

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

*Minnesota Politics
and Irish Identity:
Five Sons of Erin
at the State Capitol*
John W. Milton

Spring 2009

Volume 44, Number 1

—Page 3



Five Sons of Erin at the Minnesota State Capitol (clockwise from the upper right): Senator Nicholas D. Coleman (bronze bust by Paul T. Granlund, 1983; photo by Robert W. Larson, 2009); Ignatius Donnelly, 1891 (oil portrait by Nicholas Richard Brewer; courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society); Archbishop John Ireland, about 1910 (pastel portrait by an anonymous artist; courtesy of the

Minnesota Historical Society); Governor Andrew Ryan McGill, 1889 (oil portrait by Carl Gutherz; courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society); and General James Shields, about 1860 (oil portrait by Henry W. Carling; courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society). In the background is a postcard of the Minnesota State Capitol from about 1907 (postcard courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society).

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 44, Number 1

Spring 2009

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

This spring, we invite you to take an armchair walk with us to some familiar sites with a new perspective. John Milton illuminates the diversity of Irish heritage in St. Paul by depicting the stories of five prominent Ramsey County men who have been honored within the halls of the Minnesota Capitol. Among them is former Senate Majority Leader Nick Coleman, whose son, Chris Coleman, serves as St. Paul's current mayor. Another of Milton's subjects, Ignatius Donnelly, is famous for dreaming up a failed city, Nininger, in the 1850s, and later helping to establish the national People's Party. In the second article, Greg Brick, a local geological expert who obtained permission to view Carver's Cave, gives us the real "inside story" of the cave, including historic and current maps and photographs. And the third article draws on Ramsey County's heritage as an agricultural community, which we honor at our own Gibbs Museum in Falcon Heights. Harlan Stoehr and Helen Hammersten tell the wonderful story of Clara Oberg, a strong woman who developed the Ramsey County 4-H program into a vital community resource from 1928 to 1953. Thanks to Oberg's vigorous leadership, the 4-H sponsored such various programs as Victory Gardens, athletic teams, and even community orchestras!

Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board

A Trailblazer

Clara Oberg and Ramsey County 4-H

Harlan Stoehr and Helen Hammersten

When Clara Sollie Oberg was hired as Ramsey County 4-H Club Agent in March 1928, the county had about sixteen 4-H clubs with about 200 members. During her twenty-five years of service to 4-H, annual enrollment would grow to exceed 1,200 and the young men and women club members she influenced would treasure their 4-H experiences and remember them fondly throughout their lives.



Clara Oberg, about age 25, with her husband, Forest. Photo courtesy of Miranda Rosa, Family Collection.

America's 4-H clubs began as boys and girls clubs, founded by pioneering school-teachers to give rural youth extracurricular instruction in the arts and sciences of agriculture and homemaking to make rural life more appealing.

The origins of these early clubs can be traced to Page County, Iowa, where Miss Jessie Field organized a 3-H—Head, Heart, Hands—group in her school in 1900. In Clark County, Ohio, Albert Graham organized a meeting of boys and girls in 1902 and showed them how to test soil acidity. In Texas a Farm Boys and Girls Progressive League was formed in 1903, and in Iowa Henry Wallace, publisher of *Wallace's Farmer*, distributed superior seed corn to farm boys in 1904, urging them to exhibit corn they grew at the Farmers Institute in Des Moines.

Club work of this kind in Minnesota began with T.A. (Dad) Erickson, county superintendent of schools at Alexandria, who in spring 1904 spent \$20 of his own money to buy seed of Minnesota No. 13 corn, offering it free to boys and girls who would request it and agree to show ten ears of their harvest at their local school fair that fall. The best of each fair would be exhibited at the Alexandria Carnival.

Boys and girl's club work gradually came under sponsorship of the agricultural extension service of the land-grant colleges and universities, and then under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Extension Service. The University of Minnesota's Extension Division was created in 1909. In 1912 Erickson was appointed Extension's rural school specialist, to further develop boys and girls clubs.

