

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Fall, 2005

Volume 40, Number 3

Willet M. Hays
Who Saw 'Shakespeares'
Among His Plants

Page 20

*Stonebridge: The Story of a Lost Estate and
Oliver Crosby, the Genius Who Created It*

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Stonebridge, one of Ramsey County's largest and most elegant homes. See article beginning on page 4. Photograph from Dexter Crosby's private collection and used with his permission.

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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

Author Jay Pfaender opens our Fall issue with a fascinating account of one of St. Paul's pioneering industrialists and inventors, Oliver Crosby, and Stonebridge, his lost estate that was located near the Mississippi River in St. Paul from 1916 to 1953.

Because our author was unable to find any color photo or even a postcard of the Stonebridge mansion, the RCHS Editorial Board decided, after much lively debate, to electronically colorize a surviving black and white photo of the famous Crosby home. This colorized version is reproduced on the front cover. The Editorial Board values accuracy and insisted that readers be told what we had done so that there was no deception. At the Board's request, Jay Pfaender systematically pursued examples of the actual colors that might have been seen if a color photo had existed. Thus he found brick from the original building and chased down paints used in other Clarence Johnston-designed buildings that have similarities to Stonebridge. From the landscape architects' plans for the Crosby estate he was able to identify the colors of the trees and shrubs that graced the grounds. The result, we hope, is a color image that conveys Stonebridge as faithfully as careful research and electronic wizardry permit. We, of course, invite you to comment on our decision to colorize and the results.

Two authors, Harlan Stoehr and Forrest Troyer, who have long been associated with the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Experiment Station in St. Paul, conclude this issue of *Ramsey County History* with a biographical profile and tribute to Willet Hays, the first head of agronomic research at the university. Hays served Minnesota between 1888 and 1891 and 1893 and 1904. During his long career as an agronomist, Hays not only conducted major research at the East Bank campus, but he also served for a time in the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. and as Minister of Agriculture for Argentina. Today Hays deserves to be recognized as one of Minnesota's true agricultural leaders.

John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

The Andahazys: A Clarification

The photograph of Anna and Lorand (Lorant) Andahazy that appeared on page 26 of your Summer issue was one of a series of Constantine photos taken in the 1950s. The Andahazys were not refugees who fled Europe during World War II. Anna Andrianova (Andahazy) was the stage name of a young woman named Sally Bridges who was born in New York and became the first American girl to join the Ballet Russe. Lorand Andahazy and his family emigrated from Hungary to America in the 1920s. He studied ballet in Ohio and also joined the Ballet Russe. They were married just before he was drafted into the army during World War II.

Sandra Snell Weinberg.

Getting It Right

The article on Zeb Pike in your most recent issue is just fine; it's what a historical magazine devoted to Ramsey County should be after. Interesting, full of personalities, alive. There was one tiny typo, however. On page 11, in the far right column, the editor let stand the word *principle* for principal. On page 13 in the left column the editor adds the word *sic* to another (historical) misuse of the word. If a nineteenth century account earns a *sic*, should a twenty-first century one languish without it? P. S. The Eastman cover paintings are swell, giving a visible wilderness background for the Pike visit.

Walter N. Trenerry

More About Streetcars

It was interesting to read John Diers's article on streetcars in your Spring issue. I came down from rural Minnesota to enroll at Hamline University

in the Fall of 1951. Not only did I see my first streetcars, I actually rode them. Even some of the beautiful PCC cars. The destruction of the streetcar systems of America was one of the most heinous crimes this nation ever committed.

Diers states on page 17 that "Fred Ossama went hat-in-hand to G. M. for a mere twenty-five buses and returned with an offer of 525." This type of thing went on across the United States for some time. For a synopsis of that ugly tale, look at "The Great Transportation Conspiracy" by Jonathon Kwity in the February 1981 issue of Harper's. Kwity also was the author of *Vicious Circles: The Mafia in the Market Place* (W.W. Norton). In 1950, G. M. and other criminals were convicted of anti-trust violations in a federal court in Chicago. Under appeal, the conviction was upheld.

I do not think we should say that the streetcar and the auto "came into general use at the same time" in 1920. After all, there were horsecars before streetcars, and railroads had reached their maximum miles of trackage in 1916. When the first electric streetcars began running here in 1890, most riders had been on passenger trains. I also would highly recommend the book, *Getting There* by Stephen B. Goddard (Basic Books).

Today we are engaged in a war in Iraq which is at least partly about keeping a cheap and steady supply of oil for the cars G. M. forced down our throats after it destroyed the rail transit system of America.

Richard Hanson

Help!

My grandmother worked at a movie theater when she was seventeen or eighteen years old and met my grandfather

there. She lived at 85 Hatch Street St. Paul, and he lived at 212 Sherburne. In 1930 there had to be a movie theater in that neighborhood. Could you find its name and address?

Jim Logsdon

We found a listing for Bluebird Motion Pictures at 900 Rice Street and its intersection with Manitoba. The building apparently is still standing. It was built by Hiller Hoffman in 1914 to house his hardware store. From time to time the building also housed a parochial school uniform manufacturer, True Value Hardware, and Weyandt Brothers Furniture Appliance and Mattresses.

A Rubber Factory's Timbers

I am curious about the structure that was a rubber factory established in 1905 at 300 E. Fourth Street in Lowertown. I was visiting there last week and was awestruck by the giant timbers used in its construction. My estimate of the main beams is that they are 24 by 24 inches and 40 feet high. Were these from native Minnesota trees? What kind? What was their origin? Was Western fir brought in by rail, or harvested in northern Minnesota?

Ed Schmidt

You seem to be describing the St. Paul Rubber Company's seven-story building. The original building permit is lost. We do not know the architect. For years the building was used for Honza Printing; it also was home to the Toni Home Perm Company. In the mid-1980s one-fourth of the building was rebuilt for use as apartments. The folks at the Northwest Architectural Archives might have blueprints of the building.



Top: In 1937, the South Mississippi Boulevard entrance gate was moved to Hamline and Midway Parkway as the west entrance to Como Park. E.E. Engelbert donated the gate and WPA workers installed it.

Below: The wrought-iron pedestrian gates were moved to near Lake Como and are frequently used for wedding pictures. Photos by the author.



R.C.H.S.
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