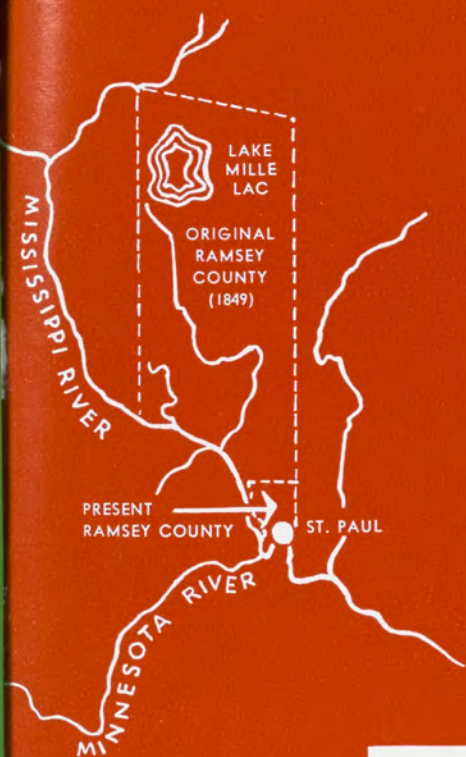


RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



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CONTENTS . . .

	Early Explorers' Trails Alan R. Woolworth	Page 3
Spring 1967	Portrait of a Pioneer Photographer Henry Hall	Page 9
Volume 4	A Bridge, A Street, A Levee Patricia Condon	Page 14
Number 1	The Saga of Charley Pitts' Body Forgotten Pioneers . . . III A Pioneer Seeks a Farm The Waterways of Minnesota	Page 19 Page 20 Page 21 Page 22

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ON THE COVER: This picture of Fort Snelling, taken about 1870, is an example of the work of William H. Illingworth, pioneer St. Paul photographer whose career is described in the story beginning on Page 9. This is an appropriate cover picture because it also illustrates the story of the early explorers of the Ramsey County area, beginning on Page 3. It was from the Fort that expeditions of exploration set forth into the "howling wilderness" of the Minnesota area between the 1820's and the 1850's.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: All pictures in this issue, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Picture Department of the Minnesota Historical Society. The editor is indebted to Eugene Becker, picture curator, and his assistant, Dorothy Gimme-stad, for their help.



*Time, Luck, Stamina—
Pioneers Needed Them All
When Seeking a Farm*

LOCATING a farm, or farm land, during the pioneer years of Minnesota's history often involved a combination of time, luck and physical stamina. At least it would seem so from the following account written by Coates P. Bull, 2137 Commonwealth Avenue, St. Paul.

Bull, who will be 94 years old this year, graduated from the University of Minnesota's College of Agriculture in 1901, served on the faculty there and later joined the state department of agriculture. Here he tells how his father and grandfather came to Minnesota and traveled, on foot, around what is now Minneapolis seeking the farm which became the family homestead. It was located at what is now Fiftieth Street and France Avenue in Edina.

"[My father] was born and raised on a farm in Jefferson Co., N. Y. . . . about 75 miles north of Syracuse. [He] met Mary A. Comstock [and] married her in 1855.

"In 1857, he and his father came to Minnesota to find a farm location where [my father could] start his life's work. The [railroad] ran only to La Crosse, Wis., and [they took] the riverboat from there to Minneapolis.

"[They arrived] on July 4, 1857. They were discouraged by the sandy land north and east, but decided to make one more try so walked to Lake Harriet and around the west side [of the lake] and through the woods of the southwest lake area.

"Here they found a field of corn flourish-

This log farm home is similar to the house bought in 1858 by Coates Bull's father. The sketch by Edward J. Lettermann is from his book, *Farming in Early Minnesota*, published in 1966 by the Ramsey County Historical Society and available at the Society.

ing knee high, so kept [following] the old trail road. After one-and-a-half miles they talked with a man who was hoeing potatoes. Yes, he might sell. He would talk to his wife.

"They went on a quarter of a mile—got dinner with another [farmer]. They were impressed with the prospects. Returning, they talked again with Mr. ——. Yes, they would probably sell, would let them know later.

"In February a letter came stating the terms: 160 acres, enough wheat and oats to plant the tillable acres, two cows, two brood sows, 12 chickens, team of oxen, wagon and farm machinery (such as it was), log house and log barn. Price \$3,000.

"So [my father] and Mary started west, arrived in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Bought a team of horses and wagon, started north along the Mississippi River trail. The 1858 spring was breaking, thawing in the daytime and freezing at night.

"Starting early each morning the horses broke through the mud-frozen crust. After a two-weeks trip from La Crosse, they arrived at the farm, the hair off the front of the horses legs where they broke through the frozen mud. . . . Farming operations were underway at once."

Bull adds that in 1864, Mary Comstock Bull died. In 1866 his father married his mother, who was Annie Lea Cooper. The last forty acres of the farm, with Minnehaha Creek flowing through them, were sold in 1920 for \$1,000 an acre.



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.