

RAMSEY COUNTY
History

A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Summer, 1990
Volume 25, Number 2



FOR HER HONOR'S SAKE.

There are cases where a brother must interfere in his sister's affairs.

An acid commentary on the Great Census War of 1890 and the rivalries which have colored the history of St. Paul and Minneapolis. See page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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On the cover: The United States census of 1890 sparked virtual warfare in the unceasing rivalry between Minneapolis and St. Paul. This cartoon was published in the *St. Paul News* for June 28, 1890.

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A MESSAGE TO OUR READERS

In May, 1988, the Board of Directors of the Ramsey County Historical society decided that they should develop a plan to broaden the appeal of *Ramsey County History*, redesign it, expand its coverage of the history of the county, and publish the magazine four times each year.

In bringing change to the look of *Ramsey County History*, the Editorial Board has tried to make sure that the strengths in content and features of its predecessors have not been abandoned. Thus we have the good fortune to be able to publish carefully researched and well written articles on a wide range of topics associated with the colorful history of Ramsey County. And we have added new features, such as "A Matter of Time" and "What's Historic About This Site?".

Throughout this process, the goal always has remained to produce the best possible magazine on the history of Ramsey County with the widest appeal within the resources available. The Editorial Board believes this new format meets those objectives. We hope you agree.

—John L. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

Book Reviews

The Cathedral of St. Paul:

An Architectural Biography.
Eric C. Hansen
St. Paul: The Cathedral of St. Paul,
1990.

On Palm Sunday, 1915, the first liturgy was held at the magnificent new St. Paul Cathedral. It has become such an important landmark for the city of St. Paul—one looks up to “Cathedral Hill”—that it is hard to imagine that it is only seventy-five years old.

In celebration of that anniversary, a gloriously illustrated new book has been published, written by Eric C. Hansen. Although currently teaching modern European history at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Hansen is well known to the area from his days on the faculty of the College of St. Thomas.

As the title suggests, this is a book that focuses on the building, but recognizes that one needs to understand the interaction between patron, in this case the indefatigable Archbishop John Ireland, the architect, the Frenchman Emmanuel Louis Masqueray, and the intended audience.



Unity Church, St. Paul. This photograph of the HGA-designed opening to the church's courtyard is from the firm's history.



Last rites for Archbishop Ireland, October 2, 1918, one of the many photographs in the richly illustrated history of the St. Paul Cathedral.

The result is a fascinating look at the powerful leadership of Ireland as he pushed forward on the culminating effort of his career. Hansen carries the story up to the term of Monsignor Ambrose V. Hayden, the present rector of the Cathedral.

The great strength of this book is its detailed study of the Cathedral. Through the use of excellent color and black and white photography, the nooks and crannies of the enormous building come alive as if for the first time, revealing wonderful details.

The beautiful stained glass windows by the masters, John LaFarge and Charles Connick, are especially noteworthy. I was immediately tempted to walk up the hill and wander through once more, carrying the book in front of me. A walking tour, in fact, is included in the appendix of the book.

Hansen wisely noted that the Cathedral performs several important functions. Obviously, it is a place of worship. It sits on the edge of the downtown, opening the way, so it seems, to Summit Avenue.

Finally, it is a storehouse of history and individual memory. As Archbishop Ireland said at the last service of the third Cathedral in 1914, “Look well around;

for the last time see what so long you have loved to see; call back in memory the years gone by, all that those years do mean to you.” This book evokes those feelings.

From Bauhaus to Bowties: HGA Celebrates 35 Years.

Bette Jones Hammel
Minneapolis: Hammel Green and
Abrahamson, 1989.

Bette Hammel states the case for architecture in ardent terms in her introduction. “Architecture,” she writes, “should uplift the human spirit, say the architectural historians. After writing this history, I now know how much emotion is packed into architecture.” Her husband, one of the firm's founders, said it another way: “We are designing for a celebration of human life.” In this study of one firm, Hammel provides a good introduction to the ideas that shaped it.

The book traces the history of the firm, telling how Curt Green and Dick Hammel began their influential business over lunch at the St. Paul Hotel in 1952. Green said, “Dick and I agreed that we

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ern distributing center in the Midway, and Bingham and Norton, successors to the Central Automobile Agency, opened "one of the largest garages in the Northwest" at Grand and Victoria avenues. It cost \$25,000.

►25,000 people attended the Fourth of July celebration at Como Park, and in Europe, a Russian submarine torpedoed a German warship of the Deutschland class at the entrance to Danzig Bay.

