

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.*

Contents

- 1 *Take a Hike*
A Century of Walks with the St. Paul Hiking Club
BOB THOLKES, WITH MEREDITH CUMMINGS
- 10 *Growing Up Along the Mighty Mississippi*
The Great Depression Through the Eyes of a Young "River Rat"
HARRIETTE PETERSON KOOPMAN, WITH CONNIE KOOPMAN PETERSEN
- 20 *We Represent*
Evolving Public Art at the Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse
KRISTINA YOUSO
- 30 *How'd They Do That?*
Bringing Ramsey County History Tours Right to Your Home
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.

A Century of Walks with the St. Paul Hiking Club

BOB THOLKES, WITH MEREDITH CUMMINGS

On Tuesday, January 19, 2021, five members of the St. Paul Hiking Club stepped off the corner of Burns Avenue and English Street in St. Paul at 2:30 in the afternoon and hiked over six miles to and from a select location on the south-east side of the city. Why would this group, ranging from sixty-one to seventy-eight years of age, attempt such a trek in a typical Minnesota winter with a high temperature of just 15°F? We were determined to do so!

The unceremonious event marked the one-hundredth anniversary (plus a few days) of the inaugural hike of what was then called the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club to the same location. Back then, the destination was a schoolhouse rather than the now-converted private residence on Point Douglas Road. And although continuing COVID-19 concerns kept many members home, seven of us bundled in long underwear, snow pants, warm coats, and wool mittens and strapped traction cleats to our boots to keep from slipping on the ice. We're Minnesotans, after all; cold and ice don't bother us. And so, our small band of hikers paid homage to the those who participated in the first club hike a century ago.

Step Out into the Snow and Go!

Apparently, the cold didn't bother the twenty-five members of the newly formed hiking organization on January 15, 1921, either. The 1918-1919 flu pandemic was a distant memory, as well. So, with a high of 10°F, the group donned their warmest winter gear. They met at Room 218—the Playgrounds Department at the Federal Court Building on West Fifth Street. From there, they caught the streetcar, riding it to the terminus of the Rondo-Maria Streetcar Line and walked three miles from Burns Avenue and English Street to Samuel Sargent Taylor School. The hardy hikers

took turns carrying thermoses of steamy coffee and boxes of sweet donuts as they made their way to the school, which was “open for their use through the courtesy of the Men's Club at Highwood.”¹ They rested for two hours and played parlor games in the warm shelter. Some likely knew each other from work or social settings, while others may have joined simply to meet new people with similar interests.²

Grace Cummings, a twenty-two-year-old stenographer to E. W. Johnson with the Parks Department/Playgrounds Bureau Office, organized the club as an affiliate of the city, announcing hikes in local papers. The department assembled mimeographed monthly schedules



Seven members of the century-old St. Paul Hiking Club recreated the organization's inaugural 1921 hike on a frigid day in January 2021. *Front row (L-R):* Vicky Beutel, Barb Fitzpatrick, Bob Tholkes, Sharon Heaton, and Nancy Duffrin. *Back row (L-R):* Lyle Mowery and Bernie Wildes. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

Grace Cummings, parks department employee and founding member of the St. Paul Hiking Club (left), and Lillian Lee, another employee, announced the club's inaugural hike in the *Saint Paul Dispatch* on January 14, 1921. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*



Grace Cummings and Lillian Lee (right) worked for the city's playgrounds department, housed at the Federal Court Building, so it made sense to meet there prior to each outing. Conveniently, a streetcar stop across Rice Park on Fourth Street carried the hikers to locations around town, where they could begin their weekly adventures. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

listing four Saturday afternoon hikes ranging from five to seven miles round trip and usually ending at playground shelter houses, schools, university cafeterias, and even Fort Snelling, where the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers meet. Games and dancing sometimes followed. A year later, a group of fifty-nine celebrated their first anniversary with a supper and dance at Margaret Park in Dayton's Bluff at a cost of fifty cents per person. They even hired an orchestra.³



“Regardless of the Weather, You’ll Find Us Together”—1923 to 1933

The club formally organized at its first annual member meeting on November 23, 1923. They adopted a constitution, initiated annual dues (\$1 per year), and created a clever slogan as they prepared for a third season of winter hikes—“Regardless of the Weather, You’ll Find Us Together.” Reba Barnes stepped into the role of president. Short business meetings took place

Grace Cummings met her future husband, Gerald Villars, through the club. Their hiking friends Fred and Joyce Boxmeyer (right) were very active members. In fact, Fred Boxmeyer served as club president twice. *Courtesy of the Villars Family and Minnesota Historical Society.*

after Saturday hikes to plan upcoming events.⁴ There was a social group of energetic young people, most in their twenties and thirties.

