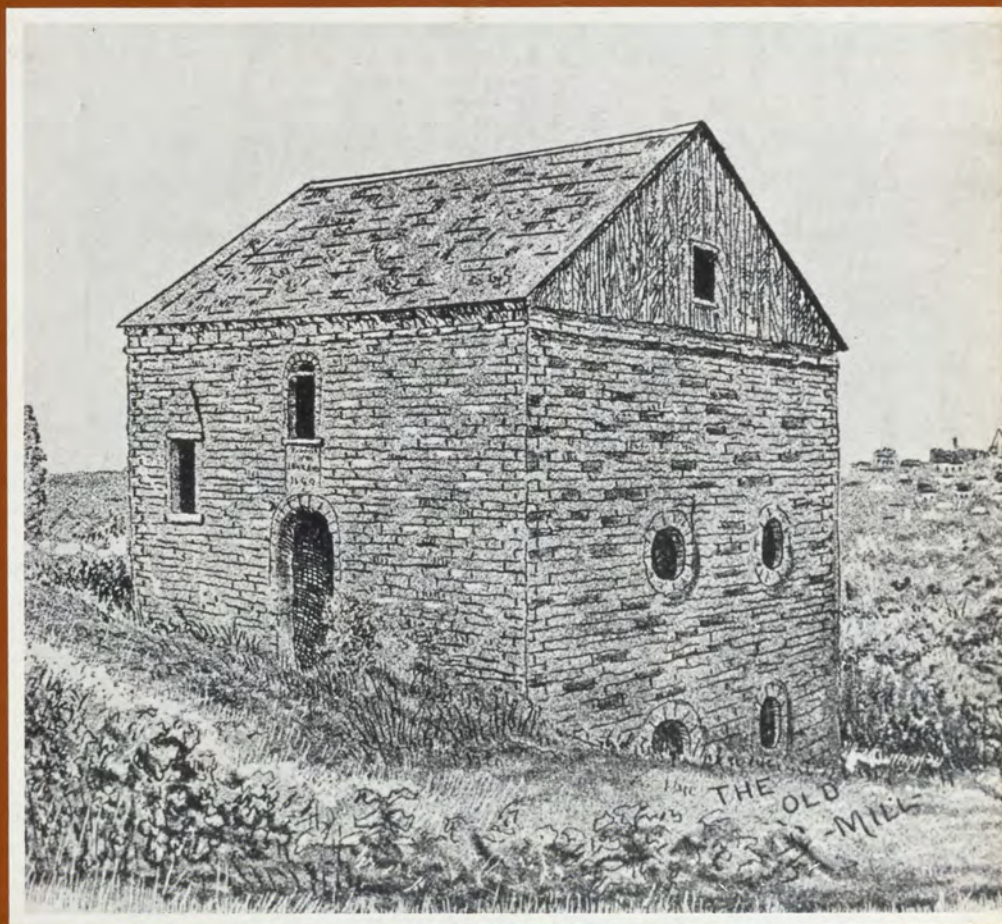


RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



Fall

1974

Volume 11

Number 2

Ramsey County History

Published by the
RAMSEY COUNTY and SAINT PAUL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Editor: Virginia Brainard Kunz

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ON THE COVER: Drawing of Ayd's Mill, published July 12, 1889, in St. Anthony Hill Graphic. This is the only illustration of the mill known to the author of the article beginning on page 3.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Unless otherwise indicated, pictures used in this issue are from the audio-visual department of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

Promoters Waxed Lyrical in 'Selling' St. Paul

By Virginia Brainard Kunz

The promoter, it seems, has always been with us. Through the course of American history, the land-promoter-speculator traditionally has arrived on the scene almost hand-in-hand with the first settlers, the better to attract more settlers. Judging from the booklets, journals and other broadsides published during the 1850's for immigrants and tourists, this certainly was true of early Minnesota and early St. Paul.

These enterprising gentlemen, whose importance in the settlement of St. Paul cannot be ignored or discounted, also recognized the value of the printed word in bringing to the attention of the unenlightened the advantages of life in Minnesota.

