



# Radisson Farm & Its Influences

## Historical Notes on the Farm, the Hotel and the Road

By Karen Klinkenberg

### Founding of the Farm

The 1888 map of Blaine lists vast amounts of land owned by Albert Johnson and Lorenzo D. Parker.<sup>1</sup> With a little bit of research and by connecting the dots, it is almost certain that the Albert Johnson who owned land in Blaine is the same person who gave his cousin, Edna Dickerson, over a million-dollar inheritance, with which she built the Radisson Hotel in downtown Minneapolis. It then follows that Edna already owned the land on which she and her husband, Simon Kruse, would establish the Radisson Farm, to supply produce for the hotel's Flame Room restaurant, which was opened in 1925.

Albert Johnson (1833-1905) came to Minneapolis in 1855 at the urging of his half-brother, Dr. Asa Johnson. Albert was a real estate lawyer, specializing in buying delinquent property, tax sales and lending money. He is described in a 1989 article<sup>2</sup> as being a miserly, eccentric and poorly-dressed millionaire who lived and died at his office in the Century Building in downtown Minneapolis. Besides owning land in partnership with L.D. Parker<sup>3</sup> in Blaine, Albert Johnson also acquired large tracts of property in Minneapolis and elsewhere, including the land on which the Radisson Hotel was eventually built.

### History of the Hotel

Albert evidently admired Edna Dickerson because she was, at the time, a single career woman in Chicago who ran a secretarial school and worked as a court reporter, while living with and caring for her mother. He made her the sole heir

of his estate. Asa Johnson contested Albert's will, claiming that Albert was insane. However, Edna's lawyers testified in Probate Court that Asa was the one who was insane and Edna eventually was awarded the entire inheritance, consisting of real estate, stocks, bonds and cash — valued, in total, between one and two million dollars. Simon Kruse, who had married Edna in 1906, represented her in court.

Meanwhile, many of the city's businessmen and civic groups were of the opinion that Minneapolis needed a first-class hotel and managed to convince Edna and Simon that they should be the ones to build it, with Edna's inheritance.

The Hotel Radisson (named for explorer Pierre-Esprit Radisson) opened on December 15, 1909. The Kruses ended up spending double the money on its construction than they planned; they were poor money managers and neither of them had experience in hotel management. By 1934 they were bankrupt and the hotel was sold to Tom Moore, who owned the Coca-Cola franchise in Minneapolis. The farm also went into bankruptcy. Simon Kruse died in 1946. When Edna died in 1948, her estate was worth only \$2,158.06.

### Notes on Radisson Road

Simon Kruse named the farm after the hotel, calling it "The Radisson Farm". According to the town minutes, dating between 1900 and the 1930's, most of the roads in Blaine during were called by the names of the farmers who lived on them. (e.g., Wall Road, Lovell Road, etc.). Radisson Road was called "Rice Creek and Bethel Road" in these minutes, until after the Radisson Farm was established and the two names were then used interchangeably. As often occurs, the name "Radisson Road" seems to have evolved over time and casually replaced its previous name sometime after the mid-1920's.

#### Background for this article

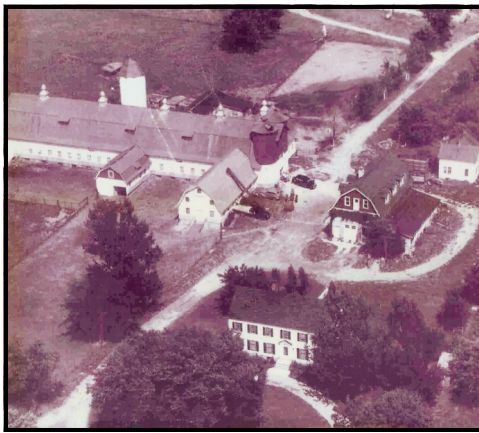
<sup>1</sup> Parker and Johnson's interest in Blaine land seems to have been entirely for investment purposes. According to the *History of Anoka County* by Albert M. Goodrich (1976, p. 113), in 1886, James T. Elwell purchased about 6,000 acres from Parker and Johnson for his stock farms.

<sup>2</sup> "Minneapolis' Grand Hotels—Part 4: The Hotel Radisson" by Penny A. Petersen, *Lake Area News*, October 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Little is yet known about Lorenzo D. Parker, other than that he lived in Minneapolis, was married and had a son. Census records do not list his occupation.



*Postcard of the  
Hotel Radisson, in its early  
years*



**Top** Aerial photograph of Radisson Farm—facing east, with main house in foreground. Radisson Road runs parallel to the house, just outside the view of the photo.

**Right** Hand-drawn diagram of Radisson Farm. Radisson Road is indicated as “Gravel Road” at the top of the image. Diagram is from insurance policy materials, 1954.

**Bottom** Contemporary view of windbreak from Radisson Farm, taken from the grounds of Blaine City Hall. The treeline at the lower right side of the hand-drawn diagram (at right) approximates the position. This is the only remaining evidence of Radisson Farm, as the buildings were removed or demolished in the early 1960s.

