

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

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 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. Copy-
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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.

CONTENTS

- 3 *When Ramsey County Politics Had an Edge*
Mass vs. Williams
Paul D. Nelson
- 13 *Long-Ago Snapshots*
When Sitting Bull Was Photographed in St. Paul
Leo J. Harris
- 19 *Carnies and Calamities*
A Carnival Midway on the Island at Phalen Park, 1903–1908
Janice R. Quick
- 24 *Book Reviews*
- 27 *Letters to the Editor*

*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

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

Long-Ago Snapshots

When Sitting Bull Was Photographed in St. Paul

Leo J. Harris

During the final decades of the nineteenth century certain Native American leaders were the subject of newspaper headlines. These leaders included two of the most prominent chiefs, Geronimo, the Chiricahua Apache, and Sitting Bull, the Hunkpapa Lakota.

Sitting Bull was identified as a symbol, the embodiment of a shared dream of freedom by his followers. By others he was admired, hated, ridiculed, and praised.¹ He was indeed the subject of great curiosity of many Americans. This curiosity took many forms. For example, the trains on the way to the 1883 “golden spike” ceremony of the Northern Pacific Railroad stopped in Bismarck, North Dakota. While there, Sitting Bull conducted “a thriving business, selling his autograph for \$1.50 each to both foreign and domestic dignitaries.”² Just what did Sitting Bull look like? This article will tell about how and why photographs of Sitting Bull were taken in St. Paul to help satisfy this curiosity.

By further way of introduction, nineteenth-century photography of Native Americans had gone through a number of stages. Early photographers would occasionally accompany federal government survey teams and other expeditions, exploring and investigating sites in the western United States and Alaska. Photographic images in this genre included fanciful to authentic views of the Native American, and were often published in official reports. Other early photographers in the field were interested in documenting the grim aftermath of skirmishes between Native Americans and the army, but because of the limitations of early photographic technology they were limited to photographs of Native American tribal leaders and combatants, and battle sites.³

One of the earliest St. Paul photographers was Joel Emmons Whitney

(1822–1886) who began work with the daguerreotype process, and then continued as a wet-plate photographer. After the so-called Sioux Uprising (now referred to as the U. S. Dakota War of 1862), there was a great demand for photographs of the principal Native American participants, and Whitney sold sepia toned carte-de-visite images of these Dakota Indians, as well as of the soldiers who helped to suppress the conflict.⁴

In the 1880s Americans were obsessed with collecting these 4” by 6” cardboard-backed celebrity portraits. Many such photographs were produced and collected including, by way of example, those of the actress Sarah Bernhardt and the writer Oscar Wilde.⁵

Another early Minnesota photographer of this era was Benjamin Franklin Upton (1818–ca.1899), who operated out of St. Anthony and St. Paul, and during the 1862–1865 period, specialized in photographs of the Native American people living in the Upper Midwest.

Later photographers, during the 1870s and 1880s, would primarily take studio photographs of Native Americans, but occasionally they would go to the field to record actual domestic life, ceremonies, games, and work of the tribal people and their families. Palmquist & Jurgens of St. Paul were among these photographers, and their work will be considered later in this article.

Early in the twentieth century many professional photographers were described as “pictorialists.” “The intent of this genre was to emulate the look and feel-

ing of *impressionism*, the major art movement of the time, by experimenting with light, focus, perspective, [and] tint. . . .” Such photographs were essentially contrived or posed, using clothing and personal articles of the past. Arguably the best known pictorialist was Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952), a native of Wisconsin. The technical and artistic quality of his work is generally considered to be of the highest caliber. Curtis was said to have been driven by something between melancholy and acquisitiveness, to capture the image of Native Americans before they “vanished.”⁶ Another photographer, Royal W. (Roland) Reed (1864–1934), who was active in Wisconsin and Minnesota, was also engaged in this genre.⁷

