

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Building Permits—
Oh the Stories
They Can Tell

Page 19

Winter, 2005

Volume 39, Number 4

Curtain Up in 1933

The Legacy of the St. Paul Opera Association

—Page 4



"Attending the Opera," a gouache by painter Miriam Ibling (1895–1985). This was a 1938 study for a WPA mural at St. Paul's Galtier Elementary School. From the Minnesota Historical Society archives.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Executive Director

Priscilla Farnham

Editor

Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Howard Guthmann

President

W. Andrew Boss

First Vice President

Judith Frost Lewis

Second Vice President

Joan Higinbotham

Secretary

J. Scott Hutton

Treasurer

Duke Addicks, Charles L. Bathke, W. Andrew Boss, Norlin Boyum, Joseph Campbell, Norbert Conzemius, Anne Cowie, Charlton Dietz, Charlotte H. Drake, Joanne A. Englund, Robert F. Garland, Howard Guthmann, Joan Higinbotham, Scott Hutton, Judith Frost Lewis, John M. Lindley, George A. Mairs, Laurie Murphy, Richard Nicholson, Marla Ordway, Marvin J. Pertzik, Jay Pfaender, Penny Harris Reynen, David Thune, Paul Verret, Glenn Wiessner, Richard Wilhoit, Laurie Zenner.

Richard T. Murphy, Sr.

Director Emeritus

EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, *chair*; James B. Bell, Thomas H. Boyd, Tom Kelley, Laurie Murphy, Richard H. Nicholson, Paul D. Nelson, Jay Pfaender, David Riehle, C. Richard Slade, Steve Trimble, Mary Lethert Wingerd.

HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

Olivia I. Dodge, Charlton Dietz, William Finney, William Fallon, Robert S. Hess, D. W. "Don" Larson, George Latimer, Joseph S. Micallef, Robert Mirick, Marvin J. Pertzik, James Reagan, Rosalie E. Wahl, Donald D. Wozniak.

RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, chairman
Commissioner Tony Bennett
Commissioner Rafael Ortega
Commissioner Janice Rettman
Commissioner Jan Wiessner
Commissioner Jim McDonough

David Twa, manager, Ramsey County

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright, 2005, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. **All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher.** The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Fax 651-223-8539; e-mail address admin@rchs.com.; web site address www.rchs.com

RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 39, Number 4

Winter, 2005

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.

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 *Curtain Up in 1933*
The Legacy of the St. Paul Opera Association
Steve Trimble
- 19 RCHS's Collection of Building Permits and
The Story of the DeLoop Parking Ramp
Bob Garland
- 25 *Union Park in the 1880s*
Band Concerts, Balloon Ascensions Once
Lured 10,000 People in a Single Day
- 26 Book Reviews

Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon

A Message from the Editorial Board

Beginning in 1933, the St. Paul Civic Opera Association played a vital and enriching role in the city's arts and cultural life. When in the mid-1970s financial problems caused the St. Paul organization to merge with the Minnesota Opera, local pride in the city's ability to stage and present this grand art form gave way to the realities of what it actually cost to deliver any sustained program in the arts at the end of the twentieth century.

Historian Steve Trimble tells the story of the St. Paul Civic Opera Association with insight based on substantial research, interviews with a number of individuals who were involved in the Opera Association, and sensitivity to the complexity of opera as an art form. Despite the differences of opinion on whether operas should be done in their original language or in English; use homegrown talent for key roles or hire outside, professional voices; or select works for a given season that include Grand Opera, light opera, or musical comedy, the depth of commitment of opera supporters in St. Paul was steadfast until funding problems made all other issues secondary. What shines forth from Trimble's account is how hard many people worked to sustain their belief in the importance and value of the arts as an integral part of civic life in St. Paul.

Juxtaposed to the fantasy and delight of Grand Opera in our winter issue is a detailed examination of the birth, life, and death of the DeLoop Parking Garage on Cedar Street in downtown St. Paul. On the surface, Bob Garland's analysis of the paper trail left by a deservedly forgotten and otherwise unremarkable St. Paul building whose life span paralleled many of the same years when the Opera Association flourished seems not only mundane, but also incongruous.

Yet the painstaking research Garland did in this case study makes a powerful point: the proper preservation of the paper records of the city of St. Paul is essential if historians are going to be able to recount the city's history accurately and in detail. Just as families need to learn how to preserve their own letters, photographs, and other paper records, so cities need to learn how to properly archive their many records. Fortunately, in the case of St. Paul's building permits, in 2003 the city turned these records over to the Ramsey County Historical Society and the Society is working hard to make them more accessible to all who want to search them for answers about St. Paul's built environment.

John Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

2004 Donor Recognition Roll

The Ramsey County Historical Society extends warmest and most sincere thanks to all supporters of the Society in 2004, 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 countless members of his staff for their excellent professional assistance.

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

If you would like to become a member of RCHS or make your own contribution to the organization, please call (651) 222-0701, or visit our web site www.rchs.com.

2004 Annual Appeal, General Operating, Endowment and Project Support: by individuals

Operating and endowment support above and beyond membership dues is critical to continue quality programming for the Society. This year we appreciate deeply the substantial support from the following individuals: (Please call 651-222-0701 to correct any errors or omissions)

Anonymous	James & Joan Gardner	John & Lillian Meyer
Duke Addicks & Jeanette Bach	Robert F. Garland	Mrs. Walter S. Meyers
William & Paula Bathke	Catherine & Paul Gatto	Joseph S. & Jane Micallef
Alfred & Dorothee Aeppli	N.L. Gault	Robert B. & Donna Mirick
Mary Anderson	Betty M. Granger	Robert & Deborah Montgomery
Bruce & Jean Anderson	Judson Grenier	Jonathan & Martha Morgan
Roger & Dorothy Anderson	Jennifer H. Gross & Jerry W. Lefevre	Charles & Wilma Muessel
Walter & Melinda Andrews	Marvin & Lorraine Grunke	Catherine Murnane
Donald & Clara S. Asp	Howard & Elizabeth Guthmann	Deborah Nelson
Gordon B. Asselstine	Ronald Hachey	Don E. Nelson
Joni & Roger Ballou	Richard & Violet Hagberg	Mary P. Nelson
Robert & Adrienne Banks	Arthur & Jane Hammel	Paul D. Nelson
Steven J. Barton	Harry & Lorraine Hammerly	Robert & Margaret Nelson
William & Paula Bathke	Marion J. Handt	Ford & Catherine Nicholson
Jeff & Karen Birkeland	Glenn Hanson	Richard & Nancy Nicholson
Alexandra O. Bjorklund	John Harens	Robert & Pamela Nuffort
Michael Borkan	Douglas & Mari Harpur	Polly O'Brien
Tom & Elizabeth Boyd	Harold Fotsch & Donna Harrington	Joan K. O'Brien
Norlin & Carole Boyum	Jean E. & B.C. Hart	Patrick H. O'Neill
Edwin & Barbara Braman	Douglas Heidenreich	Jeffery & Diane Oertel
Steve & Gail Brand	Rita Heintz	John & Marla Ordway
Richard & Ruth Brink	Louis F. & Katherine E. Hill	John & Margaret Ordway
Win Brown	Terry Hoffman	Constance Otis
Gladys Bruckner	Douglas & Vicky Holmen	Lucy Owens
Carolyn J. Brusseau	Stanley & Kaern Hubbard	William W. Owens, III
Alan & Janette Buckbee	Richard & Ruby Hunt	Marjorie Pearson
Roger F. Burg	Ruth & John Huss	Ronald Pederson
Jackie & Wayne Burlingame	J. Scott & Pamela Hutton	Marvin J. Pertzik
De Anne Cherry	Michael & Heather Iannacone	James & Beverly Peterson
C. P. Claude	David D. Irwin	Karin Marie Peterson
Ruth Cole	Elaine Jahnke	Jay Pfaender
Ruth Ann Cole	Kathryn & Glenn Johnson	Julian G. Plante
Norb & Mary Ellen Conzemius	Neel & Pegge Johnson	L.J. & Janet Quale
Bill & Maureen Cosgriff	James E. Johnson	Paul & Elizabeth Quie
Anne Cowie	Marion Johnson	William & Catherine Randall
James Cowie	Kathryn & Glenn Johnson	James Reagan
Jay Cowles	Byron & Virginia Johnson	Donald Reardon
John R. Cross	Reuben & Esther Kaplan	Edna Reasoner
Mary Beth Cutting	Arnold Kaplan	Isabel Redleaf & Family
Richard & Betty Mae Cutting	Esther & Martin Kellogg	Ellen & Andrew Reeher
Richard De Leo	Tom Kelley & Kathy Stack	Leola Rempel
Arnold Delger	James Kenna	Richard A. Rohleder
Charlton Dietz	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Klas	Daniel & Kathryn Rominski
William & Terry Dircks	David & Cristiana Kristal	Robert & Joyce Rosene
Robert J. Dolle	James & Gail LaFave	Patricia Kane & Joel Rudney
Chris & Jean Donaldson	Leonette Lanners	Robert Rulon-Miller
Carl & Charlotte Drake	Judith Frost Lewis & Stephen Lewis	James & Kathleen Russell
John & Elizabeth Driscoll	William Lightner	Alan K. Ruvelson
Wanda F. Duffy	Mary Lightner Vernon	Anders & Ewa Rydaker
William Dunn	David & Perrin Lilly	William & Susan Sands
David Durenberger	Albert & Georgia Lindeke	Thomas & Elizabeth Savage
Mark Eisenschenk	John & Susan Lindley	Susan Schlomka
Joseph W. Elsinger	Terry & Ann Love	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schroeder
Joanne Englund	George & Dusty Mairs	Thomas & Ann Schroeder
Michael & Helen Esch	Robert P. & Helen Mairs	Robert & Pam Senkler
Thomas & Jean Fabel	Thomas G. Mairs	Steven Shaller
Priscilla Farnham	John & Bonnie Manthey	Terry Shima
Eugene Fevold	Margaret M. Marrinan	Mrs. J. Bradner Smith
Peter & Lorraine Fischer	Marlene Marschall	Milton & Evelyn Smith
Fred Foley	Marcia Marshall	Norma Sommerdorf
Roger & Marianne Foussard	Margaret Pearl Martin	John S. Sonnen
Edward & Erin Fox	Nancy D. Martin	Gary & Peggy R. Sparr
William B. Frels	Susan & Edwin McCarthy	Charles Stander
Elizabeth French	Malcolm McDonald	Ralph & Grace Sulerud
Sam H. Fudenberg	Lawrence & Andrea McGough	Claude & Mary Ann Swayze

