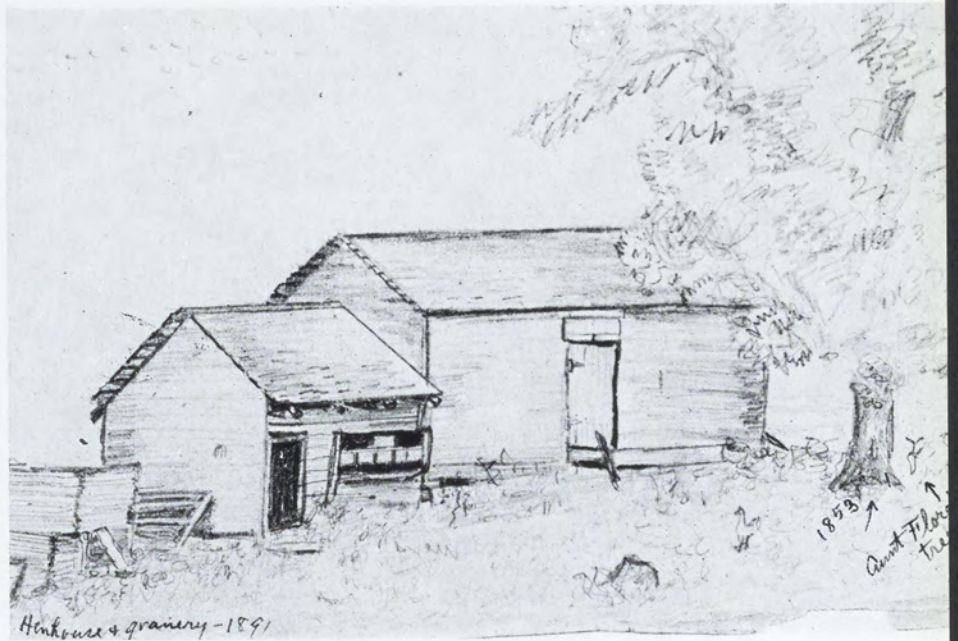
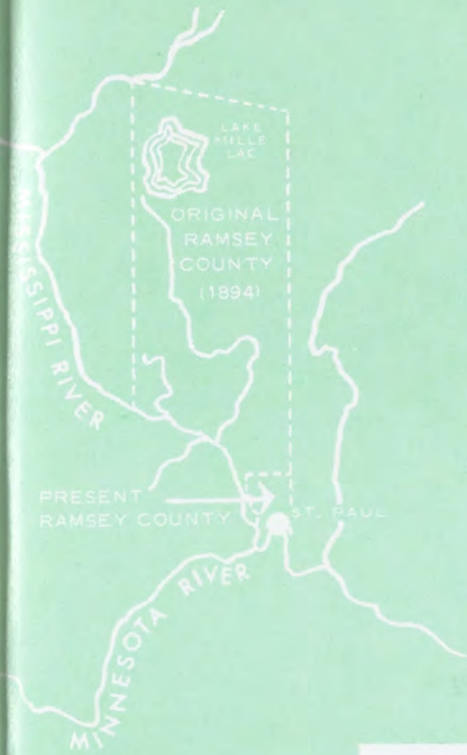


RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



Spring

1964

Volume 1

Number 1

Ramsey County History

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

SPRING, 1964

Published by the RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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teur Avenue West, St. Paul, Minn. Member-
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sell for \$1.00. Correspondence concerning con-
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lished, if accepted, as space permits.

ON THE COVER: The old henhouse and granary which once stood behind the Gibbs farm house are long since gone but they are recaptured here in one of a series of charming pencil sketches made during the 1890s by Lillie Gibbs LeVesconte, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Heman Gibbs. Sometime during that decade, Lillie accompanied her mother on a trip back to Mrs. Gibbs' childhood home near Batavia, N. Y. In the days before cameras, Lillie LeVesconte, like so many other men and women of her era, took along her little sketchbook and produced her own pictorial record of the trip. More of her sketches accompany the story beginning on the opposite page. They are reproduced from the original sketchbook which now is owned by the Ramsey County Historical Society.

