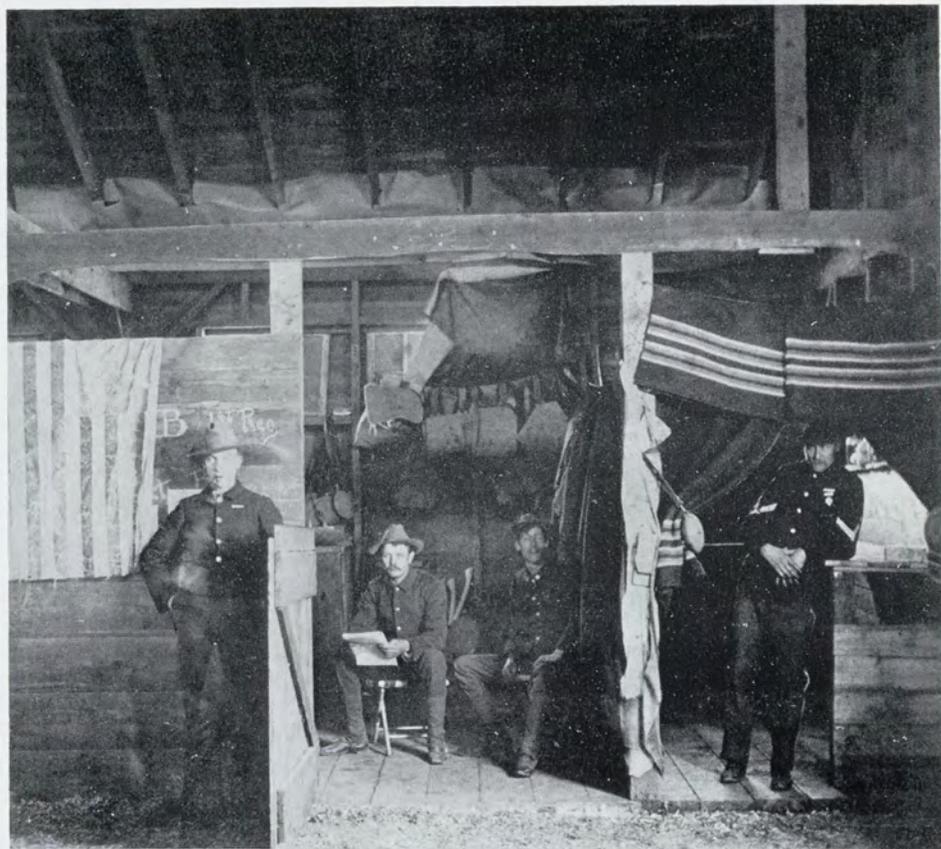
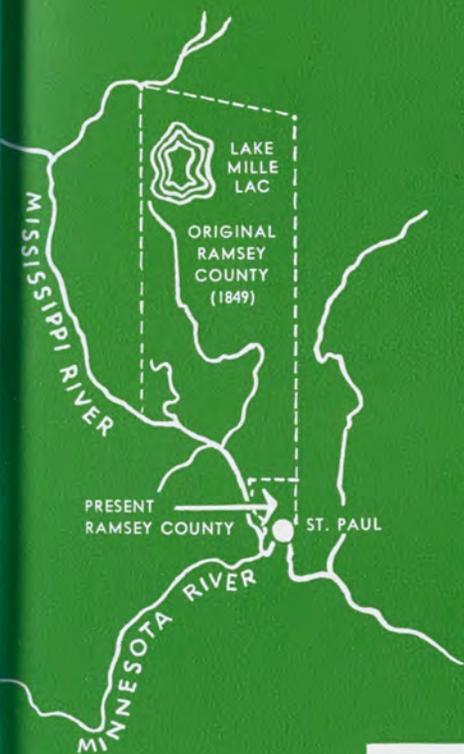


RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



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CONTENTS . . .

Fall	The Typhoid Fever Epidemic of 1898 Herbert F. R. Plass, M.D.	Page 3
1966	Forty-Five Years as a School Board Member Robert M. Jordan	Page 9
Volume 3		
Number 2	A Sioux Medicine Dance And a Perilous Journey Ellen Rice Hollinshead	Page 12
	Forgotten Pioneers—II	Page 17

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ment of the Minnesota Historical Society and the editor is grateful for the assistance of Eugene Becker, picture curator, and Dorothy Gimmestad, his assistant. The picture of Benjamin F. Hoyt is from the Territorial Pioneers' collection and published in the History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society—1854-1910 by Darwin S. Hall.

ON THE COVER: *Minnesota's National Guard regiments mustered into federal service in 1898, at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, were encamped at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds, renamed Camp Ramsey. Quarters, of course, were makeshift, with most of the troops bedding down in the stock barns. Pictured on the cover are men from Company B of the Thirteenth Minnesota Volunteer Regiment.*

Forgotten Pioneers—II



RAMSEY COUNTY has had its share of famous pioneers whose names fill the pages of the history books. But there have been many more men and women who have been almost forgotten but who also made outstanding contributions and left their names upon streets, parks, buildings, and in the official records. The following article is the second in a new feature in Ramsey County History, a series of sketches of "forgotten pioneers."

