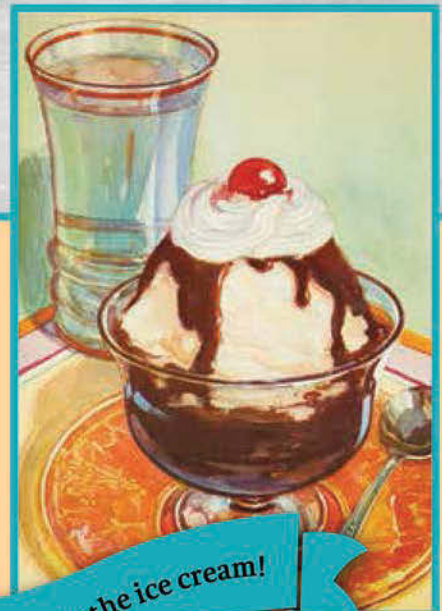




*How It Started; How It's Going*

## **Land O'Lakes Celebrates Ten Decades of Innovation**

KAREN MELLOTT-FOSHIER, PAGE 1



**Don't forget the ice cream!**



## By the Numbers ...

Does Minnesota “do dairy?” You bet it does! Dairy farmers and related agribusinesses across the state are some of the nation’s leading producers of butter, milk, cheese, and other dairy products. Check out the numbers below:

Fourth in total value of manufactured dairy products:

**\$5 billion annually**

Sixth in cheese production:

**657 million pounds annually**

Seventh largest dairy herd:

**460,000 dairy cows**

Eighth in milk production:

**9.5 billion pounds annually**

Eighth in dairy product exports:

**\$190 million annually**

Eighth in employment in dairy product manufacturing:

**5,500 people**

Number of major dairy product companies and brands:

**5\***

\*Dairy Queen, General Mills, Kraft Heinz, Land O’Lakes, and Schwan’s.

One dairy company (a co-op actually) has been buttering our bread and putting milk (and ice cream!) and other products on our tables for over a century. To learn more about the nation’s No. 1 butter company, see Karen Mellott-Foshier’s article “*How It Started; How It’s Going: Land O’Lakes Celebrates Ten Decades of Innovation*” on page 1.

SOURCES: “Minnesota’s Dairy Industry: A Fact Sheet for Businesses,” Minnesota Employment and Economic Development, 2018, accessed May 24, 2021, [https://mn.gov/deed/assets/dairy-fact\\_tcm1045-315966.pdf](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/dairy-fact_tcm1045-315966.pdf).

## ON THE COVER



A fleet of ten refrigerated trucks purchased for \$15,000 in 1923 provided early marketing and distribution services to consumers around the Twin Cities. The first drivers, who sold product from their vehicles, eventually opened sales branches in cities across the state. The later model truck pictured here not only advertised butter but other Land O’Lakes products, including dry milk, which became especially popular and essential during the war years. Courtesy of Land O’Lakes, Inc.

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## Message from the Editorial Board

For over a year, we’ve been separated from one another—each of us uniquely affected by the global pandemic. But, Summer 2021 has offered a welcome respite from separation and much-needed time to reconnect and heal.

This issue of *Ramsey County History* reminds us of the many ways we connect, and how we are better together than apart—from the Minnesota farmers who pooled their resources, talents, and butter to build an innovative business model; to the traditions kept alive through family gatherings; to the 320 St. Paul bridges that transport us to points north, south, east and west; and to our shared history of conflict and violence—the connections between us are many.

First, Karen Mellott-Foshier brings us a history of Land O’Lakes, Inc., the cooperative that united dairy farmers a century ago, building a more stable market for member-owners and better products for consumers. Kao Kalia Yang shares an intimate account of Hmong traditions cemented through frequent gatherings, many generations, and the shared memories of faraway places that bring and keep families together. And then there are bridges. Whether emotional or physical, bridges offer us a way to meet one another. Christine Podas-Larson has written a loving depiction of St. Paul’s exquisite South Channel and Montreal bridges. Finally, our community is tied to our shared histories, and that often includes conflict. Mary Lethert Wingerd reviews *Massacre In Minnesota* by Gary Clayton Anderson, a refreshed narrative of the 1862 US-Dakota War that offers an unflinching perspective of the damage wrought to all sides by ethnic violence.

This summer, as we finally gather again, we have much to celebrate, mourn, and contemplate as a community.

