

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



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ON THE COVER: The officers quarters at Fort Ripley had long since been deserted when Edward A. Bromley, the Minneapolis photographer and collector published this brooding picture of the old fort in 1906. He may have taken the picture himself.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Unless otherwise indicated, pictures used in this issue are from the audiovisual library of the Minnesota Historical Society. The editor is indebted to Eugene Becker and Dorothy Gimmestad, of the state historical society's audiovisual staff, for their help.

The Letters of Samuel Pond, Jr.

Exams: 'The Terror' of Students

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the Fall, 1969, issue of Ramsey County History, we published the first portion of a series of letters written by Samuel Pond, Jr., 100 years ago when he was a student at the University of Minnesota. The second and last portion of this collection of letters is published here, with annotation by Ann Cowie. They were written to his father, the famous missionary, and his brother, E. Judson Pond, at their home at Shakopee, and they vividly describe the author's life as a student during the first year the University offered college level work. However, the letters also reveal a quality which sometimes seems to be missing today. Threaded through his letters is a deep concern for his family, a longing to be home with them, and an unashamed affection for them. Student humor also surfaces.

Samuel Pond, Jr., graduated from the University and moved to Minneapolis in 1878. In 1879 he married Irene Goodrich and joined his brother-in-law, William Dean, in the farm implement business. He was secretary of Dean and Company until his death in 1916. His brother, E. Judson, married Minnie Marcus and remained in the Shakopee area, working his father's farm east of that town. When he was 72 he moved into Shakopee where he died in 1943.

* * *

Samuel Pond, Jr., wrote the letters published here during the University's winter and fall terms of 1870. He had completed the 1869 fall term, and had returned to the University after a holiday in Shakopee with his family. There is a break in the letters between the end of the winter, 1870, term, and the fall term of 1870.

* * *

The letters are used through the courtesy of Mrs. George A. Pond, 1311 Cleveland Avenue, St. Paul, whose husband was a charter member of the Ramsey County Historical Society, a faculty member of the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus, and a son of E. Judson Pond.

No. 4 State University
6 P.M. Feb. 21, 1870

FRATER carissimus: It is but a short time not more than 7 hours since we parted company at Gates Corner but judging that you will not be adverse to hearing of my safe arrival I take this early opportunity of informing you of that fact. After having [left] you at the aforesaid point I pursued my journey on top of the drifts for about 7 miles to Richfield. Miles comfortably pleasant and cheerful. There I was overtaken by a man with whom I rode to market square.¹ I arrived at this place at 2 P.M. and having procured a key entered my room where I found the enclosed note which sufficiently explains itself. Respecting the board matter mentioned I have not yet decided which course to pursue whether to board myself or enter the club.² There is stock which I can obtain if I wish.

Mr. Mil —, the fluid preacher, lectures

in Minneapolis to-night. Tomorrow is [a] holiday in honor of General Washington's birthday. I hope you got home without freezing yourself any more, the skin will probably peel off from the side of your nose some. It was as white as snow before we went into Mr. Gates.

I found the weather grew very much milder after I turned toward the city. I also noticed a number of sudden changes in the temperature which, strange to say, invariably occurred at some turn in the road.

I have not yet ascertained where my classes are but do not imagine they have advanced very much during my absence. I have not much to write and will now close. Please write soon and tell me how Rebecca, Aunt Rebecca³ and yourself are.

With much love,
Yours, S.W. Pond Jr.



Farmers' produce wagons in Bridge Square, Minneapolis, the market where Samuel Pond, Jr., went to check prices.

State University, March 8, 1870
 Mon Cher Frere (Latin address)⁴

And now having completed the preface which may as well be embodied in Latin as in anything else, I will proceed.

So Shakopee has become a city. When do they propose to elect a mayor and C. [council] which I suppose are necessary appendages? And R. [Rebecca] has hired a girl.⁵ I hope she will be able to get along more comfortably than without one which I apprehend is rarely the case with house-keepers of Rebecca's temperament. I hope she is much better than she was when I was at home.

I cannot say that I was very much delighted to hear that the cow had a calf, though. I suppose you now have an abundant supply of butter and cream.