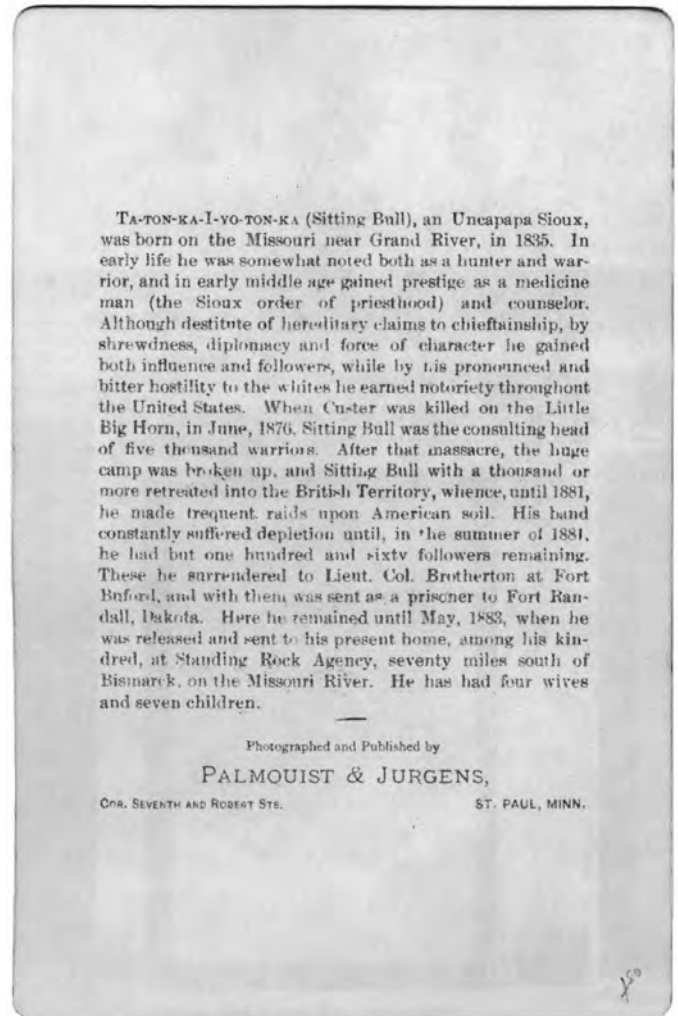
During the same time, finally, the Native American was a popular subject of tourist-oriented photography, appearing on items such as cartes-de-visite, stereopticon views, posters, travel brochures, slides, and especially on picture postcards. Such photographs would usually pose the Native American people in local places and as participants in events.⁸ Roland Reed issued a popular set of postcards based upon his earlier photographs of the Blackfeet and Ojibwe.⁹ Perhaps the most highly recognizable Minnesota Native American postcard photographs are of Ga-Be-Nah-Wonce, an Ojibwe man, also known as John Smith, of Cass Lake.¹⁰ He supposedly was 137 years old at the time of his death.¹¹

Sitting Bull

Having been pursued by the U.S. Army and exiled in Canada for more than five years following the battle of the Little Big Horn, Sitting Bull surrendered to the authorities at Fort Buford, Dakota Territory, on July 19, 1881. His surrender prompted national attention; the public was interested in viewing his likeness.



This is one of several signed cabinet-card photographs of Sitting Bull made by photographers Alfred Palmquist and Peder T. Jurgens in St. Paul in 1884. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



On the reverse side of Sitting Bull's cabinet-card photos, the photographers included a biographical profile of the great warrior. Photo courtesy of Leo J. Harris.

While under military custody numerous photographers eagerly sought to obtain images of Sitting Bull which might be marketed nationally. Nebraska photographer William R. Cross has been credited with taking, at Fort Randall, the earliest images (1878) of Sitting Bull. A later cabinet card image (1881) by photographer Orlando Goff shows Sitting Bull holding both a club and a pipe. Most of these early images did little to supply a realistic Sitting Bull. They normally were in a contrived pose, usually within a studio setting.¹²

Sitting Bull was born in 1834 on the banks of the Grand River, within the boundaries of the then Great Sioux Reservation, some 45 miles southwest of the Standing Rock Indian Agency in

Dakota Territory. By the early 1880s Sitting Bull had become one of the most famous Native American chiefs. In the previous decade he was a leader of the Hunkpapa Lakotas. His war parties were active, attacking, among others, various Northern Pacific railroad crews. In 1876 George Custer's Seventh Cavalry attacked Sitting Bull's camp on the Little Bighorn River, with consequences well known to most readers. As noted above, Sitting Bull subsequently fled to Canada, but he returned and surrendered to the authorities. As a prisoner of war he would, for the rest of his life, be a ward of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Sitting Bull was required to live and farm at the Standing Rock reservation in Dakota Territory. While he was there, he came under the jurisdiction of Major James

McLaughlin (1842–1923), who was the local Indian Agent.¹³

In the Lakota culture of Sitting Bull's time, men commonly recounted details of their deeds in warfare verbally and through dance. These autobiographical deeds were also recorded in stylized drawings on clothing, tipi liners, hides, and on paper. Sitting Bull's output of such arts covered the period between 1870 and 1883, and two buffalo robes and at least fifty drawings have survived.¹⁴

On several occasions Sitting Bull was permitted to leave the reservation. He made two visits to Saint Paul. The first began on March 14, 1884. He was accompanied by his nephew and one of his wives, by Major McLaughlin, and also by an interpreter.

