

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

In the Beginning:
The Geological Forces
That Shaped Ramsey County

Page 4

Spring, 1999

Volume 34, Number 1

Special 150th Anniversary Issue
Ramsey County And Its Territorial Years

—Page 8



"St. Paul in Minnesota," watercolor, 1851, by Johann Baptist Wengler. Oberösterreichisches Landes Museum, Linz, Austria. Photo: F. Gangl. Reproduced by permission of the museum. Two years after the establishment of Minnesota Territory, St. Paul as its capital was a boom town, "... its situation is as remarkable for beauty as healthiness as it is advantageous for trade," Fredrika Bremer wrote in 1853, and the rush to settlement was on. See "A Short History of Ramsey County" and its Territorial Years, beginning on page 8.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Executive Director
Priscilla Farnham
Editor
Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Laurie A. Zenner
Chair
Howard M. Guthmann
President
James Russell
First Vice President
Anne Cowie Wilson
Second Vice President
Richard A. Wilhoit
Secretary
Ronald J. Zweber
Treasurer

W. Andrew Boss, Peter K. Butler, Charlotte H. Drake, Mark G. Eisenschenk, Joanne A. Englund, Robert F. Garland, Judith Frost Lewis, John M. Lindley, George A. Mairs, Marlene Marschall, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Bob Olsen, Linda Owen, Fred Perez, Marvin J. Pertzik, Vicenta D. Scarlett, Glenn Wiessner, Charles H. Williams, Jr.

EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chair; Thomas H. Boyd, Thomas C. Buckley, Pat Hart, Virginia Brainard Kunz, Thomas J. Kelley, Tom Mega, Laurie Murphy, Vicenta Scarlett, G. Richard Slade, Laurie Zenner.

HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

Elmer L. Andersen, Olivia I. Dodge, Charlton Dietz, William Finney, Otis Godfrey, Jr., Robert S. Hess, Fred T. Lanners, Jr., D. W. "Don" Larson, George Latimer, Frank Marzitelli, Joseph S. Micallef, Robert Mirick, Samuel Morgan, Marvin J. Pertzik, J. Jerome Plunkett, James Reagan, Solly Robins, Rosalie E. Wahl, Donald D. Wozniak.

RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Rafael Ortega, chairman
Commissioner Susan Haigh
Commissioner Tony Bennett
Commissioner Dino Guerin
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt
Commissioner Janice Rettman
Commissioner Jan Wiessner

Terry Schutten, manager, Ramsey County

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright, 1999, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Fax 651-223-8539; e-mail address admin@rchs.com.; web site address www.rchs.com

RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 34, Number 1

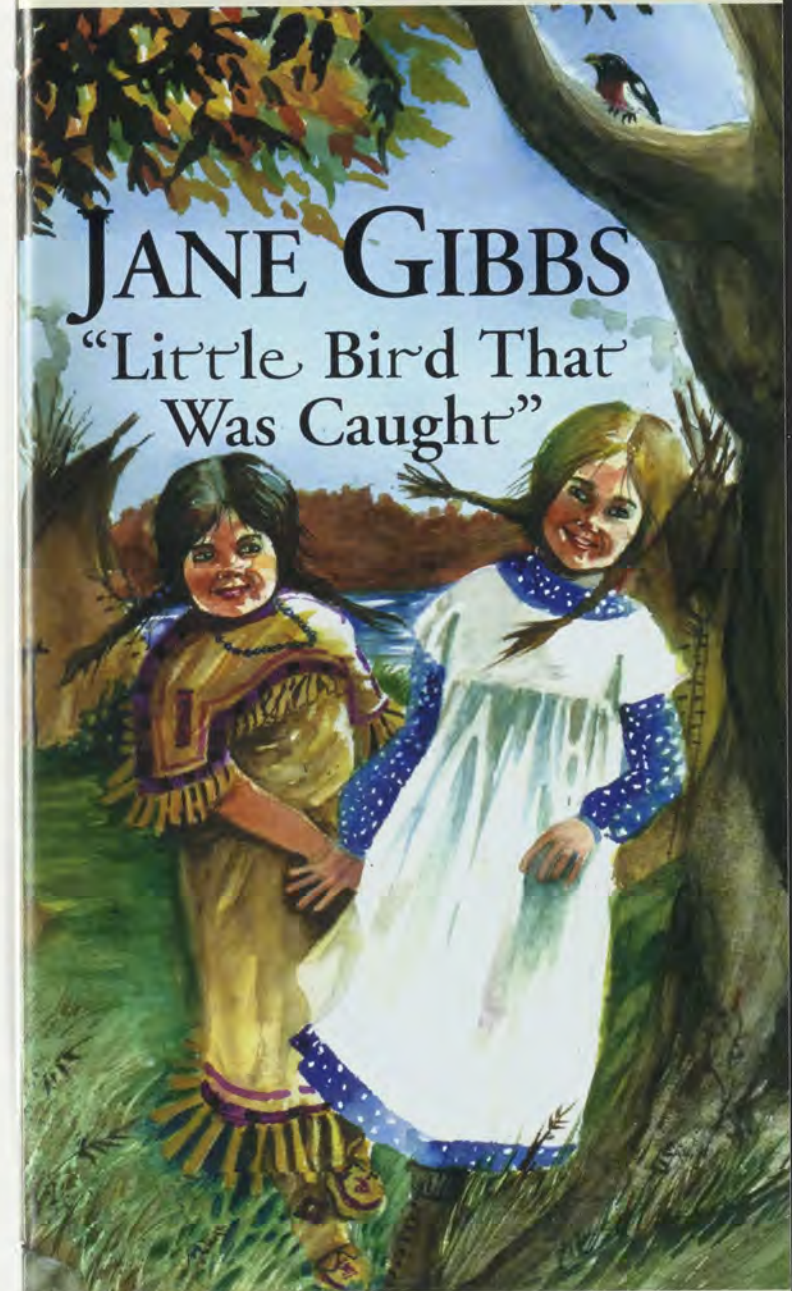
Spring, 1999

CONTENTS

- 3 Message from the President
- 4 In the Beginning
The Geological Forces that Shaped Ramsey County and the People Who Followed
Scott F. Anfinson
- 8 A Short History of Ramsey County—
Its Territorial Years and the Rush to Settlement
- 22 Ramsey County's Heritage Trees
- 23 The Dakota Perspective
'We Have Been Cheated So Often'
Mark Diedrich
- 28-38 More About the County and Its People
from the pages of *Ramsey County History*:
Ramsey County History Preserved in Its Survey Office, page 27; Hardship and Struggle—The Pioneer Years of White Bear Lake and the Township That Bears Its Name, page 28; Little Canada—Heritage from the French Canadians, page 30; Handy With the Pistols—Ramsey County's Territorial Editors, page 32; A Pioneer's Memories—Farming with Flail and Cradle, page 33; Wolves and Bitter Cold—A Fur Trader's Perilous Journey, page 34; Cattlemen and Capitalists—The Founding of New Brighton, page 35; The Great Horse-Market Years at Prior and University, page 36; In North St. Paul—Boom, Boom, Bust, Come-back, page 37.
- 39 Book Review: *Jane Gibbs*—"Little Bird That Was Caught"

Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon

An Exciting New Book for Young Readers



Based on a true story about real people
and events that happened.

PUBLISHED BY THE RAMSEY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Dakota Perspective

'We Have Been Cheated So Often'

Mark Diedrich

As Minnesotans pause to consider the founding of their territory in 1849, they might also recognize that American Indians once owned the land they now walk and live upon. Minnesota's Indian population consisted mainly of the Dakota (or Allies), commonly called the "Sioux," who had been living about the region of Lake Mille Lacs, at least since the 1600s. In about 1680 one division of Dakotas, called the Mantantons, relocated and established their main village in present-day Bloomington, Minnesota. By the 1750s they were joined by the Mdewakantons, who established their village on Rice Creek, above the Falls of St. Anthony.

By the early 1800s the two divisions more or less merged into one tribe. One band was led by Hawk That Hunts Walking, better known as Little Crow. They made their summer planting village on the east side of the Mississippi River, below the limestone bluff, and sometimes near the Great Marsh downriver from today's St. Paul. In addition, Wapasha (II) established a village at what is now Winona; Red Wing at present Red Wing; The Son of Pinichon at Bloomington; Black Dog, some miles up the Minnesota River; and Shakopee at today's Shakopee. Other tribal groups, including the Wahpekutes, Wahpetons, and Sissetons, were scattered to the west as far as Lake Traverse.

