

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

Fall, 1998

Volume 33, Number 3

Henry Bosse,  
Mark Twain And  
The Mighty Mississippi

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*Richard C. Lilly*

*The Man Who Led Two Lives—Page 4*



*The Lilly family at their Mendota Heights farm. Left to right: David, Richard C. Lilly, Sr., Richard, Jr., and John.*



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*Ramsey County History* is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102 (612-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright, 1998, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Fax 651-223-8539; e-mail address admin@rchs.com.; web site address www.rchs.com

# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 33, Number 3

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Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon

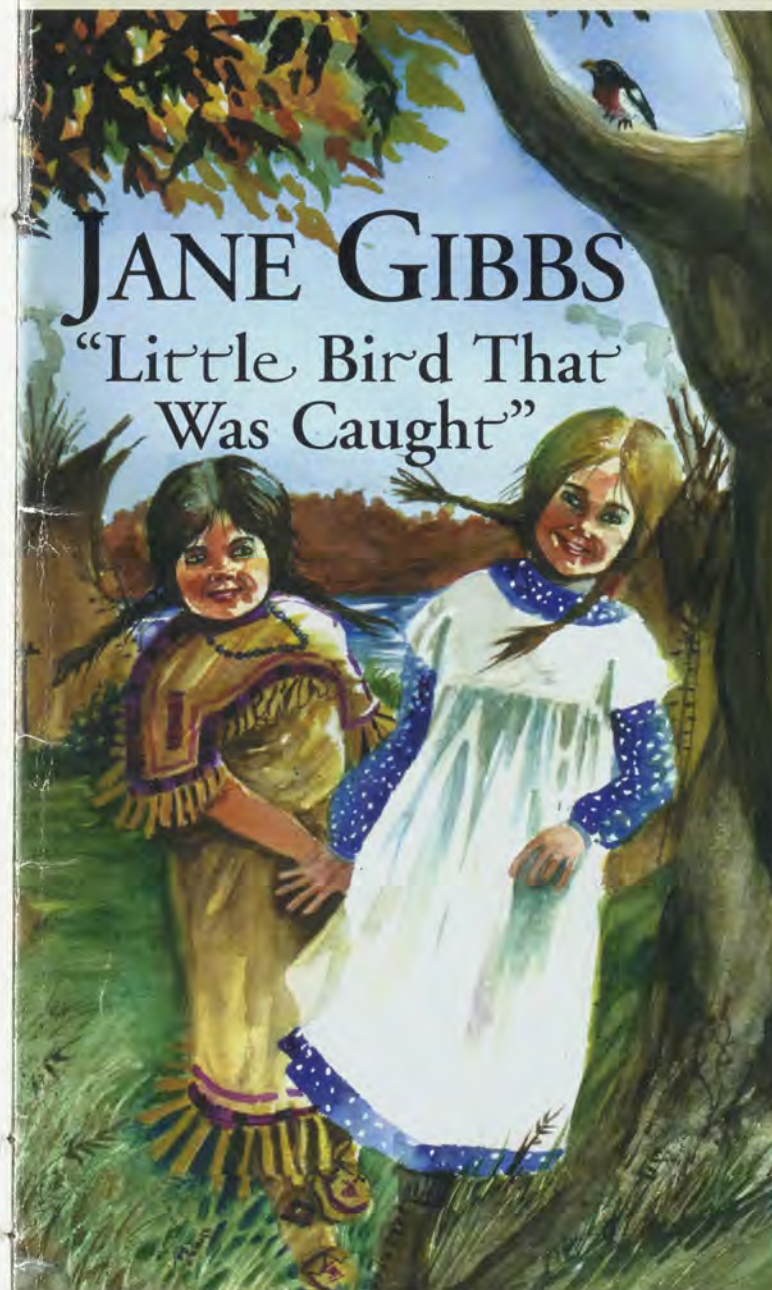
## A Message from the Editorial Board

Many long-time residents of Ramsey County have heard of or know about the banking activities and contributions of Richard C. Lilly, a former president of the First National Bank in St. Paul. Lilly had a distinguished banking career that began in 1900, when he was sixteen, and lasted until his retirement from First Bank as president in 1945. Business associates, community leaders, and friends of Lilly who had followed the many twists and turns in his banking career understood that he epitomized the American dream in his rise from very humble beginnings to great business success. Lilly was a self-made man, but as Virginia Brainard Kunz shows in the lead article in this issue, Lilly led two lives; he was also a very giving man whose philanthropy serves as a model of generosity even today. Until his death in 1959, Lilly repeatedly shared his wealth, time, and talents with many schools, churches, and charities that have continued to make Ramsey County a better place to live for its citizens.

The Ramsey County Historical Society has recently remounted an exhibit of Henry Peter Bosse's unusual cyanotype photos of the Mississippi River that Bosse took in the 1880s and 1890s. In honor of the reopening of this exhibit, our magazine includes an insightful and persuasive article by Michael Connor, who originally discovered many of the Bosse prints in 1991. Connor's article demonstrates the definite influence of Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) on certain aspects of Bosse's photographic work. The similarities and parallels that Connor identifies between many of Bosse's photos and Twain's descriptions of the Mississippi are remarkable and shed new light on our understanding of Bosse's achievements as a visual artist.

John M. Lindley,  
Chair, Editorial Board

## An Exciting New Book for Young Readers



Based on a true story about real people  
