

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

The Prince and  
The Pearl of  
Great Price

Page 17

Fall, 2004

Volume 39, Number 3

*Another Lost Neighborhood*

The Life and Death of Central Park—  
A Small Part of the Past Illuminated

—Page 4



*A postcard view of the state Capitol in its heyday when the greenery of grass and trees surrounded Central Park. A layered-cement parking ramp has replaced the park. See the article beginning on page 4 that traces the life and death of Central Park, another of St. Paul's Lost Neighborhoods. Minnesota Historical Society collections.*



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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 39, Number 3

Fall, 2004

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2003:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve 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 over this history.

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

Born in the 1880s and died in the 1970s, Central Park in St. Paul has today passed into urban legend. Fortunately, Paul Nelson has carefully researched the park's history and his account opens our Fall issue. In 1884 four wealthy and powerful St. Paul families donated the land that became Central Park, a rather small space that was laid out formally with walkways, trees, and shrubs and included an ornate fountain. Unlike Como Park, whose city-led development later in the decade was intended as a naturalistic refuge, the practical donors of the land for Central Park conceived it as a neat buffer for their homes against haphazard urban sprawl nearby. Today, or course, all that remains of Central Park is a parking ramp for state government workers.

In celebration of Hamline University's sesquicentennial in 2004, we have John Larson's elegant account of the all-to-brief time that Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein spent at the liberal-arts school in the fall of 1942. Prince Hubertus had a profound impact on students such as Larson through his courageous opposition to the forces of Nazism. Scion of an old and noble German family, Prince Hubertus had fled to the United States in the early 1930s and subsequently worked tirelessly to persuade Americans of the dangers of Hitlerism. Hamline proved to be a generous and supportive host to the prince at a time when the United States was just entering the fight against fascism.

Our Fall issue concludes with the second in a series of Rondo oral histories. Thanks once more to the interviewing skills of Kate Cavett, we learn of the youth, educational, and employment experiences of Kathryn Coram Gagnon, a graduate of Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Mass., who spent much of her adult life as a social worker in the Rondo community.

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As a service to the Society's members and friends, we want all of our readers to know that there is now a complete listing of articles that have appeared in *Ramsey County History* over the past forty years on the Society's web site at [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com). We hope you'll make use of this tool when you want to see if a past issue of our magazine has information bearing on a question about St. Paul or Ramsey County.

*John Lindley*, Chair, Editorial Board



# Hamline University and Its Royal Refugee

## The Prince and the Pearl of Great Price

John W. Larson

**A**s Hamline University in St. Paul celebrates the 150th year of its founding, Hamline graduate John Larson recalls the World War II impact on its students and the visit of a royal refugee from Germany.

It had not been easy for me to get into Hamline. My academic record from Mechanic Arts High School in St. Paul was poor, although I had been president of my senior class and active in student government. Hamline, however, agreed to accept me, but only on probation. I entered upon my university studies in the fall of 1941 with startling determination and unforeseen enthusiasm.

It is not easy to explain why. I lived at home on Jessamine Avenue and wore the ridiculous little green cap required of freshmen. I wore it proudly walking through our working-class neighborhood of recent immigrant.

I enjoyed the unaccustomed experience of long afternoons of study in the University library. No matter that Hamline could not, in those days, have impressed a visitor from the East, much less one from Europe as very cosmopolitan, or that in winter arctic-like winds swept over the empty spaces on the campus as though they were still part of the vast, largely uninhabited prairie. Hamline, I felt, was a pearl of great price.

Coeducational, Methodist, and midwestern Hamline was admittedly somewhat provincial at that time. The 600 students came mostly from Minnesota and its immediately neighborhood states. Its president since 1934 had been Charles Nelson Pace, an 1899 graduate of Iowa Wesleyan College at Mount Pleasant, Iowa, and a Methodist minister. In chapel I remember his admonishing students that lack of order in their dormitory rooms was an outward expression of their disorderly minds. Still, Pace's nineteenth century inner-directed qualities

included a firm dedication to the liberal arts college. Its mission, as he saw it, was encouraging students to develop the abilities needed to solve pressing public issues of the time. When war broke out in Europe in 1939, he advised a calm, open-minded attitude.

