

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

The African-American
Community and the Cuba
Pageant of 1898

Page 15

Winter, 1999

Volume 33, Number 4

Timber, Steel, Law, Politics

St. Paul's Pioneering Lawyers—Page 4



The signing of the Briand-Kellogg Pact in Paris on August 27, 1928. Frank B. Kellogg is seated at the table. This copy of a painting of the historic event is from the Minnesota Historical Society. See article beginning on page 4.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

The winter issue of *Ramsey County History* opens with a fascinating account of how some pioneering lawyers who were involved in cases relating to the timber and steel industries helped shape and change the practice of law and politics in Minnesota. Written by Samuel H. Morgan, a retired St. Paul attorney, this article ranges from President Theodore Roosevelt persuading Frank B. Kellogg and Cordenio A. Severance to represent the government in key anti-trust cases in the first decade of this century to the great 1962 election recount involving incumbent governor Elmer L. Anderson and his challenger, lieutenant governor Karl F. Rolvaag.

David Riehle's article examining the reaction of the African-American community in St. Paul to the fighting in Cuba in 1898 reminds us that the struggle of African-Americans in Minnesota to obtain full civil rights didn't begin in the 1960s. By using information culled from the pages of St. Paul's articulate and influential African-American newspaper, *The Appeal*, Riehle demonstrates that the decision to go to war with Spain in 1898 brought out complex reactions from the local African-American community. What Riehle finds in the coverage of the pageant in *The Appeal* is clear-cut ambivalence as to the meaning of the war for the civil rights of African-Americans in St. Paul.

John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

Who First Owned North Oaks?

In your summer, 1998, edition, letter-writer Joan Brainard inquired about who first owned land in present-day North Oaks. I recently came across the following:

"More than thirty years ago, Hon. C. C. Gilfillan of St. Paul acquired the land around and adjacent to this [Pleasant] lake, as a means of preserving the purity of [St. Paul's] water supply, of which it was then the ultimate source. He built a fine summer residence on its western shore. The entire property was afterwards sold to James J. Hill."

This typed manuscript titled "White Bear Lake Region" is with the White Bear Historical Society materials in the possession of the Ramsey County Historical Society. Although neither the author nor the date is indicated, the text suggests that it was written while Hill was still living.

—Mary Jane LaVigne, Birchwood.

Charles C. Gilfillan, who was a lawyer, state representative, senator, organizer and president of the St. Paul Waterworks Company, sold his 3,070-acre Pleasant Lake property to James J. Hill in 1883 for \$50,000. Hill then developed the property into what became North Oaks. He died in 1916.

James J. Hill and the Irish

The article on Richard C. Lilly in the fall issue refers to James J. Hill as among the Irish Catholics of St. Paul. Wasn't he of Scottish ancestry and a Protestant?

—Harvey Linley, St. Paul.

Sort of. Albro Martin, in his 1976 biography of Hill, refers to one of the Empire

Builder's ancestors as "an Irishman" and Ann Regen, writing about the Irish in They Chose Minnesota, published by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1981, identifies Hill as "Minnesota's best-known Irishman." According to Martin, Hill's ancestors were Scottish Protestants who settled in Northern Ireland in the 1600s and his parents emigrated from Northern Ireland to Canada in the nineteenth century. Hill's wife, Mary, was Irish and a devout Catholic.

Richard. C. Lilly

My congratulations on making the fall, 1998, issue of *Ramsey County History* one of the best I remember. Your article on Richard C. Lilly reminded us of a fine man, a mover and shaker who in a sense underwrote St. Paul and quietly channeled money where it mattered and did good. I would have appreciated a few more quotes and fewer details about corporate buy-outs, bailouts, handouts, and runabouts that tend to become printed chloroform. (The old formula for an article: statistics, quotes, and anecdotes.) My kids always wanted to go to Lilly's house at Halloween because he gave out quarters instead of candy. And the people at the Somerset [Club] have told me that he single-handedly kept the place afloat.

The article about the Bosse collection gives a boost to the study of photo history in Minnesota, a neglected topic. Bob Ridder was a year behind me at Harvard and later a key Red Cross worker when I met him again. Again, good work!

—Walter Trenerry, West St. Paul.

Good bankers know how to make money; great bankers are also commu-

nity builders. That's a lesson to be learned from the Richard C. Lilly story. Different era, perhaps, but a community's need for strong business leadership never changes. A banker is in a particularly unique position to effect change and improvement, but it doesn't just happen. This story is a primer for "Community Development 101."

—Rick Beeson, president,
St. Anthony Park Bank.

Nelson vs. Marshall

I think the Nelson Avenue mentioned in Mary Etta Manship's journal in the summer issue is now Marshall Avenue. What was that neighborhood like back then?

Mary Louise Burns, South St. Paul.

In 1898, when Mary Etta lived there, Norman Kittson's mansion was still standing on nearby Selby but it had become a boarding house. It was torn down in 1905 and replaced by the St. Paul Cathedral. Perhaps it was just as well. In Lost Twin Cities, author Larry Millett describes the mansion as a "vast, rambling house—built largely of Kasota stone—that embraced all the excesses of the already-passé French Second Empire style."

Claustrophobia Rampant

I'm a confirmed claustrophobe and there's no way I'd let anyone talk me into crawling around underground, as Greg Brick did for the Cascade Creek article in last spring's issue. But I sure enjoyed reading about it. How about something on the famous Carver's Cave?

Rick Hillstrom, Edina.

Wait until later this year. The fall or winter issue.

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The four-act pageant presented as a benefit for the American League of Minnesota in November, 1898. See Dave Riehle's article about St. Paul's African-American community and the Spanish-American War beginning on page 15.

R.C.H.S.

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