

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

The St. Paul Society
for the Hard of Hearing
*Kristin Mapel Bloomberg
and Leah S. McLaughlin*

—Page 10

Winter 2010

Volume 44, Number 4

Recollections of Cathedral Hill

A Glimpse of Old St. Paul from an Up-and-Down Duplex
on Holly Avenue

Mary Reichardt

—Page 3



One of the distinguishing features of the up-and-down duplex at 444 Holly Avenue in the Cathedral Hill neighborhood is its spacious front porches that encourage conversation and reminiscing about old St. Paul on warm summer days. Photo courtesy of Mary Reichardt.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 44, Number 4

Winter 2010

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Sometimes, reading history fuels our imaginations. This issue contains some great moments that we can conjure up in the comfort of our armchairs. Kristin Mapel Bloomberg and Leah McLaughlin's history of the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing lets us join in when a hard-of-hearing person went to the movies in St. Paul and, thanks to technology pushed by the Society, could for the first time "hear with ease the slightest whisper . . . the baby's gurgle, the villain's chuckle." We are there, too, when Norm Horton inched along drifted roads during the Armistice Day Blizzard to get home to fill the oil heater for his family, after working his shift at the Ford plant. And we share Mary Reichardt's thrill when, on purchasing her house on Holly Avenue, she received a postcard from the Dow family, the house's longtime former owners, opening up a rich vein of family and neighborhood history. Join us to read these stories, and contact our editor if you have your own to share.

Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board

Book Reviews

Murder Has a Public Face: Crime and Punishment in the Speed Graphic Era

Larry Millett

St. Paul: Borealis Books; Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008
118 pages; \$29.95

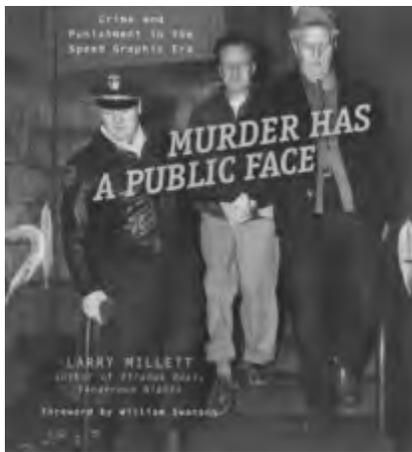
Reviewed by Paul D. Nelson

One can imagine the problem that confronted author Larry Millett. He had access to a trove of photos from the *Pioneer Press* and *Dispatch*, including many crime and criminal justice images from the so-called Speed Graphic era, 1930 to 1960. This was the time when newspapers, including our local ones, printed lots of lurid crime scenes. How to package some of these and bring them to the public?

Mr. Millett's solution was to compose a book in three parts. The main part, about 75% of this book, consists of detailed accounts of four murder cases, from killing to verdict, amply illustrated. (In all, the book reproduces 100 prints and another 25 copies of newspaper pages.) Though these cases have nothing in common with one another, the author weaves them together into the book's central narrative. To this he adds seven sidebar sections of unrelated photos, and, to bind it all together, an introductory essay on the history of crime coverage in American newspapers. The confection works pretty well. The result is a true-crime entertainment, Upper Midwest-subgenre, with a little serious history added for context and heft.

The central narrative takes us through murders that took place in

Minneapolis, Little Canada, Hutchinson, and LaCrosse, in the late 1940s and early '50s. We meet some memorable characters: sad-faced Dr. Axilrod, with his suspiciously drug-heavy approach to dentistry; cheerful ladies man and psychopath Arthur DeZeler; heartless roué Gordon Jones and his pistol-packing girlfriend, Laura



Miller; and grieving (and increasingly unhinged) clothes horse, Arnold Larson. The newspapers covered these cases obsessively, in word and image, and as we follow them in this book we begin to imagine that we understand something about the participants. The photos encourage this illusion: deep down we all think we can tell something of a person's character from his or her face and demeanor, especially under pressure. And we are reminded how little we now see, in this state without cameras in the courtroom, of defendants, juries, lawyers, and witnesses in the act of carrying out our system of criminal justice.

