

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

A Lynching in St. Paul?
Almost—in 1895, an Era
of ‘Vigilante Justice’

Page 11

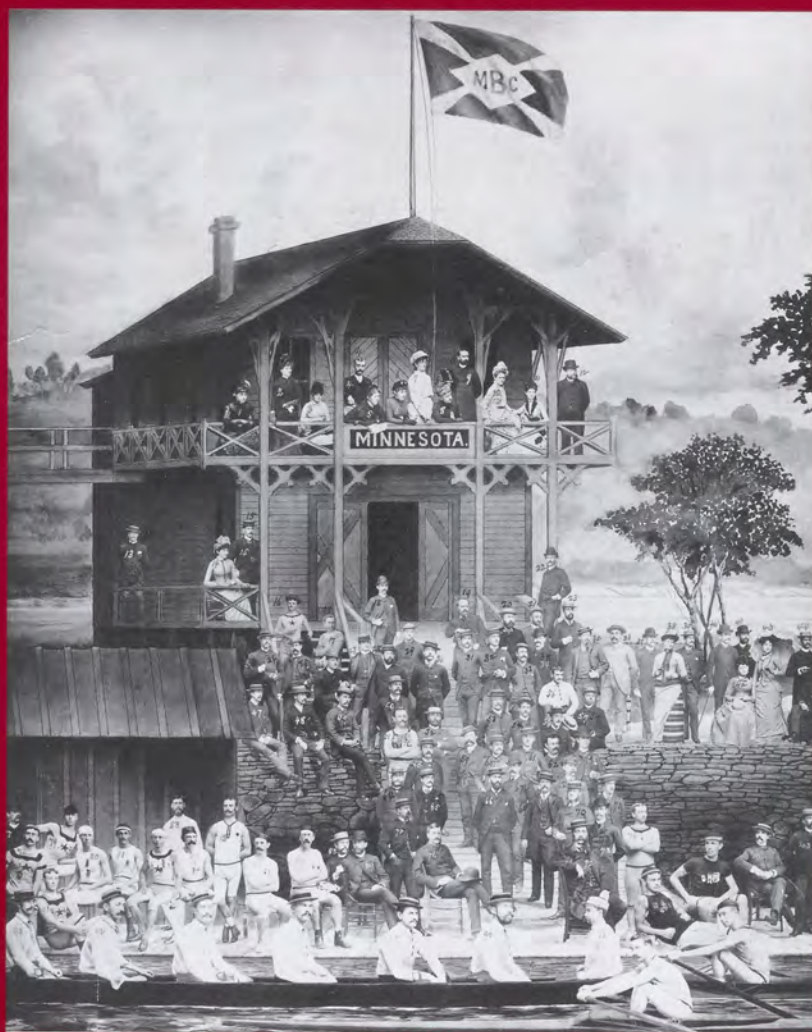
Summer, 2002

Volume 37, Number 2

Life on the Mississippi:

Singles, Doubles and Pairs, Fours and Quads—
The Minnesota Boat Club’s 132 Years

—Page 4



The home of the Minnesota Boat Club, circa 1880s. This photograph by C. A. Zimmerman “was one of the most remarkable pieces of photography ever accomplished,” according to an article in a 1903 issue of *The Razoo*, a Boat Club publication, adding that it “and has been commented upon by photographers all over the country. . . . In order to get it, Mr. Zimmerman had to keep a sketch of the boat-house in his mind while he took photographs of the members and the ladies. These he afterward arranged in groups so that they appear in the completed picture to be all posing together.” From the Minnesota Historical Society archives. See article on the Minnesota Boat Club’s history beginning on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Executive Director

Priscilla Farnham

Editor

Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Howard M. Guthmann

Chair

James Russell

President

Marlene Marschall

First Vice President

Ronald J. Zweber

Second Vice President

Richard A. Wilhoit

Secretary

Peter K. Butler

Treasurer

Charles L. Bathke, W. Andrew Boss, Peter K. Butler, Norbert Conzemius, Anne Cowie, Charlotte H. Drake, Joanne A. Englund, Robert F. Garland, John M. Harens, Joan Higinbotham, Scott Hutton, Judith Frost Lewis, John M. Lindley, George A. Mairs, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Richard Nicholson, Marvin J. Pertzik, Glenn Wiessner, Laurie Zenner, Ronald J. Zweber.

EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chair; James B. Bell, Henry Blodgett, Thomas H. Boyd, Thomas C. Buckley, Mark Eisenschenk, Pat Hart, Thomas J. Kelley, Tom Mega, Laurie Murphy, Richard H. Nicholson, Paul D. Nelson, G. Richard Slade.

HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

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

RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner James McDonough, chairman
Commissioner Susan Haigh
Commissioner Tony Bennett
Commissioner Rafael Ortega
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt
Commissioner Janice Rettman
Commissioner Jan Wiessner

Paul Kirkwold, 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, 2002, 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 37, Number 2

Summer, 2002

CONTENTS

- 3** Letters
- 4** Singles, Doubles and Eights, Fours and Quads
Life on the Mississippi: The 132 Years of the
Minnesota Boat Club and Its Rich History
Jim Miller
- 11** 'Hang Him! That's the Best Way'
A Lynching in St. Paul? Almost, in 1895—
An Era of 'Vigilante Justice' in America
Paul D. Nelson
- 15** Is This Houston Osborne?
Paul D. Nelson
- 16** The Road to the Selby Tunnel: Or, How
To Make It Up the St. Anthony Hill
Virginia Brainard Kunz
- 18-20** Lost Neighborhood: A Story in Pictures
- 21** Growing Up in St. Paul
Manager, Fight Promoter, Minnesota Game Warden—
Johnny Salvator and his Impact on Boxing in St. Paul
Paul R. Gold
- 24** Book Reviews

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

A Message from the Editorial Board

Given this summer's 90-degree temperatures, Jim Miller's history of the Minnesota Boat Club provides a refreshing glimpse of an early St. Paul athletic enterprise. Founded in 1870 by a number of the city's leading men, rowing at the MBC was strictly for amateurs. It also afforded an opportunity to attend social events on the Club's yearly calendar. In addition, Miller's research greatly increases our understanding of the value of Raspberry Island, where the MBC is located, to the city's cultural heritage and riverfront beauty.

In contrast, Paul Nelson's account of the near lynching of an African American, Houston Osborne, in St. Paul in 1895 is tense and suspenseful. Nelson not only explains what happened in 1895, he also shares the steps through which he went in uncovering this shameful and forgotten piece of the city's history. Unlike the Houston Osborne saga, the existence of the Selby Tunnel is well known today. What's less well known is its origin and how its construction changed the neighborhood around it. With words and photos, Virginia Brainard Kunz provides a brief history of this St. Paul landmark. "Growing Up in St. Paul," about boxer Johnny Salvator, is written by an avid promoter of St. Paul boxing history, Paul R. Gold. After Minnesota legalized boxing in 1915, St. Paul became the second largest center for training and supporting boxers in the United States. Johnny Salvator was one of the many St. Paul boxers who contributed to the city's athletic prominence in the first third of the twentieth century.

John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

Lost Neighborhood: A Story in Pictures

For almost twenty years the Selby Avenue's St. Anthony Hill challenged the efforts of the cable car and the electrified streetcar to haul residents from downtown St. Paul to Summit Avenue and the expanding neighborhoods lying to the west. While the final solution was the Selby Avenue Streetcar Tunnel, its construction was chaotic for the dwellers along and below the hill, as revealed in these photographs from the Minnesota Historical Society collections.



