



RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

ALL BABA

OR MORGIANA and the FORTY THIEVES.

AS PERFORMED BY DAVID HENDERSON

American Extravaganza Co.

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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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Forgotten Pioneers.....VI



DURING the years from 1849 to 1858 when Minnesota was a territory, St. Paul served as the collecting point for the lively trade in furs which extended throughout Minnesota and into what is now Manitoba, Canada.

Each year trains of the famed Red River ox carts passed back and forth on the month-long, 448-mile trip between Pembina and St. Paul. They hauled furs and buffalo robes to the steamboat landing at the foot of what is now Jackson Street in St. Paul, and supplies and trade goods out into the wilderness.

Well-known to the ox cart drivers, and to later generations of "Sunday drivers," was one of Ramsey County's "forgotten pioneers," Stephen Desnoyer or Denoyer, who operated a saloon and hotel on what is now the site of the Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children.

Desnoyer was well-situated. From the downtown steamboat landing on the Mississippi River, the ox cart trail ran west, past the present Cathedral of St. Paul, along St. Anthony Avenue and up the east bank of the Mississippi to Main Street in St. Anthony.

Sources

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H. F. Koeper, *Historic St. Paul Buildings*, 1964.
Thomas McLean Newson, *Pen Pictures of St. Paul and Biographical Sketches of Old Settlers*, 1886, page 432.
George E. Warner and Charles M. Foote, *History of Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis*, 1881, page 366.
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Minnesota Historical Society *Scrapbooks*: Vol. I, page 52, obituaries in English and French, December 5, 1877.
Work Projects Administration, Writers' Project, *Annals of Minnesota: Minneapolis Tribune*, July 20, 1869.

RAMSEY COUNTY has had its share of famous pioneers whose names fill the pages of the history books. But there also 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 sixth in a series of sketches of "forgotten pioneers," a special feature in Ramsey County History.

STEPHEN DESNOYER

The trail passed within a block of present-day Desnoyer Park School, Desnoyer Park, an area bounded by the river and Marshall, Cleveland, and University Avenues, was named after Desnoyer, who was the first settler of that area.

Desnoyer was born in St. Jean d'Iberville, Quebec, on May 15, 1805. When he was eighteen years old, he moved to Oswego, New York, where he farmed for four years. He spent another four years in St. Louis, Missouri, dealing in clothing, lumber, and grain, and three years in Dubuque, Iowa, dealing in wood. He came to St. Paul in 1845 and bought his 320-acre claim on the river bank from an old Canadian fur trader, Donald McDonald, for a barrel of whiskey and two Indian guns.

Stephen Desnoyer's inn is shown at the top of the page as it looked in 1894. Below are Red River ox carts and their drivers camped on the prairie near what is now the University of Minnesota campus. Ox cart trains such as this one often stopped at Desnoyer's.



That same year, Desnoyer built a large frame building which was for many years his home as well as a saloon and hotel. It was commonly known as the "Halfway House," as it stood halfway between St. Paul and St. Anthony on the ox cart trail. The trail later became a stage coach road. According to the *Minneapolis Tribune*, the "Halfway House" was popular as a "place of public resort, especially for Sunday driving."

Though almost no details of Stephen Desnoyer's life have been found, he seems to have spent it accommodating travelers and trading with the Indians and the soldiers from Fort Snelling. He seems to have been a frugal man who held onto his money, for he apparently left an estate of \$150,000. He died December 4, 1877, of an apoplectic attack two weeks after being thrown from a buggy.

Silver Lake Childhood--Revisited

EDITOR'S NOTE: The story of the early years of North St. Paul, carried in the spring 1968 issue of Ramsey County History, has brought a letter from William Finley Morgan, now 90 years old and living in Plandome, Long Island, New York, and Boston, Massachusetts. He comments on how the pictures and the article revived for him happy memories of childhood days spent at Silver Lake. The letter was written to his nephew Charles M. Burns, 4204 Sunnyside Road, Edina, Minnesota. In the letter, Mr. Morgan's mention of "your mother" refers to his sister, Florence, now Mrs. W. H. Burns of Duluth, and Charles Burns' mother. Mr. Morgan's recollections add a very personal dimension to the history of North St. Paul and Silver Lake.

During the 1880s, Mr. Morgan's father, Theodore Morgan, bought three acres of land on the east shore of Silver Lake from Captain Henry Anson Castle. This was the first property there which Castle sold, according to Charles Burns.

William Morgan grew up in the area, graduated in engineering from the University of Minnesota, soon moved to the East where he since has lived.

He writes:

"How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood." *Ramsey County History* brings such a flood of memories! The cover picture looks as though it might have been made from an old photograph. The dock, sailing canoes and launch, and even the little girl look familiar.

"We first moved into a little red cottage close to that dock. Your mother was smaller — maybe four years old. In the spring she announced far and wide that we were going to 'Sliver (sic) Lake the next of May.' She had never seen a lake. When we arrived she walked straight out from the shore. My mother's screams brought me on the run.



This Silver Lake scene is from the cover of the Spring, 1968, issue of *Ramsey County History*.

When I got to your mother she was up to her waist, heading due north.

"I used to make canvas canoes, with sail, and we sat just as in the picture .

"The launch was steam, of course, with kerosene for fuel. To start, the boiler had to be pumped full of air under some pressure. The owner 'allowed' me to do that. By the time the boiler was full, I was empty, and entirely out of air. As a reward, he let me run the boat while he visited with the passengers, especially the pretty ones.

"My fun, in coming back, was to head full speed — maybe five miles per hour — for the end of the dock. It gave satisfactory jitters to the owner and passengers, and I then made a quick 'S' turn to the side of the dock, reversing the engine. Sometimes it was on dead center and I had to make a grab for the crank. Luckily I still have all my fingers!

"In the cupola of the McKinney residence (pictured with the story) I used to give magic lantern shows; pins for admission. The lantern had a smelly tallow lamp, with hand-painted slides, made in Germany. A treasured Christmas present."



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.