

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We Represent

**Evolving Public Art at the Saint Paul
City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse**

KRISTINA YOUSO, PAGE 20



Take a Hike

**A CENTURY OF WALKS
WITH THE ST. PAUL HIKING CLUB**

BOB THOLKES, WITH MEREDITH CUMMINGS, PAGE 1

By the Numbers . . .

Minnesotans like to get outdoors and hike. They do today, and they did more than a century ago, as well. And why not? Hiking is fun, healthy, and opportunities abound at parks of all sizes in St. Paul, Ramsey County, and across the state. Check out these impressive statistics:

Number of parks in St. Paul:
179

Approximate acres of parkland in St. Paul:
5,000

Percentage of St. Paul residents within a ten-minute walk to a park:
99

Number of parks in Ramsey County (county/regional parks and regional trail corridors only):
20

Number of state parks and recreation areas in Minnesota:
75

Average number of visitors to Minnesota State Parks each year:
9,700,000

To learn more about a local hiking club that's covered thousands of miles over ten decades, see the article "Take a Hike: A Century of Walks with the St. Paul Hiking Club" on page 1.

SOURCES:

<https://www.saintpaulparksconservancy.org/>;
<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/parks-trails/find-park>; and
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/faq/mnfacts/state_parks.html.

ON THE COVER



Minnesotans are hardy people, and snow wasn't about to stop members of the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club as they set out one chilly winter day in 1930. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

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JEREMY L. NIENOW

Message from the Editorial Board

Sometimes when we look closely, history helps us see the land and its people from different perspectives. In this issue, Bob Tholkes and Meredith Cummings share the history of the St. Paul Hiking Club. The dedicated members of this organization have been trekking around St. Paul, Ramsey County, and parts of Minnesota for one hundred years, exploring parks and neighborhoods from the ground up. Harriette Peterson Koopman and her daughter Connie Pettersen share vivid memories of Koopman's childhood, growing up in a large family on St. Paul's West Side Flats during the Depression. The children had exciting and sometimes harrowing close-up adventures on and around the great Mississippi River. One day, they even met a group practicing target shooting—possibly some of the infamous gangsters who sometimes hid in the city at that time! Kristina Youso fills us in on a much more recent change in perspective—the installation of new murals in the council chambers of the Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse. This artwork better reflects the diverse heritage of the groups who have contributed to our city and county. And finally, bowing to the reality of the current pandemic, but also taking advantage of new technology, Jeremy Nienow tells us how to embark on virtual visits to local historic sites without leaving the comfort of our living rooms.

Anne Cowie
Chair, Editorial Board

The Ramsey County Historical Society thanks Board Member James A. Stolpestad and affiliate AHS Legacy Fund for supporting the updated design of this magazine. Publication of Ramsey County History is also supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr., and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon. Thanks to the St. Paul Hiking Club for their financial support.

How'd They Do That?

Bringing Ramsey County History Tours to Your Home

JEREMY L. NIENOW

Having lived under the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic for a year, many people have a deep desire to get out and explore their surroundings. But when *was* the last time you were able to take a tour to Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse, the stately Hill, Ramsey, or Sibley homes, or Gibbs Farm? Walking historic neighborhoods or hiking at Minnesota's parks have helped us feel less shut in, but as winter's chill becomes a certainty, outdoor escapes will give way to the confines of home. *Now* what to do?

Explore History in Your Living Room

There are alternative options where curious visitors may be transported outside current confines—digitally—via computer or smartphone. Welcome to the world of virtual tours!

Now, from the comfort of home, you may enter the Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse (without going through security!) and marvel at the three-story, carved onyx *Vision of Peace* statue, or—elsewhere in the building—check

out the law library, Courtroom 880, or the original John Norton murals inside council chambers. Meanwhile, at the historic Gibbs Farm, explore a nineteenth-century schoolhouse or the farmhouse where the Gibbs family lived and shared stories with their Dakota friends.

How Does this Technology Work?

Six years ago, Nienow Cultural Consultants worked with a local architect who used a high-end laser scanner to capture three-dimensional (3D) building details for drawings. In the past, architects typically hand measured distances and rooms sizes. This process was time-consuming and sometimes dangerous. With the introduction of laser tools, however, a simple light beam can calculate any distance quickly and accurately, replacing long, awkward tape measures and wobbly ladders.

Although the technology was invented in the 1960s, it was not fully embraced by the architectural, engineering, and scientific worlds for several more decades. Here in Minnesota,

Take a Virtual Tour!

Enjoy a little local history this winter. Below is a sampling of free Ramsey County tours ready for you any time of day, with more to come this spring. Go to www.rchs.com/news/ on your computer or smart phone and enjoy!

American Association of Woodturners

Gallery of Wood Art (Downtown St. Paul)

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=P7NfhXSZBJU>

Bruentrup Heritage Farm Yard Tour (Maplewood)

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=iHm693wgjwY>

Gibbs Family Farmhouse and Schoolhouse

(Falcon Heights)

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=31zu2jRsZrJ>

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=G8KZb7XHdYr>

Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse, Courtroom 880, and Ramsey County Law Library

(Downtown St. Paul)

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=y3pfCMHDeK2>

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=KynY6GZC229>

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=RgX8fJFoggg>

Waldmann Brewery & Wurstery (Downtown St. Paul)

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=HLXdHdKiFgn>

historical archaeologists were early adaptors, recognizing the potential in scanning barns, mills, historic houses, and ruins.

