

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Summer 2014

Volume 49, Number 2

A Grand Topographical
Feature:

The History of the Mississippi
River Boulevard

Donald L. Empson

—Page 11

*“Sewed, Baked Bread,
and Did a Little Housework Beside”:*

The Stork Family in St. Paul, 1914–1916

Rebecca A. Mavencamp, page 3



The unknown photographer who posed Grace and William Stork, St. Paul residents from 1903–1951, in such a stoic and traditional way missed their true characters as hardworking, but jovial, individuals. The couple raised five children, buried three of them, farmed the prairie, fought in the Civil War, and served lunch to local businessmen such as Frederick Spangenberg, F. Rudolph Knapheide, and H.B. Fuller in their home on Cleveland Avenue in St. Paul. Their story unfolds in this issue, told in their own words, during the last moments of peace before America was plunged into a world forever changed by the First World War. Photo courtesy of the Rockford Area Historical Society.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

President

Chad Roberts

Founding Editor (1964–2006)

Virginia Brainard Kunz

Editor

John M. Lindley

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

William Frels

Chair

Cheryl Dickson

First Vice Chair

Elizabeth M. Kiernat

Second Vice Chair

Julie Brady

Secretary

Carolyn J. Brusseau

Treasurer

Thomas H. Boyd, Anne Cowie, Jo Anne Driscoll, Thomas Fabel, John Guthmann, Douglas Heidenreich, Richard B. Heydinger, Jr., John Holman, Kenneth H. Johnson, David Kristal, Carl Kuhmeyer, Father Kevin M. McDonough, Nancy W. McKillips, Susan McNeely, James Miller, Robert Muschewske, Jeffrey Slack, Ralph Thrane, Susan Vento, Jerry Woefel.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Anne Cowie, *chair*, James B. Bell, Thomas H. Boyd, John Diers, William Frels, Douglas Heidenreich, James Miller, John Milton, Laurie M. Murphy, Paul D. Nelson, Richard H. Nicholson, Jay Pfaender, David Riehle, Chad Roberts, Steve Trimble, Mary Lethert Wingerd.

HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

William Fallon, William Finney, George Latimer, Joseph S. Micallef, Marvin J. Pertzik, James Reagan.

RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Jim McDonough, chair
Commissioner Toni Carter
Commissioner Blake Huffman
Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire
Commissioner Rafael Ortega
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt
Commissioner Janice Rettman

Julie Kleinschmidt, manager,
Ramsey County

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, MN 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 2014, 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: info@rchs.com; web site address: www.rchs.com

RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 49, Number 2

Summer 2014

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

C O N T E N T S

- 3 “*Sewed, Baked Bread, and Did a Little Housework Beside*”:
The Stork Family in St. Paul, 1914–1916
Rebecca A. Mavencamp
- 13 *A Grand Topographical Feature*
The History of the Mississippi River Boulevard
Donald L. Empson
- 23 “*A Banner with the Strange Device*”
Longfellow and St. Paul
Moira F. Harris

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 issue, we present several stories relating to the area near modern-day Highland Park. The Mississippi River Boulevard remains one of the more picturesque scenes in St. Paul. Donald Empson shares the story of its design by famous Chicago landscape architect Horace William Shaler Cleveland. Built in stages as land was acquired, the road had an early speed limit of 8 miles per hour and was subject to disputes between horses and new-fangled automobiles. Through careful research of family letters and diaries, Rebecca Mavencamp outlines the history of the Stork family, who lived on Cleveland Avenue South, which once lay beyond the city proper in Reserve Township. And Moira Harris traces the story of “Excelsior,” another Longfellow poem besides the famous “Song of Hiawatha,” which, in its day, inspired songs, a town, and even a Hamm’s beer label!