During the settlement of the West, a wide variety of booklets was published describing territories open for settlement. Typical of these, though more factual and less fanciful, is *The Minnesota Year Book for 1853*, one of a series published annually in St. Paul by "Le Duc & Rohrer, Booksellers and Stationers."

It is interesting that just five years after Minnesota became a territory, Le Duc and Rohrer was one of several St. Paul stores selling books and stationery supplies. Located "On Square in Front of the Court House" (near present-day Fourth and Wabasha), the store carried "a large and well-selected assortment of school, miscellaneous and law, theological, medical and blank books," according to its own advertisement in the year book.

(It also offered musical instruments, including a Grand Action piano, bass drums,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Virginia Brainard Kunz is executive director of the Ramsey County and St. Paul Historical Society, editor of Ramsey County History, and the author of three published books on Minnesota and American history. The booklet this article is based on is from the personal collection of the Society's past president, Robert Orr Baker.

and "Choice Jews Harps," in addition to fishing rods, hooks and tackle.)

OTHER ADVERTISEMENTS notified readers that Dr. J. H. Day would practice his profession in "St. Paul and Vicinity," and that he could be found in his office "in Bench-street when not absent on Business;" that Freeman M. Smith would attend promptly and faithfully to the collection of debts and the purchase and sale of real estate from his office at the corner of Third and Minnesota streets, and that W. G. Le Duc was an attorney at law with an office at the corner of Third and "Wabashaw" streets.

In short, the impression was that St. Paul was open for business, and that Minnesota Territory and its capital had an organized and functioning government, judging from the year book's listing of members and acts of the Third Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Minnesota, which met from January 7 to March 6, 1852.

FROM THIS, a prospective settler learned that there were 41 members of the Assembly, evenly divided among merchants, lawyers, Indian traders, surveyors, farmers, physicians, clerks, carpenters, one hunter and one tavern keeper, with Indian traders having a slight edge.

He also learned that a charter was issued to establish a ferry across the Mississippi River at St. Paul; that a bill had passed the legislature dissolving the marriage contracts between J. W. Brown and his wife, and Fido S. Lottman and his wife; that memorials to the president of the United States asked that he address his attention to the troublesome question of establishing a boundary between the Territory of Minnesota and the British possessions to the north, and that maps and other public documents henceforth list the river "hitherto called St. Peter's" as the "Minnesota."


IN THE ONE EDITORIAL comment the booklet's writer permitted himself, he was snappish on the subject of the cost involved in putting up public buildings. He reported, with considerable satisfaction:

"That most clumsy and wasteful act passed in March, 1851, was amended and the expense of superintending the erection of the public buildings was reduced to within \$1000 per annum, which is more by one-half than it ought to be."

Under "Miscellaneous Acts," considerable space is devoted to a report on a "very important experimental act" which was passed for "the close restriction of the sale of intoxicating liquors." The booklet's author may have felt that this attempt at temperance in the Territory would have considerable attraction for prospective settlers, since temperance societies had been flourishing for some years in the East. In fact, the writer first reported the act as passed, then admitted to its having been "so unexpectedly set aside."

Back cover of the booklet carried an advertisement for the book store operated by Le Duc and Rohrer, publishers of the booklet.