Jon & Lea Theobald
Steven & Geraldine R. Thompson
Ralph & Loanne Thrane
J. Quinn Tierney
Walter N. Trenerry
Steve Trimble
Jerry Trooien & Janice Simmond
Jane Trosdahl
Paul & Carolyn Verret
Bernice Vetsch

Harry Walsh
James T. Walton & Janet Reay Walton
Dennis Watson
Jerome & Alice Webster
Richard & Margaret Wedell
Stephen & Katherine Wellington
Carl Weschcke
Jean V. West
F. T. & Nancy Weyerhaeuser
Annette M. Whaley

Glenn Wiessner
Rick & Lucy Wilhoit
Nan Willie
Kent & Ann Mears Wilson
William & Tish Wolston
R. M. Wolterstorff
Walter & Barbara Wolterstorff
Anthony & Agnes F. Yapel
Laurie Zenner & Michael Bleck
Ronald J. Zweber

2004 Foundations, Corporations, and Organizations

Ramsey County Historical Society receives generous financial support from foundations, corporations, businesses and other organizations. This year the following have made gifts in support of the Society:

3M Foundation
Elmer L. & Eleanor J. Andersen
The John M. & Elizabeth W. Baker Fund
F. R. Bigelow Foundation
Boss Foundation
Harlan Boss Foundation for the Arts
Briggs & Morgan
Mary Livingston Griggs &
Mary Griggs Burke Foundation
Patrick & Aimee Butler Family Foundation
Catholic Community Foundation
Copper Dome Restaurant
Edwin W. & Catherine M. Davis Foundation
Dellwood Foundation
Deluxe Corporation Foundation
German-American Heritage Foundation
GMAC-RFC Employee Charitable Giving Fund

Hess, Roise & Company
Art & Martha Kammer Fund of the HRK
Foundation
Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation
KM Building Co.
Kraus-Anderson Construction Company
R.C. Lilly Foundation
McCarthy Bjorklund Foundation
McGough Companies
Minnesota Mutual Foundation
Eileen M. & Richard Momsen Fund
The Laura Jane Musser Fund
National Endowment for the Humanities
Casey Albert T. O'Neil Foundation
Pondie Ordway Johnson Fund
L.A. O'Shaughnessy Foundation
Park Midway Bank

Premier Bank
Margaret Rivers Fund
Roseville Community Fund
St. Croix Foundation
Saint Paul Jaycees
St. Paul Travlers Foundation
Target Foundation
Tozer Foundation
United Defense
Walmart
Warren Foundation
The Lee and Rose Warner Foundation
Whitney Foundation
Wiessner Insurance Inc.
The Lillian Wright & C. Emil Berglund
Foundation
Xcel Energy Foundation

2004 Premium Members Contributors

We would like to show our appreciation to the following members who from year to year choose to renew their memberships at one of the premium levels, above and beyond the basic membership level, thereby providing significant additional annual support for the work of the Society.

