

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

**Spring, 1998**

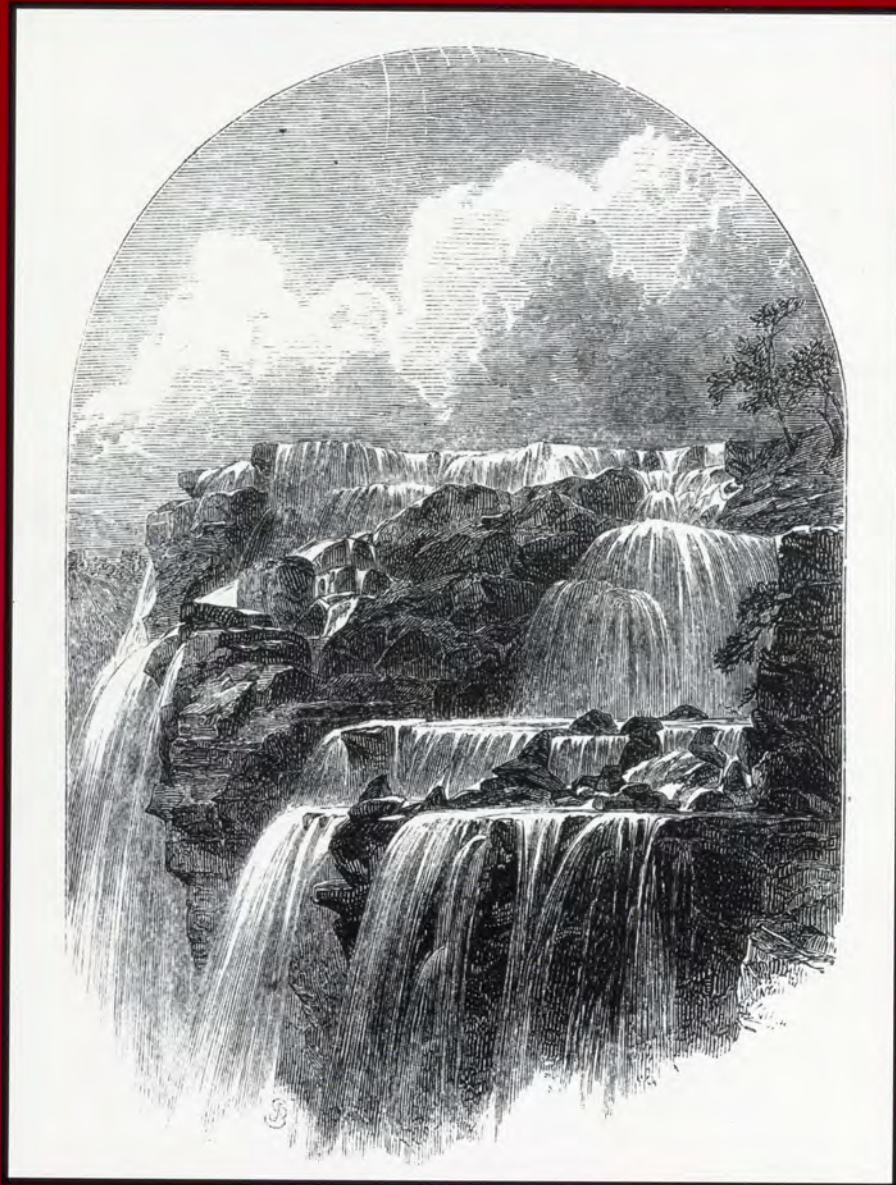
Volume 33, Number 1

Westminster Junction—  
Turn-of-the-Century  
Railroad 'Highway'

Page 9

*Stairway to the Abyss—*

*The Diverting Story of Cascade Creek—Page 4*



*Cascade Creek, from Harper's New Monthly Magazine, in 1860. The creek was named after a waterfall that was described in early travel literature about the St. Paul area. This engraving probably depicts the namesake cascade. The waterfall, now dry, can be seen today along the Mississippi bluffs near Colborne Street. See the article beginning on page 4. Photo from the Minnesota Historical Society collections.*

