

RAMSEY COUNTY

History

A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Ramsey County's
Women Athletes And a
Win at Wimbledon

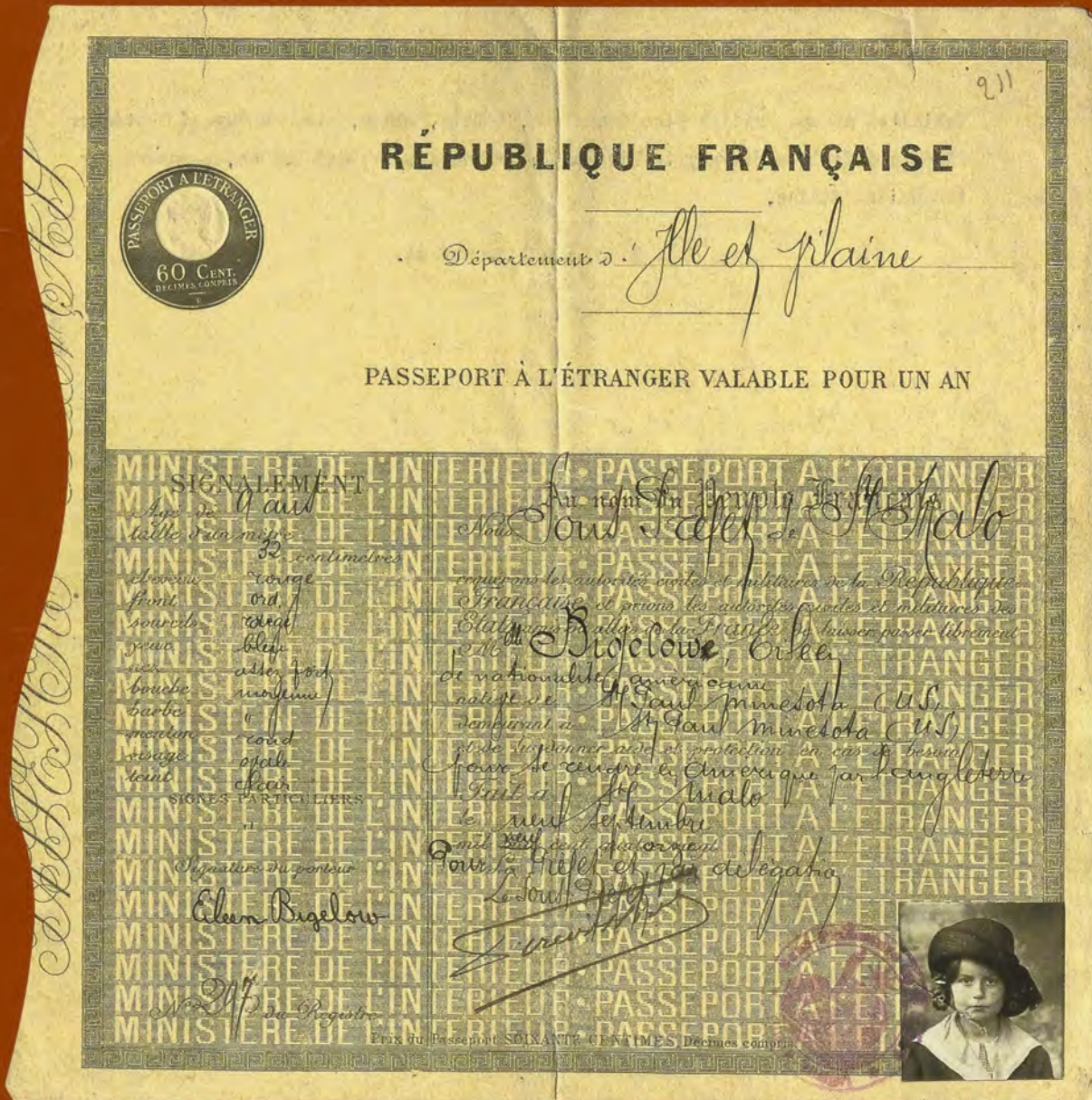
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Summer, 1998

Volume 33, Number 2

Money Belts Stuffed with Gold

F. R. Bigelow's Dash to France in 1914—Page 4



Eileen Bigelow's passport. A notation on the back states: "Exhibited at the British Vice Consulate, St. Malo, France, this 9th day of September, 1914, good for the journey, via Southampton and London, to embark for the United States. H.B.M.'s Vice Consul." Her father's account of his trip to France begins on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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Summer, 1998

