

# THE BURBANK- LIVINGSTON-GRIGGS HOUSE

*Historic Treasure on Summit Avenue*

Christina H. Jacobsen

SITUATED high on a bluff commanding a view of St. Paul and the Mississippi River is Minnesota's most elaborate example of mid-nineteenth century "Italianate" architecture. The house, built at 432 Summit Avenue by James C. Burbank in 1862-63, is a three-story gray limestone mansion crowned by a low-pitched roof and a wooden cupola. The bracketed cornice, round-arched windows, and handsomely proportioned belvedere are typical of the villa style so popular in America between 1850 and 1870. It was one of the first homes erected along the tree-lined carriage-way that threaded the bluffs above the frontier commercial center, and for more than a century its owners have contributed, each in his own fashion, to the growth of St. Paul and to the way of life that came to be symbolized by Summit Avenue.<sup>1</sup>

The Victorian interior of the house was totally transformed in the 1930s by the last resident, Mary Livingston Griggs, who imported from Venice ten

European period rooms, complete with original paneling and matching antique furnishings. Nevertheless, her daughter, Mary Griggs Burke, gave the property to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1968 with the hope that the home would be preserved as a "living house" rather than a museum. Assisted by the Junior League of St. Paul and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the society has opened the mansion, now known as the Burbank-Livingston-Griggs House, to the public. It is intended that it will serve not only as a showpiece but as a uniquely gracious setting for certain community events and social activities.



THE BUILDER whose social aspirations the house once embodied was James Crawford Burbank. He had been born to Simeon and Nancy (Wilder) Burbank on January 20, 1822, in Ludlow, Vermont. The family, which grew to include nine children, settled in 1831 on a farm near Watertown, New York. Young Burbank

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early asserted his independence, gaining what education he could during the long winters. He later taught school, operated a bookstore, and ran an express line from Watertown to New York City. On February 16, 1845, Burbank married a fellow towns-woman, Evelyn Sophia DeLano.<sup>2</sup>

The death of their infant son in 1847 may have prompted the couple to move to Wisconsin, where Burbank worked a farm. For some reason — perhaps the loss of his second son — he sold his property there in 1850 and went to St. Paul “without money and without friends.”<sup>3</sup>

Burbank's industry and judgment built a financial empire during an era when businesses reflected the personalities of their directors. When the lumber business he started immediately after settling in St. Paul proved unsatisfactory, Burbank established the express line that became the keystone of his success. In mid-July, 1851, he began making weekly trips on the steamer “Nominee,” carrying mail and merchandise from St. Paul to Galena, Illinois, chief depot of the steamboat trade on the Upper Mississippi. The following winter he made the journey by stage down the old fur traders' road by way of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Undaunted by the loss of two partners in 1852–53, Burbank joined forces with Charles T. Whitney and went into the forwarding business using an old wharf boat which he docked at the foot of Eagle Street in St. Paul. The two men also organized the Northwest Express Company, which soon became a flourishing enterprise. By 1854 they had regular offices in all the major towns on their route.<sup>4</sup>

The business took on new life in 1856 when Whitney sold his interest to Russell C. Blakeley, an ambitious young steamboat captain from Massachusetts. Together Burbank and Blakeley directed their energies toward establishing a stage line. Up to that time Burbank had been forced to rely on the apparently unsatisfactory services of W. O. Walker's company. Burbank was primarily interested in handling freight, and he soon won the downriver mail franchise. Before long, however, passengers were praising his coaches as “luxurious” in comparison with Walker's “rude stages,” and his business far exceeded his means. In 1859 his line merged with the well-established company of Alvaren Allen and Charles L. Chase.<sup>5</sup>

By the time John L. Merriam purchased Allen and Chase's share in 1860, the firm, then called the Minnesota Stage Company, enjoyed a virtual monopoly in transportation and mail contracts throughout the state. With Burbank as general manager, the company greatly improved postal communications, forged roads, and built bridges. The partners' stage line so far out-

paced their express business that they sold the southern Minnesota portion of the business to the American Express Company in 1863. The advance of railroads, however, cut into the stage line's profits. No doubt Burbank sensed the changing scene, for both he and Merriam sold their interests in the Minnesota Stage Company to Blakeley and C. W. Carpenter in 1867.<sup>6</sup>

In 1859 Burbank's younger brother, Henry Clay Burbank, Amherst H. Wilder, and Merriam joined his



EVELYN DELANO BURBANK

wholesale grocery, storage, forwarding, and commission business, which had moved to St. Paul's lower levee at the base of Jackson Street. The firm became the agent of the Hudson's Bay Company and assumed responsibility for transporting the latter's goods from St. Paul to Fort Garry, Manitoba, by way of ox cart and then steamer on the Red River. The opening of that waterway for navigation in 1859 marked the beginning of a prosperous — if short-lived — era for St. Paul and Burbank.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, the Sioux menace, combined with the fur company's reluctance to share its trading empire with the enterprising Burbank, spelled the end of the latter's Red River business. When his contract expired in 1863, it was not renewed, and Norman C. Kittson became the Hudson's Bay Company agent in St. Paul. Burbank's firm then began to specialize in government transportation and contracting. In 1868 it finally dissolved, but Henry kept the St. Cloud branch alive until 1874, first with James' support and then on his own.<sup>8</sup>

A striking feature of Burbank's character was his

amazing vitality. For more than a quarter century he was one of Minnesota's most active and respected citizens. Despite the demands of his commercial interests he twice held public office — Ramsey County commissioner in 1860 and state representative in 1872. He served as an incorporator and director of the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad from 1857 until his death in 1876. He was also on the board of directors of Minnesota's pioneer national bank from 1863 to 1871. In



JAMES CRAWFORD BURBANK

1865 he found time to help reorganize the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company, of which he was president until 1876. For several years he was prominent in the affairs of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society. The city of St. Paul profited from his efforts in founding a chamber of commerce in 1867, establishing Como Park in 1871, and constructing a street railway in 1872-73.<sup>9</sup>

DURING the first decade of his residence in St. Paul, Burbank built a "large two-story brick house" at Fourth and Sibley streets, from which "a fine view could be had of the river's magnificent scenery." He early became involved in the development of various tracts of land throughout the city. A few months after the birth of his third little girl in 1861, Burbank purchased an irregularly shaped piece of property on Summit Avenue, consisting of about 1½ acres, which became the site of his magnificent new mansion. He subsequently added other small plots of land to the property, perhaps to provide a large open yard for his growing daughters. Certainly his choice of a building site re-

flected his rising fortunes. There was no potentially grander location in the city than Summit Avenue.<sup>10</sup>

