

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

A Lynching in St. Paul?
Almost—in 1895, an Era
of ‘Vigilante Justice’

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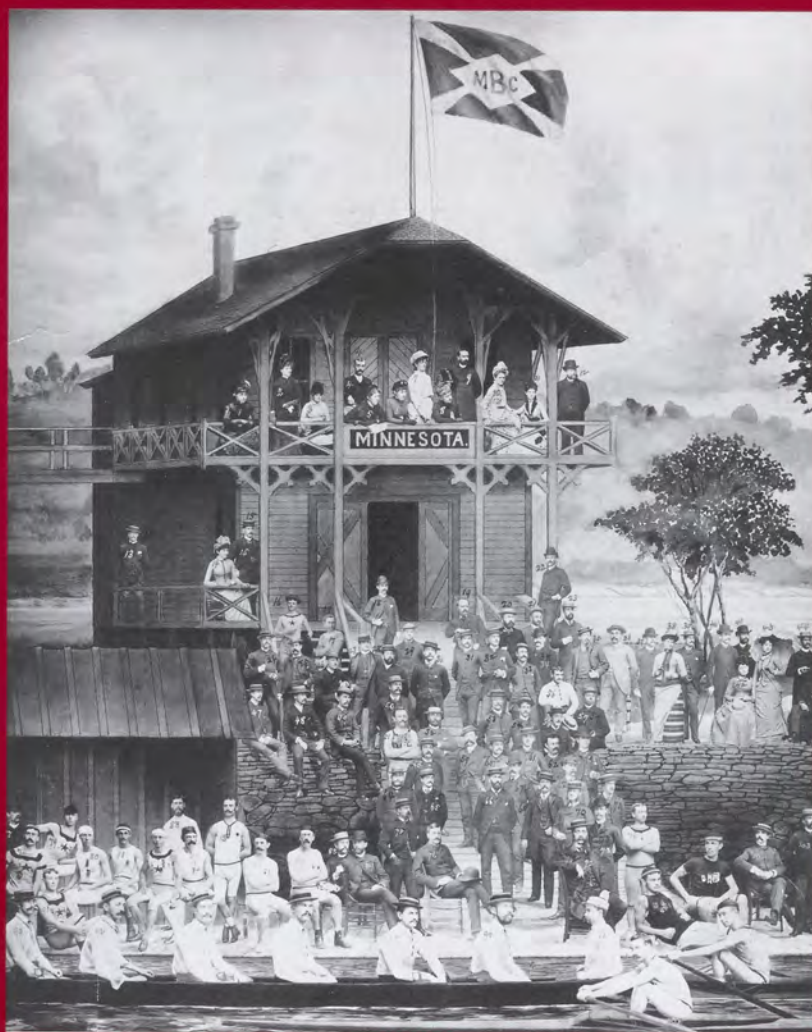
Summer, 2002

Volume 37, Number 2

Life on the Mississippi:

Singles, Doubles and Pairs, Fours and Quads—
The Minnesota Boat Club’s 132 Years

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The home of the Minnesota Boat Club, circa 1880s. This photograph by C. A. Zimmerman “was one of the most remarkable pieces of photography ever accomplished,” according to an article in a 1903 issue of *The Razoo*, a Boat Club publication, adding that it “and has been commented upon by photographers all over the country. . . . In order to get it, Mr. Zimmerman had to keep a sketch of the boat-house in his mind while he took photographs of the members and the ladies. These he afterward arranged in groups so that they appear in the completed picture to be all posing together.” From the Minnesota Historical Society archives. See article on the Minnesota Boat Club’s history beginning on page 4.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Given this summer's 90-degree temperatures, Jim Miller's history of the Minnesota Boat Club provides a refreshing glimpse of an early St. Paul athletic enterprise. Founded in 1870 by a number of the city's leading men, rowing at the MBC was strictly for amateurs. It also afforded an opportunity to attend social events on the Club's yearly calendar. In addition, Miller's research greatly increases our understanding of the value of Raspberry Island, where the MBC is located, to the city's cultural heritage and riverfront beauty.

In contrast, Paul Nelson's account of the near lynching of an African American, Houston Osborne, in St. Paul in 1895 is tense and suspenseful. Nelson not only explains what happened in 1895, he also shares the steps through which he went in uncovering this shameful and forgotten piece of the city's history. Unlike the Houston Osborne saga, the existence of the Selby Tunnel is well known today. What's less well known is its origin and how its construction changed the neighborhood around it. With words and photos, Virginia Brainard Kunz provides a brief history of this St. Paul landmark. "Growing Up in St. Paul," about boxer Johnny Salvator, is written by an avid promoter of St. Paul boxing history, Paul R. Gold. After Minnesota legalized boxing in 1915, St. Paul became the second largest center for training and supporting boxers in the United States. Johnny Salvator was one of the many St. Paul boxers who contributed to the city's athletic prominence in the first third of the twentieth century.