BENJAMIN F. HOYT

Few pioneer churchmen who settled in Minnesota during its earliest years possessed the business acumen which evidently blessed Benjamin Franklin Hoyt, one of Ramsey County's "forgotten pioneers." Generally known as "Reverend B. F. Hoyt" or "Father Hoyt," he owned at one time more property in the state than any man before or since his time.

Hoyt moved west "one step at a time." Born in Norwalk, Connecticut, June 8, 1800, he worked on a farm and taught school. He moved to western New York State, then to Illinois where, in 1826, he married Elizabeth Haney. He moved his wife to Ohio, securing 400 acres of land from his grandfather's Revolutionary War bounty warrant. Two decades later, the family was living in Marietta, Illinois.

In the spring of 1848, Hoyt sent his eldest son, Lorenzo, who was twenty years old, to "the then much talked about region of St. Paul . . . to spy out the land." Convinced of a bright future in this near-wilderness, the Hoyt family journeyed in two wagons

to Galena, Illinois, and took the steamboat, "Nominee," to St. Paul.

THEY LANDED in St. Paul August 1, 1848. At first they lived in a rude log house on what afterwards was known as Baptist Hill, near the corner of Fifth and Wacouta Streets. Later, Hoyt built a dwelling of tamarack logs upon a tract of land he had purchased for \$400. The building, a double log structure, stood near the intersection of Eighth and Jackson Streets.

A devout Methodist, Hoyt was a teacher in the first Union Sunday School which met in a building at Third and St. Peter. In September, 1848, it was suspended and separate Sunday Schools were established by Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists.

St. Paul had no Methodist Episcopal Society, so Hoyt accepted an appointment as local preacher. Harriet Bishop, the pioneer schoolmistress, noted in her diary that he preached and . . . "occasionally broke the bread of life to the listening few. When the number of disciples had increased to five or six, on Nov. 9, 1848, a prayer meeting was established. Hon. H. M. Rice made



First Methodist Church, St. Paul, in 1849. Also called the Market Street Church, this was the first Protestant church built in St. Paul.

the liberal offer of \$200 and ten downtown lots towards the church edifice which offer was accepted.”

This was to be the Market Street Methodist Church and the first Protestant church built in St. Paul.

ALTHOUGH HOYT frequently assumed pastoral duties in the early years (he married the first white couple in St. Anthony), he always protested being called “Reverend,” saying he was not qualified to claim the title. Yet he always was closely identified with the Methodist church. He was one of the founders of Hamline University, and made several trips to New York for the university. He was present at the organizational meeting of the Oakland Cemetery Association on June 27, 1853, and he sold the association 40 acres of land at \$30 an acre.

Hoyt was a practical man. Like many early “preachers,” he had to work at other jobs during the week to feed his family and he became a real estate speculator.

So successful was he that his holdings at one time included most of the land in central Ramsey County, Red Wing and Cannon Falls. He probably sold the first tract of land disposed of in St. Paul—one acre at the corner of Ninth and Jackson Streets, sold for \$40 to W. C. Morrison. He sold

the Oakes block (worth \$150,000 by 1886) for \$1,200 and the Borup block, where the First Baptist Church is now, for \$150. By 1886, this land was worth \$100,000. He sold the Reverend C. Hobart one lot on Eighth Street for \$20. He bought the island in White Bear Lake for a small sum.

Hoyt helped organize the Sons of Temperance on May 19, 1849. (Ironically, the temperance men later lost their building to the mortgage holder and it was converted into a saloon).

He was appointed school trustee in December, 1849, and was elected in 1850 to the same position. He was elected trustee of the township board on May 6, 1850.

HOYT WAS PROMINENT in the early fairs and agricultural organizations. He was an incorporator of the Ramsey County Agricultural Society in 1852, and was present when the Territorial Agricultural Society was organized in St. Paul in January of 1854.

He was known for his charity to the Indians, Negro slaves and the poor. T. M. Newson, in *Pen Pictures of St. Paul*, mentions that after Hoyt’s death a timber cutter said that at one time Hoyt had given him orders for eight cords of wood to be delivered to poor families. His charity apparently stemmed from his faith. Once when he heard somebody question the Bible’s divine origin, he answered, “My mother told me the Bible was true, and I have never since questioned its divine origin.”

This practical and vigorous businessman, who also was gentle and benevolent, died September 3, 1875, in St. Paul.

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THE GIBBS HOUSE

Headquarters of the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue W., St. Paul, Minn.

THE Ramsey County Historical Society was founded in 1949. During the following years the Society, believing that a sense of history is of great importance in giving a new, mobile generation a knowledge of its roots in the past, acquired the 100-year-old farm home which had belonged to Heman R. Gibbs. The Society restored the Gibbs House and in 1954 opened it to the public as a museum which would depict the way of life of an early Minnesota settler.

In 1958 the Society erected a barn, behind the house, which is maintained as an agricultural museum to display the tools and other implements used by the men who broke up the prairie soil and farmed with horse and oxen.

Today, in addition to maintaining the Gibbs property, the Ramsey County Historical Society is active in the preservation of historic sites in Ramsey county, conducts tours, prepares pamphlets and other publications, organizes demonstrations of pioneer crafts and maintains a Speakers' Bureau for schools and organizations. It is the Society's hope that through its work the rich heritage of the sturdy men and women who were the pioneers of Ramsey County will be preserved for future generations.