

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Fall 2006

Volume 41, Number 3

The 1894 Pullman Strike
and the Death of
Switchman Charles Luth

Page 14

A Little-Known Railway That Couldn't
The St. Paul Southern

—Page 4



Looking west from the Robert Street Bridge, this 1920s photo shows a St. Paul Southern car headed outbound for South St. Paul and Hastings. Between 1900 and 1910 the combined population of these two Dakota County communities increased 38.5%, encouraging construction of the interurban. But the line's ambitions to build on to Cannon Falls and Rochester went unfulfilled, and it eventually succumbed to automobile and bus competition. Photograph courtesy of the Minnesota Transportation Museum. See John Diers's article beginning on page 4.

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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 (651-222-0701). Printed in
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torical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. **All
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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 41, Number 3

Fall 2006

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.

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 *A Little-Known Railway That Couldn't
The St. Paul Southern*
John W. Diers
- 14 *The 1894 Pullman Strike in St. Paul
and the Death of Switchman Charles Luth*
Gregory T. Proferl
- 24 *Growing Up in St. Paul
Memories of Frogtown in the 1930s*
James R. Brown
- 27 Book Review

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

Transportation is the theme for this issue's two main articles: a history of the short-lived St. Paul Southern electric interurban railway, and an exploration of the social and economic implications of the 1894 Pullman strike in St. Paul. The latest addition to our series, "Growing Up in St. Paul," presents a lyrical account of childhood in the Frogtown neighborhood in the 1930s. And a book review introduces a significant compilation of the letters of Bishop Loras, who sent priests from Dubuque in the 1850s to minister to the population of the new Minnesota Territory.

These articles, with their varying subjects and approaches, illustrate the different ways this magazine addresses its mission to preserve and highlight the many facets of Ramsey County history. We hope you will be able to contribute a little extra this year, through our annual appeal, to strengthen the financial base that allows us to present such great material on a continuing basis.

Anne Cowie,
Chair, Editorial Board

Foundations: The Letters of Mathias Loras, D.D., Bishop of Dubuque

Robert F. Klein, editor, translator, and transcriber, assisted by Sr. Benvenuta Bras, O.P.

Dubuque, Iowa: Loras College Press, 2004

987 pages, \$39.90

Reviewed by Julian G. Plante

This hefty volume contains more than 400 letters of Bishop Mathias Loras. The letters are in French, a large number in English, thirty in Latin, and six in German. They are competently transcribed, translated, and edited by Robert F. Klein, director of library resources at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. During his nearly half-century association with Loras College, Robert Klein developed an interest in obtaining a fuller picture of the person of Bishop Loras. He initiated the effort to track down related correspondence in twelve archives and documented sources.

Jean Mathias Pierre Loras, more commonly known as Mathias Loras, was born in 1792 in Lyons, France. He studied at the Balley presbytery school in Ecully. There he established a life-long friendship with his schoolmate and, later, saint John Vianney. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1815. Two years following his ordination, Father Loras served as superior of the minor seminary in Meximieux, and in 1827, at the major seminary at L'Argentière. He accepted an invitation in 1829 from fellow native of Lyons, Bishop Michael Portier, Bishop of Mobile, Alabama, to come to the United States. He set out from Le Havre and worked for seven years as pastor of the cathedral in Mobile, as vicar general of the Mobile diocese, and later as rector of Spring Hill College, founded in 1830.

In late 1837 at the cathedral in Mobile, Loras was consecrated first bishop of the newly created diocese of Dubuque, although he did not arrive in the city until spring of 1839. He had spent the intervening months in Europe

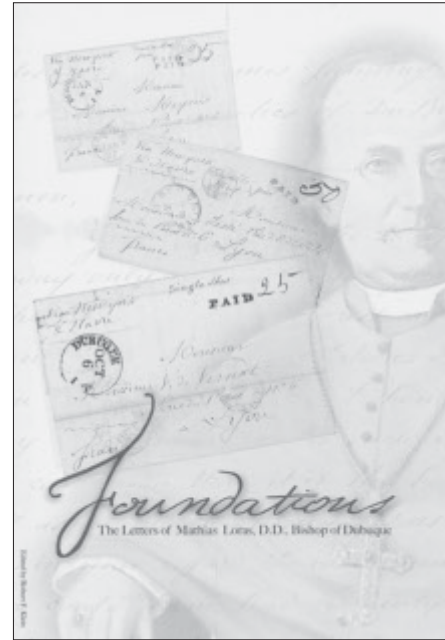
raising funds and recruiting volunteer clergy to work in the new diocese.

Bishop Loras visited Fort Snelling and Mendota in 1839 in the hope of establishing mission churches. There, to his pleasant surprise, he found 185 Catholics, "most of them being Indians and French." After spending thirteen days in Mendota he returned to Dubuque down the Mississippi River by canoe. On his arrival in Dubuque, he made good on his promise to send a priest to outposts in the Minnesota Territory. The person he chose for this missionary activity was Father Lucien Galtier. Minnesota at the time came under the jurisdictions of the dioceses of Dubuque and Milwaukee. Saint Paul was not created as a diocese until 1850. It was Loras who nominated his former student at Meximieux and his vicar general, Father Joseph Cretin, to be the first bishop of Saint Paul.

When Mathias Loras arrived as bishop in Dubuque, there were almost no Catholics present. "By 1857, the year before his death, the diocese served 49,000 Catholics, with 37 priests in 52 churches and 47 mission stations" (p. vii). The picture that emerges of Loras is one of a deeply devout Catholic priest, a zealous missionary, a persistent, even demanding but successful fundraiser who personally lived in poverty in his nineteen years as ecclesiastical Ordinary (Bishop) of Dubuque.

The letters in this volume are grouped according to date, extending in twelve sections, from 1809 to 1857. Klein lists the location of the letters in the section "Conventions Used" (p. xiii). In a brief, clear and straightforward way, he describes the editorial process he used for transcribing and translating the letters. There are four appendices, to wit, the text of an article on the death of Loras, the text of Bishop Loras' secretary, Rev. Louis Decailly's report on the death of Loras, the text of the memorial oration by Rev. Samuel Mazzuchelli, O.P., and an inventory of the personal property of the deceased Loras. A thorough and competent bibliography is followed by a useful index.

Some of the letters specific to Minnesota include thirty-four letters deal-



ing with Father and later Bishop Joseph Cretin, one of them addressed to Cretin himself. Fort Snelling ("Fort of St. Peter's") is referenced three times. Fr. Lucien Galtier figures six times; Lake Superior and the Apostle Islands once; his canoe trip from St. Peter's (Minnesota River) are dealt with twice. There are numerous references to Fr. Augustin Ravoux and to Native Americans, including especially the Sioux and the Sioux Massacre. The Red River rates mention three times, St. Anthony Falls once, the city of St. Paul once. There are repeated references to the diocese of St. Paul and to St. Peter, Minnesota.

Bishop Loras died in 1858.

Klein, who was responsible for this superb compilation notes that "[Loras] has not yet received the full study and attention so richly deserved but which he would be the first to turn aside. Perhaps these letters will provide evidence for the greatness of Mathias Loras and serve as a stimulus for further research" (p. viii). Dr. Klein has accomplished his noble goal.

Julian G. Plante, Ph.D. is founding Executive Director emeritus of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library and Research Professor of Classics ancien at Saint John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minnesota.



This headstone in Oakland Cemetery marks the final resting places of railroad switchman Charles Luth and his wife, Pauline. For more on how Charlie Luth died in St. Paul's labor violence of 1894, see Gregory Proferl's article beginning on page 14. Photograph by Maureen McGinn.

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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