

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Life on the Farm:
A Changing World With
Changing Fortunes

Page 13

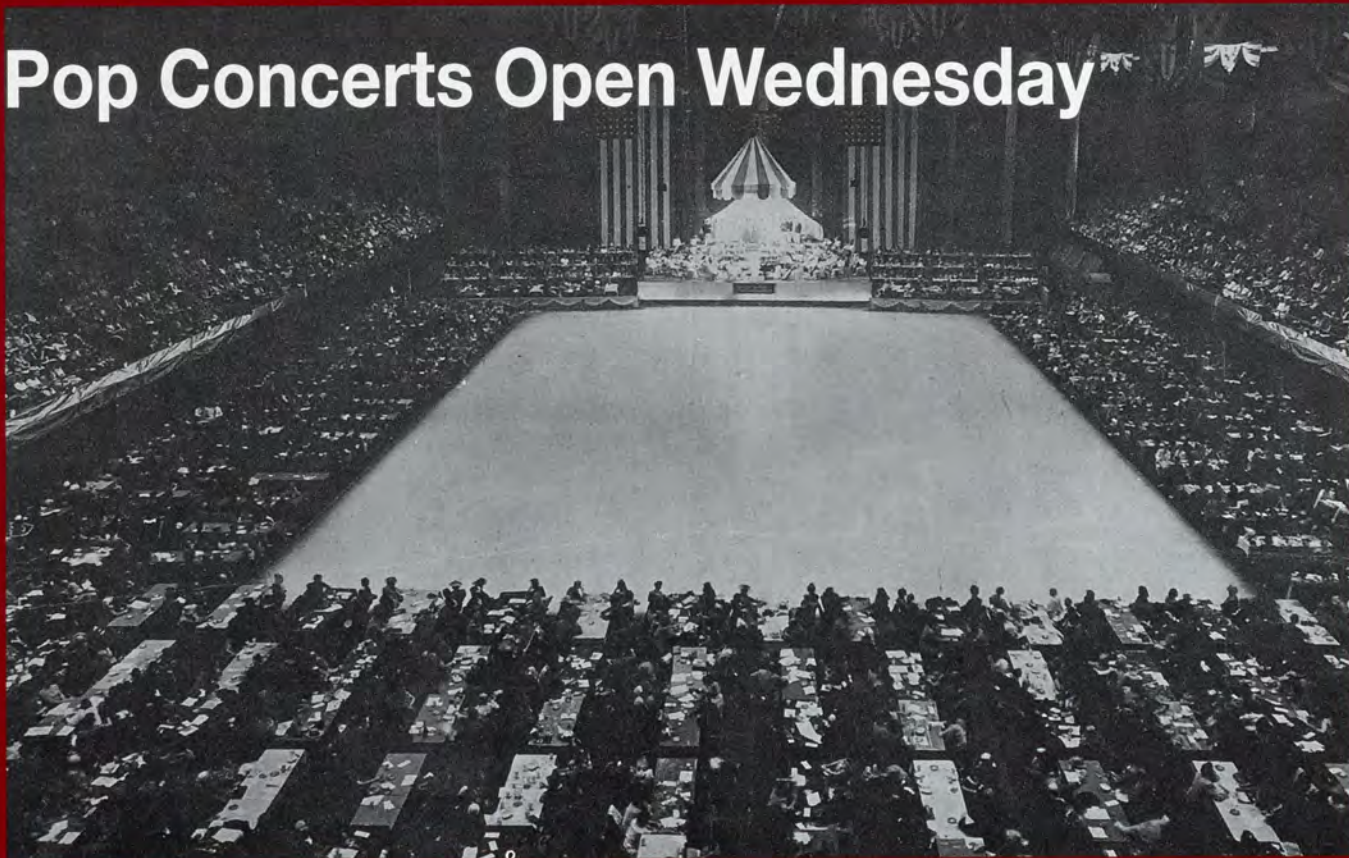
Summer, 1999

Volume 34, Number 2

Escaping the Heat on a Hot Night
The St. Paul Figure Skating Club and
Those Popular Summer Pop Concerts

—Page 4

Pop Concerts Open Wednesday



St. Paul's Pop Concerts were famous nationwide, the St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press noted in its rotogravure section for July 18, 1943. "Literally the only show of its kind in the world," the newspaper reported that the St. Paul Pops was a cooperative venture. St. Paul supplied the Auditorium arena, the Figure Skating Club the talent "for the spectacular ice shows," the Civic Opera provided the chorus, and the Musicians' Association the seventy-piece orchestra, many of them members of the Minneapolis Symphony." See article beginning on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Executive Director