This main section of the book is good, well-written, and entertaining. It does have a couple of weaknesses, though. The primary one is that the cases were not and are not important. They do not merit book-length treatment, or even being remembered, on their own—they are noteworthy only because of the photos that embellish them. And the author recounts them in excessive detail. We don't need to know, for example, where the Axilrod jury had supper. The result is that the book feels padded at times. It's a picture book—too many words.

From a purely photographic point of view the most successful sections of the book are the sidebars: Photographers in Action; Murder Up Close; The Youngest Victims; Hunting the Murderer; The People's Court; Behind Bars; and The Face of Murder. These show us representative pictures from the era, and some of them are wonderful in a heartbreaking way. I'll describe three. There is snapshot of Raymond Smith, 18, smiling for his girlfriend as he stands in a river; he and the girlfriend were murdered minutes later. Two very young children sleep in a miserable northern Minnesota shack where two of their brothers have just stomped their two-year-old sister to death. The tots appear to have slept through the murder. An old woman peers through a car window at her teenage grandson, who has murdered his parents: "I have no regrets."

The reader looking for Weegee-like gore will be disappointed. There are rather few crime scenes shown in this book. The great majority of the

photos are portraits and courthouse scenes with no inherent drama. Many are entertaining for the strangeness of the relatively recent past: every juror in suit and tie, women in small feathered hats, courtrooms jammed with spectators day after day—didn't anybody have to work?

The introductory essay on newspaper history is very well done, but probably the least compelling element of the book for most readers. This is essentially a picture book, very well designed, where words accompany the images rather than the other way around. The images will stay with you.

Paul D. Nelson is a frequent contributor to Ramsey County History and a member of the Society's Editorial Board.

Subterranean Twin Cities

Greg A. Brick

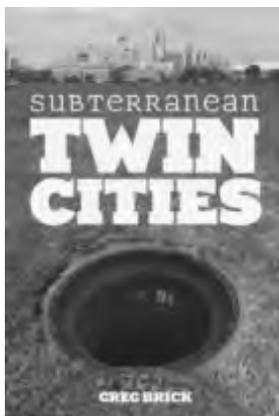
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009
226 pages; \$18.95

Reviewed by Donald L. Empson

Today, for the first time ever, there is a detailed description of the world beneath our feet. Yet we are mostly oblivious when it comes to this place in our lives; a parallel universe with its own infrastructure, economy, and workers. During the last century, this Twin Cities domain has seldom been explored, and early accounts have mostly been forgotten.

Greg Brick, the author of this groundbreaking book, is a professional geologist and educator who has spent over twenty years researching and writing about the underground. He has published over 100 articles—including several in *Ramsey County History*—and a book on Iowa's subsurface. Moreover, while many historians simply borrow from previous work, much of Brick's information comes from original documents including the voluminous records in the St. Paul Public Works Department. However diligently you may study local history, you will discover Brick's book is crammed with new information about the Twin Cities.

Subterranean Twin Cities is writ-



ten in the first person; an account of Brick's many adventures discovering and exploring this parallel universe of caves, streams, canals, and sewers. It begins with an account and description of two St. Paul caves famous in the early days: Carver's Cave and Fountain Cave. The former exists under Mounds Park. The latter is now buried under Shephard Road, although Brick rooted around to find the only complete map of Fountain Cave as it was in 1880.

You would never know it today, but there were at one time numerous streams in Minneapolis and St. Paul that have since been routed underground and Brick gives us all the details of these formerly pristine creeks. The West Side of St. Paul once had a thriving cave industry: medieval-like temples with Gothic arches. Find the facts in this book. One of the most interesting chapters explores the underground of the Minneapolis milling district. In the nineteenth century, St. Anthony Falls provided the force to operate a number of flour mills by way of underground canals which channeled the water away from the Mississippi to power the mills and then back into the river. Brick discovered, explored, and recounts his visits to many of these early tunnels.