Otis Wheelock, an eminent architect from Chicago, drew the plans for the Burbank house. His design was an irregular cube with walls of locally quarried limestone, windows and doors set in rounded arches, and a projecting roof and cupola supported by elaborate brackets. It incorporated the basic elements of the Italianate or bracketed style which was then flourishing in Europe and America. Inspired by the architectural remains in the picturesque landscapes painted by Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain, the fashion was popularized in the United States by such leading architects as Andrew Jackson Downing.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the high wages demanded by laborers and the shortage of money caused by the Civil War, work on the house apparently began in 1862 and proceeded rapidly. John D. Pollock and William T. Donaldson, carpenters, supervised the construction. By December 9, 1863, the *St. Paul Pioneer* could announce completion of the residence and stables at an estimated cost of \$22,000. The newspaper printed a glowing description of it and Russell Blakeley's new mansion on Jackson Street: "Messrs. Burbank and Blakeley each have erected buildings that would grace the finest streets in New York or any other American city, splendid architectural ornaments to our city, and models of convenience in arrangement and happy adaptation of all the modern improvements." The house boasted a number of features unusual in its day — steam heat, hot and cold water, gas lighting, and brick-lined walls which were supposed to be moisture and rat proof.<sup>12</sup>

By the spring of 1864 Burbank had settled his family in the new house. The floor plan was open and spacious. There seems little reason to doubt that the magnificently carved hardwood entrance, staircase, and upper hall are original to the house. The design is well-integrated with its surroundings, and it is consistent for the construction period. Efforts to substantiate the long-standing tradition that convicts carved the woodwork have been fruitless. Moreover, the evident hand of a master craftsman places additional doubt on the story. It is known that the arches facing the central, rear parlor, now called the stone room, were once open. A single, round-arched window illuminated the landing.<sup>13</sup>

There were two parlors and a dining room on the first floor. The upstairs had four large rooms and one smaller chamber which may have been a dressing or sitting room. The kitchen was located in the basement, while the servants — who by 1870 included three domestics, a coachman, a driver, and a gardener —

were housed on the third floor. From there a stairway led to the glass-enclosed cupola on the roof.<sup>14</sup>

Delicate, railed porches supported by branching columns were placed on the north, east, and south sides of the house. The large, sloping yard was fenced and graced by young trees, a lattice-work gazebo, a fountain, and decorative benches. A greenhouse was situated on the edge of the bluff in back. Burbank must have taken pride in his fine grounds, for he reportedly offered one of his contemporaries \$1,000 to transplant a 40-foot Norwegian spruce from the latter's yard to his own.<sup>15</sup>

The family circle was large but close. In addition to his wife and three daughters — Ella, Lillian, and Evelyn or "Eva" — Burbank's parents, his brother, six sisters, and his wife's sister lived nearby at various times. Numerous get-togethers and celebrations were held at 432 Summit, such as the marriage of Burbank's sister, Evelyn Gertrude, to Henry P. Upham, later president of the First National Bank of St. Paul and treasurer of the Minnesota Historical Society, on September 23, 1868.<sup>16</sup>

One "brilliant gathering of relatives and friends," as a local newspaper called it, occurred on May 10, 1881, several years after Burbank's death. His daughter Lillian, who was described as "a most charming and sprightly young lady," married Hamilton Vose, the son of a leading Milwaukee wholesale merchant. On this occasion, said the reporter, "The spacious parlors were decked with beautiful flowers, which plied the air with their rich perfume. A pyramid of tropical plants was a noticeable feature of the ornamentation of the parlor in which the ceremony was performed, and over the heads of the bridal couple was suspended a most lovely production of the florist's skill."<sup>17</sup>

By 1875 illness had forced Burbank to adopt a slower pace. The sudden death in that year of his beloved daughter Ella aggravated the spinal disorder which had been plaguing him. The following year he traveled to New York in search of the best surgical treatment available. His wife and his daughter Lillian were touring Europe when they learned of his rapidly declining health. Burbank died on June 3, 1876. The funeral, which took place from the house on Summit, was "largely attended." The *St. Paul Dispatch* paid perceptive tribute to Burbank in an obituary which said that "his history is the history of St. Paul and the State, his own successes and failures being so closely allied with their settlement and development as to preclude the mention of the one without the other."<sup>18</sup>

Mrs. Burbank continued to live in the family home on Summit Avenue until the fall of 1883. By that time she may have been alone in the big house for one

daughter had married and the other was engaged if not married. At any rate, she sold it in that year to George and Mary Finch, who with their four children took possession of the mansion. Mrs. Burbank moved to the South, perhaps to care for Ella's sons. She died in Georgia on January 12, 1894.<sup>19</sup>



THE FINCHES' STAY at 432 Summit was short but happy. Like the Burbanks, they were a large and gregarious clan. George R. Finch was born in Delaware, Ohio, on September 24, 1839, the son of Sherman and Eliza (Sheperd or Sheppard) Finch. His father, a judge, saw to it that George received a solid education. After his graduation from the local academy, young Finch went to Cleveland where he entered a dry goods firm. He continued in this line of work for the rest of his life, moving to Bellevue, Ohio, in 1860 and finally settling in St. Paul in 1863. While living in Bellevue, Finch married Nellie T. Chapman, a sweet-faced young woman who died following the birth of their first child, a girl, in 1863. Finch then wed one of her six sisters, Mary.<sup>20</sup>

Little is known about Finch's first years in St. Paul. He probably went to work more or less immediately for Maurice Auerbach and J. L. Forepaugh's wholesale dry goods company, which had been founded in 1857. The family boarded in a house at the corner of Sixth and Robert streets until Finch saved enough money to buy a home on East Third in 1867. Finch's father lived with the family for some time before moving to a farm near Mankato, and several relatives, including two married sisters, lived in the city.<sup>21</sup>

By 1866 Finch had become Auerbach's partner, and two years later his brother-in-law Charles Scheffer also joined the firm. Upon Auerbach's retirement in 1888, Finch became the senior partner, and the firm — Finch, Van Slyck and Company — did a booming business throughout the Northwest, distributing woolens, notions, carpets, wallpaper, and upholstery and later manufacturing clothing, such as overalls, jackets, duck-lined suits, and Mackinaw shirts.<sup>22</sup>