Priscilla Farnham

Editor

Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Laurie A. Zenner

Chair

Howard M. Guthmann

President

James Russell

First Vice President

Anne Cowie Wilson

Second Vice President

Richard A. Wilhoit

Secretary

Ronald J. Zweber

Treasurer

W. Andrew Boss, Peter K. Butler, Charlotte H. Drake, Mark G. Eisenschenk, Joanne A. Englund, Robert F. Garland, Judith Frost Lewis, John M. Lindley, George A. Mairs, Marlene Marschall, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Bob Olsen, Linda Owen, Fred Perez, Marvin J. Pertzik, Vicenta D. Scarlett, Glenn Wiessner, Charles H. Williams, Jr.,

EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chair; Thomas H. Boyd, Thomas C. Buckley, Pat Hart, Virginia Brainard Kunz, Thomas J. Kelley, Tom Mega, Laurie Murphy, Vicenta Scarlett, G. Richard Slade, Laurie Zenner.

HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

Elmer L. Andersen, Olivia I. Dodge, Charlton Dietz, William Finney, Otis Godfrey, Jr., Robert S. Hess, Fred T. Lanners, Jr., D. W. "Don" Larson, George Latimer, Frank Marzitelli, Joseph S. Micallef, Robert Mirick, Samuel Morgan, Marvin J. Pertzik, J. Jerome Plunkett, James Reagan, Solly Robins, Rosalie E. Wahl, Donald D. Wozniak.

RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Rafael Ortega, chairman
Commissioner Susan Haigh
Commissioner Tony Bennett
Commissioner Dino Guerin
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt
Commissioner Janice Rettman
Commissioner Jan Wiessner

Paul Kirkwold, acting manager, Ramsey County

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright, 1999, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Fax 651-223-8539; e-mail address admin@rchs.com.; web site address www.rchs.com

RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 34, Number 2

Summer, 1999

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 Escaping the Heat on a Hot Summer Night
The St. Paul Figure Skating Club and
Those Popular Pop Concerts
Kathleen C. Ridder
- 13 Growing Up in St. Paul
Life on the Farm In a Changing World
Henry H. Morgan and Samuel H. Morgan
- 22 Two Who Were There Remember
How Ramsey County Moved Into the 20th Century
Thomas J. Kelley and Judge John T. Finley

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. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon

Message from Editorial Board

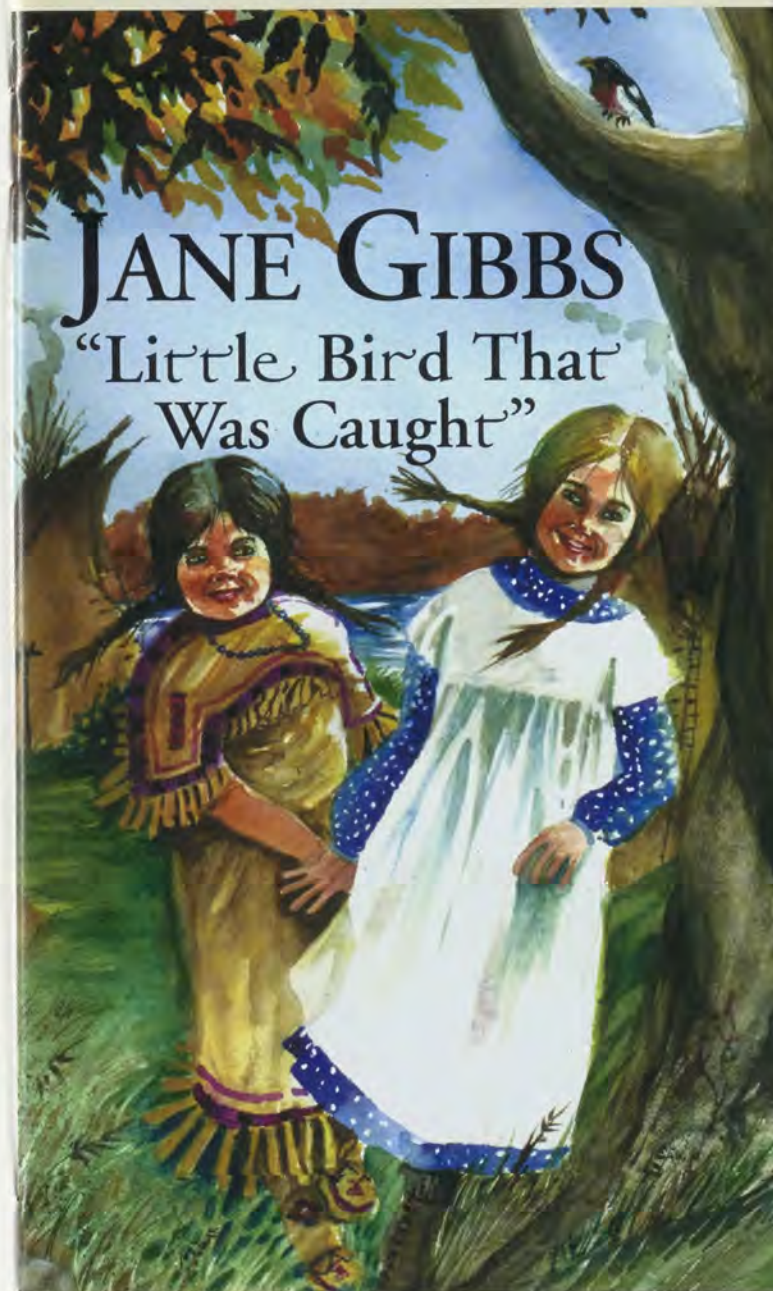
Given the record-setting heat that much of this area has experienced in the summer of 1999, this issue of *Ramsey County History* opens with Kathleen Ridder's history of the origins and early years of the St. Paul Figure Skating Club, which provides a verbal form of cool relief. With roots dating from the late 1920s and the efforts of St. Paul skating legends Eddie and Roy Shipstad and Oscar Johnson, the club got its legal start in 1936. It produced not only a number of regional and national skating champions, but also introduced the Summer Sessions and Pop Concerts that helped train young skaters.