Ramsey County Extension and 4-H Work Begins

Ramsey County Agricultural Society was reorganized in 1911 to serve as

the county extension organization and to promote a county fair. Ramsey was among the first Minnesota counties to employ a county agent, whose role was to channel educational resources of the University to the county. The county agent typically organized farmers clubs. Boys and girls clubs, which became 4-H clubs, were then organized and supervised by the schools, with the county agent's support. Health, the fourth H, was added in 1913.

In his first report, Ramsey County Agent Harry Krum noted carrying out a 1914 seed-testing campaign through the schools, persuading businesses to contribute rag doll testers and blotting paper, so "each child could take one home. I . . . am confident at least 30% of families with children in school tested their seeds

this spring. Following the seed-testing campaign, I attempted to organize boys and girls clubs in each of the school districts . . . the idea being to form a single club for the boys and girls of each district. The work to be carried on . . . was corn, potato and tomato growing, and, for the girls, bread baking."

By 1918, during World War I, clubs had been organized in each of the county's twenty-eight rural school districts. "These clubs, as part of their organized work buy War Savings Stamps, collect salvage material, do Red Cross work, and participate in all types of war work available to boys and girls," noted the 1918 county Extension report.

Any assistance the Ramsey Co. Boys and Girls Clubs received from the Agricultural Extension Service was from

the county agent, and whatever crumbs came from the state Extension staff at the University. A 1917 report shows Margaret Baker as leader of Ramsey County boys and girls club work; Baker actually was a member of the state Extension staff. By 1920 the Ramsey County Boys and Girls Clubs were known as 4-H clubs and the green four-leaf-clover 4-H emblem was appearing. During the decade it became universally used throughout the United States.

Ann Lamb became county home demonstration agent in 1920, the first of several to serve and have some involvement with 4-H work during the 1920s. In 1923 dairying was considered Ramsey County's leading industry; potatoes, poultry, dairy calf, pig, bread making, garment making, and flower gardens were its leading 4-H projects.

Agricultural Depression in the 1920s and '30s

Prices paid for farm products tend to be cyclical. After the Civil War, manufacturing began to grow and farming to decline as the prime mover of the U.S. economy. The cost of producing crops and livestock often was more than they brought at market and farm values tended to decrease as the country's overall wealth increased. Then, in the late 1890s prices for farm commodities begin to rise, ushering in what became known as "The Golden Age of Agriculture," which lasted through 1918. Demand for farm products decreased after World War I, and the Golden Age was followed by more than twenty years of falling prices for agricultural commodities and a severe agricultural depression.

A persistent problem for farmers was the lack of stable sources of long-term credit to enable farm ownership, and short- and intermediate-term credit to finance farm inputs: seed, feed, fertilizer, breeding stock, and the like. Banks generally loaned money to farmers on a callable basis rather than for specific terms; consequently, a farmer could not rely on the use of loan funds until that year's crop was sold. One major rec-

ommendation of President Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission (CLC), which was set up in 1908 and published a report in 1911, was a cooperative credit system to provide agricultural credit on "fair terms." The Farm Loan Act of 1916 fostered the Federal Land Bank system to provide long-term, lower-cost credit and eliminate charging renewal fees every three to five years. But not until 1933 was a functional system established to provide credit for loans of variable terms to farmers and their cooperatives.

The CLC also recommended establishing an Agricultural Extension Service to foster advances in scientific agriculture and improve rural living. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 fostered a partnership between counties, states, and the federal government. Federal funds now helped with salaries of extension agents, who brought results of research at the land-grant colleges and universities and its practical application to farming and rural life to farmers and their families. During World War I, to foster increased food production, low-cost government-funded seed loans were made available to farmers

through Extension agents. When the war ended abruptly with the Armistice in November 1918, the seed loan program also ended, cutting off a valuable source of crop production credit.

Another CLC recommendation had to do with reforming rural schools and churches, rural America's two main institutions. One-room schools were considered inefficient; consolidation and a broader curriculum were recommended. That notion did not sit well in the countryside and the one-room schools would function in most rural communities until the years following World War II. Rural churches were encouraged to become more effective by preaching more of a social gospel, consolidating, and becoming interdenominational. That idea, considered heresy at best in many congregations, went nowhere.

