

RAMSEY COUNTY

# History

*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

Euphoria Dimmed:  
X-Rays' First Victim

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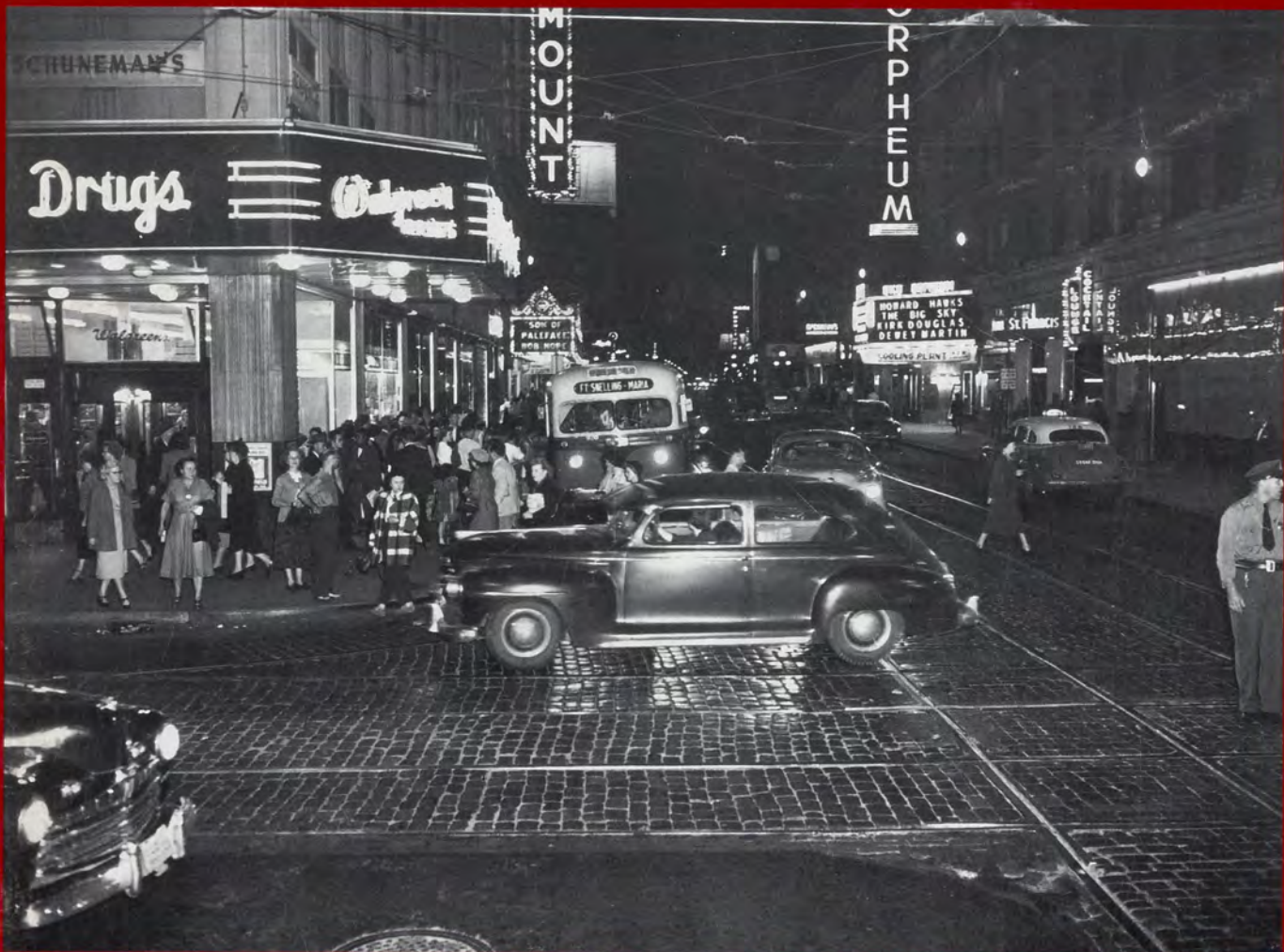
Winter, 1997

Volume 31, Number 4

*Rats, Politicians, Librarians*

Untold Stories of the Old St. Francis Hotel

Page 4



A brightly lighted downtown St. Paul was photographed on the night of September 4, 1952. This view looks west along Seventh Street from Wabasha to St. Peter. The St. Frances is on the right. Minnesota Historical Society photo.

