

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

Fall, 2003

Volume 38, Number 3

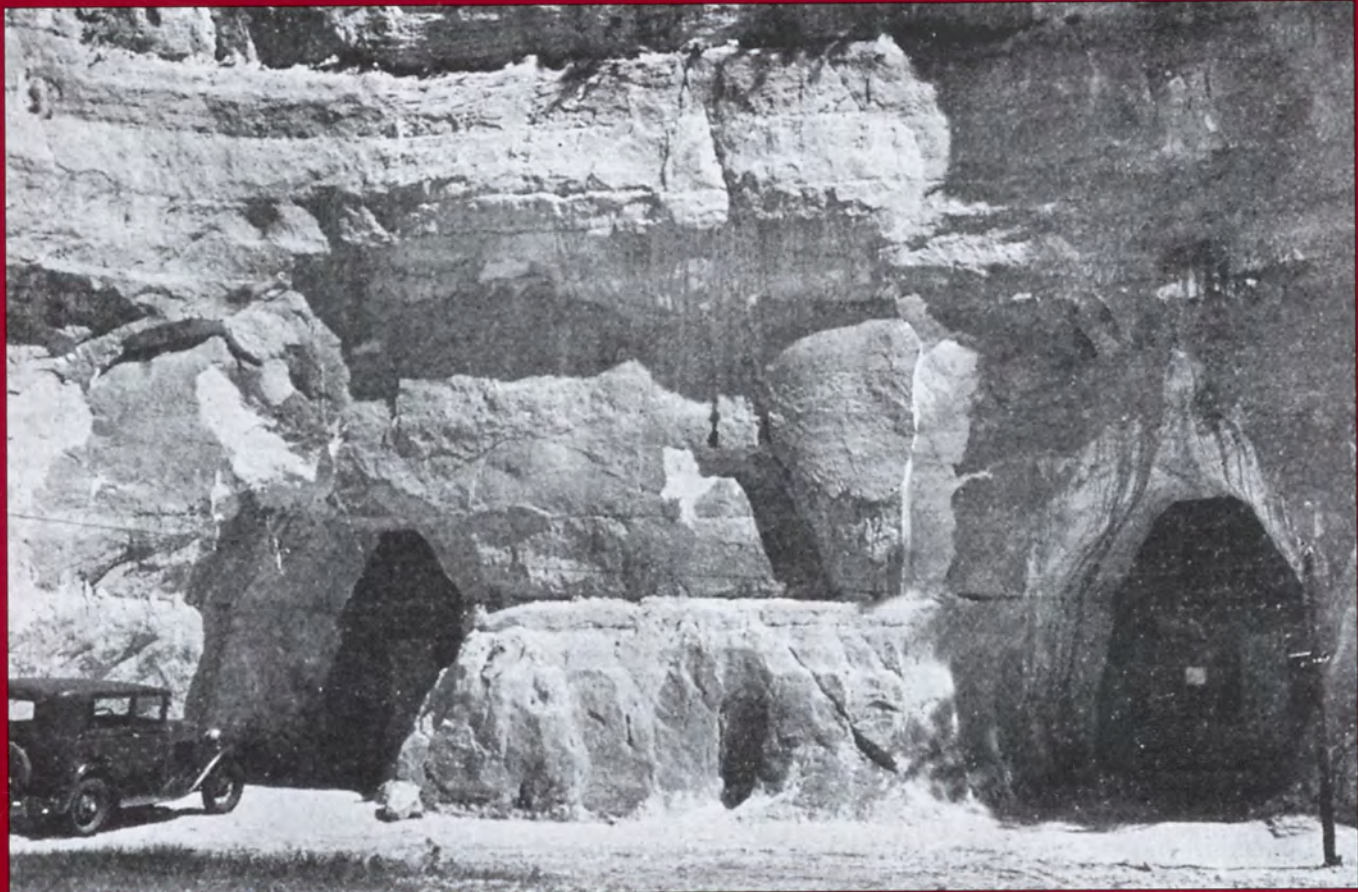
Alfred Adler and his 1937  
Lecture at the St. Paul  
Women's City Club

Page 11

*St. Paul Underground*

The University Farm Experimental Cave and  
St. Paul as the Blue Cheese Capital of the World

—Page 4



Caves like these in the Twin Cities bluffs along the Mississippi River were used for ripening the Roquefort-like cheese that almost caused an international incident with France. See article about Minnesota's Blue Cheese beginning on page 4. Photo from the National Butter and Cheese Journal, January 10, 1935.

## 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, Rod Hill, Judith Frost Lewis, John M. Lindley, George A. Mairs, Marlene Marschall, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Richard Nicholson, Linda Owen, Marvin J. Pertzik, Glenn Wiessner, Laurie Zenner.

### EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chair; James B. Bell, Thomas H. Boyd, Mark Eisenschenk, Pat Hart, Thomas J. Kelley, Laurie Murphy, Richard H. Nicholson, G. Richard Slade, Steve Trimble, Mary Lethert Wingerd.

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

David Twa, 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, 2001, 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](mailto:admin@rchs.com); web site address [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com)

# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 36, Number 3

Fall, 2001

## CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 The University Farm Experimental Cave and How St. Paul Became the Blue Cheese Capital of the World  
*Greg A. Brick*
- 11 A Pillar of Modern Psychology  
Alfred Adler and His 1937 Lecture at the Historic St. Paul Women's Club  
*Roger A. Ballou*
- 16 'Laid to Rest by Strangers' Hands'  
Death in the Railroad Yards: The Century-old Mystery of a Beautiful Young Woman  
*Susan C. Dowd*
- 19 Gibbs Museum Heritage Orchard and the Comeback of the Ancient Apple  
*Ralph Thrane*
- 22 *Growing Up in St. Paul*  
A Stroll Down Memory Lane: Payne Avenue in the 1950s Was Like Living in a Small Town  
*DeAnne Marie Cherry*
- 26 Books
- 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

This issue of *Ramsey County History* opens with Greg Brick's absorbing examination of how and why agricultural researchers at the University of Minnesota produced a Roquefort-like blue cheese in the caves on St. Paul's West Side from the 1930s to the 1950s. Many local people know that in the days before modern refrigeration, St. Paul's pioneer brewers had taken advantage of the constant cool temperatures in the caves to store beer, and some people knew the caves had been used for raising mushrooms, but author Brick introduces us to the little-known world of blue cheese production in these caves.

Additional articles in this issue present Roger A. Ballou's account of a 1937 lecture by the famous psychologist Alfred Adler at the Women's City Club and Susan C. Dowd's research into the mysterious 1902 death of an unidentified, beautiful young woman near the railway station at Dayton's Bluff.

Fall is always a great time for apples. To honor this year's apple season, Ralph Thrane, the resident horticulturalist at the Society's Gibbs Museum in Falcon Heights, contributes a summary of his work in choosing and growing the Heritage apple varieties that have been planted at the Museum. This issue closes with author DeAnne Cherry adding another piece to our ongoing series, "Growing Up in St. Paul," with her recollections of her teenage years living on St. Paul's Avenue in the 1950s.

The Editorial Board of this magazine also wants its readers to be aware that Paul Nelson's article about St. Paul's smallpox epidemic of 1924 that appeared in the Summer issue has caught the eye of a present-day researcher at the Medical School of the University of Minnesota and is being used in conjunction with contemporary studies of this dread disease. Our thanks to Paul for his timely work that may, in a small way, contribute to the future betterment of all.

*John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board*

# Books

## *Growing an Inch*

Stanley Gordon West  
St. Paul: Lexington-Marshall  
Publishing,

Reviewed by Tom Patterson

Stanley Gordon West lives in Montana, but he is a Minnesotan, and more specifically a St. Paulite through and through. Central High School, which West attended, and which is a focal point of his novels, happens to be located at the intersection of Lexington Parkway and Marshall Avenue in St. Paul. *Growing an Inch* is, to use the phrase of James Mustich, the editor and reviewer of *A Common Reader*, "a thumping good read" for anyone looking for an engrossing mystery novel. But if the reader knows the area around Central High School, he or she will enjoy it more. And if the reader's familiarity extends back to the late 1940s and the 1950s, and the culture and mores of that time, even better yet.

The novel largely takes place in the neighborhood south of University Avenue, north of Ford Parkway, east of the Mississippi River and west of Lexington Parkway. All of the references to places and events are factually accurate. Among those which locals will recognize are Longfellow Grade School, Summit School, St. Mark's Catholic Church, Soko Momo Sorority at Central High school, Highland Village, Mechanic Arts and Johnson High Schools, the Selby Lake streetcar line, Seven Corners, Mattocks Drug Store, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, St. Thomas cadets, the Paramount and Orpheum movie theaters, Fort Snelling, Marshall, Prior, Summit, and Cleveland Avenues, the State Fair, and many more.