For farmers, the Great Depression began by 1920 and lasted another twenty years. Clara Oberg, once a one-room-school teacher, lost a farm to it, and then found a secure job in the Agricultural Extension Service. She lived out her Extension career in the era of the one-room schools, from which 4-H clubs had sprung.

RAMSEY 4-H NEWS

Published by the Ramsey County 4-H Clubs Motto: To Make the Best Better
Vol. 1 ST. PAUL, MINN., MARCH, 1936 No. 1

A Message from Our State Leader

To The Leaders and Members Of Ramsey County 4-H Clubs:

I wish to congratulate the 4-H members and leaders of Ramsey County for the fine record the county made for 1935. I have been studying your annual report for the state and believe you will be interested to know how your record compares with other counties in the state. Here are a few of the more important points in which your county excelled:

Ramsey county was first in the state in completion with 98.3 per cent. It was one of the eleven counties which increased in both enrollment and completion, and first in average number of years members remain in 4-H work, namely, 3.47 years, and girls, 3.14 years.

Ramsey had the largest number of members who have been in the work 8 to 10 years or more, with 815 members in this group. The county had the third largest enrollment, namely, 1,258 members, and was seventh in percentage gain.

In individual achievements, boys and girls from Ramsey have ranked high. Your representatives at state fairs (4-H Club Week, State Fair, Junior Livestock Show, and Conservation Camp) and at the National Club Convention and National Dairy Show, have won a credit to themselves and to 4-H work.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to commend you for this fine record for 1935. I have also left



T.A. ERICKSON

that you have progressed towards these definite goals of 4-H work—higher income, a better community life and ideal citizenship.

May 1936 bring much success to all of you.

Yours very sincerely,
T. A. ERICKSON,
State Club Leader.

4-H Clubs Help Save Birds

RAMSEY COUNTY HAS YOUR AID PROGRAM
BIRDS PRESERVED 1935

Given Recognition in Monthly Edition of State Paper.

The Ramsey County 4-H boys and girls received recognition in the State Paper for their efforts in the distribution of food, and also feeding shelter, for our feathered friends in the last winter cold wave.

To those not acquainted to club work, this apparently seemed to be something new, but we as club members, find that it is just another of the many useful activities which are always to be put to good use. The 4-H club is an important cog in the conservation program.

Ramsey 4-H clubs have received 125 from the Bird Feeding Fund, reported by the St. Paul Dispatch and St. Paul Association, to supply the extra feeding stations provided for 4-H boys and girls.

Four stations are placed in the west side of the county and five feeding stations are maintained in numerous places. Dried bread from bakeries, and corn go to make up the winter diet of the birds.

Let's carry on with this good work, and give the birds a chance.

County Agricultural Agent

County Goals for 1936

1. Normal increase in enrollment—Gain in the membership of the above youth groups especially. There were a number of 1935 efforts reached last year: 4-H Clubs 4, 4-H Club Program for every Club—Good singing, good horticultural projects, during business session, short talks, demonstrations, a brief address, news program, and refreshments.
2. More demonstrations—Have at least one demonstration for each project represented in the club. Have 4-H club demonstrations as part of club and community programs.
3. Participation in Club activities—Most county conservation work, safety work, etc. As long as you try to work actively from every club.
4. Have club members enrolled in health work—For the sake of the county to health habits in each individual boy and girl.
5. Athletics—Make it possible for club members to participate in football, volleyball, and hockey.
6. State and District—Every member should attend the Spring Music Festival and the Fall One-Act Play.
7. County Fair—Every member should see judging contest or identification contest at the County Fair. Participation in the parade, the every club committee and leader, and make every member a successful vendor.
8. Conserving Projects—Each member complete records and exhibit at time of contest.

Wishes Us Success

This news sheet which is to serve fully explains the general plan, and our own membership, with the various activities of the 4-H Club in Ramsey County, follows a long felt want.

Visualizing in advance the efforts and aspirations of the members, makes the work more effective.

May the splendid devotion of the local leaders and recognition in the pages of your publications.