Moving on from the Pop Concerts, authors Henry H. and Samuel H. Morgan share with us their careful research into their family history and Ramsey County real estate records. They trace what happened to the family farmstead which, in the 1880s, made up a substantial portion of the authors' great-grandfather's net worth in excess of \$600,000. The 160-acre farm, located on the western edge of Ramsey County was not the victim of corporate agribusiness at the turn of the century, but was, as they explain, more like the cherry orchard in Anton Chekhov's 1904 play of that name. What emerges from the Morgans' account is a cautionary tale about the uncertainties of the national economy earlier in this century. Next, two longtime practitioners of the art of governing, Thomas J. Kelley and Judge John T. Finley, record their memories of helping Ramsey County join the twentieth century.

Finally, the Ramsey County Historical Society has been saddened to learn of the recent death of Faith LeVesconte, the wife of the late Lester LeVesconte who was the grandson of Jane and Heman Gibbs. Faith LeVesconte was a longtime friend and supporter of the Gibbs Farm Museum, established by Lester LeVesconte's grandparents in 1849 and now maintained by the Ramsey County Historical Society.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, 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

Two Who Were There Remember: How Ramsey County's Governance Moved Into the 20th Century

Thomas J. Kelley

I was elected Ramsey county auditor in November, 1966. When I took office in January, 1967, I found that county governance had remained virtually unchanged for a half-century. During that period the county had become almost totally urbanized. Its population was 225,673 in 1910 and 422,525 in 1960.

Although the county board was charged with administering the operation of county government, its members were very much part-time officials. The county board met on Monday morning and concluded its business by noon.

The facilities provided for the county board when the present city hall and courthouse was built in 1931 were evidence of how little the role of the county board had changed since the nineteenth century. The county board room was a modest space with an oak T-shaped table for the board members, with the mayor of St. Paul, who served as its chairman, flanked by the auditor and a secretary facing several rows of spectators. Adjoining the board room was a tiny room that served as the office space for the six county board members. The room was so small that the six desks were custom made because the space was not large enough to accommodate full-size desks.

Not only were the county board's quarters quite limited, but so were its powers. The policies under which the county operated were enacted by the state Legislature. Variance from the state laws governing counties required the enactment of a special state law, so the county board's responsibility was restricted to overseeing the management of the county's operations. However, its responsibility was further restricted. Many of the county operations were overseen by independently elected officials. An elected

sheriff was in charge of law enforcement.

Land records administration was divided among three elected officers: the register of deeds, the treasurer, and the county auditor. An elected abstract clerk ran what was, in effect, a private land title company. He was given office space in the city hall—county courthouse. The office produced abstracts of the history of property parcels for a fee. The fees funded the entire operation, including salaries for the clerk and his employees. An elected county attorney was in charge of prosecuting all but minor criminal violations committed in the county as well as representing the county in civil matters and serving as legal advisor to the county board. Over the years, the Legislature chose the auditor's office as the repository for many unrelated tasks such as administering elections, serving as secretary to the county board, and serving as the county accounting office.