BOOKS AND STATIONERY,



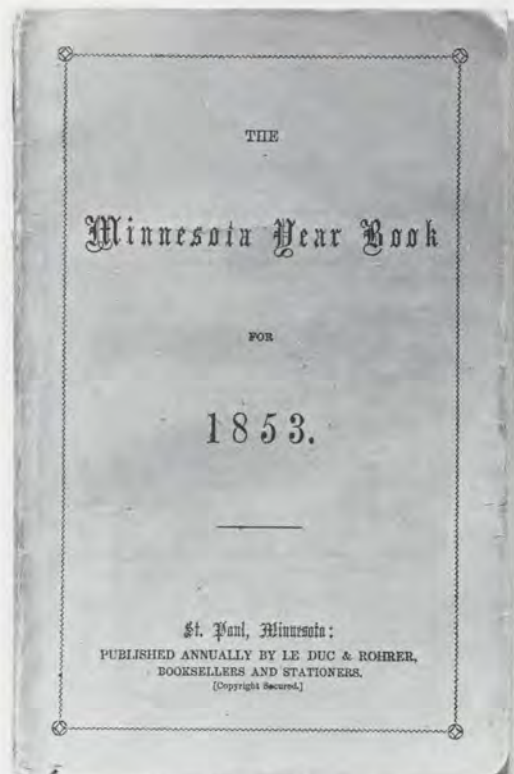
AT LE DUC & ROHRER'S BOOK STORE,
On Square in Front of the Court House,
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.

We will keep constantly on hand a large and well selected assortment of
SCHOOL, MISCELLANEOUS, AND LAW,
THEOLOGICAL, MEDICAL, AND BLANK
BOOKS,

A large stock of **STATIONERY**, and all other goods usually found in Book Stores. **MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS** of all kinds, from a Grand Action Piano to Bass Drums, and Choice Jews harps. **FISHING RODS, Hooks, and Tackle,** of the best quality.

SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED
For all the Principal Magazines and Newspapers,
AMONG OTHERS,

Godey, Graham and Sartain's, Hunt's Merchant's, Knickerbocker, and Harper's Magazines; Blackwood, London Quarterly, Edinburgh, North British, Westminster, and Whig and Democratic Reviews; London Lancet, British and Foreign Review, Home Journal, Arthur's Home Gazette, Youth's Cabinet.



Cover page for The Minnesota Year Book for 1853.

"BY THIS ACT," the report reads, "it was made a highly penal offense to sell, manufacture or keep for sale intoxicating liquors, manufacturers and sellers thereof must be appointed by and under the supervision of the County Commissioners, and are authorized to sell only for medicinal or mechanical purposes.

"No person unlawfully selling liquors is a competent as a jurymen, all sales of intoxicating drinks are declared null and void against all persons and in all cases, and no rights of any kind can be acquired thereby.

"Liquors seized in a place where they are offered for sale are to be destroyed."

However, the act was written to self-destruct, depending upon the voters' willingness to allow morality to be legislated. In short, the proposed legislation ". . ." also provided for the holding of an election by the voters on the first Monday in April, to whom the provisions of the act were submitted. If the majority voted to sustain the law it was operative from and after the first of May. Also that the County Commissioners from and after the approval of the act should

not grant any licenses for a longer time than the first of May." The majority of the voters did favor the law.

ENFORCEMENT was, to say the least, erratic if not non-existent ". . . in Ramsey County, the Commissioners construed that portion of the law to be of no effect, which prohibited the granting of licenses for a longer time than the first of May, and application being made, licenses were granted to all who desired to sell. Thus the traffic has been conducted at St. Paul as usual, but no new liquor shops have been opened and some of the old ones have closed by reason of the exhibition of public sentiment, which passed the law, or for the want of custom.

"In Washington County, the liquor traffic was entirely broken up and driven into Wisconsin, until the decision of Judge Hayner, declaring the law of no effect, since then one or two of the old haunts have been re-established in Stillwater. Acting under the law, a justice of the peace at St. Anthony, seized and destroyed a quantity of liquor in the possession of Alexis Cloutier, and he was fined \$25. Appeal was made to the District Court and motion was made to grant proceedings on the ground that the law was unconstitutional and invalid. Judge Hayner decided in substance that the legislative power was vested by the organization act, in the Governor and Legislative assembly alone, and that they had no power to delegate their authority to the people, that the act in question was an attempt at such transfer of power and was consequently null and void.

"The clergy of the Territory, Protestant and Catholic, have been active and prominent in urging the adoption and enforcement of this law, and the majority of citizens have ardently desired to see this experiment to entirely suppress the liquor traffic, fairly tried, energetic measures have therefore been taken to bring the subject again before the Assembly, and to urge the enactment of another law similar in its objects to that which has been so unexpectedly set aside."