John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

More about Flandreau / Flandrau

My letter about Sinclair Lewis and the old Flandrau house brought back memories for St. Paul attorney Fred A. Kueppers, Jr. He remembered a title examination he did in 1961 in regard to the Flandrau property, so he pulled out his worksheets from that project. He has sent along to me the following abstract entries, which might be of interest to your readers:

1. An 1871 Deed whereby Charles E. Flandreau acquired title to lots 23, 24, 29, and 30 in Block 86, Dayton's and Irvine's Addition, and
2. An 1873 Deed whereby Charles E. Flandreau acquired title to Lot 25 in said Block 86; and
3. A Final Decree in the Charles Flandreau Estate dated in 1904, whereby title to all five lots was confirmed in Rebecca Blair Flandreau; and
4. A Quit Claim Deed from Rebecca to Charles M. Flandreau dated June 18, 1909.

Kueppers noted that after 1909 his worksheet did not disclose conveyances except:

- a. A Final Decree in the Estate of William Blair McClure Flandreau, dated 1940, confirming title in Grace Hodgson Flandreau; and
- b. A 1958 Quit Claim Deed from Grace Hodgson Flandreau, a single woman, to First Trust Company.

Kueppers enclosed a photocopy of a portion of the St. Paul Plat Book published in 1928. It shows that at that date there was a house on Lots 29 and 30, and to the rear of that a garage on Lot 23. He writes that "The house is on lots



Charles E. Flandrau's house at 385 Pleasant Avenue in St. Paul as it looked in 1942. Minnesota Historical Society photograph.

which are two lots (112 feet) east from the alley which lies just east of the church at the foot of Ramsey Hill," and he asks if this information vindicates Sinclair Lewis.

William S. Fallon, St. Paul

Mechanic Arts in 1901

After reading John Larson's informative article on the early history of Mechanic Arts High School, I uncovered my father's graduation program for the Class of 1901. The "graduating exercises" were held in the Raudenbush Hall on June 11, 1901. Thirty-two graduating seniors were listed.

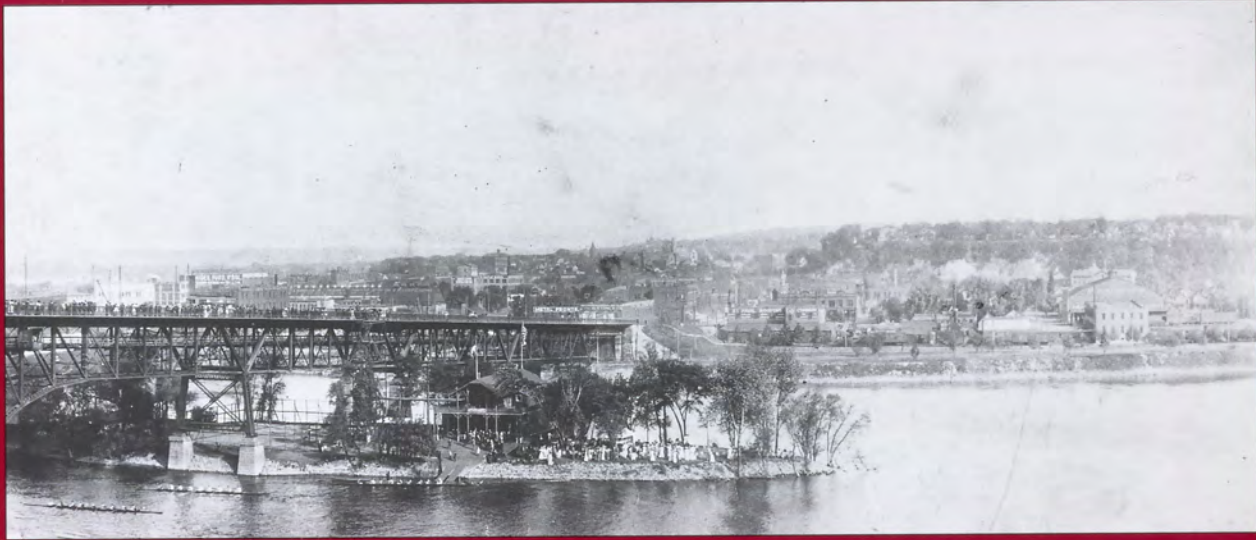
After graduation, Wilfred Theodore Johnson joined his father's new firm, C. I. Johnson Mfg. Company, which became the largest printing machinery and supply company in the Northwest from 1896 to 1947. My father became president in 1935. Born in St. Paul in 1883, he was a strong St. Paul booster all his life until his sudden death in 1946. He was an active Rotarian, Shriner, Knights Templar, Junior Pioneer, Min-

nesota and National Editorial Association member, as well as a charter member of the St. Paul Science Museum, and the St. Paul Athletic Club, among others. He was well-known among newspaper publishers and the printing trade.

I noted that a Susan Greene Weitbrecht was also listed among the graduates. Could she have been the daughter of George Weitbrecht, the first principal of Mechanic Arts? Rabbi Isaac Rypins gave the graduating address that day. Rabbi Rypins was mentioned in the article as delivering the sermon at George Weitbrecht's memorial service at the school in February, 1916.

*Jeanne Johnson Cummings,
Edina, Minnesota*

Yes, Susan Greene Weitbrecht was indeed the daughter of George Weitbrecht. Author John Larson found Susan G. Weitbrecht listed in the 1900 census as living in the George Weitbrecht family on Portland Avenue in St. Paul. She was eighteen years old at the time of the 1900 census.



The Minnesota Boat Club on Raspberry Island below the Wabash Street bridge in 1908. Across the river: St. Paul's west side. See article beginning on page 4.

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

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