

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Growing Up in Ramsey County

With a Dash of Foreign Spice

KITTY GOGINS, PAGE 14



One Hundred Years Serving New Americans

The Centennial of the International Institute of Minnesota

KRISTA FINSTAD HANSON, PAGE 1

By the Numbers . . .

The world's first golf club, The Royal and Ancient Club of St. Andrews, formed in Scotland.

1754

The first eighteen-hole course in the U.S., the Chicago Golf Club, opened.

1893

Ramsey County's first nine-hole course, Town & Country Club, opened in St. Paul.

1898

University of Minnesota professors sent a solicitation to faculty seeking to form a golf club.

1915

Articles of incorporation were finalized for the University Golf Club.

1919

The newly named Midland Hills Country Club of Rose Township opened for play.

July 23, 1921

Hollywood actors Bing Crosby and Bob Hope played an Army Navy fundraiser at Midland Hills.

May 9, 1942

Midland Hills Country Club celebrates its centennial.

July 2019

SOURCE: Midland Hills Country Club Archives

Most any new "great idea" often proves to be a monumental effort, full of competing ideas, hurdles, and a bit of handwringing. John Hamburger's article, *Where the Grass is Always Green: The Founding of Midland Hills a Century Ago*, tells the story of the early efforts and challenges in creating a course for University of Minnesota faculty and other members. See page 20.

ON THE COVER

Karen dancers at the Festival of Nations, sponsored by the International Institute and held in the St. Paul RiverCentre and Roy Wilkins Auditorium, May 3–5, 2013. The Karen people are an ethnic minority from Burma (Myanmar) who first arrived as refugees to Minnesota in 1994. *Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.*

Contents

- 1** *One Hundred Years Serving New Americans*
The Centennial of the International Institute of Minnesota
KRISTA FINSTAD HANSON
- 14** *Growing Up in Ramsey County*
With a Dash of Foreign Spice
KITTY GOGINS
- 20** *Where the Grass is Always Green*
The Founding of Midland Hills a Century Ago
JOHN HAMBURGER

Book Review

The Crusade for Forgotten Souls: Reforming Minnesota's Mental Institutions, 1946–1954 by Susan Bartlett Foote

GARY F. GLEASON

Message from the Editorial Board

In this issue, we mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the International Institute of Minnesota. Krista Finstad Hanson brings us a comprehensive look at that organization, which began under sponsorship of the YWCA after World War I and has assisted people of diverse countries and ethnicities as they come to live in Minnesota. For instance, the group sponsored Japanese Americans who were allowed to leave U.S. internment camps during World War II, and it helped resettle Eastern Europeans after that conflict. More recently, it's been instrumental in providing support to the growing Hmong, Karen, and Somali communities. The Festival of Nations, still going strong, reflects the compelling cultural heritage of many groups that have contributed to our county. In a companion article, Kitty Gogins provides a more personal view, sharing how the International Institute helped her Hungarian-immigrant parents and reinforced rich family traditions as she grew up in Roseville. The other article in this issue tells a different suburban story: Midland Hills Country Club emerged from farm fields in the early 1900s to provide an opportunity to play the newly popular game of golf. Club member John Hamburger has delved into club archives to illustrate how the organization became a reality, despite the difficult process of acquiring land and raising money from sponsors. Even construction was hard. Designed by prominent golf architect Seth Raynor, the course was completed with rocks removed by hand and fairways cut with a horse-drawn hay mower!

Anne Cowie
Chair, Editorial Board

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The Centennial of the International Institute of Minnesota

KRISTA FINSTAD HANSON

To leave one's country is a life-changing decision. Every day, people flee their homelands to escape persecution and war. Every day, these sometimes reluctant migrants choose to leave all they know in search of new and better opportunities in a new land. Every day, men, women, and children come to the United States as immigrants, refugees, and asylees.

For the past century, newcomers arriving in St. Paul have had their likelihood of success improved by the International Institute of Minnesota. With remarkable consistency of purpose, this organization has extended a hand of

friendship to people hoping to begin new lives here. This year, the International Institute of Minnesota celebrates a century of serving these New Americans.

