

RAMSEY COUNTY
History

A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Winter, 1990
Volume 25, Number 4



The burning of St. Paul's International Hotel in 1869. See article on "the men who ran with the machine," St. Paul's volunteer firemen, beginning on page 4. "The Mystery of the Leaking Lake" begins on page 18.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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On the Cover: The burning of the International Hotel on February 3, 1869, was sketched by St Paul artist R. O. Sweeny and published in *Harper's Weekly* on February 27, 1869.

Acknowledgements: Photographs on pages 3, 5, 13, 15, 23 (the band concert), 27, 29, 30 and 31 are from the Ramsey County Historical Society's photo collection. The engine woodcut, page 7, is from the archives of the Waterous Company in South St. Paul. Those on pages 18, 19, 20 (ice fishing), 21, 22 (launch), 23 (races), 24 and 25 are from the St. Paul Department of Parks and Recreation. All other photographs used in this issue of *Ramsey County History* are from the audio-visual collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a grant from the Grotto Foundation and a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr.

A Message from the Editorial Board

Ramsey County History is your magazine. Without readers who have an interest in St. Paul, Ramsey County and the surrounding area, this magazine cannot be a forum for ideas and discovery about the history of Ramsey County.

Because the Editorial Board wants to encourage and support writing about urban and rural history relating to St. Paul and Ramsey County, we invite you to send us any suggestions or ideas for future articles or topics to be presented in this magazine. Perhaps there is a favorite landmark, person, group or institution that you would like to know more about. Whether your question concerns the origin of a street name in St. Paul or the origin of a neighborhood in Ramsey County, let us know of your interest and desire to learn more. Please call or write our editor, our executive director or the Society's general office in Landmark Center.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

Letters to Editor

St. Paul's Cable Cars

As a long-time resident of St. Paul, I would like to know about the cable cars and the streetcar tunnel that once existed below the Cathedral. When did the cable cars run up and down the hill in front of the Cathedral? Why were they removed? Did construction of the Cathedral have something to do with it? When did they put in the Selby Avenue streetcar tunnel and when was it closed up? Has it been used as storage or a temporary residence for transients?

—Mrs. Dorothy Chaput, St. Paul.

St. Paul had two cable car lines, both beginning at Broadway in Lowertown. The line running up the Summit Avenue bluff was built in 1887 and the line running east from Broadway and Seventh Street a year later. They were installed for the same reason they were invented in San Francisco in 1885: hills. However, Minnesota winters were hard on the cables and the cars were removed when the entire Minneapolis-St. Paul streetcar system was electrified in 1891. Construction of the Cathedral had nothing to do with this. The Selby Avenue tunnel was completed in August, 1907, in order to reduce the Selby Avenue grade for the trolleys. It was closed in 1953. The west end is sealed but the east end is secured only by a chain link fence. The tunnel isn't used for storage but it's possible that transients find shelter there.

Orchard Cemetery Again

The files of the St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation reveal that Orchard Cemetery at Victoria and Orchard was owned by three churches. The north section was owned first by the First Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church and later by the Memorial English Evangelical Lutheran Church. The south section was owned by



The Selby Tunnel under construction in December, 1906, and its lower end (below), as photographed by Thomas B. Mega in 1982.



the German Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church. However, the cemeteries had been inactive since 1890 so the property was declared tax-forfeited and, by 1938, St. Paul was looking around for other

uses for the site. Bodies from the north section were moved to Union Cemetery; those from the south section to Elmhurst Cemetery. In the mid-1950s the site became a playground. Bodies discovered during playground construction were reburied in Elmhurst Cemetery.

—Dan Hollerbach, White Bear Lake, Gibbs Farm Museum volunteer.

Which Dempsey?

In "A Matter of Time," page 22 of the Fall, 1990, issue of *Ramsey County History*, you mentioned Jack Dempsey as espousing the value of boxing in an 1890 *Pioneer Press* article. You realize that this is the original Jack Dempsey, not the "Manassa Mauler," who fought Carpentier, Tunney, et al. In "Letters," page 3, you listed F. Scott Fitzgerald's birth date as 1886. I believe it was 1896.

—Paul W. Guenzel, Wilmette, Illinois

Thank you for pointing out that this was the original Jack Dempsey. And you're right about Fitzgerald's birth date.