Building the "4-H Triangle of Human Happiness" is one of those jobs where the shared thoughts and energies of each one of us is needed to make satisfactory progress.

ROBERT FREEMAN.

FEBRUARY MY TRIP TO CHICAGO

Segment of the front page of the inaugural issue of Ramsey [County] 4-H News, March 1936. T.A. "Dad" Erickson's photo accompanied his message to all county 4-Hers. Ramsey 4-H News, microfilm collection, Minnesota Historical Society.

Ramsey County Extension reports of 1920-27 contained little about 4-H. There were sixteen clubs in 1923, with 29 boys and 77 girls enrolled; 14 boys and 44 girls completed their projects. By 1927, when Laura H. Rogalla became Ramsey County's first 4-H Club leader, 4-H clothing demonstrations were a part of the Ramsey County Fair.

Clara Oberg Takes Charge of 4-H

In 1928 Rogalla was succeeded by Clara Oberg. Born in Fertile, Minnesota, in 1895, Oberg graduated Crookston High School, attended Crookston Normal for two years and taught school for six years at Angus, north of Crookston. Learning of 4-H from Dad Erickson at a teachers institute, she founded a club in her school in 1919 and led it for several years, leaving teaching to have a daughter, Lylah. When she and her husband, Forest, lost their farm early in the agricultural depression they and Lylah, then six, moved to St. Paul, where Erickson recommended her for the Ramsey County position.

A strongly focused, hard-working woman whose mission was to develop the ca-

capabilities of her club members, Oberg may have been Ramsey County's all-time best human investment. In her twenty-five years as 4-H Club leader she gave unstintingly of her time and effort and profoundly affected the lives of hundreds of young men and women 4-H Club members. Her annual reports over the twenty-five years she served, some of sixty single-spaced, typewritten pages, are the most vital surviving records of 4-H work in Ramsey Co.

Within four months after she had assumed her new duties, Oberg had formed a county 4-H federation and by the end of the year twenty "standard" clubs were formed. Standard club members could choose from a wide array of projects; those in traditional project clubs had focused on a single project. Members of the Carvers Chicken Club, for example, only raised chickens.

Oberg stressed the concept of junior leadership, "by older club members of the type that would cooperate well and understand club requirements." Believing the phrase, "Every organization lives and dies within the hearts of its own people," Oberg made her case for 4-H work not just to the boys and girls who were prospective club members,

but also to an assembly representing the community. She expected clubs to conduct their meetings according to Roberts Rules of Order and members to be familiar with those rules. With few recreational opportunities available to rural young people she promoted, along with recognized 4-H projects, sports teams and recreational activities.

A county 4-H kittenball (an earlier name for softball) league was formed and both a kittenball tournament and home talent tournament were held in 1929. Two clubs, Gladstone Boosters (Maplewood) and Beach Hustlers (Rose Township) formed orchestras. At the 1929 Ramsey County Fair in White Bear Lake, all twenty-three clubs participated in a gala procession around the horse show track, led by the White Bear Lake Band. Oberg's annual report noted that, "after due deliberation by a committee, the rainbow-colored iris was designated the Ramsey Co. 4-H club flower."

At the 1931 county 4-H Talent Tournament, where plays were judged 40% on entertainment, 20% on artistry and 40% on worthiness, the Lake Owasso Club won the silver loving cup presented by Publix Theatres.

The Ramsey County 4-H Orchestra was organized at North St. Paul in 1931. The orchestra had nineteen members, who appeared in trim green and white 4-H uniforms they made themselves. By 1934 Ramsey County 4-H members were giving a fifteen-minute program over KSTP Radio at 4:45 p.m. every Thursday.

The Great Depression made life difficult for most Americans then, for farmers especially, given severe drought, unreasonably low prices for their products, and relatively high prices for products they had to buy. Times were hard in rural Ramsey County, where agriculture was virtually the only source of income.

