

Fall 2007

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The Other Librarian

Clara Baldwin and the Public Library

Movement in Minnesota

— Page 4



Clara F. Baldwin in 1936, shortly before her retirement from her position as the director of the Division of Libraries in the Minnesota Department of Education. She was a long-time leader in the Public Library movement in Minnesota whose career is profiled in this issue. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 42, Number 3

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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

The theme for this issue is the creativity of diverse Ramsey county residents as they responded to change. Bob Garland adds an important chapter to Minnesota women's history with his account of Clara F. Baldwin, who headed the drive to build a library system in greater Minnesota as its population grew. From the time she graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1892, Baldwin worked to make books accessible to all Minnesotans. As state librarian from 1900 to 1936, she first oversaw the development of traveling libraries, then a comprehensive system of local libraries. James Brown follows an earlier article for this magazine with more lively reminiscences of growing up in the 1920s and '30s in Frogtown, which was then a vital neighborhood near the state capitol that included African-American residents. His early relationships and activities, followed by his education on racism at the neighborhood barbershop, make a compelling read. And Anne Beiser Allen tells the intriguing story of Rev. Henry B. Whipple's election as the first Episcopal bishop of Minnesota in 1859, as that denomination was expanding in the new state. We hope you enjoy reading it all.

Anne Cowie
Chair, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

The Steam Engine at Villaume

Just a footnote to [Steve Trimble's] article about the Villaume Company in your Winter 2007 issue. The steam engine that had been in the Villaume Company plant for so many years and was donated to and restored by the Western Minnesota Steam Threshers Reunion was also a local product. It was built by the Twin Cities Iron Works and is a single, simple, engine having a 20½-inch bore and a 48-inch stroke, with a Corliss valve gear. The flywheel pulley face is 29 inches wide and drives the generator with a 26-inch flat belt. It originally operated with 150 lbs. steam pressure at 72 rpm producing 380 horsepower. This engine can be seen in operation over the Labor Day weekend each year at Rollag, Minnesota. Its quiet power is quite impressive.

*Richard Wenkel,
Falcon Heights*

We appreciate having this additional information on the majestic steam engine that the Villaume Company used to generate electrical power for its woodworking operations. Anyone who wants to learn more about the impressive woodworking that Villaume carpenters did in finishing the interior of the St. Paul City Hall/Ramsey County Courthouse is invited to attend a public celebration of Villaume Industries' 125 years of continuous operations at the City Hall/County Courthouse at 6:30 PM on October 25th. The evening includes talks about Villaume, their work in that building between 1929 and 1932, and an opportunity to take a guided tour to see some of the exotic woods used to finish this architectural treasure.

Henry Ford and St. Paul

I enjoyed the Summer issue of *Ramsey County History* ("Henry Ford Wins the Power Struggle for the High Dam"). Henry Ford may have been a crackpot ("Get the boys out of the trenches by Christmas" and his "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," etc.), but he was a real benefactor of St. Paul.

One query: On page 18 ("The Bishop Jade Books"), the author says [William Dawson Johnston, the head librarian at the St. Paul Public Library, who was also known as Sir William Johnston-Gordon] "... was an English knight, bearer of the inherited title." I don't think so. A knight is a noble and does not inherit the knighthood. If Sir Somebody is a baronet, he could have inherited the "Sir" but otherwise no.

*Walter Trenerry,
Mendota Heights*

As author Brian McMahon makes clear in his article on the Ford hydroelectric plant, Henry Ford was a controversial business figure in the 1920s and he is still controversial today. As to William Johnston Gordon, we couldn't find a copy of Burke's Peerage to check this question out.

Kudos for the Ford Article

I enjoyed Brian McMahon's article (Summer 2007) on the Ford plant so much! Very interesting and impressive from a scholarship point of view. Thanks for a fine effort.

*Diane Trout-Oertel,
Oertel Architects, St. Paul*

We hope that anyone who is interested in what happens to the Ford Assembly Plant site in St. Paul will take the time to read Brian's article.

Building the St. Paul Southern

Our Fall 2006 issue carried John W. Diers's history of the St. Paul Southern Electric Railway between St. Paul and Hastings between 1913, when the line was incorporated, and its demise in 1928. Some time after that issue was published, Editorial Board member Steve Trimble came across two photos that are reproduced below while reading microfilm of the *St. Paul Daily News*. These photos carry the headline "St. Paul Southern Cars Are Chartered for First Excursion over Its Lines. Trolley Wire Stringing to Start This Week—Passenger Coaches to



Arrive June 15." The top photo gives a close-up view of a spiking crew laying rails for the road at the rate of half a mile per day. These photos appeared in the May 24, 1914 edition on page 3. They are reproduced by courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



A postcard view from about 1909 showing the Carnegie Library in Spring Valley, Minnesota. For more on Clara F. Baldwin and her role in the Public Library movement in Minnesota, see Robert Garland's article beginning on page 4. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

R.C.H.S.
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