While the Saturday hikes worked well, with an average attendance of forty, in June 1925, the club added daylong Sunday endurance hikes. They'd trek between ten and twenty-five miles, with occasional breaks for picnics, cookouts, games, and a lot of tomfoolery. Newly instituted Tuesday evening hikes and summer excursions (1927) and longer, overnight camping trips (1929) were especially popular. With the addition of winter skating parties at the Hippodrome, the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club maintained a packed social calendar.⁵

You might say some hikers were a bit obsessed with the sport. On Sunday, May 17, 1931, three fearless trekkers, Holger A. Pedersen, Charlie Signs, and L. S. Shockley, rose before dawn and walked about fifteen miles to Wildwood Amusement Park in Mahtomedi, where they met three fellow members, who'd cheated a bit and ridden the streetcar there. The six then hiked another nine miles to Stillwater before everyone headed back.⁶ Twenty-nine miles is nothing to sneeze at, but the trio that started in St. Paul was probably a bit worn out. They might have had a blister or two after trekking forty-four grueling miles in one day!⁷

"Hike a Bit and Stay Fit"—The Great Depression and World War II

The group's popularity grew as the Great Depression set in. It was difficult to find disposable funds in a time when many were out of work. But hiking is a relatively inexpensive sport. Other than the cost of a solid pair of boots and transportation to certain sites, exercising in the great outdoors costs next to nothing. Still, not all members could pay their dues, so the club reduced the annual fee to 50 cents from 1931 to 1934, when it adjusted back to \$1. At this time, the club took a more active approach to bringing in new, like-minded walkers and instituted annual membership drives, ending each with a party, of course! Fifty-five new members answered the call in 1937 and forty-nine in 1938.⁸

The variety of hikes and events most certainly piqued the interest of potential new members. For example, hike leader Eva Jones organized a seven-mile Chain of Lakes trek to



Over two dozen trekkers enjoyed a challenging day of hiking in 1924—possibly on one of the many bluffs along the St. Croix River Valley. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*



Club members likely acquired their hiking gear from one of the early mail-order catalogs—Montgomery Ward, Sears Roebuck and Company, or Maine-based supplier L.L.Bean. But it was also fun to dress up in fine clothes as they did at this 1924 party. *Courtesy of Rick Currie.*

Minneapolis on May 16, 1937, for an “interesting and beautiful [jaunt] over country woods bedecked in the fresh, bright green of Springtime.” Following a quick bus ride from the east side of the Mississippi River, they met the Minnehikers, Minneapolis's version of the St. Paul Hiking Club, on the west side. Together, they hiked around Brownie Lake, Cedar Lake, Lake of the



In 1940, the City of Saint Paul honored the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club for their volunteer work at one of the local parks. Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.



Isles, Lake Calhoun (now Bde Maka Ska), and Lake Harriet, following trails and parks connecting each of the bodies of water.⁹

They also climbed Mount Tom at Sibley State Park near New London, spent a relaxing day along the Rum River on another excursion, and took on an obstacle hike in the rain near Hastings. Climbing over the rough terrain and in and out of caves, they skinned knees, and broke fingernails. One woman fell, ripped her trousers, and finished the challenge covered in a raincoat, but most everyone still had a great time.¹⁰

Around then, the club updated its motto—“Hike a Bit and Keep Fit.” Little did they know at the time, but staying fit would serve them well, especially the nearly thirty members who traded their hiking boots for standard-issue military boots.