Perhaps the most riveting narratives emerge from his adventures in the sewer system underneath both cities. Descending via a manhole in a city street, Brick made his way below the surface, recording the structure, dimensions, content, flora, and wildlife that flourish beneath our feet. On one occasion, he actually rode his moun-

tain bike for miles through the sewer system. During one Minneapolis tunnel canoe ride, Greg observed that "clusters of mushrooms sprang from jagged fissures in the wall, looking like the ghostly white fingers of a hand thrust upward in supplication from another dimension."

The Twin Cities has unique geology: a limestone cover with soft sandstone underneath. There are extensive cavities under us, both natural and man made. In fact, our underground has become a mecca of sorts for spelunkers from around the world. Fortunately, Greg Brick has provided the seminal history of the subterranean Twin Cities so we can share the delights. Check out his website at www.GregBrick.org for online slide shows of some of Brick's underground Twin Cities. Better yet, read this book.

Donald L. Empson is the author of The Street Where You Live: A Guide to the Place Names of St. Paul. He and Greg Brick have been sharing local history for over twenty years.

The Last Rafter: David Bronson and the St. Croix Lumber Industry

Robert Goodman

Stillwater, Minn.: Hardenbergh Foundation and the Washington County Historical Society, 2009
91 pages; \$15.00

Reviewed by John M. Lindley

This important biography of David Bronson deserves recognition from anyone interested in the history of Minnesota in the last half of the nineteenth century, the local lumber industry, and philanthropy. David Bronson Jr. (1834–1919) was born in Maine and came to Stillwater in 1855 with the intention of making his fortune in lumbering, which was just starting to boom along the St. Croix River and its tributaries in Minnesota and Wisconsin. At the time, Stillwater had about 1,500 residents, but it was soon to become the center of a vast lumbering industry that would bring the community

and its residents prosperity in good times and financial depression in bad.

Before coming to Minnesota, Bronson had already spent five years apprenticed to a commission merchant in Boston, but he sought a fresh start in a challenging place. He was a hard-working, astute businessman who gradually earned success as a merchant and a lumberman. Over the years, Bronson worked for or partnered with a variety of retail and lumbering businessmen in Stillwater such as Isaac Staples, General Samuel Hersey, Edwin Folsom, and Colonel James S. Davis.

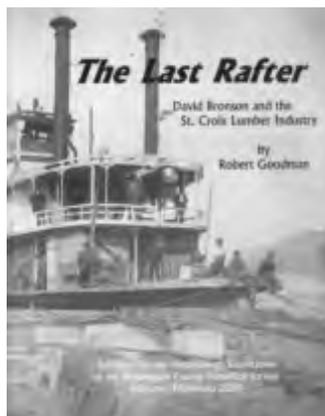
Much of the timber that was harvested along the St. Croix and its tributaries found its way to Stillwater where many of the logs were made up into giant rafts that were then floated down river to sawmills in Winona and river cities in Iowa. When David Bronson died in Stillwater in 1919, he left an estate of over \$400,000 (about \$4.8 million today) to his granddaughter, Ianthe Bronson, and his son, James. By then, lumbering and rafting had effectively ceased on the St. Croix.

The author of *The Last Rafter*, Robert Goodman, has written or collaborated with this wife, Nancy, on a number of other books about Minnesota, including a biography of Joseph R. Brown, a history of St. Croix County (the area that included Minnesota and Wisconsin along the St. Croix River before Minnesota was organized as a territory in the 1840s), a history of Washington County, and an account of paddleboats on the upper Mississippi from the 1820s to the 1850s. In this book, Goodman does an excellent job of describing the effects of the Panics of 1857 and 1873 on Bronson and his Stillwater neighbors, the complex business operations of logging and the lumber industry, and the life of the social elite of Stillwater in the middle and late nineteenth century.

