

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



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ON THE COVER: The officers quarters at Fort Ripley had long since been deserted when Edward A. Bromley, the Minneapolis photographer and collector published this brooding picture of the old fort in 1906. He may have taken the picture himself.

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

IRVINE PARK - *And Its Faded But Splendid Mansions*



The home of Henry J. Horn, above, with its wide veranda and spacious lawns still stands. Built about 1880, it is the white house pictured at right, considerably altered but recognizable. Across the street from it is the William Spencer house, built about 1860 and the oldest house on the park still standing.



Eighty years ago Irvine Park was a lovely homes with spacious lawns. Today the little park and its buildings make up a small part of downtown. A cluster of architecturally significant houses is found in the area. Buildings of interest and importance date from 1849, and include the St. Paul parks — and the mansions near it. The house shown is one of the state's second oldest, built by the Minnesota Historical Society block off the park. The houses which face the park are shown above and below.



mansions

to Irvine Park was an area of
h spacious lawns and gardens.
park and the blocks surround-
a special enclave close to
cluster of historic sites and
significant buildings can be
a. But what may be of most
importance is the park itself —
9, and one of the three oldest
— and the splendid but fading
t. The Ramsey House, home
of a governor and now owned
by the State Historical Society, is a
park. Two magnificent houses
in the park are shown at right



Horace R. Bigelow's house, shown below at far left, stood on the corner of Walnut and Exchange streets, across Walnut from Governor Ramsey's house. A smaller, earlier Bigelow house originally stood on the Ramsey House site, then was moved across the street and incorporated into the Bigelow mansion. The house has been torn down and a manufacturing firm occupies the site, as shown by the photo, below, of Irvine Park today. The fountain also has disappeared but is said to be stored away in a garage somewhere in St. Paul.





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.