Compromised Disputes

Virginia Kunz's excellent article on past Twin Cities disputes and rivalries caused me to recall some recent resolutions and compromises. While we had difficulty agreeing upon a state fair site, in recent times we've been able to agree on sites for our Amtrak station and our International airport. Continuing interaction between our two cities has had a positive effect on working conditions for employee groups; it has made us an outstanding sports center and has created a strong cultural arts climate. Working together we have strengthened the educational insti-

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Schuneman and Evans, one of St. Paul's leading department stores, circa 1890, when the store advertised a "real diamond ring" for \$1.98.

20,000 more young people in Minnesota.

► Otherwise, just a year away from the attack on Pearl Harbor, all seemed normal on the home front. The Young Motor Company was selling a 1940 Ford Deluxe sedan for \$650, a 1939 Ford Sport Convertible for \$550 and a 1928 Ford Model A for \$45. Quilted robes were on sale for \$10.95 and *Mrs. Miniver and Information Please: 1941 Edition* were the best-sellers at the Golden Rule.

► At the movies, "Philadelphia Story," starring Katharine Hepburn, arrived in St. Paul to compete with "Go West," featuring the Marx Brothers.

1965 25 YEARS AGO

► Although Lieutenant General Lewis Hershey, director of the Selective Service, was claiming the right to reclassify and draft Vietnam War protestors, peace talks seemed to be in the air. Guns still outweighed butter, however, as "informed sources" placed the 1966 budget at more than \$60 billion. The Federal Reserve planned to increase the discount rate, provoking the ire of President Lyn-

Johnson.

► Foreign ministers of thirty-four African nations adopted secret measures to bring down Rhodesia's white-ruled government, as Great Britain's economic sanctions began to bite. And in France, Charles de Gaulle was forced into a run-off election to remain president.

► The St. Paul Junior Chamber of Commerce held its 36th annual Bosses Night dinner at the Prom Center. Ronald M. Hubbs, president of the St. Paul Companies, received the Boss-of-the-Year award. Elsewhere, corporate wife and mother Mrs. J. Robert Flour, declared that a good corporate wife should not be too beautiful or smart.

► Out in Los Angeles, conditions after the Watts riots continued to be disastrous. An eight-person commission reported that the causes of the riots included poor schools, hatred of the police, a burgeoning population, inadequate public transportation and insufficient federal programs. In Selma, Alabama, an all-white jury acquitted three men of the slaying of Unitarian minister James Reeb.

Letters from page 3

tutions and commercial centers of both cities. That cooperative spirit was perhaps best personified by the joint efforts of both Mayor Latimer and Mayor Fraser in modernizing the downtown business districts of both cities in the early 1980s.

—A. C. McWatt, St. Paul.

West is South, North is..?

When did St. Paul annex the West Side and why on earth is it called the "West" side when it so obviously lies to the south of St. Paul?

—Paul Conrad, South St. Paul.

The Mississippi mostly runs south and divides the nation more or less neatly in two—hence the historic references to "east" or "west" of the Mississippi. However, at the point where the Minnesota river joins the Mississippi, the Mississippi enters a great bend and flows north and east, so that the West Side really does lie south of St. Paul. St. Paul annexed the West Side in 1874.

Comiskey's White Sox

When we visited the Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, New York, we noted that Charles Comiskey was manager in St. Paul of the New Western League which in 1900 moved its franchise to Chicago and became the White Sox. Later, on a tour of Frogtown in St. Paul, our guide pointed out a site where Comiskey's team had played. However, he told us, the city would not allow games on Sunday so Comiskey moved the games outside of the city limits to Lexington Park, now the site of the University-Lexington mall. Shortly afterwards, as I recall the story, the city annexed the site. Since the Sunday law still applied, Comiskey took his team to Chicago as the White Sox and built Comiskey Park, where the last game in this park was played this past September. I believe this story to be true, but it could be authenticated through the newspapers, and it might be the basis for an interesting article in *Ramsey County History*.

—Martha C. Bray, St. Paul.



Before the days of boom boxes, canoeists at Phalen Park in the 1920s brought along their victrolas to listen to music. For a history of the park and of Lake Phalen, see the article beginning on page 18.

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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St. Paul MN
Permit #3989