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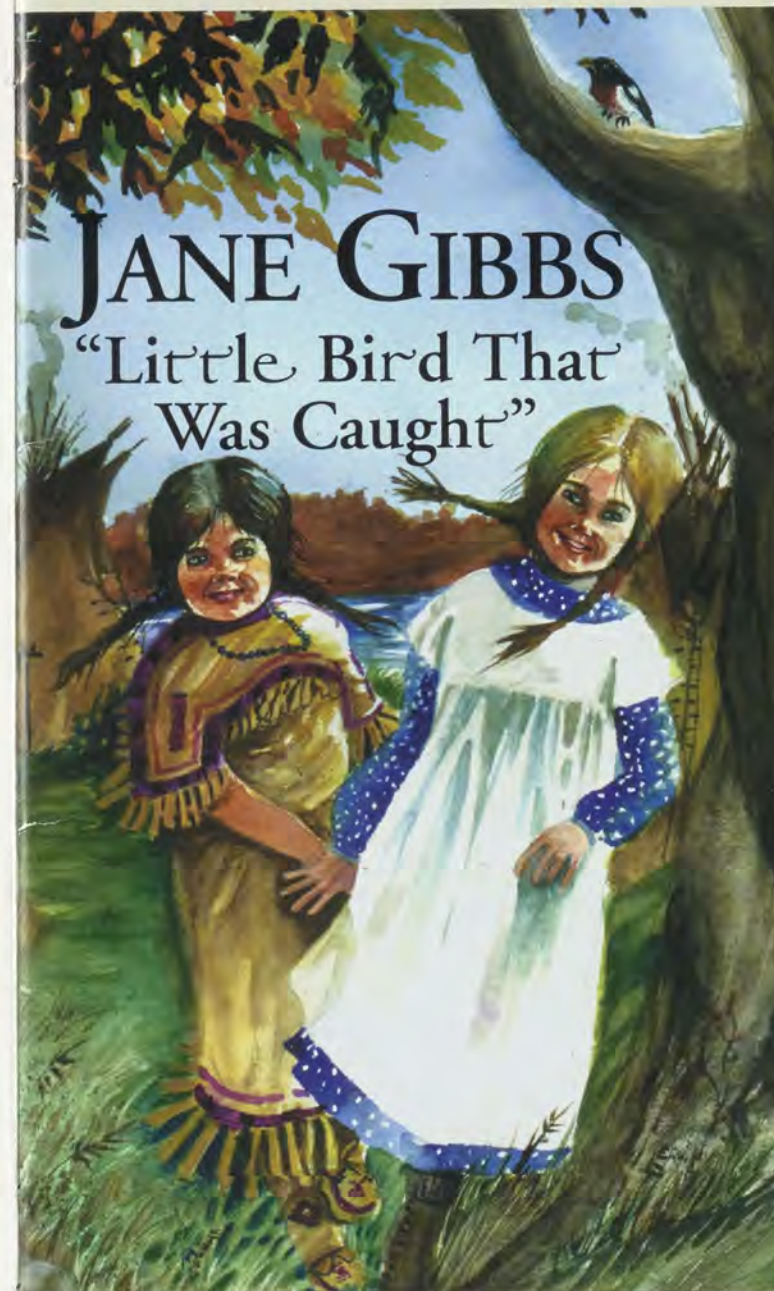
A Message from the Editorial Board

With the winding down of summer 1998 and the beginning of another school year, the lead article in this issue recalls the "Guns of August," F.R. Bigelow's account of his determined efforts in 1914 to join his wife and children in France and to safely leave that country ahead of the swift advance of the Imperial German Army in the opening days of World War I. Although the United States didn't join the war against Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary until 1917, Bigelow's story of how he was able to get to France via Spain, find his family in the maelstrom of a France caught up in fighting a powerful invader, and return to St. Paul in time for the opening day of school for his young children is not only compelling reading, but also persuasive of where the sympathies of many Americans would lean as the war went on year after year.

Equally as fascinating as Frederic Bigelow's account of the world in the summer of 1914 is Kathleen C. Ridder's examination of the notable success of some of Ramsey County's women athletes in the middle third of this century. Women such as Jean Havlish, Mary Meyers, Jeanne Arth, and Bev Vanstrum achieved prominence and public acclaim for their victories in softball, bowling, speed skating, tennis, and golf long before federal legislation prohibited discrimination based on gender in educational programs that received federal funds. From "A League of Their Own" to the Olympics, these women led the way for the next generation of women athletes in Ramsey County and Minnesota. Despite their pioneering efforts, few of these athletes are known today because all too often they and their achievements were regarded as exceptions (which they were for their times) rather than as role models for those young women who would come after them.

