

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Summer 2015

Volume 50, Number 2

Long-Ago Snapshots

*When Sitting Bull
Was Photographed
in St. Paul*

Leo J. Harris

—Page 13

When Ramsey County Politics Had an Edge
Maas vs. Williams

Paul D. Nelson, page 3



A 1934 campaign poster calling for voters to reelect Congressman Melvin Maas. Maas, a Republican, won this election, defeating four other candidates who split the votes in Minnesota's Fourth Congressional District, which included Ramsey County. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 50, Number 2

Summer 2015

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.

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and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon*

A Message from the Editorial Board

Enjoy fun summer reading with this issue. The political landscape in Ramsey County in the 1920s and '30s was not dull. Paul Nelson has written a lively account of the rivalry between Melvin Maas, a colorful Republican congressman, and his left-leaning and equally passionate challenger, Howard Williams. It's a great read. Leo J. Harris explores the world of professional photography in St. Paul in the 1880s. In particular, portraits of Sitting Bull illustrate an up-and-coming technology, used to record the poignancy of a defeated warrior. And Janice Quick reveals the brief but sparkling existence of a midway carnival on the island in Lake Phalen in the early 1900s. Until concerns about water pollution shut it down, it hosted many festive family outings. We have a few interesting book reviews, too, and updates from readers. We are always interested in what you think.

Anne Cowie
Chair, Editorial Board

Book Reviews

Fountain Cave, St. Paul Ramsey County, Minnesota

and

*Wakan-Tipi Cave
(Carver's Cave) Saint Paul
Ramsey County, Minnesota*

Dr. Greg Brick, Ph.D.

Speece Productions (Altoona, Penna.),
Spelean History Series No. 26 and
No. 27 [2014]

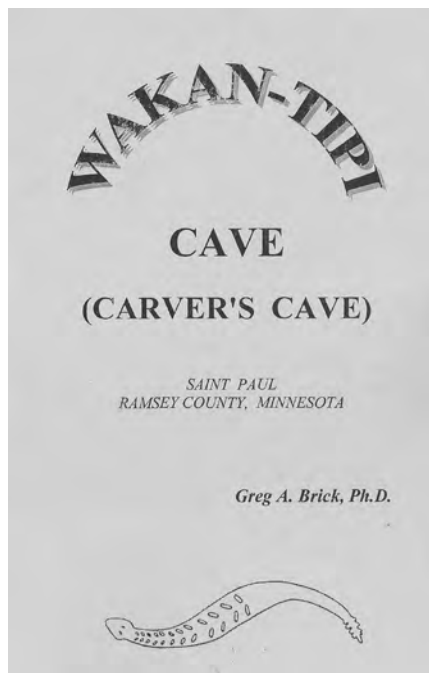
Available from the author at 1001
Front Street, St. Paul, MN 55103.
\$10.00: includes postage and handling.

Reviewed by Donald L. Empson

Dr. Greg Brick (his Ph.D. is in Geology) has been researching and writing about the underground of Minneapolis and St. Paul for the past 25 years. His most recent book, *Subterranean Twin Cities* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) is a fascinating account of the caves, underground streams, and sewers under the two cities.

These two new booklets are somewhat of a pair, summarizing information about the two famous natural sandstone caves in St. Paul, both of which were found and described by some of the first Europeans to visit this area.

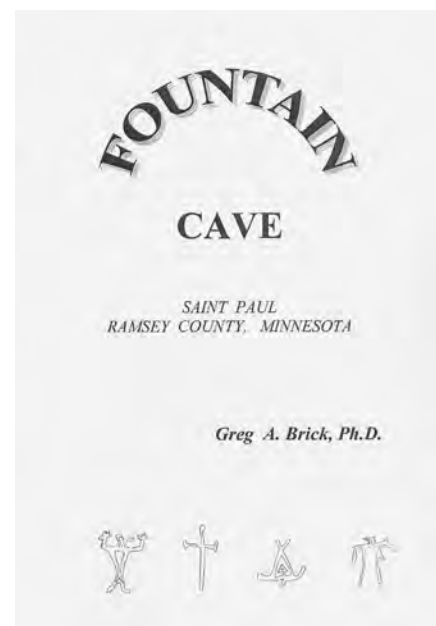
Carver's Cave (also known by its Indian name, Wakan-Tipi), first described by Jonathan Carver, an English explorer, in 1766, is the more historic of the two caves. We are rapidly approaching the 250th anniversary of Carver's



visit, so the appearance of this booklet is timely. Located below Mounds Park in St. Paul, the cave was opened and explored several times over the subsequent centuries until it was sealed, most recently, in 2010. Today, the cave is a part of the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and there are plans to renovate an old commercial building at the base of the bluff—near the entrance to the cave—into the Wakan-Tipi Center, an “urban oasis” and farmer’s market. The 24-page booklet includes a number of illustrations: drawings, photographs, newspaper clippings, and maps. Some of the illustrations are in color.