As one of the city's leading merchants, Finch was a charter member of the chamber of commerce and the first president of the St. Paul Jobbers Union. In 1878, the year President Rutherford B. Hayes attended the state fair, he was president of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society. A member of several clubs, Finch also participated in such sports as hunting and snowshoeing. In an attempt to promote the "dry, clear, clean, bracing atmosphere" Minnesotans enjoyed each

winter, he and a number of other businessmen formed the St. Paul Ice Palace and Winter Carnival Association in November, 1885. Finch's daughter Clemence, "one of the fairest maidens of the North . . . charmingly attired in a costume of crimson blanket, with a broad scarf of blue, and a jaunty sailor cap," laid the cornerstone of the first ice palace in Central Park. As president, Finch officiated at the opening of the massive, turreted structure on February 1, 1886.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to Clemence, the Finch children included Helen or "Nellie," George Chapman, and William Van Slyck. The boys attended nearby Baldwin Seminary, of which their father was a patron. Nellie and Clemence (who eventually wed Richard Stockton, the son of a New York senator) are said to have dressed elegantly and enjoyed a social whirl of costume parties, formal balls, boat rides, and picnics. Surviving photographs show that Mrs. Finch decorated their house on Summit Avenue lavishly, crowding the rooms with heavily carved furniture, Turkish

rugs, Victorian bric-a-brac, and potted palms. Finch, who was described as "a great social favorite," and his wife fraternized with St. Paul's most prominent residents. It is interesting to note that their circle of friends included the Thomas Oakes and Crawford Livingston families, both of whom later lived at 432 Summit Avenue.<sup>24</sup>

After living in the house approximately a year Finch sold it, late in 1884, to Oakes, who was then vice-president and general manager of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The Finchs moved to the newly constructed Hotel Ryan in downtown St. Paul. In 1892 they bought the residence at 245 Summit Avenue which remained the family home for many years. Finch died there on June 1, 1910. George, William, and Nellie, who never married, continued to live at home with their mother.<sup>25</sup>

THOMAS FLETCHER OAKES' career with the Northern Pacific has been well documented, but the



THE FIVE Finch children—Clemence (standing), Nellie, George, and William—with their Grandmother Chapman

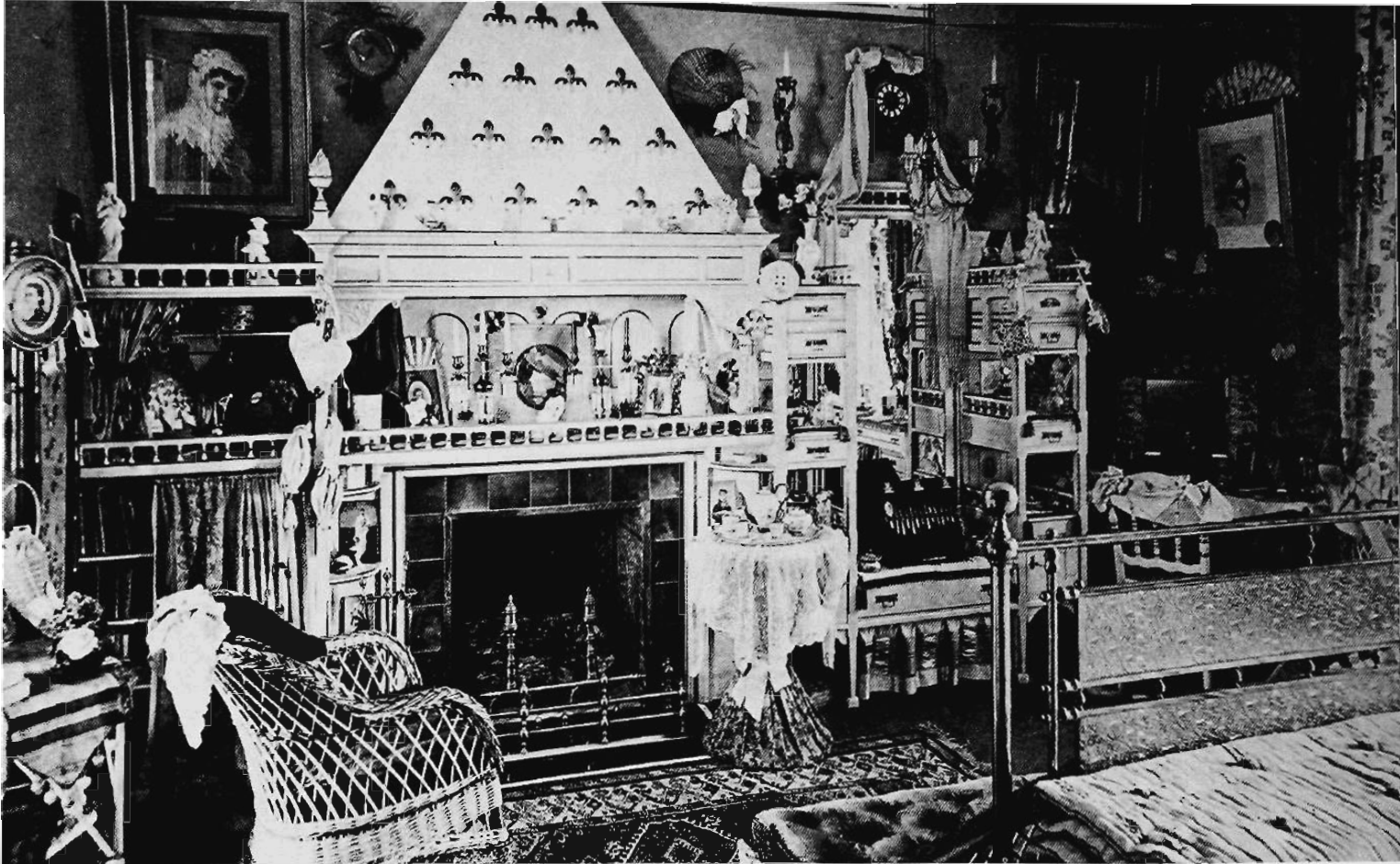


MARY FINCH

GEORGE R. FINCH stands garbed in the uniform of the Chinato Club, one of the dozens of member organizations in the first Winter Carnival Association. Portrait by Vincent de Gernon.