*Growing an Inch* is the story of Donny

Cunningham, a four-foot, eleven-inch-tall Central senior struggling to keep his family together after his mother's tragic death and his father's resulting alcoholism. It is well-written, hilarious at times, and engrossing. It is difficult to put down, once you have started to read. The book is not timeless literature. It is not *The Great Gatsby* or even *Babbitt*. Nevertheless it has a serious aspect and illuminates some of the contradictions of life in the fifteen or so years after World War II. The innocence and soft edge of that time are captured in such episodes as Donny's romance with a girl both taller and richer than he; his family's idyllic summer vacations of the North Shore of Lake Superior; his friendship with his overweight buddy, Reggie; and harmless pranks played on the Central teachers. References to Zenith radios; Glenn Miller's "String of Pearls;" Jack Armstrong and Wheaties; the "breakfast of champions;" Buick Roadmasters; capture the flag; and five and dime stores are used by West to complete the mood of the post-war period.

But the novel also raises a less-discussed dark side of the era, such as the senseless cruelty of children, organized crime, and violence. For no apparent reason, a group of giggling boys drowns Donny's pet cat in front of him. Mob enforcers smash the fingers and toes of Donny's father with a ballpeen hammer as warnings of worse things to come—attempted murder and murder.

Comedy and tragi-comedy are thrown into the mix in the form of a captured bear addicted to Coca-Cola who rejects freedom to remain close to his Coke supply; eight domesticated squirrels named for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs who run somewhat freely in the Cunningham household; a welfare

worker named Miss Boomray whom the Cunningham family renames Miss Doomsday; and a World War I veteran who regularly wears his gas mask and reminds Donny's youngest brother of an elephant, but who is murdered by hit men out to collect the gambling debts of Donny's father.

West is an excellent storyteller, and there is an unanticipated revelation midway through the book which puts the story in an entirely new perspective and raises issues of guilt, accountability, responsibility, and forgiveness. It is well worth the price of this book to drop back in time and find out what happened.

*Tom Patterson is retired from the vice presidency of the U. S. Trust Company and a lifelong resident of St. Paul. He attended St. Paul Academy, the only member of his family who didn't go to Central High School.*

## *The Carol Thompson Murder Case*

Donald John Giese  
Scope Reports, New York, New York  
Reviewed by Tom Boyd

This past spring marked the thirtieth anniversary of the brutal murder of Carol Thompson. Donald John Giese was a St. Paul reporter at the time who covered this story from beginning to end for the *Pioneer Press and Dispatch*. Giese eventually published a complete account of these events in 1969 in his book entitled, *The Carol Thompson Murder Case*. While the case has been closed for many years, Giese's book is nonetheless still well worth dusting off and reading.

The scene of the crime was the Thompsons' Highland Park home in St.

Paul. On the morning of March 6, 1963, Carol Thompson had just finished her typical routine of rousing, feeding, and sending her children off to school and her husband off to work when she was attacked by an intruder who mercilessly beat, strangled, and stabbed her repeatedly. Incredibly, she survived this onslaught and was able to escape her attacker by way of the back door. She staggered to a nearby house, where her neighbor did not even recognize her in her bloody and beaten condition. An ambulance was called and she taken to the old Ancker Hospital. Carol Thompson, just thirty-four years old, died a few hours later.

News of the grizzly and shocking murder spread through St. Paul immediately. Concerned husbands phoned their wives at home. Normally unlocked doors were bolted shut. Salesmen and electric meter readers were turned away from residences, while sporting goods stores experienced brisk sales of guns and cartridge shells. The switchboards at the mayor's office and the police station lighted up with calls from alarmed and outraged citizens.

Giese describes the initial rumors that Thompson had been "victim of a sex maniac suddenly turned loose in th[e] quiet, decent, respectable neighborhood." However, as detectives and policemen inspected the crime scene and sifted through countless tips and leads, the theory of a random attack made less and less sense.

Suspicion soon turned to the victim's distraught and grieving husband, T. Eugene Thompson, who was rumored to have purchased more than \$1 million of insurance coverage on his late wife. He had a public persona as a rising star in the legal community, a family man, and a deacon in his church. However, it turned out that he was leading a double life in which he frequented seedy bars and night clubs, gambled heavily, and carried on with a mistress.

Authorities eventually rounded up a number of individuals in pursuing the theory that Thompson had put out a "contract" for the murder his wife.

These suspects included Norman Mastrian, a pugnacious boxer and underworld fringe character who had been a college classmate and client of Thompson's, and W.C. Anderson, an alcoholic salesman who had fled Minnesota and tried to hide out in Arizona, only to be captured and returned to St. Paul for interrogation.

Giese's suspenseful, while somewhat campy, narrative captures the sense of tension and desperation that existed at that point of the investigation as Anderson sat in his jail cell in St. Paul:

The view from his cell, where the walls seem to be closing in, was dark and dismal. His family wasn't able to help him. He was without funds. He was like a fly caught on sticky paper. During the dark nights and long days his only constant companion was his conscience. Only he knew what words came from that small but insistent inner voice that spoke to him as he stared at the ceiling and steel bars.

