

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Winter, 2006

Volume 40, Number 4

Growing Up in St. Paul
The Andahazy School of
Classical Ballet

Page 16

“The Greatest Single Industry”
Crex: Created Out of Nothing

—Page 4



This 1901 American Grass Twine publicity photo shows a room furnished and decorated almost entirely with wire grass products. The company processed all of the raw material and manufactured the floor coverings in St. Paul. It made the wicker items in New York. The wall matting and picture frames were probably made specially for this photograph. American Grass Twine later became Crex Carpet Company. Photo from *Creating New Industries in the Minnesota Historical Society collections*.

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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
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torical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. **All
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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 40, Number 4

Winter 2006

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 "The Greatest Single Industry?"
Crex: Created Out of Nothing
Paul D. Nelson
- 16 Growing Up in St. Paul
My Years at the Andahazy School of Classical Ballet
Sandra Snell Weinberg
- 22 Rabies Scare in St. Paul
"Mad Dog on the Loose": Panic Prevails
as Fear Rips the City in 1901
Susan Dowd
- 25 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

In this era when we seek to use natural products in new ways, we will enjoy reading Paul Nelson's lead article depicting a once-flourishing Ramsey County industry that manufactured twine, furniture, and carpet from a forgotten resource: wire grass! A modern-day visit to Crex Meadows in Wisconsin will evoke memories of workers harvesting this dense material, which was twisted and bent into wicker furniture that once graced the porches of St. Paul neighborhoods. A detailed portrait of the founders of the Andahazy dance studio, an account of an early rabies outbreak, and two book reviews round out this diverse issue.

We welcome as our new editor John Lindley, who takes the position following his tenure as editorial board chair. John brings to his new job years of professional publishing experience and a practiced, conscientious approach to the complex task of producing this magazine on a quarterly basis. Under his committed leadership we will maintain the high standards of content and production that have garnered *Ramsey County History* two national awards. As we greet John, we dearly miss our founding editor, Virginia Brainard Kunz, whom we profile in this issue. Her keen intelligence, lively curiosity, and abiding compassion have long guided our interest in local history, and she will always live on in our hearts.

Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board

Virginia Brainard Kunz 1921-2006

A Remembrance

Virginia Brainard Kunz, editor of *Ramsey County History* for more than forty years, died on January 7, 2006, in Minneapolis. Members and supporters of the Ramsey County Historical Society will miss Virginia's deft editorial hand, her nearly encyclopedic knowledge of St. Paul history, and her talent as a writer.



Born in 1921 in St. Cloud, Minnesota, Virginia graduated from Iowa State University in 1943 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter the *Minneapolis Tribune* hired Virginia. Her work with the newspaper involved cropping and sizing photos for news stories, writing short articles, and crafting headlines. These skills would serve her well when in 1962 she became the Ramsey County Historical Society's executive secretary. Two years later, Virginia founded *Ramsey County History*. At the time the Society's magazine came out twice a year. It expanded to quarterly publication in 1989. In 1973 the Society made Virginia its executive director, a position she held until her retirement sixteen years later.

During her tenure as executive director, Virginia oversaw the Society's move from offices at the Gibbs Farm Museum (now the Gibbs Museum of Pioneer and Dakotah Life) in Falcon Heights to larger quarters in the Landmark Center in downtown St. Paul. In the 1970s she was one of a number of civic-minded leaders who were involved in persuading St. Paul and Ramsey County officials to restore the old Federal Courts Building and convert it to the Landmark Center. A skilled manager, Virginia also oversaw the growth of the Society from operating two afternoons a week on an annual budget of \$10,000 to more than 1,200 members and a budget that exceeded \$500,000 at the time of her retirement.