*FINCH'S eldest daughter, Clemence, slept in this elaborately decorated bedroom, which was probably in what is now the northwest sitting room. Photograph here and below by Truman W. Ingersoll.*

*THE CARVED ENTRANCE as it appeared during the Finches' residence in the mansion*



facts of his personal life are relatively obscure. He was the son of Francis Garaux Oakes, a shipmaster, and Caroline Paige of Boston, where he was born on July 15 or 16, 1843. He was educated in public schools and by private tutors. A month before his twentieth birthday he became a purchasing agent for the Kansas Pacific Railroad, the eastern division of the Union Pacific. His rise with that line was steady — assistant treasurer, general freight agent, vice-president, and finally general superintendent in 1878. In 1879–80 he served as general superintendent of the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Gulf and Kansas City, Lawrence and Southern roads.<sup>26</sup>

Henry Villard, a German-born capitalist with large holdings in Oregon, invited Oakes to Portland in the spring of 1880 to manage his Oregon Railway and Navigation Company. When Villard gained control of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1881, his friend Oakes was elected first vice-president. Two years later Oakes became the general manager and moved to St. Paul, where he was in direct charge of the day-to-day operations of the company.<sup>27</sup>

Those were lean years for the Northern Pacific. Villard's daring financial policy led to his replacement in 1884, but Oakes was retained. He became president in 1888 after Villard regained a controlling interest in the road. By 1893 the latter's program of expansion

had bankrupted the Northern Pacific and Oakes became one of the three receivers. In the bitter struggle for control of the railroad which followed, however, he resigned, and the Northern Pacific passed into the hands of J. P. Morgan, James J. Hill, and E. H. Harriman.<sup>28</sup>

It is probable that Oakes' work led to long separations from his wife, Abby Rogers Haskell, and his two sons and three daughters. It is not clear whether his family joined him in St. Paul immediately. Certainly they were reunited at 432 Summit Avenue from 1885 to 1887. Little is known of their life within its walls, although it is recorded that one rather startling event occurred there in the summer of 1885. Oakes shot at but did not kill a known criminal who had broken into the house, probably in search of money and other valuables.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps because of his uncertain future, Oakes subdivided the property and the neighboring lot and sold them to William G. Riley in the summer of 1887. From that time until he returned to the East in 1891 Oakes rented a suite in the Hotel Ryan. He spent his last years in Seattle, Washington, where he died on March 14, 1919.<sup>30</sup>

**THOMAS FLETCHER OAKES**  
*Third resident of the house*



AT A RECEPTION held in the mansion in the 1870s, James Burbank introduced Mary Steele Potts, the daughter of a prominent St. Paul physician, and Crawford Livingston, the son of an old New York family. On January 28, 1875, Miss Potts and Livingston were married at the St. Paul home of the bride's uncle, Henry H. Sibley. It was a double ceremony, with the other couple being Mary's sister Abbie and Charles W. McIntyre.<sup>31</sup>

Miss Potts had moved to St. Paul with her family from Galena, Ohio, in 1849 when her father, Thomas Reed Potts, became the surgeon at Fort Snelling. Livingston, who was born on May 6, 1848, to Crawford and Caroline (Chapman) Livingston, had migrated from the East to St. Paul in 1870. He possessed the same driving ambition that had spurred on the pioneering Burbank. At the age of sixteen, he had gone to work for a stock brokerage firm in New York City. After a brief term as deputy treasurer of New Jersey, he had headed west.<sup>32</sup>

By the time of his marriage in 1875 Livingston had become the manager of a life insurance company. He went on to form a brokerage firm and to found the St. Paul Gas Light Company. Along with Hill and Villard he helped build several railroads in Minnesota and throughout the Northwest. He also served as president of the Como Railway and St. Paul District Telegraph companies and director of the Merchants National Bank. His interests were as far flung as Montana, where he bought the townsite which bears his name, and New York, where he opened a banking house.<sup>33</sup>

The Livingstons had long admired the old Burbank mansion and must have been delighted when they were able to purchase it in 1888 from John J. Watson, who had acquired it as well as the neighboring Summit Court from William Riley earlier that year. The couple and their five children — Crawford, Mary Steele, Abbie Potts, Henry Sibley, and Gerald — moved in that spring. For years thereafter the house rang with the sound of children's play and the voices of distinguished visitors. Although Livingston had to travel in connection with his various enterprises and the family maintained vacation residences in Maine and northern Wisconsin, the house at 432 Summit Avenue remained the center of their lives. Young Crawford and Henry died there, and Mary and Abbie were married in the mansion.<sup>34</sup>

By the end of the century, Summit Avenue had become St. Paul's most fashionable address, and the great gray house, with the grace of age, stood majestically among its neighbors. Through the years the owners

had tampered very little with its original design, either inside or out. Comparison of an 1867 engraving with a photograph taken in the late 1880s indicates that the east porch had been extended the full length of the house by the latter date. Livingston replaced the single window which lit the central stairway with three arched windows of stained glass. He may also have installed the parquet floor, thought to be the first in Minnesota, in the drawing room on the east side of the house. For the most part, however, the mansion stood for nearly sixty-five years substantially as Burbank had built it. At an unknown time, probably early in the twentieth century, the old stone stables in the southeast corner of the lot were converted into a modern garage with two apartments.<sup>35</sup>

THE MANSION became the home of a new generation in 1915. In that year Theodore Wright Griggs married the Livingstons' daughter Mary and thereafter resided with the family. Griggs was the scion of a pioneer merchant and lumberman, Chauncey Wright Griggs, who had built prosperous businesses in St. Paul and Tacoma, Washington. As a young boy, Theodore had lived abroad for nearly two years with his mother, Martha (Gallup) Griggs, a brother, and two sisters. Following his graduation from Yale University in 1895, he became associated with Griggs, Cooper and Company, the wholesale grocery and food manufacturing business which his father and older brother had helped found in St. Paul in 1882. From his first job, which included "dipping prunes" in the dried fruit department, he rose to become secretary of the firm and then vice-president, president, and chairman of the board.<sup>36</sup>

Griggs served as a first lieutenant during the Spanish-American War and remained fit and active in sports. He belonged to the University, Town and

