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Contents

Spring	Old Federal Courts Building — <i>Beautiful, Unique — Its Style of Architecture Faces Extinction</i> By Eileen Michels	Page 3
1972		
Volume 9	A Teacher Looks Back at PTA, 4-H — <i>And How a Frog in a Desk Drawer Became a Lesson in Biology</i> By Alice Olson	Page 10
Number 1	Forgotten Pioneers . . . XII	Page 15
	North St. Paul's 'Manufactories' <i>Come-back After 1893 'Bust'</i> By Edward J. Lettermann	Page 17

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ON THE COVER: The Old Federal Courts Building, viewed from across Rice Park about 1905. With the park itself, and the Minneapolis Public Library directly across from it, the Old Federal Courts Building lends a sense of community to the area.

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Forgotten Pioneers...XII

RAMSEY COUNTY has had its share of famous pioneers whose names fill the pages of the history books. But there also have been many more men and women who have been almost forgotten but who also made



Josias R. King

A block or so down the hill from what was once Summit Park, at the intersection of Summit and Marshall Avenues stands a monument erected by the Allied Organizations of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.).

It was dedicated on November 20, 1903, to the memory of those who served in the Civil War, and to Josias R. King, of St. Paul's pre-war Pioneer Guards. King is generally thought to be the first man to volunteer for service with the First Minnesota Infantry Regiment, the first regiment to be offered to President Lincoln upon the surrender of Fort Sumter on April 13, 1861.

There are conflicting accounts of King's enlistment, and separating fact from legend often is difficult. However, it is a matter of historical record that when Fort Sumter, the federal fort in Charleston harbor, was fired upon on April 12, 1861, Governor Alexander Ramsey was in Washington. He went immediately to the office of the Secretary of War to offer Minnesota troops for the defense of the Union. According to one newspaper story, "The word was telegraphed to Lieutenant Governor Ignatius Donnelly. And just by chance Josias King was stand-

outstanding contributions and left their names upon streets, parks, buildings, and in the official records. This article is the twelfth in a series on "forgotten pioneers," a special feature in Ramsey County History.

St. Paul, like many other cities, has its quota of statues to men who brought a measure of fame to the city and the state. Sometimes one has to look up to see them, as is the case of the King Monument, now located on a grassy plot at the point where Summit Avenue, Kellogg Boulevard and John Ireland Boulevard all converge. How many people passing that spot have noticed that the monument is topped by a figure in Civil War uniform?

The following article on the King Monument and the man for whom it was named came from the Junior Pioneer Association which has issued a variety of interesting papers on the history of St. Paul and Ramsey County. Author Max Winkel tells the story of how King came to be placed on a pedestal.

ing in the old Armory near the Union Depot, when the call came. He stepped to the secretary's desk and signed the muster roll — the first man to volunteer in the first state to come to the defense of the Union."

The bronze statue before it was placed on the monument. The head is a likeness of Lt. Col. Josias King, who is standing at left. The body is a "standard" Civil War soldier. The date is November 20, 1903.





Josias King monument in Summit Park. Pictures from the Minnesota Historical Society.

Actually the story is not as simple as that. The morning *Pioneer-Democrat* of April 13, 1861, reported the attack on Fort Sumter. The edition of Tuesday, April 16 (no paper was published on Monday), carried a small notice calling the Pioneer Guard to meet at the Armory that night at 7:30 o'clock.

THE NEXT DAY, Wednesday, the paper mentioned that the Guard met but took no action regarding volunteering for service. (The Pioneer Guard was a company of volunteers pledged to defend the state, but it was not under the jurisdiction of the federal government; as a matter of fact, only two months earlier the members had voted to disband in the event of war.)

On April 18, 1861, it was stated positively that no one had enlisted thus far. The rumor that a man had enlisted had been checked and found to be untrue. There was a notice of another meeting of the Guard that night. What transpired at this second meeting was described in a letter signed "Old Timer" which appeared in the *Pioneer Press* of April 21, 1889:

"First there was a general discussion lasting about an hour, some urging that the Guard enlist as a unit, while others felt it should be left to the individual. A recess was then taken to permit members to consult their families. A book had been provided for registration, and at this point King, im-

patient at the delay, stepped forward and said, 'I'll be the first to sign,' or words to that effect, and signed the book. Several others then also signed.

"The company was not completely organized until April 23, when officers were elected, King being elected sergeant, and they were mustered into service on April 29. Signing the book did not constitute a formal enlistment — an order had been issued on April 18 designating John K. Becht's saloon on Third Street as the place to enroll — so there was some controversy later on technicalities as to whether King was the first volunteer. Nevertheless, all the evidence indicates he 'started the ball rolling' and deserves the honor."

THE LOCATION of the Armory where this historic meeting took place also has been incorrectly identified, probably due to the fact that the numbering system for buildings on Third Street was changed three times. Armory Hall is listed in the 1863 City Directory as being in the Bernheimer Block, built in 1859 on Third Street between Minnesota and Cedar. By 1866 the Bernheimer Block was Number 160 Third Street. Space does not permit tracing the street number changes, but in 1884, under the present number system, the Bernheimer Block was numbered as 63 East Third Street. It was the oldest section of the Tilden Produce building, torn down some years ago to make way for the new YWCA. There can be no doubt that the Armory was on the third floor of this building. Tilden added a fourth floor about 1910.

The King Monument first stood on a small triangular plot in the center of what is now Kellogg Boulevard at the intersection of Summit Avenue and facing down the hill toward Seven Corners. When the Cathedral was built in the early 1900's, Archbishop Ireland bought all of the property between Summit, Kellogg and Selby. He tore down the houses and a church which were in the area, and then had Summit Avenue curved to give the Cathedral a better setting. The monument was moved at that time.

Today the statue still stands near the intersection of Kellogg and Summit. The head of the figure at the top of the monument is a likeness of King, modeled from life by the sculptor, John K. Daniels, but the body is that of a "standard" Civil War soldier.



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.