For us students in September of 1941, the war was far away, geographically and temperamentally. Studies and campus life were all-consuming. In freshman English we read Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Korzybsky's semantics and wrote weekly papers that were sometimes searching and reflective but generally untouched by broader public issues. Courses in the Old and New Testaments temporarily satisfied my interest in religion. A survey course in English literature offered all I could quickly absorb of that tradition, while a course in the history of Western Civilization confirmed my interest in history and in Europe.

Hamline's mandatory course in Western Civilization was taught by Arthur Williamson, who subscribed to the conclusions of the American historian Sidney Fay in his *Origins of the World War* (1928). Fay's critical judgment had led him to conclude that it was not historically sound to say that Germany and her allies were solely responsible for the first World War. To a greater or lesser degree, Fay insisted, all European countries were responsible.

### A Certain Smugness

While Fay's conclusions confirmed our Midwestern smugness regarding Europe's responsibilities for its own wars, it seemed also to recommend that we remain ob-

jective and uninvolved in the European war then in progress. We students were unprepared, as were most everyone, for what was to happen. On October 8, 1941, the day following the attack on Pearl Harbor, students and faculty gathered on Old Main's Bridgman Hall to hear President Roosevelt's address to the joint session of Congress. In contrast to the cheers and whistles with which the members of Congress responded to the subsequent declaration of war, the Bridgman Hall audience was profoundly still. Miron Morrill, professor of religion, turned off the radio. Students and faculty dispersed without a word.

War, it seems, was bad business for private colleges like Hamline. It threatened to conscript tuition-paying students and leave behind an underemployed faculty that still had to be paid. At the



John W. Larson as a student at Hamline University. Photo from the author.



beginning of the 1942–1943 academic year, Hamline prudently emphasized courses of wartime significance and announced itself ready to accommodate 200 military and naval trainees.

The militarization of private colleges must have seemed appropriate and realistic to the Hamline administration. Still, students unfamiliar with the institutional will to survive and of the compromises sometimes made to do so, felt cheated. The war already had introduced a highly disruptive element of uncertainty into student life. Day by day, fellow students disappeared from the campus to join the training programs which would help to assure their serving as officers while others waited uneasily to be drafted as common soldiers. War became all pervasive and one's studies increasingly irrelevant. Morale was low among those of my friends who clung to the liberal arts. Once encouraged to remain calm and openminded, they were puzzled by what now appeared to be a desertion of liberal arts values.

Such was the situation and mood at Hamline before Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein's arrival on campus early in October of 1942. It was a tribute to the liberal arts tradition that President Pace accepted the Carnegie Peace Foundation's offer of the German, and Catholic, visiting lecturer. The *Hamline Oracle* described him in advance as an exile from Nazi tyranny and a doctor of jurisprudence from the University of Hamburg who, while in America, was a contributor to prominent magazines and the author of five books.

For his part, Hubertus knew in a general way what to expect at Hamline. He had taught at dozens of private liberal arts colleges since 1937 when he became a visiting professor of International Relations with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He knew that as a European with personal experience in the European affairs then attracting American attention, he would have a busy schedule. Decades later he would remember that during his six weeks at Hamline he gave no less than forty scheduled lectures and a good many unscheduled ones as well.

Concern at Hamline as to where to house the visiting prince was resolved



Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg. Photograph from Presse-und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung—Bundesbildstelle, Bonn, Germany.

by his own suggestion that he be given a room with some member of the faculty. His hosts became Dr. and Mrs. Gerald Otto McCulloch. Dr. McCulloch was a professor of philosophy who as a student at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland had traveled on the Continent. He was more familiar than his colleagues with the European scene.

