

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Irvine Park in 1854:
*Its Homes and the People
Who Once Lived There*

See article on page 20

Spring, 2004

Volume 39, Number 1

'High and Dry on a Sandstone Cliff'

St. Paul and the Year of the Chicago and
Rock Island's Great Railroad Excursion

—Page 4



This postcard dated 1909 shows St. Paul's Lower Landing where the Great Railroad Excursion came ashore 150 years ago. From historian Robert J. Stumm's collection and used with his permission. See articles beginning on page 4 and page 20.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 39, Number 1

Spring, 2004

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2003:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve and interpret the history of the county for the general public, recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major responsibility is its stewardship over this history.

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 'High and Dry on a Sandstone Cliff'
St. Paul and the Year of the Great Railroad Excursion
Steve Trimble
- 20 Irvine Park in 1854: Its Homes and the
People Who Lived There 150 Years Ago
Robert J. Stumm
- 24 A Quilt and a Diary: The Story of the Little Girl
Who Rode an Orphan Train to a New Home
Ann Zemke
- 27 Growing Up in St. Paul
Mechanic Arts—An Imposing 'Melting Pot'
High School that Drew Minorities Together
Bernice Fisher
- 30 Books

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Ramsey County Historical Society is celebrating two major events this spring. The first is the sesquicentennial of the Great Railroad Excursion in June of 1854 that heralded the completion of the railroad to the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois, and the opening up of the trans-Mississippi west to settlement. In the lead article in this issue, historian Steve Trimble deftly reports what the historical record tells us about St. Paul in 1854. Then Robert Stumm, an avid collector of historic postcards, takes us on a tour of present-day homes in Irvine Park that have their origins in the era of the Grand Excursion and explains what those buildings tell us about the people who lived in them.

This issue of *Ramsey County History* completes forty years of unbroken publication. Begun in 1964 under the editorship of its founder, Virginia Brainard Kunz, our magazine has won two awards for excellence from the American Association for State and Local History. *Ramsey County History* has also demonstrated that local history, especially when it concerns the history of Ramsey County and St. Paul, can be a rich source of materials for authors, historians, and readers. Given the pleasure and enlightenment that this magazine has provided to all who have read it over the years, we thank the many authors who have contributed the fruits of their research and writing to RCHS. In addition Virginia Kunz deserves special thanks for her sterling editorship of this history magazine for the past forty years.

John Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

Larpenteurs and the Avenue

I have relatives who are Larpenteurs. I would like to know how Larpenteur Avenue got its name.

Colleen Nietz

Larpenteur Avenue originally was Minneapolis Avenue. In 1904 the St. Paul City Council changed its name to Larpenteur in honor of Auguste L. Larpenteur (1823-1919), farmer, fur trader, and merchandiser and one of the oldest living settlers of St. Paul at that time. He was born in Baltimore, Maryland, the grandson of a French emigre and moved to St. Paul in 1843, one of first twelve settlers of the community. He helped lay out the original city and claimed 160 acres near today's Lexington and University avenues. He built his family home in 1860 near what is now Dale Street and Interstate 94 and named it "the Anchorage." He spoke French and several Indian languages, in addition to English.

Grace Flandrau Review

Thanks to Steve Trimble for his thorough and thoughtful review of *Memoirs of Grace Flandrau*. I thought he covered the *Memoirs'* content well and produced some excellent Flandrau quotes from other sources to flesh out his article. There are, however, several minor errors in his piece that need correction. One is that *Memoirs of Grace Flandrau* is the third product of my research to reach publication, not the first. Another is that Grace did not live with her father-in-law, Charles E. Flandrau, after she returned to St. Paul from Mexico in 1914. Instead, she lived with her brother-in-law, Charles Macomb Flandrau in the family home at 385

Pleasant. Also, "Knochloe Beg Press published the book, not "Knoche Beg Press." Please see the copyright page in *Memoirs of Grace Flandrau* for explanation of that name.

Readers might wonder why a publisher trying to resuscitate Grace Flandrau would introduce an unfinished manuscript like her drafted memoirs before bringing out her full-length biography or republishing some of her best out-of-print works. The answer is that reintroducing Flandrau's voice at its most mature and frank in these never-read memoirs seemed the best way to whet appetites for the coming biography and to restore her credibility as a fine prose artist. Due to the animosity of Grace's brother-in-law, Charles M. Flandrau, considerable skepticism about the reality of her talent as a writer developed in her hometown. Eventually, the best of Grace Flandrau's published work will reappear, too.

Georgia Ray, St. Paul

A Park Avenue Address

I'm trying to find an 1890 address for Samuel, William H., Alfred N., and James B. Blair. They are listed in the *St. Paul City Directory* for that year as living at 600 Park Avenue. I found a Park Avenue in Washington County, but I can't seem to find one in Ramsey County. Perhaps the area has been rebuilt. Can you help?

Kathy Sullivan, Anoka.

Park Avenue now is called Park Street. It is located between Rice Street and Capitol Boulevard, which originally was called Brewster Street. The 600 address is on the west side of Park, in the middle of the block between Como and Winter, and north of the Capitol.

Bethesda Hospital is on Park, one block south of the Blairs' address.

Crosby Confusion

I'm confused. There is a Crosby house at 804 Lincoln and a Crosby house at 302 Mississippi River Boulevard. One of them was called Stonebridge. Which is which?

jayp@afmcorp.net

The Colonial Revival House at 804 Lincoln was built by the prominent St. Paul architect, Clarence H. Johnston for Oliver T. Crosby, co-founder and first president of American Hoist and Derrick Company, one of the oldest and largest manufacturers of heavy construction equipment in the United States. He lived there until 1916. Then he built Stonebridge at 302 Mississippi River Boulevard. This house was taken down in 1957.

A Victorian Structure

I am the owner of the old Roberts Hamilton building at 328-330 East Ninth Street in St. Paul. I would like to locate old photos and information about the property. I believe it was built around 1885.

Tom Simonetti, St. Paul.

We have an Historic Sites survey sheet on 328-330 East Ninth but are unable to locate the building permit. The building seems to date to about 1910. The survey form states that it was part of an industrial complex near the railroad tracks in the Phalen Creek-Trout Brook Valley and it escaped demolition when the 35E and I94 freeways were built. Railroad tracks go through the center of the building. Surrounding streets are paved with brick.

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R.C.H.S.
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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