*Anne Field*  
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. Sincere thanks to Land O’Lakes, Inc., for their financial support.*

## Gatherings from Before

KAO KALIA YANG

*A reflection on a simpler time for one Hmong American family in Minnesota before the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything.*

**I**t's a hot summer's day. There's a big family ceremony at Auntie and Uncle Eng's house. Auntie had a dream where Uncle has returned to Laos. She's asked an older uncle to arrange for a shaman to come and perform a ceremony.

There are no parking spaces for blocks along their street in its corner tucked behind the freeway. When I was a child, all the cars in the family were used cars—Pontiacs, Buicks, Fords, Subaru—whatever was available and affordable. In those years, many of our parents did the best they could on government assistance, working the temporary field jobs, shucking corn, or picking pickling cucumbers. Now, most of the cars are Toyotas and Hondas—bought

new. Many of the children have grown up, me included. We have jobs that allow us the loans to afford the new cars.

My husband, Aaron, and I unbuckle the children from their car seats. Our daughter waits for us on the curb. We carry the twin boys.

The green grass is soft beneath my heels. The ground sinks when I walk. I have to be careful with the growing child in my arms—my purse hanging from one elbow. Head up and head down, I traverse the uneven lawn toward Auntie and Uncle's blue one-story.

I glance at Aaron and know I've the lighter load. He's carrying one boy in one arm and the large diaper bag in the other. His balding head shines beneath the brilliant sun. Beads of sweat trickle down his face as we walk the block and a half toward the people gathered beneath the widespread oak on Auntie and Uncle's lawn.

The younger children play happily in the front yard. A group of young boys belonging to assorted cousins sits under the familiar tree. I can't hear their talk, but I have no trouble hearing their laughter. I call my greetings to them in English, a language that many of them use far more frequently than Hmong. They wave back shyly. I'm a stranger aunt now. The family has grown big and spread far. I wonder if they even know my name.

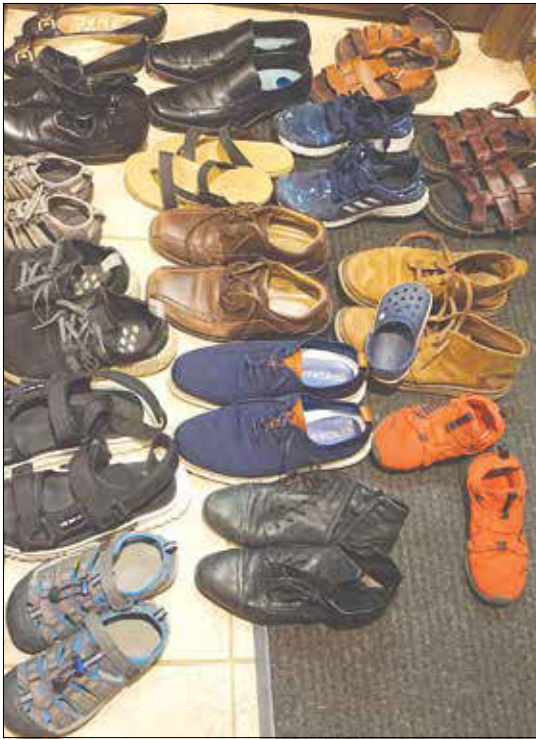
The front door is open. I see mountains of shoes piled at the entry—a sign I'm entering a home I love, a sign of childhood, a sign not only of Hmongness but Asian Americanness. Inside, the living room is full of older men—more distant relatives and elders from the community.

The men sit on two sofas pushed against two walls. They sit on chairs in the corners and along the banister to the basement. There's a coffee table full of bananas and oranges, Fuji apples, white peaches, and ripened mangoes on a large circular plate. On top of the mound of fruits, rest several paring knives carefully balanced.

Kao Kalia Yang, a nationally known author of fiction and non-fiction for children and adults, has lived in St. Paul since she was a child. *Courtesy of Shee Yang.*







Shoes pile up by a host's front door. It is a sign of respect and courtesy to remove street shoes before entering one's home. Of course, guests hope no one has the same style footwear, or they could accidentally go home with someone else's lookalikes!

At the edges of the table, there are cans of soya bean milk, sweet white gourd drink, and packages of wafer cookies in strawberry, chocolate, and coconut flavors. This is the same table that housed all the sweets and snacks of my childhood whenever we visited Auntie and Uncle's house. It has not changed. I love it so much.