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 31, Number 4

Winter, 1997

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### 26-27 1996 Donor Recognition

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

**T**oward the end of 1996, Ronald M. Hubbs, a long-time supporter of history in Ramsey County, died. Ron not only had contributed a number of fine articles that were published over the years in *Ramsey County History*, but he also was unfailingly enthusiastic in his support for the Ramsey County Historical Society's publication program. The Society dedicates this issue to his memory and to the great value he placed on history. In it we feature a building—the St. Francis Hotel—and a location—Seventh Place—that many residents and visitors know but little understand in terms of their historical significance to St. Paul. A companion piece tells the story of the Saint Paul Building.

*John M. Lindley, chair, Editorial Board*

# Letters to the Editor

## St. Paul Companies

Congratulations on your fine article on the history of the St. Paul Companies. A few comments: 209 policies had been taken in when the company closed in 1856, not 1859; the company was inactive for closer to eight years, three months, rather than nine years; and Lake Burntside, where A. H. Jackson discovered a "lovely wilderness area" in the late 1920s, is in the Superior National Forest, not the nearby Quetico National Forest. Also, I would like to see something written about the men who reorganized the company in 1865—David Day, John Nicols, John L. Merriam, John S. Pince, Horace Thompson, Peter Berkey, Elias Drake, etc. They were more important than some of the original incorporators because they revived the company.

*Richard W. Arpi, archivist,  
the St. Paul Companies.*

## Bolin, Not Bolen

The Fall, 1996, issue of *Ramsey County History* has reached me. I'm pleased to find credit on the cover and the fold-out. However, I was disappointed to find my name misspelled. It is important to me to have this corrected for the sake of posterity.

*Michael Bolin, St. Paul.*

*We stand corrected.*

## That Building on Wacouta

I was walking through Mears Park last fall and noticed an interesting building across the street from the park's northeast corner. It looks like an old warehouse reconverted into housing. Is it?

*Jackie Anderson, St. Paul.*



*Elias Drake. A lawyer and builder of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, Drake also was one of a group of pioneer business leaders who reorganized the St. Paul and Marine Insurance Company in 1865. Minnesota Historical Society photo.*

*Yes. Now known as "The Cosmopolitan" and converted into condominiums, this was once the Finch building housing the Finch, Van Slyke and McConville Dry Goods Company, a cornerstone of Lowertown's old warehouse district. It was built in 1911 in the neo-classical style, a popular architectural design for commercial buildings at that time.*

## The Men's Garden Club

My grandfather, who was a dedicated gardener, used to belong to an organization he called the Men's Garden Club. This would go back more than seventy-five years. When was it founded?

*Elissa Carlson, St. Paul.*

*That probably was the Men's Garden Club of Ramsey County, organized in 1912 "amidst great enthusiasm," according to a column by James Taylor Dunn in a 1975 issue of The Grand Gazette. During World War I the men turned from growing flowers to planting vegetables, foreshadowing the World War II Victory Gardens. Once a male-dominated group, its ranks were infiltrated by women in the 1930s, and its name changed to the Garden Club of Ramsey County. By 1946 the club once again was all male under the name of the Men's Garden Club of St. Paul.*

## Yoerg's Brewery

James B. Bell's account of the Yoerg Brewery and its demise, published in last summer's issue, was fascinating. We used to play in those bluffs back when Yoerg's was still going strong. What has happened to all those old beer bottles that someone thought were "worthless?" People collect bottles today.

*Peter Johnson, South St. Paul.*

*They do indeed. Some of the 2,800 amber bottles that were salvaged turned up not long ago in a St. Paul antique shop.*

## Grandfather Larson

I greatly enjoyed John Larson's touching story about his Swedish grandfather in the Summer issue. It reminded me of my Norwegian great grandfather who came to northern Iowa in 1850. But how sad, and yet how typical of those long-ago years, that Grandfather Larson felt he needed to hide his epilepsy, a condition that is accepted and treated today.

*Louise Knutson, Minneapolis.*



*St. Paul's first public Market House at Seventh and Wabasha, about 1870. It was built by Vetat Guerin, a French-Canadian who was the first settler on this tract of land. Minnesota Historical Society photo. See article beginning on page 4.*

**R.C.H.S.**  
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