With this versatile tool, it was even possible to make fly-through movies from laser scanners, where the viewer moves through a space on a predetermined route. However, these scanners were not cheap (\$20,000 and up), and it was time-intensive to generate the videos once the data was stitched together.

Beginning in 2011, a more cost-effective alternative became available. Matterport, a spatial data company in California, uses the same laser scanner application but with a tripod-mounted spherical camera to capture a 360° picture. Its artificial intelligence (AI) platform stitches spaces together as the camera is moved to each new location every six to eight feet. One person can complete the work in a couple of hours, depending on the size of the space and how many stops or camera placements are planned. Once the scan is completed, data files are uploaded to California, where they are processed before the client receives a final product link.¹

The city hall-courthouse project that mapped three floors was completed over parts of two days. Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS), which usually organizes live tours of the location, commissioned the project. Once the 3D model was complete, Nienow and RCHS staff added “tags” or points of architectural or historical information to guide visitors. A completed link was uploaded to social media and embedded in websites. As visitors take this or other tours, clients can see the number of visits individuals make to the models, although the program does not track individual IP addresses.

Virtual Opportunities Abound

Over the last several years, Nienow Cultural Consultants has worked with historical societies, Masonic lodges, museums, businesses, and educators and has created seventy 3D models or



In late 2020, Jeremy Nienow with Nienow Cultural Consultants scanned images for a new virtual tour of the American Association of Woodturners Gallery of Wood Art in St. Paul's Landmark Center. Photograph by Tib Shaw, courtesy of Nienow Cultural Consultants, LLC.

tours in Ramsey County and around the state, with online visits from more than 32,000 viewers.

The Matterport cameras were initially intended for the real estate market, but they have been adopted by a variety of professions, including insurance, restoration, and archaeology.²

With the current difficulties most of us are experiencing, escaping virtually into a historic home or visiting a space that is now closed to the public may be just the thing to spark curiosity and enjoyment of the world around us. As this technology continues to improve with better and faster cameras and processors, virtual reality glasses, and smart phone use, it will no doubt become an even more immersive and engaging part of our daily lives, whether in lockdown or not.

Jeremy L. Nienow, PhD/RPA, is a passionate cultural resource management consultant who works in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest. He and his company, Nienow Cultural Consultants, LLC, have been involved most recently with revitalization efforts at Historic Fort Snelling. He is president of the Council for Minnesota Archaeology.

NOTES

1. Prices are set by the marketplace and the relationship between clients. A typical charge is about \$500 for a 100-position model, with twenty to thirty tags and a year of hosting.

2. There are limitations to this technology. It is

mostly limited to indoor use, as direct sunlight scatters the camera's ability to make model locations. Also, currently, the resulting imaging is jointly owned by the client and Matterport, with Matterport hosting the data. It can be accessed by the client but not downloaded.

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Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 2021, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758.

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

The Ramsey County Historical Society's vision is to innovate, lead, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community, delivering inspiring history programming, and incorporating 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 preserved the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family acquired in 1849. The original programs at Gibbs Farm (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974) focused on telling the story of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, the site also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways. RCHS built additional structures and dedicated outdoor spaces to tell the stories of the remarkable relationship between Jane Gibbs and the Dakota people of Heyate Otunwe (Cloud Man's Village).

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine, *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, the organization moved its library, archives, and administrative offices to St. Paul's Landmark Center, a restored Federal Courts building on the National Register of Historic Places. An expansion of the Research Center was completed in 2010 to allow greater access to the Society's collection of historical archives and artifacts. In 2016, the Research Center was rededicated as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

RCHS offers a variety of public programming for youth and adults. Visit www.rchs.com for details of upcoming History Revealed programs, summer camps, courthouse and depot tours, and more. RCHS serves 15,000 students annually on field trips or through outreach programs in schools that introduce the Gibbs family and the Dakota people of Heyate Otunwe. 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.

Equity & Inclusion Statement

History informs us, inspires new choices, brings people together, and builds community. Likewise, it can be misused to inspire fear, create division, and perpetuate racism and other injustices. We resolve to present history in accordance with our values of Authenticity, Innovation, Inspiration, Integrity, and Respect. We believe that by doing so, our community will be more informed, more engaged, and will become stronger.

R.C.H.S.
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
323 Landmark Center
75 West Fifth Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

U.S. Postage
PAID
Twin Cities, MN
Permit No. 3989

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Growing Up Along the Mighty Mississippi

The Great Depression Through the Eyes of a Young “River Rat”

HARRIETTE PETERSON KOOPMAN, WITH CONNIE KOOPMAN PETTERSEN, PAGE 10



During the Great Depression, Harriette Peterson and several of her siblings lived with their parents in a tar-paper shack along the Mississippi River in St. Paul's West Side Flats. The children grew up with fond memories of wonder and adventure, despite the lean times and hardship.
Courtesy of Kyle Imdieke and Peterson Family Archives.