The Dakotas fought hard for dominion over the great hunting ground, which was deemed a part of French and Spanish Louisiana. They warred constantly with the Ojibway, or Chippewa, to the north, who invaded Dakota hunting territory in the mid-1700s. To the south, the Mantantons fought in wars with the Illinois tribes.

When not defending their lands, the men hunted and trapped every variety of



Little Crow in 1862, the year of the Dakota Conflict. Photo by Whitney, Minnesota Historical Society collections.

wild game. Their women gathered roots and berries, planted corn, harvested wild rice, raised the children; they also cared for the bark-covered lodges, which they used during the summer, and the buffalo-skin tepees used during the winter for ease of travel. They became dependent on French traders for guns and ammunition from 1680 until the French defeat in North America in 1763. After that time, the Dakotas looked to the British king as their "Father." While British traders came to live, trade, and even marry some of the Dakota women, the English had no desire to purchase Dakota lands.

Things began to change in 1803 when Louisiana was purchased by President Thomas Jefferson and the government immediately moved to secure the region

from British influence. Lieutenant Zebulon Pike visited the Dakota villages on the Mississippi and bought a patch of land at the mouth of the Minnesota River for the establishment of a fort. Pike told the sellers, Little Crow and The Son of Pinichon, that their American "Father" would have a "factory" at the fort where they could buy goods at a cheaper price than they could from the English. Actually, Jefferson had an ulterior motive in the establishment of factories: He told Governor William Henry Harrison that the Indians should be urged to purchase goods on credit, for "when these debts get beyond what individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands."

But before the government fulfilled Pike's promises, the Dakotas suffered greatly from the lack of trade caused by an 1807 embargo on British goods. They therefore joined the British side in the War of 1812, believing that the British would help them keep their lands and supply them with goods by their traders. But due to the peace agreement at Ghent in 1814, the Dakotas were left to deal with the Americans without British intervention of any kind. Fort Snelling was built and Lawrence Taliaferro was appointed the Dakota Indian agent. The Dakota chiefs tried to please him by having frequent peace councils with the Ojibways and also allowed (in 1830) the partitioning of the "Neutral Ground" (along the present Iowa-Minnesota border) which was designed to prevent clashes between the Dakotas and the Sac and Fox. But although no serious land cession had been made to the Americans, Dakota lands were successively and ominously considered to be part of Michigan, Iowa and Wisconsin territories.

Game began to decrease on Dakota lands by the early 1830s and the tribes

became increasingly indebted, not to the factory system (which had failed), but to the traders of the American Fur Company. The buffalo, which once had ranged to the Mississippi, could only be found farther west on the plains. Deer, which were the staple meat item for the eastern Dakotas, also declined. Beaver became scarce as well and hunters were forced to sell the traders muskrat skins instead—not worth nearly as much.

In 1837 the Mdewakanton leaders were invited to Washington City to discuss their economic needs, but the government already had decided to make use of the trip to buy all of the Dakota lands east of the Mississippi. It recognized the Dakotas as a “sovereign nation”—as the British had the previous century—and that they were therefore the legal owners of the land. However, the government had become adept in manipulating or coercing the “nations” into compliance with land cession initiatives, rendering nation status almost a charade.

During their first visit with Commissioner of Indian affairs Carey A. Harris and Secretary of War Joel Poinsett, the Mdewakanton chiefs were informed that the president would give them one million dollars for five million acres of land east of the Great River. They were told that their hunting grounds to the west of the river would be sufficient to enable them to live and they would receive annual money and provisions. Grey Iron, the son of Black Dog, said on September 23, 1837, “We are giving up our best hunting grounds, [it is] not so good hunting west of the Mississippi.” Big Thunder, son of Little Crow, pointed out that when the treaty money was divided, it would not amount to much for each individual. Even a week later, Iron Cloud stated, “I have not had a good night’s rest. . . . I feel very uneasy about giving up these lands.”