On the north wall facing the window and the backyard where the large dining table is generally situated, a shaman's altar has been set—a bench before it. On a plastic mat behind the bench, rests the large body of a cleaned and gutted pig, lying belly down, heavy head to the side. This is ceremonial. The shaman's assistants sit on folding chairs close by to make sure children don't tread too close.

The shaman has his hood over his face. He's wearing traditional Hmong clothes—wide-legged cotton trousers, and a cotton shirt with simple black buttons. He's a special person, this shaman, traditional but incredibly versed in English and French and the language of diplomacy. I see the finger bells in his hands. My boy sees the pig, hears the ringing of the bells, and clings tighter to me.



During family gatherings, tropical fruits and a variety of beverages are commonly served—all refreshing on hot summer days in Minnesota.

I make my way through the group of men, greeting the familiar and unfamiliar faces with nods of head, a slight flattening of my lips, small smiles. My tall husband bowing his gleaming head low, follows with his load. He manages to shake hands along the line of older men who are within reach. Our daughter holds fast to her father's shirt.

In the kitchen, the women are busy working. My aunts come to me. Cousins I've not seen in long months offer to carry the toddler from my arms, but he refuses. Someone takes my purse. The same is happening behind me with my husband and the diaper bag. Another person ushers us out the side door to the patio, which has become a makeshift kitchen.

Uncle has set up a canvas tarp. Beneath it, along one side of the patio, propane fires burn, with huge pots simmering away on top. Nearby, there are two banquet tables set up side by

About sixty percent of Hmong are animist and believe that they have three souls and thirty-two spirits. When someone is sick, it means that their soul has left them or has been frightened away. *All three images courtesy of Lee Pao Xiong Family Archives.*



Part of the enjoyment of a family gathering is coming together to prepare food and catch up on the latest news from relatives and friends. Young cousins play on the periphery and help when called upon to do so. *Both images courtesy of Lee Pao Xiong Family Archives.*



side—with massive mismatched bowls of red and blue plastic, dented metal ones, and large colanders filled with cooked fermented rice noodles. My cousins' wives all stand, holding knives, thinly slicing halves of purple and green cabbages in their palms. Some shred canned bamboo shoots into fine strips. Others cut Chinese broccoli, bell peppers, and large onions into bite-sized pieces. An older woman I don't

know mixes a collection of herbs—cilantro, green onion, mint, and sweet Thai basil—with fresh-cut banana blossoms.

Around a table on the lawn, young cousins focus on cutting boards. They are thinly slicing the white stalks of lemongrass, galangal roots, kaffir lime leaves, and Thai bird's eye chilis.

I know the menu from the items everyone is prepping. We'll be having chicken curry noodles, probably without coconut milk because the older generation dislikes the thickness; pork stir-fry; and minced beef salad with chili and herbs. Fresh, spicy, green smells welcome us.

Everyone greets us in Hmong and English. I answer in both, easily floating between the two languages I occupy.

My mother gets up from a line of aunties dressing a small mountain of freshly killed Hmong chickens from another uncle's farm up north. She wipes her hands on an apron I don't recognize, so I know it belongs to my aunt. Mother kisses the boy in my arms, hugs me, and then moves to Aaron and the two grandchildren with him.

I admire my mother's comfort in this space of family. She and all my aunties look younger



here in Auntie and Uncle Eng's backyard than they do anywhere else in the world beyond our home and culture—a world that has and continues its presumption that they are somehow less. I've seen them in church basements sorting through old clothes, looking for the wearable pieces, the ones that might fit any of us. I've seen them walking the streets, looking straight ahead, because they don't want to be greeted with the middle finger or words like, "Go home!" This little bit of earth we're on is our home. We don't have to say it here.

Auntie calls from a long line of tables and chairs, "Take your children and husband and come over here and sit down."

Uncle Eng has connected several smaller sun tents and created a shaded eating area along the back of the property. Their yard is big, bordered by neighboring yards. All of them are empty save for a lone dog in a kennel observing us with pointed ears and a wagging tail.

Auntie continues waving us over, beckoning again, "Bring the children here so I can see how much they have grown."

Seated beside her beneath the cool shade of the tent, I can feel the calming breeze of the day. I breathe, able to rest my child in my lap now. The yard belonging to the neighbor on the left has heads of yellow dandelion rising above the grass. My uncle mows her lawn.

When Auntie and Uncle Eng first moved into the house nearly twenty years ago, this neighbor hated them. She was an older white woman. She lived alone. She lived quietly. She didn't like their big family, and she especially hated all the large family functions at their house. In the early days, she used to call the police to investigate.

