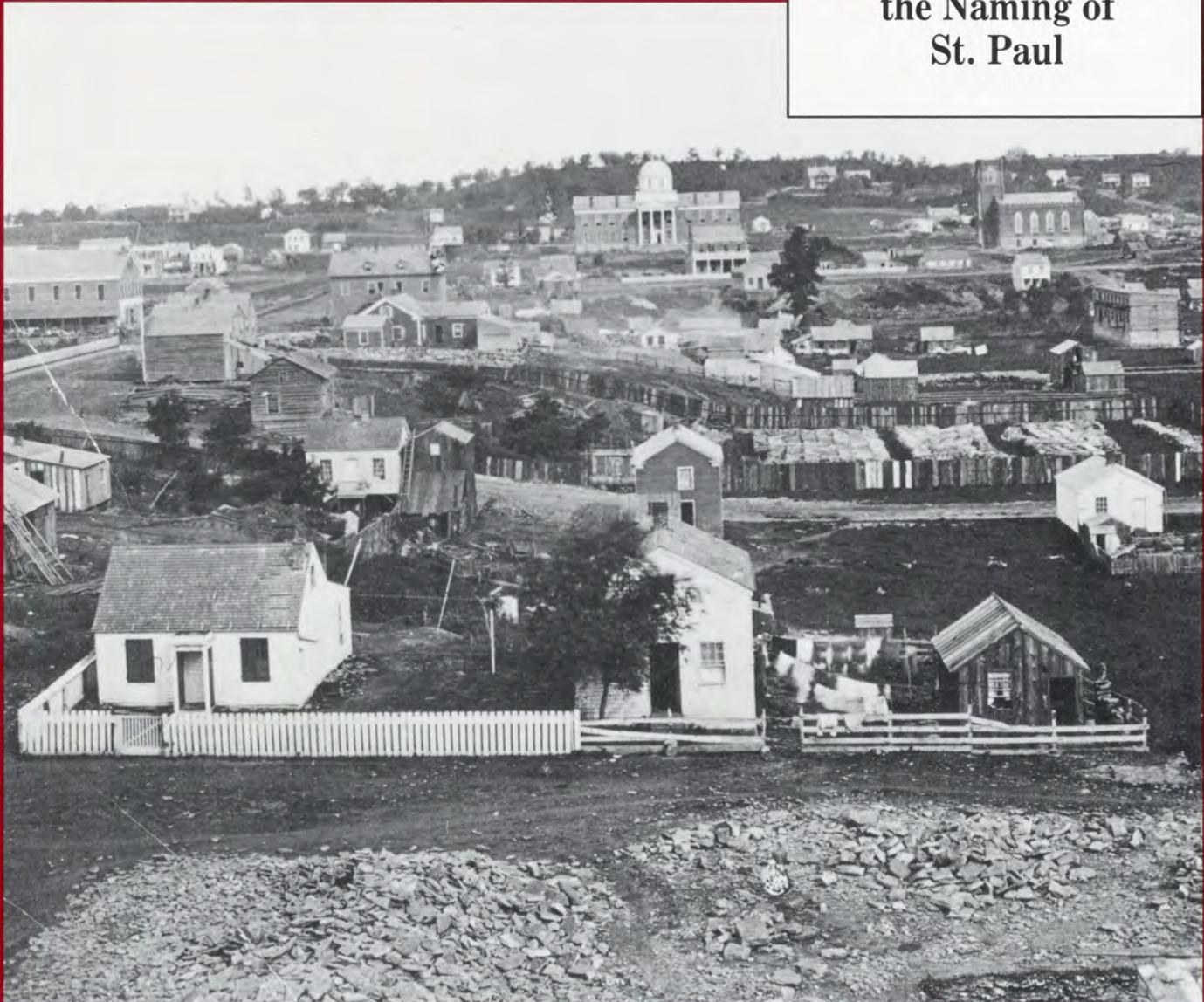


RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Fall, 1991
Volume 26, Number 3

Special Issue:
150th Anniversary of
the Naming of
St. Paul



St. Paul in 1857. This is one of nine panoramic views shot that year by B. F. Upton from the roof of the Ramsey County Courthouse at Fourth and Wabasha streets. In this view to the north, the building with the pillars and the dome is the territorial capitol at Tenth and Wabasha streets. The articles beginning on page 4 are published in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the naming of St. Paul and trace the early history of the settlement on the Mississippi that once was known as Pig's Eye.

