The burning of St. Paul's International Hotel in 1869. See article on "the men who ran with the machine," St. Paul's volunteer firemen, beginning on page 4. "The Mystery of the Leaking Lake" begins on page 18.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Ramsey County History is your magazine. Without readers who have an interest in St. Paul, Ramsey County and the surrounding area, this magazine cannot be a forum for ideas and discovery about the history of Ramsey County.

Because the Editorial Board wants to encourage and support writing about urban and rural history relating to St. Paul and Ramsey County, we invite you to send us any suggestions or ideas for future articles or topics to be presented in this magazine. Perhaps there is a favorite landmark, person, group or institution that you would like to know more about. Whether your question concerns the origin of a street name in St. Paul or the origin of a neighborhood in Ramsey County, let us know of your interest and desire to learn more. Please call or write our editor, our executive director or the Society's general office in Landmark Center.

—*John M. Lindley*, chairman, Editorial Board

What's Historic About This Site?

The West Side's Riverview Carnegie Branch Library

Andrew Carnegie's steel money found its way into many communities, including St. Paul where the Riverview Carnegie Branch Library at 1 East George Street still serves the West Side. The first attempt to address the reading needs of the people of the West Side was a "small station [established] in Bastyr's Drug Store, 548 Ohio Street, in 1905," as reported in a history of Carnegie branch library buildings in Minneapolis and St. Paul. By 1914 the Riverview community had outgrown the little station and acquired a site for a library building in order to qualify for support from the Carnegie Corporation which was donating money for libraries from Philadelphia to Wyoming.

The Riverview branch, designed by city architect Charles A. Hausler and built by Cameron and Company, was completed in 1916 at a cost of $26,000.

The new library opened on September 4, 1917, with Dorothy Rogers as librarian. Besides its books and periodicals, the library had an auditorium for meetings of local organizations and it quickly became a community center. The auditorium also was used for Americanization classes and war registration during World War I.

In its early years, the library focused on the young in an attempt to reach out to their immigrant parents. Working closely with local schools and clubs, the library provided story hours, reading classes and puppet shows. A Teen Corner was established in 1946.

In the mid-1930s a piano was donated to the library and used for club meetings in the auditorium. By 1938, volunteer teachers were giving piano lessons there.

The Riverview Branch Library, photographed in 1981.

Beginning in 1945 the meeting room also was used by the Cherokee Heights Garden Club for its flower sales.

In 1958 the library was renovated, its original Carnegie interior refurbished with contemporary colors, furnishings, lighting and floor coverings. Discipline problems in the 1950s led to a reduction in the number of school visits and, in the 1960s, a 7:30 p.m. curfew was established. Otherwise, the library remains today, still serving the changing community of the West Side.

—*Steve Haebig*

But, of all the Midwest cities, the one that I knew best was St. Paul and it was a crook's haven. Every criminal of any importance in the 1930's made his home at one time or another in St. Paul. If you were looking for a guy you hadn't seen in a few months, you usually thought of two places—prison or St. Paul.

The story has never been told so well as in *Saint Mudd*. It is a good read, full of fictional and historic characters, written in a fast paced narrative. Thayer knows the facts and knows the city and this allows him to comfortably build his character, Grover Mudd, into the period. The fictional Mudd, a reporter for the *Frontier News*, manages to stick himself in the thick of the action, giving the reader some history plus personal plot.

History tells, through the selection of facts, what happened in the past. Fiction, good fiction, tells a different kind of truth—a truth that brings us, through the accurate vision of the writer, into the hearts and minds of people. Historical fiction walks a mine field between the two forms. Thayer generally does a good job. One element detracted from the story, for me, at least. The title of Mudd's column, *Grover's Corner*, obviously brings to mind the charming fictional village of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, possibly a cute metaphor except that the play had not yet been written in 1934.

Get the book and have fun. A powerfully written, well researched history of the era still needs to be published in the future.

—*Daniel John Hoisington*

Before the days of boom boxes, canoeists at Phalen Park in the 1920s brought along their victrolas to listen to music. For a history of the park and of Lake Phalen, see the article beginning on page 18.