One day, Uncle saw her struggling with her lawn mower. He offered to mow her yard. She hesitated for a brief moment then relented. She said, "thank you" that day and "hello" the next, and now whenever Auntie and Uncle host family events, she doesn't call the cops.

The lawn needs mowed again, but I know my uncle has been busy setting up for the day and has not had time to get to it. It used to bother me that he helps her but not so much anymore. The woman is getting older. She's getting lonelier. I'm glad that my uncle is being kind. He knows that lessons like these will lead us where we need to go.



Auntie and Uncle Eng—all of my aunts and uncles, in fact—make it a point to send food to their surrounding neighbors after family events. Once or twice they've even invited their neighbors. Once or twice, different families joined them. They insist on sharing the flavors of their home as a kindness but also as a way of alleviating and placating the fears of the white people who live all around us.

I want to help with the continuing preparations, but I know the child in my arms won't tolerate anyone else's arms, and Aaron can't hold both boys. Our girl is still too shy to play with the other kids. She sits close to her father, but her eyes dart in the direction of the children. It's only a matter of time before someone invites her and lures her into a game.

I change my mind, and despite the child on my lap, I say, "I want to help with the work." My aunt waves away my words like there's a fly in the air. She replies, "You can't. You have little ones. When they get bigger, you will help. Now, your job is to show up and be part of this. Introduce your children to us."

The boy cousins come with drinks—water, cans of soda, and bottles of cold beer. I take a water. My auntie tells them to rally the young ones to pick up trash from the yard—any debris at all.

From inside the house, I hear the shaman's gong, the chorus of *ua tsaug* that the men in my family are offering the shaman and his helper

It takes great effort and time to prepare for a family gathering. Once set up, the tents provide a shaded area to visit, rest, and share a meal. *Courtesy of Lee Pao Xiong Family Archives.*

Hmong family and friends are gathering once more following the pandemic that restricted gatherings and saw the loss of many loved ones within the community. Courtesy of Lee Pao Xiong Family Archives.



for taking the time, going on the spiritual journey, putting community first—even on a hot summer's day when there's so much else they could be doing.

I sit back and smile. It's one summer day. I remember countless summer days like this from years before. At one time, I was one of the girls cutting the lemon grass and kaffir lime leaves, standing around the table, making jokes and fun. At one time, I was a young woman among my cousins' wives prepping vegetables for various dishes. I was quiet, but I listened and learned of their married lives, laughed when they laughed, consoled them when they were sad or unhappy.

I never saw myself quite where I am now—with a baby on my lap, my husband beside me holding two more—all of us sitting beneath the shade of a sun shelter with my large family around me.

My aunt sees me looking across the yard at all the activities and tells me, "Mark my words. I was like you once. I was born in a large family. I had more aunts and uncles than I could count on my hands. Now, I have none. One day, you will realize that you have no more aunts and uncles, Dearest One."

I nod my head to show her that I hear her words, but my heart refuses them. I tighten my

hold on my child. Beneath the shade of the tent, even with the summer breeze on my skin, I start to feel a heat erupting from within—the heat of future heartbreak, of seasons beyond this one, the engine of memory trying to remember, to memorialize.

*Kao Kalia Yang is an award-winning Hmong American author based in Ramsey County. Her memoirs include The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir; The Song Poet: A Memoir of My Father; and Somewhere in the Unknown World: A Collective Refugee Memoir. She coedited and contributed to the groundbreaking collection, What God is Honored Here? Writings on Miscarriage and Infant Loss by and for Native Women and Women of Color. Her children's books include A Map Into the World; The Shared Room; The Most Beautiful Thing; and Yang Warriors. Learn more about Yang's work at [www.kaokaliayang.com](http://www.kaokaliayang.com).*

To learn more about the Hmong community in Minnesota, visit the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University online at <https://hmongcenter.csp.edu/about-us/> and the Hmong Cultural Center on University Avenue at <https://www.hmongcc.org/about-us.html>.

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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 Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) strives to innovate, lead, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community, deliver inspiring history programming, and incorporate local history in education.

The Society was established in 1949 to preserve the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family acquired in 1849. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the original programs told the story of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, RCHS also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, now telling the stories of the remarkable relationship between Jane Gibbs and the Dakota people of Heyáta Othúnwe (Cloud Man's Village).