In addition to all the responsibilities she had as executive director of the Society, Virginia found time
(continued on the reverse)

Rabies Scare in St. Paul

“Mad Dog on the Loose”: Panic Prevails as Fear Rips the City in 1901

Susan Dowd

“Mad dog on the loose! MAD DOG!” When this cry was heard in St. Paul in the spring of 1901, it undoubtedly sent the good citizens of that city scurrying to safety. Mothers frantically called for their children. Doors slammed and marksmen searched for their pistols, for rabid (“mad”) dogs were a real—though fortunately infrequent—occurrence at the turn-of-the-last-century. Infrequent, but not unknown.

It seems that an occasional “epidemic” of dogs afflicted with rabies was the norm. One such epidemic was reported with drama and urgency in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* in the last two weeks of April 1901. The headlines were horrifying:

- April 14 *Mad Dogs Become Too Numerous*
- April 17 *Attacked Twice by a Mad Dog*
- April 18 *Prevent a Mad Dog Epidemic*
- April 23 *Boy Bitten by Mad Dog*
- April 25 *Police Kill Dogs*
- April 27 *Suppression of Rabies in the State*

For two weeks fear gripped several St. Paul neighborhoods.

The story began on Saturday, April 13, 1901, when a dog described as “a black and tan” attacked horses and dogs on the West Side of the Mississippi. The writer of the newspaper account perhaps enjoyed the drama inherent in the situation despite its danger, describing the incidents as “exciting to say the least, and gave many spectators a real scare. They had not only the chance of seeing a dog with a genuine case of rabies, but saw him attack half a dozen other dogs and bite three horses severely.” The dog attacked a team of horses driven by Walter Hall who was traveling “between Annapolis Street and the top of the hill.” One of the unfortunate horses was attacked about the face as the dog seized hold of its lips and tongue. The reporter’s description described how the horse flung back its

head, swinging the little dog into the air. The force of the motion tore most of the horse’s tongue out of its mouth, such was the strength of the dog’s grip.

The dog then proceeded to South Robert Street between Concord and Indiana, where it attacked a second team of horses driven by a man named Ketchell who was hauling stone. Here the dog bit and tore at the legs of the horses. As Ketchell attempted to fend off the attack, a Mrs. Eckert and her daughter drove by, and the dog left the horses to spring at the face of the older woman. She cried for help. “It gave the woman and her daughter a scare which they will remember for many days,” noted the newspaper account. Luckily, the attack took place close to the West Side police station, where “Patrolman Lauderdale and Officer Kettle . . . sized up the situation, and, calling to the crowd to stand back, soon dispatched the dog with two bullets in his brain.” As horrified passersby continued to look on, the body of the dog was removed for delivery to the Board of Health. It was high drama of a terrifying kind.

On the same Saturday, another dog, described as “a pet dog belonging to the children of Mrs. Markee on Pleasant Avenue was taken sick . . . and died of the rabies,” the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* announced, adding that it “goes to show that canines all over the city will bear watching just about this time of year.” The newspaper warned that “for the next two weeks there will be any number of canines in different parts of the city, particularly on the West Side, that will develop rabies.” This prophecy added to the anxiety that St. Paul residents already felt.

Several days later, another newspaper headline leapt from the page: “*Attacked Twice by a Mad Dog.*” On April 16 “a mad dog which is now running at large in the woods in the vicinity of Linwood Place

and Oxford Street” made two attempts to bite a veterinarian called to examine the dog. The canine, a 10-month old St. Bernard “of unusual fine markings and exceptionally large for his age” belonged to W.C. Stanton of 1032 Linwood Place. He was an excellent pet — “one of his good traits was never to go away from home,” the writer recounts. “But Monday he broke his good record for gentlemanly dogs and wandered off. He not only remained away all afternoon but ‘made a night of it,’ not returning home until yesterday.”

