

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

Growing Up on  
Crocus Hill  
—Page 22

Summer, 1995

Volume 30, Number 2

*A Powerhouse of Vision, Vigor*  
Friends of the Library's 50 Years—Page 4



*A little girl, seemingly overwhelmed by the riches a library offers, kneels beside her stack of books at an event organized by The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library. Beside her a future reader watches carefully. Photo from The Friends' files. For a history of The Friends' fifty years of service to the community, see the article beginning on page 4.*



## RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

*Executive Director*  
Priscilla Farnham  
*Editor*  
Virginia Brainard Kunz

## RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joanne A. Englund  
*Chairman of the Board*

John M. Lindley  
*President*

Laurie Zenner  
*First Vice President*

Judge Margaret M. Marrinan  
*Second Vice President*

Richard A. Wilhoit  
*Secretary*

James Russell  
*Treasurer*

Arthur Baumeister, Jr., Alexandra Bjorklund,  
Andrew Boss, Thomas Boyd, Mark Eisen-  
schenk, John Harens, Marshall Hatfield, Liz  
Johnson, Richard Long, Laurie Murphy,  
Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Thomond O'Brien,  
Robert Olsen, Vicenta Scarlett, Evangeline  
Schroeder, Jane Thiele, Anne Cowie Wilson.

### EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chairman; Thomas H.  
Boyd, Thomas C. Buckley, Laurie M.  
Murphy, Dr. Thomas B. Mega.

### HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

Elmer L. Andersen, Olivia I. Dodge,  
Charlton Dietz, William Finney, Clarence  
Frame, Otis Godfrey, Jr., Ronald Hachey,  
Reuel D. Harmon, Robert S. Hess, Ronald  
M. Hubbs, Fred T. Lanners, Jr., Don Larson,  
George Latimer, Lewis Lehr, David Mars-  
den, Robert B. Mirick, Samuel H. Morgan,  
Marvin J. Pertzik, J. Jerome Plunkett, Peter  
S. Popovich, James Reagan, Rosalie E.  
Wahl, Donald D. Wozniak.

### RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hal Norgard, chairman  
Commissioner Susan Haigh  
Commissioner John Finley  
Commissioner Rafael Ortega  
Commissioner Warren Schaber  
Commissioner Brenda Thomas  
Commissioner Richard Wedell

Terry Schutten, manager, Ramsey County

*Ramsey County History* is published quar-  
terly by the Ramsey County Historical Soci-  
ety, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth  
Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102. Printed in  
U.S.A. Copyright, 1995, Ramsey County  
Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-  
9758. All rights reserved. No part of this pub-  
lication may be reprinted or otherwise repro-  
duced without written permission from the  
publisher. The Society assumes no responsi-  
bility for statements made by contributors.

# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 30, Number 2

Summer, 1995

## CONTENTS

- 3** Letters
- 4** Vision, Vigor, Earthbound Practicality  
Friends of the Library—A Powerhouse After 50 Years  
*Virginia L. Martin*
- 22** Growing Up in St. Paul  
Flexible Flyers, Trolleys to Wildwood  
And the Wondrous Tree House on Grand Hill  
*Samuel H. Morgan*
- 19** Books, Etc.  
*To Be An Indian: An Oral History*  
Joseph H. Cash, Herbert T. Hoover, editors  
*Reviewed by Gail Teas*

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.

## A Message from the Editorial Board

**T**his issue of *Ramsey County History* provides an unusual look at a non-profit organization—The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library—that for more than fifty years has quietly served the cultural, intellectual, and public-spirited side of St. Paul and Ramsey County. As writer Virginia L. Martin tells us, The Friends began as what they themselves called a “tea and crumpets” society, but today is an initiator of change in the world of the local library. For example, in 1994 The Friends put more than a quarter of million dollars into various programs and activities designed to improve, expand, and upgrade the public library services that are available to all members of the community. Congratulations to The Friends.

*John M. Lindley, chairman*



# Letters to the Editor

## Water Street Again

You've gotten some bad information. There is now a Water Street and, as far as I have been able to determine, it has always been the street next to the right [west] bank of the river except where the Yacht Club Road has been plopped in. That latest issue of *Ramsey County History* was a nice issue. I especially enjoyed James Bell's Seeger story. I hope you have him lined up for other material.

*Henry Hall, St. Paul.*

*Actually, our response to the Water Street question quoted an 1850s issue of the Minnesota Pioneer, at which time there might—or might not—have been a Water Street. Many other readers also liked James Bell's Seeger article. For more from him, watch for the history of St. Paul's Norwest Bank in the coming Fall issue, and for histories of Yoerg's Brewery and the St. Paul Daily News in 1996.*

## Fountain Cave

Greg Brick's article on Fountain Cave is truly outstanding, a major contribution to St. Paul's history. *Ramsey County History* continues to improve with every issue.

*James Taylor Dunn, Taylors Falls.*

## What Happened to Bass Lake?

Wasn't there once a Bass Lake somewhere north of St. Paul? I seem to remember seeing it on some old maps. Did it just disappear in the surge of the suburbs?

*—Penny Jackson, Shoreview.*

*No. It's still there, out on Victoria. It's now Lake Owasso. The name was*



*John A. Seeger, founder and chairman of the Seeger Refrigerator Company, about 1935. Photo from James B. Bell, author of the article tracing the company's history published in the Spring, 1995, issue of Ramsey County History.*

*changed in 1873. Victoria was once known as Bass Lake Road.*

## A Home for the Homeless

With all the caves around St. Paul, has anyone ever lived in one?

*—Julie Harris, Woodbury.*

*Probably. At least briefly. One documented case was reported in the April 11, 1934, issue of the St. Paul Daily News. Two men, destitute that depression year, made their home in Carver's Cave. They sold crafts, including latticework and baskets, to eke out a living.*

## St. Paul's Parks

We attended several concerts at Como Park last summer and got to wondering when that beautiful park was created. And what about Phalen Park? It's another favorite spot, especially during the Winter Carnival.

*—Robert Moore, North St. Paul.*

*Como Park was created as far back as 1873 when the city bought the lake and the surrounding land for \$100,000. The conservatory was built in 1915. Phalen Park came later, in 1899 after the land was acquired for \$22,000.*

## The Hamms' House

For me, the picturesque home built by William Hamm on Greenbrier always was a beautiful sight on its steep hill overlooking the downtown. When was it torn down?

*—Steven Westcott, St. Paul.*

*It wasn't torn down. The house had been vacant for some time when it was destroyed by a fire set by an arsonist in 1954.*

## The Foreign Press

My father as a boy used to have a paper route delivering the *Daily Volks Zeitung*. Were there other German-language newspapers in Ramsey County?

*—Clara Hoffmann, Lake Elmo.*

*By 1869 St. Paul had five German-language newspapers. At one time the city, which was a printing center, was headquarters for twenty papers published in the German language.*





*Mayor George Latimer and Garrison Keillor do their own inimitable thing during The Saint Paul Public Library's 100th anniversary celebration in 1982, an event which launched The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library on a new era of expansive growth. Keillor was chairman of the 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee. For a history of The Friends, see the 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

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION

U.S. Postage  
PAID  
St. Paul, MN  
Permit #3989