Guarantor

William & Terry Dircks
Joan Higinbotham
Betty Wold Johnson & Douglas Bushnell
George & Dusty Mairs
Richard & Nancy Nicholson

Benefactor

Mary Anderson
Alexandra O. Bjorklund
Norlin & Carole Boyum
Peter K. Butler
Sandra & Peter Butler
William B. Frels
Robert F. Garland
Jennifer H. Gross & Jerry W. Lefevre
Marshall & Elizabeth Hatfield
Stanley & Karen Hubbard
Ruth & John Huss
Francis Markoe
Mary Bigelow McMillan
David & Barbara Nicholson
Gary & Peggy R. Sparr
Richard & Lucy Wilhoit

Sponsor

William & Nancy Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Anson
W. Andrew & Linda Boss
Carl & Charlotte Drake

Jeannette Bach & Duke Addicks
Blanche & Violet Dvorak
Howard & Elizabeth Guthmann
Pat Hart
June Wheeler & Peter Herzog
Robert & Ramona Hess
William Hollinshead
Horace Irvine, II
James E. Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Klas
David & Karen Lanegran
Judith Frost Lewis & Stephen Lewis
Richard & Margaret Lidstad
Thomas G. Mairs
Marlene Marschall
Harry McNeely, Jr.
Robert B. & Donna Mirick
Jon & Ginny Morris
Mrs. Richardson B. Okie
John & Marla Ordway
Lori Ricke
Dave Riehle
Paul & Roxanne Sands
Robert & Pam Senkler
Richard & Barbara Shank
Tom Kelley & Kathy Stack
Jon & Lea Theobald
Jane Trosdahl
David & Mary Ann Wark

Patron

Tony Andersen
Caroline & Austin Baillon
John Baker
Robert & Adrienne Banks
Charles L. Bathke
Dr. & Mrs. James B. Bell
George & Karen Benz
William Bowell, Sr.
Bill & Sandra Brennom
C. P. Claude
Jefferson Jay Clowes
Mary Sue Comfort
Richard & Maureen Cox
Charlton Dietz
Rosemary & Harrison Dilworth
Olivia I. Dodge
Robert J. Dolle, Jr.
David Durenberger
Joanne Englund
Richard Faricy
Gertrude B. Ffolliott
James & Joan Gardner
Joan & Bob Grzywinski
Marion J. Handt
Harold Fotsch Donna Harrington
Douglas Heidenreich
Michael & Heather Iannacone
David D. Irwin
Lucy R. Jones

Esther & Martin Kellogg
 Sarah Kinney
 James & Gail LaFave
 John & Susan Lindley
 Jean Kummerow & John Loban
 James & Sarah Jane Markoe
 Marcia Marshall
 Jerry & Jeanne Meigs
 Joseph S. & Jane Micallef
 Henry Morgan
 John Mueller
 Catherine Murnane
 Mary Nelson
 Bob & Anne Nickoloff
 John & Margaret G. Ordway, Jr.
 Thomas & Sally Patterson
 Ronald Pederson
 Julian G. Plante

Leila D. J. Poullada
 James Reagan
 Bruce & Ilene Rice
 Robert & Joyce Rosene
 Ken & Nina Rothchild
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schroeder
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Slade
 Mark Stutrud
 Timothy & Beth Sullivan
 J. Quinn Tierney
 James Wall
 Harry Walsh
 Annette M. Whaley
 Glenn Wiessner
 Ronald J. Zweber

Corporate Partners
 EMC Corporation
 Copper Dome Restaurant
 Denny C's Inc.
 Equity Services of St. Paul, Inc.
 JLT Group
 KM Building Company
 Kraus-Anderson Construction Company
 McGough Companies
 Premier Bank
 Schroeder Milk Company
 Sexton Printing Company
 Smyth Companies
 Summit Brewing Co.
 Victory Parking Ramp
 Villaume Industries Inc.
 Western Insurance Agency
 Wiessner Insurance Inc.

Bequest, Appreciation, Special Recognitions

A Bequest from the Byron Mortenson Estate

In memory of Katherine J. Thomas, to recognize her long standing membership in RCHS and her interest in local history, from her friends and family.

From Joanne Englund

In memory of Kathryn Gagnon — Educator, community leader, writer, and performing artist including jazz singer and Penumbra Theatre actress.