In 1967 many of the most important county functions were administered by independent boards and commissions. The Ramsey County Welfare Board directed all of the human service functions and administered the federally mandated assistance programs. It was also in charge of Ancker Hospital, which provided care of indigent patients with certain contagious diseases such as tuberculosis. It also provided some emergency services. The county board reviewed the budgets and levied the

taxes which financed these human service operations, but, for the most part, it left the decision-making to the Welfare Board. The county judiciary was operated by elected judges, and the county board was involved only in providing the courtrooms and maintaining the court records.

The county board did have specific control over the development and maintenance of county roads and parks. The county road engineer was given the responsibility for maintaining the parks. The board also was directly in charge of recreational facilities, two golf courses, and a skating arena which were more or less self-sustaining.

During my first year on the job, I spent most of my time just getting acquainted with the intricacies of Ramsey County's fragmented government. My first reaction was that a lot could be done to streamline the county government, and that a lot of opportunities to modernize the county services had been neglected.

For example, I found that the clerk who typed up the county board meeting minutes had a custom-made typewriter with a very wide carriage so it would accommodate the extraordinarily large sheets of paper used for the minutes. These large sheets were assembled annually in large leather-bound volumes. When I asked about it, I was told it was done this way because it always had been done this way. When I checked the old records in the vault, I found the the size of the volumes had not changed from the earliest annual records of the county board in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the leather binding with its gold embossed labels had remained the same. Those early minutes were

hand-written on pen-ruled sheets. The size of the sheets was designed for the convenience of the penman who had to transcribe those early minutes.

I ordered the minutes to be typed on standard legal size paper which could be typed on any machine and could be duplicated on a office copying machine. Any stationery store could supply handsome leather or imitation leather binders which were hardly distinguishable from the larger and many times more costly covers used previously. This was the first of what were to be many changes and proposals for change in which I had a hand.

Although the county board members were accused of taking a minimalist point of view toward the role of county government, the charge was hardly fair because it was limited by legislative constraints. In addition to the board chairman, Mayor Thomas Byrne, the members of the board when I became the auditor were John Danbury, former mayor of St. Paul; Arthur Gibbons, former state legislator; Elizabeth DeCourcy, former St. Paul City Council member; Harold Goodrich, former St. Paul city comptroller; Roy Nadeau, former Village of Little Canada clerk; and Edward Salverda, city of Roseville electrical inspector.

Daubney initiated many of the board resolutions, particularly those expanding the county road network. Nadeau was also actively concerned with road construction and road maintenance. Goodrich was particularly interested in the county parks and was instrumental in expanding the parks system to include the land from St. Paul's Phalen Park to Keller Park and along Arcade Street to Gervais Lake.

Also, during that first year, a member of my staff, William Peters, the county's chief accountant, became my ally and often my mentor. Although he had served for more than three decades without being allowed to initiate any serious changes in how the county arrived at a budget or reported its finances, he remained enthusiastic about government and how



The county commissioners' board room as it looked about 1931, shortly after the new City Hall-County Courthouse opened. Photo from the St. Paul firm, formerly known as Ellerbe Associates, Inc., that worked with Holabird and Root of Chicago in designing the building.

it was run. The first year we watched the county board deal with budget requests from the various offices and departments on an individual unrelated basis. There was no clear picture of the overall budget goals. Creating a total budget picture was further complicated because the discussions were confined to the amount financed from the local real estate taxes, personal property taxes and some state aids. Much of the county's funds that came from non-local tax revenues such as federal block grants remained "off the books."

In 1969, Peters produced a county budget that included all funds, such as federal and state grants and gifts. I labeled this a "full disclosure budget." This became the first step toward establishing a unified budget. Often a government's policies are not found in its resolutions and proclamations but in its budget for here is where it sets and carries out its priorities. A full disclosure, unified budget eventually became the standard practice in Ramsey County and still facilitates the county board's job of allocating resources and setting priorities.

Another idea we had for facilitating the orderly operation of government was multi-year budgeting. We

never succeeded in selling this idea for operations, although, in later years, we implemented the concept in connection with capital expenditures.

