

# RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Ramsey County Historical Society *"History Close to Home"*



Special Anniversary Issue:  
The Minnesota Club  
St. Paul's Enterprising Leaders  
And Their 'Gentlemen's Social Club'

Volume 19  
Number 2



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# Ramsey County History

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# The Minnesota Club: St. Paul's Enterprising Leaders And Their 'Gentlemen's Social Club'

by Robert Orr Baker

In 1869 St. Paul, with 22,000 residents and a little more than a decade removed from its pioneer origins, was flushed with the sort of civic pride that was endearingly typical of 19th century America.

The *St. Paul Directory* for that year pointed to nine attributes the city possessed, only five of which were open to argument. The city was, the *Directory* declared, "the healthiest city in the world," "the wealthiest city of its size in the Union," "the handsomest city in America," "the most popular summer resort of invalids, fashion, wealth and beauty from the entire Eastern and Southern states," and such would be its progress that in a few years it would have "the best water power in the world."

On somewhat more solid ground, the *Directory* also pointed out that St. Paul stood at the head of navigation on the Mississippi and the outlet of the Minnesota and that, moreover, it was the commercial, political, social, financial and geographical capital of the state and the railroad center for the entire Northwest. It is scarcely surprising, then, that a group of enterprising business leaders, who were fast making their fortunes in this expanding region on the edge of the frontier, would seek to crown their city with a men's social club in the best tradition of their peers to the East.

The Minnesota Club, whose birth was reported in the March 11, 1869, edition of the *St. Paul Pioneer*, was a descendant of the men's social clubs that sprang up in England during the 17th century. They were formed by men with common interests who were, for the most part, members of the merchant class created by the Industrial Revolution and who agreed to meet together, first in taverns because of the sociability provided, then in coffee houses and finally in private clubhouses.

THE IDEA LEAPED the Atlantic to colonial

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America and to Annapolis, Maryland, where, after the formation of the Tuesday Club in 1745, club life spread rapidly to other cities of the Eastern seaboard. By 1861, the beginning of the Civil War, membership in social clubs in the major cities of America had become traditional among community leaders.

Those leaders were exclusively male, and so were their clubs. Women were invited only to receptions or dances. (When the present clubhouse was built in 1914, it included a separate entrance for women who were prohibited from using the main entrance. This allowed them to go directly to the women's reception lounge just off the main reception area or to a powder room on the second floor.) Women also were not allowed the use of the dining room unless accompanied by a gentleman. As recently as 1973 the Minnesota Club had no women members, except for those who inherited memberships through their husbands. The door seems to have been ajar, however. When St. Paul attorney Michael J. Galvin, Jr., the club's president in 1972, researched the men-only precedent, he found no actual restrictions against women members, and suggested that "Should we receive an application for such a membership, we should be prepared to consider the application." Women now hold full membership.

From the records that have survived, from newspapers, periodicals, and private collections, and from the recollections of members, some insights can be pieced together into the time when, as now, the Minnesota Club was considered one of the ten great men's social clubs in America.

The *St. Paul Pioneer's* account of the founding of "a gentlemen's social club in this city . . . at a meeting held in the Chamber of Commerce" on March 9, 1869, also announced that "the organization was perfected" by the election of the following officers:

President	General Henry Hastings Sibley
Vice President	Westcott Wilkin
Treasurer	Norman W. Kittson
Secretary	Stanford Newel

The newspaper account added, "The name selected is, we believe, 'The Minnesota Club,' it not being the design to confine the list of members to St.

Paul alone but to embrace the entire state."

THE CLUB, the newspaper informed its readers, would be located in the "fine and commodious building of Bartlett Presley, Esq., on Eighth Street." Presley was a grocer who had come to St. Paul in 1849. The city's first fruit dealer, he branched out into real estate, erecting a number of "tenements," the term then for houses for rent. One of these, a two-story frame structure at 25 E. Eighth Street known as the Presley Mansion, was leased by the club for five years. Eighth Street has all but disappeared from modern downtown St. Paul, but the Presley Mansion stood not far from the First Baptist Church in Lower-town, at that time one of the finest residential districts in St. Paul.

For their first officers, the seventy-five members had assembled some of the most influential men in the Northwest. Sibley had arrived in Mendota in 1832 as the representative of the American Fur Company. He was elected to Congress from the Territory of Wisconsin with the understanding that he would urge the organization of Minnesota Territory, an arrangement he honored forthwith. The bill passed in 1849 and Sibley represented the new territory for another four years. When Minnesota became a state in 1858 he was elected its first governor. Four years later he commanded the Minnesota forces during the Sioux

Henry Hastings Sibley



Uprising of 1862. His community involvements ranged from banking (director of the First National Bank of St. Paul) to education (president of the University of Minnesota's Board of Regents).

Judge Wilkin was a brother of Alexander Wilkin, first president of the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company. Alexander Wilkin was killed while leading his regiment, the Ninth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, in the Civil War battle of Tupelo on July 14, 1864. A graduate of Princeton who had arrived in St. Paul in 1856, Judge Wilkin was elected to the district bench in 1864.

KITTSOON, whose grandfather had come to Canada with the English army under Wolfe, was a native of Canada who rose from clerk to partner in the American Fur Company. He served in the Minnesota territorial legislature as Pembina's representative. A partner of fellow Canadian James J. Hill, the "Empire Builder" of the Great Northern Railroad, in a number of ventures, Kittson was an agent for the Hudson Bay Company and operated a line of steamers on the Red River of the North. Kittson County in northern Minnesota bears his name.

It was Newel, however, who was the quintessential club man among these early entrepreneurs. A St. Paul lawyer and a graduate of both Harvard and Yale, he also was president of the *Pioneer Press* Company. He was Hill's closest friend and best man at his wedding. A high-ranking Republican, he later became United States minister to The Hague. Almost single-handedly, Newel resurrected the Minnesota Club after it fell upon hard times in 1875.

On April 15, 1870, the clubhouse was thrown open for the use of its members, and the *Pioneer Press* announced that it was taking the liberty "of withdrawing the curtain of exclusiveness and allowing the public gaze to rest upon what is reserved entirely for the benefit of the favored few who are among the 'elect'."

"ITS FINE AND IMPOSING front gives its outside appearance an air of aristocratic exclusiveness," the newspaper observed, adding, cryptically, that "The wide porch, its massive Corinthian pillars and the rich stained glass windows and transom which surround the main entrance to the building all betoken wealth, if not refinement."

(The words "fashionable," "elegant," "refinement," "taste" occur with some regularity in 19th century newspaper descriptions. The Victorians in both England and America were transfixed by the idea of elegance, refinement, taste, and fashion, perhaps as a reaction to what they might have seen as the sully-ing effects of "trade," as opposed to landed wealth.)

The club's first home actually was a rather modest



structure, by later standards, since few imposing mansions were built in St. Paul before the 1870s. On the first floor, the newspaper told its readers, was a reception room, "well-lighted by large windows and by night an elegant chandelier." Folding doors opened into a similar room. There were "rich carpets of an oak and green pattern . . . easy chairs with seats and backs covered with brown leather and richly upholstered . . . and windows provided with tasty oiled windowshades with green ground and gold edge."

A REFRESHMENT ROOM offered "all the necessary equipments to minister to the wants of those who are athirst, whether he is a member in good regular standing of the Father Matthew or any other temperance society or a devotee at the shrine of Bacchus. A fine bar occupies the eastern side of the room, immediately adjoining which is a closet in which is contained an abundant supply of wines, liquors, cigars, etc., all of which are the finest and most costly in the market." The black walnut table in the reading room was covered with the leading daily newspapers and periodicals.

Up the winding stairs there was a card room with whist tables, a chess stand and backgammon boards, and a billiard room that accommodated "two of

*The Presley Mansion, the Minnesota Club's first home, on East Eighth Street, as it looked about 1904.*

Kleeman's finest billiard tables." As to staffing, "the entire establishment has been placed in charge of Captain O.H. Maxwell as steward, assisted by a number of waiters."

Some weeks later our reporter returned for a second look. His account assured his readers — including, undoubtedly, the wives of members — of the decorum of the new club.

IN THE READING ROOM, he noted, "Two or three gentlemen, strangers in the city, no doubt, occupied easy chairs absorbed in the contents of a book or paper, presenting a picture of lazy contentment, and feeling apparently as much at home as though they were enjoying their own parlors. As well they might, as the quiet elegance of their surrounding was undisturbed by a single sound other than the passage of a carriage on the street."

