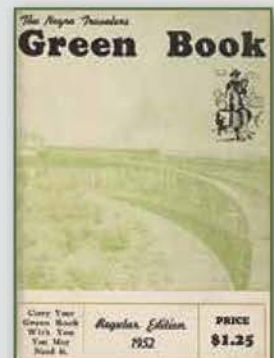
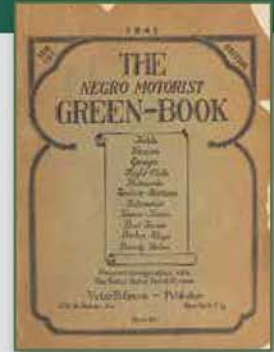


**Bob Brown:
 "Paint What You See"**

PAUL NELSON, PAGE 14



*Traveling Without Aggravation—
 How Victor H. Green Changed Travel for Black Americans*

Green Book Locations in the Historic Rondo Community (1940-1956)

NIEETA L. PRESLEY, PAGE 1

By the Numbers . . .

If an obstacle blocks our path, we find a way around said barrier. African Americans needed a reliable resource they could consult when traveling in the Jim Crow era. Victor H. Green created *The Negro Motorist Green Book* to help people find safe and welcoming tourist homes, restaurants, and other businesses that made leisure life a pleasurable life. There were even locations in St. Paul!

First and last year businesses in St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood were listed in the *Green Book*:

1940 and 1956

Victor Green's age the year he published his first book in 1936:

44

Number of Rondo locations listed in the *Green Book*:

9

Price of *The Negro Motorist Green Book* in 1938 and the *Travelers' Green Book* in 1963-64:

\$.25 and \$1.95

Number of St. Paul businesses outside of Rondo that advertised in the *Green Book*, beginning in 1957:

15

To learn more, see "*Traveling Without Aggravation—How Victor H. Green Changed Travel for Black Americans: Green Book Locations in the Historic Rondo Community (1940-1956)*" by Nieeta L. Presley on page 1.

ON THE COVER



The Credjafawn Social Club hosted a "Gypsy Tour" to Wisconsin in 1952. Only the occupants in the lead vehicle and the social committee knew the itinerary. All other families caravanned to "unknown" locations

for a day of fun and friendship. Names listed on the photograph back: John H. Griffin; "Bubs" Powell, Jr.; Rodney Maxwell; Corrine Griffin; Yvonne Powell; Betty Maxwell; Revoida Wright; and Viola Johnson. Photograph in the *Murphy-Taylor Family Papers*, courtesy, Hallie Q. Brown Community Archives; "Gypsy Tour" details in *St. Paul Recorder*, June 27, 1952, 7.

The *Negro Motorist Green Book covers (1941, 1949, 1952)*, courtesy of Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library Digital Collections

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Message from the Editorial Board

Successful communities are the result of dedicated citizens working for the betterment of all. This issue focuses on such teamwork, beginning with Nieeta Presley's never-before researched *Green Book* locations in the Historic Rondo community. In our county's history, Black visitors couldn't always find safe access to motels, restaurants, or other businesses. Rondo neighbors set out welcome mats and fulfilled this need.

During the Great Depression, the US government developed programs to help citizens earn a living at a time when few imagined seeing a stable paycheck again. The Federal Art Project enabled local artists, including Bob Brown, to get back on their feet. See Paul Nelson's story on page 14.

Our last two articles highlight historians: young students representing Minnesota at this year's National History Day and seven specially selected McWatt Fellows. Through community collaborations, these scholars have uncovered important contributions to our state's history, helping all of us better understand our past so that we may build toward a more equitable future.

The examples above depend on "we/us" to get things done. I joke that I am a one-woman publishing department, but I could never do this job alone. In fact, this year, it took assistance from twenty-seven executive and editorial board members, nine colleagues, twenty-five authors, and fifty individuals/businesses (4,100 volunteer hours!), along with our extraordinary designer Wendy Holdman and printers Modern Press, Co., and Bookmobile to tell our county's history. Thanks, too, to editorial chair, Anne Field. She usually writes this column, but she's on a much-deserved vacation. It's important to recognize such dedicated teamwork.