His second visit began on September 4, 1884. This time he was accompanied by Colonel Alvaren Allen (1822–ca.1908), the owner of the Merchant Hotel in St. Paul where Sitting Bull had stayed during his first visit. Allen was also a promoter, owner of a cartage service, and a former mayor of St. Anthony (later to become a part of Minneapolis).¹⁵ Allen had obtained permission from Interior Secretary Henry M. Teller to take Sitting Bull and his party to various American cities for educational purposes. Secretary Teller was convinced that a tour through the United States under the management of thoroughly responsible parties would do Sitting Bull good, and, through him, would do more to break down the Sioux antipathy for the white man's way of life than any amount of prejudice or argument.¹⁶ Events which occurred on the latter visit have previously been described in *Ramsey County History*.¹⁷

While on this tour, in Philadelphia to be specific, Sitting Bull was permitted, through an interpreter, to make a speech in which he spoke of the needs of his people for education and material assistance. Apparently the interpreter included a lurid “first person” account of the slaying of Custer and his troops at the Little Big Horn.¹⁸ The Secretary of the Interior was not amused, and the tour was promptly ended.¹⁹

Except for these tours, Sitting Bull remained on the Standing Rock reservation. By that time Sitting Bull was clearly established as a notable figure among Native Americans. Buffalo Bill Cody quickly recognized how to take advantage of this celebrity status. After lobbying the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Cody entered into a contract with Sitting Bull on June 6, 1885. This contract provided for a variety of cash payments and expense reimbursements for Sitting Bull and his party. In return, Sitting Bull agreed to travel for a four-month period with the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. During this four-month period, nearly a million



In the early 1880s, the studio of photographers Alfred Palmquist and Peder Jurgens was on the second floor of the building that housed the Pacific Steam Marble and Granite Works located at the corner of Seventh and Cedar Streets in St. Paul. Later that decade, the studio relocated to the corner of Seventh and Robert Streets. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

people witnessed the participation of Sitting Bull in Cody's extravaganza.²⁰ The contract provided that Sitting Bull was to have the sole right to sell his own photographs and autographs.²¹ This contract apparently was the only one of its kind ever authorized.²²

On both visits to St. Paul, Chief Sitting Bull was treated as a curiosity and he, as a tourist, visited many places and events, and met many people. Among other activities, he sat for his portrait at the studio of a St. Paul photographer.²⁴ That photography studio was Palmquist & Jurgens. The remainder of this article will limit itself to a consideration of that single event.

By 1890 Sitting Bull was once again in retirement at the Standing Rock Reservation. Because of his expressed interest in the Ghost Dance beliefs of the Lakota people, he was ordered to be

“That is a daisy of a dish; gimme another plate . . .”

Sitting Bull was quoted on his second visit to Saint Paul in 1884 as saying “Bouka boofa tookash lata nee-nee . . .,” concerning the serving to him of a dish of ice cream.²³ Supposedly this phrase, quoted by a *St. Paul Daily Globe* reporter, was translated as “That is a daisy of a dish; gimme another plate. . . .” This author doubts if such words existed in the Lakota language. Press coverage of the events surrounding Native Americans was, at this time, mostly hype, of the most demeaning sort, and this story was obviously no exception.

Studio Photography in St. Paul, 1880–1890

In the decade of the 1880s there were ten studio photographers, more or less, in downtown St. Paul. Many were only open for business for several years. Most had one or, at most, two employees, and many of the studios were on the second floor, up steep staircases. Customers were posed, stiffly, against theatrical backdrops, and the resulting photographs were known as “cabinet cards.” Subjects were dressed in clothing appropriate to the occasion, such as Christening gowns, military uniforms, and wedding clothing.