Wolves, Indians, Bitter Cold . . .

A Fur Trader's Perilous Journey

“**M**OVED by a disposition to rove and see the world . . .”, Daniel H. Hunt, a New England schoolmaster who became a Minnesota fur trader, spent three weeks during the winter of 1859 traveling hundreds of miles alone, by dog sled, between Fort Garry and St. Anthony.

His own account of this hazardous journey is recorded in his diary of the years from 1854 to 1859. Hunt, who became one of Ramsey county's hardy and colorful pioneers, seems to have fallen prey to the adventurous spirit which was so much a part of 19th century American life. It is in his diary, now in the possession of the Ramsey County Historical Society, that he candidly admits to this “disposition to rove.” He records a trip through Massachusetts and a long sea voyage to the Carolinas before making his way westward, in 1857, to St. Anthony where he became a fur trader. Between 1857 and 1860 he plied his trade between St. Anthony and Fort Garry, now within Winnipeg, Canada.

Eventually, Hunt gave up the fur trade, served from 1862 to 1865 with the Third Minnesota Infantry Regiment in the Civil War, married Annie Lockwood of St. Paul and settled down in a house which still stands on Old Territorial Road near Cromwell in St. Paul. From 1866 until his death in 1891, he was a farmer and school teacher.

Thirty years after his perilous journey, he

Hunt's route is traced here on a map drawn especially for Ramsey County History by Edward J. Lettermann, host in residence at the Gibbs House.

sat down to write an account of it, evidently in a letter to friends back east. The letter, portions of which are published here, also is in the possession of the Ramsey County Historical Society. It was based on his diary entries, with some comments add-



ed in retrospect, and bears the date of the day on which he began his journey.

*"Ft. Garry, Hudson Bay Territory,
Prince Rupert Land,
January 15—1859*

"Left Ft. Garry at 6 in the morning with my team of dogs attached to sled constructed just as they now make their toboggans—upon which I had two robes—two blankets—one rubber blanket—one ax—camp kettle & Provisions for myself & dogs consisting of pemican—bread—pork—tea—coffee—salt & sugar, all in small quantities—as I did not wish to overload my dogs.

"About noon it commenced snowing & snowed hard all that day & the next which made it very hard traveling as the wind blew great gusts & I got tired out & was quite sick the third day, but pushed on through wind & snow—reaching my old friend Peter Hayden's at Pembina just at dark in good condition to enter hospital. Bought two more dogs & left one of my old ones that did not work well. The mail carriers who brought the mail from Crow Wing on the Mississippi to Pembina Mountain or St. Jo were to be at P. in the forenoon on their way to Crow Wing and I was to go along with them, but they had got behind time by having a drunk & did not leave til nearly night.

"I traveled on to the first of the two Rivers & ate supper as it was a bright moonlight night—drove on to the next river—hitched my dogs & laid down in the snow but could not sleep so about two A.M. hitched up my four dogs & drove on hoping that the mailcarriers would come along but as it began to get daylight in the morning I could see that the tricky mailcarriers had already gone ahead, having passed me by turning out one side when I laid down. . . ."

"IT THAWED nearly all day & towards night began to rain which wet me through but drove down to Pine River & camped but could not get dry—so laid down & went to sleep & awoke to find myself under some three inches of snow & the weather getting decidedly cold. Got a lunch & thinking it to be nearly morning, started on, but after going a few miles, the moon came out & I saw that it was then only about 1 A.M. &

as the only way I could get through the loose snow, about 6 inches, was to shove behind my train, & as the dogs would not go any further I hitched them without unharnessing & laid down in the snow without any fire & went to sleep, but how long I lay there do not know but was dreaming that some good angel was saying—'Get up, Daniel, you are freezing,' & when I tried to get up found that I could hardly move & could not stand for a long time, but at last got hold of a small tree & got on my feet & at last . . . I could walk back & forth in the path, til I got so as to get my ax & make a fire & get something warm to drink & eat.

