

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

Volume 50, Number 2

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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

# Letters to the Editor

## More on Brings and Company

Marcia Kremer's article on *Brings and Company* in the Spring 2015 issue prompted Teri Vetsch and author Patrick Hill to contact the editor regarding the tragic death of St. Paul firefighter Captain Michael A. Kane following the fire at the *Brings and Company* building on May 30, 1911. Teri Vetsch is a granddaughter of Michael Kane and Patrick Hill wrote a lengthy article about the fire and Kane's subsequent demise in the January 2014 issue of *Community Reporter*, a local newspaper serving the *West End, Downtown, and Fort Snelling* neighborhoods. In "St. Paul Fallen Firefighter—Captain Michael Kane," Patrick Hill recounts how paid firefighters belonging to Hope Engine Company 3, which was based at the fire house at the corner of Leech and Ramsey Streets responded to the fire that broke out at *Brings and Company* the morning of May 30, 1911. The *Brings* building, at 314–318 West Seventh at Ramsey, contained hay and feed and was located roughly a block away from Engine Company 3, which responded quickly to the fire bell. We know from Marcia Kremer's article that a large wall of burning hay bales fell on Captain Kane and Lieutenant Andrew Davis while they were attempting to put out the flames. Trapped when the fiery bales tumbled down on them, Davis was quickly rescued but Kane was knocked unconscious and he took longer to rescue. Rushed to nearby St. Joseph's Hospital, Kane died on June 6, according to his death certifi-



Captain Michael A. Kane (1861–1911) of the Saint Paul Fire Department in about 1900. Photo by J. E. Jones. Photo courtesy of Teri Vetsch.



A photo of Michael Kane's orphaned daughters, Catherine, right, and Mary Margaret, in late 1912, shortly after their mother died. Photo courtesy of Teri Vetsch.

cate, from his burns and pneumonia resulting from all the noxious smoke and fumes he had breathed while trapped under the bales. Captain Kane left a wife, Mary, and two daughters, Catherine and Mary Margaret. The St. Paul Firemen's Relief Fund provided financial assistance to both girls until they graduated from high school.

## We Goofed

In the Fall 2014 issue, we published a photo in Anne Cowie's reminiscences about her time working for RCHS in the late 1970s. The photo (on page 11) showed Elizabeth Musser, Carl Drake, Ron Hubbs, and Frank Marzitelli about to do ceremonial demolition work to the loading dock of the former post office in the building. The caption that accompanied the photo identified Marzitelli as then serving on the St. Paul Port Authority.

Subsequently Anne received an email from Terry Garvey, who had served as legal counsel for the Port Authority for twenty-seven years, in which he informed us that Frank Marzitelli was no longer on the board of the Port Authority in 1975 when this photo was taken. By the time this staged photo of three men in business suits and one elegant woman in a dress was shot, Marzitelli had moved on to serve as Minnesota's Commissioner of Highways. In addition, Mr. Garvey reminded us that the St. Paul Port Authority had no involvement in the restoration of the former Federal Courts Building and Post Office, which we know today as Landmark Center.

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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.*