and events that happened.

PUBLISHED BY THE RAMSEY COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## THE STORY OF JANE GIBBS AND THE DAKOTA PEOPLE

Jane DeBow Gibbs {1828-1910} was a little girl who lived long ago in a place that someday would be called Minnesota. A family of strangers had taken her from her home in New York State and carried her hundreds of miles away to the far-off frontier beyond the Mississippi River.

There she lived in two worlds: the world of the Dakota people and the world of the soldiers and missionaries who lived among them. Her Dakota friends named her *Zitkadan Usawin*, "Little Bird That Was Caught," because they knew she truly was a "little bird" who had been "caught" and taken away by a strange family.

Jane learned to answer to two names, to speak two languages, to call two families her own. She went to school with the Dakota children, and she played their games. But Jane also shared the fear the Dakota knew as they faced an attack by their enemies.

Although she lost her own family, Jane had twice the adventures most people have. This is the story of those adventures. It is based on a true story about real people.

## Letters to the Editor

### Why a Trunk?

That was an interesting article (summer, 1998) about Frederic Bigelow's dash to France in 1914 to rescue his family. I have just one question: why on earth did he load himself down with a steamer truck?

*Samuel Morgan, St. Paul.*

*Good question. Of course, 1914 was long before the era of airplane carry-on limits and back-packing tourists, and Bigelow must have been none-too-sure his trip would be a short one. Perhaps "be prepared" was his motto.*

### Olympic and Titanic

In the account of F. R. Bigelow's trip to France in 1914, he wrote that he and his family returned home on the *Olympic*. Wasn't the *Olympic* the *Titanic's* sister ship? If so, it was every bit as luxurious. No wonder Bigelow found their accommodations "very fine" but with a "price [that was] as fine as the rooms."

*R. C. Ellis, St. Paul.*

### Women at Play

It's about time our fine women athletes are recognized, as in Kathleen Ridder's article about Ramsey County's women athletes (summer, 1998). What a shame they have been so overshadowed by the men and so discouraged, until relatively recently, from taking part in competitive sports. My grandchildren all play soccer and basketball and it's a joy to watch their games.

*Constance Harvey, Mahtomedi.*

### Typhoid at the Fairgrounds

Mary Etta Manship's diary mentioned seeing the Minnesota regiments at the state fair during the Spanish American



*A cable car rolls past Norman W. Kittson's magnificently ugly mansion at Selby and Summit Avenues about 1889. Minnesota Historical Society photo.*

War in 1898. Wasn't there a serious outbreak of typhoid fever around that time that killed a lot of those soldiers?

