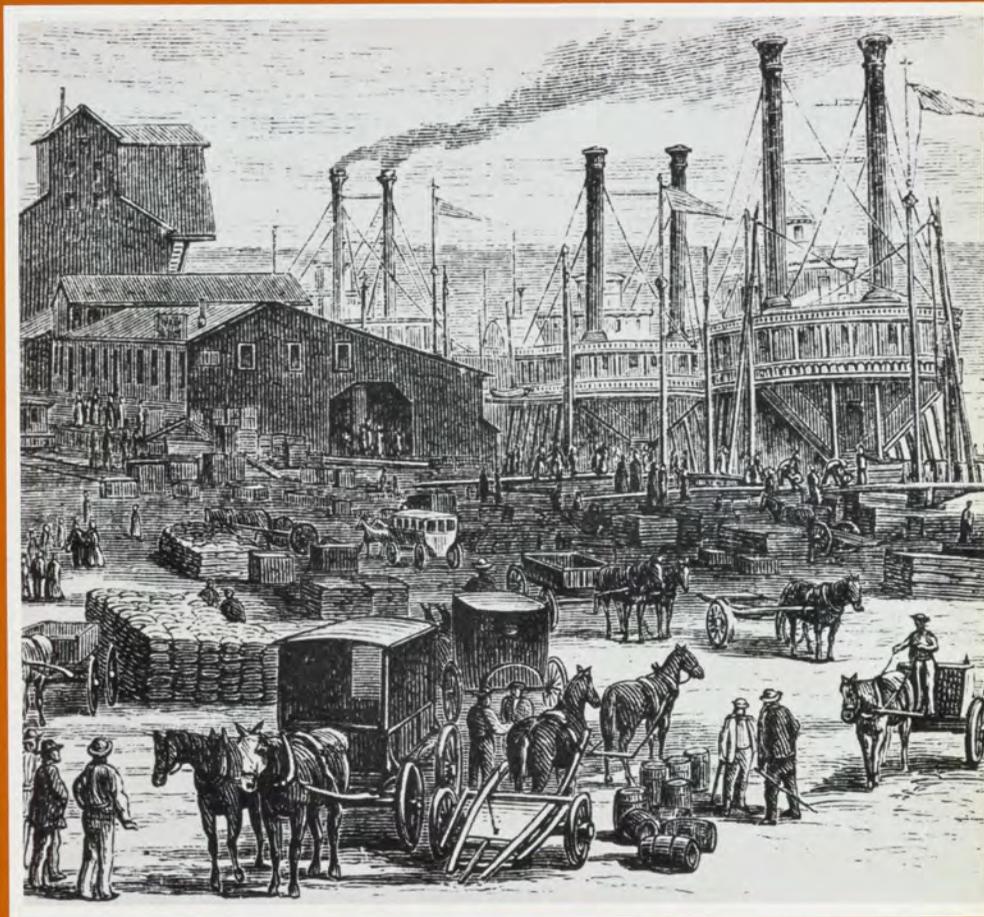
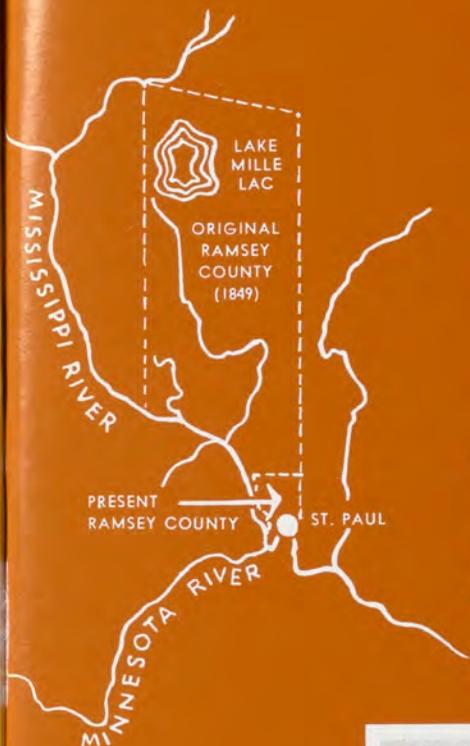


RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



Fall

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ON THE COVER: This steel engraving of St. Paul's Lower Landing as it looked in 1853 shows the bustling river front during the boom years of steamboat travel on the Upper Mississippi. See story beginning on page 15.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Pictures illustrating the story which begins on page 3 are from the author's scrapbook, except for the pictures of Battle Creek and the little railroad station. All other 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.

