

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

Colorful, Contentious —  
St. Paul's 100-Year-Old  
Neighborhood Press

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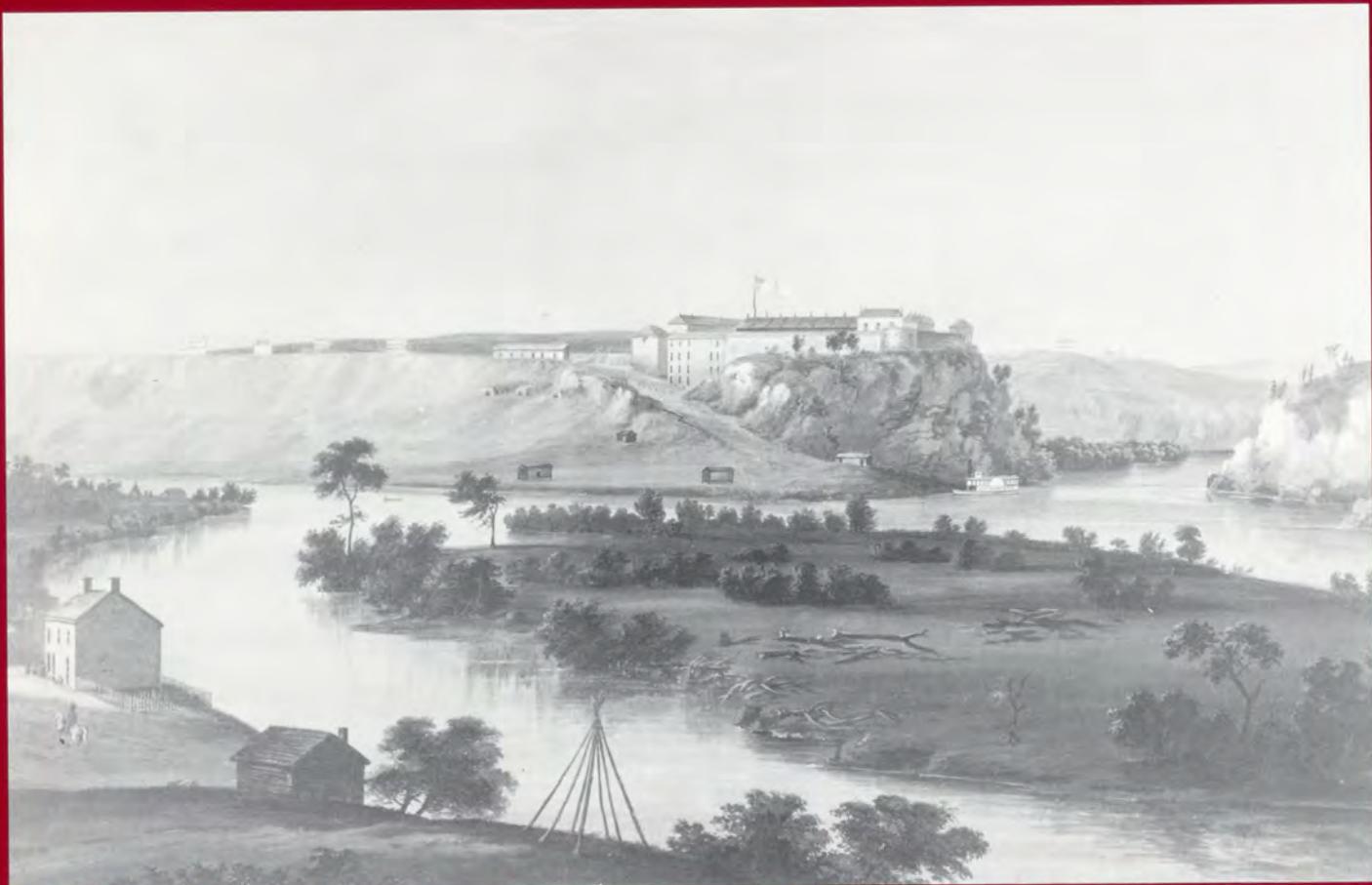
**Summer, 1993**

Volume 28, Number 2

*Birth, Death, Reincarnation*

**The Story of Fort Snelling and Its State Park**

*Page 4*



*Old Fort Snelling in 1844. This water color and gouache painting by John Casper Wild shows the fort a few years before Minnesota became a territory. The many pitfalls in the effort to save, restore and rebuild the fort and create Fort Snelling State Park are described by an active participant, in the article beginning on page 4. Minnesota Historical Society photograph of the original painting, which is in its collection.*

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

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Summer, 1993

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

In the past several months the Editorial Board has received requests to reprint articles published in back issues of *Ramsey County History*. This recognition of the editorial strength of our magazine is very gratifying to all members of the Ramsey County Historical Society.