In spite of the chiefs’ misgivings, the officials would not increase the price they offered, but agreed to invest a certain amount to provide the tribe with annuities (\$40,000), pay for the support of mixed-bloods (\$110,000), and pay off \$90,000 which Henry H. Sibley of the American Fur Company and other traders claimed the tribe owed. The chiefs finally



Dakota chiefs and warriors in Washington, D. C., to negotiate a treaty in 1858. Standing, left to right are Big Eagle, Traveling Hail, and Red Leg. Those seated in front are believed to be Medicine Bottle I, The Thief, and Taconlipeiyo. Minnesota Historical Society collections.

consented to the offer, but requested the right to hunt on the ceded land for twelve more years.

New Bills with the Traders

There is no question but that the Mdewakantons were helped by their treaty annuities, but the continued scarcity of game meant that they soon would run up new bills with the traders, with the same consequences already seen. Furthermore, whites now were able to occupy lands just east of the Mdewakanton villages on the Mississippi River. A number of them set up whiskey or “grog” shops. In 1844, Dakota agent Amos Bruce, reported: “The country ceded by the Sioux on the east side of the Mississippi is filling up with whiskey dealers from below Lake Pepin, as far as Crow Wing River, . . . which enable the Indians to get a supply at almost every point.” One visitor to Little Crow’s village described the situation: “A drunken frolic in an Indian village is like a scene in the infernal regions; not only men, but women, indulging in the most violent excesses. Both sexes fighting indiscriminately, knives are drawn, blood flows from

ghastly wounds, and death not unfrequently offers up its victim to the god Bacchus.” Bruce’s successor, agent Richard Murphy, advised the government to move the Dakotas away from the whiskey trade.

In April 1849 Congress enacted a bill for the establishment of Minnesota Territory and Alexander Ramsey was appointed the new governor. He immediately planned the expansion of efforts by trader-politician Henry Sibley and treaty councils were arranged in 1851. The Sissetons and Wahpetons met with Ramsey and Indian commissioner Luke Lea at Traverse des Sioux in July; the commissioners later met with the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute bands at Mendota. The Mdewakantons, however, refused to negotiate until backmoney was given them from the Treaty of 1837. Little Crow (III) said on July 31:

These chiefs went to Washington long ago [1837] and brought back a good report concerning the settlement of our affairs in the treaty made there, and they and we were glad. But things promised in that treaty have not taken place. This is why these men sit still and say nothing. . . . They speak of some

money that is due them. . . . We desire to have it laid down to us. . . . We will talk of nothing else but that money if it is until next spring. That lies in the way of a treaty.

Eventually the commissioners agreed to pay this money if the Dakotas signed the new treaty. The chiefs agreed if they could have not only additional annuities, but a permanent reservation along the Minnesota River and hunting rights in the ceded territory known as the "Big Woods." Receiving these assurances, the chiefs signed. They were to receive about ten cents per acre.

Why did the Dakotas succumb? First, the tribe was able to secure the back-money, amounting to \$30,000. Second, the traders were demanding payment of their debts and the chiefs wanted to recompense them fairly. Third, the chiefs were aware of the inevitability of removal to the west, which so many other tribes had endured, and they wanted to be paid for their lands; furthermore, they wanted a permanent home, fearing a removal to the distant plains where they might have to contend with strong enemies. Fourth, tribal leaders recognized the argument of the commissioners, that the Dakota youth could not be regularly schooled until the tribe was consolidated. Fifth, the chiefs thought that the money would make them well off, even rich. However, all these arguments were based on the assumption that the American government would keep its treaty promises in good faith, as the Dakotas had no military to assure their rights if the government was negligent or fraudulent.

From the get go, the Dakotas were forced to worry about the government's trustworthiness. Before the treaty was ratified, settlers began to spill over the Mississippi and white officials would not stop them. In May 1852 Little Crow complained:

"The white settlers came in and showered down their houses all over our country. We did not really know whether this country any longer belonged to us or not. . . . But this is what we are waiting to know, whether our father means to take our lands for nothing, or whether he means to pay us the money and the annuities he promised us in the treaties?"

