



RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

ALL BABA

OR MORGIANA and the FORTY THIEVES.

AS PERFORMED BY
DAVID HENDERSON
American Extravaganza Co.
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1. I wonder if dreams come true. A TYPICAL NIGHTMARE 4
 2. I'm a detective. 4
 3. Laughing Song. 4
 4. Walking Telephone. 4
 5. I'm now a Millionaire. 4
 6. Cobbler's Song & Chorus. 5
 7. Happy Rhymes. 4
 8. Papa's pants will soon fit Willie. 3
 9. I'll be Old Too. 4

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ON THE COVER: "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" was one of the musical extravaganzas of the late Nineteenth Century which often depended upon feminine charm for their appeal. Reproduced is a portion of the cover for one of the musical numbers. From the private collection of Kenneth Carley, editor of Minnesota History.

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Velocipede Races in Armory Hall

Bernheimer Block Is Gone But Memories Linger On



THE Bernheimer Block on East Kellogg Boulevard in downtown St. Paul was the oldest section of the Tilden Produce plant, recently torn down to make room for the new YWCA. This old building, erected in 1859, and shown above the year it was built, had more historical interest than any other building on what once was called Third Street, but now is Kellogg Boulevard.

Armory Hall, where Josias King* and other members of the Pioneer Guard enlisted at the start of the Civil War, was on the third floor, and though the hall generally was used for military drill, it was also the scene of many gay parties. For instance, on July 26, 1860, the Dubuque "Grays" visited St. Paul and were entertained by the Pioneer Guard with a grand ball at the Armory. Church organizations often used the hall; on October 14, 1860, there was a fair and supper for the benefit of the St. Joseph Orphan Home. Occasionally the hall was used as a theater; in May of 1864, the Bohemian Glass Blowers exhibited their work there for two weeks, and the following

*Credited as being the first man from Minnesota to enlist in the Union Army. He and St. Paul's Pioneer Guard became part of the famous First Minnesota Infantry Regiment.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The role a business building served in the life of a community, and the character it adds to that community, often is as important as the people living there. Certainly, buildings such as the Bernheimer Block described here, serve the community just as truly as the people who use the building. Yet, when an old building is torn down, we not always are visited with the same sense of loss as we might be in the case of a church or private building. Whether the tearing down of an old building is necessary or needless, the loss still is there, however, in that a physical reminder of the city's history has disappeared.

This story about the Bernheimer Block came from the Junior Pioneer Association which has issued a wide variety of fascinating monographs concerning the history of St. Paul and Ramsey County.

month a magician, Professor Karl Kahr, presented his "Soiree de Magique" for several days.

One of the more hilarious episodes was the introduction of the velocipedes, the old high-wheel bikes, which were first demonstrated in the hall on February 12, 1869. A big crowd was on hand and many were willing to try the new contraption. Between the novice riders and the enthusiastic help of the spectators there were plenty of spills. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that at one time nearly half of St. Paul was piled up at one end of the hall.

LOTS OF bruises resulted but luckily no blood was spilled, and it was predicted that the "veloces" would become popular if the roads could be improved. Within a month the riders were proficient enough to hold races (speed trials). A black circle was painted on the floor, 12 times around being equal to one-fourth mile. Nine men competed. O. P. Lanpher won with a time of 1 minute and 25 seconds.

In May, 1870, the hall was leased by the St. Paul Musical Society and the name changed to Music Hall. Here Society members rehearsed and held their social affairs,



Third Street, now Kellogg Boulevard, was as much a center of the life of the growing city of St. Paul as was the Bernheimer Block which stood there. Above, the street was strung with gas lights during the 1880's for the Winter Carnival. Below is Lt. Josias King; at right, one of the Bell brothers; a medal winner in the famous velocipede races which assumed the proportions of a national sport after the Civil War.



such as a banquet December 18, 1870, in observance of the Beethoven Centennial. The hall also was used as an armory by the Zouaves and by Company A, First Regiment, Minnesota National Guard. One of the first boxing matches recorded in St. Paul was also held here on July 15, 1872.

A new Music Hall at Third Street and Wabasha was dedicated on September 16,



1873. The following February, the old hall was fitted up as a gymnasium by the St. Paul Gymnastic Society. Twice a year the society staged a public exhibition. Ladies were admitted to membership in 1878 and the gym reserved for them from 2 to 5 p.m. every day. George A. Weitbrecht, then a St. Paul High School teacher, was one of the most active members, and served as president for several years.

FROM 1873 to 1876 the YMCA had a reading room in the building, and the Women's Christian Association also met there. The 1869 City Directory lists the general offices of the newly-organized St. Paul and Chicago Railroad as being located in the same building, probably on the second floor.

About 1880 the gym closed and the space was converted to office use. During the middle 1880s, when Third Street was in its heyday, lawyers, real estate and insurance men had offices on the upper floors. W. W. Erwin, a prominent lawyer; A. F. Knight, an architect who designed many of St. Paul's older buildings, and Crawford Livingston, financier, were among the tenants.

AMONG FIRMS who occupied space were such well-remembered names as the Boston One Price Clothing Company; Garland Trunk Company, and Raudenbush Piano Company. During this period there was a great deal of moving around as new buildings were erected. By 1900 Third Street was almost completely lined with produce houses, and the Minnesota Cold Storage Company used the building.

The Bernheimer brothers, who erected the original three-story building, were New York merchants, and never lived in St. Paul. They bought huge tracts of Minnesota land, and their name still can be seen on several plat additions to the city. A street was named in their honor but the name later was changed to Martin, and after that to Central Avenue. By 1884 the building was owned by a Mr. Lockhardt of Philadelphia. W. A. Tilden bought it about 1910, added a fourth story, and enlarged it to the east.

Those high-wheeled bicycles may have earned their initial popularity as the result of those hilarious indoor races in Armory Hall, but the sport soon spread to the out-of-doors, as these two youngsters, clutching their "veloces" in dead earnest, demonstrate above about 1900.





THE GIBBS HOUSE

Headquarters of the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul, Minnesota.

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 farm 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. In 1966, the Society moved to its museum property a one-room rural schoolhouse, dating from the 1870's. The white frame school came from near Milan, Minnesota. Now restored to the period of the late 1890's, the school actually is used for classes and meetings. In the basement beneath the school building, the Society has its office, library and collections. In 1968, the Society acquired from the University of Minnesota the use of the white barn adjoining the Society's property. Here is housed a collection of carriages and sleighs which once belonged to James J. Hill.

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.