Just as folks were recovering from the Depression years, war around the world turned lives upside down again. Thankfully, hiking still cost

little and served as a cathartic escape for anyone who needed a break on a warm summer evening or a weekend afternoon. Practical jokes were encouraged and expected. If hikers removed their boots to give their feet a much-needed breather, they could expect to find their unoccupied footwear hidden behind a tree, or, in some cases, a slimy frog tucked inside an empty boot! And then there were the water fights—watch out! Everyone walked away drenched.¹¹

The group was especially fond of fall hikes through country cornfields. It wasn't uncommon for mischievous members to drop handfuls of kernels down the backs of their friends' shirts. That likely didn't make the bus driver happy on the return trip to town when, as members removed warm layers of clothing, the bus floor soon resembled the bottom of a corn crib.¹²

Dances helped everyone take their minds off the war. Member Dorothy Carlson shared fond memories of dancing with friends. “. . . every Sunday afternoon, [we'd] go hiking, and then on Sunday night, everybody would go home and change, and then we'd meet out at the Prom. We danced the whole evening, after hiking five miles in the afternoon!” Carlson even met her husband while kicking up her heels at the Prom!¹³

Still the club didn't forget their comrades overseas. The group introduced the *Trail Blazer* newsletter in 1939 and from 1942 until 1945, Florence Brennan took on the role of editor.¹⁴ In addition, she wrote and mailed a monthly flyer called *Grapevine Gazette* to the group's service men and women, who, in turn, shared updates from Europe and the Pacific. Sadly, not all of the hiking members-turned-soldiers came home.

Keep on Keeping On—One Foot in Front of the Other

When the fighting ended, the club welcomed returning members, some of whom resumed their hiking adventures. Others, along with those who hadn't served, dropped out due to various obligations—schooling (thanks in part to the GI Bill) or family and work responsibilities among them. But that didn't mean membership dipped. It rose, peaking at nearly 200 members by the late 1950s. Most members were still relatively young and more female than male. And they

kept busy: The 1957-58 annual report lists forty-nine Sunday and forty-five Tuesday evening hikes, three all-day hikes, three two-day treks, and a three-day weekend excursion, as well as one long-distance train trip and one bus trip.¹⁵

For several decades, the group leased a bus for state excursions and marked it with its own signs. Nearly every weekend, members met at the courthouse, jumped on the bus, and headed off for canoe trips on the St. Croix River and group camps in several Minnesota State Parks. Norway Park Point at St. Croix State Park became the de facto location for Labor Day getaways. Eleanor Posel loved these trips. "There were berries to be picked, trails to be hiked, dancing, card games, puzzles, sunburn, and mosquitoes."¹⁶

Social events became annual traditions—picnics, banquets, holiday parties, and winter sleigh rides, followed by a delicious warm meal prepared by the men. Dances gave way to roller

skating parties and volleyball games. Then, in September 1951, the club went head-to-head against "rival" hiking team, the Minnehikers on a local radio quiz show.¹⁷

"The Best Way to Reach the Fountain of Youth is to Walk to It"—The Later Years

Detailed records of hikes, club news, or advertisements in the paper ebbed and flowed over the years. Perhaps, there were times when no one stepped up as editor, or news within the group made the rounds over the phone and later via email, instead. Weekly hikes and events continued but so did life—the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights fight of the 1960s, Watergate, the Reagan years, and the early internet era of the '90s. More people watched television or went to the movies. Personal computers in most every home may have affected club walks, as well. Fewer people joined

Honoring a Fallen Club Member: Charles Kuhlman

Charles Kuhlman joined the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club in 1941. The next May, he was one of fifty members who spent the day challenging themselves on an obstacle hike near Hastings.^a Before long, Kuhlman and nearly thirty others in the group joined the war effort following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor the previous December. He died in action on April 25, 1945, in Czechoslovakia.^b

An undated obituary in the club archives states that Kuhlman, a medical corpsman, "went out to bring aid to a wounded comrade and was instantly killed."^c He was twenty-seven.

