

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Crex Carpet
Company Revisited

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Summer 2006

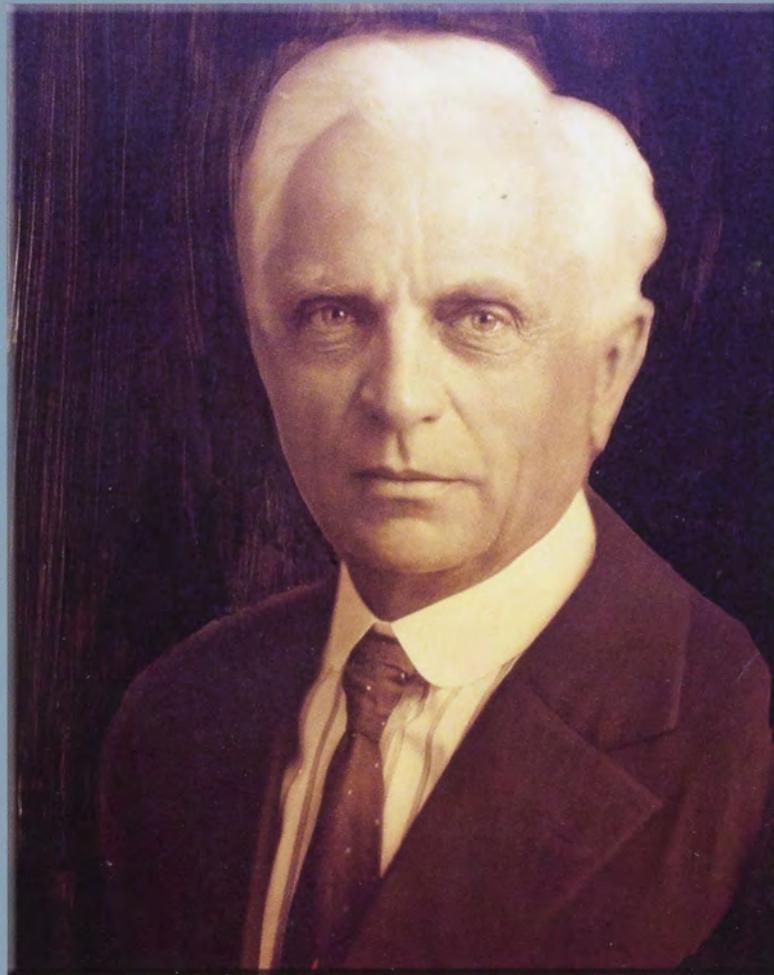
Volume 41, Number 2

“He Was Mechanic Arts”

Mechanic Arts High School

The Dietrich Lange Years, 1916-1939

—Page 4



A hand-tinted portrait of Dietrich Lange, who served as principal of Mechanic Arts High School between 1916 and 1939. Photo courtesy of John W. Mittelstadt. Photography by Maureen McGinn.

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Ramsey County History is published quarterly
by the Ramsey County Historical Society,
323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St.
Paul, Minn. 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in
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torical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. **All
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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 41, Number 2

Summer 2006

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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Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from
Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr.
and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon

A Message from the Editorial Board

Good historical research and writing ultimately reveals the stories of people
from a new perspective. In his history of diverse Mechanics Arts High School,
John W. Larson shares his insights on the influence of a committed principal and En-
glish teachers on the later careers of graduates, including Roy Wilkins and Harry Black-
mun. Paul D. Nelson shows how his earlier article on the Crex Carpet Company led to
a new discovery: memoirs of the company's first president, Michael J. O'Shaughnessy.
And Paul Picard outlines the story of Billy Miske, a St. Paul boxer who took on Jack
Dempsey in 1920 despite an illness that would soon take his life. We are proud to help
preserve accounts like these, which otherwise would go unrecognized, and showcase
them for our wider member audience. As you hold this magazine, you are in a unique
position to read these stories: share the wealth and recruit a new member today!

Anne Cowie,
Chair, Editorial Board

Letters to the Editor

Kudos for Crex

Paul D. Nelson's story about wild wire grass in the Winter 2006 issue was well worth my annual membership check.

