

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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A group of smiling youngsters at the Thomas-Dale Child Care Center, part of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's Child Care Services Program. Child care issues are one of the many concerns of the Saint Paul Foundation. See article beginning on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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On the cover: Children at the Thomas-Dale Child Care Center attend one of the many needed child care centers operated by the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation in the East Metro area of St. Paul and Ramsey County.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Ramsey County History welcomes the submission of manuscripts dealing with the history of St. Paul, Ramsey County, and their environs. In particular, the Editorial Board encourages writers to contact the editor with proposals for neighborhood histories, stories about local leaders and their families, accounts of prominent institutions, businesses or organizations and articles on the racial and ethnic diversity of Ramsey County.

The intent of the Editorial Board is to encourage and support writing about urban and local history relating to St. Paul and Ramsey County. Our quarterly magazine needs a continuing flow of well researched and thoughtfully written articles that reflect the richness of the people, places, and institutions of the county. The members of our society are enthusiastic about history. They deserve the best historical writing we can provide to them.

—John L. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

A Matter of Time

1850 140 YEARS AGO

► A subscription to the *Minnesota Pioneer*, Minnesota Territory's first newspaper, was \$2 per year with a minimum of a year's subscription, the newspaper announced in October of 1850.

► Returns from the 1850 census reported 2,283 people as living in Ramsey County, 1,523 in Madison, Wisconsin, 90,000 in St. Louis, Missouri, and 150,000 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

► The officers and troops who had removed the Sac and Fox Indians from their reservation in Iowa were back at Fort Snelling and under the command of a Captain Hendrickson. The Indians had been resettled on a new reservation at Long Prairie, Minnesota.

► The cornerstone of Christ Church, the community's first Episcopal church, was laid on September 5 at Cedar and Third Streets. The church was "raised" on October 8. The Presbyterians and Baptists also were building churches. These, with the Methodists and Catholics, brought to five the number of churches in St. Paul.

► Judge Meeke was confirmed by the United States Senate as associate judge for Minnesota and Henry H. Sibley was elected to Congress as delegate from the Territory, outpolling his opponent 649 to 559.

► A. L. Larpenteur opened a general store on the corner of Jackson and Third Street, and culture flourished in the Territory. A Mr. and Mrs. Strong gave several readings of Shakespeare in the Central House.

► Minnesota's pioneers were not cut off from national and international news and events. The *Pioneer* informed its readers that Canada had signed a treaty with the North Shore Chippewa, who surrendered what was left of their land on the northern shores of Lakes Superior and Huron for a \$16,000 lump sum plus \$4,400 in annuity payments.

► The mayor of San Francisco, along with the city assessor and several others, were killed in riots of squatters on deeded land.

► The American steamship, *Pacific*, crossed from Liverpool to New York in ten days and five hours, almost twelve hours faster than any other steamer. "We look upon the time as not far distant, when the journey can be made from St. Paul to Liverpool inside of 12 days," the *Pioneer* predicted.

1890 100 YEARS AGO

► Things were quiet in St. Paul in the fall of 1890. At the Harris Theatre, Jane Coombs was playing in "Bleak House," while the Olympic Theatre advertised the Dare Brothers Burlesque and Folly Company's performance at 2:30 and 8 p.m. The St. Paul Museum exhibited Johnny Miller, the half man, along with comedians and a decapitation act.

► Minnesota's attorney general, Gordon C. Cloe, died that October and James Allen of St. Paul received the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism during the Civil War.

► Minnesota's population was recorded as 1,200,017, despite the furor over the disputed 1890 census figures for Minneapolis and St. Paul. This was an increase of 519,177 in ten years. In New York, a new count by a police survey listed 200,000 more people than those tabulated by the census enumerators.

► A subscription to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* cost \$2.50 a month and included the Americanized *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

► Touching all bases, the People's Church was sponsoring a lyceum, sewing circle, home club lecture, Bible class and the "training of girls in the mysteries of housekeeping."

► For \$10 and three hours a day, San-

dens Electric Belt would provide "a never failing cure for all personal weaknesses in men," according to an advertisement in the *Pioneer Press*. In an article, the newspaper claimed that "the expense entailed in the proper bringing up of a dainty, well-bred girl of today" amounted to \$1,500 per year, \$354 of it in clothes alone.

► St. Paul citizens that autumn could buy Charles Dickens' complete works for \$2.75. They also were reading *Heart of Gold* by L. T. Meade, *Alas* by Rhoda Broughton, *He Went for a Soldier* by John Winter, and *Upward Steps of 70 Years* by Giles B. Stebbins.

