

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Education was a serious matter in 1911 when these boys and girls attended the Stoen School on the western prairie of Minnesota. It has been preserved and restored as the one-room country school at the Ramsey County Historical Society's Gibbs Farm Museum in Falcon Heights. See the articles beginning on Page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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On the Cover: School children pose with their teacher, Andrew Peterson, the man in the hat. Ernie Kittleston, who gave this photograph to the museum, is the little boy second from the left in the front row. See articles beginning on page 4.

Acknowledgements: Photographs with the articles on pages 4-13 are from former Stoen school students and teachers. Those of Walter Hill on page 18; Walter Sanborn and his family on pages 22-27, and Kittsondale on page 29 are from the Minnesota Historical Society's audio-visual library. Other Hill family photographs are from the James J. Hill Papers at the James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, and are used with the library's permission. The photograph on page 31 is from the Ramsey County Historical Society's historic sites survey file.

RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 26, Number 2 Summer, 1991

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 The Little White School House on the Prairie
Harlan Seyfer
- 14 Dog Sled to Private Car: The Peregrinating Hills
Thomas C. Buckley
- 22 Walter Sanborn and the Eighth Circuit Court
Thomas H. Boyd
- 28 A Matter of Time
- 30 Books, Etc.
- 31 What's Historic About This Site?
First National Bank
of White Bear Lake

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A Message from the Editorial Board

While this issue of *Ramsey County History* focuses on the school house at the Gibbs Farm Museum, the peregrinating family of James J. Hill and the career of Judge Walter Sanborn, the Editorial Board already is looking ahead to the fall issue. On November 1, the city of St. Paul will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the naming of the city. *Ramsey County History* will share in this celebration with an article on "the real" Pierre "Pig's Eye" Parrant, a look back at the early days of St. Paul and a fascinating account of the experiences of one of the city's first settlers—the Perry family. We at *Ramsey County History* look forward to this landmark event next fall and hope you will, too.

We also remain interested in your comments on articles in past issues of this magazine. We're inviting you to bring a bag lunch and participate in the second in our new discussion series based on these articles. Please join us from 12-1 p.m. Thursday, July 18, in Courtroom 408, Landmark Center, St. Paul.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

What's Historic About This Site?

First National Bank of White Bear Lake

Editor's Note: This is the sixth in a series of articles on Ramsey County's historic sites.

This delightful classically-inspired building is an excellent example of how the older buildings which have added so much character to the downtowns of Minnesota communities can be adapted to new uses.

The former First National Bank of White Bear Lake at what used to be 316 Washington Avenue now houses Timberdoodle, a clothing and gift shop, but it stands on the site it has occupied for seventy years and its original exterior is still intact.

Built in 1921, the year White Bear Lake became a city, the Beaux Arts-inspired bank was designed by St. Paul architect C. E. Vankirk and built by Steenburg Construction Company, with Phil Ulmer as stone cutter. The bank had been established in 1914 as the White Bear State Bank and, in constructing its new building, the bank's founders, Cooper Fulton and Fred Murray, were said to have spared no expense in creating a building that would rival any bank building in Ramsey County. Its pediment, with masonry elaborately carved in the form of a cornucopia spilling out fruit, seems to express the prosperity of the 1920s.

Fulton and Murray had hoped to set off a "city beautiful" building trend in White Bear Lake. This was a community whose origins dated back to the early years of the nineteenth century when the region was inhabited by Ojibway (Chippewa) and Dakota (Sioux) bands who came each season to hunt, fish and harvest berries and wild rice.

In the 1850s, several settlers launched the beginnings of a resort community that, for the next thirty years, attracted vacationers from throughout the Midwest. Beginning in the 1890s, streetcar lines connected White Bear Lake with St. Paul and



First National Bank of White Bear Lake, now renovated as the Timberdoodle clothing and gift store.

well-to-do families built summer homes along the lake shore and on Manitou Island, which was connected to the mainland by a small bridge.

As the automobile eclipsed the streetcar, most of the summer residents began to live there throughout the year. Many of their former summer homes still exist, although often greatly altered in their adaptation for year-round use.

A number of other commercial buildings still survive in the downtown district, in addition to the First National Bank building. Among the most important is the Italianate-inspired, brick Reif and Clement Meat Market, now the Wayzata Children's Shop, built in 1886 and standing next to the bank. The Tudor Revival Avalon Theater, built in 1928 at 2179 Fourth Street, has been converted to shops.

First National Bank of White Bear Lake closed after the stock market crash in 1929. The First State Bank of White Bear Lake then occupied the building from 1930 to 1961.

