

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

**Spring, 1990**  
Volume 25, Number 1



*James J. Hill's yacht, the Wacouta of St. Paul. See Page 4.*

## RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

*Executive Director*  
Daniel J. Hoisington

*Editor*  
Virginia Brainard Kunz

## RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gregory K. Page  
*Chairman of the Board*

William S. Fallon  
*President*

Richard Lee  
*First Vice President*

Anne Cowie Wilson  
*Second Vice President*

Robert Hess  
*Secretary*

James P. Wicker  
*Treasurer*

John Costello, Joanne Englund, Deborah Gelbach, Joan Grzywinski, Lorraine Hammerly, Craig Jilk, John M. Lindley, Frank Marzitelli, Dr. Thomas B. Mega, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Marvin Pertzik, Douglas Skor, Robert O. Straughn, Stephen Urion, Gary Woeltge, Laurie Zenner.

### EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chairman; Thomas H. Boyd, Thomas C. Buckley, Charlton Dietz, Craig Jilk, Thomas J. Kelley, Dr. Thomas B. Mega.

### RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hal Norgard, chairman  
Commissioner Diane Ahrens  
Commissioner John Finley  
Commissioner Ruby Hunt  
Commissioner Duane McCarty  
Commissioner Don Salverda  
Commissioner Warren Schaber

Terry Schutten, executive director, Ramsey County

*Ramsey County History* is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright, 1990, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISBN Number 0-934294-00-3. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher.

Design by: Don Leeper, Stanton Publication Services; Little & Company

**On the cover:** The *Wacouta*, James J. Hill's yacht, passing through the locks at the Sault Ste. Marie, seen in the background.

**Acknowledgements:** Except for Page 9, photographs with the articles on James J. Hill and the yacht *Wacouta* are from the James J. Hill Papers in the James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, and used with the library's permission. Photographs on Pages 9, 12, 13 and 27 are from the Minnesota Historical Society's audio-visual collection. The photograph on Page 22 is from the Ramsey County Historical Society's photo collection. The photograph on Page 10 is from the Debs Foundation, Terre Haute, Indiana.

# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 25, Number 1 Spring, 1990

## CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 Railroader as Yachtsman  
James J. Hill and the Yacht *Wacouta*  
*Thomas C. Buckley*
- 12 Eugene Debs, James J. Hill and the Great Northern Railway's Strike of 1894  
*Tamara C. Truer*
- 14-15 St. Paul and the 1940s Revisited in Pictures
- 20 The *Wacouta* in Two World Wars
- 22 Book Reviews
- 23 Cooper and Goodrich and the Famous Duel
- 24 A Matter of Time
- 27 What's Historic about this Site?

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 PRESIDENT

Welcome to the "new" *Ramsey County History*. In 1987 the Society's Board of Directors established a task force to develop a strategic plan. One of the principal recommendations of that task force was to publish our magazine on a quarterly basis. For that purpose an Editorial Board was established and as a result of their efforts over a two-year planning period, we are proud and happy to present to you, our members and our readers, this new, enlivened format. You will note the additional new features, such as "A Matter of Time," Letters to the Editor, book reviews, descriptions of St. Paul's historic sites and other features.

We hope you will enjoy this new format, and request your comments and reactions to it. We also would like to remind you that we always are looking for manuscripts, for writers and particularly for reminiscences, those colorful and personal accounts of your experiences and memories of St. Paul and Ramsey County. If you would like to contribute to our new magazine, just call the editor.

—William S. Fallon

# Book Reviews

## *Northern Lights: The Story of Minnesota's Past.*

Rhoda R. Gilman  
St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989.

This book is part of a complete curriculum for students in grades 5 to 7 developed by the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society. But don't let that deter you from reading *Northern Lights*. It is well written, well researched, and marvelously illustrated. Wisely, the society refrained from creating a history book by committee and selected a single author. This keeps the book out of that category of dull text books that we remember from school days which managed to turn the exciting field of history into an exercise in boredom. In addition to the strong narrative text, numerous "side bar" biographies of important Minnesotans capture much of the character of the state. The concluding chapter is an essay on "The Idea of Minnesota," asking the question, "What is a state?" and finding the answer in everything from its cold winters, its multi-ethnic background, and its land.

*Northern Lights* is a lively introduction to the history of Minnesota and the state historical society should be commended for producing this book.

## *Roseville, Minnesota. The Story of Its Growth, 1843-1988.*

Roseville: Roseville Historical Society, 1988.

Former speaker of the house, Tip O'Neill, always claimed that "all politics is local." In much the same spirit, all history is local because only on that very human level can the historian understand the immediate level of experience. A



*The Exchange Building in New Brighton, one of the many photographs included in a spritely book, A Centennial History of New Brighton, Minnesota, by Gene F. Skiba, long-time editor of the New Brighton Bulletin.*

committee of the Roseville Historical Society has contributed a new local history that helps us understand Ramsey County history through the experience of a single town.

If there is a story to the "growth of a city", as this book is subtitled, it might be found in the rapid transformation of Roseville from farm land to a heavily populated suburb. The tale of Reuben Sloan's family is a fine example. In 1919, they moved to West County Road B and lived in a tent while a log cabin was built. After living in the cabin for three years, they moved into a prefabricated house ordered from Sears and Roebuck. Progress came with stunning swiftness.

The book has two quite different sections. The first half of the book consists of a history of Roseville, beginning with the first settler, Isaac Rose, and ending with the community's designation as a Star City in 1987. The second half is giv-

en over to short histories of local clubs, churches, and civic groups—a valuable resource for anyone new to the community. The book's illustrations, many drawn from private collections, are especially valuable.