New Book Traces 115-Year History of Church Cooperation

TOGETHER. *The Story of Church Cooperation in Minnesota.* By Dr. H. L. Stright. Published, 1971, by T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., Minneapolis. \$6.95, 325 pages.

Reviewed by

William L. Cavert

Cooperation among people of many faiths is not new, though we may tend to think today is the ecumenical era.

The origins of Minnesota's vigorous ecumenical church life actually trace back more than 100 years, when they hinged upon a number of basic concerns, two of them being the practical needs of pioneer settlers, and their very human concern for their children.

The role of interchurch cooperation through its 115-year history in Minnesota, and the men and women who shaped that history are described by the author, Dr. Hayden L. Stright, White Bear Lake, who was himself the executive secretary of the Minnesota Council of Churches for more than one-third of the council's history.

Now executive secretary emeritus of the council, he has worked for three years on his history of the council. He has written it from a position of personal involvement — and seems to have negotiated rather easily the hazards such a situation creates for an author.

Of interest particularly to Ramsey County readers, and perhaps unknown to others, is the fact that the council had its beginning in St. Paul with the founding, in 1859, of the State Sunday School Association.

For more than a decade before that, however, Dr. Stright writes, St. Paul had an active Sunday School movement fostered by settlers who felt that "providing Christian education for their children was a priority."

AN EARLY CHAPTER tells the story of the Sunday School, the first in Minnesota. It was taught by Harriet E. Bishop, who arrived in St. Paul from Vermont in 1847 to teach a day school and took on the Sunday School as well. Her school was located on what is now St. Peter at Kellogg Boulevard,

the site of the Women's City Club of St. Paul. Eight youngsters attended her first class.

The Sunday School movement grew. Another early chapter describes a popular feature of those years, the Sunday School parade. According to a notice carried in the *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat* on June 27, 1856, "The Sabbath Schools of St. Paul will celebrate the Fourth of July, and all the Friends, and Citizens in general are respectively invited to participate in the Festivities of the day and join the Schools in procession."

BESIDES LISTING Sunday Schools from six different churches in the line of march, the "Programme" then listed: ". . . Infant S. S. Scholars in Carriages," and "Ladies in Carriages." "Citizens and strangers," apparently, brought up the rear.

Although interchurch cooperation began with the Sunday Schools, Dr. Stright writes, another important step was taken when Dr. R. W. Bowden, executive secretary of the Ramsey County Sunday School Association, was considering how he might get the pastors of St. Paul to work together on a common project.

On January 30, 1930, he presented the idea to a meeting of state denominational executives. Out of this grew, in 1931, the first Minnesota State Pastors Conference.

The conference celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1957 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Paul. Its pastor, Dr. Clifford Ansgar Nelson, was chairman and the Reverend Floyd Massey, pastor of Pilgrim Baptist Church, St. Paul, was program chairman.

AND FINALLY, on June 30, 1963, the cornerstone was laid for the new Minnesota Church Center in Minneapolis, which now houses the headquarters of most of the Protestant churches in Minnesota.

It also was a highlight in the career of Dr. Stright, whose interest in history goes beyond his many years with the Minnesota Council of Churches. He is immediate past president and a member of the Board of Directors of the Ramsey County Historical Society, a member of the Minnesota Historical Society, an honorary life member of the Hennepin County Historical Society, and, as a tenth generation descendant of John Alden, a member and officer of the Mayflower Society.



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.