It was difficult to include the news in the next issue of the club's *Grapevine Gazette*:

It is with deepest regret that we bring to you the news of the death of our dear friend, Charles Kuhlman, who was killed in Germany by a sniper on April 25th. Charlie went into the service in August 1942 . . . The whole hiking club mourns his loss and those who knew him loved his happy spirit and joking ways. These are treasured memories that will live on with us forever. These are the gifts he left with us, and the greatest respect we can pay him is to carry on in the spirit which he did, both in peace and war. He was our pal and we miss him greatly.^d

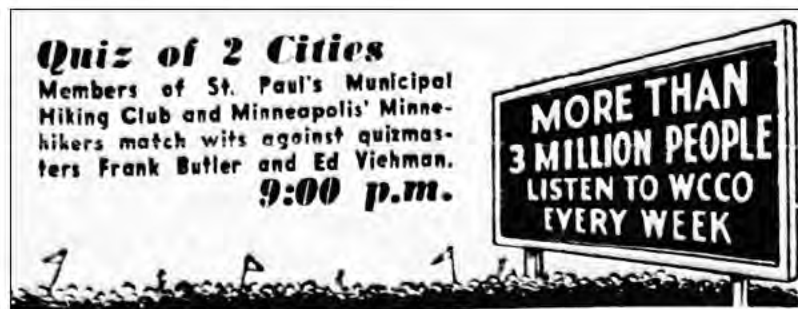
In memory of Charlie, as he was known, the club purchased a memorial bench made from Vermont marble.^e Club member Florence Brennan shared a poem at a private service:

*We remember well those happy days
When you were with the gang,
We'd hike and eat and build a fire
And then we always sang . . .^f*



St. Paul Hiking Club member and serviceman Charles Kuhlman. Courtesy of St. Paul Hiking Club Archives.

Club members hopped on board their bus for an adventure to the Black Hills in 1952, the first year the organization offered annual privately organized vacation trips. These continued through 1997. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*



WCCO radio personalities Frank Butler and Fred Viehman hosted a quiz show each Tuesday at 9 p.m., featuring competing teams from Minneapolis and St. Paul. On September 11, 1951, members of the two Twin Cities hiking clubs met at the station for a night of friendly competition. The clubs got along quite well and sometimes shared hikes and other activities. *Courtesy of Star Tribune and WCCO.*

hiking or civic clubs of any kind. By the 1970s, those folks who were hiking often did so solo or with just one or two friends.

Membership declined from 183 in 1978 to sixty-one in 2000. From the incomplete data available, the club's average member age seems to have advanced continually. The club was still sufficiently youthful in the 1940s and '50s, but a declined interest in camping and extended bus trips by the end of the twentieth century illustrates the continuing demographic change. Still, the group did like to challenge itself and for three years between 1987 and 1990, it instituted full-moon five-mile hikes through the city, beginning at midnight during the warmer months and followed by early morning breakfasts at an all-night restaurant.¹⁸ What were they thinking?

In the early 1990s, a *Star Tribune* reporter tagged along with the club for a city hike to see why they did what they did. Some hike for health reasons; others for social interaction. Chuck Ramsey, who served three stints as club president with a combined total of thirteen terms, gave another reason, "I unwind doing

If You Could Walk a Mile in His Shoes

James (Jim) Phillip Cowie—Lifelong Hiking Club Member

Jim Cowie was in his thirties when he joined the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club—a club to which he actively belonged until he died at ninety-one on August 2, 1983.^a

"My mom said the hiking club was [Uncle Jim's] whole social life," said grandniece Anne Cowie. "I remember him talking about it at family gatherings."^b

Her great uncle was born May 8, 1892, to George G. Cowie and Mary Hanrahan Doyle Cowie and spent his life in St. Paul.^c He served in World War I as a private in the medical corps. He married Florence Carlson, but the brief union ended in divorce. The couple had no children, and Cowie never remarried.^d



By the early 1930s, Jim Cowie had already been an active member of the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club for several years. *Courtesy of Cowie Family Archives.*

Over the years, he participated as a member of a Scottish dance troop at the International Institute of Minnesota's annual Festival of Nations celebration, and at one point, he skated as an extra with the Ice Capades when they came to town.^e

Cowie worked for the Great Northern Railway in its physical testing laboratory, which his grandniece said was not surprising because he was a tinkerer. He invented his own personal version of a telephone answering machine and, with the advent of the television, he converted his black and white set to color before such a thing was common, getting a write-up in the local paper for his creativity.^f

When he wasn't tinkering, Cowie walked and walked with his beloved hiking club, even as he grew older. He was among the members who attempted a daylong obstacle hike in 1942, as he was always up for a challenge. The group kept records of the member who recorded the most miles in a given year, something the organization still tracks today. In 1963, at seventy, Cowie hiked right past everyone else—clocking 328 miles.^g He is considered the longest active member, participating for nearly six decades.



