

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Digging Into the Past—
The Gibbs
Claim Shanty

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Spring, 1996

Volume 31, Number 1

Childhood Among the Dakota

Jane Gibbs: 'Little Bird That Was Caught'

Page 4



Jane DeBow Gibbs (Zitkadan Usawin), an undated portrait by C. A. DeLong, Sunbeam Gallery, St. Anthony, Minnesota, dating from the 1880s. Ramsey County Historical Society archives. See article beginning on page 4.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

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A Message from the Editorial Board

This issue of *Ramsey County History* features the remarkable story of Jane DeBow Gibbs and her family on the Minnesota frontier. Deanne Weber's research on Jane Gibbs and her struggle to make a life for her family, along with Thomond O'Brien's report on the archeological dig for the Gibbs's sod shanty that the Ramsey County Historical Society undertook at the Gibbs Farm Museum last summer, have awakened new interest in Jane Gibbs, an otherwise ordinary woman of her times who displayed extraordinary strength of character in the face of substantial hardships. For the Society, this new research has prompted a total re-examination and reinterpretation of the Gibbs Farm Museum. For members of the Society and friends of Ramsey County history, we hope this issue of our magazine will be the beginning of their own reassessment of what life was like for Minnesotans in the middle of the nineteenth century.

John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

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Jane Gibbs from page 16.

cated that it was family tradition to refer to people by their middle names. Nonetheless, Jane DeBow Gibbs apparently never referred to herself as anything other than "Jane."

44. William V. Pooley, *The Settlement of Illinois from 1830-1850*, Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, No. 63 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1908), 467.

45. S. Riggs to ABCFM, [March 1869], ABCFM Papers; LeVesconte, *Little Bird*, 23.

46. LeVesconte, *Little Bird*, 23.

47. Edward D. Neill, *History of Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul* (Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Company, 1881), 268; Kurt E. Leichtle, "The Gibbs Family and Farm in Perspective," March 1982, Ramsey County Historical Society, St. Paul, 3. (Hereinafter, Ramsey County Historical Society will be referenced as RCHS.)

48. LeVesconte, *Little Bird*, 24.

49. Frank Gibbs, interview by Ethel Stewart, 23 May 1946, RCHS.

50. J. Fletcher Williams, *History of St. Paul to 1875*, (1876; reprint, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1983), 213. This book was originally published as *A History of the City of St. Paul*.

51. Williams, 207

52. Interview with Karen Bluhm.

53. For more information on the Indian treaties, see Baker, et al., 278. The land warrant is described in William L. Cavert, "Story of a Pioneer Farmer," *Ramsey County His-*

tory Magazine 1 (Spring 1964).

54. Leichtle.

55. Frank Gibbs interview.

56. Whitcomb.

57. "Historical Society to Dedicate Farm Home Museum," *Rose Tribune*, 3 December 1954, 4.

58. Whitcomb.

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61. LeVesconte, "Childhood Days," 1870, RCHS.

62. Whitcomb.

63. Kendra Dillard, "Urban Fringe Farming," *Ramsey County History Magazine* 20 (1985).

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65. Morris, 108-109.

66. "Gibbs House-Historical Interest of Site," n.d., RCHS.

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70. Neill, 260; Roseville MN: The Story of its Growth (Roseville, MN: Roseville Historical Society, 1988), 23.

71. Interview with Karen Bluhm

72. David A. Lanegran, *St. Anthony Park: Portrait of a Community* (St. Paul: St. Anthony Park Foundation, 1987), 34.

73. Whitcomb; Frank Gibbs interview.

74. Mary DePowers to Abbie Gibbs, n.d., RCHS.

75. "Chronology of the Gibbs Farm &

Family," n.d., RCHS.

76. Whitcomb.

77. Lillie LeVesconte to Abbie Fischer, 20 May 1904, RCHS.

78. Ray Pook to Abbie Fischer, 18 April 1905, RCHS.

79. Lillie LeVesconte to Abbie Fischer, 2 March 1909, RCHS.

80. Lillie LeVesconte to Abbie Fischer, 4 March 1906 and 19 August 1908, RCHS.

81. Lillie LeVesconte to Abbie Fischer, 22 March 1910, RCHS.

82. Lillie LeVesconte to Abbie Gibbs, 29 October 1896, RCHS.

83. Lillie LeVesconte to Abbie Fischer, 2 July 1909, RCHS.

Deanne Zibell Weber, a St. Paul resident, earned a master's degree in Medieval and Renaissance history from Duke University. As a child, she had first-hand experience in modern market gardening, helping her grandparents sell produce at their vegetable stand on the northwest corner of County Road B and Snelling Avenue in Roseville. Her grandfather also served as the custodian at the Gibbs School for a short time. The Ramsey County Historical Society wishes to thank the Patrick and Aimée Butler Family Foundation for its support in the research and writing of this article.



Payne Avenue, as it looked in 1931. This view looks south on Payne from its intersection with Jessamine. See "Growing Up in St. Paul" on page 21. Minnesota Historical Society photograph.

R.C.H.S.
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