

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

*'Say It Ain't So, Charlie:'
Comiskey's Labor Dispute and
the Opening of Lexington Park*

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Summer, 2004

Volume 39, Number 2

*From Farm to Florence: The Gifted Keating
Sisters and the Mystery of Their Lost Paintings*



Madonna of the Rosebower (Stephan Lochner, c. 1435; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum). A beautiful example of the elegant International Courtly Style of the late Middle Ages, this 3' by 5' copy was painted by Sr. Anysia in 1939 as a gift for her niece, Margaret H. Marrinan. See article beginning on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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Volume 39, Number 2

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THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2003:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve and interpret the history of the county for the general public, recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major responsibility is its stewardship over this history.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Judge Margaret H. Marrinan has long had more than just the casual interest of a family member in the artistry of her two aunts, Sr. Anysia and Sr. Sophia Keating, who belonged to the Congregation of St. Joseph of Carondelet in St. Paul and were sent by their Order to Italy from 1908 to 1910 to study art and copy Old Masters' paintings. The many reproductions of famous religious and secular paintings that the Sisters made during their three-year journey, as well as those they made after their return to the College of St. Catherine, have been a source of great pride to Judge Marrinan and her family, but have also raised many questions concerning what became of these paintings beginning in the 1950s.

Judge Marrinan unravels this tale as best she can, but a full account remains untold. So that our readers will better appreciate the artistry of Sr. Anysia and Sr. Sophia, the Society has reproduced eight of their paintings in full color on the front and back covers and in selected pages of this issue. The Society also salutes the College of St. Catherine, which on August 31 begins a nearly year-long celebration of its 100th birthday, by publishing these paintings and acknowledging the talent, hard work, and faithful dedication of two of the many women religious who have served so well to educate so many at the College over the past century.

John Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

Byron R. Mortensen Remembers The Society in His Will



Byron R. Mortensen
1949-2003

Byron R. Mortensen (1949-2003) was born in St. Paul and spent the early years of his life at 865 Sherwood Avenue, near Arcade Street. His father, Gordon Mortensen was an East Sider, but his mother, Loretta, was from the West Side. In 1961 the Mortensen family moved to White Bear Lake, where Byron, his brothers, Gordon Jr. and Neil, and his sister, Arvilla, all grew up.

Byron graduated from White Bear Lake High School. One of his favorite school activities was the Photography Club, a hobby that Byron continued as an adult. After high school, Byron attended Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn., studying history and business. He completed his business education at Lakewood Community College.

Using his business training well, Byron was employed by various Twin Cities businesses in the food service industry. He became very skilled at analyzing food preparation and handling equipment and arranging for its installation at commercial sites. His employer for about the last six years of his life was Commercial Kitchen Services in St. Paul.

Byron's father had been a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army and had served in

the northern European theater in World War II. The senior Mortensen's stories of landing at Normandy, advancing across France and Belgium, and finishing the war at Hitler's fortified mountain retreat known as Berchtesgarden (Eagle's Nest) in southern Germany as well as his extensive collection of Nazi souvenirs may have spurred Byron's love of history.

A long-time resident of White Bear Lake and member of the Ramsey County Historical Society, Byron read widely on World War II and Minnesota history. For more than thirty years, Gordon Mortensen Sr. displayed a large 1883 lithographic map of the city of St. Paul in the office of his commercial and residential painting business on Payne Avenue. In 1986 he gave this map to Byron, who subsequently made a copy of it and in 2001 donated the original to the Society.

In addition to his passion for history, Byron Mortensen was an avid bike rider, enthusiastic sports fan, and serious amateur photographer. His family particularly enjoyed the many black and white photos he took on his vacation and fishing trips to places such as Lake Mille Lacs, Two Harbors, and Grand Marais in northern Minnesota. Byron also made photographic studies of Payne Avenue and Swede Hollow in St. Paul. His other hobby was collecting die cast metal toy banks made by the Ertl Company of Dyersville, Iowa.

Byron Mortensen is survived by his brothers and sister, three special nephews, one special niece, many friends, and two favorite cats, Vivian and Eddy. In his will, Byron left a bequest of more than \$40,000 to the Ramsey County Historical Society. His gift has been added to the Society's investments so that it can help support future operations and programming.

J.M.L.