Some of the old hands in the county began to regard me as a loose cannon, but as I looked at the difference between the progressive government of neighboring Hennepin County and some of the antique features of ours, I felt it called for action. For example, Ramsey County was almost fully developed, and when I saw the Hennepin County Parks and Open Space Program, I became concerned that soon there would be no land available in Ramsey County to establish a similar system. When I proposed to the county board that they seek legislative authority to issue bonds so we could acquire open space and recreational lands, some critics questioned what this issue had to do with the position of county auditor. The board, however, authorized me to prepare a specific proposal. The county attorney drafted a proposal for a bill asking the Legislature for authority for the county to issue up to \$16 million in bonds for the purchase of open space and recreational lands.

I realized that such a proposal would never succeed without a gen-

eral physical plan showing the pattern of proposed acquisition and how these acquisitions would integrate into a county-wide park system. The county contracted with the City of St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation to draft a preliminary proposal.

There were no large parcels of desirable land available, and those which were available were scattered throughout the county. It was Bernard Edmonds who provided the overarching concept that shaped the plan. Water, lowlands, marshes and land otherwise not desirable for development would be an important part of the plan. The waterways and streams which linked these would provide a trail system connecting these parcels. Other choice parcels were added to the system to provide places for more intensive use by people.

As a selling point, Edmonds explained that many of the highly developed suburbs were already experiencing problems with storm water because lowlands and aquifers had given way to development. The preservation of the streams, ponds, marshes, and lowlands would prevent future problems in areas adjoining the system, thus saving money for the suburban municipalities in the future.

Armed with the bill prepared by the county attorney and the Edmonds plan, I approached the members of the Ramsey County legislative delegation. After incorporating a few alterations proposed by Senator Nick Coleman and Fred Norton, I appeared before a formal meeting of the delegation. When my name came up on the agenda, I stood up before the group. Before I could speak, Senator Wendell Anderson, a former Olympic hockey star and later governor, moved to strike everything in the bill after the enabling clause and to substitute eight hockey arenas and one golf course. I sat down; the Ramsey County Parks and Open Space bill was dead until the next session of the Legislature. In 1971, when Wendell Anderson was governor, he signed into law a later version of the Ramsey County Parks and Open Space bill.

This experience was disappointing, but the changes recommended by the legislative interim study commission, reinforced by the new members elected to the county board in 1970, foreshadowed many improvements in Ramsey County. One of those significant improvements was in the area of budgeting. After my appointment in 1972 as the county's first administrator, one of my priorities was to estab-

lish multi-year budgeting for the operating and capital budgets. This time, unlike my original effort as the county auditor, the proposal was approved by the board.

When I resigned as county administrator at the end of 1973, I could look back over six years with great pleasure and satisfaction; I felt privileged to have taken part in the reform of county government.

Judge John T. Finley

In the early 1960s, after the Legislature created reforms in the Hennepin and Anoka County governments, Ramsey County's legislative delegation created a special commission made up of Ramsey County legislators and others to examine county government and recommend changes. The commission created an interim report which became public during the 1970 elections. It attracted strong bipartisan support from Democrat and Republican senators and representatives, such as Senators Robert Ashback, Joseph O'Neill, Edward Novak, and Jerome Hughes and Representative Robert Pavlak, chairman of the commission.

The Legislature adopted an orderly codification of the many special laws adopted randomly over a century. Drafted by Henry (Harry) Gregg, assistant county attorney, authorized in 1969, and passed in the following session, Gregg's codification followed the format of a city charter. This action helped make the county look more like a city.

The 1970 election brought a new mayor to St. Paul in Charles P. McCarty who, under state law, also chaired the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, and four of the six longest-serving commissioners lost their seats to four young newcomers, including this writer (I was thirty at the time); Lawrence Cohen, thirty-eight; John Milton, thirty-five; and William Carlson, Jr., twenty-two. We took office in January, 1971—a timely event because it followed so closely on the release of the legislative report. As the new commissioners, we immediately set out to implement the commission's proposals. Veteran commissioners Ed Salverda and Elizabeth DeCourcy, who had served throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, provided much support for us,

as well as for Tony Danna who replaced Cohen when he became mayor of St. Paul. Because of the redistricting, Danna and DeCourcy had to face off in 1974. DeCourcy lost to Danna and Danna and I became the only incumbents. Ed Salverda did not seek re-election.

Newly elected commissioners formed the majority of the board in 1975 when five new commissioners joined us: Donald Salverda, a consultant who succeeded his father; Robert Orth, an attorney; Warren Schaber, an insurance agent; Hal Norgard, a retired teacher; and Diane Ahrens, a social worker. Although none of the newcomers ever had held elected office, they were intent in carrying out the 1970–1974 legislative mandates, and they brought new ideas to the board.