I thought some of going out to Bloomington last Sabbath for the purpose of seeing Father if he should come down, but finally decided not to do so. Went to hear a Rev. Mr. _____ instead. He preached a pretty good sermon. Mr. Palton [is] the minister on this side and they consequently have no regular services at the Pres. Church on this side of the river. Prof. Robertson is now absent, consequently we are not now under the necessity of spending a quarter of an hour each day listening to an uninteresting "agricultural" lecture.⁶

So Ellen is to be married to Prof Miller to-day or tomorrow on which point with reference to the time I notice a slight disagreement between your's and Father's letters.⁷ Cornelius informed me a day or two ago "Professor Miller" had in posting hand bills for a lecture in Excelsior appended his title in full to the same and appeared as

a full fledged *professor* of what I did not learn. Has he disposed of his house yet? There is another thing which I have intended to inquire about but have omitted doing so. Has Seymour been in Minneapolis lately?⁸ A fellow of mine informed me that he met in that city some time since a young man who claimed to be a cousin of mine. He paid him the high compliment of saying that he was a first note billiard player so he beat him in a game.

This evening is lyceum night.⁹ Find it useless to make preparation as the speeches must be adapted to the turn which the arguments take; am leader on the negative for this evening. I don't find much news to write, it is as Cooper says.

"Of was seen in ages past
 All that be with wonder view
 Often I will be till the last
 Earth produces nothing new."

Write as often as you can

Vester Frater Samueles W. Pondus Jr.
 (latinized)

State University March 19, 1870
 Siebe Bueder: Yours . . . duly received and the persual of it afforded me much pleasure.

Much of the information contained in it was of a very pleasing and interesting character.

I was very sorry to hear that Rebecca was confined to her bed again and hope she is much better by this time.

Mr. Campbell's absence, I suppose, is not very much regretted by you if his pulpit is well supplied during his absence. Mr. Dewey, the Baptist minister in this place, died suddenly yesterday after an illness of 1 week. Severe colds are very prevalent here just now, the mumps has also attacked one or two of the University students. We have had a very heavy snow during the past two weeks.

Last Tuesday the voters of this town voted on an issue of bonds in aid of the R.R. projected through this place and Shakopee and Carver. The project was defeated by 30 maj[ority].

I attended a lecture last Wednesday evening given by Dr. Brooks in the Baptist Church in Minneapolis: subject, Ralph Waldo Emerson's "English Traits." There were only about fifty or sixty in attendance I think the

Dr. was quite disappointed in the audience if the audience was not in the Dr.

Did not attend Gen. J's. lecture last evening nor have I heard anything concerning it.

Yesterday afternoon we Delta Sigman's were invited to be present at a meeting of the Tenobiau . . . society.¹⁰ The girls conducted things in a very orderly and becoming manner the only difficulty being that we were unable to hear more than one quarter that was said. The exercises consisted chiefly of recitations of selected pieces, select readings and essays. One young lady spoke a piece in German. I must say that half of them might have spoken in German for all I heard of what they said.

I believe nearly all the members of the society comprising nearly all of the female members of this school took part and the pieces were generally quite lengthy, too.

I believe I have mentioned Mrs. Stanton's lecture. Alexander is between two fires and the subject, he says, [is] that his mother will lecture him if he does not go, and Mrs. Stanton will lecture him if he does. And he has been considerably puzzled to determine which he can stand the best, he says that his mother is a great admirer of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady [Stanton].¹¹

Where is Aunt Rebecca at present and how is she? (incorrect use of interrogation point/S.P.)

Examinations commence Friday. I shall probably get away about Wednesday of next week perhaps earlier perhaps later. I have made up my mind not to come back next term. I can easily keep up with my classes at home if I wish to. About the pictures which you mentioned, I do not know if I wish to have any taken. I have some on hand at present which mother can have if she wishes.

I remain as ever your aff. Bro.
S.W. Pond Jr.

St. Anthony Oct. 2nd 1870
Monday 2 o'clock P.M.

My Dear Brother:

I suppose you have information concerning my whereabouts up to the time of Father's return home Sat. afternoon at which point I will commence. Went up to the ferry at the fort [Snelling], with Uncle G. [Gideon Pond] and brought back the team as had been

planned. Had, however, a double team instead of a single horse, regretted being under the necessity of going off just then which was something I had not calculated on, there were some things I wished to talk with Father about and did not.

Sat even W.J. went to meeting, the rest of us staid at home. Sunday morning I went to hear Mr. Wells of Red Wing at Market Street M.E. [church], in afternoon Mr. Riggs¹² came & staid to tea, left R's at 5:45 got home in about 2 hours where I found a letter awaiting me from Aunt R. Alexander has received a circular from the Wisconsin University [and] seems to have nearly decided to go there.

