

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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A Roof Over Their Heads:
The Ramsey County Home

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Summer, 2000

Volume 35, Number 2

Dilettante, Renaissance Man, Intelligence Officer
Jerome Hill and His 'Dearest Mother' Letters

—Page 4



James J. Hill, II (Jerome Hill) in Air Corps uniform, photographed around 1942, probably at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. See article beginning on Page 4.

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Message from the Editorial Board

Because the more recent issues of *Ramsey County History* have concentrated on the mid-nineteenth century and the area's pioneer heritage, this issue shifts to the mid-twentieth century with the wartime experiences of Jerome Hill, grandson and namesake of the Empire Builder, James J. Hill. Historian and author G. Richard Slade uses Jerome Hill's letters to his mother while Hill was serving as an Army Air Forces intelligence officer in France in the summer of 1944 as a window on southern France and Paris immediately following liberation by the Allies. Jerome Hill's reports of what he saw allow the reader to glimpse Paris through the eyes of an observer who knew it well before the German army overran it in 1940. We then turn to a subject close at hand—the story of the Ramsey County "Poor Farm" and its adjacent cemetery in Maplewood. Authors Pete Boulay and Robert C. Vogel both make a strong case for the value and usefulness of local history in current policy-making decisions. Rounding out this issue is Tom Kelley's account of the 1962 gubernatorial election recount. Although the recount itself is a familiar story in Minnesota politics, Kelley provides the perspective of an insider who participated in the process as the state's first Election Procedures Advisor. His reminiscences remind us that balloting in elections is a serious business that is sometimes overlooked in the heat of a campaign.

John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

Walter W. Liggett

I was rather disappointed to read Patricia Sweney Hart's review of my book, *Stopping the Presses* (University of Minnesota Press, 1998). This book deals with the murder of my journalist father, Walter W. Liggett, in Minneapolis [on December 9], 1935, and it does so in the context of journalism and the persecution of troublesome journalists. My father was killed when he was exploring the ties between Minnesota government and organized crime, as well as the differences between the promises and practices of the governing Farmer-Labor party.

Rather than evaluating either my book or my extensive research or discussing my father's life and death, Hart sequed into a fairly lengthy recapitulation of Fred Friendly's *Near vs. Minnesota ex rel. Olson*, which I also cover in a section (pp. 39-42), titled "Attempted Murder and the Minnesota Gag Law." I also cover Guilford's subsequent murder and its circumstances in more detail than Friendly.

Since my emphasis and interpretation differ somewhat from those of Fred Friendly, Hart has missed an opportunity to weigh our varying interpretations or to consider the validity of my research. Instead, she recapitulates Fred Friendly and calls my father a "scandal-mongering publisher." She's entitled to her opinion, of course, but, given my extensive quotes from Walter's newspaper and editorials, she might have explained why she considered these scandal-mongering.

Marda L. Woodbury, Oakland, Calif.

Another comment on our review of Stopping the Presses has come in a long letter from George C. Brandt of Minneapolis. Due to space considerations, a digest of his letter is published here:

As one of the few surviving observers of the events of December 9th, 1935, I am compelled to put some of my memories

in writing . . . in the hope that some balance will exist for future historians. Recently, I read the Fall, 1999, issue of [Minnesota History], the quarterly of the Minnesota Historical Society. Soon followed the Winter 2000 issue of Ramsey County History (Vol. 34, Number 4). Both of them had reviews of [Marda Liggett Woodbury's] marvelous book, *Stopping the Presses—The Murder of Walter W. Liggett*. Both reviews are flawed. Patricia Sweney Hart in the RCH review wanders from the subject but does provide some balanced views. . . .

The extended family relationship, that included [the Liggett family and my family] lasted many years and effectively covered two generations. My parents . . . *did not have lifelong friends that included blackmailers or child molesters* [as Floyd B. Olson and his cronies charged]. It is my hope that future reviewers and historians will give honest consideration to the character, family, and friends of *all* the participants in this ugly and tragic drama. Can there be any doubt that all the players should be defined by what they did and who were their associates—the good, the bad, and the ugly?

On the night of December 9, 1935, our family dinner was a quiet celebration of my younger brother David's eleventh birthday. It was interrupted by a phone call from [my aunt] telling of the murder of Walter Liggett. We lived in an old large traditional home in St. Anthony Park, only two doors from [my aunt's] home. Walter Liggett's brother Robert had called her with the news, and to ask if his young family might find refuge from the expected further carnage. Our home had five bedrooms and a large attic and basement. Walter Liggett's death had been predicted in writing by W. Liggett himself, and by the slaying of crusader Howard Guilford, also in south Minneapolis a year earlier. Robert Liggett

was not connected to the newspaper business, but was very concerned for the safety of his family. The events of that evening created a strong and lasting impression on this then-sixteen-year-old lad.

Jane and the Dakota

I write to express my appreciation of Julie Humann's article in the spring issue of *Ramsey County History*. It's not that I was, or am, much interested in the life of Jane Gibbs. What I found terrifically good was Ms. Humann's summary of Dakota life in this area in the early days of white settlement. It is the best short account that I can recall having seen.

Paul Nelson, St. Paul

The Dakota Villages

I understand that there were a number of Dakota villages in the Twin Cities region early in the last century. Where were they located?

Jean Harvey, Bismark, N. D.

Mark Diedrich, who has written and published a number of books about the Dakota, Winnebago, and Ojibway, listed a number of Dakota villages in his article, "The Dakota Perspectives—'We have been Cheated so Often,'" published in the spring, 1999, issue of Ramsey County History. In addition, a map drawn by Samuel Pond showing the location of some of the Dakota villages in the Twin Cities region as they were in 1834 was published in the most recent issue of this magazine. They include the following: Wapahasha II's village at present-day Winona; Red Wing's village at Red Wing; Pinichon or Pinisha's at Bloomington; Black Dog's village on the Minnesota River; and Shakopee's village at present-day Shakopee. Pond's map also indicates villages at Kaposia, Grey Cloud Island, Eagle Creek, Eden Prairie, St. Lawrence, and Carver.



Dairy herd at the Ramsey County Home in Maplewood in 1923. Minnesota Historical Society photograph. See Pete Boulay's history of the Ramsey County "Poor Farm" beginning on page 13.

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

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