The Dakotas became even more despondent about their relationship with the government, when, in the summer of 1852, they were told that they could not have a permanent reservation in Minnesota, that they would be granted but a five-year stay until the president moved them elsewhere. Wapahasha (III) was outraged and commented, "There is one thing more which our Great Father can do, that is, gather us all together on the prairie and surround us with soldiers and shoot us down!" Tribal speaker Bad Hail later added, "Father, we fear that our Great Father at Washington wishes to drive us to some country to starve us to death, and we cannot sign the treaty as our Great Father wishes us."

In order to get the chiefs to sign the amended treaty, Ramsey employed another trader-politician, Henry Mower Rice, to wine and dine the Indians until they came around. Some \$25,000 was spent on goods and presents, and unbeknownst to the Dakotas, the money came from their own removal fund. According to Little Crow, Sibley went so far as to bribe the chiefs with offers of guns and horses; Ramsey also threatened to withhold the tribes' regular annuities. The chiefs finally capitulated, signing the amended treaty as well as traders' payment receipts. By mid-December 1852 some \$370,000 had passed into the hands of traders, lawyers, and mixed-bloods. The rest of the treaty money was held by the government, and the interest on the amount was paid to the Dakotas annually. It generally amounted to about ten dollars per individual, plus goods (\$88,000 annually). Congress investigated Ramsey's handling of these financial transactions, but while fraud and conspiracy were evident, it exonerated him.

The Inkpaduta Outbreak

In late 1853 the Mdewakantons and Wahpekutes were removed to the vicinity of Redwood Falls on the Minnesota River. Governor Willis A. Gorman and agent Murphy paid them their annuities, but then they scattered back to their old lands. Meanwhile, Little Crow determined to try and set the treaty matters straight; Gorman acquiesced and accom-

panied the chief to Washington in the spring of 1854. Little Crow, through his interpreter, spoke with Senator William Sebastian and Commissioner George W. Manypenny, asking that the Dakota reservation be granted to them as a permanent home and that it be extended on the southeast end. Congress agreed and later sent the request to the president; however, it was never signed. Little Crow thought that the matter had been taken care of and upon his return to Minnesota, he boasted that he had arrived in Washington "in the nick of time" to prevent his tribe from being removed to the Missouri.

Between 1854 and 1857 the Dakotas tried to adjust to reservation life. However, the agricultural efforts made by hired farmers and the Indian women could not keep up with the food demand, even augmented by annuities. The Dakotas were forced to continue hunting and trapping during the fall and winter, often in the Big Woods region of central Minnesota. The chiefs repeatedly requested a trip to Washington to complain of non-fulfillment of treaty promises, but they were always denied.

Finally, after the Inkpaduta outbreak of 1857,^{*} the government allowed delegations to go to Washington. Conducted there by Superintendent William J. Cullen and agent Joseph R. Brown, the chiefs were told that they would be able to "redress" their treaty. But actually the politicians and Indian officials planned to demand another land cession of the northern half of the Dakota reservation—the so-called "ten-mile strip." Ironically, Minnesota attained statehood while the chiefs were in Washington in the spring of 1858. Learning of the government's intent, the Dakota leaders were again outraged with the deception practiced upon them. Little Crow said, "The [treaty] paper made me ashamed because it said that the Sioux Indians own nothing. . . . [W]e were promised a great many things. . . . but it appears that the wind blows it off and that which they own, and their Great Father, when he

^{*}An attack by Inkpaduta, a Dakota chief, on communities in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa.

wants it, buys it of them!" But acting-commissioner Charles E. Mix made it clear that if the Indians did not sign the treaty, their land might be taken away from them. Mix also repeatedly berated and insulted the chief. Little Crow replied:

I saw piles of paper on your table and when I spoke to you, you said I talked and acted like a child. But we have been cheated so often that I wished to be cautious and not sign any more papers without having them explained, so that we may know what we are doing. . . . Among all the treaties we have made, not one has been carried out with us in good faith. This time I am determined not to act as a child in signing a paper I do not understand.