For my part were I intending to graduate I would about as lieve it would be in this institution so far as the information to be attained were concerned as anywhere, but there is such a rush made for colleges at present that a degree bids fair to be of little value. A little surprised to find that we [are] so very first class students and get so many who are destined to be great men. Mr. Riggs informed me that General O.O. Howard had offered Thomas [Riggs] a nomination to an Indian Agency which he, following the advise of his father, did not accept.

He said that Thomas had had some writing to do for the A.M.A. and General H. had received the impression that he knew all about Indians.

I have a good many lessons to prepare and review this afternoon and have no time to write more. Please write as soon and as often as you can and I wish to hear from Father and Mother as often as convenient, any kind of news will be welcome.

From your most aff. Bro.
S.W. Pond Junior

St. Anthony Oct. 31st 1870 1:10 P.M.

Ever Dear Brother: I have just finished my repast consisting of bread, apples and cheese. I procured some excellent cheese last week and have now entered the lists in competition with the mice to see which will secure the "biggest half." I have about come to the conclusion that the staple product of St. Anthony are mice, sand burs and University students. Of the two former enumerated classes it is difficult [learning] which predominates. We have been waging a destructive war upon the mice for some time past.

went at it in scientific style. — the weapons used chiefly mathematical — a slate, algebra, copy of Caesar . . . [We] can now number our victims by the teens, but if the quantity of bread which nightly disappears is any criterion to judge by, we have not succeeded in materially thinning the ranks of the foe. This city also abounds in celestial phenomena, a very extraordinary display of which occurred on last Thursday evening, according to E.S.A.'s account, and I am inclined to believe it to have been very *extraordinary indeed* if it was so attractive as to keep him standing out in the cold for any length of time watching it.¹³

The North star and Northern lights have been in the habit of appearing in different portions of the heavens for some time past. I myself am very strongly inclined to believe that the Northern lights are in the right of it but in this opinion I find myself greatly in the minority. There is even an obscure tradition that one of the sages of this institution took the bearings here once, and demonstrated to a certainty that the North Star was correct. It is rumored that our Prof. [of] Military Sciences & Maj. Gen. N.S.A. contemplates resigning, no reason assigned.

The President came into the meeting of the Harmerian Society the other eve and adjourned it *sine die*. He subsequently revoked the order and we held our meeting as usual.

He was particularly out of humor at that time, the boys say on account of a boil on his neck.

Mr. Cobb of "Temperance Ticket" form is stationed at this place this year — went to hear him yesterday not a very great preacher in *my* opinion.¹⁴

We students are very ignorant respecting the news as a general thing. If Paris was burnt up and the Russian and French armies should use each other up as thoroughly as the famous Kilkeny Cats I don't believe the report thereof "would reach the lower bed of St. Anthony"¹⁵ but then these are trifles. Greek adjectives . . . are of a great deal more importance if we stuff our minds with rules for the subj. . . . we can not fail of becoming great men. If we learn to expound an infinite series or produce a line to infinity, our minds will expand proportionately. *So they say.*

I am glad to hear that you are nearly ready for *winter*. I suppose that winter is nearly ready for *us*. The reason why I do not say more about things at home is not because I do not think [of things] there and wonder about the various things individually considered but because I desire my letters to be more particularly a record of affairs in St. Anthony with which I am connected and yours I desire should be a record of home affairs as fully as is consistent with your time and patience.

In order to post myself in regard to Father's queries I went over to [Minneapolis] Saturday and made sundry inquiries respecting geese and honey by which I obtained the following information that geese were worth from 10 to 12. Market dull at present I should judge. Honey (box) is worth about \$.25 according to quality. There will probably be more demand for poultry in the course of 3 or 4 weeks and probably also a *greater supply*.

Last evening I went over to hear Henry Stimpson, he delivered a most excellent discourse directed especially to young men. I am undecided whether I admire him or Mr. Breed most as a preacher but am inclined to think Mr. S. superior. The house was full and the congregation most attentive. Mr. S. has a very plain but nevertheless *beautiful* style both of composition and delivery.

Henry Riggs is still in Minneapolis has secured employment in the P.O. I *think*.