John M. Lindley, chair, Editorial Board

An Exciting New Book for Young Readers



Based on a true story about real people
and events that happened.

PUBLISHED BY THE RAMSEY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE STORY OF JANE GIBBS AND THE DAKOTA PEOPLE

Jane DeBow Gibbs {1828-1910} was a little girl who lived long ago in a place that someday would be called Minnesota. A family of strangers had taken her from her home in New York State and carried her hundreds of miles away to the far-off frontier beyond the Mississippi River.

There she lived in two worlds: the world of the Dakota people and the world of the soldiers and missionaries who lived among them. Her Dakota friends named her *Zitkadan Usawin*, "Little Bird That Was Caught," because they knew she truly was a "little bird" who had been "caught" and taken away by a strange family.

Jane learned to answer to two names, to speak two languages, to call two families her own. She went to school with the Dakota children, and she played their games. But Jane also shared the fear the Dakota knew as they faced an attack by their enemies.

Although she lost her own family, Jane had twice the adventures most people have. This is the story of those adventures. It is based on a true story about real people.

Letters to the Editor

Ports and James J. Hill

In the Letters section of your winter, 1998, issue, a reader asked about a restaurant somewhere on Grand Avenue, and the reply was that it might have been Faber's Colonial Tea and Coffee Shop. As both my husband and my parents lived in the Grand and Lexington area at the time we were born (1922 and 1925), we spent a great deal of time on Grand Avenue. Neither of us can remember the Faber eating establishment.

We do remember and both of us ate many meals at Ports Restaurant located on the south side of Grand near Oxford. There was a Shell gasoline station on the southwest corner, then Ports. As I recall, the restaurant was built and opened as Gilbert's Restaurant. Mr. and Mrs. Port later purchased it, and through the many years they owned it, were almost always present to greet and seat patrons. The exterior of the building had a distinctive architecture, unlike the box structures characteristic of the other Grand Avenue storefronts.

The interior was divided into three sections, two for dining at tables and at fine quality wood booths and the west section offered counter service. In the back area of the east section where tables were located, the plaster walls were softly textured, and I think there were murals.

Also, in the same issue is an article about Swedish immigrants by John W. Larson. He mentions James J. Hill. I have done considerable research at the Hill papers and elsewhere on Hill's North Oaks Farm and have wondered where there might be information on where the farm workers came from. I have been told immigrants worked on the farm and some of them who were



The intersection of Seventh and Wabasha in downtown St. Paul in 1952. Minnesota Historical Society photo.

moving westward were housed at the farm. Another source of interest is about the people who owned the land prior to James J. Hill's ownership. Were they immigrants? Hill purchased the farm from Charles Gilfillan in 1883, and through the years purchased adjacent small parcels of land from their owners. I have a complete record of these purchases, but know nothing about the people who owned the land.

Joan Brainard,
North Oaks, Minnesota.

Sharp Eyes

In last winter's issue, the photo on page 13 is from 1952. That's the release date of the movie at the Orpheum.

William S. Fallon, St. Paul.

Reader Fallon is right. The photo illustrated Paul Gold's article on "The Legend of Sam Taran: Bootlegger and St. Paul's 'Fighting Tailor,'" and shows

the intersection of Seventh and Wabasha where Taran was first arrested for loitering. The picture post-dates Taran's 1920s heyday by some twenty years and cars and stores have changed, but the intersection remains (sort of) and so does the Orpheum (at least for now).

Setting the Record Straight

I really enjoyed the article on Cascade Creek in the spring '98 issue of *Ramsey County History*. I had no idea there were so many underground streams in the Cities! The only problem I had with the article was a tiny mistake. It's mentioned that the creek flowed by Cretin High, but in 1987 Cretin High merged with Derham Hall. As a proud graduate of Cretin-Derham Hall, I thought I'd set the record straight.

Kirsten Brott, Roseville.



She did it! Bev Vanstrum's victory jig at the 1968 State Match Tournament at Edina Country Club. See article on Ramsey County's women athletes, beginning on page 13.

R.C.H.S.
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