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

Two themes run through this spring issue of *Ramsey County History*. One theme is engineering; the other is people. Greg Brick's lead article, which tells the story of Cascade Creek, is another in our St. Paul Underground series, which was suggested some years ago by the late Reuel Harmon. Both this article and that by Andrew Schmidt on the local railroad area known as Westminster Junction represent historical research into little-known sources of St. Paul engineering and transportation history

The theme of people plays a secondary role in the stories of Cascade Creek and Westminster Junction, but this theme is foremost in Jean Hanna's account of her mother, Rose Hanna, and her journey from Palestine to St. Paul in the 1950s; in Joe Lepsche's article on the history and people of the Upper Levee; and in Charlotte McKendree Wright Lewis's reminiscence of the Fourth of July Extravaganza on Grand Hill. These writers convey vividly the enduring diversity of the area's people and how their individual stories are today a part of the larger story of St. Paul and Ramsey County.

*John M. Lindley*  
Chair, Editorial Committee

# Letters to the Editor

## Howard Kahn and Crime

The article on the history of the *St. Paul Daily News* in your most recent issue didn't say much about Howard Kahn, the newspaper's editor and later a columnist for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Wasn't he also instrumental in putting an end to St. Paul's harboring of criminals during that crime era of the 1920s and 1930s?

*John Irving, St. Paul*

*He was indeed. In fact, as our article states, he often was credited with a leading role in the investigation that cleaned up St. Paul. In his 1995 book, John Dillinger Slept Here, crime historian Paul Maccabee describes him more completely. Kahn was a World War I hero who had served in the United States, French, and Italian armies. In 1918 he became a cub reporter for the Daily News and he had risen to the post of managing editor by 1938, when the Daily News was bought by the Dispatch-Pioneer Press Company. Kahn then became a columnist for the Pioneer Press, writing the celebrated column, "So What" under the pen name of Paul Light. Kahn's relentless Daily News editorials helped end the infamous O'Connor system that protected criminals as long as they swore off crime while in St. Paul.*

## Amerika to America

John Larson's description of his grandmother's "Americanization" reminded me of my own German immigrant family and their foot-in-both-camps approach to the English language. Grandfather, who emigrated to the United States with his family when he was eight years old, spoke German to the end of his life, but mainly within the



*Howard K. Kahn, newspaper editor and anti-crime crusader. Minnesota Historical Society photo.*

family. Of course, when he began work in a bank in southern Minnesota, he spoke English, but he never lost his heavy German accent. His children spoke both German and English at home; his grandchildren spoke only English, although we understood some German words. Now, of course, we wish we had retained that second language, but such was our need to adapt to the American economy.

*Henry (once Heinrich) Kost,  
Maplewood*

## Millard Fillmore Again

The Millard Fillmore/Riverfront Redevelopment celebration dinner in St. Paul in May reminded me: was Fillmore really such a bad president?

*Steve Abbott, St. Paul*

*It depends. Perhaps he's regarded as somewhat of a nonentity because his*

*"accidental" presidency came at a time when the office seems to have fallen on hard times. Two predecessors, William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor, died in office a few months after their elections. Fillmore, who succeeded Taylor, supported the Compromise of 1850, which staved off civil war for a decade, and, by sending warships commanded by Commodore Matthew C. Perry to Japan, Fillmore opened up trade in the Far East. However, he accepted the nomination of the violently prejudiced Know-Nothing Party, costing him the election to another term.*

## Demise of the Porch

With summer here, I've been remembering that when I was growing up many of the houses on our block had those wonderful screened front porches that were like outdoor living rooms. We could sit out there during the cool of the evening and watch the world go by. Whatever happened to such a restful way of living?