At the time of David Bronson's death in 1919, granddaughter Ianthe Bronson and her mother, Gabrielle, who was a widow, were living in a rented apartment on Summit Avenue in St. Paul. This is one of the many connections between Stillwater and Minnesota's capital city that Robert Goodman makes in

this book. A few years earlier, Ianthe had made her debut at a dinner dance at the University Club.

Both mother and daughter had inherited significant sums when Roscoe Bronson, David's son and Gabrielle's husband, died in 1907. In the early 1920s, Ianthe and Gabrielle moved to a



spacious home that Gabrielle bought on Summit Court. In 1922 Ianthe married George S. Hardenbergh. George and Ianthe had a single child, Gabrielle, born in 1923. She grew up in St. Paul society, summered at Dellwood and the White Bear Yacht Club, but never married.

In 1950 Ianthe Bronson Hardenbergh established the St. Croix Foundation with an initial gift of \$500. She made annual contributions to the Foundation through the 1950s and it made small grants to local applicants until 1958 when Ianthe, through the Foundation, gave \$75,000 to Lakeview Memorial Hospital in Stillwater, which was in the midst of a capital campaign to build a new hospital in the city. Following Ianthe's death in 1983, Gabrielle Hardenbergh continued her mother's philanthropy with additional gifts to the Foundation.

As its endowment grew, the Foundation increased the size and number of its grants, especially to organizations located in the St. Croix Valley and the East Metro area of the Twin Cities. Gabrielle died in 2003 and left the Foundation more than \$41 million to continue the work that she and her mother had begun more than a half century earlier. In 2006 the St. Croix Foundation changed its

name to the Hardenbergh Foundation to better reflect its transition from its roots in small family philanthropy to its present role as a large independent foundation whose assets rank it among the top twenty-five foundations in Minnesota.

This book is an uplifting account of a family that until now has been little known to Minnesotans. Readers who are interested in source materials from the early years of Minnesota's history will be disappointed, however, because the book has no notes or source references that might be a guide to future research on Bronson, lumbering, and early Stillwater. Its account of how David Bronson made his fortune is engaging, well written, and raises the visibility of Bronson in the ranks of Minnesota pioneers. Goodman's book is also successful in honoring Ianthe and Gabrielle Hardenbergh by telling their stories and recognizing their many gifts to the local community through their philanthropy and foundation.

John M. Lindley is the editor of Ramsey County History.

Establishing Justice in Middle America

Jeffrey B. Morris
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2007)
441 pages; \$39.95.

Reviewed by Thomas H. Boyd

The Preamble of the United States Constitution expressly provides that one of the fundamental purposes of our federal government is to "establish justice" in this country. Toward this end, the founding fathers ratified Article III which vests the judicial power "in one Supreme Court, and in such inferior courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish." In accordance thereto, Congress has subsequently created thirteen courts of appeal which serve as the intermediate appellate courts that handle the vast bulk of appellate review in the federal judicial branch.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit is one of those federal

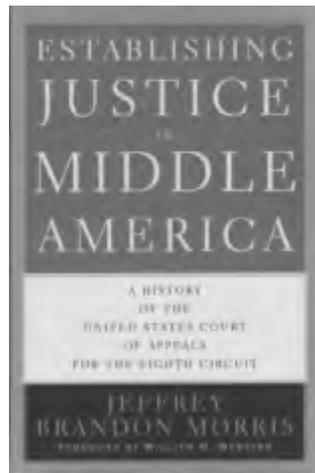
courts of appeals. It includes Minnesota and has jurisdiction over federal district courts located in the states of the Middle West. Over the years, the Eighth Circuit has been the court of last resort for this part of the nation, with the exception of those few cases that actually end up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

At one time, the Eighth Circuit was the largest of the federal circuit courts and included all of the states west of the Mississippi River from the Canadian border in the north down to the southern border of Arkansas, and west across the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains. In 1929, the circuit was split, and the “modern” Eighth Circuit retained seven states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Arkansas. Throughout this time, the Eighth Circuit’s headquarters have always been located in St. Louis. Ramsey County and St. Paul, in particular, have, however, long been focal points of the Eighth Circuit.

