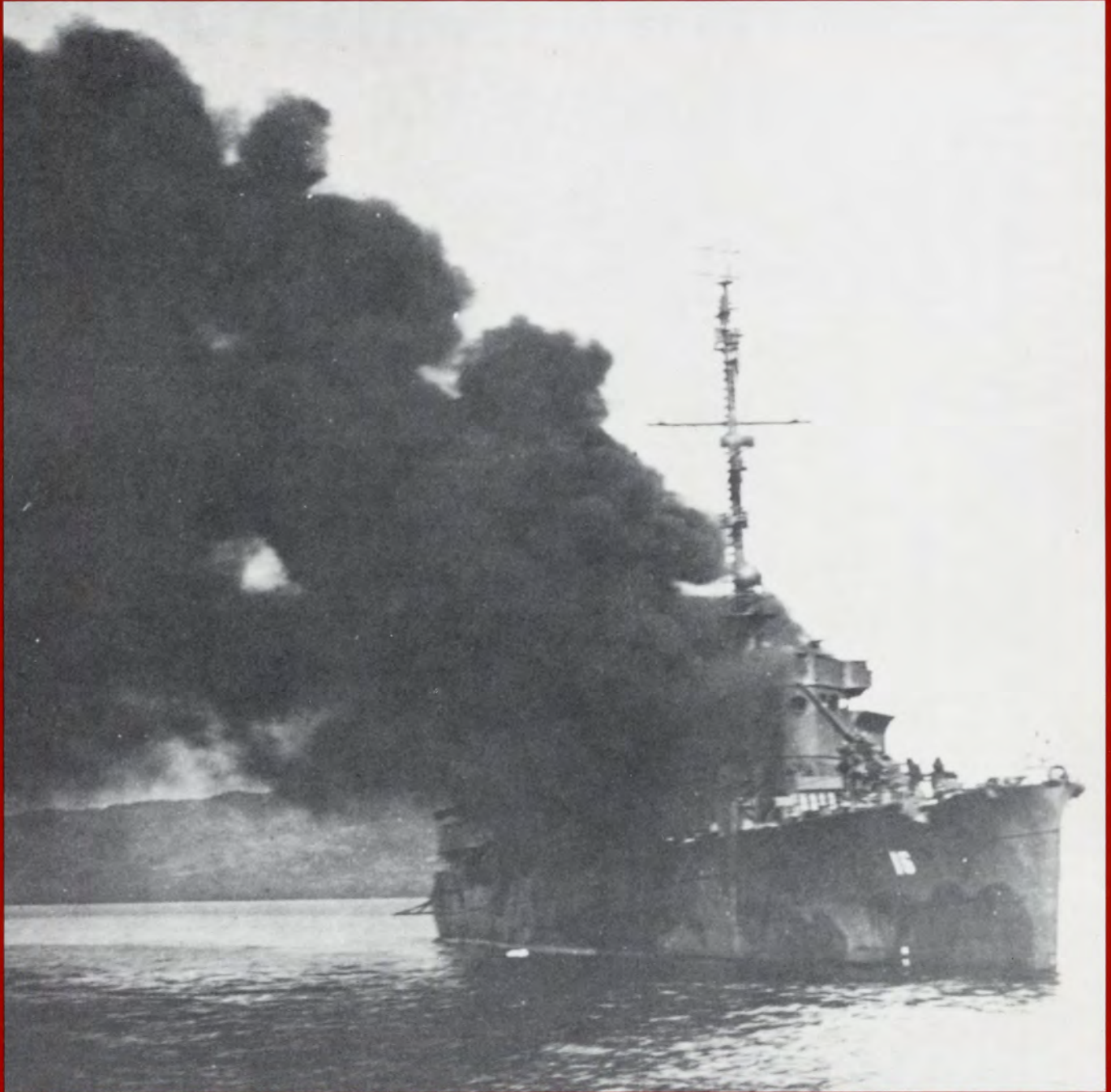


RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
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**Winter, 1991**  
Volume 26, Number 4



*The death of the U.S.S. Ward. The destroyer whose crew made up almost entirely of St. Paul men fired America's first shot of World War II, was sunk by gunfire three years to the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. See the article beginning on page 4 about the ship and her crew.*