Prince Hubertus was introduced to Hamline students and faculty during convocation on Monday, October 5, 1942. During the weeks that followed, as late summer turned to a brilliant and brisk Midwestern autumn, a different spirit hovered over the campus for those who heard him speak. Under the spell of the foreign guest, the far-off but momentous events so upsetting to life at Hamline became real. Such was his charisma that events remote in time and space became immediately alive.

### **A Different Spirit**

He opened his afternoon lecture series, "Europe Past and Present," with the announcement that an historic decision might well be made at the battle of Stalingrad before the six weeks of his stay

ended. While he proceeded each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to unfold his comprehensive view of European history to some thirty students in a lecture room in Science Hall, the fierce battle for Stalingrad raged in the background.

To Hamline students about to be caught up in the nation's mobilization efforts, the Prince, by example, implied that even with war in progress one should not lose sight of traditional values summed up in the idea of the oneness of all humanity. His history lectures were designed to introduce his students to the *spirit* rather than the minutiae of history. He seemed convinced that after the war the common man of Europe would reject all forms of exalted nationalism and Europe would reaffirm its essential unity. In the interest of future peace, he said, no nation should be divided, but Europe should be organized into a system of interlocking states, a United States of Europe with a House of Parliament. All armed forces should be placed under the control of this international organization, and there should be a common currency.

On October 14, 1942, Hubertus celebrated his thirty-sixth birthday by sharing with his students and the McCullochs a "torte" sent by his family from Geigers, an Austrian Konditorei in Yorkville, the German-speaking quarter of New York City. But the popularity of the German prince rested on a sounder basis than Austrian pastry. More important at the time was the publication during his stay at Hamline of his autobiography, *On Borrowed Peace*, published by Doubleday, Doran and Company.

Not many students at Hamline had ever had contact with a living author, particularly one who had taken part in so many momentous events of their times. The *St. Paul Dispatch's* book reviewer, James Gray, called him "A young, hopeful, crusader for the Republic of Man," one who had spoken out against Hitler with the "clear, firm, uncompromising voice of liberal conviction." Faculty and students purchased the book to read, but also to have its author autograph their copies.

When the prince gave me a copy of *On Borrowed Peace* toward the end of



his stay, he wrote as a dedication the first lines from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which begins "In the midst of the way of our life. . . ." This fragment remained cryptic for me until recently when I considered the complete line in Dante: "In the midst of the way of our life, we found ourselves in a dark wood." As used by Hubertus, it was, I now realize, a metaphor which alluded generally to the inferno of the war and particularly, for him, the special hell of exile.

I might never have guessed that our gracious and cosmopolitan guest found exile painful. One pleasantly fresh autumn afternoon, I met him at the Hamline library. We had agreed to share a long walk northward over the train tracks to the state fairgrounds and to Como Park. No one was about. We visited the Conservatory with its tropical atmosphere, tall exotic palms, and unfamiliar vegetation.

### The Unhappy Raccoon

Then we discovered a small zoo. At its center was a large cage with rocks, running water, and an unhappy raccoon running back and forth around the outside limits of his cage. Then, either because of something the prince said, or because I caught his mood, I realized he felt an extraordinary compassion for the trapped animal, a poignant similarity between the raccoon's predicament and his own. Over the years, he repeatedly referred to the incident in his letters. The now classic "Raccoon at Como Park" became a code phrase when he wished to indicate acute dissatisfaction with where he was and what he was doing as Europe continued to be ravaged by a frightful war. This shared experience became a milestone marking a significant event of our friendship.

Hubertus completed his lectures at Hamline on November 13, 1942, and left St. Paul on the night train for Chicago. The realities of war, the emphasis on the useful sciences, and induction into the armed services again dominated campus life. The message the prince left behind was not soon forgotten, however. On November 20 the *Hamline Oracle* commented that "Although Prince Loewenstein was here for only six weeks, it seems as though he had been here for years. Indeed, after his

## The Prince and The Fascists

Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg, a courtly man once described as "one of the most courageous opponents of Hitler," was born in 1906 into an old German noble family. Soon after Hitler came to power in 1933, the prince and his wife, their lives threatened by the Nazis, fled to the United States. There, as a refugee, he embarked on a decades-long mission, lecturing tirelessly, denouncing Hitler, anti-Semitism, and totalitarianism, and predicting that such a course would erupt into World War II.