In the billiard room "we found devotees of this fashionable amusement either playing or sitting around the room, interested spectators of the game . . . In the adjoining room we found select parties engaged in playing whist or euchre, while off by themselves we discovered two well-known lovers of

A "Brilliant Affair - Grand Reception to Gen. Hancock By the Minnesota Club" was described in considerable detail by the St. Paul Pioneer Press for August 28, 1869:

"The reception by the Minnesota Club to Major Gen. W.S. Hancock, last evening, was the most brilliant that has ever been witnessed or enjoyed in this city.

"Since Gen. Hancock's arrival in this city his time has been entirely occupied in becoming acquainted with the wants and requirements of the widely extended department over which he has command, and much of the time he has been absent from the city upon tours of inspection to the frontierposts, and our citizens have had no opportunity to testify their appreciation of the gallant services of this distinguished chieftain by tendering him a fitting reception upon his assuming command of this department. His recent return to the city, accompanied by his family, was seized upon by the members of the Minnesota Club, as a proper time to tender him such honors as would in some degree testify to their high esteem and respect. . .

"With this idea a reception was tendered to Gen. Hancock by the club, and he accepted the same in the spirit in which the offer was made. These preliminaries settled, the members of the Club determined that the occasion should lack nothing to make it a success. For the past few days their splendid Club House on Eighth Street has been undergoing a series of alterations and preparations for the event. A large . . . Pavilion was erected . . . and the other rooms of the House decorated for the occasion. The Pavilion . . . was magnificently festooned and completely lined with flags, both along the sides and ends, while overhead numberless flags were gracefully looped up and interspersed with wreathes and flowers . . . At the farther end and immediately over the musician's stand was the motto 'St. Paul Welcomes Hancock,' surrounded by a beautiful wreath of flowers and evergreens. The entrance to this gorgeously decorated apartment was from the main hall of the Club House, both sides of which were also lined with gracefully draped flags. . .

"At 8 o'clock last evening the Regimental Brass Band from Fort Snelling, which was stationed in the grounds around the house, commenced playing, and the members of the Club and invited guests, with their ladies, began to

arrive. The carriages soon choked up the street in front of the house, and the sidewalk along the entire block was blocked up with people, requiring the services of several policemen to keep the space immediately in front of the entrance clear.

"Gen. Hancock took his station in the reception-room, at the left of the entrance. He was supported on either side by Hon. Edmund Rice and Hon. Geo. L. Becker, and here for over an hour the beauty, fashion and wealth of St. Paul passed by, stopping to be introduced, and doing honor to the distinguished guest of the evening.

"Shortly after nine o'clock the brilliant assemblage passed into the grand pavilion, and this portion of the evening's entertainment was opened by Gen. Hancock at the head of the room in a grand quadrille. The gaily decorated room flooded with light, the rich and varied dresses of the ladies, and the many gorgeous uniforms of the Military, all of whom were dressed in full uniform, not by any means overlooking the tasty dress of the civilians, all conspired to produce a bewildering scene of beauty difficult if not impossible to describe. Seventy-two couples found places upon the floor at once, and soon 'fair ladies and brave men' were threading the lively mazes of the dance to the inspiring music of Siebert's String Band.

"There were about 250 ladies and gentlemen present, among whom were the most if not all the officers stationed at this city and Fort Snelling.

"But why enlarge upon this, the most elegant and *recherche* affair ever gotten up in St. Paul? The members of the Club, who are composed of our leading and wealthiest citizens, were determined that the occasion should not only be such as was befitting the illustrious chieftain in whose honor it was given, and their own desire, but at the same time one replete with pleasure and enjoyment to all present. It is sufficient to say they succeeded, and the reception in honor of Gen. Hancock will rank in the annals of St. Paul as a brilliant, successful and altogether a delightfully pleasant occasion, never to be forgotten by those present."



the noble game of chess, deeply absorbed in the mysteries of this kingly pastime."

It is clear, from these early accounts, that while the club must have been a place of good cheer for its members, it was scarcely boisterous, and newspaper accounts kept returning to this theme:

"What struck us particularly was the quiet and order which reigned supreme in all the rooms. During the entire evening we did not see an act performed or hear a word spoken that would be out of place in the private mansion of any citizen in St. Paul. Everything was orderly. No boisterous mirth, no unseemly language, but on the contrary everyone present recognized fully what was due not only to himself but to others as a gentleman."

FOR ONE THING, gambling was prohibited since, in that era, gentlemen did not gamble, despite the fact that their fortunes might have depended upon their willingness to accept risk. For another thing, the clubhouse opened at 7 a.m. daily and remained open as late as 1 a.m. on week nights, but it closed no later

*The Minnesota Club at Fourth and Cedar in 1886. The light-colored building at far right was the rooming house where Nina Clifford lived when she first came to St. Paul.*

than midnight on Saturdays and 11 p.m. on Sundays. No one, in those days, intruded on the Sabbath. Most of St. Paul closed by midnight on Saturday.

Members also were not allowed to invite their St. Paul friends to the house, since the club was reluctant to extend membership privileges without membership fees. However, ". . .strangers from abroad or from the State at large . . . may have the entre to the house when accompanied by a member for a period not to exceed two weeks in every three months." Prospective members were then, as now, proposed for membership and voted upon by the members.

The newspaper said it succinctly: "The founders of the Club have been very particular in the selection of those whom they have invited to join, and we presume that the same spirit will govern them in the admission of new members. A strict observance of

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the rules of the Club is the only thing needed to make the 'Minnesota Club' not only a pleasant resort to its members, but an institution to which they might invite their friends from abroad with pardonable pride in the elegant, complete and fastidious establishment which they have fitted up for their own and their friends' enjoyment."

One of the most glittering social events in the club's early years — and apparently a major event for the Northwest — was the reception, described on page 6, held on August 27, 1869, in honor of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, one of the nation's great Civil War heroes and now the commanding general of the army's Department of the Dakotas, with headquarters in St. Paul. Hancock already was well-known to Minnesotans for ordering the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment to charge the Confederate lines during the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg on July 2, 1863. All but forty-seven of the 262 men who were present for action that day were killed or wounded.

THE RECEPTION, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* of August 28, "was the most brilliant, as well as the most agreeable and delightful affair, that has ever been witnessed or enjoyed in this city." A 63-by-27-foot pavillion was erected behind the clubhouse and its floor covered by a cotton cloth drawn tightly, creating a bouncy, springy floor for dancing.

"All the splendid suites of rooms were tastefully and beautifully decorated with wreaths of flowers, all of which had been done under the direction of the ladies," the news accounts reported. "A walk through the rooms was like walking through a scene of enchantment." And, wonder of wonders, in that era before transcontinental railroads, the refreshments included "splendid white grapes and magnificent pears, brought direct from California for this occasion. . .", presumably by grocer Presley. The general promptly joined the club and remained a member until his frontier duties ended.

The first years of the club's existence passed with relative ease, but problems that would affect the entire country were hovering on the horizon. The Panic of 1873 ushered in one of the longest periods of economic contraction in American history. It was precipitated on September 18, 1873, by the failure of Jay Cooke & Co. of Philadelphia as the result of its heavy involvement in railroads. The great surge in railroad construction after the Civil War, along with liberal credits, led to reckless speculation and caused a temporary cessation of investment and a decline in federal spending.

MINNESOTA FELT the Panic in 1874. According

to the *Pioneer*, "it has prevented many transactions from taking place." Minnesota had an additional economic problem, a grasshopper plague of such severity that one observer predicted: "It is expected that the yield of wheat will not be more than one-third." The farmers' plight was so serious that the state of California sent \$500 for their relief, and newspapers reported that "hard times or an unusual amount of temperance is acting disastrously upon a number of saloons and they are closing because of financial embarrassment."

At the club's annual meeting on March 8, 1874, the members discussed moving to new quarters farther uptown. Their five-year lease was up, but the real reason for the move seems to have been financial. The Panic was draining the resources of many club members, and so, on April 19, 1874, they moved to Cutter's Block at 124 East Seventh Street, between Sibley and Wacouta. It was only four blocks away, but it was on the streetcar line.