Hard times did not soften Oberg's approach to her leadership role. She nurtured commitment from leaders and members alike, fostered excellence in project work, and expected completion of what was begun. A 1935 congratulatory letter to Oberg from T.A. (Dad) Erickson, state 4-H leader, cited Ramsey, smallest Minnesota county in area and with but four townships, for being third in the state in 4-H



Author Helen Hammersten as a junior leader with her Golden Arrows 4-H Club, about 1940. From left, back row, Alma (Mrs. Byron) Hammersten, leader; Helen Hammersten, Fran Leiner, Eleanor Leiner, Marylou Hammersten, Ella Wolkerstorfer, senior leader. Middle row, Pauline Haider, club guest, Rosemary Haider, Shirley Leibel, Clara Jo Swanson. Front row, club guest Diane Lindstrom, Mary Mollner, Polly Leiner, Beverly Leibel. Photo courtesy of Helen Hammersten.

enrollment, first in project completions at 95.9%, and first with the most members in 4-H work for five or more years.

Concerned by lack of coverage of 4-H events by the county's newspapers, in 1936 Oberg persuaded the 4-H Federation to publish a monthly tabloid newspaper, *Ramsey 4-H News*, supported by a \$1 annual subscription fee and 4-H members selling advertising. An early *article* encouraged purchasing a 10¢ pattern for the standard girl's 4-H uniform:

It is an attractive uniform, smartly tailored with saddle sleeves and easy fullness in the skirt but no pleats to press. With a jacket it is a neat outfit for street and assembly wear, yet removable if warm weather demands it. Jade green broadcloth is recommended as it wears and launders well and has more body than lighter weight goods. It also retains its color well. White sports shoes, a white hat and white collar and buttons complete the costume.

In summer 1936 Club members hatched pheasant eggs under "clucky" hens in cooperation with the Isaac Walton League and the Minnesota Department of Con-

servation. The clubs then maintained a wildlife study and research area on Goose Lake Island near White Bear Lake. The clubs received \$25 from the *St. Paul Dispatch* and St. Paul Association Bird Feeding Fund to supply four bird-feeding stations on the west side and five on the east side of the county with corn and dried bread from bakeries. In 1936 4-H sports included sixteen boys' and eight girls' kittenball teams, twelve girls' volleyball teams, and fifteen hockey teams.

May 2, 1937, marked the first "4-H Sunday in Church," a promotion in which 4-H members were urged to become involved in the service and sing a song, such as "America the Beautiful," "Dreaming Song," "Field Song," or "Song of the Open Country." The Ramsey County 4-H Club Athletic Association was founded that year and given a constitution, bylaws, and rules. A horseshoe-pitching contest was among the year's athletic events.

Twelve hundred young people were enrolled in Ramsey County 4-H clubs on November 20, 1937, when many

club members and leaders met to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Extension Service work in Minnesota. Oberg received a scroll commemorating ten years of service and an expense-paid trip to the 4-H Club Congress in Chicago.

Oberg's grandson, John Rosa, recalls his mother, Lylah, telling him that the Oberg family was so poor when they came to St. Paul in the late 1920s that they could afford meat only once a week and that her one dress was washed each night to be fresh for school the next morning. Oberg possibly identified her husband as her brother to gain the 4-H Agent job, as this excerpt from a letter in University archives suggests:

She is listed as married with one child . . . A letter written on Jan. 31, 1938, indicated that Oberg's husband is employed at irregular intervals as a substitute city truck driver, working only when a regular driver is off . . . previously her record indicated she was a widow. Because of her long service as of 1938 an exception is made by Malcolm Willey, U. Vice President, to the general policy of not employing married women.

Like so many aspects of Clara Oberg's history, no personal records have survived that explain this apparent contradiction in the files.

World War II Affects 4-H

World War II greatly affected Ramsey County 4-H programs. More than 400 former and current Ramsey County 4-H members already served in the armed forces. Oberg noted further effects of wartime mobilization on the home front in her 1942 report:

- The Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant [in New Brighton] and other war industries bringing in many new people, and the challenge of bringing 4-H to their children.
- Changing leadership because of war work disrupting attendance and participation in 4-H activities.
- Requests of 4-H leaders for service work, such as supervising Red Cross sewing and knitting units, teaching first aid classes, speaking on nutrition, serving as victory aides, air raid

wardens, neighborhood leaders, and with school hot lunch projects.