A team of horses hauling a heavy load toils up the Selby hill toward Summit Avenue. At right is the First Methodist Church; at left, Assumption Church on St. Peter Street in downtown St. Paul. This neighborhood once was the farm of J. W. Selby, who came to St. Paul in 1849 and was a member of the 1852 territorial legislature, a city assessor, and a Ramsey County commissioner. He died in 1855. Photograph by Michael Nowack.

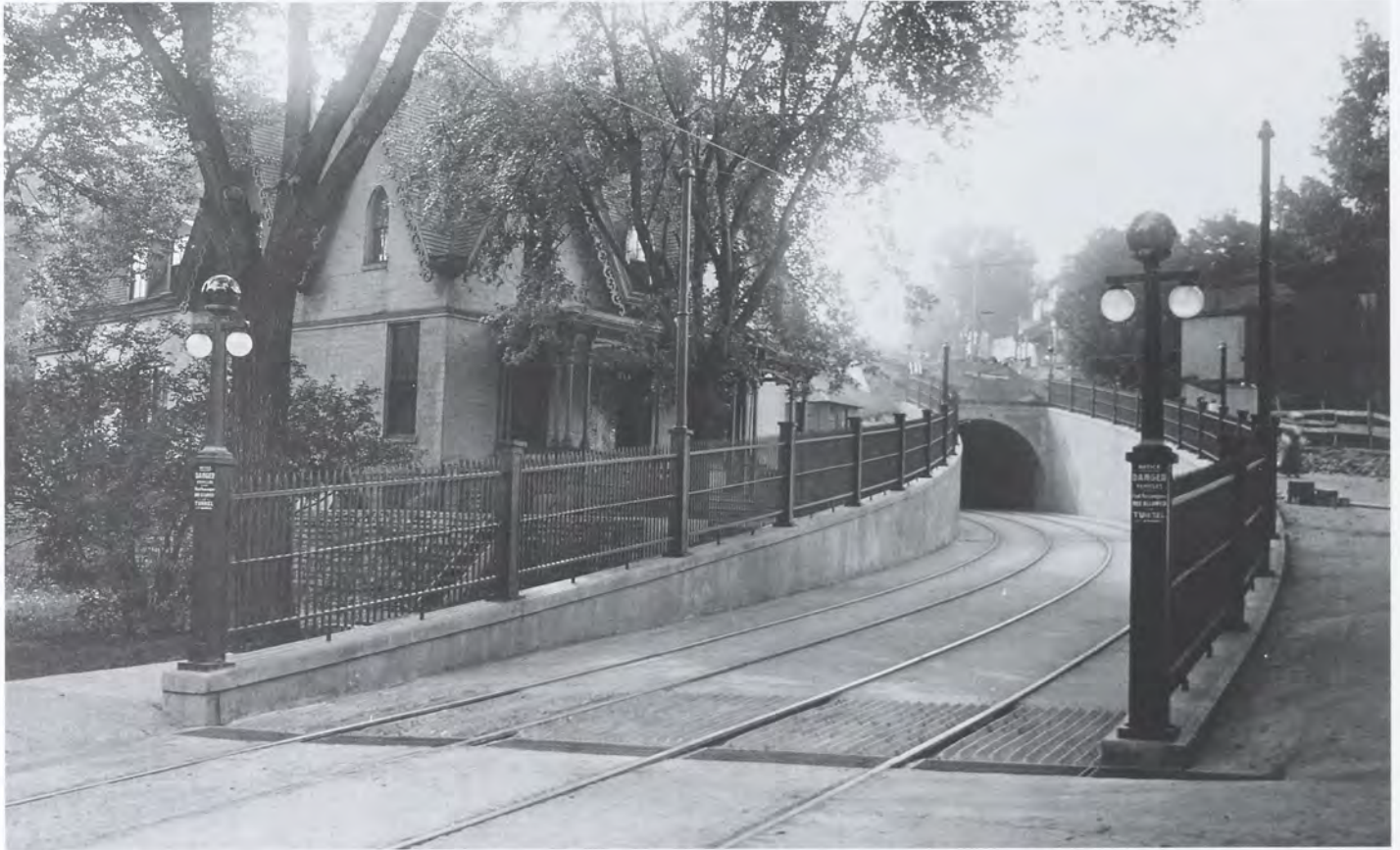


An electric streetcar with its counterweight is poised at the top of the hill in this photograph dated October 23, 1906. On the left, John M. Gilman's elegant 1870s Greek Revival house endures a foreshortening of its front yard. Gilman, a pioneer St. Paul lawyer and legislator, died there in 1906 before completion of the tunnel. This photograph, and the other three accompanying construction photos are by Haynes and are stamped "Geo. J. Grant Construction Co., Como Boulevard at N. P. Tracks, St. Paul 3, Minnesota."

