

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

In the Beginning:  
The Geological Forces  
That Shaped Ramsey County

Page 4

Spring, 1999

Volume 34, Number 1

*Special 150th Anniversary Issue*  
Ramsey County And Its Territorial Years

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"St. Paul in Minnesota," watercolor, 1851, by Johann Baptist Wengler. Oberösterreichisches Landes Museum, Linz, Austria. Photo: F. Gangl. Reproduced by permission of the museum. Two years after the establishment of Minnesota Territory, St. Paul as its capital was a boom town, "... its situation is as remarkable for beauty as healthiness as it is advantageous for trade," Fredrika Bremer wrote in 1853, and the rush to settlement was on. See "A Short History of Ramsey County" and its Territorial Years, beginning on page 8.

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 34, Number 1

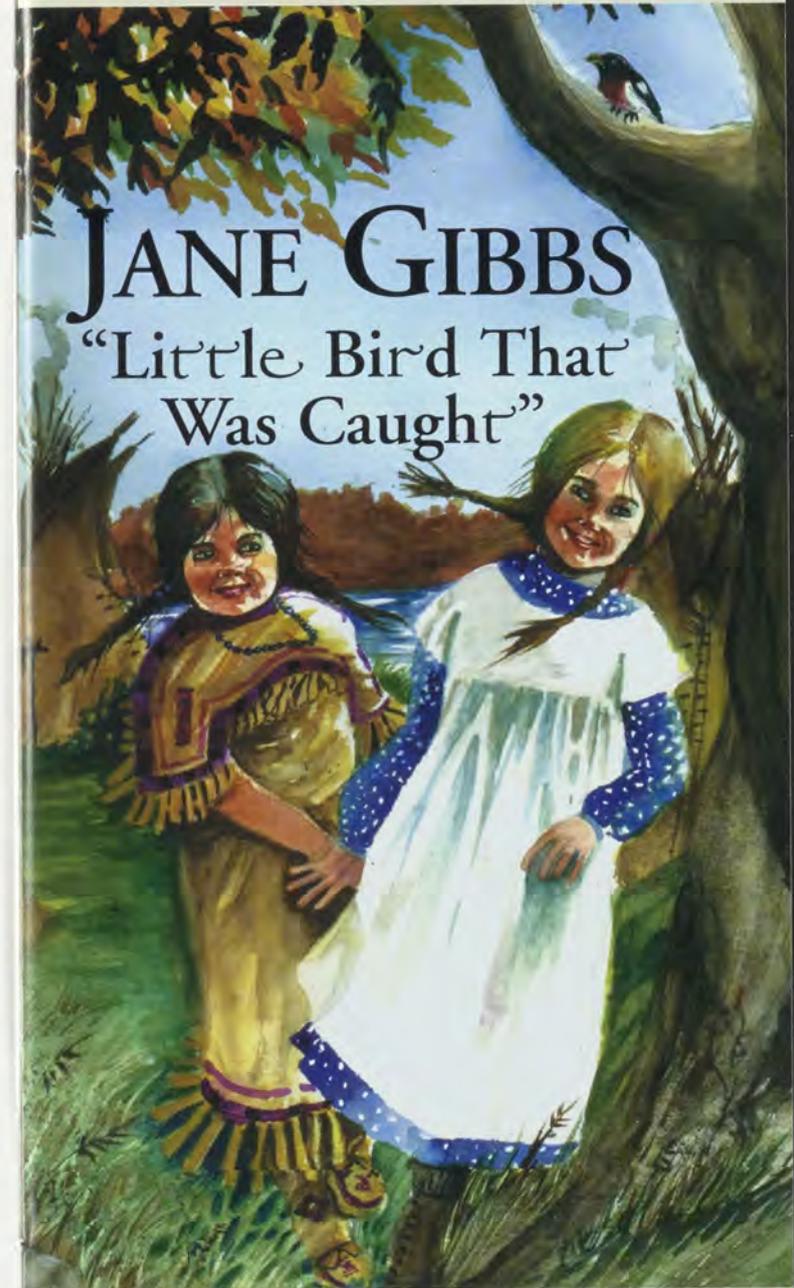
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## An Exciting New Book for Young Readers