►A German note defending the torpedoing of the *Luisitania* on May 12 was published on the front page of the July 10 *Pioneer Press*.

►In Glen Cove, Long Island, Frank Holt attempted to assassinate J. P. Morgan but succeeded only in wounding him. Holt was holding Morgan's wife and children hostage and threatening to kill them with dynamite unless Morgan used his influence to stop the exportation of war munitions. Vice President Thomas R. Marshall also received death threats. A bomb exploded in the reception room off the Senate chamber within a few feet of Marshall's desk. Secret Service surveillance of President Wilson was stepped up. Holt himself died in jail of a fractured skull. His death, termed "a riddle," was marked down as a suicide.

1940 50 Years Ago

►At the Democratic Party convention held in July in Chicago, President Roosevelt announced that he would run for a third term against Wendell Willkie.

►Newspaper columnist Joseph H. Ball described Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen's pivotal role in helping Willkie win the Republican nomination in Philadelphia and praised Stassen's "great keynote speech."

►The newspapers were full of war news from Europe. The Nazis sent a large fleet of German bombers to Rumania, strengthening the feeling that the Reich was backing Rumania against further Russian encroachments after the Russians seized Bessarabia and Bukovina. At the same time, the Germans ordered American and other diplomatic missions to leave newly-occupied Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

►Jews were beaten and shot in a wave of anti-Semitism as street rioting broke out in Rumania. King Carol, who had ap-

pealed to the Nazis for help to save his kingdom, tried to abdicate. A *Pioneer Press* editorial labeled him an "opportunist" who backed the wrong side.

►The first German and Italian prisoners of war began arriving in Canada but more than 1,000 died when a German U-boat sank the British steamer, *Arandora Starr*, off the Irish west coast.

►Back in St. Paul, merchants and theater operators began collecting new taxes levied by the federal government as part of the national defense program. Twenty-five-cent theater tickets rose to 28 cents and 40-cent tickets to 44 cents.

►Major Bowes brought his Anniversary Unit to the RKO Orpheum theater in conjunction with "Twenty Mule Team," Wallace Beery's latest film. "Rebecca," with Joan Fontaine and Laurence Oliver, was playing at the Strand.

►Two members of St. Paul's royal family (Winter Carnival royalty, that is) celebrated birthdays at the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Shiely at Prescott, Wisconsin. They were Mrs. Shiely, whose husband was King Boreas, and Joseph L. Shiely, Jr. Others present were Mrs. W. J. Hickey and her husband, Winter Carnival Association president, and Mrs. Ernest Reiff and her husband, who was Vulcan.

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knew almost everything about architecture and should control our own destiny."

Hammel's account, told from the perspective of a family member, is filled with charming anecdotes like this one. They put a human face on the grand scale in which architecture works.

Working in a historical society, I am quick to recognize that buildings are one of the most important common threads that join generations. The work of one generation lives on through hundreds of years, proving true the advice of John Ruskin: "Build as if it would last forever."

The work of Hammel Green and Abrahamson has shaped life in the Twin Cities for the last thirty-five years and their work will last for many more. In reviewing some of their projects, I was struck by the inventiveness and beauty of the St. Bede's Priory, completed in 1967; the Phillips Plastic Headquarters in Phil-

lips, Wisconsin; and the charming Canterbury Downs race track.

The firm is currently responsible for the new Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, giving us the prospect of two of the great celebrations of the human spirit rising in one structure.

Little Canada, A Voyageur's Vision.

Gareth D. Heibert, editor.
Stillwater: The Croixside Press, Inc., 1989.