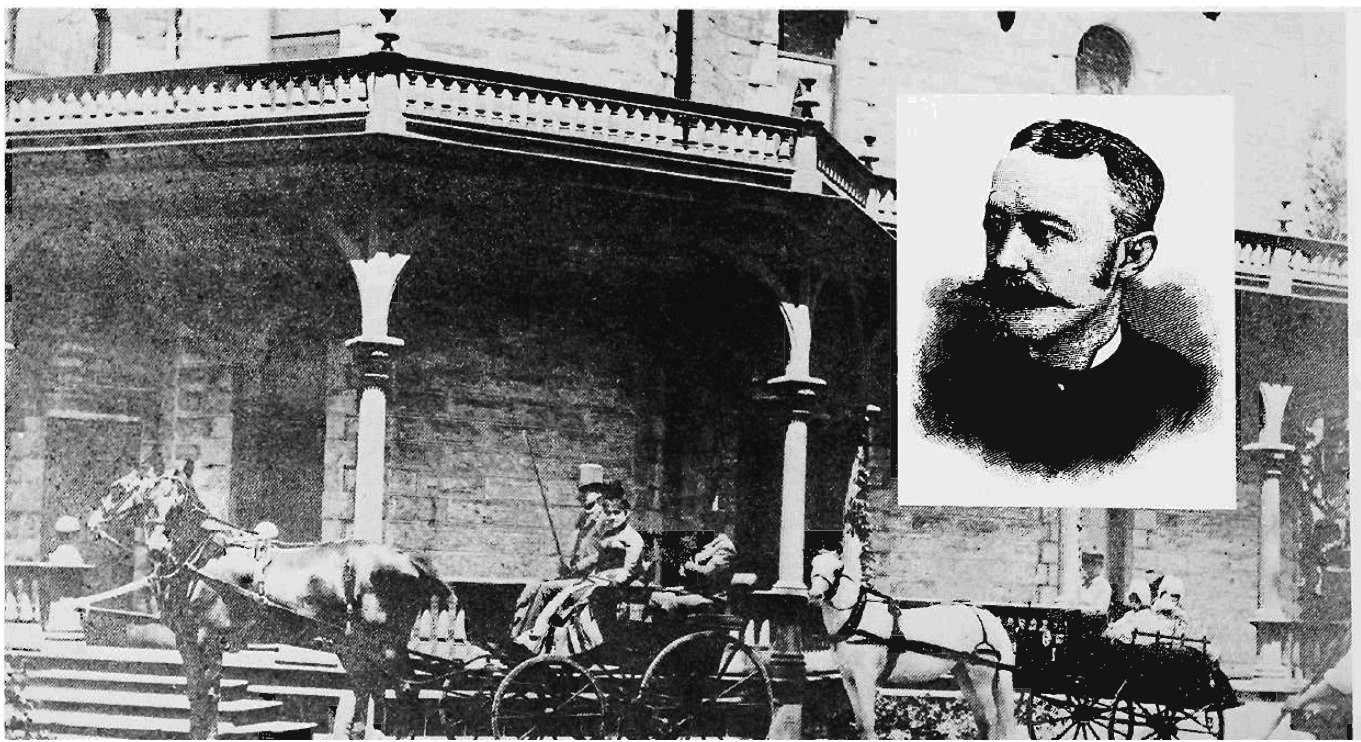
Country, Somerset, Minnesota, St. Paul Athletic, Commercial, St. Paul Curling, White Bear Yacht, and St. Paul Choral clubs. He had a fine bass voice and enjoyed performing for small gatherings. Albert W. Lindeke, a contemporary businessman, said of him: "No man in St. Paul had more friends, or knew better how to hold them." Mary Livingston Griggs was also active in St. Paul society. She belonged to a number of organizations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Women's City Club. For a number of years she devoted herself in a quiet way to philanthropic work.<sup>37</sup>

The Livingstons both died in 1925, and Mrs. Griggs inherited the property at 432 Summit Avenue. Having developed an appreciation for antiques at an early age, she installed rooms from elegant French and Italian houses, furnished with period pieces and art treasures, in the old mansion.<sup>38</sup>

The first stage of the work involved the construction of a two-story wing on the southwest corner of the house in 1925. Allen H. Stem, a nationally known architect, designed the addition to blend inconspicuously with the original plan. The kitchen was moved to the first floor, and the basement space was converted into a laundry. Upstairs a large bedroom, a bath in brass and marble, a wardrobe room, and a hallway were added. The wiring, heating, and plumbing systems of the entire house were probably modernized at this time, and an elevator was installed in the new hallway.<sup>39</sup>

Stem also remodeled the living room in the style of a seventeenth-century English renaissance chamber.

*IN THE LATE 1880s Crawford (inset) and Mary Livingston, attended by a groom, posed with three of their children on the east side of the house.*





The black-and-white marble floor and typical Jacobean plaster ceiling complement the walls of unpolished limestone from which the room derives its name, the stone room. Stem changed the shape of the windows and installed leaded glass, resulting in the removal of the Victorian porch on the rear of the house. The carved limestone mantel is a replica of the one Mrs. Griggs ordered, which was broken in shipment. Miss Gheen, the New York representative of Charles of London, supplied the ornaments and richly carved furnishings.

Stem became ill and retired in the late 1920s. Around 1930 Mrs. Griggs hired Magnus Jemne, another St. Paul architect, to begin the installation of late eighteenth-century French panels in the grand salon and bedroom suite on the east side of the house. It was Edwin H. Lundie, however, who completed the task of fitting and placing antique interiors in the salon, dining room, three bedrooms, two sitting rooms, wardrobe room, and small hallway.

Mr. Lundie, who began his career as an office boy for noted architect Cass Gilbert, shared with Mrs. Griggs a vision of "something wonderfully different" for the house. He meticulously measured the fixed details of the existing rooms and sent the information to Adolf Loewi, a Venetian dealer who collected panels and mantels. Loewi, in turn, submitted photographs and sketches of rooms from which Mrs. Griggs and Mr. Lundie made a selection. The installation of each room presented unique problems for the architect. Door openings had to be shifted, missing panels had to be replaced, molding details had to be added, and eighteenth-century pigments had to be matched.<sup>40</sup>

While Mr. Lundie struggled with the varied problems presented by the panels, Mrs. Griggs searched for appropriate furniture in the East and abroad. Relying on her own judgment and that of Pauline Ferguson Emmet, a close friend whose husband was in the diplomatic service in Europe, Mrs. Griggs furnished the house with great care for authenticity, color, and arrangement.