I'm intrigued and still wondering about a question posed by Nelson: How did the young women who worked in the factory feel about their labor in a burden of "clatter, roar, rattle, and dust" for half the pay of men. . . or did they find satisfaction in camaraderie and at least a measure of self-reliance?"

This question invites the reader to reach beyond the well-researched facts . . . and into souls. . . .

Jo An M. Lindstrom, Lake Elmo

For more on the Crex story, see Paul Nelson's "Crex Revisited" starting on page 18 of this issue.

Jews and Lowertown

The articles by Eileen McCormack and David Riehle on Mary Hill's Lowertown in the Spring issue were interesting, but why was there no discussion of the Jewish residents of this "lost neighborhood"?

Gene Rosenblum, St. Paul

We're working with Gene Rosenblum to expand the coverage of Jewish residents of this part of St. Paul in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Look for a follow-up in a future issue.

"Pin Money" Questioned

I'm not sure I like the part about "pin money" in [Anne B. Webb's review of Pearl and the Howling Hound Farm in the Spring 2006 issue]. As poor as farmers were, there was no "pin money." The money went where it was needed most. We more often called

this money "chicken feed." Mostly farming for a married couple was a team effort. Many women worked in the barn helping milk cows. . . When Pearl's grandfather worked in the bakery [on the farm], you wouldn't say he deprived some woman of her "pin money." . . . The rest of the [review] was done very well.

Nancy Schenk Gysbers, Roseville

Correction

The Stahlmann Brewery brand and trademark are owned by Mark L. Arend. The editor regrets that this information was not included with the reproduction of the Stahlmann letterhead on the back cover of the Spring 2006 issue.

More on the Schurmeier and Gotzian Families

I wish to make some statements, for the purpose of strictest accuracy and information about [the Schurmeier and Gotzian families in Eileen McCormack's "Mary Hill's Lowertown," in the Spring 2006 issue]. I believe C. H. Schurmeier came to St. Paul in 1852-1854; perhaps to buy land and . . . have a house built; but that sometime in 1854 his family moved fully and permanently to St. Paul. . . .

[The article states that the Schurmeiers had] "sons." Wrong; should be "son," as only one was alive then (Paul H.). . . . [The Gotzians' daughter was not] "Helena." Should be Helen. . . . [The Gotzians' daughter] "Roberta" should be Ruberta.

The map of Lowertown is "wrong" in the placement of No. 12 [for the First German Methodist Episcopal Church], as it was not there in 1884, the date of the map used (it was there only about and after 1891), being [in 1884] on the

NE corner of Sixth St. and Rosabel St., which is off the map to the bottom, at its original location.

*Geoffrey Brewster,
Paradise Valley, Ariz.*

Mr. Brewster has definitely caught several errors in this article on Lowertown. We stand corrected and thank him for taking the time to call these mistakes to our attention.

Where Was Nash Street?

I'm working on a manuscript about a Swedish immigrant woman [who] lived in St. Paul briefly with her husband. Their (Jacob and Minnie Halgren) address was 219 Nash (in 1893-94). Could you tell me where this was located then, and what replaced the street?

How close [was] this street to Payne Avenue, where the couple would have been able to access a number of Swedish businesses? The husband was living just up the hill from Swede Hollow (603 Fred) before the couple married in 1893.

*Dr. Joy K. Lintelman,
Moorhead, Minn.*

In the 1890s, 219 Nash was located at the corner of Nash and L'Orient. Nash Street was approximately five blocks long. It was renamed 14th Street and by the 1950s University Avenue was extended to include Nash/14th. Today L'Orient is on the west side of I-35E north. Thus the corner of Nash and L'Orient is now roughly the west side of the underpass for University Avenue. The Halgrens' house would probably have been located on the west exit ramp from I-35E to University. In the 1890s they would therefore have been living about a mile west of Swede Hollow and Payne Avenue.



This 1966 yearbook photo of Mechanic Arts High School was provided by Robert Cramer of the class of 1955. See John Larson's article beginning on page 4.

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

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
323 Landmark Center
75 West Fifth Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

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