In honor of Blanche Weaver who lived over 101 years. She was a lifelong poet and recorder of her history. A member of Writers' Unlimited for 30 years, Blanche was a role model completing her autobiography, "My Century" shortly before she died.

In memory of Kent Schonberger — For 30 years as Assistant City Engineer, Kent managed the care and safety of Saint Paul and its river.

In memory of Richard Broeker — Dick was Mayor Latimer's "elf," always working behind the spotlight on ideas and projects to benefit Saint Paul.

In Memory of Art Baumeister
 Robert Butterbrodt
 Julian G. Plante
 Margaret M. Marrinan
 Richard & Lucy Wilhoit

In Memory of Vincenta Scarlet
 Polly & Michael O'Brien

In Memory of Robert Farnham
 Jeannette Albertson
 Mary Anderson
 John Baker
 Alexandra O. Bjorklund
 W. Andrew & Linda Boss
 Norlin Boyum
 Bernard Brockhaus
 Christine Burda
 Twiss & Patrick Butler
 Herb & Catherine Buscher
 Nancy Buttweiler
 Anne Cowie
 Gloria Dahlen
 Charlton Dietz
 Blanche & Violet Dvorak
 Joanne Englund
 Dorothy Farnham
 Gibbs Museum Staff
 Howard & Elizabeth Guthmann
 Louise Hammerlindl
 Joan Higinbotham
 Stanley S. & Karen Hubbard
 Scott Hutton

Horace Irvine, II
 Gerald & Ann Kazmierczak
 John & Judy Kinkead
 Tom Kelley & Kathy Stack
 Rosemary Kessler & Kevin P. Filter
 Virginia Kunz
 Judith Frost Lewis & Stephen Lewis
 John & Susan Lindley
 George & Dusty Mairs
 Robert P. & Helen Mairs
 Marlene Marschall
 Steve Schwahn & Helen Miller
 Richard & Nancy Nicholson
 Thomas & Sally Patterson
 Louise Plank
 Julian G. Plante
 Leila D. J. Poullada
 Barbara & Phil Roy
 James & Kathleen Russell
 Jane F. Schroeder
 Stephen Schwahn
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Slade
 Shirley Sternquist
 Betsy Turner
 Joan Louise Waitt
 Carl Weschcke
 Glenn Wiessner
 Richard & Lucy Wilhoit
 Charles & Elizabeth Woehrl
 Laurie Zenner & Michael Bleck
 Ronald J. Zweber
 Merrill Lynch Pierce Fenner and Smith

2004 Gifts In - Kind

Many businesses and individuals helped this year with gifts of objects, expertise, or free or reduced cost services. The Society thanks the following for gifts in-kind:

Access Lifts Inc., Steve Marstad
 Duke Addicks
 Priscilla Farnham
 Forecast Public Artworks
 Sam Fudenberg
 Susan Gehrz
 Get Up Johns
 Rhoda Gilman
 Great American History Theater
 Guthrie Theater
 Historic Murphy's Landing

Thomas Kelley & Kathryn Stack
 Kraus-Anderson Construction,
 John Schletty, Ross Nelson
 Lakes & Plains Regional Council
 of Carpenters and Joiners,
 Scott Malcolm
 Lampert Yards, Inc., Daniel L. Fesler
 Landmark Center
 Judith Frost Lewis
 D. R. Martin
 Maureen McGinn

Brian McMahon
 Murphy Companies
 Laurie Murphy
 Paul D. Nelson
 Old Log Theater
 Park Square Playhouse
 Plymouth Playhouse
 Schroeder Milk Company
 Science Museum of Minnesota
 Stepping Stone Theatre
 Summit Brewing

Ralph Thrane
 Ramsey County Staff Members
 Hagdis Tschunko
 Victory Parking Ramp
 Randy Walker
 Robert Watson
 Mary Wingerd
 David and Mary Zuhn

Please call 651-222-0701 to correct any errors or omissions



Mrs. W. Homer Sweney, known to family and friends as Mary Glyde Griggs, a founder of the St. Paul Opera Association. Portrait is by St. Paul artist Carl Bohnen (1871–1951), and is reproduced here courtesy of her daughter Pat Hart. Bohnen, an opera buff, was nationally known for his portraits, including seven governor portraits in the Minnesota State Capitol. Border taken from the Mary Molton Cheney Papers (1872-1950) in the collection of the Ramsey County Historical Society. See article on page 4.

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

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
323 Landmark Center
75 West Fifth Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION

U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Paul, MN
Permit #3989

