

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

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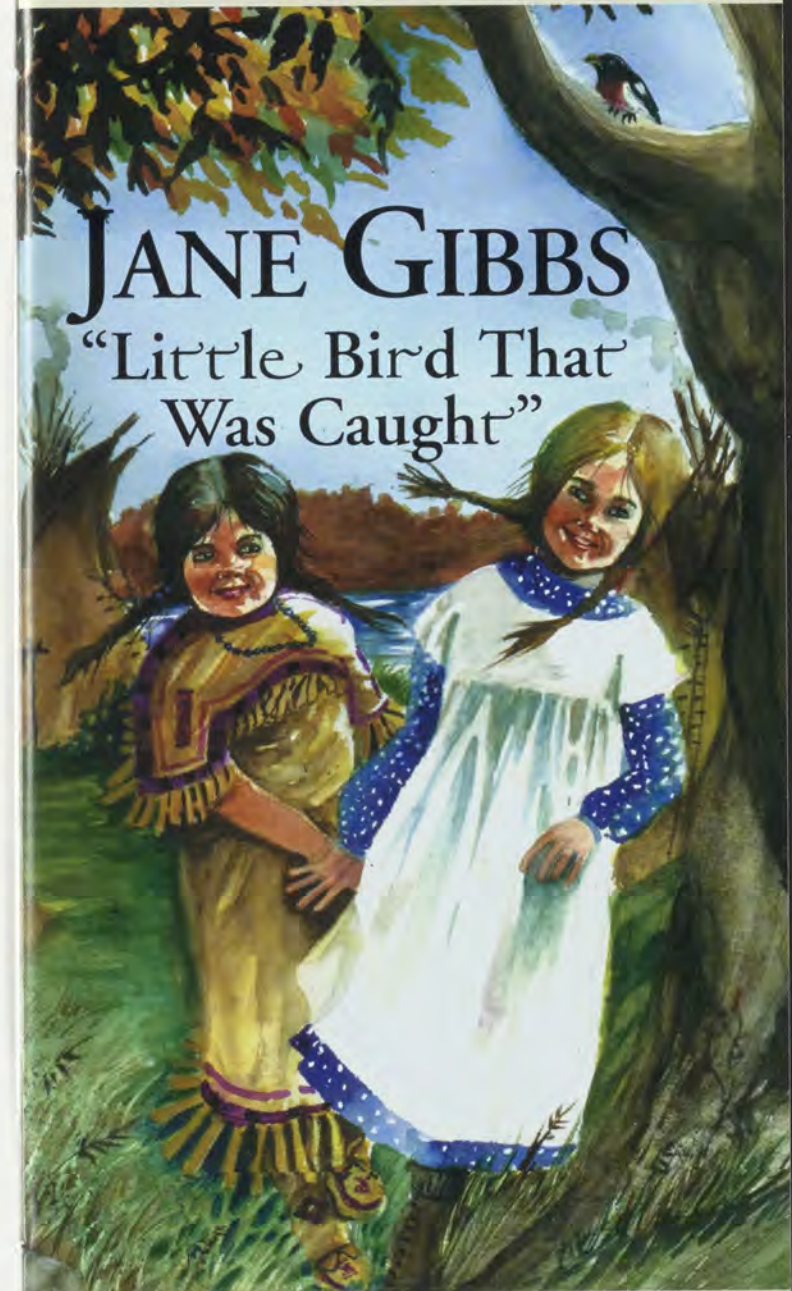
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CONTENTS

- 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"

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An Exciting New Book for Young Readers



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

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE STORY OF JANE GIBBS AND THE DAKOTA PEOPLE

Jane DeBow Gibbs {1828-1910} was a little girl who lived long ago in a place that someday would be called Minnesota. A family of strangers had taken her from her home in New York State and carried her hundreds of miles away to the far-off frontier beyond the Mississippi River.

There she lived in two worlds: the world of the Dakota people and the world of the soldiers and missionaries who lived among them. Her Dakota friends named her *Zitkadan Usawin*, "Little Bird That Was Caught," because they knew she truly was a "little bird" who had been "caught" and taken away by a strange family.