The book is available through the Roseville Historical Society, Roseville Recreation Center, Roseville, Minn. 55113.

## *Theodore Hamm in Minnesota: His Family and Brewery*

John T. Flanagan  
Minneapolis: Pogo Press, 1989

I grew up watching the Chicago Cubs lose baseball games. Two indelible memories are of Ernie Banks hitting home runs and of all those Hamm's Beer commercials starring that bear who came "from the land of sky blue waters." Now John Flanagan has captured the story be-

hind those advertisements in his book on the Hamm family of St. Paul.

The author brings a wonderful combination of talents to his book. First, he is a family descendant—the sole surviving grandson of Theodore Hamm—so his writing is filled with many personal recollections and family photographs. Second, he is a legitimate historian—a professor emeritus at the University of Illinois in history—so the book avoids the ancestor worship so common to this genre.

The Hamm family story encompasses many parts—the tale of an immigrant family making good, the development of the city of St. Paul in the late 19th century, and a business history of an important company. Flanagan gives special attention to the dramatic events of 1933 when William Hamm, Jr., became a national celebrity following his kidnapping by the Barker-Karpis gang for which a \$100,000 ransom was paid.

Flanagan closes the book with a look at the decline of the brewery, ranked fifth in the nation in 1957, to its sale out of the family in the 1960s. And of course, he gives a chapter to a look at Hamm's Beer advertising through the years, including several pictures of that old friend, the Bear.

This is a good book—a fine example of local family history.

—Daniel J. Hoisington

#### *Debs from page 13*

personal victory for Eugene Debs. He had this to say on leaving the city:

In all my life I have never felt so highly honored as I did when leaving St. Paul on my way home. As our train pulled out of the yards the token of esteem, which I prize far more highly than all others, was in seeing the old trackmen, men whose frames were bent with years of grinding toil, who received the pittance of from 80 cents to \$1 a day, leaning on their shovels and lifting their hats to me in appreciation of my humble assistance in a cause which they believed had resulted in a betterment of their miserable existence.

From another quarter altogether came this unexpected token of esteem. According to one source, James J. Hill later said of Debs: "Gene Debs is the squarest labor leader I have ever known. He cannot be bought, bribed or intimidated. He never deals under the table, and his spoken word is as good as his bond or signed contract. I know. I have dealt with him and been well spanked."

*Tamara C. Truer is manager of the Ramsey County Historical Society's Gibbs Farm Museum. She has a masters degree in history from Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, where she was a curator and guide at the Eugene V. Debs Foundation.*

#### *Letters from page 3*

**'Off the bench he is a beast...**

### **Cooper & Goodrich And the Famous Duel**

I was particularly interested in Ronald Hubbs' reference to Judge Aaron Goodrich in his fine article on "A Pioneer Writes Home: Alexander Wilkin and 1850s St. Paul." Goodrich was the first chief justice of the territorial court. He was from Tennessee and had been appointed by President Taylor in 1849. However, as Hubbs' article reflects, he was not well received as a member of the court and in 1851 he was removed. Goodrich, nonetheless, went on to build a respectable legal practice in St. Paul and was much involved in state politics. Less fortunate was David Cooper, one of Goodrich's fellow justices on the three-member territorial court. Cooper was a gifted orator and at a very young age had been a great campaigner for the Whig party in Pennsylvania. He was awarded by an appointment to the territorial court when he was only 28 years old.

Unfortunately, Cooper was a better speaker than a judge. While he was on the court, Cooper was ridiculed by members of the public and the bar alike. At the time, the editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer* wrote the following: "He is lost to all sense of decency and self-respect. Off the bench he is a beast and on the bench he is an ass, stuffed with arrogance, self-

conceited, and a ridiculous affectation of dignity." This particular criticism infuriated Justice Cooper's brother, James, who swore revenge. The *Pioneer's* editor, James Madison Goodhue, heard rumors of a threatened assault by Cooper and armed himself with a revolver and a small derringer. The following is a description of their "showdown," referred to in history as a duel:

It was about 12 o'clock on Wednesday, January 15 [1851], the Legislature having adjourned for dinner, that the two combatants, in the presence of nearly 150 witnesses, met on St. Anthony Street in front of the lot where now stands the Metropolitan Hotel.\* The attack commenced by desultory pistol shooting, which was of more danger to the lifes [sic] of the spectators congregated than to the participants. The principals were thereupon quickly disarmed by C.P.V. Lull, the Sheriff of Ramsey County. At this time, one of the crowd of spectators stole up behind Mr. Goodhue and threw his arms around him. Cooper then rushed forward and with a dark knife inflicted two wounds upon Mr. Goodhue, one in the abdomen and one in the side. The latter, jerking himself free from the party holding him, drew from his pants pocket his Derringer pistol and fired, Cooper receiving the ball in his groin. The wounds inflicted were of a dangerous character. Cooper died some two or three months after the affray in Michigan, his death being hastened by the pistol wound he had received. Goodhue was confined to his bed for several weeks.

Like Goodrich, David Cooper was eventually removed from the court. Although he was an intelligent man with great natural talent, he was also a person of "somewhat eccentric disposition, infirmities of temper, and unfortunate habits." He died 15 years later as a patient in an inebriate asylum at Salt Lake City. Goodhue died suddenly a few months after the duel.

—Thomas H. Boyd

\* *St. Anthony became Third Street, then Kellogg Boulevard. The Metropolitan Hotel was on the present site of the Minnesota Club.*



*Henry H. Sibley's house at 417 Woodward, St. Paul, from the 1874 Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota, published by A. M. Andreas.*

**R.C.H.S.**  
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society  
323 Landmark Center  
75 West Fifth Street  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
St. Paul MN  
Permit #3989