At the end of that war, he returned to Germany where he served for four years in the West German Parliament as a member of the liberal Free Democratic Party. He also continued to lecture around the world on behalf of the West German government. A man of letters, as was his father, a cavalry officer in a pre-World War I Bavarian regiment, the prince wrote more than forty books. In *The Tragedy of a Nation*, published in England in 1934, he labeled the leaders of the Nazi party as "cowards to the very bone."

Prince Loewenstein, as he was known in America, also was a prominent Roman Catholic layman. Pope John XXIII decorated him for his role in working toward the reconciliation between the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches.

The prince, who lived in Bad Godesbern, outside of Bonn, died in 1984 at the age of seventy-eight.



A portrait of Prince Loewenstein painted in Paris in 1938 by Paul Hammaux. It now hangs in the Historische Museum in Berlin. This copy of the painting is from the author.

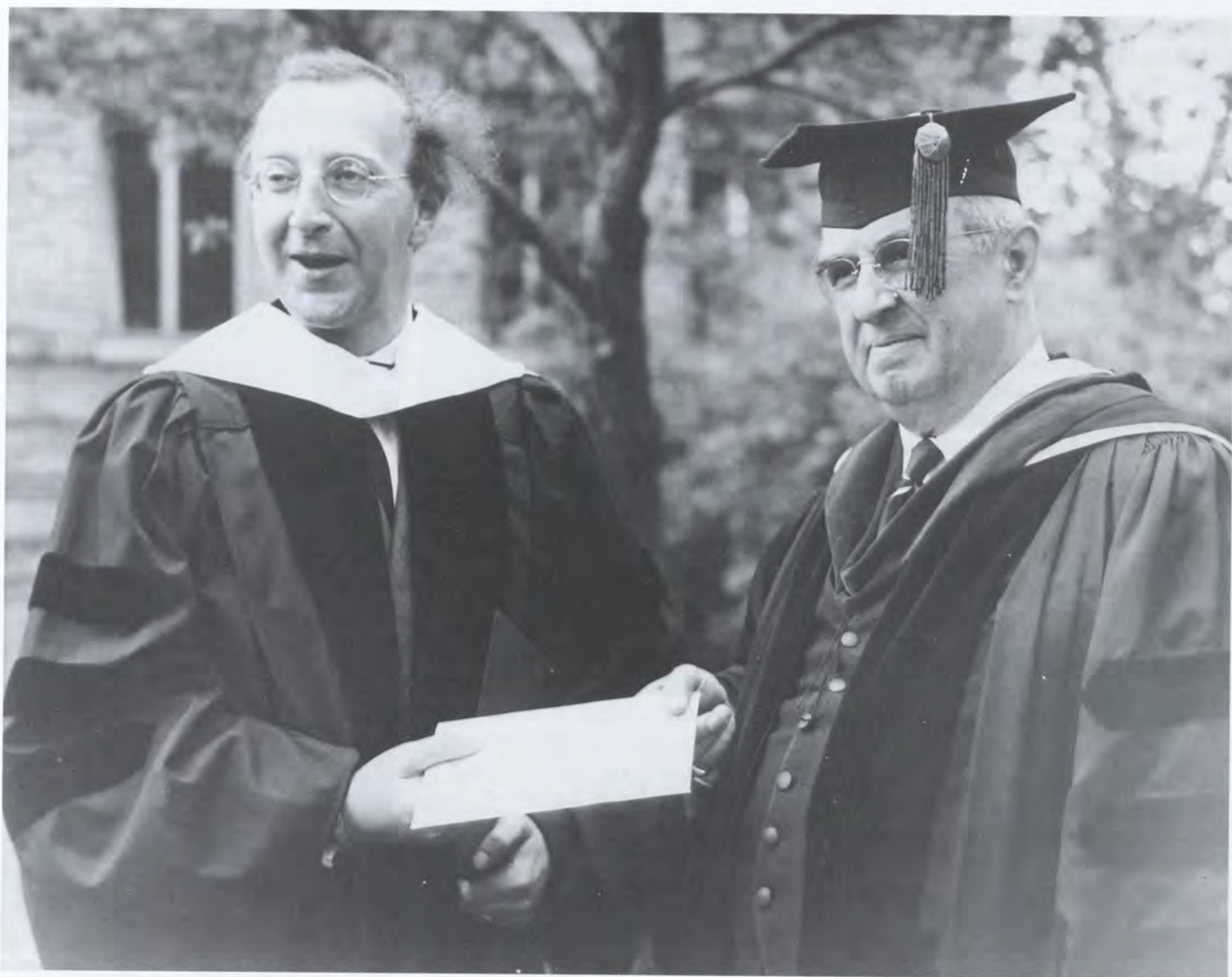
first week here he was as much at home on the campus as Old Main."