The first room to be completed was the Directoire or mirror room on the lower floor. Most of the large glass sections which are attached to two walls date to the end of the eighteenth century. Mr. Lundie added decorative details around the window openings and doorways and designed the supplemental molding of gold leaf above the cornice of the hand-carved paneling. He recalls trying "everything under the shining heavens" to match the unusual pale green shade of the antique panels. In a box of dried colors brought from Europe by one of the workmen, the architect finally found what he needed. The furnishings are delicate



MARY L. GRIGGS



THEODORE W. GRIGGS

Regency pieces in soft shades of green and gold. Two massive gilded bronze and crystal chandeliers lend a final touch of elegance to the room.<sup>41</sup>

In the dining room Mr. Lundie installed eighteenth-century Venetian panels in a deep sea-blue and five oil-on-canvas panels painted by Orizzonti. The black-and-white marble floor is full of marine fossils, and the shields for the wall sconces are real shell. The furniture, some of which is of nineteenth-century manufacture, has an English Georgian flavor.

Mr. Lundie laid rough but charming parquet flooring throughout the upstairs. It is well suited to the masculine bedroom, which he paneled in late eighteenth-century natural oak. Jemne lined the sunlit sitting room or library in the southeast corner of the house with Louis XVI classically styled panels. Mr. Lundie completed the installation of lavishly carved Louis XV panels in the bedroom used by the Griggs' daughter, Mary Griggs Burke. In a small chamber opening off the bedroom, Mr. Lundie arranged a display of antique dolls and a three-story dollhouse created by Mrs. Griggs and St. Paul cabinetmaker William Yungbauer.

The hallway connecting the original hall with the addition of the 1920s features Louis XV natural oak panels. They cover closets and the elevator shaft. The guest bathroom at the end of the hall has an enormous tub carved from a solid block of red marble and a matching basin with gold fixtures. Next door Mrs. Griggs' sitting room, which is original to the house, is an intimate creation of Louis XV rococo. A dainty secretary bookcase holds her collection of Meissen porcelain.

The three connecting rooms in the newer wing, along with the sitting room, formed Mrs. Griggs' suite. Her charming wardrobe room challenged the skills of one of Mr. Lundie's craftsmen, a Scandinavian church-window painter, who had to create two new



*THIS FOUR-POSTER canopy bed, covered in light green satin, was purchased in New York for the east bedroom.*

panels to match the antique painted ones from Austria. In the dressing and bathroom, the paneling is modern and only the furniture was imported. Stem separated the green marble fixtures from the rest of the room by a pair of brass gates. Mr. Lundie designed an unusual curved doorway to match the opening in the ornate Louis XVI paneling in Mrs. Griggs' bedroom.

A complete departure from the European antique décor may be found in the glass-walled basement amusement room which Mr. Lundie styled to reflect the sophisticated taste of the 1930s. A wide marble stairway leads to the room, which he calls "Venetian baroque in reverse" because all the surfaces are smooth and shining. The piped-in sound system, forced air heating, and indirect lighting were advanced ideas for that period. Mr. Lundie found some of the light-colored furniture in New York, and he designed other pieces himself.<sup>42</sup>

During the remodeling of the 1920s and 1930s, the stained-glass windows which Livingston had installed on the landing of the main stairway were replaced by leaded panes with the coats-of-arms of the Livingston, Griggs, and Gallup families, the last being

*THE DAUGHTER of the last residents of the house, Mary Griggs Burke, sits with her dachshund in the mirror-paneled salon which dates to the end of the eighteenth century.*



Griggs' maternal grandparents. The original porch on the back of the house was torn down, and a stone terrace was built. The interior of the garage was renovated.

Built to crown the career of a pioneer entrepreneur, the house bridges the colorful century in which St. Paul grew from a rough-and-tumble river town to an important center of commerce and government. Its sweeping view of the Mississippi — a major source of its builder's fortune — was gradually narrowed by surrounding structures. Over the years the activities and lives within it focused more and more on the tree-lined avenue in front and upon the society of wealth and refinement represented there. Standing at the head of Summit Avenue, the house survived to become the art-filled home of a cosmopolitan woman, who, after her husband's death in 1934, spent much of her time in foreign travel. Yet until her death in 1967 Mrs. Griggs always returned to the old mansion whose character she had changed so radically. For her it represented the roots of a lifetime rather than a show-piece. It was in this spirit that her daughter donated the property to the people of Minnesota.

<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to express her appreciation to Craig A. Gannon and other members of the society's historic sites department for their assistance in supplying material for this article. For a discussion of Italianate architecture, see Alan Gowans, *Images of American Living* (New York, 1964) and John Maas, *The Gingerbread Age: A View of Victorian America* (New York, 1957).

<sup>2</sup> C. L. Andrews, *History of St. Paul, Minn.*, 404 (Syracuse, 1890); George B. Sedgley, *Genealogy of the Burbank Family and the Families of Bray, Wellcome, Sedgley (Sedgley) and Welch*, 89, 371 (Farmington, Me., 1928).

<sup>3</sup> Records of Oakland Cemetery, in the cemetery office, St. Paul; Thomas M. Newson, *Pen Pictures of St. Paul, Minnesota, and Biographical Sketches of Old Settlers*, 1:215 (quote) (St. Paul, 1886).

<sup>4</sup> *Minnesota Pioneer*, July 10, p. 2, July 31, p. 3, 1851; J. Fletcher Williams, *A History of the City of Saint Paul, and of the County of Ramsey, Minnesota*, 298-303 (*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, vol. 4, 1876); *Illustrated St. Paul: A Souvenir of the St. Paul Dispatch*, 80 (St. Paul, 1892).

<sup>5</sup> Charles E. Flandrau, *The History of Minnesota and Tales of the Frontier*, 81 (St. Paul, 1900); Newson, *Pen Pictures*, 1:216; Henry B. Whipple, "Recollections of Persons and Events in the History of Minnesota," in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, 9:578 (quotes) (St. Paul, 1901); *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, November 17, 1857, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, *A History of the City of Saint Paul*, 303; Henry A. Castle, *History of St. Paul and Vicinity*, 1:209 (Chicago, 1912); Warren Upham, "Russell Blakeley," in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, 9:667 (St. Paul, 1901). On the stage business in Minnesota, see James H. Baker, "History of Transportation in Minnesota," in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, 9:1-34.