The Early Years: Women Leaders Ahead of Their Time

In 1911, Edith Terry Bremer opened the original International Institute in New York City within the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) to serve foreign-born women and hire caseworkers fluent in the languages of the people they served.¹



The 1920 Christmas party at the International Institute's first location. More than 150 guests from eleven countries attended. *Brown's Photo Studio, courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.*

St. Paul's International Institute opened its doors December 12, 1919, as part of the city's YWCA, to serve foreign-born residents and new immigrants arriving after World War I.²

According to Augustine DeAngelis, the Institute's northwest field secretary, St. Paul had "17,000 aliens including Scandinavians, Russians, Germans, Italians, Hungarians, and Poles."³ The organization met a great need.

The Institute's first St. Paul location was 584 Rice Street at the southwest corner of Como Avenue in a former saloon called Jake's Place, where a small group of reforming women, including Bess Leuthold Beebe and Lorena Harrison, transformed the once rough-and-tumble building into a safe-haven to fortify new immigrant families.

Before long, the Institute offered English and citizenship classes, interpreters, home visits, and referrals for services. It provided activities for immigrants and resources to the community, and it partnered with twenty-three agencies, including the Wilder Health Center, which ran a clinic on site, and the Schubert Club, which offered youth music lessons.⁴

The 1921 Annual Report included a letter from Executive Secretary Harrison, who wrote: "This small report is an endeavor to tell of our earnest efforts to be of real service and to bring friendliness, understanding, and a chance to learn our language to our New American friends in St. Paul."⁵ That year, a four-person staff of caseworkers who spoke German, Italian, Norwegian, and Polish helped newcomers from thirteen countries. A Polish client said in the report, "When I came to St. Paul ten years ago, there seemed to be no hope for the foreigner who could not speak English. I feel more at home since you came to see me and told me how I could get free medical aid and could learn English."⁶

The Institute saw its role not only to help newcomers learn English, naturalize, and find work, but also to help cultures accept each other. It was hoped that New Americans would feel connected to their new homes without losing a sense of their ethnic backgrounds.

After five years, the organization moved to its second location in the basement of the YWCA at 123–133 W. Fifth Street because rent at the first location had become burdensome.⁷

A Celebration of Culture in Community: Connecting New and Established Americans

In 1931, Alice Lilliequist Sickels became the organization's third executive secretary. She instituted a three-day Homelands Exhibit at the YWCA auditorium April 22–24, 1932.⁸ A year later, she organized a Spring Fete at Como Park. However, rain threatened, and Sickels vowed never again to attempt an outdoor event. Instead, the Institute sponsored a Folk Festival at the St. Paul Civic Auditorium the following year.⁹

Initially, as the Institute formed within the YWCA, its staff and board included only women. However, perhaps because of the substantial work required to run the popular festivals, the board invited men to join them in 1934.¹⁰ With more hands on deck in 1936, the organization debuted what would become its signature event—the Festival of Nations.

The Great Depression, World War II, and an Influx of New Clients

In the 1930s, Mexican migrants moved to Minnesota to work in the sugar beet industry. Many eventually found their way to St. Paul's West Side neighborhood. The 1930 U.S. Census counted 628 Mexicans living in St. Paul. While a small number of Mexicans resided here as early as 1870, the new influx coincided with the Great Depression. The Institute studied the Mexican population, which faced hostility and discrimination, and advocated for and served this ethnic community's needs.¹¹

On October 26, 1938, the organization became an independent agency—International Institute, Inc.—but remained at the YWCA.

Nearly 1,000 members, representing twenty-eight nations and African Americans, paid annual dues of fifty cents per person in the early 1940s. The cultural groups organized into Scandinavian, Slavic, Mediterranean, English-speaking, and Central European committees.¹²

Around the same time, the forces of history called on the country's Institutes to take on a wider role in serving people caught in national and international crises. On December 7, 1941, Japan bombed the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and at the request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Congress declared war the next day.