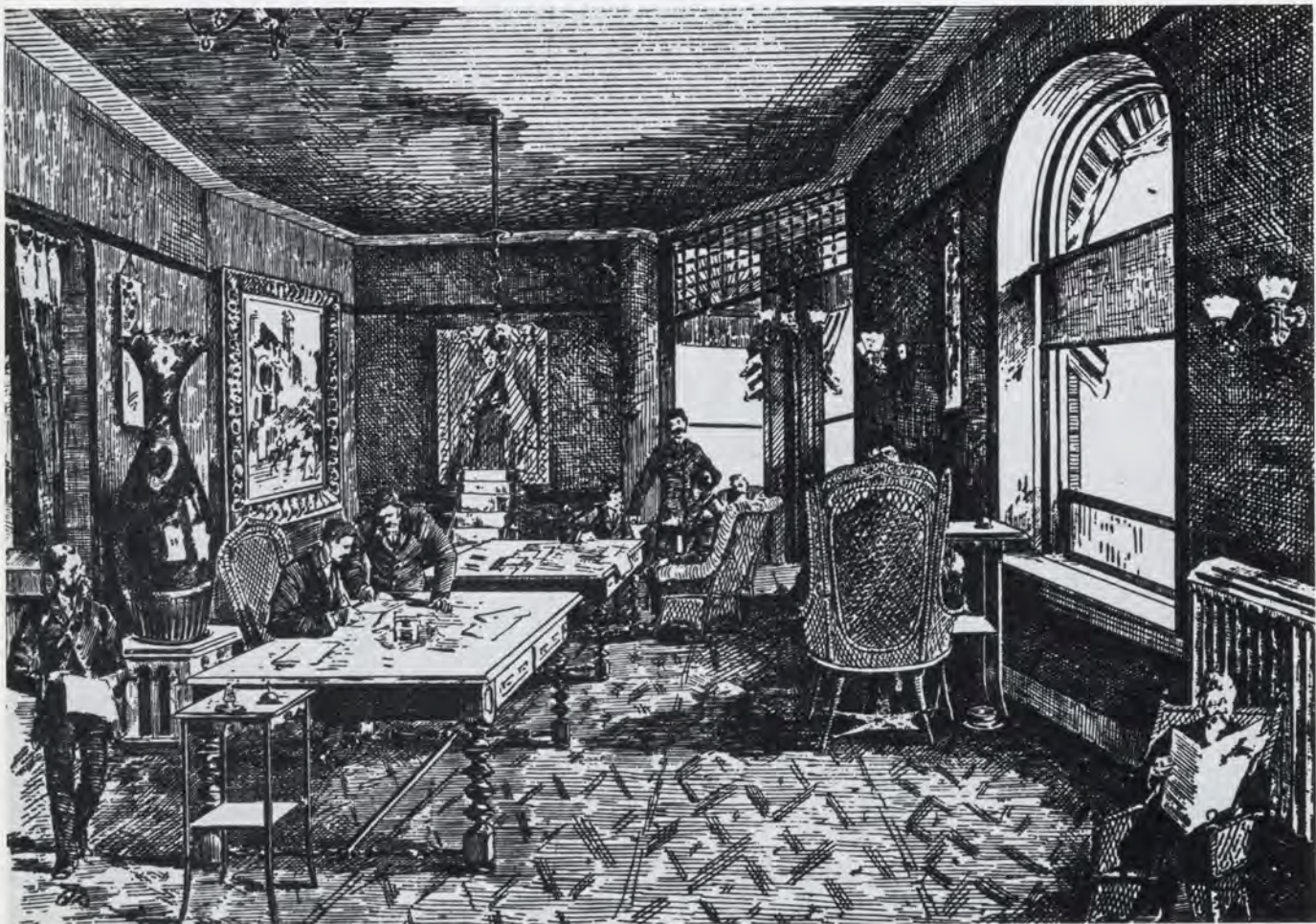
The club rented the entire second floor of the building. Parlor and reading room were "elegantly furnished," according to news reports. "A soft, velvety carpet covered the floor, easy chairs and sofas elaborately furnished were scattered about the room, while beautiful paintings and chromos adorned the walls. Truly, it was the home of the dreamer or idler. Back of these rooms was the Billiard room. All these rooms were lighted from splendid chandeliers and supplied with Phalen water" (fresh water brought in from Phalen creek on water wagons).

Meanwhile, shortly after the Minnesota Club's fifth annual meeting on May 2, 1874, a new men's social club, the St. Paul Club, was formed which included some members of both clubs. The idea for a new club had been generated by Alexander Ramsey Nininger, the promoter, nephew and namesake of Minnesota's first territorial governor, and from its location, if for no other reason, it seems to have had more of a saloon ambiance than did the Minnesota Club. The St. Paul Club rented space on the third floor of a building at 11 East Third Street, just off Robert. Browne and Donnelly, who were saloon-keepers as well as retail and wholesale dealers in choice liquors, wines, cordials and syrups, occupied the first floor. They advertised, "family trade a specialty." One cannot help but wonder how, in that era, they were able to cater to wives and children in their liquor trade.

Nininger negotiated the following arrangement with Messrs Browne and Donnelly:

"FOR THE SUM of sixty dollars monthly for such a period of years as would justify the expense of improvements, we, Browne and Donnelly, will partition off a room and furnish each room with carpet,





tables, chairs and will also furnish a billiard table and accompanying fixtures. We will also have a wash basin, urinal and water closet and dumb waiter, bells and trumpets. We will also have a door cut through to Mrs. Oyster's Restaurant and will furnish bell and trumpet communications."

The new club numbered seventy-five members at the dedication of its new rooms on July 2, 1874. Charter members included James N. Granger (secretary of both the St. Paul and Minnesota clubs) and Judge Greenleaf Clark, both lawyers; William Crooks, chief engineer of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad for whom the famous little engine, the "William Crooks", was named; Dr. David Day, pioneer physician and St. Paul's postmaster; James J. Hill, railroad magnate who became the "Empire builder"; Norman Kittson and Stanford Newel, all charter members of the Minnesota Club as well.

On December 14, 1875, St. Paul Club members called an executive meeting to consider the financial condition of the club, in debt by \$175 and facing a bill for six months rent in advance. Each member was asked to pay \$15 in dues, or the club would be forced to close. However, Browne and Donnelly

*The "lounging room" of the Cedar Street clubhouse about 1888. Line drawing is from The Northwest Magazine, page 22, Volume 6, February, 1888.*

also were in financial difficulties. They foreclosed on the mortgage they held on the club's furniture and turned the club out into the street. As Harold E. Wood, president of Harold E. Wood Investment Securities, and Minnesota Club president in 1951, noted in an address on the club's seventy-fifth anniversary: "Here the St. Paul Club went to sleep."

The same fate — the continuing reverberations of the Panic of 1873, the resignation of members because of their own financial difficulties, and the inability in those hard times to attract new members — befell the Minnesota Club. In late 1875 it, too, closed its doors.

Early in 1883, Stanford Newel circulated the following subscription list for another effort at the reorganization of a men's social club in St. Paul:

"We, the undersigned, mutually agree to pay the sum set opposite our names for the purpose of purchasing a site and building a club house in the City of St. Paul. Such a site is to be selected by



Gen. H.H. Sibley, Greenleaf Clark, Conrad Gotzian\*, James J. Hill, Wm. E. Merriam, Norman W. Kittson and Stanford Newel and is to be within that portion of the City bounded on the north by Seventh Street, on the east by Jackson Street, on the south by the Mississippi River and on the west by Market Street. Each of the undersigned agrees to pay the amount subscribed by him when so required by the Committee."

His proposal actually resulted in the reorganization of the Minnesota Club. Others among the 105 subscribers included Richards Gordon of Gordon-Ferguson, the hat and cap manufacturer; David C. Shepard, railroad contractor; Amherst H. Wilder, entrepreneur and capitalist; and Lucius P. Ordway, who became president of Crane and Ordway and a major investor in 3M. Of \$41,000 raised, the largest single contribution, \$5,000, came from Kittson. The property on the southeast corner of Cedar and Fourth Streets was purchased in the name of Greenleaf Clark and plans were begun for a three-story structure costing an additional \$33,000.

The subscribers' first meeting was held in the Merchants' National Bank. Sibley was elected president; \*Legislator and shoe manufacturer.

*The Warner block on the northwest corner of Third and Wabasha Streets in 1887. This photograph by Arthur C. Warner was taken only three years after the Minnesota Club formally incorporated.*

Stanford Newel, first vice president; Greenleaf Clark, second vice president; James N. Granger, secretary, and William E. Merriam, treasurer. It was decided that the club's "general purpose shall be for literary and social culture." Articles of incorporation were filed on May 16, 1884, and two committees appointed: Library, with Greenleaf Clark, chairman, and James J. Hill, and Reception, with Sibley, David C. Shepard and Dr. C.E. Smith.

THE CLUB'S FIRST annual meeting was held at the Cafe Brevoort on Third Street on October 14, 1884. A year later the second annual meeting was held at the Ryan Hotel in the Ladies Ordinary (the dining room). Two items of interest were noted in the minutes:

"The incumbent officers were renominated. The candidates being too surprised at their selection for such high and responsible positions to enter any protest, the motion having been recorded, was instantly carried."