*Louise Roberts, Roseville.*

*There was indeed. Typhoid fever was a serious health threat then, and particularly during the warm months. Chief cause was contaminated water supplies. In an article in the fall, 1966, issue of Ramsey County History, Minneapolis physician Herbert F. R. Plass described the epidemic. When American declared war on Spain on April 24, 1898, the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Minnesota Volunteer regiments were mobilized and an encampment hurriedly created for them at the state fairgrounds. Sanitary facilities, which were just as hastily dug throughout the camp, left much to be desired, Plass wrote. Water, probably polluted with typhoid germs, was drawn from wells on the grounds. There was a holiday atmos-*

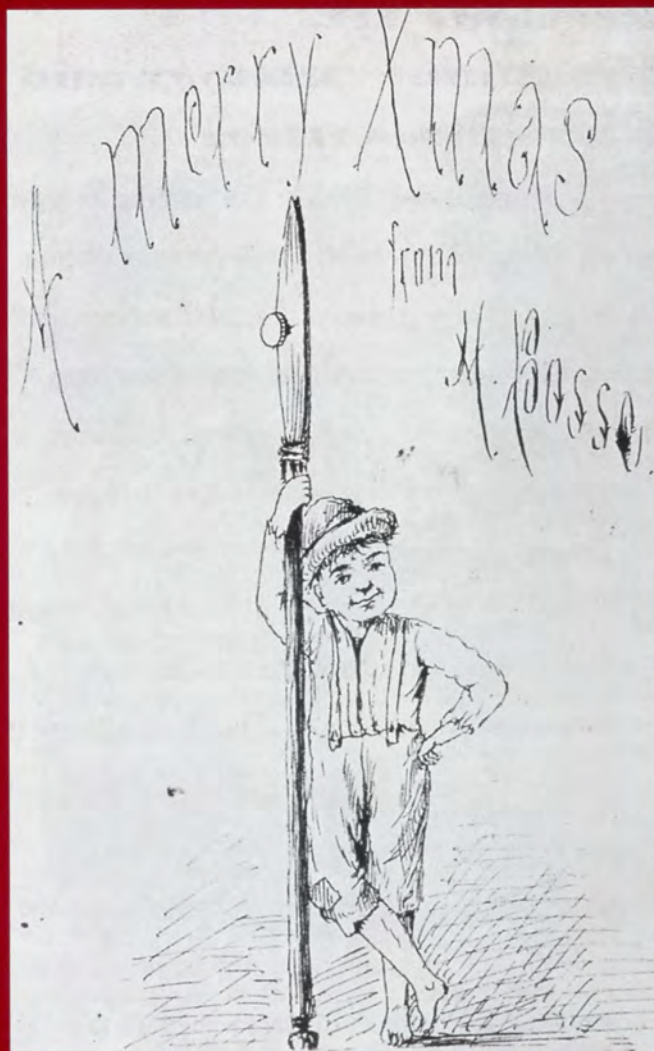
*phere in camp, with families bearing home-cooked food visiting the soldiers. "The men went into Minneapolis and St. Paul on week-end passes. The fairgrounds at that time were in open farm country, surrounded by the market gardens of rural Ramsey County, but trolleys regularly made the trip between camp and the two cities. Later, those trolleys would serve as ambulances to haul typhoid fever victims into city hospitals." Of the 1,200 men in one regiment alone, Plass wrote, 463 were typhoid victims and twenty died.*

### Westminster Junction

After reading Andrew Schmidt's article on Westminster Junction in your spring issue, I drove across University Avenue and north on the Lafayette Road Bridge. Then I looked to the left (west) as I crossed the bridge. Sure enough it is possible to see those railroad tunnels.

*Jerry Olson, St. Louis Park.*





*Henry Bosse's whimsical Christmas card, another Huck Finn-like boy holding a drafting pen. This sketch is from Michael Connor's collection and reproduced here with his permission. See the article about Henry Bosse and Mark Twain beginning on page 18.*

**R.C.H.S.**  
RAMSEY • COUNTY • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society  
323 Landmark Center  
75 West Fifth Street  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

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