"Started on at daylight & soon came out upon the prairie & found the wind blowing hard & weather bitter cold. Drove on till night when I found a little clump of poplars about as big as a small blanket & tried to get a fire but could only succeed in partially thawing some snow to drink & ate frozen pemican for supper—fed my dogs & laid down, but soon found that I could not live there long as it was very cold (50° below at Ft. Garry). . . ."

"On I went over that desolate prairie till about nine the next morning when I found enough brush to build a fire, make coffee & thaw some meat & bread & feeding my dogs who were about tired out, but after an hour's rest, drove on till three in the afternoon when I found a chance to get wood enough to make a fire & camp for the night. Talk of comfort! Home in a palace & all such things!! That night I enjoyed them. . . ."

"STARTED EARLY & drove hard all day & got good camping place at night & the next day the same. Had just got a fire started & was standing probably thinking of 'the girl I left behind me,' when a yell such as we might expect to come up out of the infernal pit, made my hair stand up—& if my cap had not been tied down I might have gone up to add another star to the Dipper. I did not know whether it came from the Heavens or the earth but it seemed to be everywhere, all at the same time, & for an instant I seemed petrified, but when that one yell was turned into twenty coming from all around me, . . . then I realized that it was only wolves. . . ."

"After getting a warm supper I laid down

before a grand good fire, & was dreaming the dreams of the righteous when presto! I found myself out in the snow up to my middle, holding on to my leg, & jumping like any other jumping jack—Wolves! Wolves! it must be they have got me for they are bighting my foot & leg horidly, but I soon find the flame coming up from the snow & I find that tis the fire that is bighting so hard & after a few extra dives in the snow & a good amount of rubbing that put out the fire. I realise that my bedding is afire & after putting that out, I haul up to find out the extent of loss & repair damages. Find that the fire had burned through rubber blanket—buffalo robe — blanket — pants legging — mocasin — blanket . . . english hoes-sock & badly scorched hide & reached a little too near the bone, to be comfortable to Dan.

“It took me nearly all the rest of the night to repair damages & get ready for a start, but I got a short nap & started out about four o'clock determined to make a big run that day. My road ran up the Red Lake River & across points where it was cracked & now & then there was a few rods of bare ice where I would jump on & ride but not to exceed one mile in all. I slung french and indian to the dogs & when that failed to keep them on the jump, slung the rawhide on their backs, keeping me on the trot till noon when I stoped & ate some frozen bread. Pushed on till sundown reaching a camping place where I found . . . fine soft spruce boughs for a bed having made sixty miles that day, as I was told by those who knew the road well.

“I WAS TOO TIRED to eat much & after caring for my sore leg & the dogs got some refreshing sleep during the first part of the night but before morning, found that I had rather overdone myself & after eating a light breakfast started on hoping to reach the indian village at Red Lake by noon, but I soon found that I was too sick to make much headway, but poked along till nearly sundown before I reached the village, & as I passed along through their street with the tepees on both sides I found the squaws all out preparing their wood for the night. Out came the bucks shouting to the top of their voice, but I only said in indian How do you do friend & drove on, till a young buck all painted up & feathered



Daniel H. Hunt, fur trader, Civil War veteran, pioneer St. Paul teacher and farmer. From the Ramsey County Historical Society files.

out ran out & jumped on my train (or sled) & began to untie the cords that held my traps.

“He was a ‘big injun’ & Hunt a little white man, but Hunt was too spry for the red devil, for before he knew what was up, Mr. injun found himself on his back in two feet of soft snow & Hunt give the dogs a whack & a yell & away went dogs & Hunt leaving Mr. injun to crawl out as best he could, while all the she red devils in the village were yelling at the baffled buck blowing and diging the snow out of his nose, eyes & ears so that he could see, & then started for me. Then I jumped on my train & tried to get out a revolver but as I could not get at it I went through the motion as though I had put it under my coat & stoped to meet him, when he turned around & went into his wigwam & I drove on as fast as my poor, tired dogs could go. I knew he was mad all through & if he could get a good chance would give me the worst of it, so after getting out of his sight, hired an indian to put his dog on ahead of

mine, hitch a string to his collar & go on about two miles to a halfbreeds house, where I got supper & a chance to sleep on the floor & food for my dogs, as mine had given out.