Rebecca Bajakian, Aukine Bangotch, Saussy Keljik, A. Ousdigian, and Togue Tufenk perform an Armenian folk dance at the 1934 Folk Festival. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

What did that mean for the Japanese and Japanese Americans in the United States? In February 1942, President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 put in place a series of restrictions for Japanese and Japanese Americans, most of whom lived in Hawaii or on the West Coast. According to the 1940 U.S. Census, fifty-one lived in Minnesota; with thirteen in St. Paul. Restrictions included curfews, travel bans, and the demand to relinquish all weapons, cameras, and radios.¹³ The Institute rushed to the aid of these residents, as they were immediately, and erroneously, put on house arrest by the police.¹⁴

A month later, Executive Order 9102 instituted the War Relocation Authority (WRA), and on March 21, 1942, Congress passed Public Law 503, creating a West-Coast war zone that removed 110,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans to internment camps in ten remote locations. They could take only what they could carry. Many lost businesses, homes, possessions, and livelihoods because of this forced removal.¹⁵

As early as August that year, the Institute received letters from American-born Japanese Nisei (children born to Japanese parents in the U.S.) who wanted assistance in gaining release from the incarceration camps. The WRA had established a process for American citizens to leave the camps if they could find a sponsor to guarantee jobs and housing for them away from the West-Coast war zone. Thomas Holland, the WRA director, spoke at the American Federation of International Institutes (AFII) annual meeting in New York City that fall. Sickels attended this meeting and reported back to her board of directors, explaining that resettlement of Japanese Americans "can only be affected on a case by case basis. Individuals must find places to work and live and then they will be released."¹⁶

As a result, the Institute started the St. Paul Resettlement Committee (SPRC) in October with Institute, YWCA, community, and church leaders.¹⁷

Japanese-American citizens Ruth and Earl Tanbara received special travel documents

The History of the Festival of Nations

From its inception in the 1930s, the Festival of Nations has become the largest and longest-running ethnic event in the state, celebrating the many cultures that call Minnesota home.³ After the 1934 and 1936 festivals, the committee hosted the event every three years.

At the 1939 festival, a medieval-style dinner opened the program. Guests of honor included the “Lord” Mayor of St. Paul and city council members as “Burgomasters.”^b Crown Prince Frederick and Princess Ingrid of Denmark visited the festival,^c and its renown and popularity grew.

The next festival fell during World War II. It was a difficult decision to move forward with programming, but Bess Leuthold Beebe determined the event was needed in war time more than ever, and so it took place May 1–3, 1942.^d The festival committee decided not to display flags, which were

considered political symbols. Rather, community clergy offered an interfaith prayer, and Lady Liberty made a regal appearance.

As Alice Lilliequist Sickels recounted, “The community-wide interpretation of the Festival of Nations as a dramatization of national unity and of the equal Americanism of people of all backgrounds was the most important aspect of the festival.”^e

Because of the ongoing war, the Institute held its next Festival of Nations April 24–27, 1947, after a five-year hiatus. A Japanese group—including Japanese Americans resettled to Minnesota and Japanese brides who married U.S. soldiers—participated for the first time under the leadership of Ruth Tanbara, a Japanese American who worked for the St. Paul YWCA and was a member of the St. Paul Resettlement Committee.^f



A large crowd enjoys the food and festivities at the 1942 Festival of Nations market in the St. Paul Civic Auditorium. *Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.*

In May 1949, the Festival of Nations opened in collaboration with the Minnesota Territorial Centennial celebration. This four-day event pulled out all the stops. Architect Dorothy Ingemann was called to design a riverboat, and the program narrated the arrival of early immigrants.⁹ Shortly thereafter, the Institute again decided to host the event every three years, including in 1952 and 1955.

The next Festival of Nations, held May 7–11, 1958, coincided with the centennial anniversary of Minnesota statehood. This premier, five-day-event occurred alongside a World Trade Expo at the St. Paul Civic Arena. Many local, national, and international dignitaries attended, including Princess Astrid of Norway and Prince Bertil of Sweden; the prime ministers of Finland, Iceland, and Norway; ten foreign ambassadors; ten consul generals; and others. National guests—U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles;

Minnesota Senators Edward Thye and Hubert H. Humphrey; and Minnesota Governor Orville Freeman—also attended.^h

Festivals in the 1960s included one in 1961, another in 1964 that welcomed newly arrived Cubans, and the last of that decade in 1967 with the theme, “Nations in Harmony.”ⁱ

The construction of the St. Paul Civic Center led to the cancellation of the 1970 event,^j but after a six-year break, the Festival of Nations opened May 11–13, 1973, at the new civic center location.^k