<sup>7</sup> Russell Blakeley, "Opening of the Red River of the North to Commerce and Civilization," in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, 8:45-67 (St. Paul, 1898); Henry C. Klassen, "The Red River Settlement and the St. Paul Route, 1859-1870," ii, 22-26, unpublished master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1963, and Henry C. Burbank Statement, October, 1891, p. 2, 3 (copies of both are in the Minnesota Historical Society).

<sup>8</sup> Klassen, "The Red River Settlement and the St. Paul Route," 27-32, 54-58; Henry C. Burbank Statement, October, 1891, p. 4-6; *Illustrated St. Paul: A Souvenir of the St. Paul Dispatch*, 80.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, *A History of the City of Saint Paul*, 393, 411, 441; Baker, in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, 9:27; Judson W. Bishop, "History of the St. Paul & Sioux City Railroad, 1864-1881," in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, vol. 10, part 1, p. 399 (Minneapolis, 1905); St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company, *The Saint Paul Letter*, 7 (St. Paul, 1953); Darwin Hall and R. Holcombe, *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from Its First Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, 109 (St. Paul, 1910); St. Paul Chamber of Commerce, *Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, Officers, Committees and Members*, 2 (St. Paul, 1867); *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer-Press and Tribune*, June 3, 1876, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph B. Chaney, "Early Bridges and Changes of the Land and Water Surface in the City of Saint Paul," in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, 12:137 (quotes) (St. Paul, 1908); Sedgley, *Genealogy of the Burbank Family*, 372; "Abstract of Title to Lot 1, Summit Court," 2, in possession of the historic sites department of the Minnesota Historical Society. As early as 1856-57, Goodrich and Somers' *St. Paul City Directory* and "Map of the City of Saint Paul" referred to Summit Avenue by name.

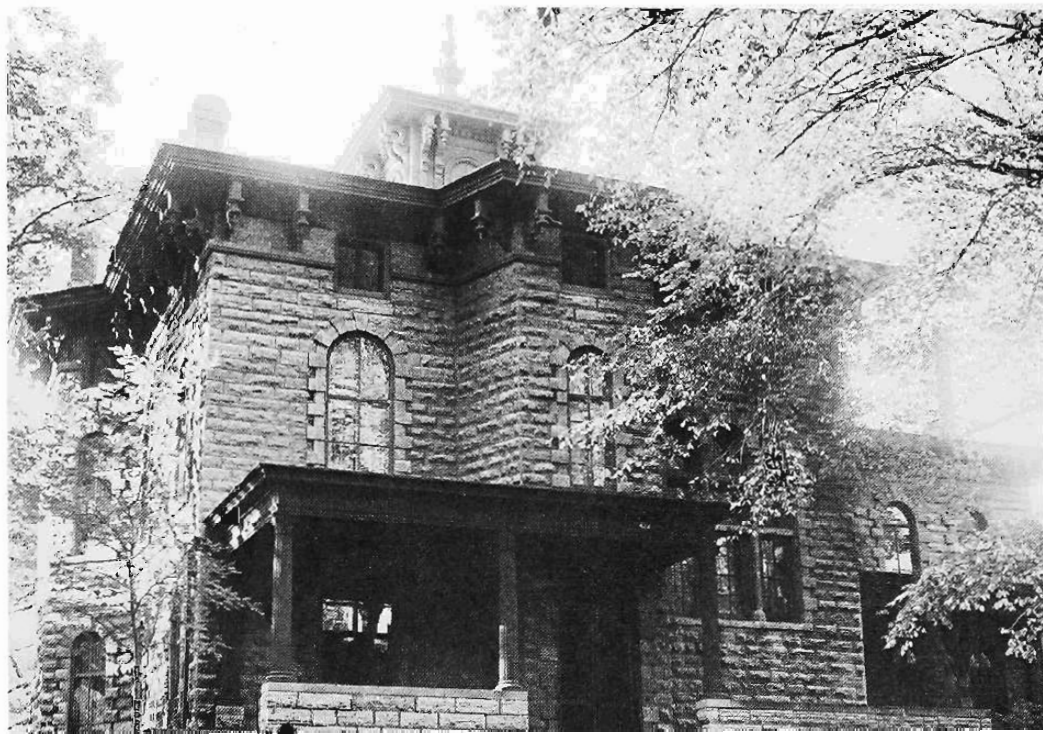
<sup>11</sup> Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, 648 (Los Angeles, 1956); Donald R. Torbert, *A Century of Minnesota Architecture*, n.p. (Minneapolis, 1958).

<sup>12</sup> H. F. Koeper, *Historic St. Paul Buildings*, 62 (St. Paul, 1967); A. Bailey's *St. Paul Directory*, 1863, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> *Groff & Bailey's St. Paul Directory*, 1864, p. 21. There are no records for the Ramsey County Jail prior to 1903. A search of the records of the Minnesota State Prison in Stillwater and the City-County Workhouse in Maplewood shed no light on the question. Considering the penal philosophy of the time and the fact that there was no work release law in Minnesota until 1957, it seems unlikely that a prisoner would have been allowed to work in the house.

<sup>14</sup> United States Manuscript Census Schedules, 1870, Ramsey County, p. 1291, in the Minnesota Historical Society.

A VIEW of the Burbank-Livingston-Griggs House at 432 Summit Avenue as it appears today



THE ARCHITECTURAL details on pages 23, 26, and 29 were photographed in the house by Alan Ominsky of the society's staff. Mr. Ominsky also took the photograph on page 33. The Livingston and Oakes portraits on page 9 appeared in the *Northwest* for January and October, 1888. The *St. Paul Dispatch* loaned the photographs on page 32. All the other illustrations are in the society's picture collection.

<sup>10</sup> A. T. Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota*, 36 (Chicago, 1874); Newson, *Pen Pictures*, 1:217.

<sup>11</sup> Records of Oakland Cemetery, St. Paul; United States Manuscript Census Schedules, 1860, Ramsey County, p. 86, 1870, p. 934, 1291, both in the Minnesota Historical Society; *St. Paul Daily Pioneer*, September 24, 1868, p. 1; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 24, 1905, p. 2; Goodrich & Somers' *St. Paul City Directory*, 1856-57, p. 67; A. Bailey's *St. Paul Directory*, 1863, p. 119.