- More home duties and employment, and less time for 4-H'ers to devote to projects, meetings and records.

Oberg then wrote,

. . . We decided that 4-H'ers were ready to meet these changes if we helped them to readjust their projects, demonstrations and meetings accordingly. Having pledged ourselves to serve on the home front, always ready to assist the Victory Program, 4-H leaders and members had no difficulty recognizing their duty, or privilege to serve. . . .

Many 4-H members gathered scrap rubber, metal and paper for the war effort, earning a penny a pound for scrap rubber. The colt club, which never had more than three members, had six in 1942. "While colts are not raised for meat, we recognize that horses are needed in our farm operations for producing food," *Ramsey 4-H News* explained. While membership in Ramsey County 4-H clubs remained high during World War II, the demands, struggles, and concerns faced by club members diminished the project completion rate. Once well above 90%, it bottomed at 67% in 1943 before a slow recovery.



Scrap collected for the war effort in 1943 by Turtle Lake 4-H Club members, left to right, Beverly Bucher, Betty Bucher, Marilyn Bucher, Roger Durbahn, and Robert Dahl. Photo courtesy of Ellen Bucher's scrapbook.

In 1943 members tended an amazing 118 acres of Victory Gardens. A Rose Town club gathered 29½ pounds of silk and nylon hosiery and collected 33 pounds of fat for the war effort. The war dominated focus and concern. In her 1944 report Oberg wrote:

We now have over 1,000 4-H'ers in the Armed forces. We are keeping close to these 4-H'ers . . . they are sons and daughters of our leaders and their neighbors in our communities. They are brothers and sisters and dads and relatives and friends of our 4-H'ers. We have a constant contact with these 4-H'ers in the Armed Forces through our 4-H clubs. . . .

This year we are preparing a Christmas letter to send to about 800 of them. . . . All of them are in there "pitching," and we sincerely hope that we at home are doing our part as diligently as the 4-H'ers are who are in the Armed Forces. And, when they come home, we hope we have kept our 4-H program strong, so that it may be a challenge and an invitation for them to join us again as leaders and 4-H buddies.

Oberg's scrapbook contains a typewritten, thirty-two-page list, school district by school district, of former Ramsey County 4-H members serving in the armed forces. Next to many names are her penned notations, sometimes noting promotions, awards or decorations, sometimes, sadly, prisoner, missing or killed; sometimes an observation: "Married an English girl." Clara Oberg kept track of her own.

In 1946 Ramsey County employed its first assistant 4-H Club leader, and Oberg revived the 4-H Athletic Program, a wartime casualty. Nine kittenball and ten volleyball teams were formed. That fall, fostered greatly through Oberg's efforts, Ramsey County 4-H clubs acquired a summer camp across Highway 96 from the north shore of White Bear Lake. The purchase price for two acres and Grace Lodge, named for Grace Hoadley Dodge, YWCA president in 1916 when the camp was established as a YWCA camp for girls, was \$8,500, precisely \$8,500 more than the 4-H clubs had. Nearly \$3,000 was raised through sale of booya, hot dogs, homemade cake, pop, ice cream, and gifts at a rally held



Mrs. Victor Fitch, left, confers with Clara Oberg in 1946 regarding 4-H program planning. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



From left, Bob Seabloom, Community Builders Club; Charlotte Fitch, Shikoma Club; Clara Oberg; Bill Seabloom, Community Builders Club; and Betty Bucher, Turtle Lake Club, in scene from a junior leaders drama, about 1946. Courtesy of Betty Bucher Hildestad's 4-H scrapbook.

at the camp in October, and \$2,500 was applied to the purchase. The camp was dedicated June 7, 1947.

Oberg's 4-H Service Ends

Maxine Harkness, who was raised in Dallas, Texas, and whose husband, Leonard, directed Minnesota 4-H Clubs from 1949 to 1980, knew nothing of 4-H when she came to Minnesota. "Clara Oberg introduced me to 4-H; I learned a lot from her," Harkness says. She has vivid memories of Oberg directing 4-H boys and girls in baking all bread eaten at the camp. Boys did much of the heavy work of kneading, small boys standing on stools or chairs as they kneaded.

