

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

*Growing Up in St. Paul—  
Diamonds, Gravel Roads,  
And a Little Chevrolet*

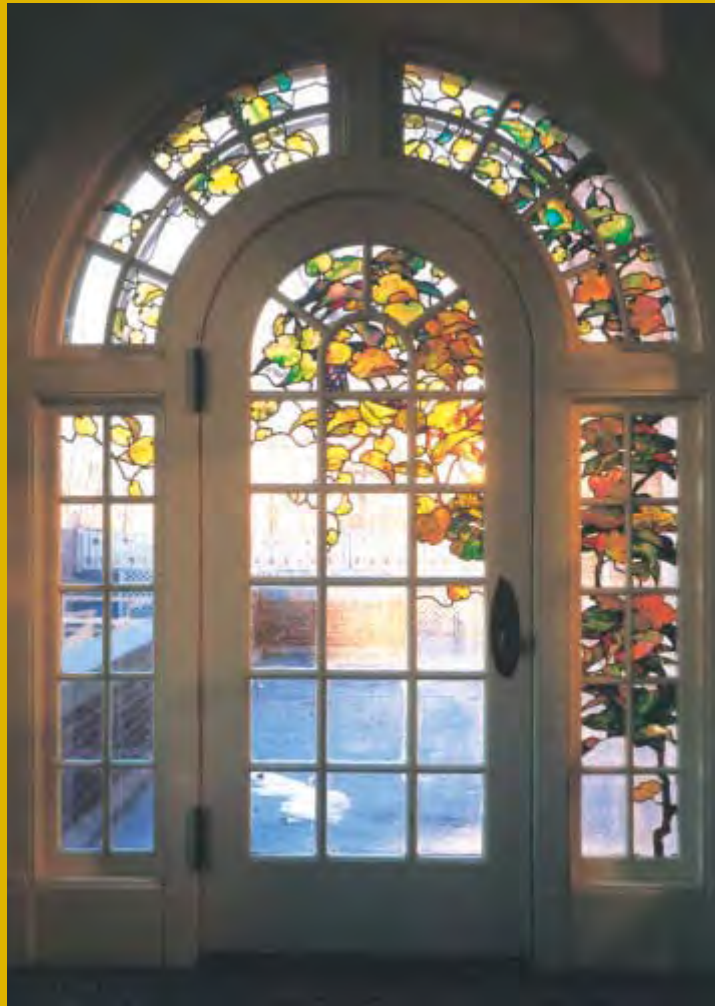
Page 16

**Winter, 2003**

Volume 37, Number 4

*The History Behind the Louis Hill House*

**New Settlers, Real Estate Boom, and Speculation**  
*—Page 4*



*The stained glass window Louis J. Millet designed for James J. Hill's house on Canada Street in Lowertown and later installed in Louis W. Hill's house at 260 Summit Avenue. See article beginning on page 4. This beautiful window was photographed for Ramsey County History by George Heinrich.*

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 37, Number 4

Winter, 2003

## CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 The 146-Year History Behind the Louis Hill House  
New Settlers, Booming Real Estate Market, and  
A Summit Avenue Site Acquired on Speculation  
*Eileen R. McCormack*
- 12 Who Was John LaFarge? And Louis Millet?
- 16 Growing Up in St. Paul  
Diamonds, Gravel Roads and a Little Chevrolet—  
The Life and Times of a Venture Capitalist  
*Alan R. (Buddy) Ruvelson*
- 21 A Flourishing Fur Trade Industry  
And the U. S. Corps of Engineers Centre Building  
*Matt Percy*
- 23 Slunky Norton: the Chimney Sweep Who Rocked the Rafters  
*Albert W. Lindeke, Jr.*
- 24 I Remember the Teachers' Strike of 1946  
*Maxine K. Dickson*
- 25 Book Reviews

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

Our winter issue opens with Eileen R. McCormack's fascinating account of the history of the house that stands at 260 Summit Avenue, known to many St. Paul residents as the Louis Hill House. Today Richard and Nancy Nicholson and their family live there and have restored the house to the splendor that it had in the days when the Hills lived in the house, while also adapting it to the conveniences of contemporary living. What emerges from Eileen McCormack's research is a glimpse of a bygone era of St. Paul's elite and of the personality of the home the Hill family built.

Moving from an elegant residential property to a modest commercial and manufacturing part of the spectrum of St. Paul buildings, historian Matt Percy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recounts the history of the building at 333 Sibley Street. This commercial structure is today's Corps of Engineers Centre, which has its origins in the history of Gordon & Ferguson Company, a famous St. Paul furrier. Alan R. (Buddy) Ruvelson, a well-known St. Paul entrepreneur, contributes a "Growing Up in St. Paul" story that begins with his maternal great grandfather's home at 545 Sibley, in Lowertown, not far from the Corps' present headquarters. Publication of an old photo of the rabbi's house in David Riehle's article in the fall issue of *Ramsey County History* prompted author Ruvelson to trace his family's roots to Rabbi B. Rosenthal's home in the area that the plat maps called "Borup's Addition." Fortunately for us, Ruvelson has had a varied and unusual life as a dealer in diamonds, an entrepreneur, a venture capitalist, and public citizen. Whether elegant like the Hill home or modest like the home of Rabbi Rosenthal, St. Paul's built environment can tell us much about who we are and how our city has changed over the years.

*John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board*

# *I Remember the Teachers' Strike of 1946*

## *“We Rolled Down Our Windows in the Cold Air”*

*Maxine K. Dickson*

I was in the first grade at the Ames Grade and Junior High School in Hazel Park on the East Side of St. Paul and I attended school there from kindergarten through ninth grade.

I remember that the teachers talked about striking, and my parents seemed to support it, but the school children didn't really know why they would do so. How could our teachers battle against the governmental system, the authority figure? It seemed like a betrayal! Why did they not want us to go to school?

My family wanted to see the strikers, even in the cold weather. I remember feeling a bit embarrassed driving by the school in our small 1938 Chevrolet, especially since there were six of us: mom, dad, and four siblings. Someone I knew might see me!

We joined the long, slow, one-way line of autos that circled the block on which the school was located. Dad would honk our horn in chorus with the other supporters in their autos. We rolled down our windows in the cold air, pointed out and called to our teachers walking the picket line. They smiled, held up their signs, and waved back.

The strike was settled within a short time. Can you imagine the complaints that the neighbors voiced about the noise and traffic congestion on White Bear Avenue, the main transit street? My parents expressed their thanks that they no longer had to buy school books for their growing children. (I still have our singing book.) School supplies were a big enough purchase for them. The teachers also expressed their thanks for the parental support and were happy to be back in their classrooms, too.

The students realized much later that the St. Paul schools were grossly under-

funded. This was the first teachers' strike in the United States. We didn't realize that it had set an important historical precedent.

When school commenced again, I walked into the classroom and to the teacher's desk. “Did you see me waving to you, Miss McLaughlin?” I inquired shyly. Miss McLaughlin assured me that she had.

*Maxine K. Dickson grew at 1718 Ross Avenue, on the corner of Flandrau, and now lives in Minnetonka.*



*May Kellerhals, left, picketing during the Teachers' Strike in 1946, and above as a young woman. She taught science and biology at Mechanics Arts High School during the 1920s.*



*John LaFarge's stained glass window, retrieved by James J. Hill from his Canada Street house for use by his son Louis W. Hill at 260 Summit Avenue. See article beginning on page 4. Photograph by George Heinrich for Ramsey County History.*

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