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# MHS COLLECTIONS

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**ABOUT 1850** Calhoun M. Deringer presented this unique cased set of percussion .42 caliber pistols to Alexander Ramsey, long-time Republican leader who served as first governor of Minnesota Territory and second governor of the state. The stocks are polished mahogany, and the side plates, tips of the ramrods, and inlays are gold. Ramsey's name is engraved on the top of each grip and on the case.

THE PURPOSE of this feature, which will be a regular part of *Minnesota History*, is to acquaint readers with some of the holdings in the society's collections. For this issue we have selected interrelated items from the museum, a historic site, and the audio-visual library. The museum is the repository of an estimated 1,000,000 objects, including the trowel and watch of Alexander Ramsey shown here. Other historical items owned by the society, such as Ramsey's pistols, are exhibited at appropriate historic sites, in this case the Ramsey House in St. Paul. Documentary photographs, such as the one on page 36, often lend additional validity and interest to the society's artifacts.

The society's articles of incorporation — signed in October, 1849, a few months after the establishment of Minnesota Territory — provided for "The collection and preservation of . . . Mineralogical and Geological specimens,

**RAMSEY** used this English watch from 1838 until his death in 1903. In 1889 he replaced the original works with an Elgin stem-winder.



Indian curiosities and other matters and things connected with, and calculated to illustrate and perpetuate the history and settlement of said Territory." Until the present Historical Building was completed in 1917, the museum was housed in hotel rooms, store lofts, and the basement of the Capitol.

The character of the collection changed along with its quarters. For many years the museum, as "Minnesota's attic," was deluged with curiosities valued for their quaint or nostalgic effect, beauty, or monetary worth. The twentieth century has seen a growing regard for the artifact as a historical document, an index of the way of life, values, and ideas of an era.

Today the museum, through permanent displays, traveling exhibits, and the interpretation of historic sites, seeks to inform Minnesotans about the development of their state and region from prehistoric times to the present.



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