The other: "Mr. Newel called for the report of the

Treasurer, as to funds in his hands. Mr. Merriam\* stated that he did not know whether he had any money or not, that he had been informed that he had about \$50, but could not vouch for the truth of that statement. The familiarity of the Treasurer with the duties and conditions of his office called out marked expressions of pleasure and satisfaction from all the members present."

In its December, 1884, issue, *Northwest Magazine Illustrated* was able to report that:

"The walls of the new club house in St. Paul begin to show above the foundations at the corner of Cedar and Fourth Streets, and the structure promises to be an ornament to the city. It was a wise decision on the part of the managers to put the building far enough downtown to make it available for a noon-day lunch for its members. This will probably be its chief use for a time. The city is not large enough yet, and not old enough to have developed a class of club men proper who have their time mainly on their hands and can enjoy the facilities for lounging, reading and quiet little dinner parties which a good club house affords. Everybody is energetically engaged in business, and business hours are longer than in the East, so that when the working day is over most men are happy to be able to get into their slippers and an easy chair and spend their evenings resting at home." (If latter day members are unable to get through the day or are drowsy after a heavy lunch they can rest in the quiet of a "slumber room" on the third floor of the present clubhouse, provided during the incumbency of William J. Hickey, Jr., president of H.M. Smyth Company.)

With the completion of the clubhouse, the governors gave their attention to furnishing it. The minutes record a delightful story:

"UPON NOMINATION to the Committee to furnish the Club House, Mr. R.W. Ransom\*\* distinguished himself by declining election, the first instance on record in the Club when any election was declined by a member. Mr. Ransom declared that he didn't know anything about furniture, that he never could or would furnish a house, that he was accustomed to furnish goods to gents at lowest market prices, but not to houses. He moved that Mr. Cass Gilbert,\*\*\* a gentleman whom he urged was carved in the right mould for such a work, be placed on the Committee. Mr. Ransom's declination

\**Soon to become governor of Minnesota*

\*\**Of Ransom and Horton Men's Furnishers*

\*\*\**St. Paul's noted architect who designed the Minnesota state capitol, the Woolworth Building in New York City and the United States Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C.*

was such a surprise to the Club and so unusual that his request was granted and Mr. Gilbert was elected to his place."

Shortly thereafter, Gilbert, who had an unusual sense of the proper decor, and from which he prospered in later years, recommended that the governors reject the kind offer of H.T. Drake, of Young, Streissguth and Drake, wholesale hats, caps and furs, to let the club have his mounted moose head for \$100. Perhaps it was the money. Gilbert's gift to the club of a picture, "The Tiger's Head," was accepted.

The board also made weighty decisions on day-to-day problems. With great thankfulness they accepted \$147.13 from the treasurer of the defunct St. Paul Club who found himself with that amount on hand when the club closed its doors in 1875. In another incident, the secretary stated that he had procured sixteen photographs of prominent clubs in London, England. He proposed that they be hung in the committee room. Inspired by patriotic fervor, Governor Westcott Wilkin (all members of the board of governors were addressed by that title whenever they were in the club) moved that the secretary procure photographs of leading American clubs.

To keep members from running amok hanging pictures, the board, ignoring the fact that they already had put Cass Gilbert in charge of furnishings, instructed the Library Committee, with Greenleaf Clark, James J. Hill and Horace Upham, president of First National Bank, to sit as an Art Committee, "to see that no works of art shall be hung or placed in the Club House without their express permission."

WHEN A MINOR FIRE, the only one in the club's long history, broke out a special fund was raised from the members for the firemen who put out the blaze. Changing of the club's lighting system from gas to electric was recommended, if the cost did not exceed \$1,200 per annum and if the contract provided for 16 candlepower (24 candlepower at the reading desks). Since one volt equals one candlepower, the eyesight of many members may have been saved by the inability of the club to negotiate the contract.

The governors discussed the expenses of receptions, such as those given in 1887 for President Grover Cleveland and William Jennings Bryan, and agreed that they be paid out of the general funds. They also listened to individual claims from dissatisfied members — from attorney W.H. Lightner, for example, concerning a charge for the use of chess men, and from W.B. Bend, railroad accountant, who made a claim in February for a hat lost the preceding October.

The club's restaurant, under the supervision of the

House Committee, was admonished "to provide the best that the market affords and to see that it is purchased and served in such manner as to make the restaurant first class in all respects." A year later the governors instructed the House Committee to abolish the custom of serving lunch at forty-five cents.

In February, 1891, Governors Flandrau and George C. Squires, a lawyer, were appointed to draft a memorial resolution on the death of General Sibley, the only member ever to be eulogized, and to see that his portrait was placed in the reception hall and draped in black for thirty days.

In June, 1890, the by-laws were amended to allow for honorary members, an honor bestowed on Stanford Newel in 1897. In the long history of the Minnesota Club, no one has given more of himself to the club than Newel. Secretary of the club from 1869 to 1876, he is credited with the club's rebirth in 1884. In that year he was elected first vice-president; he served until Sibley declined re-election in 1889, then was elected president, an office he held until his appointment in 1897 as United States minister to The Hague.

NOT ALL NOMINEES to the honorary class were approved. The minutes for December 7, 1895, record that "It was moved that the Governor of the State of Minnesota [David M. Clough] be elected an Honorary Member of this Club which was discussed at some length and lost." Another class of membership, the military, was created to include officers from Fort Snelling. In November, 1897, when he was stationed at the fort, Colonel Arthur MacArthur, father of General Douglas MacArthur, was elected to that class of membership.

It was the club's intent to draw its members from the entire state, and not just from St. Paul. For this reason a non-resident class was created. Men living outside of Ramsey County could join for a reduced fee. Minneapolis provided outstanding support in non-resident memberships that included lawyer John B. Atwater; Thomas Lowry, president of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company; Clinton Morrison, president of Farmers and Mechanics Bank; Charles A. Pillsbury, listed as "proprietor, Pillsbury Elevator Company;" and W.D. Washburn, president of North Star Feed and Cereal Company.

Ten years after its rebirth in 1884, the club's membership stood at 341, with eighty-five non-resident members and eight army members. But by 1886 resident memberships had dropped to 220, prompting the governors to appoint an Especial Committee of Ten on Membership, with Richards Gordon as chairman. Its successful membership campaign produced almost 100 new members, among whom were

Homer Clark of West Publishing Company; Albert Lindeke, of Lindeke, Warner and Schurmeier, dry goods wholesalers; and lawyer Moses E. Clapp. By 1900 the club had 300 resident members, 108 non-resident members, and four army members. A year later the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* for March 14, 1901, reported that another eighty-five new members were welcomed with a buffet and entertainment program.

INCREASED MEMBERSHIP meant increased use of the clubhouse. Despite two expansions, a new physical plant was needed to provide larger banqueting and reception rooms and more sleeping rooms. The governors appointed a special committee to determine additions or improvements to the club. In 1898, when Charles E. Flandrau, who was then 70 years of age, resigned as president of the club, he alluded to this growth in membership as a factor in his decision.

"A new and larger element of younger members has been introduced," he declared, "which may and probably has, changed the trend of thought which has hitherto controlled the management and guided the aims and objects of the Club.

"This condition of things admonishes me to withdraw from the Presidency in order that full latitude

*Stanford Newel*



may be given to the expression of any advanced sentiments that may exist regarding the conduct of Club affairs. I also regard it as dignified and becoming always to meet advancing years half-way and, 'Step gracefully down, before a younger age comes tripping on and *shoves* you off the stage.' "

As the club approached the beginning of the 20th Century, it could boast 412 members, but it was not until 1909 that the members approved a plan for a new clubhouse on the site of the Metropolitan Hotel at Fourth and Washington Streets, which was to be demolished. The neighborhood was interesting. The Central Police Station was across Third Street and the establishment of the legendary Nina Clifford was just a block away at 147 S. Washington Street.

TO FINANCE the venture Charles W. Gordon, president of Gordon-Ferguson, had been appointed chairman of a committee to raise \$51,000 to purchase the new site through the sale to members of interest-bearing bonds issued by the club. However, the building had been rented to the A.C. Thomson Carriage Company so plans were laid over for two years. In the meantime, a committee was to visit the most modern clubs in the larger cities throughout the country and incorporate the ideas gathered into the plans.

On October 19, 1911, Gordon, now club president, unveiled plans for the new building and announced that 5 percent bonds would be issued to cover the cost. Again, it took longer than expected, but on April 13, 1913, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that demolition of the Metropolitan Hotel would begin May 1, and added that an expected building boom would push construction costs up. Painters, alone, were earning 50 cents an hour, a nickel more than a year earlier.

