

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

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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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.

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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

Letters to the Editor

Wilkin Prejudiced?

I thought that Ronald M. Hubbs' article on Alexander Wilkin in the last issue of *Ramsey County History* was well written and thoroughly researched. But I wonder if you should have given this much attention to someone who was so obviously prejudiced against Indians and minorities? —Sarah Woodhouse, Roseville

Having read all of Wilkins' letters, I thought he seemed more enlightened than not—for his time. He did, after all, support Chief Hole-in-the-Day. But it's only natural to judge people of a different era by the standards of our own, and this sometimes interferes with a clear-eyed view of history. —Ronald M. Hubbs

Why Me?

I'd like to know why my house on Woodward was torn down and Alexander Ramsey's mansion in Irvine Park was not. —H. Sibley

Progress. The warehouse district we now know as Lowertown engulfed the once-lovely residential neighborhood of Lafayette Park. The spreading railroad system delivered the coup d'grace.

One Mystery Solved

Imagine my surprise when I received the first issue of Vol. 24 of *Ramsey County History* to see pictures of our two daughters who were in Marie Sepion's dance class at St. Agatha's Conservatory. On page 14 Phyllis Rasmussen is on the far right as one of the Dew Fairies in "Hansel and Gretel" and on the back cover, Karen Rasmussen is the mother in the production. Both of these girls are now grandmothers. Time flies.

—Mrs. C. V. Rasmussen, St. Paul



Phyllis on the right, top photo, and Karen, right below.

Good Question!

Maybe you could settle a bet for me. Is it true that there was a tunnel between Nina Clifford's house of ill repute on Hill Street and the Minnesota Club on the bluff up above? I've heard this many times and figured that there was a certain logic to it.

—Tom Rowell, Little Canada

One wonders why you think that seems logical. However, fascinating though the speculation is, this enduring myth seems to have originated in the fertile mind of

Joe Shiely, according to Robert Orr Baker's history of the club published in Ramsey County History in 1984. Shiely is supposed to have proposed the tunnel when he was president of the club in the early 1930s. The story probably gained some credence because the bluff is honey-combed with natural tunnels in the soft St. Peter sandstone.

Hill Houses

When touring St. Paul's historic Summit-Hill neighborhood, we went by the James J. Hill mansion and I was told that Hill, several of his children and even the man in charge of building his house all built houses on Summit Avenue. If this is correct, could you tell me where they are located so I may note their locations on my next visit? Every summer we come to the Upper Midwest to escape the heat of Tucson which some say can only be compared to that of the eternal fires of the pit that is bottomless.

—Mrs. Justine Waller, Tucson, Ariz.

Louis Hill, Sr., Hill's son, built his house at 260 Summit soon after his marriage to Maud Van Cortlandt Taylor in 1901. The house still stands next door to the Hill mansion. Hill bought Samuel Stickney's house at 1111 Summit for his son, Walter, as a wedding present when Walter married Dorothy Barrows in 1908. This house has been torn down. Rachel Hill, another of James J.'s daughters, married Egil Boeckmann in 1913 and they lived at 366 Summit in a house that also is still standing. James Brodie, the Great Northern Railway architect who supervised the construction of Hill's own house, lived near Summit at 260 Farrington.

Letters to page 23

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.
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