Not long after, his strange behavior attracted the attention of the household. He would lie down in the house in his usual resting places, but would not remain there long, jumping up with a bound. At first no attention was paid, until he made such violent lunges that the residents of the house became frightened, and he was banished to the barn. The veterinarian, Dr. Richard Price, was called immediately. When Dr. Price arrived, the dog approached him in a friendly manner, licked his hands, and smelled the doctor’s clothes. Nothing aroused the man’s suspicion. “Then without a moment’s warning, [it] sprang at Dr. Price, making a lunge at the doctor’s face or throat.” The dog bruised the doctor, but did not bite. Scarcely had he recovered from the shock when the St. Bernard attacked him a second time, catching him by the arm. Fortunately the veterinarian was wearing a heavy coat, and the dog’s teeth did not pierce his skin. Shaken, he could only watch as the frenzied creature ran away, and the police were summoned to search for the animal.

To add to the danger, the Stantons learned that their dog had fought with almost every dog in the area. The owners of those dogs were ordered to tie them up for a quarantine period of 10 days. The newspaper’s account ended on a dire note: “There are good reasons for believ-

ATTACKED TWICE BY A MAD DOG

DR. R. PRICE HAS AN EXCITING ADVENTURE.

Canine Belonging to W. C. Stanton, Afflicted With Rabies, Made a Lunge at Dr. Price's Face, and Then Grabbed Him by the Arm—Dog Is Now at Large.

A mad dog, which is now running at large in the woods in the vicinity of Linwood place and Oxford street, made two desperate attempts to bite Dr. Richard Price last evening. Although the dog's mouth came in contact with the doctor's face once, and the canine grabbed him by the arm in the second attack, the doctor escaped without any abrasion of the skin, and is none the worse for his unusual and exciting experience beyond a good fright.

The animal, which is a ten-months old St. Bernard dog of unusual fine markings and exceptionally large for his age, is the property of W. C. Stanton, who lives at 1032 Linwood place. He has been made a pet by Mr. Stanton ever since he bought him, and has always been kept around the house. One of his good traits was never to go away from home. But Monday he broke his good record for gentlemanly dogs and wandered off. He not only remained away all afternoon, but "made a night of it," not returning home until yesterday. When he did come back he did not look any the worse for his unusual outing. He appeared the same as usual until along in the afternoon, when his

antics attracted the attention of the members of the household. He would lay down in the house in his usual resting places, but would not remain there long, jumping up with a bound. At first no attention was paid to it until he made such violent lunges that the people in the house got frightened, and, fearing something serious might be the matter with him, placed him in the barn in the rear of the house, and when Mr. Stanton returned home Dr. Price was sent for.

When the doctor arrived the dog was brought out into the yard from the barn where a good look might be had of him. The dog approached both Mr. Stanton and Dr. Price in a very friendly manner and licked their hands. Dr. Price had on gloves. While they were looking at the animal he cautiously approached Dr. Price and began to smell at his clothes. He then backed off toward the house, a foot or two from where the gentlemen were standing, and then, without a moment's warning,

Sprang at Dr. Price.

The dog made a lunge at the doctor's face or throat. The animal did not bite, but struck him in the face with either his upper or lower jaw. The blow was

ing that every dog in that locality . . . will develop the rabies in due course of time, for Dr. Price says [the animal] had a well defined case of rabies."

While police were searching for the Stanton dog, a man living near Pascal Avenue noticed the dog but was not aware it had just attempted to attack a man and his wife. Mr. and Mrs. French, "who run a dairy on Pascal Avenue, near St. Clair Street" were riding in the vicinity of Grotto Street and Pleasant Avenue when they encountered the dog. The news account followed:

Suddenly the St. Bernard loomed up in the dusk and tried repeatedly to jump into the buggy in which they were riding, which was a low-seated vehicle. At first Mr. French yelled to the dog to go away, thinking that he was a pet animal and had mistaken them for his masters. By the time the dog had made a second lunge, Mr. French saw that he was acting very strangely, growling and snapping. Then he brought his whip into play, and each succeeding attempt on the part of the dog to jump into the moving buggy was met with smart blows upon his head and shoulders. By this time Mr. French had gotten his horse into a pretty fast gait, hoping to thereby elude the animal. But he kept up with the buggy and made leap after leap to land in the lap of Mr. and Mrs. French. How long the mad dog would have continued those antics is, of course, preblematical [*sic*], but just about the time that Mr. French began to grow seriously frightened the dog stumbled over a large stone near a corner." The dog then "disappeared in the gloom of the night . . . since then not a trace of him has been found."

