

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

**Spring 2006**

Volume 41, Number 1

*Stahlmann's Cellars:  
The Cave Under  
the Castle*

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*Lost Neighborhood*

Mary Hill's Lowertown, 1867–1891

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*Mary Mehegan Hill (1867). This painting is from a wedding photograph. The date of the painting and the artist are not known. In 1956 a member of the Hill family gave this painting to the James J. Hill Reference Library. Reproduced by permission of the James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, Minnesota. Photograph by Maureen McGinn.*

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 41, Number 1

Spring 2006

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.

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and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon

## A Message from the Editorial Board

Our Spring issue leads with dual articles presenting a vibrant portrait of old Lowertown, which now remains only as a fragment of a neighborhood tucked within a spaghetti-like web of freeway lanes. Eileen McCormack describes the social and economic framework that nourished Jim and Mary Hill from 1867 until 1891, when they moved to their Summit Avenue mansion. And David Riehle portrays the homes and businesses of working-class St. Paul citizens in the same neighborhood. Greg Brick leads a reader's tour underneath the streets in the West Seventh area, through thirty miles of corridors leading to caves that once cooled German-style lager beer brewed by the Stahlmann, and later Schmidt, breweries. Bernice Fisher provides an evocative remembrance of attending St. Adalbert's Catholic school in a Polish neighborhood full of traditions. Finally, many treasures await readers who sample our reviewers' picks marking, among others, Minnesota's state capitol building, the career of a recent riverboat legend, and the story of a gifted educator who grew up on a farm supplying butter and meat to city dwellers. We are proud of the last, *Pearl and the Howling Hound Farm*, which is one of our own recent publications, available through RCHS. Happy reading!

Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board

# Letters to the Editor

## **An Author's Response**

I greatly enjoyed reading the review of my book, *Banking in the Great Northern Territory*, by Professor Robert Will in your Winter 2006 issue. He certainly gives the reader a sense of the content and tone of the book and also appreciated the written excursions from the central theme that highlighted the people and the times. There is one error of fact in his report, however, that affects a major underlying accomplishment of the two holding companies. He states, "Banco and FBS rode out the Depression although their balance sheets weakened *and many affiliates were lost.*" The italicized portion of that sentence was not correct. It was a major purpose in the formation of both holding companies that the combination of big and small banks would keep the region's banking services alive, and it was a major claim to fame that no bank owned by either company failed during or after the Depression. At that time, it was a major accomplishment. With that exception, thanks again to Professor Will for his review.

*G. Richard Slade, Minneapolis*

## **Correction**

The misspelling of the name Hays in the contents section of the Fall 2005 issue reflects the confusion of the past 90 years in attributing major contributions in agronomy at the University of Minnesota. The Editorial Board message also errs in identifying Willet Hays as a former Minister of Agriculture for Argentina. The article states that he served as an adviser to the Argentine Minister of Agriculture during 1913–1914.

*Harlan Stoehr, Shoreview*

*The Editor apologizes for these errors related to Harlan Stoehr's article on the*

*many contributions of Willet Hays to agronomy in our Fall 2005 issue.*

## **Old Hudson Road**

In my youth I lived on Old Hudson Road. From the 1940s onward, the highway to Hudson from St. Paul was U.S. Highway 12. When did Highway 12 become the main road?

*Tom St. Martin, Brooklyn Park*

*To answer this question, you need to consult several plat maps and other sources on St. Paul street names. In 1940 Hudson Avenue became Wilson Avenue and Hastings Avenue became Hudson Road, which was technically identified as Trunk Highway 12. Shortly afterward a part of Hudson Road became known as Old Hudson Road. In the 1950s with the construction of I-94, Highway 12 became part of the Interstate system.*

## **Holman Field**

I am researching a distant relative named Walter Holman who was born in the early 1900s. Can you tell me who Holman Field in St. Paul is named for? I was wondering if this individual might be a relative of my Walter Holman.

*Betty Stanfield, St. Paul*

*Holman Field was named for Charles W. "Speed" Holman (1898–1931). Speed Holman was born in Bloomington, Minnesota, and earned his nickname after winning several motorcycle races at the Minnesota State Fair. His father bought him his first airplane and he subsequently became a stunt pilot, wing walker, parachutist, and airmail and airline pilot. Holman is credited with being the first pilot hired by Northwest Airlines in 1926. Two years later he set*

*a world's record for doing 1,433 consecutive loops in five hours while flying over what was then known as the St. Paul Airport. Holman Field is named in his honor after he tragically died when his airplane crashed during an air show in Omaha in 1931. The first recorded Missing Man formation, in which a vacant spot is deliberately left in an aerial maneuver, was executed by four aircraft from the 109th Air Squadron at his funeral. Holman is buried on the highest point of land in Accacia Park Cemetery in Mendota Heights. You might look into Noel Allard's 1976 biography of Speed Holman to see if there is a connection between him and your relative.*

## **Western Land Securities Company**

I am a metal detectionist. I recently found an old token in a local park and am seeking information on its origin. The token is about the size of a fifty-cent piece and is inscribed on the front with the name of the Western Land Securities Company. On the back side it reads: "Keep this souvenir. Good for refund of RR fare to buyers of our lands. Write for particulars. 143 Endicott Arcade, St. Paul, Minn." Can you tell me anything about this company?

*Paul Otto, Waukesha, Wis.*

*The St. Paul City Directory identifies the Western Land Securities Company as a business that primarily dealt in sales of farmland. Between 1909 and 1911 it was located at 143–147 Endicott Building Arcade. After 1911 it was located in the Gilfillan Block. Prior to 1909 it had its office in the National German Bank Building. Thus you can date your token from 1909 to 1911.*



*The Stahlmann Cave Brewery as depicted on the company letterhead. Courtesy of Paul Clifford Larson. See article beginning on page 12.*

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

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