Although the interim commission did not recommend eliminating the St. Paul mayor as ex-officio head of the county board, an unusual event set the stage for this change. County Auditor Thomas Kelley, in his role as secretary of the county board, called a special meeting of the board to consider an urgent financial matter. The

mayor challenged his right to call the meeting, claiming that only the mayor had the right to do so. The county board members supported the auditor's decision and met, the mayor boycotted the county board meetings; and Commissioner Cohen, as vice-chairman of the board, presided over the remainder of the county board meetings during that term. Cohen's performance as the de facto chairman created support for Ramsey County to fall under the law governing the other eighty-six counties in the state which provides that the county board should select a chairman from among its own members.

These young upstarts, named the "young turks" by the news media, rode in on the coat-tails of Hubert Humphrey, who retook his seat in the United States Senate; Wendell R. Anderson, who became governor; St. Paul's Warren Spannaus, who became state attorney general; and St. Paul's Nick Coleman, who became Senate majority leader. Fortified by power at the state Capitol and in Washington D.C., and the strong advocacy of a bipartisan Legislative Interim Study Commission, Ramsey County government set in motion tremendous changes in the next four years.

The commission recommended, and the new county board immediately adopted, all the legislative initiatives to change the structure, method of payment, and type of services provided. Programs that had been controlled by special laws were eliminated. Ramsey County's legislative delegation henceforth would sit almost as a "super county board." I was elected chairman of the Legislative Committee and presented more than fifty separate bills between 1971 and 1974. They became the laws that determined how Ramsey County and, in some cases, how all counties in the state would be governed.

The Legislature adopted many of the changes proposed in its Interim Commission Report, and many of those recommendations gave the county board new powers.

- (1) The county board was given the authority to reorganize, restructure, consolidate, and centralize all county functions and eliminate autonomous boards, commissions and agencies that had fragmented county government.
- (2) Ramsey County's elected offices of auditor, treasurer, register of deeds and court commissioner were abolished and the functions transferred and restructured under the administration of the county board.
- (3) County Auditor Thomas J. Kelley was appointed the first county administrator and placed in charge of managing the county government.
- (4) The Legislature approved a law that removed the mayor as chairman of the county board and granted the board authority to redistrict itself into seven separate districts, effective as of the 1974 elections. The board no longer would consist of four commissioners at-large within St. Paul and one each from East and West Rice Street in the suburbs. After 1974, commissioners' terms would be staggered.
- (5) Some law enforcement functions for Ramsey County and St. Paul were consolidated, and the county sheriff took over the communications records, warrant, and subpoena services.
- (6) Bonding authority was sought and the Legislature approved the county's issuance of bonds for the following facilities:
 - (a) The Adult Detention Center constructed in the mid-1970s and housing adult inmates.
 - (b) Juvenile Service Center which housed juvenile inmates.
 - (c) A new wing at the Ramsey County Hospital and affiliation with Gillette Children's Hospital.
 - (d) Ten ice arenas.
 - (e) Purchase of golf course.
 - (f) Purchase of open space.
- (7) Development of a county-wide court system with all judges serving full-time in District Court. (This was completed years later.)
- (8) Elimination of the appointed Welfare Board and the City of St. Paul's contribution toward operation of welfare services. This freed St. Paul residents from double taxation.
- (9) Elimination of the Detention Authority and the 50 percent budget contribution St. Paul gave the county for correctional services at Boys' Totem Town and the Ramsey County Workhouse, again removing double taxation for St. Paul residents.
- (10) Expansion of the county library system to include the White Bear Municipal Library and a merger with the St. Paul system. (The county library systems never totally merged.)

The development of a countywide housing authority was considered but abandoned when the City of St. Paul and other municipalities opposed it. On the other hand, under a countywide open space program, Ramsey County acquired more the \$23 million worth of land that now is preserved as open space for future generations. These thousands of acres eliminated the need for many storm sewers by providing natural drainage and natural ponding areas throughout the county.

It was hoped that the city and county health departments and those within the municipalities would be merged into one department after legislation in 1971 approved a merger. However, not until 1996 did St. Paul and Ramsey County merge their departments, and the county now provides a wide array of health services, including environmental health, resource recovery facilities, recycling, free immunizations, and funding of several health clinics.

