

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Whistles, Crowds, Free Silver
Election Night – 1896
Page 13

Fall, 1992

Volume 27, Number 3

The
Mexican-
Americans
and their
Roots in
St. Paul's
Past
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Growing Up
on The
East Side
Page 22



Mexican women attending a class in English presented by the St. Paul WPA's adult education department—April 23, 1936.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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A Message from the Editorial Board

This issue of *Ramsey County History* matches in diversity the varied fall colors we now see all around us. Jane McClure writes in fascinating detail about the history of our Mexican American neighbors on the West Side of St. Paul. Tom Buckley reminds us that the presidential election of 1896, matching Republican McKinley with Democrat Bryan, involved in its day as much hoopla, politics and suspense as the election of 1992 appears to have so far.

Two of our regular features—Growing Up in St. Paul and the Historic Site essay—highlight the colorful East Side neighborhood. And finally we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of St. Peter Claver Catholic Church and its century of service to St. Paul's African American community in A Matter of Time for 1892. The Editorial Board hopes you will enjoy the richness of Ramsey County's history found in this issue.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

secular education. The editor of a church newspaper in St. Louis, Missouri, disagreed, declaring that unsupervised secular education sapped the foundations of religion and paved the way to atheism.

►The city had its own problems. The Ramsey County Medical Society was taking preventive measures against the possible influx of cholera by creating community awareness and guidelines for the city to follow.

1917 75 YEARS AGO

►A Liberty Loan drive began in New York on October 1, 1917, with Secretary McAdoo expressing the federal government's hopes that subscriptions would total \$5 million. Each subscriber would receive a "badge of honor" button. The loans, which McAdoo said the government would repay in full, were to be used to equip American soldiers for the fight against Germany.

►German raiders appeared over England on September 30 and dropped bombs on Kent, London and Essex. It was an evening raid and, despite the bright moonlit night, mists ensured that the raiders were invisible to persons on the streets. Official tolls listed eleven killed and eighty-two injured.

►Minnesota's 151st Field Artillery arrived in New York in mid-September. Newspapers called them "a fine bunch of men" and quoted their commander as saying that, "Every man in my command is ready and willing to do his bit for Uncle Sam." Fort Snelling was to be transformed into a camp hospital for the war wounded and was expected to be one of the largest such hospitals in the country, according to Secretary of War Newton Baker.

►Back in Minnesota, University of Minnesota regents ratified an agreement on September 13 that would transfer ownership of the Mayo Foundation in Rochester to the University. Price tag for the move was expected to be more than \$1,650,000.

►As many as 200 bars in Minneapolis and St. Paul faced closing as a new federal tax took effect. The tax would force bars to raise their prices to ten cents for beer and twenty-five cents for whisky.

Books, Etc.

Murder in Minnesota

Walter Trenerry
St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society

We always are on the look-out for new books that will provide us with interesting insights into the history of Minnesota. However, we must be careful not to neglect those books—those great books—that have been around for awhile. Walter Trenerry's *Murder in Minnesota* is such a book.

I purchased a copy four years ago at a used book store soon after I moved to Minnesota. I must state in all honesty that I bought it because of its intriguing title. However, because it was written in 1962, I simply placed it on my bookshelf for future reading and turned to more current publications. When I finally read it, I enjoyed one of the most pleasant literary surprises in some time.

Murder in Minnesota recounts some of the rough and tumble—and all too often fatally violent—history of Minnesota. Originally, the wide open nature of Minnesota territory threatened the prospect of statehood and deterred business investments in the area. Thus, government officials treated vigilantes as severely, if not more severely, than those who committed the murders in the first place.

Such was the case that gave rise to the "war" in Wright County in 1858 and 1859 when Governor Henry H. Sibley ordered the state militia to bring order to the county. The governor's immediate objective was thwarted by the disorganization and poor discipline of the militia. However, as Trenerry writes, "the Wright County War, semiludicrous as it was, served notice that anarchy and rebellion would not be tolerated in Minnesota."

Trenerry describes the murder of Stanislaus Bilansky in St. Paul in 1859. This is a ghoulish tale of jealousy, adultery and poison. Thus, it is fascinating reading and serves to highlight efforts by early Minnesotans to outlaw capital punishment.

Murder in Minnesota also recounts the violent and fatal bank robbery in Northfield in 1876 by the James gang. This account includes a poignant description of Joseph L. Heywood, the courageous Northfield bank cashier who sacrificed his own life to thwart the robbery.

Then, of course, there is the murder of Louis Arbogast that occurred in St. Paul. During the early morning hours of May 13, 1909, the city was awakened by a grisly event. Trenerry describes it:

A few minutes after 4:00 a.m., the agonized screams of women in the Arbogast house jolted the neighborhood awake. People living nearby ran to help, and they were soon joined by policemen and firemen. Those who arrived first found Louis Arbogast lying cross-wise on a burning bed, naked, and covered with blood and feathers. The back of his skull had been completely smashed. He was still gasping, alive, but clearly beyond help. The bed was in flames, having been drenched with gasoline, the fumes of which were apparent in the room. Rescuers smothered the flames and rushed the man to the nearest hospital. He died en route.

Despite the fact that the Arbogast home was locked and there was no sign of entry by an intruder, none of the family members within the home at the time of the attack ever divulged the identity of the murderer.

Walter Trenerry's *Murder in Minnesota* is fascinating reading. I would recommend it highly.

—Thomas H. Boyd



Saint Paul, Minn. Public Baths, Beach and Bathers, Harriet Island

The public baths, beaches and bathers at Harriet Island. Views of St. Paul's parks, as well as the city's vibrant downtown, were popular with postcard publishers, Robert J. Stumm observes in his article beginning on page 18.

R.C.H.S.
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