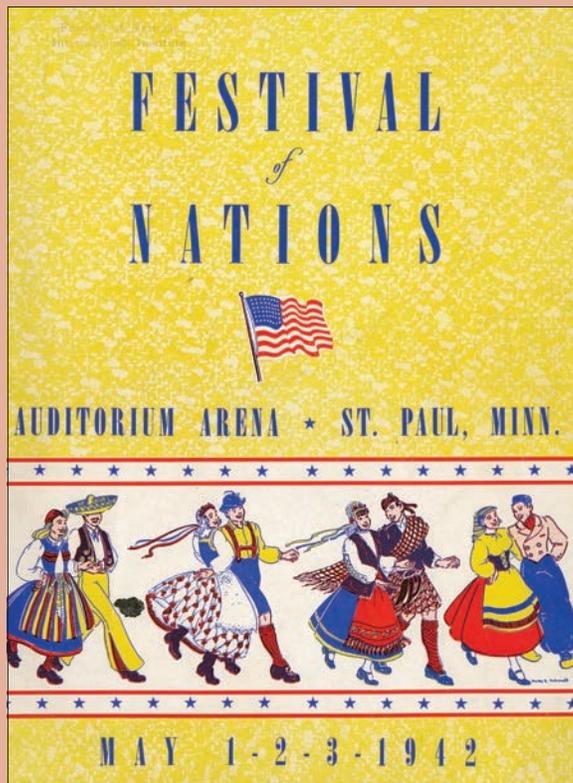
It seemed fitting that the 1976 festival celebrated the Bicentennial of the United States of America.^l It was followed three years later with the next festival, hailed as “Minnesota’s Largest Ethnic Celebration.”^m From then on, the festival occurred annually.

Newly arrived Hmong and Lao groups participated in the 1980 festivalⁿ for the first time, and new facades for the food booths were created. The Ingemann originals eventually phased out, and a well-known, stage set designer Jack Barkla designed the new facades.^o

The festival introduced a Friday student-only day in 1983,^p and in 1991, the festival started opening on Thursday, so even more school groups could attend.

Each year, the festival introduces new themes while keeping constant the elements that make it a well-attended and long-standing event. Key to its success are the cultural groups whose volunteers team up with the Institute’s staff. Some cultural groups can count four generations of family members who have helped over the years.

The International Institute continues to host the Festival of Nations annually in early May at the St. Paul RiverCentre and Roy Wilkins Auditorium. Today, they partner with one-hundred ethnic groups and count on 1,000 volunteers to run this four-day event, which, in 2018, saw more than 50,000 visitors.^q



Original promotional poster from the 1942 Festival of Nations. Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.

from the Wartime Civil Control Administration to leave California in August 1942 and relocate to St. Paul. Ruth had worked for the International Institute in San Francisco. Her brother, Paul Nomura, was stationed at Camp Savage, south of Minneapolis, as part of the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS), which had moved to Minnesota in March. Also, the Tanbaras connected with a friend who was Japanese and had offered them a place to stay.¹⁸

When the couple arrived, they met staff at the International Institute. Within a week, Ruth hired on as a secretary at the YWCA.¹⁹ The Tanbaras worked tirelessly with the resettlement committee and helped Japanese Americans personally, using their own time and resources. They also talked to civic groups to build community acceptance for the relocating Japanese Americans.²⁰

Since the beginning of the war, the Institute helped an increasing number of people complete their citizenship paperwork. The October 1944 issue of the Institute's "Nationality News" offered this information: "The Immigration and Naturalization Service reports that in St. Paul there are over 5,000 aliens. The Institute through its Education Department is letting these residents know that the city offers them free instruction in our English and Citizenship classes, and that the Institute staff will assist in filing naturalization papers if they desire it."²¹

With the war's end in August 1945, the Institute staff grew busier. The organization's annual report said, "The year 1945 saw great world

changes . . . The problems brought to the International Institute reflected the problems of a troubled world. 1320 individuals came to us for assistance. Servicemen returned to St. Paul; some brought foreign brides and children born in other countries. Requests for information about bringing wives and fiancées left abroad from ex-servicemen increased. Families living in St. Paul with relatives living in war-torn countries turned to us for assistance in locating these relatives."²²