Even before the board elected in 1974 took office, another legislative report suggested internal changes to strengthen county administration. Ramsey County had been one of the first in the state to appoint a county administrator, an action taken in 1972, and to many of the commissioners, the suggestion appeared to be only a name change. The county administrator already had as much power as the board wished the office to have, and this would not change under a county manager. The county board had eliminated the Parks and Welfare boards, as recommended, and placed those functions under the county board.

One of the more interesting suggestions was that the county take over the planning functions for the fourteen municipalities within the county. This raised the ire of most of the municipal governments operating under their own charters, and it went nowhere. This was reaching beyond what Ramsey County could do and could be accomplished only through legislation. As is true not only in government but in business, people do not like to give up power. A clear example was the struggle to abolish the City Hall and Courthouse Committee made up of members from St. Paul and Ramsey County who had managed the jointly owned city hall and courthouse since it was built in 1931. However, it was not until almost twenty years later, when the county issued \$48 million worth of bonds to remodel the courthouse, that the county finally assumed operation of the building. The infighting of that and space allocation is a story in itself. A recommendation that the Board of Water Commissioners be abolished and its duties assigned to St. Paul's Public Works Department still has not been implemented.

By the end of 1974, when the terms of the "young turks" ended, the smallest, most densely populated county in the state was beginning to look more like a city than a county from a structural standpoint. The city's mayor was now Lawrence Cohen and no longer chairman of the county board. John Milton had been elected to the state Senate where he chaired the Subcommittee on Health Services. Commissioner Carlson lost his re-election bid in one of the seven new districts. I survived the new political boundaries by being re-elected within a new district.

Because five new commissioners took office in 1975, most of the board members did not realize that in the previous four short years Ramsey County had moved from a nineteenth century operation into the 1970s. The board believed, and the Legislature concurred, that yet another study should be undertaken, and another committee formed to study Ramsey



The Courthouse soon after its completion. Hedrich Blessing photo from an article published in American Architect in the 1930s.

County's government structure. The committee, on which I served with Commissioners Orth and Ahrens, also involved citizens throughout the county and completed its work just before the 1978 elections when the terms of all seven county commissioners ended.

One of the recommendations was that staggered terms should be established for continuity within the county government. Of the new commissioners elected in 1970, only one had remained on the board in 1974 when five new commissioners were elected. Lack of continuity at the top levels of government creates problems in day-to-day operations because department heads, managers, and administrative officials spend at least two years acquainting the commissioners with all areas of county government.

In 1978 the county board determined who would get two-year terms and who four-year terms by the simple expedient of drawing straws, colored and wrapped, just prior to Christmas, 1977. No one wanted the first draw. Finally, I drew a straw giving me a four-year term. Danna said, "You're so lucky, draw one for me." I did, leaving only two four-year terms for the other five commissioners. All seven commissioners were re-elected, and they adopted, almost unani-

mously, the recommendations of the commission.

The county already had followed the previous study's recommendation concerning a county manager, a post held first by Larry Brown and then by Richard Brubaker and Terry Schutten. The new recommendation was for the county manager to become the executive director; again, pretty much form over substance. However, the commission also developed formal procedures for evaluating the performance of operating departments, setting up a public information department, and continuing the six standing committees, which was contrary to the 1974 commission which had recommended abolishing them. The early county board also adopted the recommendation that the executive director run the county's day-to-day operation and take primary responsibility for developing a planning structure, staffing it, and integrating administrative, fiscal, and service policies into the planning structure.

In 1982, Danna lost to Ruby Hunt, a former St. Paul councilwoman, in a hard-fought contest. The six commissioners were re-elected again. Ms. Hunt played a significant role in the charter changes for the city of St. Paul. She was president of the League of Women Voters and later of the City Council itself. The county board next set up a Charter Commission to determine whether or not the county could be the first in the state, and one of the few in the nation, to operate more as a municipality than a county. The commission's recommendations, as well as any changes in the powers vested in the county board, would require approval by the voters. Throughout these changes, Ramsey County had maintained a AAA bond rating, the highest rating for governmental units in the United States. Both Ramsey and Hennepin counties were among only thirteen counties in the nation to maintain such a rating.

Throughout the 1980s, new issues came to the attention of the citizens and their government officials. These involved environmental problems with

possible long-lasting effects detrimental to the equality of life in the Twin Cities. First of all, the area was running out of landfill space for solid waste generated by a rapidly expanding population. In addition, some landfills were beginning to leech contaminants into the groundwater, which eventually could affect the water table of the area. Contaminated water, in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, would have a devastating effect, environmentally and economically, on the people within the state. Therefore, the Legislature empowered the counties to develop solutions to the problem. Ramsey County entered into three public-private partnerships. The county purchased the land and buildings to be used for recycling, contracted with a private company to do curbside recycling within St. Paul, and passed through state funds to other county municipalities so they could coordinate recycling programs with the county. Ramsey County also entered into an agreement with a private company for the deposit at one site by commercial generators of hazardous waste.