The *Oracle* described Prince Loewenstein as a "likeable, loveable man, a European gentleman and a scholar whose outlook was world wide." He was a man, the *Oracle* said, who always had time, despite his busy schedule, for whoever stopped to chat with him. He was a prince who was "more democratic than most of us," and he had given Hamline something to think about. "Let us keep on thinking about it now that he's gone."

Hamline did not forget. On May 23, 1943, Hubertus returned briefly to accept the University's honorary degree of Doc-

tor of Letters. I was not able to be there for the presentation. I had been inducted into military service and we were given ten days to put our affairs in order before earnestly becoming soldiers. When the prince learned of my impending induction earlier that month, he wrote that I should make plans so that after the official college events "we could drive into the Minnesota woods or lakes regions, find a log cabin, and live for two days the way I read back in Europe, and as a small boy, that most Americans live—as trappers, hunters, fishermen, watching out for red Indians and smoking hand-rolled cigarettes."





*The prince and the president. Prince Loewenstein receives an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Hamline University President Charles Nelson Pace in 1943. Photo from the author.*

Dutifully, I arranged for a canoe trip up the St. Croix River from Stillwater to whatever point we might reach and return from in two days. The trip was an enormous success that sealed not just our friendship but his attachment to the Upper Midwest. On the train returning East, he wrote, "These twice seven miles of river, waves, submerged trees, this world of ours is a permanent present. Futile, completely futile, to try to make remarks about these days. . . . Short as they were, they were so filled with all things that it is not their shortness, only their passing which weights upon us."

The letter arrived on May 29, my twentieth birthday. That day, at home on Jes-

samine Avenue, all things familiar already had become unreal. I had taken my final exams and made an orderly departure. In a few days I was issued a uniform and was soon cleaning latrines and washing dishes. I was on my way to becoming a proper soldier. Yet, neither the war nor the succeeding decades erased the impressions of October and November, 1942.

More remarkable still, Prince Loewenstein remembered too, and over the years he returned to Minnesota as often as circumstances permitted. The year before he died on May, 1983, he returned for the last time, visiting Hamline and the home on the St. Croix where my wife and I still live. Before leaving, he wrote in

our guest book: "'Home' is too vague a word! [For me] there are 'homes' in the conventional sense—and real homes in the full spiritual and embracing human sense. This house belongs to the second category, just as Hamline University is my American alma mater, now since forty years. . . . My heart is filled with love and gratitude . . . for this house and for this country—home of the free—land of lasting, loyal friendship."

*John W. Larson writes frequently for Ramsey County History. His article on the first twenty years in the history of Mechanic Arts High School appeared in the Spring, 2002 issue.*





3886. CENTRAL PARK. ST. PAUL.  
*The James Humphrey house on the left, the Gustave Schurmeier rowhouses on the right. See article, "The Life and Death of Central Park," beginning on page 4.*

**R.C.H.S.**  
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