When it was time for swimming, Oberg led campers south and across Highway 96 to White Bear Lake. A booya was held each fall, with families donating most of the ingredients and the cakes. Each year a harvest king and queen were elected on the basis of a penny a vote, a far-from-democratic process that, in a good year, added \$500 to camp coffers. The camp was debt-free by 1951.

Oberg's 1949 report of County 4-H work filled thirty-two, single-spaced, typewritten pages, ending with this observation:

Some 20 years ago rural Ramsey Co. had a public nurse, one 4-H agent, some 50 teachers—in fact, the population was about one-fourth of the present population. Since then they have added three nurses and the teaching staff has doubled and tripled several times, while only one 4-H agent is called on beyond the ability to serve well. It is a situation which must be considered if the 4-H program is to continue—and the constant demand for more 4-H work everywhere indicates that it will continue if given the guidance an educational program must have to be worthwhile.

By 1951 rural Ramsey Co. had grown to 60,000 people. It still had 668 farms, many of them small truck farms. "There will be agriculture in Ramsey Co. for a long time," Oberg predicted. By 1970 nearly all of the farms were gone.

Oberg was gone much sooner. Although a tireless worker where 4-H members were concerned and whose valuable contributions to the development of young people were nearly beyond measure, her ways did not always sit well with some adults. She received a forced retirement in 1953 after serving 25 years. The Ramsey County Agricultural Society announced it would not hire another 4-H agent but would employ a

home agent instead. The county agent would now devote 50% of his time and new home agent 65% of her time to the 4-H program.

"The abolition of the club agent position should not have a deleterious effect," the Society said. "Rather, the introduction of the home project work will serve to tie the women as well as the farmer and young folks with Extension work . . . then, too, it has been found that home project groups are the best sources of 4-H leadership." It didn't work out that way. In Ramsey County, 4-H work would never again have the scope and the spirit it had under Clara Oberg.

She had been a 4-H trailblazer, also helping to build the National Junior Vegetable Growers Association in Minnesota and serving as state adviser. She represented 4-H on the National Post War (World War II) 4-H Planning Committee, and was elected the first female president of the National Association of Club Agents in 1952, after holding every office of the association. That same year she received the organization's distinguished service award.

Following her retirement from 4-H, Oberg went on to work for ten years as

**Census Figures
St. Paul and Ramsey County
1920 – 1960**

U.S. Census Year	City of St. Paul	Rural Ramsey County
1920	234,700	9,844
1930	271,600	15,121
1940	287,700	17,235
1950	311,300	44,032
1960	313,411	109,114

Between 1920 and 1960, the population of the city of St. Paul grew at an average rate of about 1,967 persons per year. Rural Ramsey County, in contrast, maintained a relatively stable population of less than 20,000 people from 1920 until the late 1940s, when the need for more housing encouraged the development of suburbs outside St. Paul's city limits.

receptionist at Globe Business College. She and her husband retired at Apache Junction, Ariz., where she died in 1984. In 2002 she was inducted posthumously into the National 4-H Hall of Fame.

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Clara Oberg, far left, with campers at Grace Lodge, Ramsey County 4-H Camp, White Bear Lake, about 1947. Photo courtesy of Robert Seabloom.

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Harlan Stoehr was assistant professor and agricultural bulletin editor at the University of Minnesota in the 1960s, where he connected with 4-H. Helen Hammersten went from 4-H member to junior leader and then adult leader under Clara Oberg in Roseville more than sixty years ago. Both authors reside in Shoreview.



Beverly Liebell, Clara Oberg, and James Bruess, left to right, with the 1949 4-H club calendar distributed by the Elmer Geiger Farm Equipment Co., St. Paul. Geiger's firm featured the county 4-H health king (Bruess) and queen (Leibel) on its annual calendar. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

R.C.H.S.
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The Minnesota State Capitol, where five sons of Erin have been honored, is just to the north of the Cathedral of St. Paul. Photo by Robert W. Larson (2008). For more on Minnesota politics and Irish identity, see John W. Milton's article on page 3.