Anne Cowie,
Chair, Editorial Board

“A Banner with the Strange Device”

Longfellow and Saint Paul

Moira F. Harris

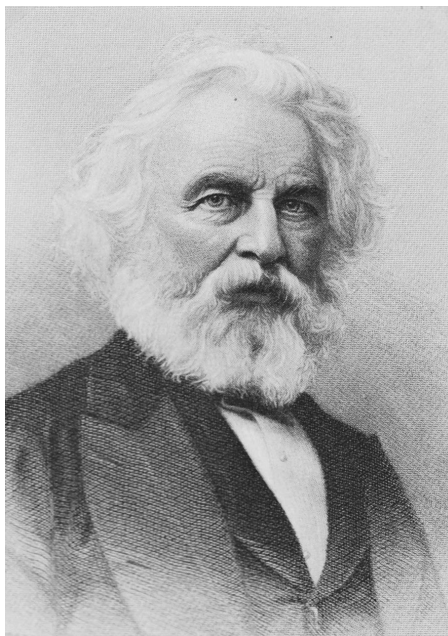
Most tourists and Minnesotans know that when Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), America’s favorite nineteenth century poet, wrote “The Song of Hiawatha,” he was inspired by Minnehaha Falls although he had never visited Minnesota. The Falls became an even more famous destination for artists. Hiawatha, Nokomis, and Minnehaha entered the language of trade, art, and geography. Lakes, parks, and products all carried their names. But another earlier Longfellow poem, far shorter than “The Song of Hiawatha,” made the poet equally famous. When he wrote “Excelsior” he may not have had any inkling as to its immediate or future popularity. It was included in his 1841 volume, *Ballads and Other Poems*, and almost immediately attracted the interest of two composers: the Irishman named Michael Balfe, and Judson, a member of the singing Hutchinson family who toured America (including Minnesota) and Europe in the nineteenth century. As Carol Rylie Brink wrote in her study of the Hutchinson family,

Here were all the ingredients of a favorite Hutchinson number: the mountains, the snow storm, the dramatic climax . . . and finally the lofty and the noble ideal.¹

After the music was complete, the Hutchinsons visited the poet and asked if he would write an introduction that could appear on the sheet music for “Excelsior.” Longfellow wrote,

This poem represents the continued aspirations of genius. . . . Disregarding the everyday comforts of life, the allurements of love, and the warnings of experience, it presses forward on its solitary path. Even in death, it holds fast its device, and a voice from the air proclaims the progress of the Soul in a higher sphere.²

In the poem a lad, carrying a banner with the word “Excelsior” on it, scales a snowy peak in the Alps and is later found frozen to death. Longfellow imagined the tale after noting the word on a banner on the New York State seal. Unlike his later works dealing with Paul Revere, Hiawatha, or Evangeline, he was not retelling an actual or legendary event. In the 1841 volume, the poem appeared with an illustration of its hero dressed in a short coat over leggings.



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), a prolific and immensely popular American poet of the nineteenth century. Many of Longfellow’s longer works were based on historical themes or events. Photo courtesy of the Dictionary of American Portraits, published by Dover Publications, Inc., in 1967.

Longfellow’s words don’t suggest a time for the trek and therefore every later illustrator was able to portray the lad as he wished.

EXCELSIOR

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore ‘mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!

His brow was sad; his eye beneath,
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,
And like a silver clarion rung
The accents of that unknown tongue,
Excelsior!

In happy homes he saw the fight
Of household fires gleam warm and
bright;
Above, the spectral glaciers shone,
And from his lips escaped a groan,
Excelsior!

“Try not the pass!” the old man said;
“Dark lowers the tempest overhead,
The roaring torrent is deep and wide!”
And loud that clarion voice replied,
Excelsior!

“Oh, stay,” the maiden said, “and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast!”
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,
But still he answered, with a sigh,
Excelsior!

“Beware the pine tree’s withered branch!
Beware the awful avalanche!”
This was the peasants last Good-night,
A voice replied, far up the height,
Excelsior!

At break of day, as heavenward
 The pious monks of Saint Bernard
 Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,
 A voice cried through the startled air,
 Excelsior!

A traveler, by the faithful hound,
 Half-buried in the snow was found,
 Still grasping in his hand of ice
 That banner with the strange device,
 Excelsior!

There, in the twilight cold and gray,
 Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
 And from the sky, serene and far,
 A voice fell, like a falling star,
 Excelsior!

