

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Volume 41, Number 4

“A Great Experience”
Villaume Builds Gliders in
World War II
Page 22

“If It Can Be Manufactured from Wood, We Can Make It”
A History of the Villaume Family and the
Company They Built — Page 4



Eugene Villaume. Portrait by Nicholas Brewer (1857–1949), one of America’s finest portrait artists. Minnesota-born, Brewer trained in New York and later moved back to St. Paul. He painted presidents and official portraits of governors from Minnesota and ten other states. Brewer also painted portraits of a number of prominent Minnesotans, including Theodore Hamm, Ignatius Donnelly, George Dayton, and Archbishop John Ireland. Photo courtesy of Nick Linsmayer and Villaume Industries.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 41, Number 4

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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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A Message from the Editorial Board

This issue of Ramsey County History showcases the significant history of Villaume Industries, formerly the Villaume Box and Lumber Company, which is celebrating 125 years as a continuously operated family owned business. Steve Trimble tells the fascinating story of this company, which Eugene Villaume, a French immigrant, started in 1882. The firm initially specialized in making commercial boxes and installing fine interior woodwork, such as can still be seen in the art deco interior furnishing of the St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse. During World War II, as John Lindley explores in a separate article, the Villaume Company helped defeat the Axis enemy by building glider floors and wings for the Army Air Forces. After the war, Villaume diversified into manufacturing roof trusses and custom wood packaging. The Winter issue concludes with a short article by Leo J. Harris about a little-known meeting in 1839 at Kaposia (now South St. Paul) between Bishop Mathias Loras and Dakota leader Big Thunder.

The Society is grateful to Villaume Industries and its president, Nick Linsmayer, for giving authors Steve Trimble and John Lindley access to the company archives, providing photos, and arranging for interviews with individuals who could tell the Villaume story based on their own experiences with the company. We hope that other local businesses will follow the example of Villaume and share their story with us.

Anne Cowie,
Chair, Editorial Board

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The Ramsey County Historical Society extends warmest and most sincere thanks to all supporters of the Society in 2006, 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 Tony Bennett, Chair; Victoria Reinhardt; Jim McDonough; Janice Rettman; Rafael Ortega; Toni Coleman; and Jan Parker. Special appreciation goes to County Manager, David Twa, and to countless members of his staff for their excellent professional assistance.

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This late-afternoon photograph taken in the 1960s shows a supply of building trusses with their "Gizmo Gussetts," or metal connector plates, ready for shipping on a Murphy Trucking Company flatbed trailer in the yard at Villaume Box & Lumber Company. In the background is the Villaume sign, complete with hundreds of light bulbs, mounted on the bluffs on the West Side. Various residences are just visible beyond the sign and above the bluffs. Photo courtesy of Nick Linsmayer and Villaume Industries. See Steve Trimble's article on page 4.

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