Three mad dogs and five attacks in three days . . . the situation was becoming so dangerous that St. Paul's Health Commissioner, Dr. Justus Ohage, determined to take matters into his own hands. He contacted the city attorney and asked him "to look up the statutes and ascertain just how far it would be possible for him, Dr. Ohage, to proceed in killing dogs known to have been bitten by an animal suffering from the rabies or where there is good reason to believe that a dog has been bitten by a mad canine." Believing in the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, Dr. Ohage wanted to exterminate the dogs personally. How-

ever, newspaper accounts in the days that followed noted that it was the police who carried out this grim task. The *Pioneer Press* went on to speculate that "there are likely to be many strange faces in dog heaven within the next forty-eight hours."

But the crisis was not over. Several days later in the Rondo neighborhood, another attack occurred. This was even more dramatic, for here a man attempted to kill the dog with his bare hands. The incident occurred in the area of Kent and Edmund Streets. The dog was described as "a small black and tan terrier," and it first attracted attention "by running around snapping at anything which attracted his attention." Proceeding down Kent Street, it fought with every dog it encountered before attacking a small boy who was not named in the newspaper account. Neighbors immediately notified the police of the Rondo Street station, and two officers were sent to kill the animal.

In the meantime, "a negro, whose name could not be learned, gave stern chase after the canine and in spite of the entreaties of thoroughly frightened women and children, got close enough to the dog to knock him down with a rock. He was in the act of beating out the brains of the animal with a stone when the police arrived and dispatched the cur with several bullets through the brain." The carcass was turned over to the same Dr. Price who had been attacked by the Stantons' St. Bernard the previous week. Dr. Price reported that "a hasty examination [of the brain] showed unmistakable signs of rabies." After the Rondo attack, police killed seven dogs at the requests of their owners.

Four days later Dr. Price shot a dog that attempted to bite a groceryman at 524 Portland Avenue. The animal was unable to do so because its lower jaw was paralyzed, and it could not close its mouth. Price publicly chastised the community for its failure to quarantine dogs that had been in fights, and quoted from a pamphlet published by the State Board of Health a year earlier. That pamphlet stated that rabies "does exist in Minnesota and is fairly widespread in distribution and number of cases . . . To Dr. Richard Price of St. Paul is due the credit of early and persistent by calling attention to the presence of rabies in this state. He says its presence should

BOY BITTEN BY A MAD DOG

ANOTHER CANINE CAUSES TROUBLE

Before Being Killed by the Police the Dog Made Vicious Attack Upon Dogs Near Kent Street.

A mad dog yesterday afternoon ran amuck of the citizens of St. Paul in the vicinity of Kent and Edmund streets, and before he could be killed by the police, succeeded in biting a small boy, a number of dogs and created no end of excitement.

The dog was a small black and tan, weighing about twelve pounds. It is reported he belonged to a man named Pomplum, who lives on Sherburne avenue near Kent street.

He first attracted attention by running around snapping at anything which attracted his attention. Finally he attacked a dog, and after giving him a good whipping started down Kent street on a run. His queer actions attracted another pup, which was given a severe bite or two for interfering. Then the infuriated animal plucked on every dog that came in his way. As a diversion, he attacked a little boy who lives in that neighborhood, whose name had not been reported to the police up to a late hour last night.

While the dog was having his own way near Kent and Edmund streets, the police of the Rondo street station were appraised of what was going on, and two officers were sent to kill him. In the meantime a negro, whose name could not be learned, gave stern chase after the canine, and in spite of the entreaties of thoroughly frightened women and children, got close enough to the dog to knock him down with a rock. He was in the act of beating out the brains of the animal with a stone when the police arrived and dispatched the cur with several bullets through the brain.