That same year, the SPRC separated from the Institute to engage in legal contracts and receive funding from the Council of Social Agencies and the Community Chest. For the next three years, the SPRC operated the St. Paul Resettlement Hostel at 191 W. Kellogg. The hostel offered temporary housing to more than 150 resettled Japanese Americans.²³

Six thousand Japanese-American soldiers had been stationed at Camp Savage and Fort Snelling during the war with the MISLS. By war's end, they were able to return home or move to new homes. The 1950 U.S. Census reports 1,049 people of Japanese descent living in Minnesota, including resettled people, former MISLS soldiers, and the Japanese brides of some soldiers returning from the war overseas.²⁴

The Tanbaras also chose to stay, and their Tanbara and Nomura family members joined them. In her memoir, Ruth wrote, "Though the weather was truly cold in Minnesota, in general the hearts of the people were warm and gracious. Many opened their homes, and churches

Christmas dinner at the St. Paul Resettlement Hostel in 1946. Residents included (L-R): Yoneko Yamada, Frank Yanari, Emi Yanari, Kimi Yanari, Tomiko Ogata, and Hiroko Ogata. *Courtesy of Linda Hashimoto van Dooijewert.*



welcomed the Nisei.”²⁵ The Tanbaras continued as community leaders in St. Paul for the rest of their lives.

A Look Back at the Past; A Step Forward Toward the Future

In 1944, Sickels took time off to write a history of the Institute and the Festival of Nations in *Around the World in St. Paul*. She then accepted the director position with the International Institute in Detroit, Michigan.²⁶

Later that year, the Institute purchased a building for \$4,000 at 183 W. Kellogg, around the corner from the YWCA.²⁷ In September 1945, Architect Magnus Jemne created plans to turn the building into the Institute’s new home, and remodeling began.²⁸ The nationality groups, special gifts, fundraising events, and proceeds from the Festival of Nations covered the \$62,103 expense. The building was dedicated December 15, 1946.²⁹

The Institute continued to build a large membership and offered many activities to bring foreign-born and native-born people together, including monthly luncheons and dinners with speakers and films; dance, craft, and ethnic cooking classes; English, world language, and citizenship classes; and other activities.

On June 25, 1948, the U.S. Displaced Persons Act authorized resettlement of up to 200,000 people from war-torn Europe. To come to the U.S., a displaced person had to have a sponsor, a place to live, and a job. The sponsor was responsible for making arrangements.³⁰ Most people arrived in Minnesota because they had family or friends here. Cultural organizations and churches also offered support. Czechs, Estonians, Hungarians, Latvians, Poles, Romanians, and Ukrainians arrived in Minnesota after this act became law.³¹

Congress passed an amended Displaced Persons Act on June 16, 1950. Over the next two years, another 200,000 displaced people resettled in the U.S. Many had been living in camps since the war’s end.³² Because of the law’s extension, the family of John (Ivan) Janowycz came to Minnesota. Janowycz was born in the Ukraine and had operated a coal mine in the Carpathian Mountains. When the Russians invaded his homeland in 1944, he fled to Poland and then to Germany with his wife, Daria,



Former International Institute Executive Secretary Alice Lilliequist Sickels signed copies of her book, *Around the World in St. Paul*, in December 1945. Sickels detailed the history of the Institute and its founding of the Festival of Nations. Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.

The third International Institute building was located at 183 W. Kellogg. Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.



and their daughter, Michaeline. While there, Janowycz had a lucky meeting with Alexander A. Granovsky, a University of Minnesota professor. The Granovsky family was active with the Institute. They helped the Janowycz family move to St. Paul in 1951.³³

Communism and the Cold War Years

Following this second Displaced Persons Act, the Red Scare emerged, with many Americans fearful of an influx of Communists. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (McCarran-Walter Act) enforced new country quotas, restricting immigration from many of the countries previously allowed into the U.S.³⁴

However, one past wrong remedied in this bill was that Chinese, Japanese, and Korean nationals were now allowed to gain citizenship from which they were previously barred.³⁵ The Institute's citizenship classes became a busy hive of activity, with frequent citizenship ceremonies.