Fountain Cave, above St. Paul on the Mississippi River, was first de-

scribed in 1817 by Major Stephen Long of the newly created U.S. Corps of Topographical Engineers. Long was on a government-sanctioned trip to reconnoiter the Falls of St. Anthony. Fountain Cave was supposedly the “birthplace” of the city of St. Paul, and while the author questions this dubious claim, he does establish that the cave was a popular tourist attraction, lit by guides with birch-bark torches. As Dr. Brick discovered, a railroad industrial site on the surface above the cave, began draining its sewage into the cave in the 1880s thus ruining this historic site. Fountain Cave was finally sealed up with the construction of Shepard Road in 1960. This 24-page pamphlet is illustrated with drawings and photographs, includ-



ing a rare find: the only complete map of Fountain Cave, drafted by the City Engineer's office around 1880.

For anyone with an interest in the history of these caves, and the role they played in early St. Paul history, these two booklets would be an indispensable acquisition. And I believe no one knows more about these caves than the author, Dr. Brick.

Donald L. Empson has spent many years researching and writing about St. Paul and Ramsey County. He is best known for his book The Street Where You Live: A Guide to the Place Names of St. Paul (2006).

*The German Friend:
War and Postwar Letters
from German Anti-Nazi Prinz
Hubertus zu Löwenstein to
American Hans Christian,
1942–1947*

John W. Larson

St. Paul: Ramsey County Historical Society, 2014

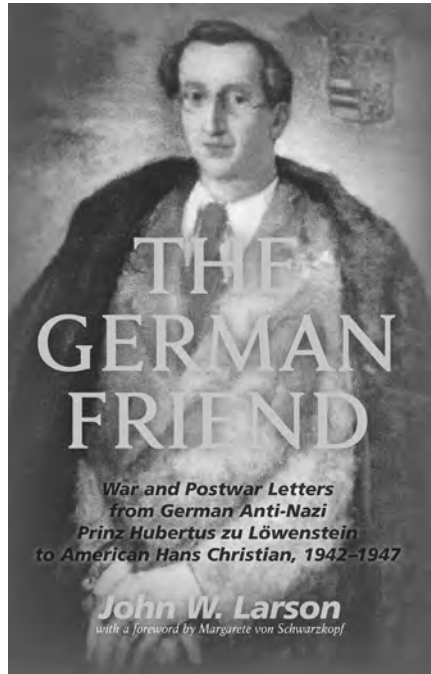
709 pages; photos; \$24.95 paper;
\$49.95 hardcover.

Reviewed by Paul D. Nelson

This is a book of letters from one man you never heard of to another even more obscure. Why might you want to read it?

There is one answer: the writer. Hubertus Löwenstein (1906–1984) was a German aristocrat of long lineage and prodigious learning. Politically active too, he quickly took the measure of Adolf Hitler and left Germany, for his safety, when the Nazis came to power in 1933. Exile brought him eventually to the United States, where made a living in part through short-term stints at small colleges. One of those, in 1942, brought him to St. Paul.

There, at Hamline University, he met a student from the North End, John Larson. A forty-year friendship, and thousands of letters, ensued. Larson



(whom Löwenstein unfailingly addresses as “Hans Christian”) has gathered a few hundred that he received between 1942 and 1947 into this volume.

Imagine undertaking to write a one- or two-page letter to a dear friend every two or three days. How long could you keep them interesting? This is what Löwenstein did, and he had no trouble at all. Through the letters, we meet the man.

He struggles to make a living, delights in his young daughters Maria and Panza, lovingly observes nature in their rural New Jersey home, and pays to fix the frequent flats on the jalopy he calls the *Büffel* (buffalo.) Along with these homely concerns, Löwenstein describes to Larson the more serious issues of his life.

He speaks often, sometimes to large (and occasionally hostile) crowds, opposing some Allied war measures, and defending German culture and the goodness of the German people—who he says are overwhelmingly anti-Nazi. He blames Churchill and Roosevelt for prolonging the war. After he and his family return to Germany, in late 1946, he deals with the sorrows of a ravaged homeland.

He puts out an astounding volume of writings—histories, historical fiction,

short stories, and editorials. He quotes Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, Schiller, the Bible, and the Romans. He praises the Holy Roman Empire and the Weimar Republic. He despairs: “You see, Hans Christian, these are the thoughts that come to me while the world is grey and wrapped in darker grey” and he cheers up. He philosophizes: “One must flee into the center of the typhoon; there there will be quietness.” He reflects on his unquiet mind: “Now I must close writing. My thoughts continue. They are never interrupted.” He inquires after Larson’s health and recalls fondly their days together on the St. Croix River. Löwenstein is a professional writer who relaxes by writing.

The reader learns a little from the book—about World War II policy debates, about Germany before the war and after, about life in exile—but mostly the reader gets to meet Hubertus Löwenstein. This book is an easy read and full of pleasures because Löwenstein is a superb writer and the most interesting person you will ever get to know.