"Found the country about Red Lake very uneven & that morning as I was going down quite a hill, jumped on the train & started the dogs upon the run down the hill, the dogs making good time, with their ears & tail up, but Hunt & the train was too fast for them & as we got about two thirds the way down the hill, we came upon the first dog who gave a yell & went under the train & that stopped the other three, who jumped some one side & the others the other & away went sled, dogs & Hunt down the hill at lightning speed, sometimes one & then the other being on top, till at last we reached the bottom a badly mixed up and badly demoralised compound of sled-dogs-harness camping outfit & a little man.

"AFTER REPAIRING DAMAGES to broken harness etc. went along finely for we were in a hilly timbered country & out a road where there was no danger of getting lost. Camped that night on the bank of the Father of Waters, but at that point I could easily jump across from bank to bank. Quite a contrast from where I have floated on these waters from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico. My big days travel & my little set too with my dusky friend, was rather too much for me & during the next day I could hardly get along through the heavy snow storm & the snow got to be so deep that my dogs would lie down evry few rods, but I kept on till nearly night, when I came to some wigwams near the shore of Cass Lake & inquiring for the chief's wigwam, went there & told him that I was sick & needed rest, his two wives took care of my dogs—brought in my bedding—made me a comfortable bed & I laid down with my feet to the fire & got some sleep while they dried & mended my moccasins & socks & the next morning they furnished me with what fish I wanted for

myself & dogs & on holding out a handful of silver to them, they only took enough to pay them for the fish.

"Next morning it snowed & blowed very hard & I started out to cross Cass Lake but as there had been a fall of a foot of soft snow I could not make the dogs follow the trail. I went to some wigwams on an island & got a boy about fourteen years old to go along & show me the trail, two days till I got to Leech Lake. The boy done nicely till after we got dinner but while I was packing up our dinner things, I did not notice the boy till I saw him about twenty rods back on the trail going for home as fast as his legs would carry him.

"I gave a yell, which made him turn around & look, but only doubled his speed. Then I droped camping tools & tried my speed on 'one little injun boy' & I soon found that I was gaining on the rascal but I had on too much clothing for a long race & feared that I should get out-winded, so I sang out in indian calling him a 'bad dog' & threatening to kill him when he concluded to stop & I marched my little injun back & tied a string around his wrist & to the lead dog's collar & kept him ahead of me all the rest of the day & it was well I did for in going the length of a lake about three miles long, the trail turned off about half way across & crossed a high ridge of land & struck another lake leading off in a different direction which I should not have found without the lad.

"WE HAD A GOOD FIRE that night & the boy ate up nearly all my provisions. The next day we got to Leech Lake where I found some white men traders & I laid over there one day & got filled up on good provision & then went on without any trouble for the rest of the journey for three days when I arrived at Crow Wing on the Mississippi River, the second day of Feb. & arrived at St. Anthony the sixth, right glad to get where I could enjoy some of the blessings of society. . . ."

January 13-1889 D. H. Hunt . . ."



THE GIBBS HOUSE

Headquarters of the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue W., St. Paul, Minn.

THE Ramsey County Historical Society was founded in 1949. During the following years the Society, believing that a sense of history is of great importance in giving a new, mobile generation a knowledge of its roots in the past, acquired the 100-year-old farm home which had belonged to Heman R. Gibbs. The Society restored the Gibbs House and in 1954 opened it to the public as a museum which would depict the way of life of an early Minnesota settler.

In 1958 the Society erected a barn, behind the house, which is maintained as an agricultural museum to display the tools and other implements used by the men who broke up the prairie soil and farmed with horse and oxen.

Today, in addition to maintaining the Gibbs property, the Ramsey County Historical Society is active in the preservation of historic sites in Ramsey county, conducts tours, prepares pamphlets and other publications, organizes demonstrations of pioneer crafts and maintains a Speakers' Bureau for schools and organizations. It is the Society's hope that through its work the rich heritage of the sturdy men and women who were the pioneers of Ramsey county will be preserved for future generations.