The President is very anxious to see Uncle G. [Gideon], has learned that Uncle G. is a most excellent Sioux scholar, derived the information from Neal's [Neill's] History. The Pres. wants to learn Sioux, thinks the [language] very remarkable, has a copy of Mr. Riggs Dictionary, says it is very scarce, worth \$10.00 per copy & c&c. I think Father or Uncle G. had better apply for the professorship of Dakota in this University. It seems to me it would be almost as useful a branch of education as Military Science and would not involve so much exposure to the cold . . .

Tell mother I am waiting patiently or impatiently as the case may be for an epistle from her. I received last week a most welcome letter from Father one from Aunt R and one from E.J. Sunday. I got it from the P.O. Sunday. Thanksgiving comes the 24th. I propose to spend a week as near as maybe

at home if nothing happens to prevent.

From your loving brother — Latin
S.W. Pond Jr.

St. Anthony Dec. 1, 1870-8 P.M.

My Dear Brother

I am back again in the old place at my studies. Have completed my preparations for tomorrow recitations and am now at leisure to write home.

We parted at the little brooklet at 20 min. of two. For the next hour I travelled through much the same kind of country as we had already come through. At about three o'clock I crossed Minnehaha Creek some distance above Richfield near a large and apparently very flourishing grist mill. The mill was in motion and efficient water was running through the waste gate to carry a half dozen such mills as Mr. Pettyjohn's.¹⁶

Here I sat down and ate some ginger snaps. At 20 minutes to four I came in sight of Lake Harriet . . . so clear a lake so sweet a strand.

The road passed between Lakes Calhoun and Harriet. At 4:50 I stood by what I supposed to be the old cellar and imagined myself back more than 35 years to the time when that cellar was first dug.¹⁷ The sun was fast setting when I left the lakes and it was most beautifully reflected from the smooth waters. It was sufficient to inspire a poets pen if anything could.

At 5 P.M. I reached Minneapolis and the University before six. I saw nothing of the railroad but heard the whistle of the locomotive occasionally.

And you in the meantime, I suppose, returned to Mr. Slartings, found Father ready to go home and got home about five, perhaps got the sheep in — perhaps found them in and possibly found them on the railroad. So much for that afternoons work — wonder if Father got enough to pay his ferriage. My feet were a little sore when I got here Thursday night, but have now fully recovered.

This is as you know the first day of winter and if we were to take this as a specimen we could truly say — "*December is as pleasant as May.*"

I wonder if R. departed for her house today, if so it must seem rather lonely at

home. You will miss Nettie more considerable I imagine.¹⁸

I suppose those hogs will have to suffer to-morrow unless the powers that be grant them a reprieve. It seems as if it would be a great relief to the short one to shuffle off this mortal coil which in his case signifies unwieldy weight of fat.

The great terror of college undergraduates, next to unpaid bills, the examination is drawing on apace. Many a poor fellow is beginning to tremble at the contemplation of the uncertain tenure of his place in his classes.

Alexander is beginning to have serious apprehensions about his French. But there is one hope for the scientifics; if all others fail, they are bound to believe that Deninell will get through and he is a very modest fellow who is not vain enough to believe that he can go through any knot hole which will admit him.

I have, as you will perceive, but little news to write as things are proceeding very much as usual with but little deviation. I had a very pleasant visit at home as, of course, you are aware, and am now looking forward to the Christmas holidays as a time when perhaps I shall be home and enjoy the associations again.

Write soon to your affectionate brother
S.W. Pond Jr.

St. Anthony Friday eve.
Dec. 16th, 1870

Dear Brother: Yours of last Tuesday acknowledging my last three letters came to hand last evening. I regret very much the delay which they experienced in reaching their place of destination and the anxiety occasioned thereby.

I wrote from St. Paul at R's suggestion but with the hope that you had already heard from me which proves to have been the case.

William has made another sermon which with the preceeding ones makes according to Dr. Franklin the equivalent of a fire. R. was thoroughly tired out, of course, but seemed to be in good spirits.

The house is in most respects a great improvement on the old quarters and seems to be a pleasant convenient and comfortable home, if a rented house can be regarded as a *home* . . .

Rebecca does not, I believe, intend to go home at Christmas — does not feel disposed to incur the expense. Nettie is fat and hearty, looks as if city life suited her first rate, can say "Suffer little children," etc., and "Now I lay me," is as fervent in her responses and as insatiable in her desires as ever.

I rode all the way to St. Paul Sat. and returned, refreshed and invigorated with my visit Sunday evening.