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On the Cover: St. Paul was the capital of the Territory of Minnesota, when this view was photographed by B. F. Upton from the roof of the Ramsey County Courthouse in 1857. See articles on St. Paul's early years beginning on page 4.

Acknowledgements: The photograph on page 3 is from the Ramsey County Historical Society's photo collection. The map on page 10 was created by the design firm of Rummel, Dubs and Hill. Photographs of the Davern house in 1990 on page 23, the Daverns on page 24, Dr. Colvin on page 27 and the Colvin house on page 28 are from the author's collection. The Fuller family photograph on page 25 is from the H. B. Fuller Company. All other photographs in this issue are from the audio-visual collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr.

A Message from the Editorial Board

Four members of the Society's Board of Directors and Editorial Board have had the good fortune to serve on the St. Paul History Sub-committee for the writing of *Saint Paul—The First 150 Years*. The sub-committee came together under the auspices of The Saint Paul Foundation to assist the book's author, Virginia Brainard Kunz, with comment and criticism of her manuscript that celebrates the history and cultural diversity of the people of St. Paul. The opinions of the committee members were as varied as their ethnicity. The group included representatives from the Native American, Southeast Asian, African American and Mexican American communities of Ramsey County, as well as those of European ancestry.

The book that Virginia Kunz wrote reflects the experiences of their people and their vision for St. Paul and its cultural richness. Featured in this issue of *Ramsey County History* is a section of the book along with special articles on "Pig's Eye" Parrant, Abraham Perry's family and the Davern house, an early farm house set within an Irish community in what is now Highland Park. Together they all contribute to the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the naming of St. Paul.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

Up in the Air

I know there was an old air field somewhere out in the Midway district. Can you tell me where it was located?

—Robin Peterson, Roseville

That was the old Curtiss air field. It was located on the southeast corner of Larpenteur and Snelling avenues in Falcon Heights.

What Moat?

Your article on the homeless and the jobless in St. Paul during the depression of the 1930s (Spring, 1991, issue) said there was some kind of a moat around the old county courthouse. I'm eighty years old and I worked for the Great Northern railroad in downtown St. Paul in the 1930s. I don't remember any moat around the courthouse.

—Lester Perkins, St. Paul

We wondered about that, too, since the photograph accompanying the article didn't seem to show a moat. Apparently, the moat was a recessed sidewalk that surrounded the courthouse.

School Days

Harlan Seyfer's article on the Stoen School (Summer, 1991, issue) brought back fond memories. I attended a country school outside of Becker, Minnesota, in the late 1940s. I remember that our teacher would prepare a hot meal for us in her home, then bring it to school and heat it up on our wood-burning stove. I think those were the best lunches I ever ate, much better than what my children had in the big consolidated schools of today.

—Louise Anderson, Woodbury

Capitol Approach

When were all those old buildings around the state capitol torn down? I remember



Capitol Approach in the 1950s. Photo donated by Richard A. Moore.

that our school class visited the capitol around 1938 and the area looked different then.

—Eleanor Bankman, St. Cloud

The Capitol Approach neighborhood was one of the oldest remaining sections of St. Paul when it was cleared in the 1950s. By that time, the neighborhood was mostly decaying boarding houses and second-hand stores, as the photograph here indicates.

Johnson Topsy?

In Tom Boyd's fine article on Judge Walter Sanborn, there is a reference to President Andrew Johnson as the "sometimes tipsy Andy Johnson." I've always felt that the seventeenth president of the United States got a bum rap. I thought that on the day of Lincoln's second inaugural, Johnson was ill and feverish, rather than intoxicated.