In 1953, the Refugee Relief Act signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower granted another 214,000 permission to migrate to the U.S. because of postwar tensions with the Soviet Union and Communist countries in Eastern Europe.³⁶ The increased workload for staff led the Institute to charge fees for services for the first time.³⁷

People kept coming. In the late 1950s, an estimated 200 Hungarian "Freedom Fighters" relocated to Minnesota in the aftermath of a failed revolution.³⁸ The first wave of Cubans arrived when Fidel Castro and other armed rebels took over the island nation in 1959 and created the first Communist country in the West. The

Cuban population in the United States doubled to 163,000 by 1960.³⁹ A *St. Paul Dispatch* article tells of a plane that landed at Wold-Chamberlain airport in Minneapolis with ninety-one Cuban migrants, including thirty-one children and a stray dog.⁴⁰

On March 8, 1965, U.S. Marines deployed to Da Nang, Vietnam, thus beginning our involvement in the Vietnam War.⁴¹ In 1967, a protocol put in place by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees set the standard for all member nations resettling refugees from then on.⁴²

In 1969, the Institute had to find a new home when the city, through eminent domain, took over the blocks at West Seventh Street and Kellogg Boulevard to build the St. Paul Civic Center. On June 30, 1970, the organization purchased its current building at 1694 Como Avenue for \$145,000.⁴³ Then, on March 9, 1972, the Institute reincorporated and took on its present name, the International Institute of Minnesota.⁴⁴

The Vietnam War ended in 1975, and on May 23, President Gerald Ford signed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975, allowing 200,000 refugees from the Vietnam War to resettle in the U.S. from 1975–1976.⁴⁵

Around that same time, 3,800 Southeast Asian refugees arrived in the state. The Institute, with concerned citizens, co-sponsored eleven families. That year, they hired Nga Truitner as their first Vietnamese caseworker. The former University of California Fulbright fellow was married to Ken Truitner, who served as the

International Institute of Minnesota Executive Directors

1. Lorena Harrison	1919–1921?	8. Walter Frontczak	1956–1960
2. Edith Kreitzer	1921?–1931	9. Grace Collins	1960–1967
3. Alice Lilliequist Sickels	1931–1944	10. Edith Rock	1967–1970
4. Eleanor Deringer (acting)	1944	11. Robert Hoyle	1970–2005
5. Eloise Tanner	1944–1947	12. John Borden	2005–2010
6. J. Winifred Flannagan	1947–1953	13. Jane Graupman	2010–present
7. Martha Steinmetz	1953–1955		

Note: The early title of the International Institute leader was executive secretary. Martha Steinmetz was the first to use the term executive director, which has been in use since that time. Of the thirteen directors, ten have been women. *Information courtesy of the International Institute of Minnesota.*

Institute's education director.⁴⁶ At that time, eighteen people worked at the Institute with thirty, part-time English teachers hired to serve the large influx of new refugees.⁴⁷

In 1976, Minnesota Governor Wendell R. Anderson commended the Institute for its outstanding contribution to the resettlement of Indochinese refugees.⁴⁸ However, the Institute's work was just beginning. In just four years, from 1976 to 1980, the state's Hmong population increased from zero to 10,000. The Hmong had assisted U.S. troops in the "secret war" to overthrow the Communist regime in Laos.⁴⁹

One Hmong refugee, Shoua Vang, had been "in charge of air supply and delivery for the Laos and U.S. governments and also worked with rescue operations along the Vietnam border." He and his family fled to Thailand and arrived here in March 1976. He was hired as an Institute caseworker and became actively involved in Hmong organizations and helping Hmong people start businesses.⁵⁰

The Mariel boatlift brought as many as 125,000 Cubans to the shores of Florida in 1980.⁵¹ The Institute resettled fifty Cuban asylees to St. Paul with assistance from local churches that helped find people to sponsor and host. However, most volunteers wanted to sponsor families, not single adults.⁵² As a result, the Institute created two group homes for single, Cuban men; one in West St. Paul and another in South Minneapolis. The Institute covered rent and helped the men sign up for county assistance. In an August 3, 1980, *Minneapolis Tribune* article, Ramon Guitierrez said, "We don't have much but at least we have a roof over our heads and enough to eat . . ."⁵³

Michaeline (Janowycz) Raymond, the daughter of John and Daria Janowycz (mentioned previously) and an Institute caseworker, took this cause to heart because of her family's circumstances fleeing Ukraine following World War II. With the help of her family, she assisted these Cuban asylees by furnishing the house. "I know what they are going through." A University of Minnesota professor "found us an apartment and furnished it, just like I am doing now."⁵⁴