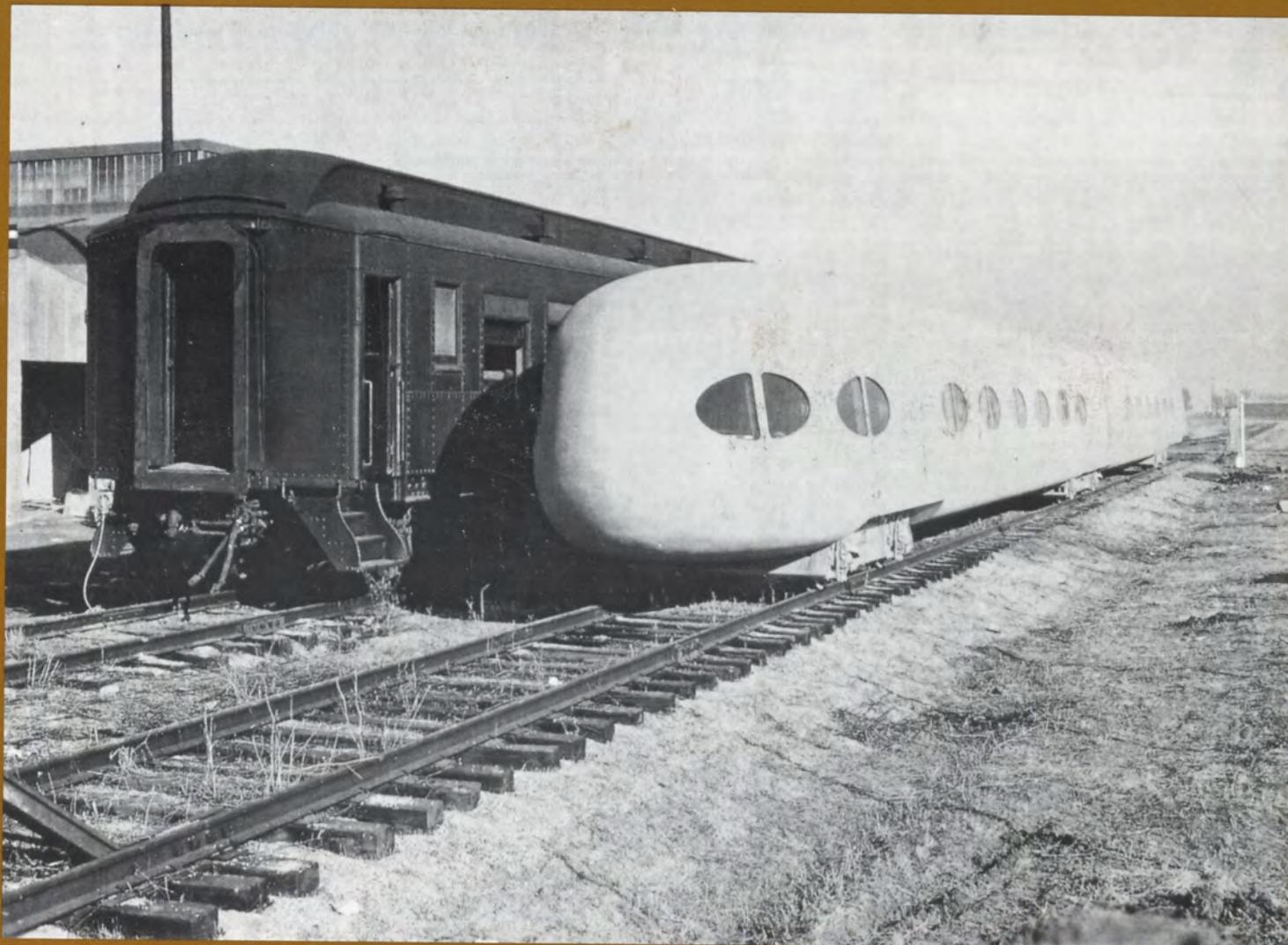
Books, Etc., from page 30

Arcadia with no railroads.

The presence of James J. Hill and his private gallery help point out a continuing facet of how St. Paul views itself. A local newspaper article, written in 1892, said, "Tell a New Yorker . . . that right here in St. Paul is a private art gallery which surpasses anything his nabobs can boast, and, unless he has seen J. J. Hill's magnificent collection, he will simply laugh you to scorn. If he really knows pictures, however, your revenge is easy." Later, in 1922, painter Robert Hale promoted the house and collections as a possible art museum. "Where art is spoken of," Hale said, "St. Paul would flash into the mind along with the Louvre and the Metropolitan." The article's title expressed a hope that is still expressed today: "With Hill Art Collection, St. Paul Would Be Famed As A Cultural Center."

Homecoming is a fine book.

—Daniel John Hoisington



Prototype of a streamlined passenger coach next to a standard railroad coach of the 1930s at Inglewood, California. The new coach was designed by Cortlandt Hill, grandson of James J. Hill. At 32,000 pounds, the bullet-shaped coach was one-fifth the weight of the older coach. See story beginning on page 14.

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

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