ON THE SUBJECT OF Minnesota's climate, the writer, like others of his time, verged on the lyrical, and the slightly inaccurate.

The climate, he declared, "is, without doubt one of the most salubrious and health-



The beauty of the St. Paul area was described in early booklets. This portion of an oil painting of Mendota, done by Seth Eastman about 1850, hints at that beauty.

ful on the continent of America. It is not subject to those frequent, sudden, and extreme changes of temperature, which characterize New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and the lower part of Wisconsin and Iowa, but the steady and continued warmth of the summer rapidly develops the vegetation, and ripens the fruits and grains which are not liable to be checked by late, nor nipped by early frosts.

"The winters are long and cold, the thermometer at St. Paul sometimes indicating 40° below zero. Although this degree of cold is rarely felt, yet when it is, the people are by no means confined to their houses, but engage in their usual outdoor avocations without inconvenience. There seem to be regular ebbs and flows of cold weather, and during the winter there are usually not more than three or four 'cold spells,' which do not exceed an average of three days each of intense cold. During this time the air will be as still as solitude, and as dry as the sunlight which pours through the transparent atmosphere in mid-summer, but without any other effect than to illumine the frosty particles which glisten in its streaming rays. All animate life is invigorated, and each inhalation is as vivifying as if breathing oxygen gas.

"Each muscle in the body seems doubly tense and elastic, each motion is a triumph,

and the luxury of mere life, the joy of living, is never better understood under the softest Italian sky at Florence, than it is at St. Paul, Minnesota, with the thermometer at 40° below Zero. The most unpleasant, and indeed the only unpleasant part of the year, is the spring month of April and the first part of May, when the damp chilly winds which have prevailed in more southern latitudes during the whole winter are felt in Minnesota.

"The rainy season in Minnesota is the early part of summer, and the snowy season is the early part of winter. The autumns are usually dry, and unequalled for their delightful Indian summer, which prevails until almost the very day that winter asserts his claim to supreme dominion. It is the frequent and unanimous expression of persons from Ohio, New York, and New England, that they much prefer the winters of Minnesota to those of their native states.

"THE WINTER breaks up and the ice leaves the rivers from the first to the fifteenth of April. The frost leaves the ground in time for the farmers to plant their spring crops during the month of May.

"The harvest of small grains, such as wheat, oats, barley, and rye, is usually the last of July, and the corn is ready to be cut by the middle of September. The long, hot days of summer, together with the warm, rich soil, bring forward vegetation with remarkable rapidity.

"It is a remarkable but well-known fact, that frosts damaging crops, often occur later in the spring and earlier in the autumn at Galena, and generally in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin, than in St. Paul and that vicinity.

"The only diseases that have yet afflicted Minnesota have been the small-pox, which raged with fatal virulence among the Indians in 1837-38-39, and the typhoid fever. This fever is marked by no peculiarities, differing from the typhoid fevers elsewhere, and the average mortality from this cause is about the same as in the New England States and New York and Ohio. The commencement of the winter of 1852 is the only time as yet when the fever has been generally prevalent. The inducing causes are doubtless much to be attributed to the diet, and personal habits of individuals."

The booklet also describes the Territory's major rivers, with particular emphasis on the Mississippi and its renowned beauty.

"The Mississippi below St. Paul is navigated by the same class of boats that ply between Galena and St. Louis — large, comfortable, and fast boats, most of which make weekly trips between Galena and St. Paul, although swift boats, in good stages of water, have made regular trips twice a week between these points. The rivers of Minnesota commence rising with the thaw of the snow in the early spring, and increase the volume of their waters until the middle of June, or thereabouts, from which time they usually slowly recede until February, when they are at the lowest . . .

. . . "The width of the river, as well as the depth, varies greatly at different places . . .

"AT ST. PAUL it is 18 chains and 75 links (very nearly one-fourth of a mile) wide . . ."