In March that year, President Jimmy Carter signed the Refugee Act of 1980, bringing the U.S. in line with international refugee standards.⁵⁵ As a result, the Institute served a more diverse



The Institute hired Nga Truitner as its first Vietnamese caseworker in 1976. Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.

group of New Americans. In 1982, the first refugees came from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, and Poland.⁵⁶

More people from the Soviet Union sought asylum in the 1980s, as well. These asylees presented unique cases that needed legal expertise the Institute couldn't provide. In 1983, Olga Zoltai, an immigration counselor and the casework department manager at the Institute and Sam Meyers, a lawyer, established the Immigrant Law Clinic.⁵⁷

Among those early clients were Eugenia and Vitaly Malikin. Eugenia shared in the Institute's "Nationality News" newsletter, "We realized that

Hmong students enjoyed a potluck at the Institute in 1976. Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.



perestroika [a political movement for restructuring within the Communist Party in the Soviet Union] had its negatives.” The Malikins were a part of the Jewish minority and “life became unbearable. We felt fear in the streets and worried that no one would defend us.” They sold nearly everything to buy their plane tickets, including Vitaly’s clarinet, so dear to him as a professional musician and professor. The Institute helped the Malikins with immigration paperwork and English classes.⁵⁸

Changing Immigration Policies and Institute Programs

On November 29, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed the Immigration Act of 1990, creating three categories for immigration visas: family reunification, diversity based, and employment based. This act lifted the ban on the immigration of gay and lesbian people, and the laws set forth in this act provide the basis of immigration policy today.⁵⁹

In September 1990, the Institute began its first Nursing Assistant Training for New Americans. This program included English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction along with nurse-led instruction in line with Minnesota state standards.⁶⁰ One early student was Belete Yimer, who spent ten years in refugee camps in Somalia and Kenya. He said his experience “gave me a concern for humanity. I saw people suffering from [a lack of] food, from sickness, and I feel in my heart a humanity.” Yimer used the empathy from his refugee experience to become a dedicated caregiver in Minnesota.⁶¹

The first refugees fleeing civil wars in Bosnia, Liberia, and Somalia came to Minnesota in 1993. The next year, the Institute welcomed the first refugees of the Karen ethnic group from Burma (now Myanmar). The Karen lived in Thai refugee camps before coming here.⁶²

In the new century, the Institute continued to resettle people from African countries, including Cameroon, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Togo. However, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Department of Homeland Security restricted immigration and resettlement. The following year, the Institute resettled only 107 refugees.⁶³

In 2004, the U.S. Department of State and the government of Thailand reached an agreement

allowing a large group of Hmong living at the Wat Tham Krabok camp to come to the United States. That February, St. Paul Mayor Randy Kelly dispatched a delegation to Thailand, including John Borden, the Institute’s associate director, to assess needs and plan effective strategies.⁶⁴ As a result, 2,316 people, including 1,198 Hmong, resettled through the Institute in 2004—more refugees than any other year in the agency’s history.⁶⁵

Internal conflicts in Iraq and Bhutan in 2010 brought more refugees to our city. Some were soldiers from coalition forces working with the U.S. military during the war in Iraq. The Bhutanese were ethnic Nepali who were forced by Bhutan’s government to return to Nepal, where they no longer had homes.⁶⁶

At that time, the Institute once again expanded services and responded to needs evidenced in the community. In 2011, they created a regional Anti-Human Trafficking initiative to help foreign-born survivors of sex and labor trafficking. They started a Hospitality Pathway program in 2013. The Institute also established Minnesota’s only Unaccompanied Minors program in 2014 to serve children who crossed U.S. borders claiming to have a relative in the state.⁶⁷

On June 15, 2012, President Barack Obama announced the policy of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).⁶⁸ The Institute’s Immigration Services Department assisted clients signing up for DACA and guided people through the lengthy citizenship or DACA paperwork. They served 1,550 clients with immigration services that year.⁶⁹

