



# RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



Fall

1970

Volume 7

Number 2

# Ramsey County History

*Published by the* RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Editor: Virginia Brainard Kunz

Fall	W. R. Brown's Civil War Diary The War Within a War	Page 3
<b>1970</b>		
Volume 7	Ramsey County Medical Society Survives Its First 100 Years	Page 14
Number 2	Forgotten Pioneers . . . X	Page 20
	Book Review: History of A Region And A People	Page 22

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY is published semi-annually and copyrighted, 1970, by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul, Minnesota. Membership in the Society carries with it a subscription to Ramsey County History. Single issues sell for \$1.00. Correspondence concerning contributions should be addressed to the editor. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Manuscripts and other editorial material are welcomed but, since the Society is an eleemosynary institution, no payment can be made for contributions. All articles and other editorial material submitted will be carefully read and published, if accepted, as space permits.

*ON THE COVER: A field hospital during the Civil War often was literally that, with the surgeons caring for the wounded behind whatever shelter they could find. In this painting by Heisser, from a panorama of the Battle of Gettysburg, surgeons are at work behind a haystack while the battle rages in the field behind them.*

*ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Unless otherwise indicated, pictures used in this issue are from the audio-visual library of the Minnesota Historical Society. The editor is indebted to Eugene Becker and Dorothy Gimmestad, of the state historical society's audio-visual staff, for their help.*

## Book Review

# History of A Region And A People

FROM WHOLE LOG TO NO LOG by  
Edward J. Lettermann. Published, 1970, by  
Dillon Press, Inc., Minneapolis. \$8.50

Reviewed by  
Vernon R. Helmen

**F**ROM WHOLE LOG TO NO LOG re-  
counts the history of a region, the general  
area of the juncture of the Mississippi and  
Minnesota Rivers, in terms of a people, the  
Eastern Dakota, who occupied the area at  
the time of initial European contact.

The author, Edward J. Lettermann, has  
been an active contributor to local history  
for a number of years and brings considerable  
knowledge and skill to the compilation of  
this book. He is especially strong in dealing  
with the published sources, both general and  
specialized, that deal with the historic period.  
His ability to give the reader a glimpse of  
the thought and activities of a number of  
Indians and Euro-Americans, usually known  
only as familiar names, makes the 19th Cen-  
tury activities of these people more "three-  
dimensional" than is usually the case.

The central theme of the book is well  
supported with these vignettes — the theme  
that begins with the control of the region by  
the Dakota and develops the story of the  
alienation of the land from them by a variety  
of means. Lettermann avoids the error made  
by so many contemporary writers about  
minority people — that of casting his pro-  
tagonists in stark black and white. Instead,  
he has presented events with great sensitivity  
for both Indian and Euro-American.

I would wish, however, that greater atten-  
tion had been paid to the extensive literature  
dealing with the prehistory of the region in  
that chapter, titled "The Whole Log," which  
deals with the relationship of the Dakota  
and the prehistoric sites in the area. For

---

*ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Vernon R. Helmen has been  
assistant professor of Anthropology at Hamline Uni-  
versity, St. Paul, since 1966. Prior to that, he was assist-  
ant director and curator of Anthropology at the St.  
Paul Science Museum.*



The village of Black Dog, a Dakota or Sioux  
chief. This picture from the book originally  
appeared in *Harper's Weekly* for July, 1853.

example, the most recent work cited in that  
section dealing with pre-historic archeology  
is Winchells' *The Aboriginies of Minnesota*  
published in 1911. While this is a standard  
reference, a great deal of archeological re-  
search has been done and the results of this  
research published since 1911.

I would expect the work of Lloyd Wilford  
and of Elden Johnson, our most recent state  
archeologists, to have been basic to the in-  
formation included in this chapter. I would  
also have valued a chapter that describes  
the mid-20th Century condition of the Dakota  
in Minnesota — a chapter which could have  
shown the continuing vitality of Dakota  
culture at Prairie Island, at Morton, and at  
Redwood Falls, as well as the continuing  
neglect on the part of the federal govern-  
ment to fulfill the requirements of treaties  
entered into with the Dakota more than 100  
years ago. The resources are easily available,  
both published and oral, which would pri-  
marily originate with the Dakota people who  
still live in these incorporated Indian  
communities.

All in all, I find this an excellent assembly  
of heretofore scattered data. The bibliog-  
raphy lists sources not usually encountered  
and will prove useful to students. This is a  
contribution to the history of our region  
that has long been needed. It should find a  
place in every school library — especially  
in this time of growing awareness of the  
history of an area as experienced by non-  
Western people.



*Photo by Henry Hall*

### 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.