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# Books

## *Jane Gibbs—“Little Bird That Was Caught”*

Anne E. Neuberger

Illustrated by Tessie Bundick

St. Paul: Ramsey County Historical Society

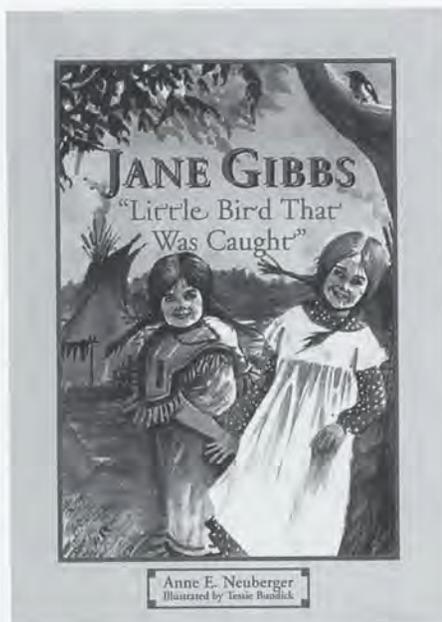
238 pages (cloth 15.95, paper 6.95)

*Reviewed by Pauline Brunette Danforth*

“Little Bird That Was Caught” was the name bestowed on Jane DeBow Gibbs by the Dakota people, and this book gives us an intimate glimpse of Dakota life from the perspective of that little girl taken far from her family in New York state to a new life on the Minnesota frontier in 1835. Through her innocent and curious eyes, we meet her Dakota neighbors, members of Cloud Man’s band, who are struggling to survive in a sea of change.

Major Lawrence Taliaferro, the Indian agent stationed at Fort Snelling, encouraged the Dakota to give up their seasonal subsistence cycle and helped them establish a farming community in the 1830s near Lake Calhoun and Lake Harriet in what is now south Minneapolis. Samuel and Gideon Pond came to teach and minister to the Dakota band, but became equally interested in understanding their way of life, and especially their language.

The Reverend Jedediah Stevens also arrived in the area with his family and six-year-old Jane DeBow to Christianize the Dakota. Convinced that Indian ways were inferior to those of the white men, Stevens alienated the Dakota and eventually left, a failure. Jane, however, made friends of the Dakota children and their families, sought to understand their ways, and wondered why they needed to be converted since they al-



ready worshipped creation in so many ways.

Backed by extensive research, *Jane Gibbs—“Little Bird That Was Caught”* shows us through Jane’s eyes how the lives of the Dakota and the white people were similar and different. For example, in one episode Jane explains to Stevens that when he preaches to the Dakota about the Christian God, it may appear that they are not listening as they continue with their tasks, but they just listen differently from whites. In another, Jane sees Julia Stevens hanging diapers on a clothesline and notes that her Dakota friends use dry moss as diapers. The Dakota children take her sledding, and instead of a wooden sled they use buffalo ribs.