Mix kept up the pressure until the chiefs signed. Incredibly, no money amount was fixed in the treaty for the land sale, but the chiefs were led to expect about \$1.00 per acre after expenses. Congress later reduced the amount to thirty cents. About three years later, after the traders had received their cuts, it turned out that the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute tribes had virtually no money coming to them! The Dakotas were incredulous that the government gave them nothing to show for their land cession. In addition, they felt that they were being defrauded by agent Brown. But when a congressional investigator, George E. Day, wanted to charge Cullen and Brown with fraud in 1861, his intentions only got him dismissed.

To make matters worse, in the spring of 1862 the Dakotas heard that the government also had been paying past traders' debts out of their regular annuity money. The agency traders reacted by stopping credit to the Dakotas, fearing that they would not be able to recoup their recent loans at the payment. In response to this, about 125–150 Dakota men formed a soldiers' lodge, with the power to punish those who violated its orders. It was in effect the temporary government for the tribe, and it decided to try to block the payment of traders out of the expected annuity money that year. This angered the traders, particularly Andrew Myrick, who told the Dakotas that they could eat grass for all he cared.



Little Crow's summer planting village known as Kaposia on the east side of the Mississippi, across from the site today of South St. Paul. Minnesota Historical Society collections.

Greenbacks Instead of Gold

In June, 1862, Superintendent Clark W. Thompson and agent Thomas J. Galbraith (political appointees of Minnesota Senator Morton S. Wilkinson) began making preparations to pay the Dakotas their annuity money, with a payment date in early July. The St. Paul newspapers reported that a steamboat was planning to bring passengers upriver to the Lower Agency to witness the event, and a company of soldiers under Lieutenant Timothy J. Sheehan marched to the Upper Agency at Yellow Medicine to be on hand to keep the peace. But when Thompson and Galbraith appeared at the Lower Agency near Morton on about July 5, they asked the Dakotas if they would accept their payment in newly printed greenbacks, rather than the customary gold coin. The Dakotas were rightly afraid that greenbacks were not worth as much as their gold equivalents and refused to accept a switch. With that, Thompson declared that he would go back to St. Paul to get the gold and come back in a short time. Incredibly, he had scheduled a payment without having the payment money on hand.

The days turned into weeks, but Thompson did not return to make the payment. It turned out that the rumors were true—traders had been paid out of the 1862 annuity money, depleting the

fund to such an extent that the Indian Office was waiting for Congress to pass the 1863 appropriation bill—with some extra cash—to make up the 1862 fund. But while the situation in Washington slowly evolved, Dakota children at the Upper Agency were dying from lack of food. Agent Galbraith (an alcoholic whose mental reasoning apparently had been impaired) had the annuity provisions locked up in government warehouses, but he refused to allow distribution. On August 4, 1862 the Dakotas at the Upper Agency felt that they had no choice but to break into the Yellow Medicine warehouse.

After several days of tension, Captain John S. Marsh arrived from Fort Ridgely and ordered Galbraith to issue the provisions. Little Crow also arrived and asked Galbraith to give goods to the bands at the Lower Agency as well, saying, "We have waited a long time [for the annuity payment]. The money is ours, but we cannot get it. We have no food. . . . We ask that you, the agent, make some arrangement by which we can get food from the stores, or else we may take our own way to keep ourselves from starving." Galbraith finally consented.

On August 13, Galbraith went down to the lower reserve but did not issue the annuity provisions. Rather, he went about recruiting various reservation em-

ployees to form a company to enlist and fight in the then-raging Civil War. The Dakotas were shocked that Galbraith would not even hold a council with the chiefs. On August 15, Galbraith left the agency with his recruits, heading for Fort Ridgely (He believed that due to his corrupt misappropriation of Indian funds, he would be removed from office and disgraced.) On August 17, the soldiers' lodge held a council and decided that every able-bodied man should join them in a march to St. Paul, if necessary, to get their annuity money.

Late in the evening of August 17-18, the soldiers' lodge learned that four young Dakotas had murdered five white people at the Acton settlement [in Meeker County]. Most of them saw this as the beginning of war. The lodge went to Little Crow to demand his leadership of the warriors. Little Crow was obligated to follow the lodge's directives, but he suggested at first that the four be taken to Fort Ridgely. Many argued against this, saying that they probably would not be paid their annuity money or given their desperately needed provisions. Little Crow eventually agreed with the majority who wanted to wage war against a faithless government and traders who would not give them credit when they were starving.