Anderson eventually confessed to committing the murder. In addition to describing all the grizzly details, Anderson also claimed to have been hired by Norman Mastrian who, in turn, had been hired by Thompson's husband in a scheme to collect insurance money. When he finished his confession, Anderson said, "Maybe I'll be able to sleep tonight."

Giese chronicles Thompson's arrest and the many legal skirmishes that ensued between the Ramsey County Attorney's Office and defendants' counsel, including significant battles over changes in venue. The press had compared this case with the highly publicized case involving Dr. Sam Shepard in Cleveland, Ohio. Eventually, the courts agreed with the defendants' concerns regarding pretrial publicity and moved the location of the trials. Thompson was eventually tried in Minneapolis and Mastrian in Duluth.

Giese's account is punctuated well by anecdotal events such as his intriguing midnight meeting in Como Park with Eve Mastrian, Norman's petrified wife who feared for her own life be-

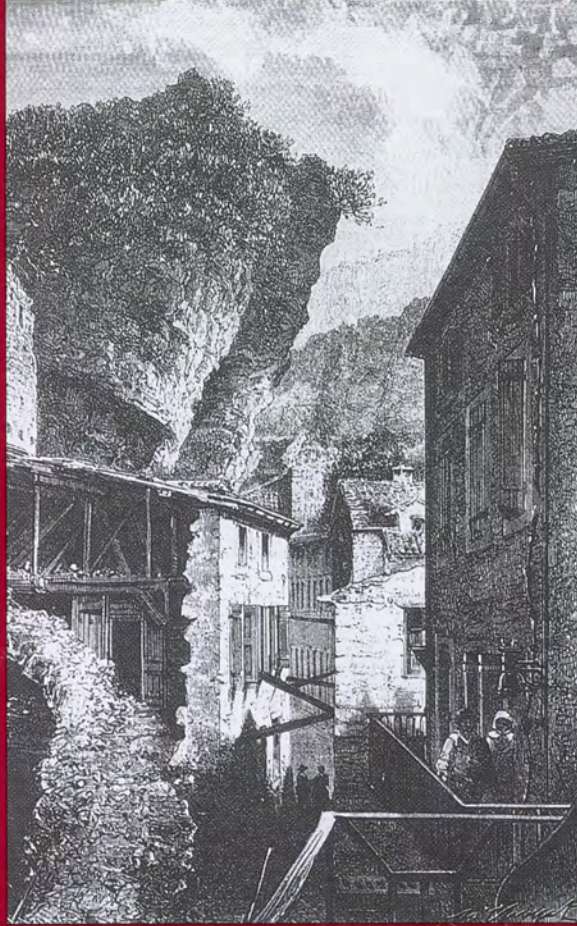
cause she knew too much about her husband's criminal activities, and Mastrian's alleged plan to poison the County Attorney, William Randall, and the lead homicide investigator, George Barkley. These and other interesting sidebars allow Giese to provide a highly informed account of the murder and surrounding events rather than simply a regurgitation of published newspaper stories and the trial transcripts.

The prosecution presented its theory that Thompson had his wife murdered in order to collect on the hefty insurance death benefits and make a new life with his mistress. The evidence against him was, of course, entirely circumstantial and included seemingly trivial things like the urinary habits of the Thompson family's pet dog and interior decorating decisions concerning carpet selection in their home. Thompson took the stand and testified in his own defense. Ultimately, the jury found him guilty, and Norman Mastrian was likewise found guilty in a subsequent trial.

While both T. Eugene Thompson and Norman Mastrian were convicted for the murder, the testimony and other evidence put forth by prosecutors does not present a particularly compelling case against either of these individuals. Although Thompson and Mastrian were both less than admirable characters, the linchpin of the prosecution's case was the confession from W.C. Anderson which he allegedly recanted later while serving his sentence in Stillwater.

Although written nearly twenty-five years ago, Giese's book relates a compelling account of the murder of Carol Thompson as well as the investigation and prosecutions that followed. The book allows readers to review all of the evidence and decide for themselves, just as the impaneled jurors had been asked to do: Did T. Eugene Thompson and Norman Mastrian really conspire to murder Carol Thompson?

*Boyd is a lawyer with Winthrop & Weinstine, P.A., and a long-time member of the Editorial Board of the Ramsey County History.*



*The celebrated Roquefort caves of France where Roquefort cheese has been ripened since antiquity. Development of a Roquefort-like cheese in the 1930s at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus, almost caused an international incident with France. See article about Minnesota's Blue Cheese beginning on page 4.*

**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