As Richard Dana Sheaff, ephemera historian, pointed out in a recent, well-illustrated essay, “Excelsior’s longevity is extraordinary.”³ Many companies named themselves or their products “Excelsior,” even if there was no overt connection with snow or mountains. Trade cards in the 1880s and 1890s marketed Excelsior metal polish, shoes, fruit, and many other goods. There were

translations of the poem and many parodies (Edward Lear imagined the banner-waver as a pig and James Thurber portrayed him as a businessman in a suit) as well as imitations. The wood chips used for packing were called excelsior by a Maine manufacturer after he heard the poem recited.⁴

While most of those who wrote parodies of “Excelsior” changed details of the verses but retained the verse-ending refrain, Bret Harte (1836–1902) changed even those. In his version, published in a small brochure by a cleaning-products manufacturer, a lad carries a stencil-plate, paints, and a brush up a mountain. On fences, rocks, mounds of snow and, finally, luggage, he diligently paints the word, “SAPOLIO,” a brand of hand soap. Harte’s verses alternate in the brochure with images also used on trade cards by the Enoch Morgan’s Sons Company. In these images maids use the soap to scrub everything from babies to pots, pans, and statuary. The Sapolio line of cleaning products was widely advertised nationally as well as in Minnesota newspapers in the latter



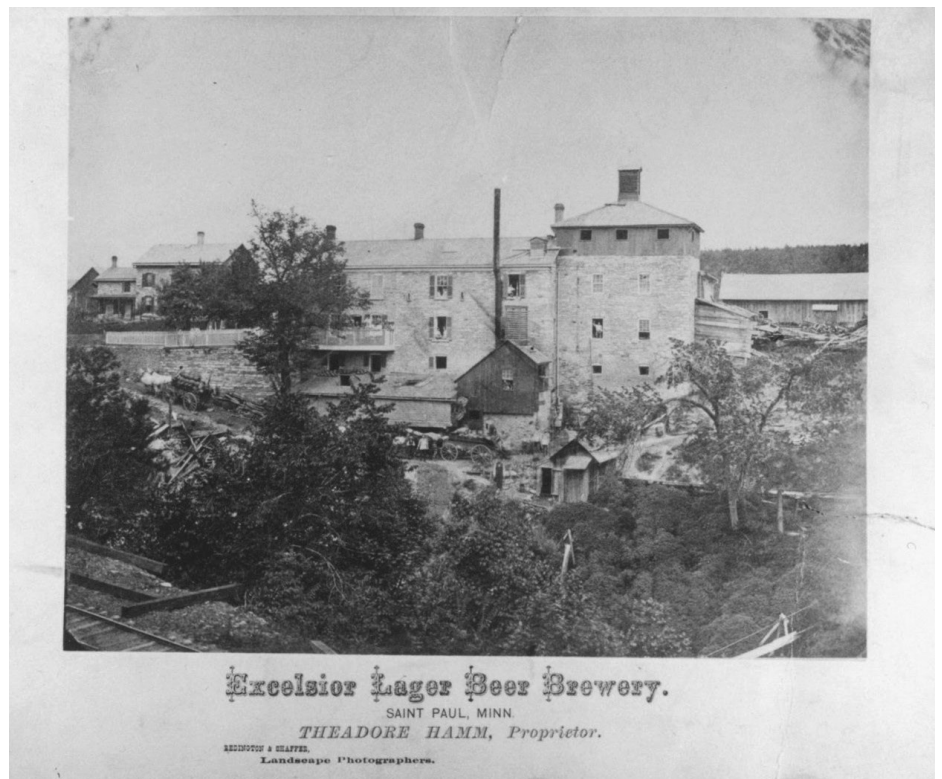
“Beware them peaks! That wall so bright
 Is but a snow bank, gleaming white,
 Your paint wont stick!” Came the reply,
 “I’ve done it! ‘How is that for high?’” “SAPOLIO.”

A satirical look at “Excelsior.” Illustration from Bret Harte, Excelsior, 1877. Courtesy of Project Gutenberg.

part of the nineteenth century. A page in the Harte brochure lists depots in eighteen cities where local merchants could purchase the products wholesale from



Bret Harte (1836–1902), novelist, poet, satirist, and short-story writer of the American West. Photo courtesy of the Dictionary of American Portraits, published by Dover Publications, Inc., in 1967.