► Ladies writing desks were selling for \$10 and bookcases for \$3.85 at Quinn and Abbott. A new house cost \$3,280. At the Boston One-price Clothing House men's suits ranged from \$10 to \$30 and sizes 33 to 44 were available on the rack.

► The St. Paul Saints placed last in the Western Association Baseball League with a 38-84 record. The Minneapolis Millers were second at 78-45.

► Jack Dempsey espoused the value of boxing in a *Pioneer Press* article, stating that "Half an hour's work with the gloves each day would give to these young men the sure foot, the strong arm, the hard muscle, the clear eye and the steady brain of the athlete."

1915 75 YEARS AGO

► Belgrade was taken for the second time in World War I as new action erupted in southeastern Europe. In Gallipoli, Australian troops were being slaughtered by the Turks. Zeppelins and airplanes began bombing raids, killing as many by fear as by shell, and the British arrested and held a St. Paul resident for a month on suspicion of being a German spy. Back home, President Woodrow Wilson called for an army of 800,00.

▶ Elsewhere around the world, China relaxed its ban on opium, due to crippling financial problems, and the United States recognized General Caranza as the leader of Mexico while General Pancho Villa fought on.

▶ In a display of civic pride, the Saint Paul Association of Commerce placed sixty signs along University Avenue West from Snelling indicating the St. Paul city limits.

▶ The St. Paul Athletic Club completed a drive for 1,500 members to allow construction of the club's new building at Fourth and Cedar Streets.

▶ State suffragists met in St. Paul as the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* published an admonition to "Remember that every suffragist, by demanding the vote, declares that the fathers, husbands, sons and brothers are not to be trusted by their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters."

▶ The Golden Rule, celebrating its thirtieth anniversary, offered eight-inch caseroles at \$1.25. Over at Mannheimer's "Bacmol" gloves were \$1 a pair.

▶ A new Packard sold from \$2,600 to \$3,150 and a used Stevens-Durea Six for \$450.

▶ The Emergency Fund met at the home of Mrs. Charles W. Ames early in October; the St. Paul Colony of New England Women threw a husking bee and the German Red Cross planned a bazaar.

▶ "The Birth of a Nation" was showing at the St. Paul auditorium, a production that required 18,000 people and 3,000 horses and cost \$500,000.

1940 50 YEARS AGO

▶ The Nazis unleashed the full force of the Luftwaffe against London as the Battle of Britain, which began in July, increased in fury. A Gallup poll reported that 83 percent of Americans surveyed said they would stay out of war. In St. Paul, 35,929 men registered for the draft and President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered equal representation in army enlistments. Mexico adopted a universal conscription law, planning to add 200,000 troops to its armed forces.

▶ The Minnesota Department of the Reserve Officers Association held at dance



Wendell Willkie campaigning for the presidency in St. Paul in 1940. Behind him on his left is Governor Harold Stassen.

at Fort Snelling while the St. Paul Foreign Policy Association met at the Hotel St. Paul to discuss war policy toward Great Britain.

▶ The 1940 political campaign, with Wendell Willkie running against Roosevelt, was underway that fall of 1940. In a speech in Minneapolis on October 19, Willkie spoke out against "long-term rulers." Nine states, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Ohio, Washington and Wisconsin, refused to allow Communist candidates on the ballot.

▶ Back in Minnesota, Highway 7 was under construction but union officials had given up their attempts to unionize 430 men employed on the project. The *Pioneer Press* quoted officials as saying that, "the men on the job don't want to be organized so we let them go." Local farmers had opposed the union pickets, claiming that the pickets tried to stop the farmers' work.

▶ Chevrolets were advertised in St. Paul as having "3-couple roominess," 90 horsepower engines and "Safe-T-Special Hydraulic brakes." Alverdes restaurant, boasting of air conditioning, offered Sunday dinners starting at sixty-five cents. High Standard house paint cost \$2.89 a gallon; a cast iron stove furnace cost \$55 and an oil burner went for \$169.50. At

the Emporium, *The Decameron* and *Arabian Nights* cost thirty-nine cents each.

▶ At the University of Minnesota, 300 young women were initiated into sororities. Minnesota beat Nebraska that fall, 13 to 7; Ohio State beat Purdue 17 to 14; Michigan whopped Michigan State 21 to 14; St. John's tied Macalester 7 to 7, and Northwestern floored Syracuse 40-0. In pro football, the Cleveland Rams beat the Chicago cardinals 26 to 14 and the Washington Redskins tromped the Philadelphia Eagles 34-17. The Cincinnati Reds beat the Detroit Tigers in the World Series, winning four games to three and picking up \$5,782.

▶ Both the Garden and Grandview movie theaters featured Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland in "Andy Hardy Meets Debutants," while the Bluebird showed Alice Faye and Don Ameche in "Lillian Russell." Tickets cost ten to twenty cents. Paul Robeson appeared at Northrup Auditorium on October 23.