*Judy Larson, Falcon Heights*

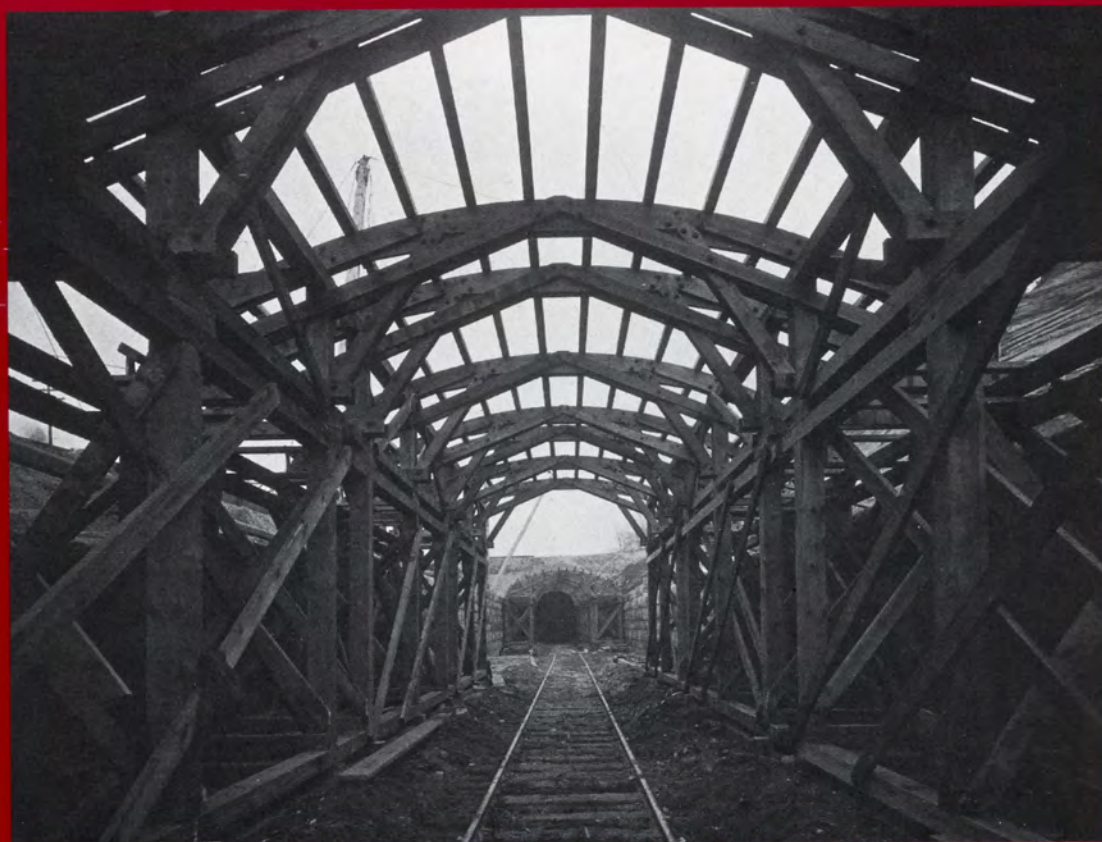
*Air conditioning, most likely.*

## Whose House Was That?

I was trying to find a parking place near Hamline University when I came upon a wonderful old Victorian house. I think it was on Van Buren. Can you tell me something about it?

*Joyce Perry, Minneapolis*

*That might have been the house built in 1889 by the Nobles Company of Merriam Park. It's known as the John J. Dewey house and it's a fine example of Queen Anne patternbook-type houses. Its ornate open porch is a typical Queen Anne feature.*



*Centers for the flat arch of the Westminster tunnel. This view, taken on April 9, 1886, is looking toward the south. Photo courtesy of the National Railway Historical Society, North Star Chapter. See article beginning on page 9.*

**R.C.H.S.**

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