

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

*St. Gaudens' New York Eagle:
Rescue and Restoration
of a St. Paul Icon*

Page 12

Fall, 2002

Volume 37, Number 3

Lost Neighborhood

**Borup's Addition and the Prosperous
African Americans Who Lived There**

—Page 4



A duplex at 555–561 in one of St. Paul's Lost Neighborhoods. This and other houses in the long-since razed Borup's Addition were the homes of pioneer African Americans who came to St. Paul after the Civil War. See article beginning on page 4. Photo by Camera Shop, Minnesota State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society collections.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Executive Director
Priscilla Farnham
Editor
Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Howard M. Guthmann
Chair

James Russell
President

Marlene Marschall
First Vice President

Ronald J. Zweber
Second Vice President

Richard A. Wilhoit
Secretary

Peter K. Butler
Treasurer

Charles L. Bathke, W. Andrew Boss, Peter K. Butler, Norbert Conzemius, Anne Cowie, Charlotte H. Drake, Joanne A. Englund, Robert F. Garland, John M. Harens, Joan Higinbotham, Scott Hutton, Judith Frost Lewis, John M. Lindley, George A. Mairs, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Richard Nicholson, Marvin J. Pertzik, Glenn Wiessner, Laurie Zenger, Ronald J. Zweber.

EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chair; James B. Bell, Henry Blodgett, Thomas H. Boyd, Thomas C. Buckley, Mark Eisenschenk, Pat Hart, Thomas J. Kelley, Tom Mega, Laurie Murphy, Richard H. Nicholson, Paul D. Nelson, G. Richard Slade.

HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

Elmer L. Andersen, Olivia I. Dodge, Charlton Dietz, William Finney, William Fallon, Otis Godfrey, Jr., Robert S. Hess, D. W. "Don" Larson, George Latimer, Joseph S. Micallef, Robert Mirick, Marvin J. Pertzik, J. Jerome Plunkett, James Reagan, Rosalie E. Wahl, Donald D. Wozniak.

RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner James McDonough, chairman
Commissioner Susan Haigh
Commissioner Tony Bennett
Commissioner Rafael Ortega
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt
Commissioner Janice Rettman
Commissioner Jan Wiessner

Paul Kirkwold, manager, Ramsey County

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright, 2002, 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 37, Number 3

Fall, 2002

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 Lost Neighborhood
Borup's Addition and the Prosperous Pioneer
African Americans Who Owned Homes There
David Riehle
- 11 Who Was the Borup of Borup's Addition?
- 12 St. Gaudens' *New York Eagle*: Rescue and Restoration of
St. Paul's First Outdoor Sculpture, Icon of Its Past
Christine Podas-Larson
- 15 Restoring the *Eagle*
- 16 New Roost for a Century-old *Eagle*
- 17 Growing Up in St. Paul
Seeing, Talking to, Calling on Spirits:
Grandma Minda's Adventures in Spiritualism
Joanne A. Englund
- 22 Norman Kittson and the Fur Trade
- 25 Book Reviews

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

In February 1998 the Board of Directors of the Ramsey County Historical Society reviewed the Society's Mission Statement and reaffirmed and adopted the following statement:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve, communicate and interpret the history of the county for the general public, recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major responsibility is its stewardship of this history.

This issue of our quarterly magazine once again carries out the Society's goal of discovering and communicating Ramsey County's past. Historian David Riehle gives us a fascinating look at another of St. Paul's "Lost Neighborhoods," known as "Borup's Addition" in the late nineteenth century when this area was home to prosperous African Americans. Next, Christine Podas-Larson describes the construction of the ten-story New York Life Insurance Building, completed in 1889 at Sixth and Minnesota, and the creation of its magnificent sculpture, the *New York Eagle*, by the renowned Augustus St. Gaudens and his brother Louis. Although the building was torn down in 1967, the *Eagle* has survived and soon will soar again over St. Paul at Summit Overlook Park.

Long-time Society member and family historian Joanne Englund's "Growing Up in St. Paul" essay focuses on her grandmother Minda's experiences in spiritualism while living in the Midway district. Included is a remarkable photograph of Minda and the other women who worked at the Bohn Refrigerator Company about the time of World War I. Finally, *Ramsey County History* returns to an earlier era in state and local history with an account of the life and times of the colorful fur trader and entrepreneur. Norman W. Kittson.