Excelsior Lager Beer Brewery, c. 1870. Photograph by Redington & Shaffer, New York. Although the proprietor is barely visible in the photograph, standing next to the small shack in the center, his first name is misspelled. Photo courtesy of the Ramsey County Historical Society.

jobbing companies; Berkey, Talmadge & Company (209 and 211 East Fourth Street) carried Sapolio in St. Paul.⁵

While Minnesotans undoubtedly read Longfellow's poetry, their familiarity with "Excelsior" was certainly deepened when they heard it sung by the five Hutchinsons: Abby, Asa, John, Judson, and Jesse. The family first appeared in St. Paul in territorial days, performing in November 1855 at the new Irvine or Melodion hall near Seven Corners. They returned in 1856 and in 1862, by which time they had acquired land west of the Twin Cities which would become the town of Hutchinson.⁶

In 1860 Andrew Keller opened an East Side business that he called the Pittsburg Brewery. Before Theodore Hamm acquired it in 1864, it had become known as the Excelsior Brewery. Hamm later named his business after himself, but he kept Excelsior as the name of a brand he brewed.⁷ Did Keller choose the name for his brewery after he heard the Hutchinsons sing and did Hamm retain the name because it meant something to him as well? There is no evidence to explain their choices, but it should be added that when settlers west of Minneapolis chose a name for their new town in the 1850s, they, too, chose Excelsior.⁸

In 1895 the German fraternal group, the Sons of Hermann, held their twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in St. Paul. It was a time to celebrate. The group had raised money and was about to witness the completion of its monumental statue of Hermann in New Ulm.⁹ Theodore Hamm and his son William were both members of the local lodge. They participated in the meetings, William rode in the parade, and the brewery inserted an advertisement in the anniversary program, The lad of the poem is dressed in Cheruscan garb (appropriate to the time of Hermann or Arminius) and, at the tip of his Excelsior banner, hangs Hamm's eagle trademark.

School children and adults declaimed the poem or sang it as they did at the Church of the Messiah at Fuller and Kent streets in St. Paul in 1893. The program for a Longfellow evening included a biographical sketch of the poet and recitations of "The Village Blacksmith," "Evangeline," "The Day is Done," and

Higher-Still Higher
Onward-Upward!!
goes the popularity of
**Hamm's
Excelsior
Beer**

There's a reason for it too,
It's a wholesome honest brew,
The reason's in each bottle,
And it's none too good for you!
or your family,
or your friends,
or your friends' friends.

Telephone 263-2 for 24 quarts
of cool, delicious Excelsior!

Hamm's Brewery presents compliments to the Sons of Hermann
upon this, their 25th anniversary, and wishes this Benevolent Order
so dear to the hearts of all Germans, Full Measure of Prosperity.

Brewery advertisement from the 25th Anniversary Program of the Sons of Hermann Minnesota Lodges, July 1895. Advertisement courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society. The drawing may have been made by someone in the William Banning firm which handled promotions for Hamm's.

the chorus of the Young People's Society of the church, singing "Excelsior."¹⁰

In 1908 a cartoonist for *The Spokane Press* in the state of Washington made reference to the poem and Minnesota. Governor John Johnson was among those contemplating their chances for the Democratic nomination for president. He lost to William Jennings Bryan who was then beaten by William Howard Taft in the election. Below the cartoon are words once more suggesting Longfellow's poem:

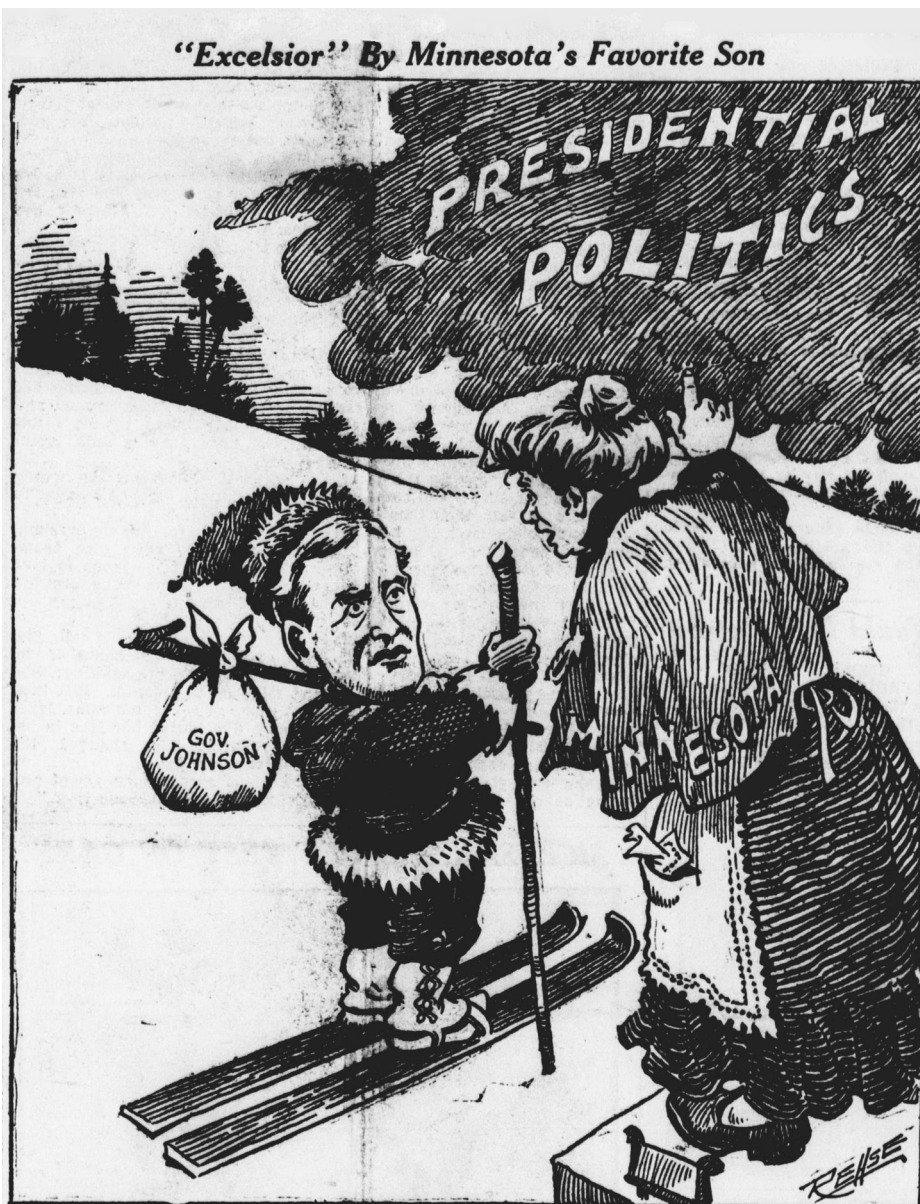
The shades of night were falling fast
When through Northwest wide there passed
A youth on skis who thought it nice
To flaunt at Dems the strange device,
"Show Me!"¹¹

Why did the poem "Excelsior" appeal to so many at the time? There was the concept of striving, of persevering which undoubtedly was understood by immigrants who had come to America to do just that. Onward and upward were important as goals for improving one's

work and elevating one's status in life. The poem's location in the Alps perhaps also appealed to those who had come to America from that area of Europe. And, for some, the sad ballads such as this one were as favored as the comic, abolitionist, or temperance songs the Hutchinsons also sang.

Moira F. Harris is the author of multiple articles in this magazine. She and her husband Leo J. Harris are the authors of

the standard book on Minnesota ephemera: Minnesota on Paper: Collecting Our Printed History (2006). She thanks Dick Sheaff whose article explained the significance of the poem in the worlds of literature and ephemera. Materials relating to the Hutchinson family can be found in the Minnesota Historical Society and in the McLeod County Historical Society in Hutchinson.



The shades of night were falling fast
When through Northwest wide there passed
A youth on skis who thought it nice
To flaunt at Dems the strange device
"Show Me!"

Cartoon from the front page of *The Spokane Press*, February 20, 1908. Cartoon courtesy of *Chronicling America, The Library of Congress*.

