

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Frederick McGhee and his family on the porch of their home at 665 University Avenue, St. Paul, around 1918. He was among the African-American business and professional men and women who helped nurture, within a gracious community, several generations of achievers. See article beginning on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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On the Cover: The first black criminal lawyer west of the Mississippi, Frederick McGhee, shown with his home and family, was a prominent Democrat and Catholic in St. Paul in the early 1900s.

Acknowledgements: Photographs on pages 5, 7 (James K. Hilyard), 8 (J. Frank Wheaton), 10 (Owen Howell), 11 (W. T. Francis' house), 13 (the Vass house), and 14 (the Adams house) are reprinted from the September 12, 1910, Quarto-Centennial celebration edition of *The Appeal*. The photograph on page 17 is from A. A. Heckman's private files. The photograph on page 30 of the Bishop house as it appeared in 1980 is from the Ramsey County Historical Society collections. All other photographs are from the audio-visual collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Dan Hoisington, the Society's executive director, is fond of saying: "We're all historians." Nowhere is this more evident than when we go through family letters, diaries or old photos seeking to reconstruct some family history. The theme of the Society's current "Have Lunch With an Historian" weekly lecture series is "Memories, Diaries and Letters."

In conjunction with this, the Editorial Board of *Ramsey County History* invites readers who would like to share an especially meaningful letter, diary, photo or artifact dealing with the history of Ramsey County to contact our office at 222-0701. We'll help you determine what bit of history your letter or photo contains.

We're also interested in your comments on articles we've published in *Ramsey County History*. We're inviting you to bring a bag lunch and participate in a new discussion series based on these articles. The first is set for 12-1 p.m. April 20 in Courtroom 408, Landmark Center. We'll invite some of our writers to attend.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

Guardian's Demise

When was the old Guardian building torn down? What is on that site now? Does any part of the original building survive?

—Carl Oestreich, Eagen, Minnesota.

Once the Germania Bank building, this was a Romanesque structure designed by architect Edward B. Bassford and built between 1888 and 1889 at Fourth and Minnesota Streets. Its main decorative feature was its keystones carved with faces but it also had a statue of Germania standing over its entrance. The statue was taken down and the building's name changed to the Guardian Building during the anti-German hysteria of World War I. The Guardian building was torn down in the early 1960s and the Kellogg Square apartments now stand on the site. The classical sandstone heads were salvaged and now decorate the apartment building.

What About the Courthouse?

When was the old courthouse in St. Paul torn down?

—Elizabeth Dierberger, St. Paul.

This was the city's second courthouse. Both were on the same site, the old Courthouse Square which occupied the block between Wabasha and Cedar, Fourth and Fifth Streets. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held in 1884 but it took five years to complete the massive structure. It was torn down in 1934. See photo on page 22.

More about Saint Mudd

After reading Steve Thayer's *Saint Mudd: A Novel of Gangsters and Saints*, reviewed in the last issue of your magazine, I have a question. I know that Nina Clifford was a famous St. Paul madam



Nina Clifford's house at 147 Washington in 1937. Built in 1888 by Clifford, whose real name was Hanna Steinbrecker, the house has been torn down. A. F. Raymond photo.

but do you suppose she really did a strip tease in her house across the street from the police station?

—Thomas C. Babcock, St. Paul.

Not unless she was an unusually lively ghost. Nina Clifford's appearance in Thayer's novel was an expression of an author's right to poetic license. Clifford died in 1929, before the events in the book took place.

He Likes Us

As acquaintance of mine recently passed on to me your Spring, 1990, issue, Volume 25, Number 1, which contained an interesting and well-written article—indeed, two articles—on the yacht *Wacouta*, owned by James J. Hill and written by Thomas C. Buckley. I just wanted you to know I certainly enjoyed both pieces and found them interesting,

informative and valuable to anyone intrigued by the history of Hill and his many operations. Your journal is to be congratulated for publishing such work. Keep it up!

—John K. Gruenfelder,
professor of history,
University of Wyoming, Laramie.

How About the Machinists?

I would like to see an account in your magazine about the International Association of Machinists, particularly Lodge #459, in Ramsey County.

—E. L. Morkin, St. Paul.

We plan an article on some of the history of the labor movement in St. Paul for an issue in 1991 or 1992. Perhaps some of the information you'd like to see could be a part of this.



Horse and buggy at the Minnesota State fairgrounds in 1903. Karal Ann Marling evokes once again the glories of the fair in her book, Blue Ribbon: A Social and Pictorial History of the Minnesota State Fair, reviewed on page 26.

R.C.H.S.
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