John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

A New Roost For A Century- old *Eagle*

With conservation of the *Eagle* at Como Park underway, the next item on the agenda for Public Art Saint Paul directors was where to reinstall the famous sculpture. The discussion was lively. Jim Miller of James Miller Investment Realty Company argued for downtown:

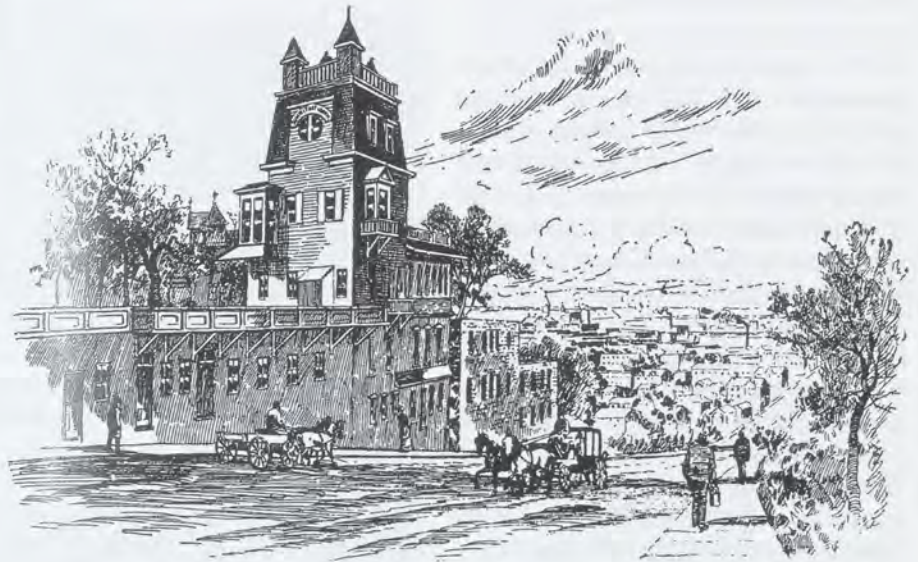
The *Eagle* was born downtown and spent her formative years downtown. After her Raptor Center-like rehabilitation, she should be returned to her home downtown. Eagles, after all, are territorial. The *New York Eagle* should not be exiled from her home, left to spend her old age in unfamiliar surroundings, separated from and abandoned by her old historic building friends.

M.J. (Jim) Czarniecki III, of SRI Planning and Programming for Communities, preferred Summit Overlook Park, once known as Carpenter Park, perched on the bluff at the intersection of Ramsey Hill and Summit Avenue.

Aesthetically, the work demands a placement well above eye level. Originally [the *Eagle*] sat more than thirty feet above street level. The problem with such a height is that, for those who wish closer scrutiny, thirty is several times too far. Carefully siting at Summit Overlook Park could allow both viewing opportunities: using the terra firma of the park for an up-close look and the sloping Ramsey Hill for the distant viewing.

He also noted that at the Summit Overlook site, the *Eagle* would join two other nearby major works from late nineteenth and early twentieth century sculptors: William Partridges' *Nathan Hale* and Paul Manship's *Indian Hunter and His Dog*. Other directors weighed in for Mears Park and another building in Lowertown.

Public Art Saint Paul is now raising money to construct a pedestal on which to mount the *Eagle* and prepare it for installation in 2003.



An artist's sketch of the Carpenter Hotel, once located on the site of Summit Overlook Park. From Northwest Magazine, Minnesota Historical Society archives.

Summit Overlook Park:

Once Upon A Time: Carpenter Park And Its Five-Story Hotel

Tom Zahn

The property at the corner of Summit Avenue and Ramsey Hill, now known as Summit Overlook Park, once was privately owned. In the mid-1880s, Warren and Maria Carpenter built a five-story hotel overlooking the Mississippi River valley at the southeast corner of the bluff site.

An early sketch of the Carpenters' hotel displays two levels being built into the stone retaining wall along Ramsey Hill, with three floors in a wood framed structure above. The architectural oddity, with numerous projecting bays and balconies, had a Mansard roof that was crowned with a balustraded observation deck.

It is believed that the hotel was destroyed by fire in the 1880s. The newly incorporated St. Paul Board of

Park Commissioners took possession of the site in 1887, shortly after the deaths of the original owners. The site has remained a public park since that time.

After their parents' deaths, the Carpenter children continued to run a hotel at 403 Summit, across the avenue from the bluff site. By 1900, in what appears to be a further attempt to eliminate uses along Summit Avenue, the Park Board acquired 401 and 403 Summit for the development of Nathan Hale Park.

Another famous lookout has since disappeared: Merriam Overlook on Sherburne Avenue near the state Capitol, included a small fountain.

Tom Zahn is an historic preservation consultant.



Minda was a Spiritualist and apparently subscribed to the Spiritual Science Magazine, copies of which were found among her belongings after her death. See Growing Up in St. Paul article on page 17.

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

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION

U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Paul, MN
Permit #3989

