

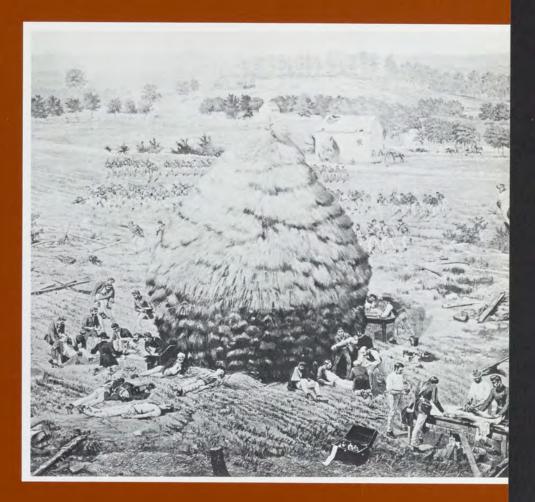
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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Fall	W. R. Brown's Civil War Diary	
1970	The War Within a War	Page 3
13/0	Ramsey County Medical Society	
Volume 7	Survives Its First 100 Years	Page 14
Number 2	Forgotten Pioneers X	Page 20
	Book Review: History of A Region And A People	Page 22

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ON THE COVER: A field hospital during the Civil War often was literally that, with the surgeons caring for the wounded behind whatever shelter they could find. In this painting by Heisser, from a panorama of the Battle of Gettysburg, surgeons are at work behind a haystack while the battle rages in the field behind them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Unless otherwise indicated, pictures used in this issue are from the audio-visual library of the Minnesota Historical Society. The editor is indebted to Eugene Becker and Dorothy Gimmestad, of the state historical society's audio-visual staff, for their help.

Book Review

History of A Region And A People

FROM WHOLE LOG TO NO LOG by Edward J. Lettermann. Published, 1970, by Dillon Press, Inc., Minneapolis. \$8.50

Reviewed by Vernon R. Helmen

ROM WHOLE LOG TO NO LOG recounts the history of a region, the general area of the juncture of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, in terms of a people, the Eastern Dakota, who occupied the area at the time of initial European contact.

The author, Edward J. Lettermann, has been an active contributor to local history for a number of years and brings considerable knowledge and skill to the compilation of this book. He is especially strong in dealing with the published sources, both general and specialized, that deal with the historic period. His ability to give the reader a glimpse of the thought and activities of a number of Indians and Euro-Americans, usually known only as familiar names, makes the 19th Century activities of these people more "three-dimensional" than is usually the case.

The central theme of the book is well supported with these vignettes — the theme that begins with the control of the region by the Dakota and develops the story of the alienation of the land from them by a variety of means. Lettermann avoids the error made by so many contemporary writers about minority people — that of casting his protagonists in stark black and white. Instead, he has presented events with great sensitivity for both Indian and Euro-American.

I would wish, however, that greater attention had been paid to the extensive literature dealing with the prehistory of the region in that chapter, titled "The Whole Log," which deals with the relationship of the Dakota and the prehistoric sites in the area. For

The village of Black Dog, a Dakota or Sioux chief. This picture from the book originally appeared in *Harper's Weekly* for July, 1853.

example, the most recent work cited in that section dealing with pre-historic archeology is Winchells' *The Aboriginies of Minnesota* published in 1911. While this is a standard reference, a great deal of archeological research has been done and the results of this research published since 1911.

I would expect the work of Lloyd Wilford and of Elden Johnson, our most recent state archeologists, to have been basic to the information included in this chapter. I would also have valued a chapter that describes the mid-20th Century condition of the Dakota in Minnesota — a chapter which could have shown the continuing vitality of Dakota culture at Prairie Island, at Morton, and at Redwood Falls, as well as the continuing neglect on the part of the federal government to fulfill the requirements of treaties entered into with the Dakota more than 100 years ago. The resources are easily available, both published and oral, which would primarily originate with the Dakota people who still live in these incorporated Indian communities.

All in all, I find this an excellent assembly of heretofore scattered data. The bibliography lists sources not usually encountered and will prove useful to students. This is a contribution to the history of our region that has long been needed. It should find a place in every school library — especially in this time of growing awareness of the history of an area as experienced by non-Western people.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Vernon R. Helmen has been assistant professor of Anthropology at Hamline University, St. Paul, since 1966. Prior to that, he was assistant director and curator of Anthropology at the St. Paul Science Museum.



Photo by Henry Hall

THE GIBBS HOUSE

Headquarters of the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul, Minnesota.

THE Ramsey County Historical Society was founded in 1949. During the following years the Society, believing that a sense of history is of great importance in giving a new, mobile generation a knowledge of its roots in the past, acquired the 100-year-old farm home which had belonged to Heman R. Gibbs. The Society restored the Gibbs House and in 1954 opened it to the public as a museum which would depict the way of life of an early Minnesota settler.

In 1958, the Society erected a barn behind the farm house which is maintained as an agricultural museum to display the tools and other implements used by the men who broke up the prairie soil and farmed with horse and oxen. In 1966, the Society moved to its museum property a one-room rural schoolhouse, dating from the 1870's. The white frame school came from near Milan, Minnesota. Now restored to the period of the late 1890's, the school actually is used for classes and meetings. In the basement beneath the school building, the Society has its office, library and collections. In 1968, the Society acquired from the University of Minnesota the use of the white barn adjoining the Society's property. Here is housed a collection of carriages and sleighs which once belonged to James J. Hill.

Today, in addition to maintaining the Gibbs property, the Ramsey County Historical Society is active in the preservation of historic sites in Ramsey county, conducts tours, prepares pamphlets and other publications, organizes demonstrations of pioneer crafts and maintains a Speakers' Bureau for schools and organizations. It is the Society's hope that through its work the rich heritage of the sturdy men and women who were the pioneers of Ramsey County will be preserved for future generations.