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, the organization moved 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 and rededicated in 2016 as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

RCHS offers public programming for youth and adults. Visit [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com) for details of upcoming History Revealed programs, summer camps, courthouse and depot tours, and more. The Society serves more than 15,000 students annually on field trips or through school outreach. Programs are made possible by donors, members, corporations, and foundations, all of whom we appreciate deeply. If you are not a member of RCHS, please join today and help bring history to life for more than 50,000 people every year.

### Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion

RCHS is committed to ensuring it preserves and presents our county's history. As we continue our work to incorporate more culturally diverse histories, we have made a commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion that is based on this core idea: RCHS exists to serve ALL who call Ramsey County home. To learn more, please see [www.rchs.com/about](http://www.rchs.com/about).

### Acknowledging This Sacred Dakota Land

Mnisóta Makhóche, the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds, extends beyond the modern borders of Minnesota and is the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Dakhóta (Dakota) people. It is also home to the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous peoples, all who make up a vibrant community in Mnisóta Makhóche. RCHS acknowledges that its sites are located on and benefit from these sacred Dakota lands.

RCHS is committed to preserving our past, informing our present, and inspiring our future. Part of doing so is acknowledging the painful history and current challenges facing the Dakota people just as we celebrate the contributions of Dakota and other Indigenous peoples.

Find our full Land Acknowledgment Statement on our website, [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com). This includes actionable ways in which RCHS pledges to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóche.

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



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(651) 222-0701



# Anne Field Named Chair of RCHS Editorial Board

Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) is pleased to announce that Anne Field has been named chair of the Society's Editorial Board. This group advises staff on publishing program policy and projects, assists with overall publishing efforts by connecting RCHS to writers and resources, as well as writing, editing, and reviewing manuscripts. Field, who is also on the RCHS Board of Directors, serves on the Collections Committee, and is co-chair of the Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Committee, joined the Editorial Board in 2019. In her new role, she will lead monthly meetings, consult on editorial projects, oversee the production of *Ramsey County History* magazine, write its quarterly "Message from the Board" column, and offer insight into other publishing efforts.

"The work of the Editorial Board is essential in bringing unique and remarkable history content to the magazine, podcasts, books, and more," said RCHS President Chad Roberts. "We are thrilled to have Anne Field take on this essential leadership role. She brings a wealth of experience and passion for history to this outstanding team. High-quality research and publishing are at the center of what RCHS does. With Anne at the helm, I am confident we will continue to build on a tradition of excellence."

Field, a native of Minnesota's Iron Range and a graduate of the University of Minnesota, lives in Mendota Heights. She follows Anne Cowie, who has been involved with RCHS in different capacities since 1967. Cowie served as chair of the Editorial Board for the last fifteen years, overseeing sixty-two issues from Winter 2006 through Spring 2021, along with many other publishing projects. RCHS has greatly benefited from her insight and historical knowledge.

"Steadfast, inquisitive, thoughtful, and enthusiastic partner are all superlatives that start to tell the story of Anne Cowie and her time with RCHS," Roberts said. "It is a credit to her that *Ramsey County History* magazine is the field-leading publication it is today. We are grateful for her faithful commitment to the Society and local history as she continues to advise RCHS as an Editorial Board member."



Anne Field



Anne Cowie



## Upcoming Events at RCHS & Gibbs Farm

### September 2021

- Sept. 11 Gibbs Farm Tree Tour
- Sept. 16 *History Revealed: Hwy 61 Through Minnesota*
- Sept. 21 RCHS Member Celebration at Gibbs Farm
- Sept. 25 Gibbs Farm Apple Festival

### October 2021

- Oct. 21 *History Revealed: St. Paul: An Urban Biography*
- Oct. 23 Gibbs Farm Volunteer Day
- Oct. 30 Gibbs Farm Halloween

For information & additional programs, see

[www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com)

or email [events@rchs.com](mailto:events@rchs.com)

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*The Aesthetics of Bridge Design*

**A Paean to Two of St. Paul's Elegant Park Bridges**

CHRISTINE PODAS-LARSON, PAGE 17



Canoers enjoy the view of the South Channel Bridge in 1905. By 1918, there were 1,000 privately owned canoes on Lake Phalen in addition to fifty canoes and eighty-five rowboats rented by the city. To read more about the bridge at Phalen Park and the Montreal Bridge at Highland Park, see Christine Podas-Larson's article on page 17. *Photograph by E. A. Bromley, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*