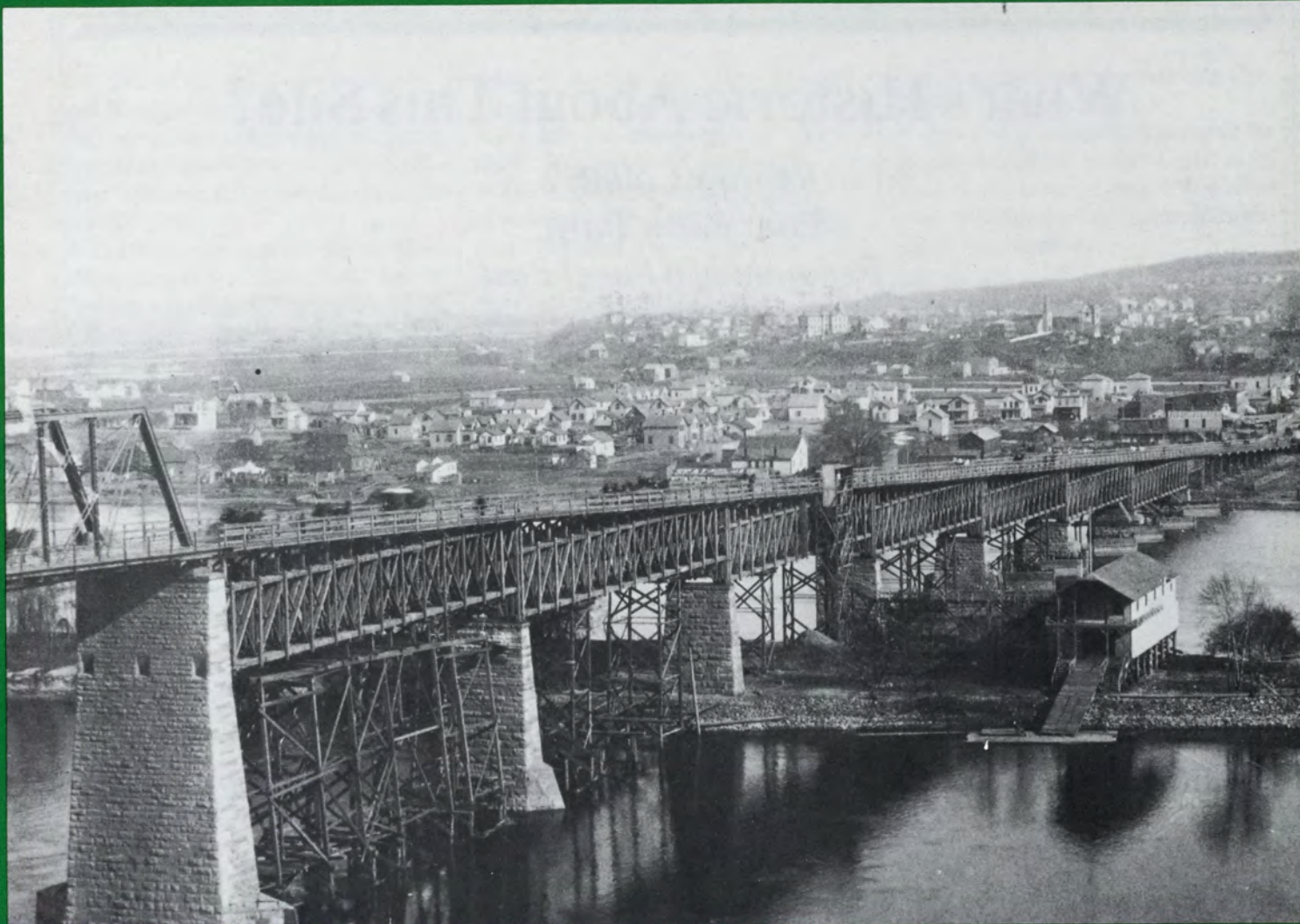
The Little Canada Historical Society, under the guidance of Johanna Meath, has produced a handsome history of their community and its development: the story of "Petit Canada." This story is told as the combination of many stories written by many authors. One of the unique elements of the book is that families wrote their own chapters, bringing an immediacy and pride to their work.

For example, we learn about Paul and Louis Bideau. Louis had nine children and accepted Paul's offer to move in with him in 1847. But, they didn't get along and Louis moved out to a barn, which he fixed up. Or the tale of Salvatore LoBaido. As a boy, he visited Italy with his family. "You will know Grandma Vitale," his father said. "She is a short lady wearing black." Many of the older women, he said, ended up being short and wearing black and he hugged the wrong grandma.

The starting point for the story, though, must begin with Benjamin Gervais, the founder of Little Canada. Gary Brueggeman authored the long chapter on Gervais, who bought land along a creek in 1844, apparently based on a recommendation from local Indians. His brother, Pierre, moved there two years later. His grave is marked in St. John's cemetery. On a local level, it becomes clear that one man and his choices can have a significant effect on history.

The Society is to be commended for its hard work. The sections on local churches, clubs, and civic organizations make it a valuable tool for anyone wanting to learn about the community today. But as historians, we know that any understanding must begin in the past.

—Daniel John Hoisington



The Minnesota Boat Club below the Wabasha Street bridge around 1890. The old clubhouse was replaced just before World War I and the island, once known as Raspberry Island, is now Navy Island. See story on Page 9.

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

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