We finished our regular exercises for this term to-day. The examinations in which I am interested are announced as follows: Algebra, Mon.; — afternoon, Latin Reader; Greek, Tuesday; Cicero, Wednesday.

I think the Prof's had in view the object of keeping the students here until the close of the term in fixing the days of examinations — Suppose I shall not be able to get away until Thursday noon.

Alexander has received an invitation to spend the holidays in Anoka but prefers going home. He is planning very violent campaigns upon the beef and other extras when he gets home. He has eaten but one small piece of meat in the past four months. I have indulged myself in the luxury of a pound of beef steak this week. It disappeared as quickly as the snowflake melts in the summer heat.

The allusion to the snowflake reminds me that it has been trying to snow to-day but in a very undecided manner.

Sat. morning: I have built four fires this morning and it is now half-past eight . . .

I can obtain first quality of foolscap for 33 cents . . . perhaps cheaper than that by the 1/4 ream. I will make inquiries today.

I am enjoying good health and hope to find you all enjoying the same blessing one week from yesterday. With love to all

I am as ever your Aff. bro.

S.W. Pond Jr.

Footnotes

1. This was downtown Minneapolis — the old Gateway area.
2. The note apparently referred to a boarding club Pond described in his first series of letters published previously. It had been the custom at that time for University students to cook their own meals in their rooms. President William Watts Folwell was proposing that students band together, pool their funds, form a boarding club in which they would hold stock, hire a cook, buy their food at cost.
3. Rebecca was the sister of Samuel Pond, Jr.; Aunt Rebecca his father's sister.
4. "Mon Chere Frere"; Samuel here mixes French with Latin, perhaps intentionally.
5. "R." was Samuel's sister Rebecca.
6. Colonel Daniel Robertson of St. Paul had been appointed professor of agriculture in 1869, according to the University regents' *Report* for that year. He was greatly interested in agriculture and active in the Grange. This remark by Samuel Pond, Jr., reinforces a statement by James Gray in his history, *The University of Minnesota, 1851-1951*: "The student body made no effort to conceal its sullen resentment at being forced to attend" these lectures.
7. Ellen, who was marrying Professor Otis Miller, was the daughter of Gideon Pond, the equally famous brother of Samuel Pond, Sr. She was a cousin of Samuel, Jr.
8. Seymour Titus, a relative of Samuel's, grandson of a Rebecca Pond who lived from 1800-1887.
9. Lyceums were associations for cultural benefit, including poetry readings and debates, which were extremely popular during this period.
10. The Tenobiau Society was one of the literary organizations which then flourished at colleges and universities. "General J's lecture" probably refers to a similar meeting or lecture.
11. Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a noted women's reform leader during the latter part of the 19th Century. President of the National Women's Suffrage Association, she apparently spoke at the University when Samuel was there.
12. Stephen R. Riggs, a famous Minnesota missionary and a friend of the Ponds'.
13. Here Samuel pokes fun at University living conditions and comments on someone's (most likely his roommate's) view of the Northern lights.
14. Daniel Cobb was a candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1870, running on the Prohibition Movement's "Temperance Ticket." Samuel's brother-in-law, William Dean, with whom he later went into business, ran on a similar platform in the 1892 governor's race.
15. Here Samuel refers facetiously to the University area.
16. The first flour mill in the Shakopee area was built about 1860 by Eli Pettyjohn, whose family was associated with Pettyjohn Breakfast Foods. His brother-in-law, Mr. Huggins, constructed a mill there to grind corn raised by the Indians, as well as a loom for teaching Indian women to weave.
17. He apparently is referring to the foundations of the cabin Gideon and Samuel Pond built in 1835 on the eastern shore of Lake Calhoun when they were working with Chief Cloudman's Lake Calhoun band of Sioux.
18. Nettie was Samuel's niece.



THE GIBBS HOUSE

Headquarters of the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul, Minnesota.

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 farm 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. In 1966, the Society moved to its museum property a one-room rural schoolhouse, dating from the 1870's. The white frame school came from near Milan, Minnesota. Now restored to the period of the late 1890's, the school actually is used for classes and meetings. In the basement beneath the school building, the Society has its office, library and collections. In 1968, the Society acquired from the University of Minnesota the use of the white barn adjoining the Society's property. Here is housed a collection of carriages and sleighs which once belonged to James J. Hill.

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.