Comradeship in 2004 was no different than it was in 1924. Getting together for a hike and picnic in the fresh air with friends is the best way to rejuvenate. *Courtesy of Marion Hastings.*

this—especially these Tuesday night hikes. I am so physically and emotionally relaxed after them.”¹⁹ In April 1996, the group celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary by planting a hackberry tree as part of a Great River Greening project on the Mississippi River near downtown. The tree was one of many planted by various organizations.²⁰

Around that time, some of the club’s steadfast traditions gave way to new traditions, including replacing Tuesday evening hikes with Tuesday day hikes in winter months to better suit the needs of the membership, which mostly included retirees.

In 2006, the club created its own website—www.st.paulhike.com—and the following year, began emailing the monthly *Trail Blazer*, which continues to list hikes and hosts, as well as those members who’ve set a mileage record. And while membership dropped substantially in 2000, it’s risen to 106, a high point in this current century.²¹ In fact, interest in hiking groups seems to be growing again as new clubs pop up through Meetup social networking platforms and other venues, and the Department of Natural Resources invites Minnesotans to hike the state’s seventy-five parks and recreation areas to earn passport stamps.²²

And why not? People come together to hike for the same reasons the founders of the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club did a century ago. It’s a chance to exercise and get some fresh air, a social opportunity to meet with friends who enjoy the same activities, and a simple way to leave worries behind and explore the parks and trails in and around the Twin Cities and the state. Truly, it’s always a great day to take a hike in Minnesota.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Rick Currie, Marian Hastings, and Jackie Lallier for photos and archival materials from their private collections.

Bob Tholkes is president and historian of the St. Paul Hiking Club. The Columbia Heights resident is a retired teacher and also worked as a trainer with Target Corporation. Tholkes prefers club hiking to solo hiking. He estimates he’s walked over 600 miles since joining the club in 2012.

Meredith Cummings, no relation to club founder Grace Cummings, has completed thirty-three half marathons and one full marathon. In 2018, she and a friend trekked 500 miles across Spain along the famed Camino de Santiago. She is editor of Ramsey County History magazine.

To see a list of club presidents and more images from the 2021 centennial hike, go to <https://publishing.rchs.com/publishing/magazine/ramsey-county-history-magazine-volume-55-4-winter-2021/>.

Clubbing It

Social clubs with specific interests were popular in the late 1900s into the first half of the twentieth century. St. Paul was home to scores of social organizations, including a yachting group, a camera club, commercial and cultural clubs, musical groups, and many more.^a

Within the club category, hiking or “leisure walking [had] evolved from a rare practice of the urban elite . . . to a widespread and multi-faceted activity by the late nineteenth century . . . because it resonated with Americans reacting against—and attempting to accommodate—industrialism [and] urbanism . . .” And while the solitary sport may have started with people like Henry David Thoreau (among others), walking together and exploring nature as a social group became wildly popular. Some early clubs included Boston’s Appalachian Mountain Club (1876) and the Sierra Club (1892) on the country’s West Coast.^b Even here in Minnesota, young St. Paulites met from time to time to hike in and around the Twin Cities.

In his dissertation, “On the Trail: A History of American Hiking,” Silas Chamberlin stated, “By the onset of World War II, club-based hiking culture had become a national phenomenon.”^c It created booming business opportunities as demand for equipment, clothing, and guidebooks grew. By and by, hikers transformed from simple trail



More than a decade before the creation of the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club, these hikers (no identifiable club name) trekked to Mendota and then to Fort Snelling on the first of May 1910. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

conservationists or naturalists to trail consumers. In the last thirty years of the twentieth century through today, many dropped from or never joined formal hiking organizations and set out along the nation’s network of trails on their own.^d

That doesn’t mean hiking clubs fell by the wayside. In fact, in the Twin Cities and around the state, many groups still exist for walkers, hikers, and naturalists. See the sampling below:

Select Area Hiking Clubs

AdventureHER	www.meetup.com/AdventureHER/
American Pilgrims on the Camino Twin Cities	www.americanpilgrims.org/iwpmmap_directory/minneapolis/
Children & Nature Network	www.childrenandnature.org
Friends of BWCA Trails	www.meetup.com/Friends-of-BWCA-Trails/
Minneapolis/St. Paul Backpackers Meetup Group	www.meetup.com/Minneapolis-StPaul-Backpackers/
Minnesota Rovers Outdoor Club	www.mnrovers.org/about-us/
Minnesota State Parks and Trails Hiking Club	www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/clubs.html
Minnesota Walking Meetup	www.meetup.com/walkers-575/
NorthStar Trail Travelers	www.nstt.org/
Outdoor Afro Minnesota	www.meetup.com/Outdoor-Afro-Minnesota/
St. Paul Hiking Club	www.stpaulhike.com/
St. Paul Parks Conservancy	www.hikingproject.com/club/7000310/saint-paul-parks-conservancy
Twin Cities Hiking Meetup	www.meetup.com/Twin-Cities-Hikers/
Twin Cities Volkssports	www.tcvwalking.com

NOTES

1. John Diers, email correspondence with editor, December 21, 2020; Hikers' Club Mobilizes for First Highway Jaunt," *Saint Paul Dispatch*, January 14, 1921, 1.

2. "Hikers' Club Mobilizes," 1; "Hikers Go To Highway," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 16, 1921, 11.

3. Irving W. Kendall, "History of the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club 1921-1960," in club yearbook, St. Paul Hiking Club (SPHC) records, 1; Florence Keeney, "St. Paul Hiking Club, 1921-1981," SPHC records, 1. Grace Cummings Villars was born in Stillwater and raised in St. Paul. She ran the hiking club through 1923. In 1943, after raising children, she operated a daycare for forty years. She died August 17, 1991, at ninety-three. She is buried at Sunset Memorial Gardens in Minneapolis. SPHC members make an annual pilgrimage to her grave to pay their respects.

4. Kendall, 3.

5. Kendall, 3.

6. Kendall, 3. Keeney, 2.

7. Kendall, 3.

8. Keeney, 1.

9. Hike announcement, *Trail Blazer*, SPHC records, June 1937, 1.

10. D. C. Dornberg, "Obstacle Hike," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 31, 1942, 1; Keeney, 3; Kendall, 5.

11. Kendall, 5.

12. Kendall, 6.

13. Dorothy Carlson, interview with Jennifer Jordan, Minnesota Historical Society Oral History Project, July 24, 2001, 10. The Prom Ballroom at 1190 University Avenue was a popular dance venue in the 1940s and '50s.

14. This publication still serves the club, announcing monthly hikes as organized by individual group leaders.

15. Annual report, SPHC records, 1957-58.

16. Kendall, 7; Eleanor Posel, "The St. Paul Hiking Club," in 1981 club yearbook, SPHC records, 6.

17. "Members of St. Paul's Municipal Hiking Club and Minneapolis Minnehikers match wits against quizmasters Frank Butler and Ed Viehman," *Star Tribune*, September 11, 1951, 33; "Minneapolis Park Memory: A Hike Down Memory Lane," Minneapolis Park History Blog, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://minneapolisparkhistory.com/tag/minnehikers/>. The Minneapolis Municipal Hiking Club formed in 1920. They disbanded in 2010.

18. Various issues, *Trail Blazer*, SPHC records, 1987-1990.

19. Nolan Zavoral, "Sound advice: Take a hike, Popular St. Paul club does the walk of life in the big city," *Star Tribune*, May 31, 1992, 40.

20. Newsletter announcement, *Trail Blazer*, SPHC records, May 1996, 1; "Who We Are," Great River Greening website, accessed December 21, 2020, <https://www.greatrivergreening.org/>. Great River Greening is an environmental conservation nonprofit. In a quarter century, over 44,000 volunteers, have helped "plant 485,000 native trees, grasses and flowers in 20,000 acres on 400 [Minnesota] sites."

21. Membership data, SPHC records, 2020. Most current members are retirees who have worked as teachers, corporate trainers, sales managers, college instructors, lawyers, doctors, postal carriers, land surveyors, IT specialists, and insurance agents.