The Editorial Board wants our readers to know that we respond promptly to these requests. We can sometimes provide additional copies of a particular issue when there is enough lead time involved in the request. The cost of reprinting or purchasing additional copies depends on the nature of the request.

While the Editorial Board wants to encourage a wide dissemination of our editorial material, we also are obliged to remind our readers that the magazine is copyrighted by the Society and under current copyright law cannot be photocopied and distributed without our permission.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

# Letters to the Editor

## What Happened?

Having recently seen the dramatization of Evelyn Fairbanks' *Days of Rondo* and even more recently having read David Taylor's fascinating article, "Looking Back at the Black Community – Part II" in the Spring issue of *Ramsey County History*, I am trying to understand what ever happened to the sturdy lifestyles described by both Ms. Fairbanks and Dr. Taylor. Near the end of his article, Dr. Taylor states that "Although many black families were poor by most standards, they were not spiritually impoverished." This seems to sum up the point of both the play and the magazine article.

What has happened since the 1940s to turn life in St. Paul's African American neighborhood from the "self contained, tightly knit, and socially stratified neighborhood of families, close friends of our families, fictive relatives and others . . ." Taylor described into the troubled area we read about today?

—Gail Friedrich Teas,  
Bloomington, Minn.

*Dr. Taylor responds: There is not a logical explanation for changes in cultures. Neighborhoods, communities, cities, states, and nations are dynamic social entities. The larger they grow, the more complex the nature of human interactions. The population of St. Paul's black community during the 1940s was perhaps 3,000; in the 1960s, perhaps 5,000. Today the population exceeds 20,000. Likewise, the size and character of our nation has changed dramatically in the intervening years. The opportunities and problems of contemporary communities differ significantly from those of the past. Problems once handled within families are now the domain of the courts because families can no longer cope with certain*



*Highland Park Water Tower, about 1940. Donaldson Photo Co., Minnesota Historical Society.*

*types of behaviors. Under the pressure of urban living, families have become dysfunctional and bereft of resources. Neighborhoods suffer as well. There is no simple explanation for what has happened, nor are there any simple solutions. Looking back to the past will help us understand what was lost, but it will not provide answers to what is presently needed. Only grounding ourselves in the reality of the present will allow us to develop answers consistent with contemporary needs. Strengthening the family*

*may hold promise, but it is not ultimately the solution.*

## Who Was She?

The picture of the Swadelsky family on the cover of the last issue of the magazine, and the brief mention of Zlotah Swadelsky's work among the Jewish women on the West Side interested me. It seems to me an unknown segment of women's history. Does the Ramsey County Historical Society have any more information on her?

—Virginia Wierich, South St. Paul

*Not at present, but Linda Schloff, executive director of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, is continuing to research her background. Jewish Historical Society offices are housed in the library at Hamline University.*

## Candlelit Tower

A childhood memory surfaced as I read Arthur Mc Watt's article on Clarence Wigington and the Highland Park water tower in the Spring issue. For many years at Christmas they used to put lighted candles in the tower windows. This lovely tradition has long since been discontinued, and I've always wondered why.

—Esther Swanson, St. Paul

*In her article on the history of neighborhood newspapers, beginning on page 13 in this issue, Jane McClure writes that the tradition ended with the death of Carl Flack, who was tower attendant for many years.*

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Church news must reach us not later than Saturday; letters to  
the editor, social news and classified ads by 5 o'clock Monday.

## New Owners

As new owners of "The Highland Villager," we wish to take this opportunity to thank the advertisers for their patience and the cooperation accorded us during the transition of ownership. It is our sincere desire, with your cooperation, to make "The Highland Villager" outstanding among papers of its kind.

We welcome news items of interest to Highland Village residents. Mail your news items to the Highland Villager, 418 South Third Street, Minneapolis 15, Minnesota.

*The masthead from the second issue of the Highland Villager, dated March 12, 1953. For the history of St. Paul's colorful neighborhood newspapers, see the article beginning on page 13.*

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

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