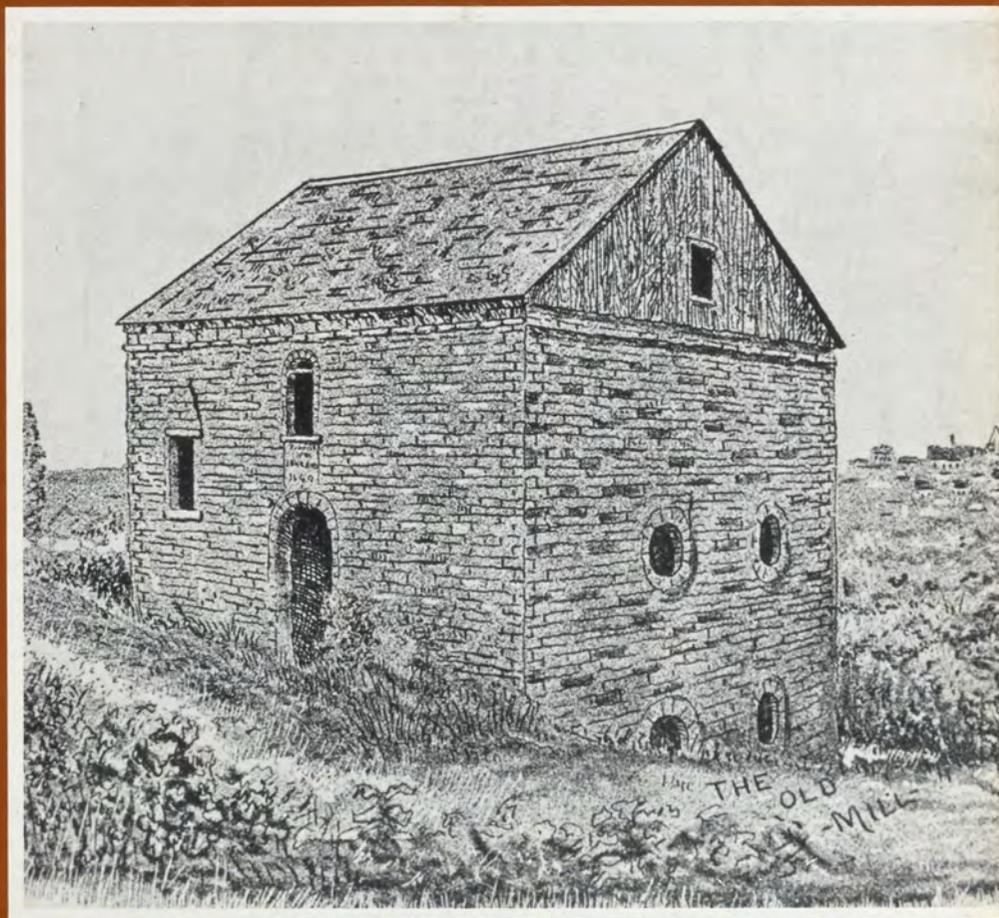


RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



Fall

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ON THE COVER: Drawing of Ayd's Mill, published July 12, 1889, in St. Anthony Hill Graphic. This is the only illustration of the mill known to the author of the article beginning on page 3.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Unless otherwise indicated, pictures used in this issue are from the audio-visual department of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.



The 1850's Shaping of St. Paul

It was the 1850's, and St. Paul was riding the crest of a building boom and growing like Topsy. From a motley collection of log cabins and shanties clustered around the settlement's two steamboat landings, the town had strung itself out along the river front and was pushing over the ridge about a half mile to the north. Expensive housing was going up — large, fine houses built by men who expected it to last.

Indeed, much of it has. Many houses of the era can be seen today scattered around the central sectors of the city. The more elegant ones were, of course, built on the high ground. One of them, the Robert A. Smith House, today 312 Summit Avenue, can be seen in the above 1856 photograph. Built the same year the picture was taken, the house is to the left on the far ridge (now known as Ramsey Hill).

The disparity in housing and the jumbled placement of the buildings, as evidenced in the picture, are indicative of what was going

Houses were standing on Summit Avenue (background) as early as 1856.

on at the time. There was little or no planning of the young town's growth, a fact which apparently upset at least a few of its residents. One of them, James M. Goodhue, editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, was quite vocal in his consternation. Goodhue characterized the city as being made up of "little skewdangular lots, about as large as a stingy piece of gingerbread," and additions which "appear to have taken a running jump at each other, like two rival steamboats . . . inextricably run into each other."

"It would save," said he, "immense costs and prove an eternal blessing to St. Paul if the whole site of the town could now be thrown into one common field and platted as it ought to be, with large reservations for public grounds, with straight, wide, regular streets, and blocks of uniform size." His recommendations, as can be seen today, apparently went unheeded.

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A cabin passage from Cincinnati to St. Louis costs, by the packet, usually \$8, by transient boats \$6; from St. Louis to St. Paul \$10. From Galena to St. Paul \$4 and \$5. From Chicago to Galena there is communication by rail, except about 70 miles. This will be reduced to 30 by the first of June. The fare is \$7 at present — will probably be reduced. The trip from New York city to St. Paul can be made in five days; from Cincinnati to St. Paul, by way of the river, ten days."

through Erie, Cleveland, Toledo, and Chicago to Galena, where daily first-class steam-packets are ready to convey passengers, with comfort and safety, a trip of 450 miles in two days and a half, winding among the green islands and between the towering bluffs of the grandest river in North America.

"More variety may be obtained by taking a steamer at Buffalo for Detroit or Chicago, or from Cleveland go to Cincinnati, take a steamer to St. Louis, and thence to St. Paul.



THE GIBBS HOUSE

at 2097 West Larpentour Avenue, Falcon Heights, is owned and maintained by the Ramsey County and Saint Paul Historical Society as a restored farm home of the mid-nineteenth century period.

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.

Headquarters of the Ramsey County and Saint Paul Historical Society are located in the Old Federal Courts Building in downtown St. Paul, an historic building of neo-Romanesque architecture which the Society, with other groups, fought to save from demolition. The Society also maintains a museum office in the basement of the schoolhouse on the Gibbs Farm property. The Society is active in identification of historic sites in the city and county, and conducts an educational program which includes the teaching and demonstration of old arts and crafts. It is one of the few county historical societies in the country to engage in an extensive publishing program in local history.