The view looking north on what is now West Kellogg Boulevard but was then Third Street, shows the lower entrance to the tunnel under construction on November 12, 1906. Bricks are stacked up on Gilman's front yard, almost covering the entrance to his house.

This is the first in a series of occasional articles on Lost Neighborhoods.

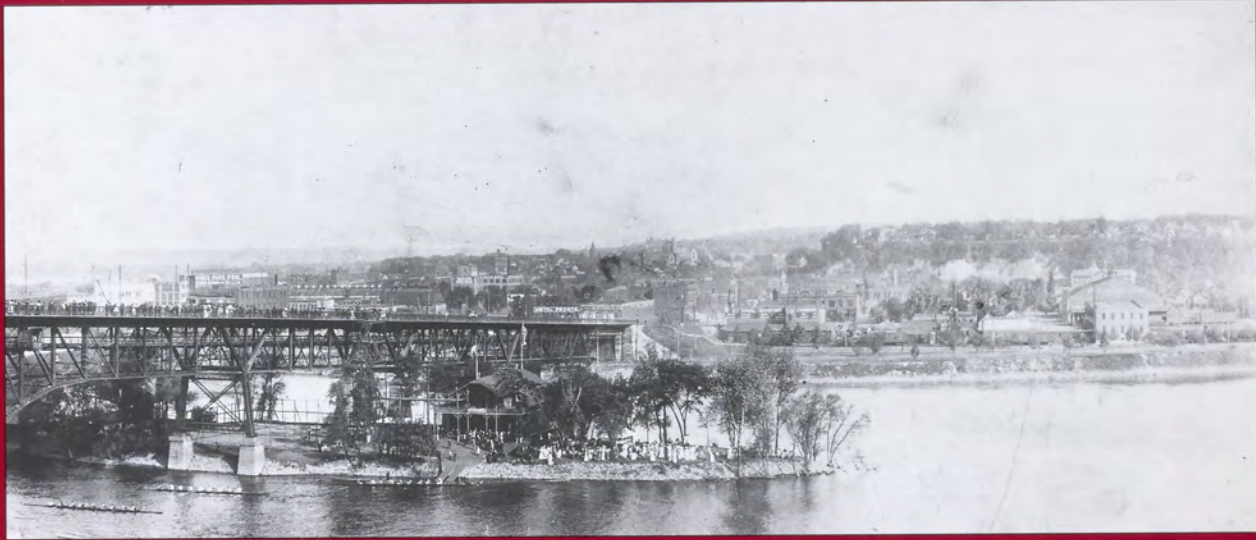




The lower entrance to the Selby tunnel around 1907. In this photograph, John Gilman's house, minus much of its front yard, has survived the sweep of the tunnel and the trolleys rocketing past, but it has long since been demolished.



Another view of the construction of the tunnel's lower entrance looks toward the southeast at the junction of Selby and Third Street. Simple frame houses line Third Street across from the Gilman residence.



The Minnesota Boat Club on Raspberry Island below the Wabash Street bridge in 1908. Across the river: St. Paul's west side. See 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

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION

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