Jane learned to answer to two names, to speak two languages, to call two families her own. She went to school with the Dakota children, and she played their games. But Jane also shared the fear the Dakota knew as they faced an attack by their enemies.

Although she lost her own family, Jane had twice the adventures most people have. This is the story of those adventures. It is based on a true story about real people.

Message from the President

This spring issue of *Ramsey County History* celebrates the founding of Ramsey County 150 years ago by devoting all its pages to people and events in the county's colorful history. Although the emphasis in this longer-than-usual issue of our magazine is on the history of the county during the territorial period (1849-1858) before Minnesota became a state, historian Scott F. Anfinson opens the story with a brief account of the geological origins of the county. The scene then fast forwards to the initial Euro-American exploration and settlement of the region, the organization of Minnesota as a territory, and its eventual admission as the thirty-second state in the Union.

Some of this material is well known, such as the role of Pierre "Pigs eye" Parrant in St. Paul's early years and the way Joe Rolette foiled the legislative attempt to move the state capital from St. Paul to St. Peter. We hope our readers will find other parts of the story new to them or more understandable as a consequence of this issue's focus on the sesquicentennial. Whether old or new, the editorial goal has been to bring both elements together and to encourage our readers to reflect on Ramsey County's long and storied past.

Because the Dakota and other Native Americans inhabited Ramsey County and the surrounding area long before the arrival of Euro-Americans, this issue places special emphasis on the Dakota perspective on the political, social, and legal aspects of the county's origins. By providing the Dakota point of view that has been too often overlooked in the past, writer Mark Diedrich reminds us in the title of his essay, "We Have Been Cheated So Often," that from its earliest days Ramsey County has had a complex and complicated history in its race relations.

This look back at 150 years of Ramsey County wouldn't be complete without a retelling of some of the details relating to the organization of the county's earliest townships (White Bear, Mounds View, Rose, New Canada, and Reserve). We also have included brief excerpts from major articles dealing with the history of the county that have been published in *Ramsey County History* over the past thirty-five years. These shorter articles are intended as a reminder of the role other people and events have played in the overall history of the county and as an indicator of how much of the county remained rural and farmland until after World War II.

As president of the Ramsey County Historical Society, I am pleased to thank so many people who have had a part in making this issue a contribution to the county's sesquicentennial celebration. My thanks and appreciation begin with the Board of Ramsey County Commissioners (Tony Bennett, Dino Guerin, Susan Haigh, Rafael Ortega, Victoria Reinhardt, Janice Rettman, and Jan Wiessner) who, along with their predecessors dating back to the founding of this Society in 1949, have provided financial support to the Society and its mission to preserve and communicate the history of the area.

I also thank our authors, Scott Anfinson, Mark Diedrich, Joe Quick (author of an innovative study of the Heritage Trees of St. Paul), the Ramsey County Land Survey Office, and the authors of the many articles we have excerpted for inclusion in this issue. We thank, as well, Victoria Reinhardt for allowing us to use material from her paper on Ramsey County history; Paul A. Verret and The Saint Paul Foundation for granting permission for us to extract material from their book, *Saint Paul—The First 150 Years*; Pauline Brunette Danforth for her insightful review of *Jane Gibbs: "The Little Bird That Was Caught,"* and Dr. Frank D. Hirschbach for his assistance in our correspondence with the museum in Linz, Austria.

Thanks also are due to many people who directly assist the Ramsey County Historical Society, either as staff members or as volunteers, in the accomplishment of its mission and in the publication of this issue. In particular, I thank Priscilla Farnham, executive director of the Society; Virginia Brainard Kunz, editor of this magazine since it began publication in 1964; and Tom Boyd, Pat Hart, Tom Kelley, John Lindley, Laurie Murphy, Dick Slade, and Vicenta Scarlett, all members of the Ramsey County Historical Society's Editorial Board; Molly Spillman and Jane Angrist. Special financial support for this issue of *Ramsey County History* has been provided by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, the Helen Lang Charitable Trust, Tom Boyd, Tom Kelley, Pat Hart, and John Lindley.

Ramsey County is 150 years old in 1999. I hope that you all will enjoy this history of the county's early years and take time to reflect on where it may be in another 150 years.

Howard M. Guthmann
President, Ramsey County Historical Society



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

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