



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. <small>A TYPICAL NIGHTMARE</small>	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. The Old Time	4

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Contents...

	Theater in Old St. Paul Frank M. Whiting	Page 3
Fall		
	Charley Pitts' Wandering Skeleton	Page 12
1968		
	Bernheimer Block Memories Linger	Page 13
Volume 5		
	Kohlman's Hotel and the Resort Era Jerome O. Schueler	Page 16
Number 2		
	Forgotten Pioneers . . . VI	Page 19
	Silver Lake Childhood — Revisited	Page 20
	A Pioneer Family's Sunday	Page 21

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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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This is how St. Anthony looked in 1872. The first suspension bridge, linking St. Anthony with Nicollet Island, can be seen in the background.

Spring Wagons and No Roads

A Pioneer Family's Sunday

By Lillie Gibbs LeVesconte

ATTENDING church services in the early 1870s was a serious undertaking, for our home was located three miles from southeast St. Anthony (now southeast Minneapolis) and no public road led from our farm into that part of town.

I recall the pleasant excitement of climbing into our two-seated spring wagon. Someone walked ahead to open and close our gate. A narrow winding road led through

In this reminiscence left to the Ramsey County Historical Society, Lillie Gibbs LeVesconte recalls some of her earliest memories of life as the daughter of a pioneer Ramsey County farmer. Born in 1865, she was the youngest child of Jane and Heman Gibbs whose farm home now is the Society's Gibbs Farm Museum.

wild land following the valley which is now part of the University of Minnesota Golf Course. Some landowners fenced their property but left bars to be opened for the convenience of the public. Three times we stopped while our hired man climbed out and let down bars and then carefully replaced them. On the way, we crossed marshy ground as well as some sandy soil.

I HAVE a vivid recollection of our horses trotting down a slope and clattering across planks of a bridge over a pretty, sparkling creek that meandered through the University campus.*

We attended the Methodist Church, a low

*Andreas Historical Atlas for 1874 shows a stream named Tuttle's Brook flowing through what is now southeast Minneapolis and onto the University campus.



white building near Central Avenue. I fail to remember the choir or the organ (perhaps I was too small to see them), but I remember some of the songs: "I'll Away, I'll Away to the Promised Land," and "Where, Oh Where Are the Hebrew Children?"

A well-remembered occasion was the Sunday we went to hear a woman evangelist, Maggie VanCot. Possibly we arrived early, for we had a seat "up front." Later the church was filled to capacity. The ushers whispered to my parents. I was requested to give my space to a grown person. With another little girl, I was taken up near the pulpit and told to sit on the floor of the platform, behind the speaker. That brought us very close to Mrs. VanCot. We were well-behaved little girls and we did not whisper. My companion showed me how many warts she had on her hands and I tried to find some on mine, but failed.

I ADMIRER Mrs. VanCot; she seemed a queenly woman. I recall how she raised her arms gracefully as she walked back and forth the length of the platform while she preached. She wore a silver-gray silk dress with a long, sweeping train. I became interested in that train; it swept past me so many times.

I had a blue veil in my hand that had been tied around my neck. The thought came to me, "Why not give my veil a ride?" That

"Some of the pleasantest scenery in the state" became accessible to many pioneer families when a road, now Como Avenue, was laid out between Lake Como and St. Anthony.

proved an interesting pastime. Placing my veil on that portion of the lady's dress, I'd watch it ride to the farther end of the platform and to the nearer side, and I'd sometimes remove it while it passed — only to let it take another ride. Mrs. Maggie VanCot was said to be an eloquent speaker and it is not likely the veil incident was noticed. I hope not.

I HAVE REASON to think the little white church was uncomfortable in winter. I recall hearing my mother say that "Mrs. R. took her chair to the stove to warm it before she sat down. Some boys giggled, and Mrs. R. scolded them right there."

Among the items in one issue of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* for the 1870s was the following:

"The people of St. Anthony are taking steps toward laying out a road from that city across the marsh to Lake Como. This will decrease the distance from that city to the lake to five miles. The road will run through some of the pleasantest scenery in the state."

The road, now Como Avenue, was soon a reality, and St. Anthony with its mills and stores and churches seemed much nearer to the people who lived out toward Lake Como and "the pleasantest scenery of the state."



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.