When Walter H. Sanborn of St. Paul was appointed to the Eighth Circuit in 1892, local newspapers proclaimed that federal justice had “come to the Northwest.” Serving for thirty-six years, he eventually became known as the “Dean of the Federal Judiciary” and was considered one of the finest federal judges of his time. His cousin, John B. Sanborn Jr., also of St. Paul, was a noted state and federal district judge before he was appointed to the Eighth Circuit in 1932. He, too, became one of the country’s most distinguished jurists during his career on the Eighth Circuit, which continued up through the time of his death in 1964. Together, Walter and John Sanborn were known as the “Hands of the Eighth Circuit,” in a favorable comparison to renowned cousins, Learned Hand and Augustus N. Hand, who were long-serving judges on the bench of the Second Circuit.

Continuing the St. Paul lineage, John Sanborn had endorsed the appointment of his first law clerk, St. Paul’s own Harry A. Blackmun, to take his spot on the Eighth Circuit in 1959. Following his appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Blackmun served as the circuit justice for the Eighth Circuit up through the time of his retirement in 1994.

The Eighth Circuit’s presence has also been evidenced in the St. Paul skyline. The magnificent federal courthouse that is now known as Landmark Center was where the Sanborns had their chambers, and where young Justice Blackmun served his apprenticeship. It was also the site of many momentous appellate arguments over the years. The Eighth Circuit moved into the “new” courthouse on the corner of Robert Street and Kellogg Boulevard in 1965.



St. Paul has continued to be a significant place for the Eighth Circuit. In 1983, then Chief Judge Donald P. Lay moved his chambers here from Omaha, Nebraska, and reaffirmed St. Paul as the “Northern Headquarters” for the Eighth Circuit. Judge Lay served on the Eighth Circuit until the time of his death in April 2007.

The Eighth Circuit’s presence in Ramsey County is likely to continue as a favored location. Following completion of a major renovation of the federal courthouse in late 2008, the Court resumed sitting in St. Paul and will presumably be hearing cases here for many more years to come.

Given these long-standing and deep ties to the Eighth Circuit, readers of the *Ramsey County History* will be interested in Professor Jeffrey B. Morris’ new book, *Establishing Justice in Middle America*, which chronicles the history of the Eighth Circuit from its founding in 1866 up to 2000. Professor Morris has done a masterful job in ap-

proaching and taming a massive amount of information about the Eighth Circuit and distilling it into readable form.

Providing a backdrop of the geographic, political, and demographic elements that constitute this vast circuit over various eras, Professor Morris explores the development of the diverse region that is the Eighth Circuit today. He also presents interesting portraits of the judges who have served on this Court, and synthesizes the important cases they have decided over the years.

This book is the product of years of research, personal interviews of many of the judges, and an insightful and experienced analysis of the development of the law in the Eighth Circuit. Professor Morris has culled through the thousands of cases decided by the Eighth Circuit over the years to present the most significant decisions that have influenced the development of the law throughout the country.

Extraordinarily well qualified to undertake this important project, Professor Morris is a member of the Touro Law School faculty and an accomplished legal historian with more than fifteen books and numerous other publications to his credit.

Establishing Justice in Middle America is also graced by a foreword written by the Honorable William H. Webster, well known for his distinguished service as a director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency. He is himself a former federal judge who served on the Eighth Circuit for five years before he departed for service in Washington, D.C. Judge Webster’s foreword provides a personal perspective of the Court that enriches the book and provides the perfect complement to Professor Morris’s fine history of the Eighth Circuit.

Thomas H. Boyd received his legal education at the University of Iowa. He lives in St. Paul and practices law with a firm in Minneapolis. He is also the president of the Ramsey County Historical Society and a member of the Society’s Editorial Board.

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The Northern Pump Company produced this poster of naval guns in 1942 to promote the work that its Naval Ordnance Division did to support the war effort. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society. For more on the CCC and working at the Ford plant and Northern Pump, see Norman C. Horton's article on page 19.