". . . This river, from Keokuk to its very sources is, perhaps, unequalled for the picturesque beauty and romantic grandeur of its scenery. The eye never tires in gazing upon the artistically wooded slopes, the abrupt castellated cliffs, that alternately challenge attention, or the grassy banks that come lovingly down to the very lip of the clear waters. Certainly, nowhere in America can natural scenery be found half so attractive, which can be so easily and cheaply approached, and which is so appropriate, delightful, and instructive an incident to a summer excursion. The world-renowned Rhine cannot excel our Mississippi in natural beauty and grandeur of scenery, any more than it can rival it by its magnitude or importance."

As for the lakes: "Minnesota has very properly been called the undine region. There is scarcely a single township in the whole Territory that has not one or more lakes, not dull, stagnant, fetid swamps, but deep, clear, living spring-water lakes, if they are but a stone's throw across, and filled with different varieties of excellent fish; even in the tamarack swamps and rice marshes, no stagnant water can be found in the hottest summer weather.

"The rural beauty of some of these liquid mirrors as they appear in mid-summer, with their surroundings of alternate forest and prairie, is altogether indescribable. Count-



less flocks of wild fowl resort to the lakes, where they brood during the summer, and in the fall become deliciously fat on the wild rice. Mille Lacs, one of the largest of the interior lakes, is 18 miles long by 16 broad.

"Minnetonka is the name given to a chain of connected lakes lying 12 or 15 miles west of St. Paul; water communication is said to extend for thirty miles from east to west; settlements have been made on the eastern and southern sides and a small steamboat is building to ply thereon. Lakes Harriet and Calhoun, northwest of Fort Snelling, are noted for their beautiful scenery and fine fishing. Phalen's, Bass, McKenty's, [Lake Como] White Bear, and many other lakes in the vicinity of St. Paul, are frequented by sportsmen for their game and fish. Throughout the Sioux purchase are many unnamed lakes of great beauty and alive with pickerel and bass."

"The natural fruits of the country are wild plums, a large fine flavored fruit, cherries — the small choke cherry is the only variety I have seen — crab apples, cranberries, of

Lake Como, called "McKenty's" lake in the booklet, was extolled for its scenery and fine fishing.

which there are hundreds of acres producing a very large and fine berry, man-o-min, (or wild rice), thousands of acres of which falls into our lakes and river margins unharvested. Hazelnuts, abundant everywhere on the limestone soil, walnuts and hickory nuts, found only on the tributaries of the Minnesota, huckleberries, found in great abundance on the sandstone ridges, strawberries of delicious flavor abound in every prairie of the Territory, blackberries and raspberries are plentiful.

"The mendo or native sweet potato, is found in the rich soil at the base of the bluffs of the Mississippi and Minnesota. The plant resembles the sweet potato, and the root is similar in taste and growth, and it is not affected by the frost. The prairie turnip is a nutritious root found growing upon the high dry prairies, it attains the size of a large egg, and when dried the inside resembles a piece of chalk in whiteness.



"The wild artichoke is found in rich loamy soils in every part of the country. The wild bean is found in the valleys, and has a rich and pleasant flavor. The plant is a slender vine from 2 to 4 feet in height, with small pods 2 to 3 inches long containing 3 to 5 small beans. The above roots, as well as some others of less importance, are used by the Indians for food.

"The grains raised by our farmers are wheat, rye, oats, barley, and Indian corn. Spring wheat is the kind commonly raised, and it is thought to be fully equal to any winter wheat for the yield and quality of its flour; 25 to 30 bushels are regarded as an average crop, although 40 have been raised to the acre, an instance is also recorded of the yield of 54 bushels of clean winter wheat to the acre. The climate and soil appear to be admirably adapted to the culture of rye, oats, and barley; 50 bushels of oats to the acre is a common crop, and of barley 60 bushels may be calculated on, although that amount has been obtained from less than two-thirds of an acre.