During the demolition, workmen employed by Butler Bros. Construction Company uncovered a honeycomb of mysterious tunnels and chambers in solid rock forty feet below the surface. The *Pioneer Press* reported that marks of tools indicating construction by human hands were visible throughout the entire system. One chamber was discovered by accident when a portion of the ceiling collapsed and a steam shovel, working over the opening, nearly fell through the hole. St. Paul's finest, the club's new neighbors across the street in the Central Police Station, could offer no explanation for the tunnels.

On December 20, 1914, under the headline, "Wealthy Club To Have A New Home" the *Pioneer Press* noted, "The new Minnesota Club stands three stories high, and with the new library building opposite on Washington Street, gives added distinction to the locality. The building extends from Fourth to Third Streets on Washington Avenue. On Third Street

overlooking the Mississippi River has been constructed a terrace. This will be embellished by a garden and provision will be made for an outdoor dining room to be used during the summer." The newspaper also advised its readers that the club would open on October 20 for a public reception. Cordenio A. Severance, St. Paul attorney and partner of Frank B. Kellogg, was named chairman for the event.

On October 17, 1915, the *Pioneer Press* nostalgically recalled the work of Stanford Newel, who had died in 1907, under the heading, "Newel's Memory Shines Light Over Dinner On Last Evening in Old Home":

"A LITTLE MORE than thirty-five years ago the building erected as a home for the Minnesota Club was approaching completion. The success of this project was due more to the interest and tireless assistance of Stanford Newel than to any other cause. Mr. Newel was a club man. He belonged to many, he was familiar with what the best of them should be. He desired to see such a club established here and to make it reflect credit upon St. Paul.

"He made a careful list of those residents of the city who would naturally be interested in the enterprise and would be suitable members of the Club. From each of these a subscription to the stock of the new building was asked. Many had but little which they put in willingly and it was principally due to the generous support of the few men of large wealth that the carrying out of the project was possible.

"Especially is this a time to honor the real founder of the Minnesota Club, in its body and spirit, Stanford Newel. Happily there are many yet active in its conduct who remember his wonderful blend of dignity and courtesy, his absolute fidelity to principles, his loyalty to the claim of friendship which kept inviolate in his heart the place of every man who had the rare good fortune to enter there, his kindly humor, his sense of what was base, his homage in thought and in action to all that was noble and fine. It was easy to believe that his benignant smile lent a tender light from the days that are dead to the last evening of the old Minnesota Club."

THREE DAYS LATER, on October 20, 1915, the club's formal opening attracted about 700 guests who dined at \$2.50 a plate and then toured the clubhouse. They noted that the second floor included a dining room for women, which, with a lounge, constituted the women's section.

The clubhouse, of brick with stone trim, was designed by Clarence H. Johnston of St. Paul at a cost of almost \$300,000. Facilities included eight billiard tables in two billiard rooms in the basement; a gym-



nasium with a squash ball and handball court, and electric baths (an early version of the jacuzzi), although showers were expected to be in greater demand. Inside windows overlooking the gymnasium and the courts permitted spectators to watch the games from galleries on the main floor. Two dozen sleeping rooms, each with a marble-lined bathroom, occupied the third floor. The kitchen was in the basement.

The clubhouse had been finished on the eve of America's entry into World War I, an event that had considerable impact on the life of the club. In 1917 the following notice went up in the bar: "During the continuance of the war, this Club will sell no liquor after 10 o'clock p.m. week days, nor at all on Sundays. No person wearing the uniform of the armed forces of The United States will be served at any time. House Committee." The Women's Christian Temperance Union and The Anti-Saloon League were determined not only to force prohibition on the country, but also to protect America's soldiers from what they saw as the degradation caused by liquor.

A few years later, just before the Armistice, the club was humiliated by the discovery that it had been hoarding sugar. A former manager, George Robinson, admitted responsibility, explaining that he felt he was acting for the welfare of the club in submitting an incorrect report on its supply of sugar. The

*The present clubhouse at Third and Washington about 1929, in this photograph by C.P. Gibson.*

United States Food Administration ordered the club to surrender all sugar in its possession and prohibited food brokers from supplying the club. This closed them down. For several months the clubhouse was dark. Finally, Herbert Hoover, the nation's Food Administrator, lifted the ban, possibly after an appeal from some of St. Paul's Republican leaders.

IN THE EUPHORIA following the crisis the board, for the first time in its history, gave a free lunch to more than 200 members. The club did not get off scot-free, however. Its penalty, in lieu of costs, was a voluntary contribution of \$1,000 for the relief of the people suffering from the Moose Lake forest fire in northeast Minnesota.

As if this were not enough, the *Pioneer Press* reported that one Schmidt, a baker at the club, was arrested, charged with disloyalty and faced internment for the duration of the war. The charges against him included allegations that he told fellow employees that he was going to take his money out of the banks because he had confidential knowledge that they were going to be closed, and that he also had said that Liberty Bonds were worthless. Employees of the club loyally reported Schmidt to the Department of Justice.

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The new clubhouse, pronounced beautiful, elegant and impressive, figured in an episode of mistaken identity, as reported in the *Pioneer Press* of May 27, 1922:

"Dignified members of the Minnesota Club raised their eyebrows and liveried servants whispered among themselves. The woman who had marched into the building with a determined air and taken a seat in the women's waiting room certainly was not of the type it would be expected to find in the exclusive Minnesota Club.

"But from her air she certainly expected to meet someone, and of course the dignified clubmen and respectful servants could not undertake the censorship of a fellow member's taste in matters feminine.

"An hour passed. The rouged visitor was still in her seat, still expectant, but appearing a trifle bored.

"Two hours passed. No change. At last a member summoned courage to approach the visitor and ask if he could assist her in finding the person she was seeking.

"'I'm waiting for the warden,' said the woman.

"'What warden?' asked the member, astonished.

"'Why the warden of this jail, of course,' came the answer.

"When the questioner had recovered his powers of speech, he told the woman she was in the Minnesota Club.

"'My Gawd!' she exclaimed. 'I thought it was the county jail,' and with a look of terror on her countenance she fled."

AN ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME to the club on its arrival at its new location might have come from Nina Clifford, whose role in the club's history may be based more on fantasy than reality. Nina Clifford, whose real name appears to have been Hannah Steinbrecker, first appeared in St. Paul in 1886, taking lodgings in a house on Cedar Street near Third Street and just a few doors from the club's location at that time. She lived there until 1889, and one may assume that it was during those years that she first attracted the attention of club members. Moving to 147 South Washington Street, just below the present Civic Center ramp, she opened her own establishment, reportedly the best in town. When the Minnesota Club's headquarters opened on the bluff above her house, she presumably was ready to welcome old friends from earlier days. For years it was whispered that one of the many tunnels under the Minnesota Club was really a secret access route to Nina Clifford's, a rumor that gained some currency from the following incident, as Reuel D. Harmon, president of the Webb Company and club president in 1962, recalls it:

"One of the most colorful of all the club presidents

was Joe Shiely, founder of the J.L. Shiely Company, supplier of sand and aggregate for major construction projects in the Twin Cities area and throughout the northwest.

"Following the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing Depression, the club found itself in severe financial straits. In fact, it appeared quite likely that the club would go broke. Under these conditions none of St. Paul's movers and shakers was willing to take on the responsibility of the club presidency — except one, who had the courage to take on such a challenge even though failure might tarnish his personal reputation. So Joe became president of the Minnesota Club in 1931.

"After determining the extent of the club's financial problems, he began to develop ways to solve them. The surest way to develop substantial and continuing income for the club was quite simple, he thought. Just across Kellogg Boulevard (then Third Street) and down Hill Street next to the city morgue was the pleasure palace run by the famous madam, Nina Clifford, who originated a credit card system for such places.

"Joe promised to build a tunnel from the club basement, under Third Street to Nina's place. He would install turnstiles, as in the New York subways, so that club members could come and go without being observed. The return turnstile would have a higher charge to take advantage of the member's guilt feelings and his desire to make a getaway.

"UNFORTUNATELY, the board of governors turned down his proposal because it would require a major outlay to dig the tunnel. It is possible that this story is apocryphal, although most people who knew Joe Shiely believe it to be true. He did pay off the club debt, in spite of this setback."

The folklore surrounding Nina Clifford and the club has found its way into history largely through the efforts of Gareth Hiebert, who writes the "Oliver Towne" column for the *St. Paul Dispatch*. It was in 1980 that Hiebert's long cultivation of this subject finally bore fruit. He reported in his column that he had received a letter from a young woman whom Nina had befriended, announcing that she would shortly arrive in St. Paul. Her arrival coincided with the Minnesota Club's Annual Tennis and Golf Tournament, held at the Somerset Club in West St. Paul. The winner's trophy for this event, as Hiebert told his readers, had long been named for Nina Clifford, and was inscribed, "In Memory of the Athletic Director of the World's Second Greatest Sport."