Paul D. Nelson is a member of the RCHS Editorial Board and has interviewed John Larson about The German Friend, Löwenstein, and their friendship, which is available as a podcast. A link to this podcast (#3) can be found on the RCHS website, www.rchs.com.

Stassen Again

Steve Werle

St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2015

256 pages; photos; \$18.95 paper; \$9.99 e-book.

Reviewed by John M. Lindley

Nearly everyone who pays attention to U.S. presidential elections has heard the name of Harold E. Stassen (1907–2001) and his ten failed attempts to win the presidency. Mostly these references are made in a humorous way

because few remember anything else about Stassen.

Prior to now there was no extended biography of Harold Stassen, a Minnesota native. Thanks to Steve Werle, we have an excellent study of Stassen which tells us much about this bright, hard-working, complex man and his many years of public service. Based on research in the Stassen papers and other documentary sources, this biography fills an important gap in our state political history.

Stassen began his political career as a Republican who was elected county attorney in Dakota County, just south of St. Paul. In that office, Stassen earned a reputation as a fighter against organized crime and gangland violence, which quickly won him favor with the Republican old guard.

Although Stassen was always an articulate internationalist in foreign affairs, his middle-of-the-road positions on domestic issues helped him to win election in 1938 as Minnesota's youngest governor at age thirty-one. This election helped revitalize the Republican Party in Minnesota and by the mid-1940s encouraged the state's Farmer-Labor Party to join with the Democratic Party to form the DFL.

After the U.S. entered World War II, Stassen resigned his gubernatorial office and volunteered to serve as a naval officer on the staff of Admiral William "Bull" Halsey. While he was Minnesota's governor, Stassen had voiced great enthusiasm for building an international organization that, unlike Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations, could prevent war in the future.

Stassen's internationalist views were not typical of politicians from the Midwest; thus in early 1945 President Franklin Roosevelt selected Stassen, who took leave from Halsey's staff, as one of seven individuals to represent the United States in San Francisco in the writing of the United Nations Charter. This was a great opportunity for Stassen to work for a successful peace following the conclusion of a successful war against fascism.

Fresh from this heady triumph of

STEVE WERLE

STASSEN

AGAIN

helping to launch the United Nations, Stassen returned to his naval duties in August 1945 to learn that he and another senior officer were put in charge of leading the efforts to locate and liberate all the surviving Allied prisoners in POW camps in Japan following Japan's surrender. At the time, there was uncertainty among both the Japanese and the American military as to who was in charge in Japan. That was no problem for Stassen, however. Standing well over six feet tall, he grabbed one obstinate Japanese colonel by the collar and told him, "I have no need for orders from Tokyo to do what I want to with these American prisoners."

A war hero, an internationalist, and a forceful voice for moderate Republican positions on domestic issues, Stassen by 1948 was also a newsmaker who made the covers of national magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Look*, and *Life*. To better prepare himself for higher office, Stassen travelled the world with the intention of continuing his efforts to achieve lasting peace. That was not going to happen, however, in the growing Cold War between the Soviet Union of Josef Stalin and his successors and the presidencies of first Harry Truman and then Dwight Eisenhower.

Stassen threw his hat into the ring in

1948 running for the Republican nomination for president. The party's Eastern Establishment refused to take Stassen seriously as a candidate and after a disastrous radio debate with Thomas Dewey in which Stassen came across as unprepared and unready for high office, he accepted the presidency of the University of Pennsylvania.

After Dwight Eisenhower was elected in 1952, Stassen held several high positions in the Eisenhower administration, but he succeeded in alienating both Vice President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and soon found that he had no support from the president and resigned. Despite these setbacks, Stassen continued to campaign for world peace and for the U.S. presidency and a variety of other offices. Stassen never won any of these many elections, but as a candidate he was assured that he would be heard on the issues that mattered to him. The press and his party paid attention to Harold Stassen even if the voters chose not to.

Steve Werle teaches social studies at a Minneapolis high school and is the author of *An American Gothic: The Life and Times and Legacy of William Gates LeDuc*. Openly sympathetic to Stassen, Werle accurately identifies where Stassen stumbled in his work with the Republican Party and its senior officials. The value of this biography is the way that Werle tells Stassen's story in detail and without glossing over his subject's political shortcomings.

Stassen accomplished much in his work with the U.N. Charter and the POWs in Japan, but this is mostly a book about politics, especially Republican Party politics. Aside from the opening chapter, very little insight is provided about Stassen's personal or family life. We know a great deal about where Stassen stood on particular issues but not so much about Stassen's personality or how he dealt with life outside of politics.

John M. Lindley is the editor of Ramsey County History.

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This photograph of Chief Sitting Bull was made at the photography studio of Alfred Palmquist and Peder T. Jurgens in St. Paul in 1884. The signature at the bottom of the cabinet card adds to the value and importance of the photo. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress. For more on Sitting Bull and Palmquist and Jurgens, see page 13.