"Of Indian corn there are three varieties cultivated; the common yellow dent of Ohio, a large white eight-rowed kind, and a small white corn which ripens very early. The largest crop on record is of the eight-rowed variety, and was 90 bushels to the acre. The average yield of this corn is believed to be 50 bushels. The small corn may be planted

Steamers, shown here at the Lower Levee in 1859, brought new settlers into the territory. Left to right are the "Grey Eagle," "Franklin Steele," "Jeanette Roberts," and "Time and Tide."

the 10th of June and will be ripe by the 1st of September; the average yield will be about 30 bushels. Both climate and soil are particularly favorable to root crops. The quantity or quality of our potato, turnip, beet, and all other garden vegetables, cannot be excelled.

"As a stock country, Minnesota offers a dry equable climate, pure water, and abundance of natural food. The range of upland prairie as well as the blue joint of the bottoms, is exceedingly nutritious, and tame grasses will always be refused when cattle can obtain the wild.

"Four tons of hay to the acre is a very common yield of our natural meadows and there is enough wild grass to supply the country until it is ten times as thickly settled as at present. Where the rushes exist in sufficient quantities, as they do in much of the low bottom land, no provision for winter food is necessary for cattle, it is only necessary that they should have plenty of salt. The same remarks will apply to horses.

"Sheep brought from Illinois and Missouri, improve in carcass and wool. A flock of 200 kept by an Indian trader on the Minnesota, which were driven from Missouri,

where they produced fleeces averaging 3½ to 4 pounds, were shorn here at 3 years old of fleeces weighing 7½ and 8 pounds. Hogs do not seem to thrive as well as in Ohio and Indiana, although in some seasons when the acorns are abundant, they find an excellent range. It is not thought we can compete with those states in raising pork."

For prospective settlers, the all-important problem of how to acquire land is disposed of in a few paragraphs devoted to pre-emptions and claims, and the difference between the two.

"Minnesota may be considered in two divisions — the surveyed and unsurveyed portions. The land lying between the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers as far north as Pokegama is surveyed, and is subject to entry at the Land Offices at Stillwater and Sauk Rapids at one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, or may be entered by land warrants, or may be pre-empted under the laws of the United States.

"A pre-emption is made upon any unappropriated lot of land, not to exceed 160 acres, by actual settlement thereon, and filing, within 30 days thereafter, with the Register of the Land Office, a statement certifying that the pre-emption is made for the purpose of settlement. (Blank statements will be furnished by the Register.) The pre-emption gives to the settler one year in which to pay for the land. All of the unsurveyed lands are subject to the occupation of claimants.

"Claims are made by marking out the boundaries of a piece of land in a plain distinguishable manner, and afterwards making such improvements thereon as are demanded by the customs or mutual agreement of claimants . . ."

"It is usual for claimants to form an association to protect each other in their respective rights, to agree upon the maximum quantity which may be held by each, and to elect arbitrators to settle all questions of boundary. Custom and mutual agreement is the only law.

"AS IT WILL probably be three or four years before the survey of the country purchased of the Dakotas can be completed, extraordinary advantages offer to actual settlers, who may choose from the best land in the country, and have every opportunity to raise produce enough to pay for it before

it is in market. A claim title is perfectly secure if attended to. Actual settlers need not hesitate to occupy government lands. Towns are laid out, settlements formed, farms opened, mills built, and hundreds of people are now occupying lands on the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers to which they desire at present no better than a claim title."

FOR TOURISTS, only, or for visitors who might be converted into permanent residents, a section titled, "How to Spend a Day Profitably in Sight-seeing" would be today's version of the Historic Tour:

"If your time is limited, and you desire to make the most of one day, make up your party before the boat arrives at St. Paul. As soon as the landing is made, secure carriages for the trip of the livery-men, who will be ready on the levee to serve you.

"Pack up a basket of edibles, and start for St. Anthony, which is eight miles distant, where you should arrive for breakfast, after an hour spent on the islands and east side of the falls. You will find some fine views from the westside, both above and below the old government mill.