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 26, Number 4 Winter, 1991

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

Fifty years ago this month the United States joined the global conflict known as World War II. This issue of *Ramsey County History* focuses on that momentous event with Jane McClure's article about the St. Paul men who served on the U.S.S. *Ward*, which fired the first shot at the Japanese. While men like the sailors of the *Ward* fought the enemy overseas, others, such as Hilda Rachuy, battled different adversaries—hunger, hardship, and poverty—as a single mother with two small children at home in St. Paul. Her article is a first-person account of that truly difficult side of the war. Lastly, Tom Kelley gives us new awareness and insight into Family Service of Greater Saint Paul, a 100-year-old social service organization developed to help those like Hilda Rachuy who need institutional support and comfort in their daily struggle to hold a family together.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

# Letters to the Editor

## Where's the Plaque?

At one time there was a plaque in the Union Depot in memory of Josias R. King of St. Paul, the first man in Minnesota and in the north to volunteer to serve in defense of the Union at the outbreak of the Civil War. King enlisted with other members of St. Paul's Pioneer Guard in Company A of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The plaque was placed in the depot on June 6, 1923, by the Nathan Hale chapter of the Minnesota Daughters of the American Revolution, but it has disappeared. I'd like to know what happened to it.

—Nick Coleman, Minneapolis

*Good question. Dave Nystuen at the Minnesota Historical Society would like to know, too. Craig Rafferty, the architect in charge of the depot's restoration, said the plaque was no longer there when he began his work in 1983. He surmises that it disappeared sometime during the twelve years the depot was closed and subjected to some vandalism. Readers? Any clues?*

## City Council's Origins

The article on St. Paul's early history states that St. Paul was incorporated as a town in 1849 and as a city in 1854. When was the City Council formed?

—Louise Olson, St. Paul

*A council of sorts was functioning as early as 1850, after the incorporation of the "Town of Saint Paul" in 1849. In the first town election on May 6, 1850, Dr. Thomas R. Potts was elected president, along with a recorder and five trustees. With the incorporation of St. Paul as a city in 1854, David Olmsted was elected mayor in the city's first election held on April 4. Nine aldermen were elected to represent the city's three wards. The new City*



*D.A.R. members at the unveiling of the Josias King plaque in the Union Depot.*

*Council organized on April 11, 1854, and elected George L. Becker as its president.*

## Davern and Highland Park

The article in the Fall issue on the Davern and Colvin homes reminded me of other Irish names on Highland Park streets. For instance, who was the Finn of Finn Street?

—Mary Harviè, St. Paul

*William Finn, for whom the street is named, was the first permanent settler of Highland Park, according to Donald Empson, whose short history of the old Reserve Township appeared in the Fall, 1973, issue of Ramsey County History. Finn was Irish and a veteran of the Mexican War. He arrived in Minnesota in 1843. His land extended from Marshall Avenue to St. Clair, and from Fairview west to the Mississippi. He built his home on what is now the University of St. Thomas campus. He moved later to downtown St. Paul and died childless in 1889.*

## Ferdinand, not Gustav

To set the record straight: It's true that Gustav Willius (Fall, 1991, issue) was involved early and briefly as partner and cashier of the German American Bank in St. Paul. However, it was his older brother, Ferdinand Willius, who with Henry Meyer was the real founder of the bank and responsible for its early success. Ferdinand arrived in St. Paul in 1856. Gustav joined him a year later.

—Anne Cowie Wilson

## Any More Parrants?

The article about "Pig's Eye" Parrant in the Fall issue was fascinating. Why haven't his descendants come forward with more information about him? Or doesn't he have any descendants in the St. Paul area?