<sup>12</sup> *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, May 11, 1881, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Sedgley, *Genealogy of the Burbank Family*, 372; *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer-Press and Tribune*, June 3, p. 4, 7, June 6, p. 7 (quote), 1876; *St. Paul Dispatch*, June 3, 1876, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> "Abstract of Title to Lot 1, Summit Court," 7, 10; Records of Oakland Cemetery, St. Paul.

<sup>15</sup> Pioneer Press Co., *St. Paul: History and Progress*, 82 (St. Paul, 1897); Albert Marquis, ed., *The Book of Minnesotans*, 159 (Chicago, 1907); Edward Holbert Collection of Finch Family Photographs, in the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>16</sup> Records of Oakland Cemetery, St. Paul; McClung's *St. Paul Directory*, 1866, p. 39; Ketchum & Crawford's *St. Paul City Directory*, 1869, p. 60; *Daily Minneapolis Tribune*, August 10, 1875, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> E. E. Barton, pub., *City of St. Paul*, 65 (*Resources of Minnesota Series* — St. Paul, 1888). Pioneer Press Co., *St. Paul: History and Progress*, 66, 81; *St. Paul Pioneer Co., History of the Leading Wholesale and Retail Houses of Saint Paul, Together with its Manufacturing Interests*, 10 (St. Paul, 1874).

<sup>18</sup> Andrews, *History of St. Paul, Minn.*, 106; Marquis, ed., *The Book of Minnesotans*, 160; *Illustrated St. Paul: A Souvenir of the St. Paul Dispatch*, 78; Pioneer Press Co., *St. Paul: History and Progress*, 82; *St. Paul Winter Carnival*, 5, 13 (quotes) (St. Paul, 1887).

<sup>19</sup> Holbert Photograph Collection; Records of Oakland Cemetery, St. Paul; Baldwin Seminary, *Catalog*, 1888, p. 6, 7, 1889, p. 8, 1890, p. 4, 6, 1891, p. 4, 6, 1892, p. 4, 6, 1899-1900, p. 6; *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, July 6, p. 11, July 20, p. 11, August 1, p. 2, August 3, p. 11, 1884, January 1, 1885, p. 7; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 25, 1917, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> "Abstract of Title to Lot 1, Summit Court," 11; R. L. Polk & Co.'s *St. Paul City Directory*, 1885-86, p. 343, 1890-91, p. 500, 1892, p. 522; Records of Oakland Cemetery, St. Paul; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 25, 1917, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Henry L. Oak, *Oak-Oaks-Oakes: Family Register Nathaniel Oak of Marlborough, Mass.*, 38 (Los Angeles, 1906); Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 13:602 (New York, 1934); Elmer T. Howson, ed.,

*Biographical Directory of the Railway Officials of America*, 410 (New York, 1913); Eugene V. Smalley, *History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, 290 (New York, 1883).

<sup>22</sup> "T. F. Oakes," in *Railroad Age*, 66:794 (March 21, 1919); Robert E. Riegel, *The Story of the Western Railroads*, 204-206 (New York, 1926); "Thomas F. Oakes," in the *Northwest*, 6:1 (October, 1888).

<sup>23</sup> Stuart Daggett, *Railroad Reorganization*, 263-310 (*Harvard Economic Series*, vol. 4 — Cambridge, 1908).

<sup>24</sup> Thomas C. Cochran, *Railroad Leaders, 1845-1890: The Business Mind in Action*, 409 (Cambridge, 1953); Marquis de Mores to Thomas Oakes, August 4, 1885, Northern Pacific Papers, in the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>25</sup> "Abstract of Title to Lot 1, Summit Court," 12; R. L. Polk & Co.'s *St. Paul City Directory*, 1887-88, p. 928, 1891-92, p. 1044; *Post-Intelligencer* (Seattle), March 14, 1919, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 13, 1966, women's section, p. 1; *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 29, 1875, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Nathaniel West, *The Ancestry, Life and Times of Hon. Henry Hastings Sibley, LL.D.*, 86 (St. Paul, 1889); Florence Van Rensselaer, comp., *The Livingston Family in America*, 144 (New York, 1949); *St. Paul Dispatch*, November 16, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell's *St. Paul City Directory*, 1875, p. 267; R. L. Polk & Co.'s *St. Paul City Directory*, 1885-86, p. 539, 1886-87, p. 619; *St. Paul Dispatch*, November 16, 1925, p. 1; *Who's Who in America*, 1:435 (Chicago, 1899).

<sup>29</sup> "Abstract of Title to Lot 1, Summit Court," 15; West, *The Ancestry . . . of Hon. Henry Hastings Sibley, LL.D.*, 86; Records of Oakland Cemetery, St. Paul; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 26, 1915, p. 1, February 13, 1966, women's section, p. 1; *St. Paul Dispatch*, July 29, 1925, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Compare the size of the east porch in the cover illustration and in the photograph on page 30 of this article. For a discussion of the drawing room floor and the hall windows, see Mary Griggs Burke, "Facts about the Griggs House," n.d., p. 4, and her statement dated February 8, 1968, p. 3, both in possession of the historic sites department of the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>31</sup> Theodore Christiansen, *Minnesota: The Land of Sky-Tinted Waters*, 5:5 (quote) (Chicago, 1935); *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, July 12, 1884, p. 8; Joseph A. A. Burnquist, ed., *Minnesota and Its People*, 4:508 (Chicago, 1924); *St. Paul Dispatch*, February 13, 1934, p. 4. For biographical information on C. W. Griggs, see Burnquist, ed., *Minnesota and Its People*, 4:496-499, and Alonzo Phelps, *Biographical History of the Northwest*, 126-130 (*American Biography of Representative Men*, vol. 4 — Boston, 1890).

<sup>32</sup> William B. Hennessy, *Past and Present of St. Paul, Minnesota*, 634 (Chicago, 1906); *St. Paul Dispatch*, February 13, 1934, p. 1 (quote), March 16, 1967, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> "Abstract of Title to Lot 1, Summit Court," 17.

<sup>34</sup> Edwin H. Lundie, who supervised most of the work that Stem began, recorded an account of the remodeling in a taped interview with Craig A. Cannon, 1968, in possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>35</sup> *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 13, 1968, women and society section, p. 11 (quote).

<sup>36</sup> Lundie interview, 1968 (quote).

<sup>37</sup> Lundie interview, 1968 (quote).





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