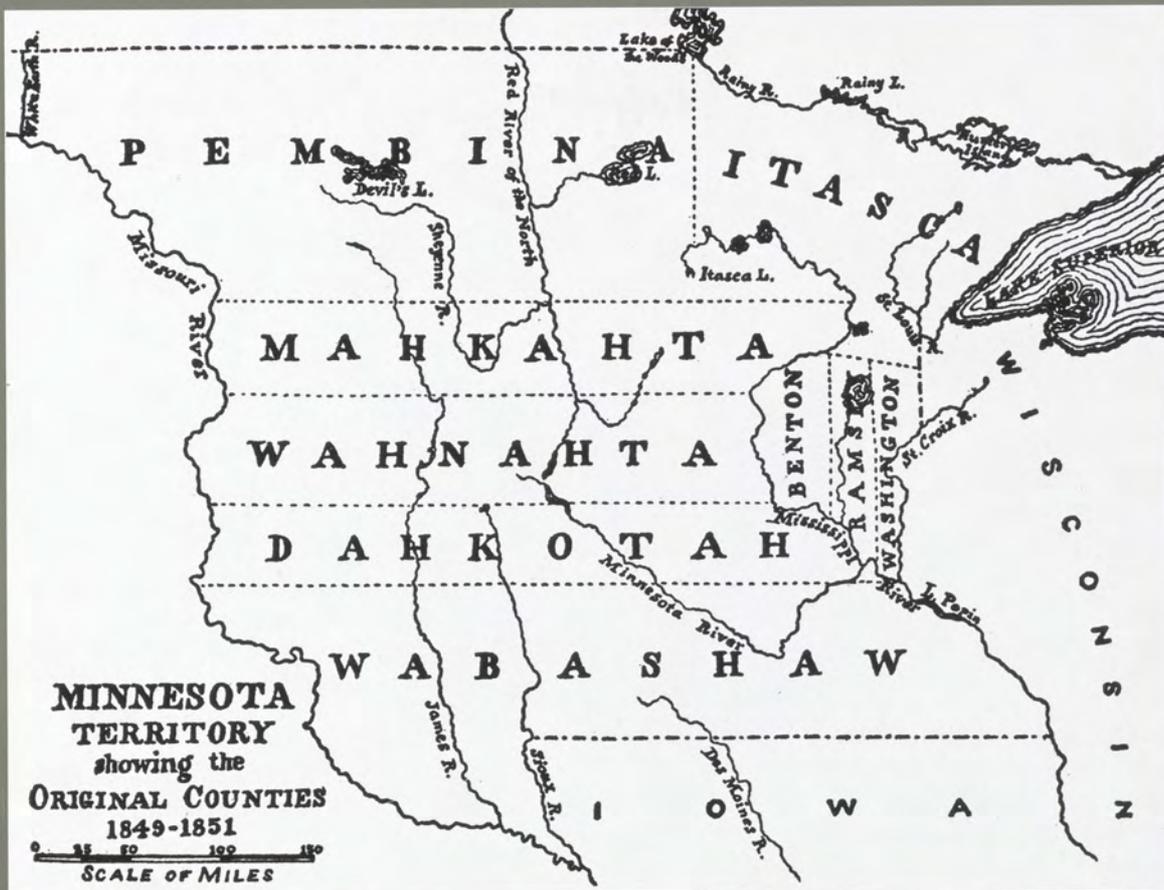
This story of her experiences at a young age presents the parallel lives of whites and Dakota in a refreshingly non-judgmental way. It’s a captivating book, respectful of Dakota lifestyles and sensitive to their struggles as they

try to reconcile the old with the new. Young adult readers should enjoy Jane DeBow Gibbs’s story and so should older readers. An Epilogue tells us that Jane traveled with the Stevens family to Illinois where she met and married Heman Gibbs. In 1849 she returned to Minnesota with her husband. The land they acquired and the home they established north of St. Paul is now the Ramsey County Historical Society’s Gibbs Farm Museum.

I found it especially useful to know the printed sources of the author’s information and was reassured to see that several American Indians representing scholarly and community interests had reviewed the manuscript. This book fills a gap, since little is written about American Indian history in the Twin Cities. One can only hope that someday more will be added from the Dakota perspective.

*Pauline Brunette Danforth is an Ojibwe who works with the American Indian Support Services at Metropolitan State University.*

The Gibbs Farm Museum, Jane’s home as a wife and mother, is a National Historic Site. It stands at the corner of Cleveland and Larpenteur avenues in the northern St. Paul suburb of Falcon Heights in Ramsey County. There you will see the location of the sod and log dugout shanty, Jane’s first home, and the farmhouse itself, with some of the furnishings that belonged to Jane. In the fields behind the farmhouse, you will see a Dakota tioti surrounded by a Dakota garden, much like the garden Jane helped tend in Cloud Man’s village so many years ago.



Map of Minnesota Territory showing the original counties as they existed from 1849 to 1851. Minnesota Historical Society collections. See "A Short History of Ramsey County," beginning on page 8

**R.C.H.S.**

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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