Cabinet cards are photographic prints mounted on card stock. Often known as cabinet cards because they could be propped up and displayed in the home,

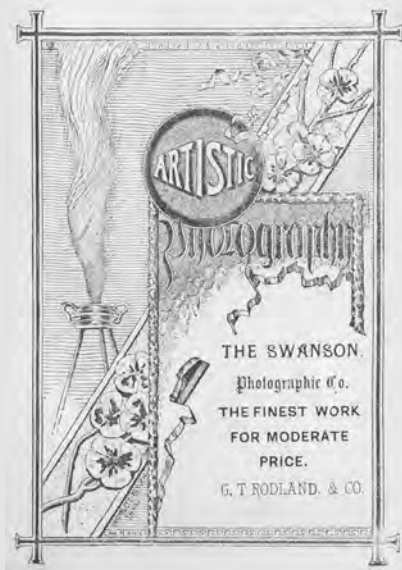
often in a cabinet. Cabinet card photographs were for many years actually albumen prints. This photographic process was invented in the late 1850s in England, and was the first economically possible process which produced prints from glass negatives. “Albumen” describes the print because the albumen found in egg whites was used to bind the photographic chemicals to the paper. Cabinet cards in St. Paul usually carried an advertisement concerning the photographer on the rear side, and his name and/or logo or emblem on the base of the front side of the card.

These St. Paul studio photographers, with street addresses (when known) and dates in business, included:

- Browns (Joseph H. Brown), 438 Wabasha Street (1886–1889).
- Essery (Robert W. Essery), 211 East Seventh Street (1873–1885).
- Hooker (Alfred E. Hooker), 10 East Third Street (1883–1889)
- Koestler Bros. (William Koestler), (1883–1893)
- Palmquist & Jurgens (Alfred U. Palmquist and Peder T. Jurgens), 225 East Seventh Street (1873–1900)
- Schlattman Bros. (E. T. and Henry F. Schlattman), 271 East Seventh Street (1883–1888)
- Harry Sheperd, 93 East Seventh Street (1888–1897)
- T.M. Swem (Thomas Swem), 419 or 438 Wabasha (1882–1919)
- S.M. Taylor (Schuyler Taylor), Seven Corners or 134 West Seventh Street (1883–1900)
- Zimmerman (Charles Alfred Zimmerman), 9 West Third Street (1869–1908).



This is the elegant advertising that photographer Charles A. Zimmerman printed on the reverse sides of the cabinet cards he made and sold at his studio. He deliberately included reproductions of the gold medals that his photos had won in competitions. Photo courtesy of Leo J. Harris.



The reverse-side advertising of the Swanson Photographic Company on its cabinet cards emphasized that studio’s artistic talents. Photo courtesy of Leo J. Harris.



African-American Harry Sheperd was another photographer in St. Paul in the 1880s whose work won awards. He sold photos to customers from a wide range of social classes in the city. Photo courtesy of Leo J. Harris.

Perhaps the most notable photographic studio was that of Charles Alfred Zimmerman. He was employed by pioneer St. Paul photographer Joel Emmons Whitney, became Whitney’s partner in 1870, and purchased Whitney’s entire studio business in 1871. This was the largest photography gallery in Minnesota and offered, in addition to cabinet cards, stereographs, and portraits in oil, watercolor, India ink and crayon.

Harry Sheperd was likely the first African-American photographer in Minnesota. His studio was successful in building a clientele that included both black and white customers.

The most famous subject of Palmquist & Jurgens, who are the photographers discussed in the accompanying article, was Sitting Bull. The Internet describes dozens of his posed portraits, many in museum collections or libraries, and lists a number for sale. Also for sale to ephemera collectors are dozens of Palmquist & Jurgens cabinet card portraits of ordinary Minnesotans.

Source: Directory of Minnesota Photographers, Minnesota Historical Society website, www.mmhns.org/people/photographers/, accessed July 27, 2014.

arrested. A fierce gun battle ensued on December 15, 1890, in which the old chief, seven of his party, and six Indian policemen were killed.²⁵

Palmquist & Jurgens

Alfred U. Palmquist (1850–1922) was an immigrant from Finland whose photography studio in St. Paul, under various partnership names, was in business from 1873 through 1900. An article in the *St. Paul Daily Globe* had this praise for Palmquist:

As nature is duplicated by the mirror so is the human feature transferred to paper by Alfred Palmquist (of Palmquist & Jurgens) whose photographing establishment on Seventh street, corner Robert street, is largely patronized because of the well known excellence of its work. Mr. Palmquist is a thorough artist, and his products vie in finish and beauty with the very best products of the East. In the essentials of abundant light, first-class artists and of convenience and apparatus for taking all kinds of pictures, large or small, the establishment is well nigh peerless.²⁶



A line drawing of Alfred Palmquist that appeared in the St. Paul Daily Globe, March 5, 1889. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

The partner of Palmquist from about 1882 to 1888 was Peder T. Jurgens (1844–1910), a one-time deputy collector of Internal Revenue. Not much else is known about him. Palmquist & Jurgens specialized in photographing prominent St. Paul families. One album we reviewed, for example, contained six cabinet card photographs taken in 1887 of Theodore Hamm, the brewer, his wife Louisa, and various poses of his daughters, Louisa, Wilhelmina, and Emma.

