

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

Mystic Caverns  
And Their Short-lived  
Days of Glory

Page 21

Spring, 2000

Volume 35, Number 1

*The Two Worlds of Jane Gibbs*  
The Gibbs Farm and the Santee Dakota

—Page 4



"Guarding the Corn Fields," a watercolor by Seth Eastman, ca. 1850. This would have been a familiar scene for the young Jane De Bow Gibbs. Corn was a staple for the Dakota people. As a child, she lived near Cloud Man's village at Lake Calhoun in what is now south Minneapolis. Reprinted by permission from Seth Eastman: A Portfolio of North American Indians, Afton Historical Society Press. See article beginning on page 4.

## 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, John M. Harens, Judith Frost Lewis, John M. Lindley, George A. Mairs, Marlene Marschall, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Linda Owen, Marvin J. Pertzik, Vicenta D. Scarlett, Glenn Wiessner.

### 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, William Fallon, Otis Godfrey, Jr., Robert S. Hess, D. W. "Don" Larson, George Latimer, Frank Marzitelli, Joseph S. Micallef, Robert Mirick, Samuel Morgan, Marvin J. Pertzik, J. Jerome Plunkett, James Reagan, 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

Paul Kirkwold, 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, 2000, 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 35, Number 1

Spring, 2000

## CONTENTS

- 3** Letters
- 4** The Two Worlds of Jane Gibbs:  
The Gibbs Farm and the Santee Dakota  
*Julie A. Humann*
- 14** Gummy, Yellow, White Flint Corn  
The Dakota Garden at the Gibbs Farm Museum  
*Janet Cass*
- 17** The Gibbs Farm, Its Neighbor, the University Farm  
And How They Influenced Agricultural History  
*William R. Hueg, Jr.*
- 21** Growing Up in St. Paul  
Mystic Caverns and Their Short-lived Glory Days  
*Ray Barton*
- 23** Books, Etc.

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

## Message from Editorial Board

Most of this issue of *Ramsey County History* focuses on the Gibbs Farm Museum, which the Ramsey County Historical Society owns in Falcon Heights. Over the past several years, the Society has expanded its interpretation of the Gibbs Farm to encompass both the white culture of the original owners, Jane and Heman Gibbs, and the Native American culture of the young Jane's friends, the Santee Dakota, in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Historian Julie Humann begins her article with an analysis of how Jane and the Dakota came to know and understand each other, beginning in 1835 when as a little girl, she lived near the village of the Dakota chief, Cloud Man, in today's south Minneapolis. A key part of their mutually supportive relationship depended upon the genuine reciprocity that these representatives of the two cultures had for each other.

Writer Janet Cass complements Humann's descriptions of Dakota culture with an examination of Dakota gardening at the farm Jane and her husband, Heman Gibbs, later established. Cass writes of the plant species the Dakota commonly used, their gardening techniques, and the relationship their gardening had to other aspects of their culture. Lastly, she explains how the Dakota garden at the farm's site fits in with the museum's expanded interpretation. The Society welcomes any additional information that readers of this magazine can supply about these aspects of Dakota material culture.

This issue next moves to the world of commercial agriculture practiced by the Gibbs family and other Minnesota farmers from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. Retired University of Minnesota agronomist William R. Hueg, Jr., explains how the University acquired the rich farmland that once belonged to the Gibbs family and other early residents of Rose Township and built a world-renowned agricultural experiment station.

*John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board*

# Letters to the Editor

## The Harriet Island Pavilion

When I was a child, the highlight of a week-end would be a visit to Harriet Island with my parents. I had no idea who "Harriet" was, let alone who designed the pavilion there, but it's nice to see a photograph of that familiar gathering place and to know a little bit more about it. I haven't been back to St. Paul in many years. Is that pavilion of my childhood still standing?

*Louise Montgomery,  
Phoenix, Arizona.*

*It is indeed, and both the pavilion and the island itself are undergoing extensive restoration as part of the Harriet Island Regional Park. The pavilion has been renamed the Clarence W. Wigington Pavilion, in honor of its architect. In addition, thirty-two red granite medallions, 12" by 12", will be installed in the plaza to represent each of the Wigington-designed buildings that still exist, as well as some of his fanciful ice palaces. Harriet Island, by the way, was named many years ago for Harriet Bishop, who arrived in St. Paul from Vermont in 1847 and organized the community's first Sunday School.*

## The Sioux and the Dakota

I have a little Minnesota history book that we used in grade school back in the early 1950s. It refers to the Indian bands that lived around the Twin Cities as "Sioux," when they seem to be called "Dakota" today. I've always wondered why.

*Melissa Gregory, St. Cloud.*

*Two major groups of Native Americans lived in the Minnesota region. The early fur traders called those in northern Minnesota the Chippewa, now known as Ojibwa. They were bitter enemies of the Dakotas, who lived in southern and western Minnesota, and the Ojibwa attached a derogatory name to them—*



*The Harriet Island Pavilion, designed by Wigington in 1941 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo from the Riverfront Development Corporation.*

*"Naudowessie," or "Nadowaysioux," meaning "snake." The French fur traders shortened it to "Sioux," but the Dakota have preferred their own name, which means "friend" or "allies."*

## Immigration and St. Paul

I read somewhere that huge waves of immigrants began to flood into St. Paul after the Civil War? Did the city have any programs for handling them back then?

*David Rask, Stillwater.*

*The city was hampered by lack of information on immigrants and their numbers. For example, when the first steamboat of the season docked at the Lower Landing in 1867, many of its passengers had nowhere to go. The St. Paul Board of Trade opened a temporary shelter, a "House for Emigrants," in a warehouse on Chestnut Street near the Upper Landing. Amenities, however, were limited to bunks filled with straw and some stoves and fuel for cooking.*

*Later on, immigrants were housed in the old Union Depot and in a Railroad Immigration House at Broadway and Third Street.*

*What was the Backus School for Girls?  
Winifred Winter, St. Paul.*

*It was a school established in St. Paul by Carrie Haskins Backus, who also founded the Thursday Club, several other women's study clubs, lectured on Shakespeare and served as state secretary of forestry for the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs.*

## The 1940 Ice Palace

I remember that magnificent ice palace Clarence Wigington designed for the 1940 Winter Carnival. I mailed a letter there because it had a federal post office inside. A few months later I was called into World War II service with my National Guard unit. It was my last memory of St. Paul.

*George Taylor, Minneapolis.*



*"Sioux Indians," an 1851 watercolor by Johann Baptist Wengler, Oberosterreichisches Landesmuseum, Linz, Austria. Wengler painted this at a time of transition for the Dakota people. The dress of the man suggests a ceremonial costume and the lance probably was for parade use, but the women's dress reflects their gradual adoption of the clothing of the white community. Photo by F. Gangl and reproduced by permission of the museum. See article beginning on page 4*

**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