▶ Once again Mammy Yokum saved America in "Lil Abner," while Paul and Terry sacrificed themselves for their friends in "Terry and the Pirates."

1965 25 YEARS AGO

▶ War raged in Southeast Asia. The United States 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) at-

tacked the Communist-controlled Soul La Tin Valley in what the newspapers called the biggest operation of the war. Bomb explosions rocked Saigon; 10,000 people marched in New York protesting United States involvement in the war but there was stiff opposition from on-lookers. Indonesian President Sukarno announced that he was safe after reports of an attempted coup.

► Blacks and whites attempted to march in Natchez, Mississippi, but were stopped by police who arrested 278 marchers. Thurgood Marshall was appointed solicitor general of the United States.

► Ramsey County Welfare workers were allowed to discuss birth control, including the Pill, with clients. Metal-studded tires were introduced for winter use—legal only from October 15 to the following spring.

► Murphy's offered a smorgasbord featuring roast beef and fried chicken for \$1.29. Star-Kist Tuna cost \$1 for five cans, a ten-pound bag of onions sold for fifty-nine cents and a twenty-five pound of flour cost \$1.49. A 1964 Dodge 880 hardtop was selling for \$1,795 and a 1964 Olds Jetstar for \$2,195.

► At the University of Minnesota, Carol Rylie Brink, author of children's books, spoke at the annual Book Week dinner. The university's 42,178 student enrollment was up 3,775 over the fall of 1964.

► Minnesota beat Indiana 42 to 18; Notre Dame won over Army, 17-0 and Ohio beat Illinois 28 to 14. The Minnesota Twins went 102-60 for the year, capturing the American League but losing the World Series to Los Angeles in seven games.

► Sluggo discovered the power of reading in Ernie Bushmillers' "Nancy." The Minnehaha theater offered Jane Fonda and Lee Marvin in "Cat Ballou," plus Maurice Chevalier and Jayne Mansfield in "Panic Button." At the St. Croix Drive-in (\$1 a car), a triple feature was playing: "You're Never Too Young," "Boy Ten Feet Tall" and "Robinson Crusoe on Mars," plus a cartoon.

Book Reviews from page 31

nearly fifty years. His life began in St. Louis, but he moved to St. Paul with his uncle, aunt and two siblings, Earl and Armeda, at the age of 6 after his mother died of tuberculosis.

His uncle, soon to be his legal guardian, was chief steward on the private railroad car of Howard Elliott, president of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Of his uncle, Wilkins writes: "As far as I know he never earned more than \$85 a month, but he bought that cottage, saw three children through college, and left Earl and me the deed, mortgage paid in full, when he died."

His years in St. Paul spanned an earlier era than Evelyn Fairbanks'. In Wilkins' day, schools were integrated. When Wilkins entered Whittier Grammar School for the first time, he recalled, "I looked around at my new classmates with a timidity any new child feels in a new school. I got a quick shock. All the children were white." Wilkins does not mention any racist incidents during his childhood and he writes that his best friend "was a shy blond boy named Herman Anderson."

In high school he edited the literary magazine and the yearbook. At the University of Minnesota, he was the first black reporter on the *Minnesota Daily*, the campus newspaper, and he edited the *Northwest Bulletin* and the *St. Paul Appeal*, the leading black publication at the time, before moving on to the *Kansas City Call*.

St. James A.M.E. Church and Pilgrim Baptist Church were the chief religious centers for the blacks of Wilkins' era. "Their congregations," he wrote, "probably accounted for half the Negro families" in St. Paul. He recalled that the African-Americans of his day were not clustered in one residential area but, "a great many Negroes lived around Rondo Street and St. Anthony Avenue."

Lynchings in Duluth in 1920 revealed a violent side to the lives of Minnesota blacks. To fight such racism, the St. Paul branch of the NAACP had been formed

in 1913, with Wilkins' uncle as number 42 of 54. This marked the beginning of Wilkins' involvement with the NAACP. *Standing Fast* is cast against the broader struggles of the black movement and it presents an important account of the civil rights movement from President Truman to President Carter.

A Choice of Weapons

Gordon Parks

St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986

In this book, Gordon Parks writes of his attempts as a struggling student to survive during the Great Depression, and his descriptions of St. Paul and his experiences differ from that of Wilkins.