It seemed only appropriate, Hiebert went on, that the young woman be a guest of the club at the award banquet and she was, in fact, present. She

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described her years of living with Nina in the house just below the hill. After the trophy presentation she produced a surprise, an oil painting of Nina Clifford, and suggested that it deserved a home as close to the old house as possible.

"So tonight," she announced, "I am giving it to the Minnesota Club where it will hang among friends." The portrait now hangs on the east wall of the Minnesota Room, the club's bar. It is hoped that one day it can be moved to a room on the lower level which has been named the Nina Clifford Room.

It is perhaps anti-climatic to record that the Nina Clifford trophy for tennis was won that year by Thomas E. McDonnell, vice president of the St. Paul Companies and chairman of the 1963 Gin Rummy Tournament. For the first time in the memory of anyone who knew him, McDonnell abandoned spectator sports for the more aggressive game of tennis.

WHILE THE CLUB'S membership, one measure of its success, has fluctuated over the years, it is interesting to note that it was not seriously affected by the Great Depression. In 1929 resident membership was 401; in 1930, it fell to a low of 270; and in 1934 and 1937, the low points of the Depression, the membership stayed above the 1930 figure. The Depression also did not intrude upon protocol. On New Year's Day, 1936, President Harold O. Washburn, president of the American Hoist and Derrick Company, received the governors and their ladies at a reception.

In 1933 Congress repealed prohibition and in 1934 the board of governors authorized the purchase of 400 cases of whiskey, financed by a demand note on the First National Bank in the amount of \$18,837. The result was that the club had 400 cases of Bourbon but not a drop of Scotch. Not until 1954 did the club's inventory list the purchase of a year's supply of Scotch — 1,738 bottles. Two years earlier the club had increased liquor per drink from 1¼ to 1½ ounces.

This might have produced happier drinkers, if not diners whose complaints about the food — either its service, its quality, its temperature or its quantity — were of some duration. Phillip Ray, president of the First Trust Company of St. Paul, unburdened himself in a 1937 memorandum to Albert H. Lindeke, chairman of the House Committee:

"Being very fond of bread and butter in any form, I claim to be something of an expert in food and it gives me great displeasure and annoyance to have to confess, as a member in good standing, that the rolls at the Minnesota Club are about the worst and the least attractive that one can encounter anywhere.

I once had the temerity to inquire of a Minnesota Club waiter as to the source of the cold, stale and unappetizing rolls he had served and he told me that he guessed it was because they were 'sent in' from the outside. I have been meaning ever since to suggest to you that they be sent in from somewhere within 50 miles of St. Paul and within no more than one week of the date of baking. It is an open question as to whether the birds or the members should get the rolls at present."

History does not record that any changes were made as a result of this complaint. Suffice it to say that Ray was elected president of the club in 1938 and one may assume that thereafter his rolls were fresh, hot and appetizing. Now the diners enjoy fresh baked hot rolls, muffins and popovers served from a silver bread box by Zadio Magee of 710 Fuller Avenue, who has been a waiter at the club for twenty-seven years.

ON A MORE SERIOUS but hopeful note, the board of governors, with remarkable prescience as to the end of the war in Europe and Asia, decided on September 19, 1944, months ahead of the actual event and while the armies of the world were still locked in mortal combat, that they would leave the question of closing the bar on V-day to the discretion of the club's officers.

It was during Lindeke's term as House Committee chairman in 1937 that the Saturday noon luncheons for executives of St. Paul's corporations got their start. On January 19, 1937, members received an invitation to the First National Bank Buffet Luncheon the following Saturday. All they could eat - \$1.00. "Julian Baird\* cocktails" and "Phil Ray oysters" were served at the bar and Richard C. Lilly, the bank's president, and his entire staff were present.

The stringency of the times (the Recession was underway) terminated the program and it was not until 1948 that A.B. (Archie) Jackson, president of St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company and club president, resurrected the lunches. Ronald Hubbs, Jackson's successor and club president in 1959, remembers that event:

"In 1948 it was decided to have Saturday lunches at the club during the winter months to be sponsored by business organizations and preceded by a social hour. Club members would be invited, plus special guests of the sponsors as well as the honorary members and others from the judiciary, academia,

*\*President of the First National Bank of St. Paul and undersecretary of the treasury during President Eisenhower's administration.*





the government and political organizations. The purpose was to permit leaders in the community to become better acquainted with each other and with the officers of the sponsoring company. There was opposition to the plan because it had been tried before in abbreviated fashion and failed. The St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company offered to lead off (as it has since then) in spite of many warnings that these events would be dismal failures. Regardless of this pessimism the lunches were a smash hit and have been for over thirty-six years."

Since then, from November to March, fourteen to eighteen corporations sponsor lunches each year in a program so popular that each company jealously guards its dates. It is not uncommon for a sponsoring firm to entertain more than 250 guests at a Saturday luncheon. Invitations go to all resident members of the club, to a sponsor's best customers and suppliers, to business and community leaders and to such notables as the president of the University of Minnesota, to state governors, past, incumbent and would-be, to senators and representatives, state and federal.

As Bert Lund, vice president of the Webb Company and one-time chairman of the Saturday Luncheon Committee, notes, "It has become a

*The club's setting about 1930 after the new Kellogg Boulevard had wiped out the river side of old Third Street.*

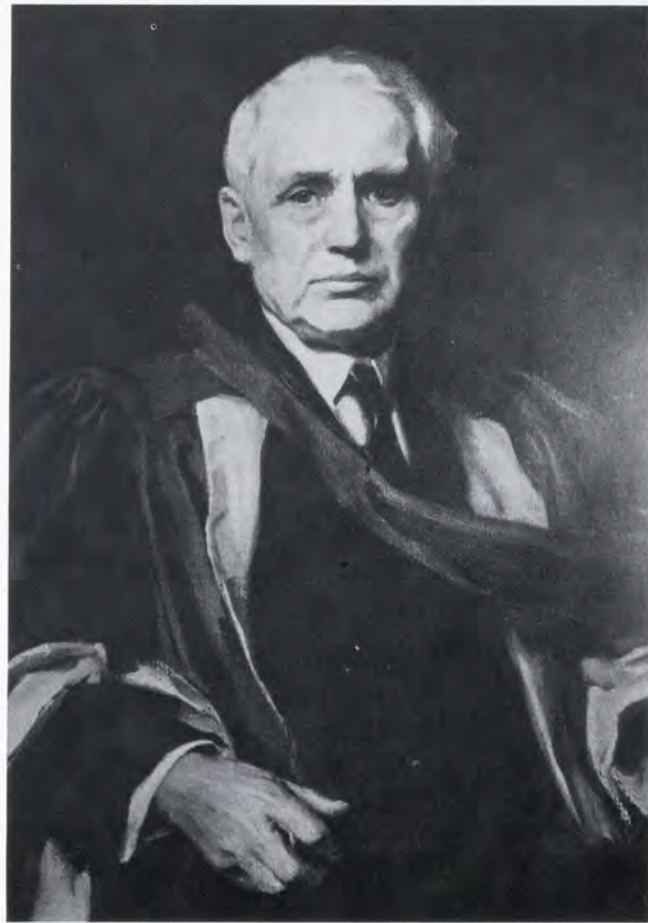
unique tradition. The luncheons are an indication that St. Paul business and government people are willing to meet together and talk about how to make their community better." And John Parish, vice president of the St. Paul Companies and club president in 1968 comments: "A lot of business is done during the receptions and luncheons, as the opportunity is there for the officers of St. Paul's corporations to meet on an informal basis with their clients and customers." James E. Kelley, St. Paul attorney and the club's oldest continuous member (he joined in 1926) believes that the Saturday luncheons sum up what the Minnesota Club is all about and he poses a good question: "Why be anywhere else on a Saturday noon?" Despite low temperatures, wind chill, and heavy snow, the luncheons continue. Coleman Bloomfield, president of Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance Company, a luncheon sponsor, says that: "The luncheons are a St. Paul tradition and they always go on despite the weather. Remember it's Minnesota we're living in."

WHILE CLUB PRESIDENT in 1960, Philip H. Nason, president of the First National Bank of St. Paul, arranged for a questionnaire to be mailed to

each member concerning the club's activities and physical plant. Seventy percent of the members responded to the survey. As a result, Nason's successor, Reuel Harmon, commenting that "There have been strong expressions from members to the effect that the club must adjust to the new progressive spirit of St. Paul," proposed a plan for expansion of the club. A new dining room would be created by extending the building south to Kellogg Boulevard. (Employees of the plastering company who had worked on the club's earlier building on Cedar Street were able to recreate the old club's beautiful ceiling in the new dining room.) A new men's grill, a cocktail room, and air conditioning also would be added at an estimated cost of \$300,000. When the expansion was completed in 1964, the annual statement for that year underlined the wisdom of the move. Club activities and revenues had increased 35 to 50 percent over the same months in 1963.