The carcass was turned over to Dr. Richard Price, who made a partial examination of the brain last evening. He stated that the hasty examination showed unmistakable signs of rabies. To satisfy himself thoroughly, he will use further tests.

HIS "HARD LUCK" STORY.

and must be recognized and steps taken to prevent its spread."

Rabies caused terror in St. Paul for a good reason. It attacks the central nervous system, and once symptoms appear is almost 100 percent fatal. Death is gruesome and painful. Today, it is the stuff of books and movies, but in 1901 it was real. The disease is transmitted to its victim

through infected saliva that enters the body through a bite or, more rarely, through a cut or abrasion. Its name derives from the Latin *rabere*, meaning "to rage or to rave." Rabies has been known and feared for thousands of years; it is mentioned in Mesopotamian writings from 2300 B.C. For centuries its treatment consisted of cauterizing the wound, until 1885 when Louis Pasteur developed and introduced the first antirabies vaccine. Thanks to that research, rabies has been wiped out or controlled in much of the world, although in underdeveloped nations it still casts its horrifying shadow and kills an estimated 50,000 people a year.

In 1901 rabies was also a disease with a treatment that was nearly as feared as its symptoms. To work, the treatment had to be started as soon as possible, before the patient began to exhibit signs of the disease. A series of between fourteen and twenty-one injections had to be administered on a daily basis, with each injection introducing a more virulent strain of the virus than the previous one. Injections were given in the abdomen because it is a large "target area" for many subcutaneous injections. Side effects could be debilitating, ranging from swelling and hives to transient paralysis and permanent—sometimes fatal—damage to the nervous system. Today, the regimen is much improved, with about six doses are given over a period of twenty-eight days. Pasteur's vaccine used live viruses and was extremely dangerous; today's medicines are grown in tissue cultures and are infinitely safer, though just as potent. Developed around 1973, the new vaccine is used mostly in the western world, while doctors in developing countries still use the old treatment.

The greatest impact on the reduction of rabies has been the vaccination of animals to prevent them from contracting the disease in the first place. But in 1901 no such precautions existed. It would be another twenty to twenty-five years before effective preventative vaccines were introduced. Not until 1927, during the First International Rabies Conference, did scientists recommend that certain kinds of viruses for canine rabies be completely inactivated or attenuated so that they would cause no disease in dogs vaccinated before exposure. Today, wide-

spread vaccination of dogs has virtually eliminated canine rabies in the United States, although the disease still affects many kinds of wildlife.

In St. Paul in 1901, were the dogs in question actually rabid? Their behavior certainly would indicate symptoms of rabies: snapping and biting, body tremors, perversion of appetite (swallowing stones, sticks, etc.), muscle paralysis, excessive salivation, hanging lower jaw, convulsions, ataxic gait, and finally death. But rabies cannot be diagnosed on observation alone; the brain of a suspected animal must be examined for a positive diagnosis.

What were the post-mortem findings? Did all of the dogs killed actually have the disease? No. In actuality, most of them were certainly vicious, but not rabid. The St. Paul Health Commission reported that in the critical month of April 1901, a total of seventeen animals were "condemned." Presumably, most of these were canines. The monthly report does not indicate whether any of them were truly rabid; but a further examination of the public records for the year 1901 reveal that twenty-nine dogs were killed, and *only two positive cases of rabies* were found in the entire twelve-month period. Thankfully, no human cases appear in the records for that year. One can conclude that the mad dog panic of 1901 was a case of hysteria fueled by the combination of a few rabid dogs and a good deal of media sensationalism.

An over-reaction? Perhaps. And yet, who among us would not look upon a "mad dog"—a creature of terror and pathos—and slam the door behind us?

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Anna and Lorand Andahazy as Zobeide and the Golden Slave in Scheherazade. Miss Dee Studio photo, 1964, courtesy of Marius Andahazy.

R.C.H.S.
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Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
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75 West Fifth Street
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