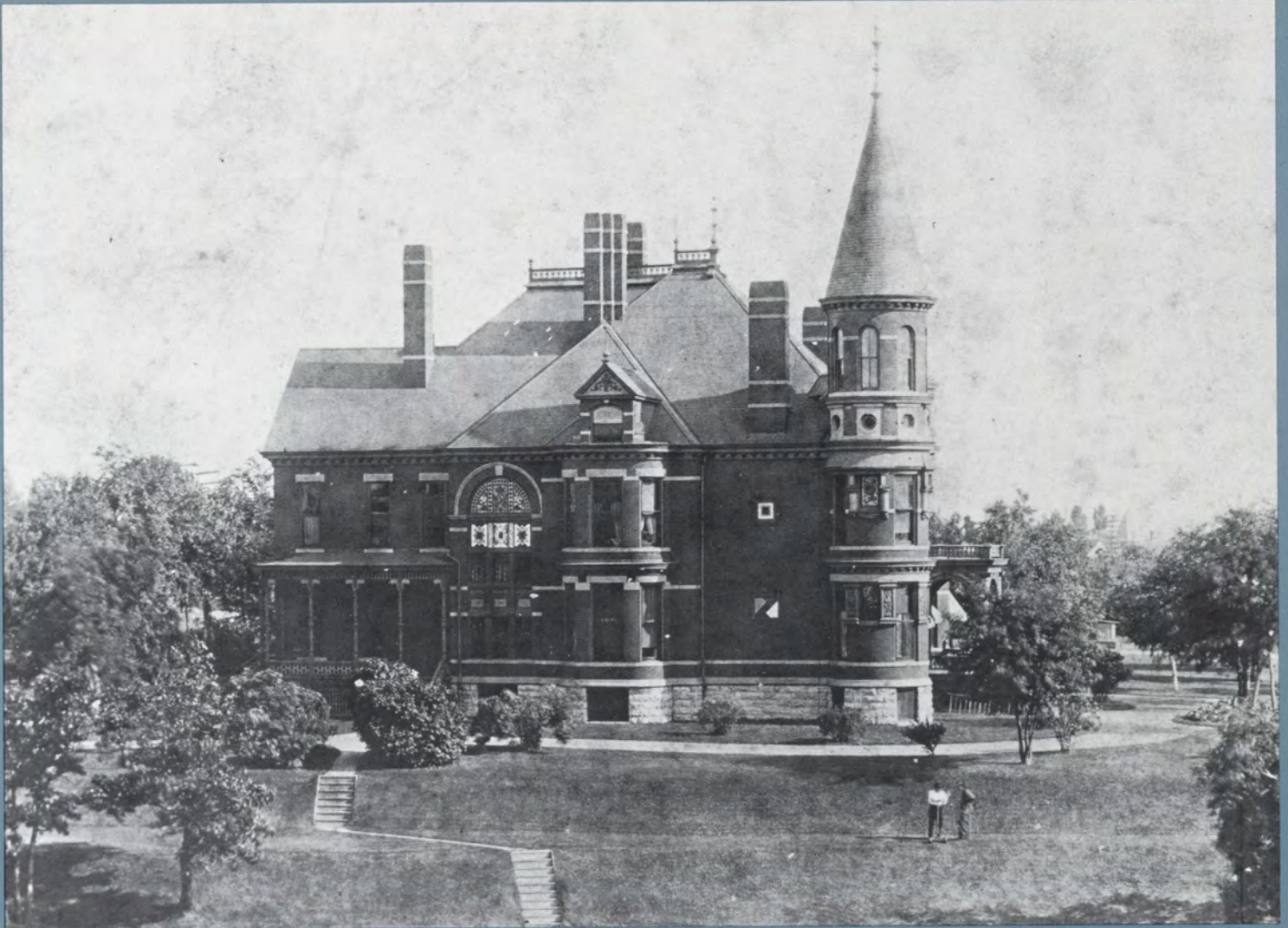
Parks' St. Paul is considerably poorer than Wilkins' and it was more overtly racist. He worked many jobs, ranging from busboy to professional basketball player, in St. Paul, Chicago and New York, before finding steady and challenging work with the Farm Society Administration in 1942. But for much of his stay in St. Paul he did not have a permanent place to sleep so he slept on the streetcars that crisscrossed the Twin Cities.

Parks writes of the racism he encountered: "The White Castle chain was probably the most notorious for this, but after ten of us dumped our sandwiches on the floor one night and doused them with water, the practice stopped, at least at that restaurant."

Racism dogged Parks wherever he went. When he got a steady job as a pianist in a jazz orchestra, he was not allowed to stay at the hotel because he was black.

Taken altogether, Parks' and Wilkins' books present to different view of the St. Paul African-American community at different points in time. They are well worth rereading, along with Fairbanks' gentle memoir.

Steve Haebig
Macalester College intern



The Theodore Hamm mansion at 671 Greenbrier Avenue, as it looked around 1900. See page 3.

R.C.H.S.
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