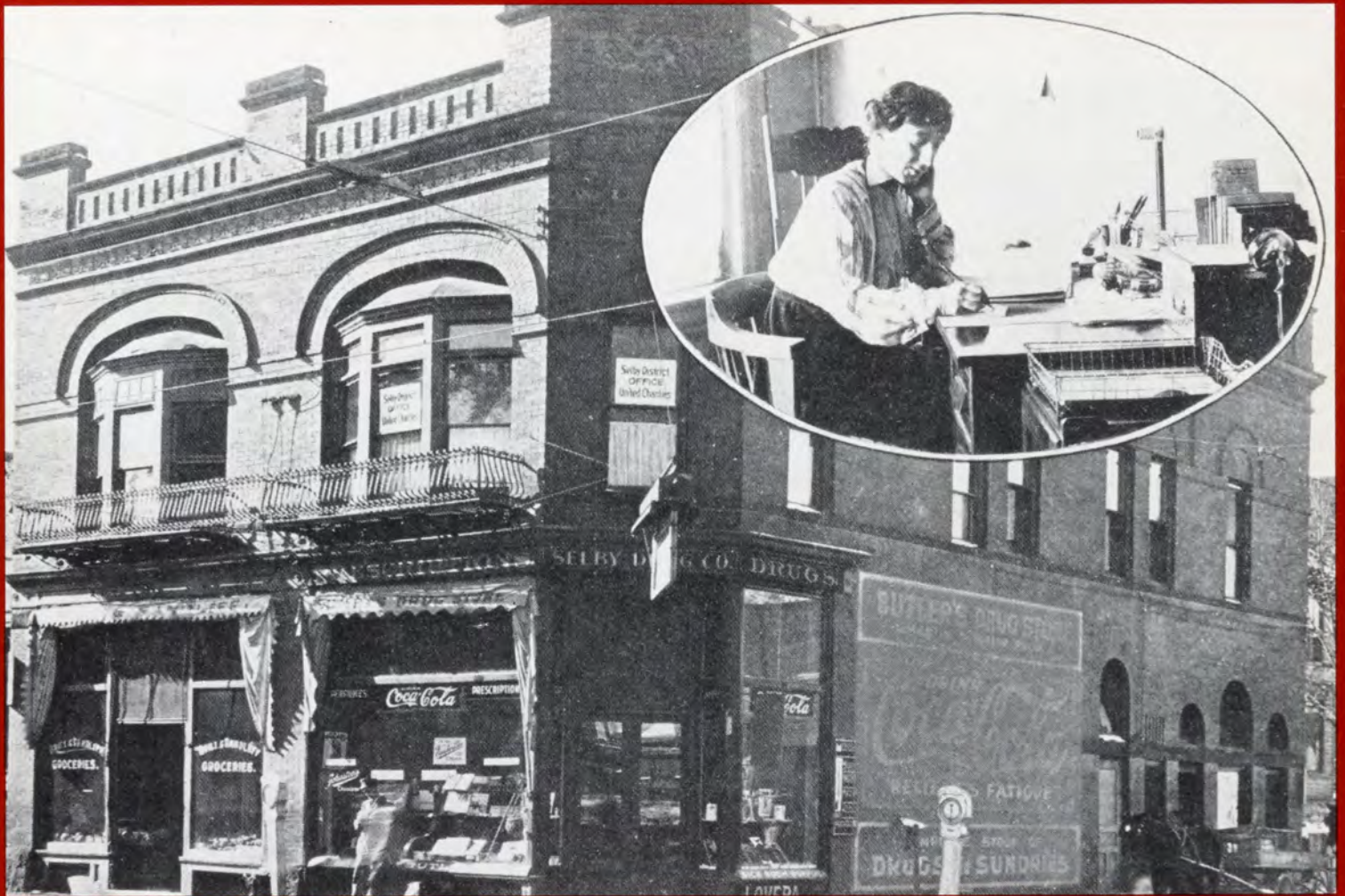
—Edward A. Axdahl, Little Canada

*None that we know of, or at least none who are willing to claim him. He seems to have come to this area from Sault Ste. Marie and apparently without kith or kin. There is some slight historical suggestion that he left a wife and children behind him in Canada, but any real evidence probably would lie in the Canadian records of the fur trade.*

## Perry's Beach

The article on the Perry family (Fall, 1991) brought back many fond memories of Perry's Beach, but this was the first time I knew about the connection between the Perry of the resort and Abraham Perry. My parents used to take me to Perry's Beach on hot summer days and we'd spend almost the whole day there swimming, eating popcorn and ice cream and drinking pop. Those were wonderfully simple childhood days for me.

—Becky Woods, Roseville



*Family Service of Greater Saint Paul is marking a century of service to the community. It is an outgrowth of earlier charitable organizations, such as the United Charities, whose Selby District Office is shown here. It was located at 624 Selby Avenue from 1916 to 1919. An article tracing Family Service's history begins on page 18.*

**R.C.H.S.**  
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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