In 1974, while Roy Svee was general manager of Montgomery Ward and Company and club president, a subcommittee of the House Committee was formed in the hope that each of the club's rooms would be renamed to express the heritage of the state

*Frank B. Kellogg*



and the club itself. The various rooms had borne such exotic names as Room Number 3, the Ballroom or the Game Room, revealing what was felt to be a lack of imagination on the part of earlier club members. The Room-naming Committee was chaired by the writer and included Russell Fridley, director of the Minnesota Historical Society, and Richard T. Faricy, president of Winsor/Faricy Architects. New names were recommended which would, with one exception,\* have some relationship to St. Paul corporations. Thus the Main Dining Room became the Sibley Room, and Sibley's portrait hangs on its west wall. The Grill is now known as the Law Room and identified by the portrait of Frank B. Kellogg, Nobel prize winner, one-time club member, United States secretary of state, author of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, senator from Minnesota, and a member of the St. Paul law firm of Briggs and Morgan. The Main Lounge is the James Jerome Hill Room, and identified with his portrait.

The bar has been renamed the Minnesota Room. The picture on one wall of the "U.S.S. Minnesota" underlines the relationship of the club to one of

*Pierce Butler*





*The reading room of the old Cedar Street club about 1900.*

America's great naval events, the Civil War battle between the Union's "Monitor" and the Confederate "Merrimac" on March 9, 1862, a date shared by the Minnesota Club whose birthday is March 9, 1869. The battle between these two new ironclads actually was fought to save the "Minnesota" from destruction by the "Merrimac."

The Regency Room is now the Homer P. Clark Room in honor of the distinguished St. Paul entrepreneur who was president of West Publishing Company. Room Number 3 is the James C. Burbank Room in recognition of his contributions as an early businessman, owner of a stagecoach line, and second president of the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company. Room Number 4 bears the name of Henry Mower Rice, Indian trader, legislator, United States senator and public official who in 1849 gave the city the public square that became Rice Park.

Room Number 5 is named for Charles E. Flandrau, Indian agent, attorney, author, and defender of New Ulm in the Indian Uprising of 1862. Later a member of the Minnesota Supreme Court, he was the club's third president. His portrait hangs in the Sibley Room. The Ballroom where the St. Paul Club now meets has been named the St. Paul Room in honor of the club's long association with the Minnesota Club. Finally, the Game Room on the lower level is, appropriately enough, the Nina Clifford Room in memory of the club's colorful neighbor below the hill.

GAZING DOWN on the main reception area from his portrait on the stair landing is that old fur trader

and legislator, Joseph Rolette, who saved the capital for St. Paul. Rolette spirited away the bill calling for the capital to be moved to St. Peter. He went into a week of hiding with his cronies and did not turn up with the bill in his pocket until the very instant of adjournment of the legislature — too late for the legislators to act on it. Thus, the capital remained in St. Paul. His portrait, an unusual sand painting and one of two such paintings (the other is owned by the Minnesota Historical Society), was given to the club by Sibley.

Since the club's 1884 charter stated its purpose as "literary and social culture," its Library Committee, consisting of Greenleaf Clark and James J. Hill, was charged with the establishment of a library. (Hill would serve on that committee throughout his life.) Books, periodicals and newspapers from around the world were gathered together in the Reading Room. However, in the course of time the interests and habits of the members changed. By the 1950s little use was being made of the library and finally it was closed. The books were sent off to the St. Paul Academy. One wag suggested that a paper cutter be included with each volume to slit open the pages, as most of the books had never been used. Some years later a suggestion that a small library be recreated was met with the observation that Gideon Bibles had been placed in all sleeping rooms and should be adequate for anyone's reading needs.

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In 1973 a crisis erupted within the club. It concerned nothing less than moving the club from its home of almost sixty years to a new building downtown. Michael J. Galvin, Jr., who was intimately involved in the proposed move, explains it:

"In 1972 American National Bank entered into an agreement with Transamerica, Tulsa, Oklahoma, to construct a new American National Bank Building between Fifth and Sixth and Robert and Minnesota Streets. For some years Transamerica's policy had been to try to persuade the leading club in each city in which they constructed a building to locate their club in that building. In due course, then, Transamerica proposed that the Minnesota Club relocate to the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth floors of the bank.

"After a committee appointed by the board had studied the proposal, the board recommended the move. Because the club's bylaws required that two-thirds of the members approve the sale or encumbrance of the corporation's assets, a membership meeting was held on June 11, 1973. The members voted, 213 to 109, to move the club."

THIS, HOWEVER, was not what one could term a popular decision, despite the vote. The ballots had scarcely been counted when battle lines were drawn up in the form of a Save the Minnesota Club committee, with Dwight D. Opperman, president of West Publishing Company and club president in 1975, as chairman. On July 13 the committee requested a complete reassessment of the decision.

Stanley E. Hubbard, president of Hubbard Broadcasting, Inc., put the case forcefully in a June 26 letter to Ray E. Wheeler, president of the Minnesota Club.

"Can you imagine," Hubbard demanded, "having an important, out-of-town person as a guest at the club in the office building, getting into an elevator with possibly some clerks and maybe a janitor and going up to the top floor for lunch; all this in contrast to the businessmen of Minneapolis using the Minneapolis Club?" Hubbard added that he felt the members would accept an increase in dues "to make some improvements," such as "first class" food, "first class service" and a parking lot. West Publishing, which has given the club two other presidents (Harry H. Kirby and Alfred V. Alliegro), in addition to Opperman, purchased the parking lot across Fourth Street on Washington Avenue, primarily for the use of club members, another instance of its long history of support for the club.

On July 20 the committee requested a special meeting of the membership. Ten days later, after the board had fully discussed the problem, a special membership meeting was called for August 20. The

Save the Minnesota Club Committee members had done their homework, actively soliciting support for their position. At that meeting, 105 members voted in favor of the move and 178 voted against, and the board agreed. Plans to move the club were terminated. Thus ended what perhaps was the club's second crisis in its history. The first was its closing almost 100 years earlier, in 1875.

It was inevitable that the profound social changes that swept the country, beginning as early as the years just after World War I would be reflected in the life of the club. The increased mobility of the American people arising partly from the use of their automobiles and the growth of their cities changed the character of the nation, and the character of the Minnesota Club changed, too. The Minnesota Club had been founded as a gentlemen's social club, an exclusive club open only to the privileged few as a luncheon and dining club.

But now, as Ronald Hubbs has observed, "Change has left its mark. No longer do we have a library, steam baths, bowling alleys, handball courts, billiard tables (where international stars performed), a generous number of backgammon tables, gin rummy players galore, the Saturday poker game . . . to name a few activities that time has left behind."

In the years since World War II, the club has gradually emerged as a community center that has preserved the social club ambiance. All this is in keeping with the club's objective: "To recognize our responsibility, individually and collectively, to make solid contributions to the growth, prosperity, and happiness of the larger community of which this club is only a part."

Under the aegis of the political, social, professional and business organizations that use the club, the guests of the city, the nation's presidents, cabinet members, military, business and social leaders are presented to the community in receptions, dinners, or formal meetings. In 1904 the Informal Club held its 100th meeting in the club and today its members still meet there during the fall and winter months. The St. Paul Club, taking its traditions from the former Exchange Club, meets weekly in the St. Paul Room. The St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, groups within both Republican and Democratic-Farmer Labor parties, United Way committees, faculty from such institutions as St. John's University at Collegeville and the University of Minnesota are among the principal organizations of the metropolitan region that use the club on a less frequent basis.

And, of course, there are private parties. On August 11, 1979, Harold Cummings, chairman emeritus of the Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance



Company, took over the entire club to entertain family and friends on his and Mrs. Cummings' 60th wedding anniversary.

To underline the use the club enjoys today, one has only to look at the figures. In December, 1981, for instance, the club served more than 10,000 people.

Formed originally in 1869 but incorporated in 1884, the Minnesota Club has transited its first century with ease and is entering a second century that seems to offer a glittering future. It remains in place on the square that circles Rice Park and includes the classically beautiful St. Paul Library and the Hill Reference Library, the soaring Amhoist Tower, the

*The four earlier locations of the Minnesota Club: (1) the Presley Mansion (2) the approximate location of the Cutter Block (3) the clubhouse at Fourth and Cedar Streets (4) the old Metropolitan Hotel on the site of the present clubhouse. Photograph is of a segment of a Panorama of St. Paul in 1888, owned by the Ramsey County Historical Society.*

elegantly restored Saint Paul Hotel, the majestic Landmark Center, and the spectacular new Ordway Theater. Under the presidency of Charlton Dietz, the management of Robert D. McCarthy, and the supervision of the dining rooms under executive chef Michael Byrne, the more than 700 members look forward to increasing involvement in the new life at the epicenter of the cultural life of the city.

