

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Members of the Junior League of St. Paul rehearsing for the 1936 Junior League Cabaret, one of the League's more entertaining fund raisers. Left to right are Mrs. John Driscoll, Molly Turner, Betty Evans, Betty Scandrett, Betty Fobes, Edith Shull, Clotilde Irvine, Mrs. Thomas Wheeler, Alice Bartles and Betty Rugg. See article on the Junior League's seventy-five years of service to the community beginning on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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A Message from the Editorial Board

In the early 1960s, a few schools on the cutting edge of higher education began to give special attention to the issue of race relations, and the contributions of racial and ethnic groups in national and local history. By the early 1970s, the contributions of women and the lives of average citizens, aside from those in the labor movement, were also singled out as subfields deserving special focus in the curriculum. However, those fields have long been recognized by state and county historical societies as worthy of attention. When the Editorial Board set about to expand the size of *Ramsey County History* and enhance its scholarly depth and breadth, the magazine already had a tradition of articles in these fields, which we determined to continue.

This issue contains three articles which contribute to the field of women's and family history. Scheduled for future issues are two articles in the areas of minority and ethnic history: the contributions of the Mexican and Jewish American communities to the history of St. Paul, as well as an article on the High Bridge, that vital link to the West Side, a neighborhood that was home to both communities.

—Thomas C. Buckley, member of the Editorial Board

What's Historic About This Site?

The Cyrus B. Cobb House in White Bear Lake

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

The house at 2199 First Street in White Bear Lake that once belonged to Cyrus B. Cobb is a reminder of the nineteenth century village that was one of Minnesota's first summer resorts, as well as an early and thriving business and farming community.

Cobb was a White Bear Lake merchant and the owner of a lumber company that advertised "lumber, lath, building material, coal, wood, lime." Like many nineteenth century businessmen, Cobb was involved in a variety of other enterprises. He operated a real estate and insurance business with James C. Murray, and apparently he also owned a commercial building known as Cobb's Block at Railroad Avenue and Fifth Street. Tenants included Otto J. Troseth, a grocer, and the *Lake Breeze* newspaper and printing office.

Cobb's house, built about 1885, is one of the most intact of the surviving Victorian era houses in White Bear Lake, according to the Historic Sites Survey of Ramsey County and St. Paul, conducted in 1980 and 1981 by the Ramsey County Historical Society and the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission. It also is the only basically intact brick house still standing in White Bear Lake that dates before 1890.

The two-story house, built in the Queen Anne style, has elaborate brick work, such as brick watertable and molded brick belt course. It has segmental arched windows and two bays, as well as a two-story, three-sided square projecting bay on the east side of the house.