"From this point to Lakes Calhoun and Harriet is near five miles, (an hour's drive.) Here lunch, fish, and otherwise amuse yourselves until 3 o'clock, P.M., then take the road leading south-east across the prairie to Fort Snelling. A drive of three-and-a-half miles will bring you to Ha-Ha Falls, a most lovely water fall, immediately below the bridge over the Minnehaha; from this to Fort Snelling is two miles.

"Arrived at the Fort, after an examination of the fortification cross at the ferry, carefully lead your horses up the difficult ascent on the east side; then a drive of three miles will bring you to Spring Cave, after looking at which you will stop a moment at the cascade, and return to St. Paul by a drive of two-and-a-half miles from Spring Cave, having seen more beautiful and romantic scenery than it will ever fall to your lot to view again in one day." ***

THEN THERE WAS the problem of, once interested, how did one get to Minnesota and specifically St. Paul, which was the gateway to the Northwest? In "How to Get to Minnesota," the booklet advises the reader that, "From New York and the New England States, the most expeditious route is to take the rail

Continued on bottom, page 22



The 1850's Shaping of St. Paul

It was the 1850's, and St. Paul was riding the crest of a building boom and growing like Topsy. From a motley collection of log cabins and shanties clustered around the settlement's two steamboat landings, the town had strung itself out along the river front and was pushing over the ridge about a half mile to the north. Expensive housing was going up — large, fine houses built by men who expected it to last.

Indeed, much of it has. Many houses of the era can be seen today scattered around the central sectors of the city. The more elegant ones were, of course, built on the high ground. One of them, the Robert A. Smith House, today 312 Summit Avenue, can be seen in the above 1856 photograph. Built the same year the picture was taken, the house is to the left on the far ridge (now known as Ramsey Hill).

The disparity in housing and the jumbled placement of the buildings, as evidenced in the picture, are indicative of what was going

Houses were standing on Summit Avenue (background) as early as 1856.

on at the time. There was little or no planning of the young town's growth, a fact which apparently upset at least a few of its residents. One of them, James M. Goodhue, editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, was quite vocal in his consternation. Goodhue characterized the city as being made up of "little skewdangular lots, about as large as a stingy piece of gingerbread," and additions which "appear to have taken a running jump at each other, like two rival steamboats . . . inextricably run into each other."

"It would save," said he, "immense costs and prove an eternal blessing to St. Paul if the whole site of the town could now be thrown into one common field and platted as it ought to be, with large reservations for public grounds, with straight, wide, regular streets, and blocks of uniform size." His recommendations, as can be seen today, apparently went unheeded.

Continued from page 21

A cabin passage from Cincinnati to St. Louis costs, by the packet, usually \$8, by transient boats \$6; from St. Louis to St. Paul \$10. From Galena to St. Paul \$4 and \$5. From Chicago to Galena there is communication by rail, except about 70 miles. This will be reduced to 30 by the first of June. The fare is \$7 at present — will probably be reduced. The trip from New York city to St. Paul can be made in five days; from Cincinnati to St. Paul, by way of the river, ten days."

through Erie, Cleveland, Toledo, and Chicago to Galena, where daily first-class steam-packets are ready to convey passengers, with comfort and safety, a trip of 450 miles in two days and a half, winding among the green islands and between the towering bluffs of the grandest river in North America.

"More variety may be obtained by taking a steamer at Buffalo for Detroit or Chicago, or from Cleveland go to Cincinnati, take a steamer to St. Louis, and thence to St. Paul.



THE GIBBS HOUSE

at 2097 West Larpentour Avenue, Falcon Heights, is owned and maintained by the Ramsey County and Saint Paul Historical Society as a restored farm home of the mid-nineteenth century period.

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.

Headquarters of the Ramsey County and Saint Paul Historical Society are located in the Old Federal Courts Building in downtown St. Paul, an historic building of neo-Romanesque architecture which the Society, with other groups, fought to save from demolition. The Society also maintains a museum office in the basement of the schoolhouse on the Gibbs Farm property. The Society is active in identification of historic sites in the city and county, and conducts an educational program which includes the teaching and demonstration of old arts and crafts. It is one of the few county historical societies in the country to engage in an extensive publishing program in local history.