End Notes

1. Carol Ryrie Brink, *Harps in the Wind: The Story of the Singing Hutchinsons* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 70.
2. Ibid. See also Philip D. Jordan, *Singin' Yankees* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1946) and Dale Cockrell, editor, *Excelsior: Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846* (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1989).
3. Richard Dana Sheaff, "Excelsior!" *The Ephemera Journal* 16, no. 2 (January 2014), 20-22.
4. For one example of the use of the name see *The Evening Bulletin* (Maysville, Ky.), August 27, 1894.
5. Bret Harte, *Excelsior* presented by Enoch Morgan's Sons Company (New York: Donaldson Bros., 1877). Interested readers can find the entire brochure online as an e-book (#24019) published by Project Gutenberg. In 1900 the Morgan Company launched a well-known advertising campaign which lauded their company's products in maintaining a "Spotless Town."
6. *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, August 19, 1862, 1.
7. Peter Blum, "Hamm's Brewery," *The Breweriana Collector* 66 (Summer 1989), 7-11.
8. According to Warren Upham in his *Minnesota Place Names: A Geographical Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed., rev. and enl. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2001), 227, Excelsior was organized on May 11, 1858. It "owes its name and settlement to a colony, under the title of the Excelsior Pioneer Association," which was formed in New York City, November 12, 1852. "They were headed by George M. Bertram and arrived in the summer of 1853." The colony adopted this name in allusion to Henry W. Longfellow's world-famous short poem, "Excelsior." The city of Excelsior is the oldest of the Lake Minnetonka communities.
9. *St. Paul Daily Globe*, July 29, 1895, pp. 1-2.
10. *St. Paul Daily Globe*, September 10, 1893, 12.
11. *The Spokane Press*, February 20, 1908, 1. Johnson was a distant third in the convention voting. He died the following year, the first Minnesota governor to succumb in office.

Preserving & Presenting YOUR Heritage for 65 Years!

In 1949 a small group of concerned citizens embarked on what has been a 65-year journey, its first step being the preservation of the Heman and Jane Gibbs 1849 farmstead. This national register site is a unique treasure that serves our community, educators, and students to this day.

The Gibbs Museum of Pioneer and Dakota Life meets a critical community need, providing unique and effective informal education to 22,000 students every year. Study after study reveals the importance of informal learning in fostering academic achievement. We are proud to be a respected provider to educators from across the state. As a volunteer, member, or donor, you should be as well – your contributions make our work possible and keep our high-quality programming accessible to students regardless of their financial circumstances.

RCHS is also celebrating its 50th year of publishing Ramsey County History. This award-winning magazine was launched in 1964. Be sure to keep an eye out for the next issue to learn all about the history of RCCH during this anniversary year.

What better way to celebrate 65 years as YOUR Capital County historical society than by going back to where it all began? We invite you to join your fellow history lovers to celebrate our anniversary this October 16th at the Gibbs Museum. A whole host of activities are planned and a short program will illuminate Dakota culture. In addition, the recipient of the Virginia Brainard Kunz Award for the best article published in *Ramsey County History* for 2012-2013 will be announced.

We ask that you continue in your support of RCCH with a gift to our annual appeal this fall. You have the option of giving using the envelope enclosed or additional information will be sent to you in October on how your contributions will serve our community. Please keep in mind that through the generous support of the Katherine B. Andersen Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation, if you increase your annual gift OR membership level in 2014 the amount of the increase will be fully matched.



Making ice cream at the Gibbs Museum. Postcard from the RCCH Collections, printed by the Ingersoll Company showing a Winter Carnival Ice Palace. Students at “school” during a day camp.

Annual donations ensure the ongoing publication of *Ramsey County History*, make unique programming available to adults and students county-wide, and help preserve our unique collections of artifacts and archival materials.

Thank you for continuing to support YOUR 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
 Twin Cities, MN
 Permit #3989



This excerpt from Plate 30 of the 1916 G.M. Hopkins plat map of St. Paul shows the Stork property along Jefferson Avenue, which is at the top of the map running east and west. They built their home on the eastern corner of the section, along Cleveland Avenue South (perpendicular to Jefferson), and farmed the remainder. By this time, the Storks had already subdivided a portion of their land to build Pleasant Park and create a portion of Juliet Street. The property to their south was owned by H.M. Muckle, friends of the Storks with whom they stayed upon their arrival to St. Paul in 1903. To the west, bordered by Mississippi River Boulevard, lived Frederick Spangenberg, whose buildings are also visible on the map near Jefferson Avenue. Plat map courtesy of the Ramsey County Historical Society. For more on the Stork family in St. Paul, see page 3.