**PRESIDENTS OF THE MINNESOTA CLUB  
FROM 1869 to 1983**

Sibley, Henry H. . . . .	1869	White, Edwin . . . . .	1941
Newel, Stanford . . . . .	1889	Jenks, Charles O. . . . .	1942
Flandrau, C.E. . . . .	1895	Griggs, Milton W. . . . .	1943
Young, E.A. . . . .	1898	Brown, Edward C. . . . .	1944
Clark, Greenleaf . . . . .	1901	Shepard, Roger B. . . . .	1945
Hannaford, J.M. . . . .	1903	Butler, Pierce . . . . .	1946
Gordon, Richards . . . . .	1904	Sweney, W. Homer . . . . .	1947
Upham, H.P. . . . .	1905	Jackson, A.B. . . . .	1948
Bunn, C.W. . . . .	1906	Lang, William H. . . . .	1949
Saunders, E.N. . . . .	1907	Griggs, Benjamin G. . . . .	1950
O'Brien, D.C. . . . .	1908	Wood, Harold E. . . . .	1951
Ames, Charles W. . . . .	1909	Barnes, Harry G. . . . .	1952
Gordon, Charles W. . . . .	1910	Ordway, Richard . . . . .	1953
Watson, John J. . . . .	1911	Price, Milton D. . . . .	1954
Clark, James T. . . . .	1912	Carroll, John E. . . . .	1955
Driscoll, A.B. . . . .	1913	Clark, Robert D. . . . .	1956
Skinner, James H. . . . .	1914	Blake, H. Wm. . . . .	1957
Butler, Pierce . . . . .	1915	Biorn, Norman D. . . . .	1958
Jackson, John N. . . . .	1916	Hubbs, Ronald M. . . . .	1959
Finch, Sherman . . . . .	1917	Nelson, Norman H. . . . .	1960
Saunders, E.N., Jr. . . . .	1918	Nason, Philip H. . . . .	1961
Schulze, T.A. . . . .	1919	Harmon, Reuel D. . . . .	1962
Kenney, W.P. . . . .	1920	Hickey, William J., Jr. . . . .	1963
Prince, G.H. . . . .	1921	Bancroft, Richard H. . . . .	1964
Armstrong, J.D. . . . .	1922	Fisher, Lyle H. . . . .	1965
Lindeke, A.W. . . . .	1923	Wolff, Fred H., Jr. . . . .	1966
Severance, C.A. . . . .	1924	Kirby, Harry H. . . . .	1967
Myers, Paul N. . . . .	1925	Parish, John C. . . . .	1968
Irvine, H.H. . . . .	1926	Mullery, Charles W. . . . .	1969
Upham, J.P. . . . .	1927	Knox, Jep D. . . . .	1970
Warren, A.H., Jr. . . . .	1928	Galvin, M.J., Jr. . . . .	1971
Griggs, T.W. . . . .	1929	Wheeler, Ray E. . . . .	1972
Hannaford, J.M., Jr. . . . .	1930	Bjorklund, Frederick . . . . .	1973
Shiely, J.L. . . . .	1931	Svee, Roy M. . . . .	1974
Crosby, Frederic . . . . .	1932	Opperman, D.D. . . . .	1975
Scandrett, B.W. . . . .	1933	Opperman, D.D. . . . .	1976
Good, T.E. . . . .	1934	Coyne, Frank H. . . . .	1977
Paetzold, F.L. . . . .	1935	Haugan, R.E. . . . .	1978
Washburn, H.O. . . . .	1936	Smith, W.G. . . . .	1979
Codere, C.F. . . . .	1937	Slade, G. Richard . . . . .	1980
Ray, P.L. . . . .	1938	Alliegro, Alfred V. . . . .	1981
McGill, C.H. . . . .	1939	Hayes, Lawrence J. . . . .	1982
Kendall, H.T. . . . .	1940	Benz, George B. . . . .	1983

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<i>First Vice President</i> . . . . .	Jerome B. Cray
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B. Clarence Hart	Sam Singer	Joseph S. Micallef
Joy Lee King	Dr. John Wangsness	Ronald L. Sorenson

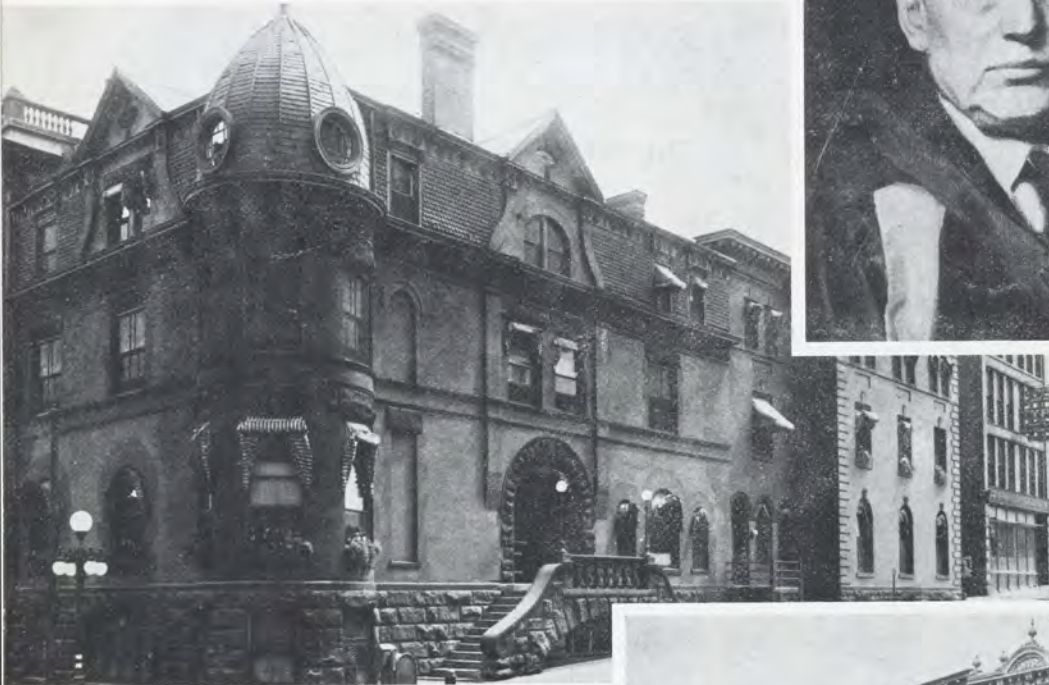
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<i>General Manager</i> . . . . .	Robert D. McCarthy
<i>Assistant to the Manager</i> . . . . .	James E. Jennings
<i>Catering Manager</i> . . . . .	Michelle Robinson
<i>Executive Chef</i> . . . . .	Mike Byrne
<i>Auditor</i> . . . . .	Richard C. Monson

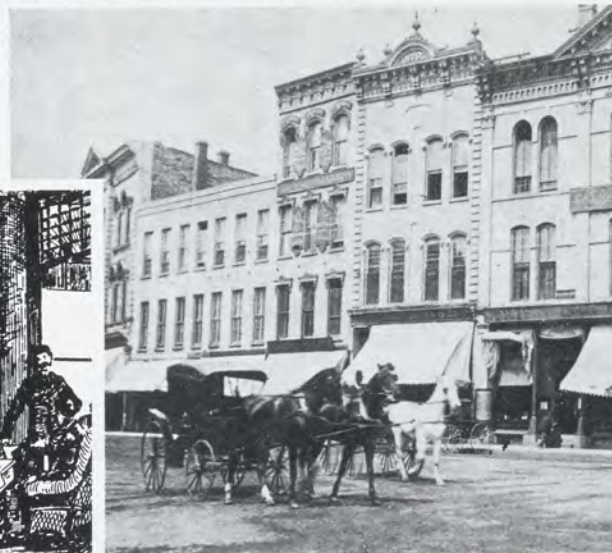
Frank B. Kellogg, St. Paul lawyer and author of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact. page 18



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The Minnesota Club's earlier building at Fourth and Cedar. page 7



Third and Wabasha in 1887. page 10



The old Club's "lounging room." page 9

The Gibbs Farm Museum, owned by the Ramsey County Historical Society, at Cleveland and Larpenteur in Falcon Heights.



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