Letters to the Editor

Setting the Record Straight

Some corrections for my article, "A Quilt and a Diary," published in the Spring issue of *Ramsey County History*: my grandmother's name was Marjory, not Margaret, Peterson; she changed her birthdate to June 13, not June 18, 1898; and there are an estimated 200 Orphan Riders still alive in Minnesota, not the United States.

Ann Zemke, Minnetonka.

A Forgotten Park?

I've been unable to find anyone in St. Paul who has heard of the now defunct Union Park. I recall that it was located near the Chicago, Milwaukee/St. Paul "Short Line" railroad somewhere in the Midway area, or perhaps near the state fairgrounds. I also have a copy of a photo of a "mansion" that I believe was located at the park. It was the home of a J. G. Hinkel, who apparently was responsible for the creation of Union Park. The 33-acre park was described as "Grounds of unexcelled beauty, 851 [-foot] lookout tower, 60-140 [-foot] grand pavilion, seats & tables to accommodate 10,000 people, fountains, lakes, bowling alley, merry-go-round."

I think it odd that even my grandmother did not recall hearing of such a park (circa 1890). The park apparently was owned by "Grote & Hinkel" and at some point was open to the public, attracting as many as "10,000 visitors in a single day. The grounds are under police surveillance to keep out rude characters." Where was it, and are there photos available?

Dennis C. Felling, St. Paul.

We're checking.

Boots and Shoes

I cannot thank you enough for the great work you people do. Thank you, thank you. What information do you have on the Foot Schultz shoe factory in St. Paul? In the early 1900s my great grandmother and her sister worked there before their marriages in 1903. Thank you so much for everything you do.

Jim McGraves, Wichita, Kansas.

In 1858 Silas B. Foot and George Sterling formed a partnership in Red Wing, Minnesota, to manufacture boots and shoes. In 1881 Foot moved part of the business to St. Paul and joined Theodore Schulze in organizing the Foot Company at 233-239 Wacouta. The company specialized in manufacturing and distributing "more refined city shoes." In 1913 the company lost its site to the new Union Depot and moved to 500 N. Robert, a building constructed in 1916. For most of his life, Silas Foot commuted daily to St. Paul from Red Wing. His son, E. H. Foot, took over operations of the Red Wing company, which became the Red Wing Shoe Company in 1905. The building at 500 N. Robert is still standing as warehouse and artists' studios. Stay with us. We plan an article for 2005 that will feature the Foot Schultz company.

Source of the Mississippi?

What is the town in Minnesota or the creek where the Mississippi River starts? Could you please help me out with that information?

Joseph Vitale

The headwaters of the Mississippi are in Itasca State Park, where you can actually walk across the stream.

Itasca, established in 1891, is Minnesota's oldest state park.

Alary's Bar

Can you please tell me the original location of Alary's Bar? We believe its first location was across from the Riviera Theater on Wabasha in downtown St. Paul. Then it moved either next door or to the side of the Riviera. If you know the answer and can share it with, you will settle a long dispute.

Gloria Tava

The bar's original location was 444-445 Wabasha, across the street from the Riviera and between the Strand and Tower theaters. After a fire at that location in 1956, Alary's moved across the street to 457 Wabasha, a storefront or two north of the Riviera. Hope this settles your dispute.

History of the Ruins

We live on Ramsey Hill in St. Paul and frequently take walks on Irvine and Summit avenues. We're curious about a ruined structure between Irvine and Summit, just west of the Hill House, and essentially in the backyard of a Summit Avenue house. Is there any information I need before conducting research on these ruins?

*Zachary D. Flann, Associate AIA,
Miller Dunwiddie Architects*

You may be speaking of the stairway and wall that are in the rear of the James J. Hill property. The southern edge of the property includes remnants of a one-and-a-half story gardeners' residence. It was stylistically similar to the house, the Hill's greenhouse, mushroom cave, grape arbors, and possibly an artesian well.



The Pantheon (Rome). Original watercolor, 1908. The nuns' sojourn coincided with modern Italy's movement to distance itself from Vatican influence. An example of this evolution is found in the Pantheon itself. In the late nineteenth century, two bell towers added during its use as a Catholic church were demolished and the building reverted to the secular Pantheon we recognize today. Several of the people in this 1908 watercolor by Sr. Anysia wear the peasant dress still worn at that time by the lower classes. See article beginning on page 4.

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

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