22. Anne Arthur, *Minnesota State Parks*, (Cambridge, MN: Adventure Publications, 2013), 6.

Notes to Sidebar on p. 5

a. D. C. Dornberg, "Obstacle Hike," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 31, 1942, 1.

b. Charles Kuhlman announcement, *Grapevine Gazette*, June 1945, 1.

c. Undated obituary for Charles Kuhlman, St. Paul Hiking Club (SPHC) records, 1945.

d. Kuhlman announcement, 1.

e. The bench sat on a hill at what is today Indian Mounds Regional Park. After it was vandalized, it was removed and relocated to the Como Park Zoo & Conservatory, where it remained for several years.

f. Kuhlman announcement, 1.

Notes to Sidebar on p. 6

a. Betty Cowie, Cowie family scrapbook, accessed November 27, 2020.

b. Anne Cowie, email correspondence with editor, November 26, 2020. Anne Cowie has worked for or volunteered with the Ramsey County Historical Society since 1969. She currently serves as chair of its editorial board. She and her mother, Betty, cleared her great uncle's belongings from his apartment upon his death and donated materials to area historical societies.

c. James Phillip Cowie, State of Minnesota, Department of Health Death Certificate, 1983-MN-021603, Minnesota Historical Society.

d. Cowie family scrapbook.

e. Cowie family scrapbook. Anne Cowie believes her great uncle was hired or volunteered as an extra when the show toured the Twin Cities.

f. Cowie family scrapbook; Paul Light, "Electronic Marvel," in "Once Over Lightly," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 25, 1960.

g. Cowie family scrapbook.

Notes to Sidebar on p. 8

a. *St. Paul City Directories* (St. Paul: R.L. Polk & Co., 1921 and 1945), 19, 1823, 1961.

b. Silas Chamberlin, "On the Trail: A History of American Hiking" (PhD diss, Lehigh University, Paper 1451, 2014), 16; "Hiking," PastPerfect online database, Ramsey County Historical Society.

c. Chamberlin, 2-14.

d. Chamberlin, 2-14.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

President

Chad P. Roberts

Editor

Meredith Cummings

Editor Emeritus (2006-2018)

John Lindley

Founding Editor (1964-2006)

Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Board of Directors

Jerry Woelfel

Chair

Mari Oyanagi Eggum

First Vice Chair

Robert W. Mairs

Second Vice Chair

Roxanne Sands

Secretary

Peter Nguyen

Treasurer

Jo Anne Driscoll, Jo Emerson, Martin Fallon, Anne Field, Tim Glines, Lorraine Griffin Johnson, John Guthmann, John Hamburger, Elizabeth J. Keyes, Judy Kishel, Carl Kuhmeyer, Debbie Lee, Joe Lutz, Marc J Manderscheid, James Miller, Jonathan H. Morgan, Chad P. Roberts, George T. Stephenson, James A. Stolpestad, Joe Twomey, July Vang, Glenn Wiessner, Lee Pao Xiong

Directors Emeriti

W. Andrew Boss, George A. Mairs, Richard T. Murphy Sr., Paul A. Verret

Editorial Board

Anne Cowie, Chair, Thomas H. Boyd, John Diers, Martin Fallon, Anne Field, John Guthmann, Lisa L. Heinrich, Kyle Imdieke, James Miller, John Milton, Laurie M. Murphy, Paul D. Nelson, Richard H. Nicholson, Jay Pfaender, David Riehle, Chad P. Roberts, George T. Stephenson, Mark Taylor, Steve Trimble, Mary Lethert Wingerd, Matthew Wright

Honorary Advisory Board

William Finney, George Latimer, Joseph S. Micallef, Marvin J. Pertzik, James Reagan

Ramsey County Commissioners

Commissioner Toni Carter, Chair
Commissioner Nicole Joy Frethem
Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo
Commissioner Jim McDonough
Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire
Commissioner Rafael E. Ortega
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt

Ryan T. O'Connor, Manager, Ramsey County

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.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

RAMSEY COUNTY History

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



www.rchs.com

info@rchs.com

(651) 222-0701

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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.