—Amos Morton, South St. Paul

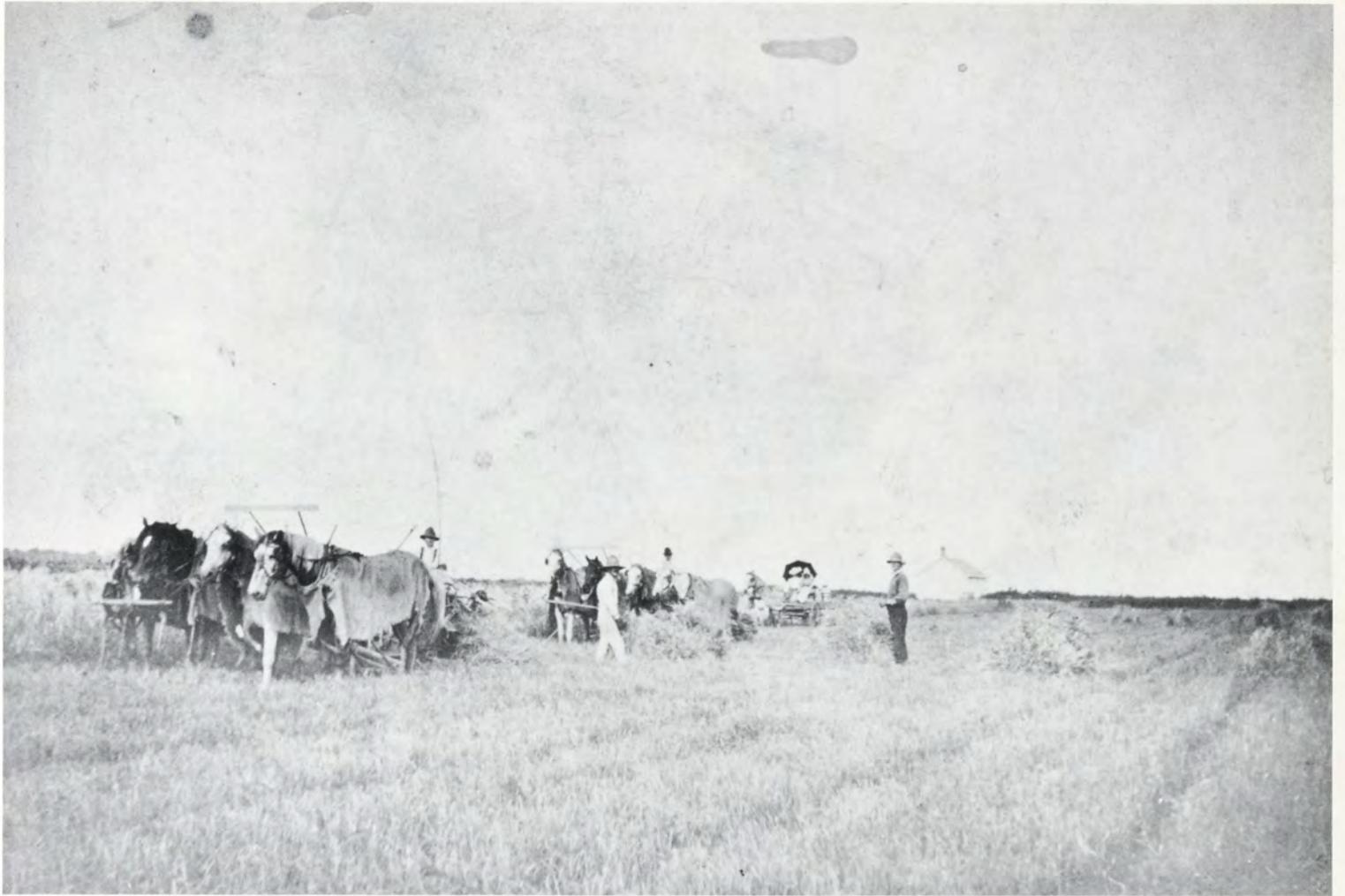
Revisionist history does suggest that Johnson was more ill than drunk, and that he was unfairly pilloried by his critics in his day.

House on the hill

Wasn't there at one time a mansion up on the hill behind the state capitol that had some scientific exhibits? I remember being taken there once as a child. At the time of my visit, there was a huge globe of the world hanging in the entrance hall.

—Joey Lee, St. Paul

That was the old St. Paul Institute of Arts and Sciences, the forerunner of the Science Museum of Minnesota. The house was the massive stone mansion built in 1887 by Colonel John Merriam, father of Minnesota's eleventh governor. The Institute acquired the mansion around 1928 and occupied it until 1964. The mansion eventually was torn down to make way for expansion of the capital complex.



The Davern family working in the field north of their farm house, late in the nineteenth century. Today, this field is a residential neighborhood southwest of Montreal and Snelling avenues. See the article page 22 on the families and the homes of the Daverns, who were among the Irish immigrants who settled in what is now Highland Park in 1849, and on the Colvins who followed them.

R.C.H.S.
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