

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

A Novelist Remembers:
Memoirs of Grace Flandrau

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Winter, 2004

Volume 38, Number 4

'He Loved a Tall Tale'

The Life and Times of I. A. O'Shaughnessy—
The Man Who Happily Gave His Money Away

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Portrait of I. A. O'Shaughnessy painted by artist Frank Bensing. From the University of St. Thomas Special Collections.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 38, Number 4

Winter, 2004

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2003:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve and interpret the history of the county for the general public, recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major responsibility is its stewardship over this history.

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Susan C. Dowd
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Message from the President of Ramsey County Historical Society

Anyone who has spent some time in St. Paul has probably come across the name O'Shaughnessy. It may have been on the facade of a building at the University of St. Thomas, or on the campus of the College of St. Catherine, or perhaps somewhere else in the local area. Many who have seen the O'Shaughnessy name in our capital city have a vague awareness that he was a generous benefactor, especially of educational institutions. Yet if you were to ask any number of individuals who O'Shaughnessy was, in all likelihood few would be able to tell you more about the man than his initials: I. A.

I. A. O'Shaughnessy was born in Stillwater, Minnesota, in 1885, but beginning in 1928, he and his wife, Lillian, made their home and raised their family in St. Paul. I. A., however, made his fortune in the oil refining business outside Minnesota. Consequently he was often away from their Summit Avenue residence tending to his many business activities in Oklahoma, Kansas, Illinois, or Washington, D.C. Thus I. A. O'Shaughnessy was less well known in his home community than he deserved.

In this issue, authors John M. Lindley and Virginia Brainard Kunz have combined their talents to provide the first wide-ranging biographical profile of I. A. O'Shaughnessy's life, business career, and personal and institutional philanthropy. They have used many documentary, business, family, and institutional records as well as extensive interviews with O'Shaughnessy family members and others who knew I. A. in writing this profile. The Ramsey County Historical Society hopes that the readers of our history quarterly will find that these authors have not only shed much light on the little-known career of the man who was once honored with the title of "Mr. St. Paul—A Great St. Paulite," but have also heightened local awareness of his great generosity to people and institutions in St. Paul and around the nation.

Marlene Marschall, President, Ramsey County Historical Society

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The Ramsey County Historical Society extends warmest and most sincere thanks to all supporters of the Society in 2003, who allow us to offer high quality programs to the community.

A special thank you goes to the Board of the Ramsey County Commissioners for their continuing and loyal support. Their patronage through the years gives the Society a solid foundation on which to build. Thanks to Victoria Reinhardt, Chair; Tony Bennett; Jim McDonough; Susan Haigh; Rafael Ortega; Janice Rettman; and Jan Parker Wiessner. Special appreciation goes to County Manager David Twa and his staff for their quality professional assistance.

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