In 2015, the organization established a new event in honor of International Women’s Day, and the following year, on March 13, 2016, they hosted their Second Annual International Women’s Day Tea where they announced the annual “Olga Zoltai Award for Outstanding Service to New Americans.” The award’s namesake was the original recipient of this honor.⁷⁰ Zoltai, an Institute caseworker, was, herself, a displaced person from Hungary following the end of World War II. She worked as an immigration counselor beginning in 1971. When the Institute joined the federal refugee resettlement program in 1975, Zoltai served as the casework department manager until her retirement in 1993.⁷¹



Nasra and her daughters recently resettled to Minnesota from Somalia. *Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.*

That year, the *Star Tribune* named Zoltai a “Patron Saint” for area immigrants.⁷²

Following the 2016 presidential election, immigration once again became a controversial matter of national politics. Congress restricted the flow of refugees and set the ceiling to a national level of 50,000 in 2017. The number of newcomers permitted is determined by the president in consultation with Congress.⁷³ The total number of resettled refugees in the U.S. that year was only 33,000.⁷⁴

Here in the Twin Cities area, the Institute resettled only 348 refugees. Across the Institute’s programs, however, the organization served 4,319 individuals from ninety-eight countries. In her letter in the 2017 Annual Report, Executive Director Jane Graupman wrote, “. . . we have witnessed many waves of anti-immigrant sentiment. And then, without fail, we’ve watched each community of New Minnesotans become an integral part of our state.” Faiza, an Institute client from Somalia, said in the report, “In Minnesota, I feel freedom, peace, and more safe.”⁷⁵ This sentiment embodies the work the Institute does on a daily basis.

Acknowledgements

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It also helped the International Institute create the exhibition, “Unity Without Uniformity: Celebrating 100 Years of the International Institute of Minnesota,” on view at the Ramsey County Historical Society March–December 2019 and at the University of Minnesota’s Andersen Library October–December 2019.



One Hundred Years of Service and the Impact for New Americans Today

As immigrants, refugees, and asylees continue to arrive in St. Paul and Ramsey County, they and their host communities benefit greatly when there are welcoming institutions that work to assist these New Americans in the transition to new homes, a new language, and a new culture. The International Institute of Minnesota was developed by visionary women like Bess Leuthold Beebe, Lorena Harrison, Alice

Lilliequist Sickels, and many, many others. Because of their vision and the efforts of dedicated employees, board members, and volunteers since 1919, this life-changing organization has endured for one hundred years.⁷⁶

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future.

*The mission statement of the Ramsey County Historical Society
adopted by the Board of Directors on January 25, 2016.*

The Ramsey County Historical Society's vision is to be widely recognized as an innovator, leader, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community, delivering inspiring history programming, and using local history in education. Our mission of *preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future* guides this vision.

The Society began in 1949 when a group of citizens acquired and preserved the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family had acquired in 1849. Following five years of restoration work, the Society opened the Gibbs Farm museum (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974). Originally programs focused on telling the story of the pioneer life of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, the historic site also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, building additional structures, and dedicating outdoor spaces to tell these stories. The remarkable relationship of Jane Gibbs with the Dakota during her childhood in the 1830s and again as an adult encouraged RCHS to expand its interpretation of the Gibbs farm to both pioneer and Dakota life.

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine, *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, an expanded commitment from Ramsey County enabled the organization to move its library, archives, and administrative offices to downtown St. Paul's Landmark Center, a restored Federal Courts building on the National Register of Historic Places. An additional expansion of the Research Center was completed in 2010 to better serve the public and allow greater access to the Society's vast collection of historical archives and artifacts. In 2016, due to an endowment gift of \$1 million, the Research Center was rededicated as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

RCHS offers a wide variety of public programming for youth and adults. Please see www.rchs.com for details of upcoming History Revealed programs, summer camps at Gibbs Farm, and much more. RCHS is a trusted education partner serving 15,000 students annually on field trips or through outreach programs in schools that bring to life the Gibbs Family as well as the Dakota people of Cloud Man's village. These programs are made possible by donors, members, corporations, and foundations, all of whom we appreciate deeply. If you are not yet a member of RCHS, please join today and help bring history to life for more than 50,000 people every year.

R.C.H.S.
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The entrance to the Midland Hills clubhouse in 1921 was by means of a gravel road that crossed in front of the old third tee. *Courtesy of Midland Hills Country Club Archives.*