Within hours, the Lower Agency was burning, and the Dakota Conflict of 1862 had commenced. Little Crow later justified the war, saying, "[W]e made a treaty with the government and beg for what little we do get, and can't get it until our children are dying with hunger." During the six-week conflict, some 500 whites lost their lives and the Dakotas either were chased or removed from Minnesota. All of their treaties were abrogated by Congress and various monies were not restored until the 1900s. Thompson and Galbraith were exonerated from any part in the matter by their political cronies.

Mark Diedrich, a descendant of Minnesota pioneers of the 1850s, writes and publishes books about the Dakota, Ojibway and Winnebago. His past works include, Old Betsey, the Life and Times of A Famous Dakota Woman, and his latest book is Sitting Bull: The Collected

Speeches. This article has been reviewed by Dale Weston, a direct descendant of the Dakota chief, Cloud Man, and instructor in the American Indian Studies Department at the University of Minnesota, and also by Tom LaBlanc, Dakota orator, poet, lecturer, author, and Dakota exhibit interpreter at the Gibbs Farm Museum.

Ramsey County History Preserved in Its Survey Office

Bottles, wooden posts, gun barrels, and pipes in the Land Survey Office of the Ramsey County Public Works Department reflect much of the county's history and the contribution the county's surveyers have made to that history.

The original surveys of the county and their markers date back to the time land was parceled using a rectangular public land survey system set forth in the Ordinance of 1785. Today, most land in the United States is parceled in a grid system of townships, which are thirty-six miles square. All measurements for Ramsey County originated from a baseline, the south line of the state of Wisconsin, and the 4th principal meridian, which also runs north through Wisconsin. Ramsey County's five original townships were White Bear, Mounds View, Rose, New [Little] Canada and Reserve.

In the 1890s, a Ramsey County resurveying project began. The original wooden stakes, set during the late 1840s and through the 1850s, were beginning to rot and disappear and usually were replaced by large granite monuments. Many counties followed the need to resurvey and used many kinds of monuments, including bottles, gun barrels, wagon wheel hubs, motor valves, and capped pipes.

Minnesota has an old law requiring each county to mark the northeast corner of each township. Survey office files containing hand-penned maps and notes, which mark corners by "the center Burr Oak" or "two chains north from the lone

White Pine," are as important today as they were in pioneer days in identifying the accuracy of county boundaries. Before land could be sold to private citizens, a United States patent was needed and it could not be granted until after the original Public Land Survey was completed in each particular area. The major job of the county then was to maintain land records, the survey system, and administer justice. Original surveys were conducted with 60-foot-long wire chains. While the terms still exist, measurements of links, rods, and chains now are calculated by laser reflections, satellites, and other computerized survey tools. Notes are saved to computer disk and calculated by machine to eliminate human error between those original monument positions.

Land surveyers once were required to recognize soil types, identify tree and plant species, have the ability to use a quill pen to draw maps, and possess good penmanship. Probably no other profession has made such a mark on the country. When the astronauts were in orbit and were asked, "Are there any works of man that would make you believe the planet had intelligent life?", one of their answers was the pattern imposed by the rectangular survey. The other was the Great Wall of China.

From Close Up, the newsletter published by the Ramsey County Public Information office.

West is South, North Is...?

One question has puzzled the residents of Ramsey County: Why is the West Side called the "West Side" when this part of the county so obviously lies to the south of St. Paul? The answer is the Mississippi and the somewhat erratic route the river takes through the Twin Cities. The Great River runs mostly north to south, dividing the nation neatly in two—hence the historic references to "east" of the Mississippi and "west" of the Mississippi. However, at the point near where the Minnesota River joins the Mississippi at Mendota, the Mississippi enters a great bend and flows north and east, so that the west side of the river lies south of St. Paul.



Map of Minnesota Territory showing the original counties as they existed from 1849 to 1851. Minnesota Historical Society collections. See "A Short History of Ramsey County," beginning on page 8

R.C.H.S.

RAMSEY · COUNTY · HISTORICAL · SOCIETY

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
 323 Landmark Center
 75 West Fifth Street
 Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. Postage
 PAID
 St. Paul, MN
 Permit #3989