Cabinet cards are photographic prints mounted on card stock, which made the prints stronger and more durable than the photographic print alone. They came to be called “cabinet cards” because they could be easily propped up and dis-

played in the home, especially in a cabinet in the parlor.

Among other promotional efforts, the firm of Palmquist & Jurgens took advantage of newspaper advertising to promote its business. Advertisements offered their photographs for \$1.00 per dozen.²⁷ They also specialized in what were known as oil portrait sketches, in which photographs taken from life were reproduced on canvas and colored by artists.²⁸ In addition, in 1883, the firm published and sold maps, including one of Yellowstone National Park.²⁹

Sitting Bull Photographed by Palmquist & Jurgens

During the March 14, 1884, visit to St. Paul, Sitting Bull and his party visited the photography studios of Palmquist & Jurgens, at 225 East Seventh Street. It is reported that, at the time, a dozen glass plate negatives were taken there of Sitting Bull, and one of him with his nephew, One Bull.³⁰ It is clear that this was not a chance visit. In fact, Sitting Bull was actually permitted to enter into a contract with Palmquist & Jurgens, reportedly giving them the exclusive right to sell these twelve photographs, finished in the form of cabinet cards, for a one-year period. It is also certain that Sitting Bull was given a number of copies of the photographs, for him to either give away or to sell. Apparently Sitting Bull scrupulously refused to let anyone else make any sort of a picture of him while the contract lasted.³¹ It was only a year later, in August of 1885, when Sitting Bull was traveling with the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show in Montreal, Canada, that the William Notman & Son studio was permitted to take additional photographs of him.³²

An on-line examination of the Palmquist & Jurgens cards discloses a number of varieties. The majority are nearly identical three-quarter-length portraits, in which Sitting Bull is seated and facing to the front, holding a calumet pipe. Another is a full-length, seated image of Sitting Bull, again holding his pipe. Still another card shows Sitting Bull seated, holding a pipe to his lips. In all of these cards Sitting Bull wears fur-wrapped braids, a single feather, a fur-trimmed leather shirt or jacket,

and jewelry. A final, full-length, image shows Sitting Bull and his nephew One Bull seated, in which both men are



Peder T. Jurgens, photographer and deputy collector of Internal Revenue, in about 1895. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

holding the calumet pipe. The Library of Congress has seven of these cards in its collections.³³

A number of the Palmquist & Jurgens cabinet cards have along the lower border the signature of Sitting Bull. While he was basically illiterate and only knew a few words of English, there were other occasions on which Sitting Bull signed his autograph. Those autograph signatures closely resemble those on the cabinet cards. The reverse side of each of these cabinet cards carries a typeset summary of the life of Sitting Bull. All of the cards carry a copyright notice, dated April 1884.

In 1885 Sitting Bull cabinet cards were sold by Palmquist & Jurgens for one dollar each. Today the cards sell, at prestige auction houses, for between one thousand dollars and twenty-five hundred dollars apiece. Not a bad investment to have made!

And, as a footnote to the above information, it is probable that one or more

of the Sitting Bull cabinet cards were used by the Native American portrait painter, Henry H. Cross (1844–1918), as a basis to produce a portrait of Sitting Bull. This particular painting, and some one hundred other Native American portraits, were commissioned to be added to the collection of Native American

portraits then owned and exhibited by Thomas Barlow Walker.³⁴ Walker was the founder of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

The cabinet card photographs of Sitting Bull taken by Palmquist & Jurgens were among those other photographs which curious Americans eagerly

sought out to discover what this newsworthy person actually looked like. To this writer, these images of Sitting Bull depict a rather forlorn figure, awkwardly facing the camera as if he was pondering the mammoth changes which were occurring in his world.

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Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
323 Landmark Center
75 West Fifth Street
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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.