The third public-private partnership was a three-party agreement among Ramsey County, Washington County, and Northern States Power. The counties provided the funds to build a refuse-derived-fuel (RDF) plant in Newport. Northern States Power would operate the plant, convert the garbage to RDF, and transport it to its coal burners in the Red Wing area where NSP would burn the RDF, rather than coal, to provide electricity. This process would convert more than 1,000 tons of garbage per day into electricity, thereby utilizing a waste product instead of a valuable natural resource.

The second major environmental concern was increased air pollution due to traffic congestion. The Legislature determined that the county unit of government should do the planning, the environmental impact studies and worksheets, and the designing and engineering for the development of Light Rail Transit in the metropolitan region. The Ramsey County board

constituted itself as a Regional Rail Authority and acquired railroad lines leading from downtown St. Paul to the northern county line for the long-range purpose of providing Light Rail Transit. In the interim, the Regional Rail Authority cooperated with St. Paul's Division of Parks and Recreation and the county's Parks Department to develop a bicycle path running from downtown St. Paul to the Willard Munger Bicycle Trail on an abandoned railway right-of-way between St. Paul and Duluth. The plan for counties to buy rail lines northward from St. Paul to Duluth has been accomplished with Ramsey County's leadership and the cooperation of Washington and Chisago counties in purchasing the line from the Burlington Northern Railroad. Seven metropolitan counties next joined to establish the Metro Transit Company. With the combined staffs of the seven counties and the Metropolitan Council, the company developed a blueprint for several Light Rail Transit lines to be woven through the metropolitan area during the first quarter of the twenty-first century.

The county also continued to expand its park system, improve golf courses, develop open space, and maintain the programs that care for the poor, the sick, and the elderly within the Community Human Services Department. The entire public Criminal Justice System under the Department of Corrections was substantially expanded to cope with an increase in crime within the county.

In 1988 the Charter Commission approved a charter and submitted it to the voters at the November, 1990, elections. The voters overwhelmingly voted for self-rule, making Ramsey County the first Charter County in the state. The enactment of the charter means that the county has home rule powers similar to the home rule powers enjoyed by municipalities. However, because the county historically is an arm of the state, the charter provides that any past or future laws passed by the Legislature are exempt and not controlled by the charter. In

other words, the Legislature has not surrendered its sovereignty over the county. The charter went into effect on November 6, 1992.

The 1991 and 1994 elections brought another huge change in Ramsey County government when Don Salverda and Duane McCarty lost, and Diane Ahrens and Ruby Hunt retired. The open seats were filled by Susan Haigh and Raphael Ortega. Brenda Thomas and Dick Wedell ousted Salverda and McCarty. In 1996 another new group was elected to the county board: Victoria Reinhart, Tony Bennett, Dino Guerin, and Jan Weissner. After a special election, Janice Rettman succeeded me upon my election to the District Court bench. The era ended after twenty-six years of continuity on the county board. For ten years, until 1999, Terry Schutten was the county manager, the longest serving executive director or administrator, in the history of Ramsey County.

Several department heads have maintained their positions for more than twenty years and serve as the backbone for the county. Most citizens might not understand the heavy losses the county will suffer when such people as Tom Fashingbauer, director of Community Human Services; Joan Fabian, director of Department of Corrections; James Van Houdt, budget director; Jim Kavalosky, Data Processing director; Don Mockenhaus in Mental Health; and Paul Kirkwold, Public Works Department director and acting county manager, retire. They are among those who have served Ramsey County and its citizens admirably during the past quarter-century and are leading it into the twenty-first century. Equally important are the unheralded career public servants who have provided stability and quality to Ramsey County government through its many changes.

Thomas J. Kelley was Ramsey County auditor and county administrator from 1967 to 1973. Judge John T. Finley served as a Ramsey County commissioner from 1971 to 1996 when he was elected to the District Court bench



Three generations at the farm, circa 1903: Cornelia Baker Hollinshead, center, with Ellen Rice Hollinshead, left, D. A. J. Baker, right, Nora and Cornelia kneeling. Billy Hollinshead took this picture. See article beginning on page 13.

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

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION

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