A line drawing of the house appeared



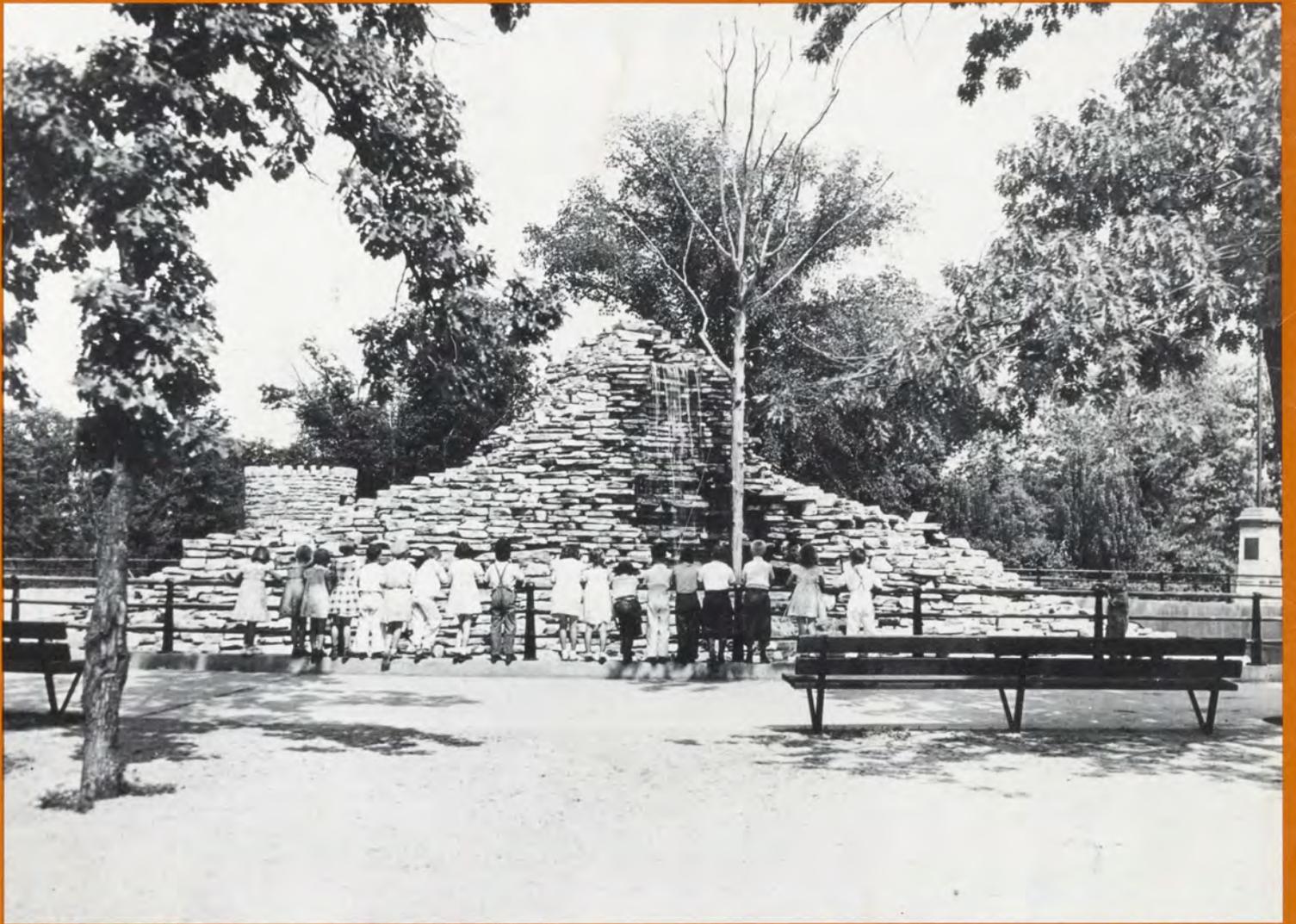
The Cyrus B. Cobb house in White Bear Lake. A tall shingled spire once rose above the canted southeast corner of the house.

in *All About White Bear Lake*, first published in 1890. The drawing reveals that there was once a tall, shingled spire which rose above the canted southeast corner of the house. The original open entrance pictured in the drawing had a balustrade and fretwork. Above the entrance to the porch there was a second-story gabled roof open porch with fretwork and balusters similar to those on the first floor level.

White Bear Lake—with its three surrounding lakes, White Bear, Bald Eagle and Birch—was a bustling resort community by 1885 when the Cobb house was built. The region was once a dense wilderness traversed frequently by the

Santee Sioux or Dakota—the Mdewakantons—who hunted the forests for deer and small animals, fished the lakes, picked blueberries and cranberries and harvested wild rice.

During the summer of 1850, after the land had been opened to settlement, White Bear Lake experienced its first real estate boom as speculators from St. Paul bought up forty and eighty-acre government lots using military land warrants purchased from veterans. Real settlement, however, began a year later when James M. Goodhue's lyrical descriptions of the land around White Bear Lake, published in his *Minnesota Pioneer*, attracted farmers to the area.



Visitors lining the railing at Monkey Island, the Como Zoo's enduringly popular attraction. This photograph was taken around 1940. See the article on *Growing Up in St. Paul*, beginning on page 16.

R.C.H.S.
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