Meredith Cummings
Editor

Correction: The photograph on page 10 in our Spring 2022 issue should be attributed to Stephanie Dehler of Stephanie Dehler Photography.

The Ramsey County Historical Society thanks former 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.

Addressing the “Trust Gap” Between Museums and Communities of Color

CHAD P. ROBERTS

Museums exist to serve community, and most museum leaders understand that this means their *entire* community. Museum directors try to create institutions where everyone interested in and impacted by their museums will be represented, welcomed, and engaged. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, however, the enormous gap between this aspiration and reality was brought into sharp focus.

In 2020, the Ramsey County Historical Society’s (RCHS) connections in the African American community existed but were limited, and many of our museum colleagues across the state were in a similar situation or had no network at all to help them understand the impact of Mr. Floyd’s killing. The Minnesota Museum of American Art (The M), with sponsorship by RCHS, hosted a community forum to address what role, if any, museums should be taking in the preservation and exhibition of the uprising art being created by local artists. There, the absence of trust between the Twin Cities’ African American community and its museums became incredibly clear. Addressing this trust gap is essential if we are to better serve our communities.

Arthur C. McWatt Fellowship Program

In 2021, RCHS joined with Anoka County Historical Society, Hennepin History Museum, and Dakota County Historical Society to establish a new partnership to accelerate our engagement of the communities we serve. With some guidance from local African American leaders, a fellowship program was born.

After an exploratory conversation with Ramsey County resident, activist, and author Jeremiah E. Ellis about the scope of the project, Ellis proposed naming the fellowship after the late Arthur C. McWatt. McWatt was a social studies teacher at Central High School in St. Paul, an author, and a former member of the RCHS Editorial Board who had written for the society

on several occasions. An activist himself, he was married to the renowned local civil rights leader Katie McWatt.

The fellowship was designed to help each partner organization connect with the African American communities they serve, advance various history projects, and identify a network of individuals and organizations engaged in preserving and presenting Black history in Minnesota. The fellows would facilitate weekly meetings between African American historians, community leaders or organizations, and the leadership at each partner museum. We anticipated hiring four fellows and expected applicants to be primarily early career people from the museum gig economy who would want to work ten to fifteen hours a week. We were wrong.

We had a dozen extraordinary applicants and ended up hiring seven fellows. They averaged twenty-five hours a week, and five were mid- to late-career individuals with important projects in mind or in the works. Fellows included the founder of the African American Registry, the founder of Memorialize the Movement, and a local school board member. The fellows’ projects were impressive and included, “If not now, when?,” which focused on connecting youth with elders in the community; the second annual “Justice for George Exhibit: Our Strength, Our Story,” with an art exhibition of uprising murals, performances, and speakers from across the Twin Cities’ area; and “Building Remembrance for Reconciliation” (BR4R), an ongoing effort to use history and the arts to remember, reconcile, and heal from generations of racism and its impact on community through ongoing discussions, web-based information, and future exhibitions.

Most program funding was provided through a grant from Minnesota’s Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, administered by the Minnesota Historical Society. Each partner organization

Arthur C. McWatt Fellows, 2022 Cohort

Sr. Fellow Jeremiah E. Ellis, senior director of partnerships for Generation Next
Ramsey County Historical Society

- “Minnesota ‘Black Rosies:’” Researched African American women who worked at the local Twin Cities Ordnance Plant during World War II. Arranged a screening of *Invisible Warriors: African American Women in World War II*, a documentary by director Gregory S. Cooke about female office and factory workers in the war years. For more information on the film, go to: <https://invisiblewarriorsfilm.com/>.
- “The Story Behind the Storyteller:” Documented the creation of *Tellstar News* and its impact using oral history interviews with producer Readus W. Fletcher II.

Sr. Fellow Benjamin Mchie, founder of the African American Registry
Anoka County Historical Society
<https://aaregistry.org/>

- “If not now when” project: Established a “street team” in Anoka County to connect youth with African American elders.

Fellow Chauntyll Allen, member of Saint Paul Board of Education
Ramsey County Historical Society

- Researched the success of Black musicians from St. Paul’s East Side, with a focus on Central High School.

Fellow James Curry, filmmaker
Dakota County Historical Society
<https://buildingremembranceforreconciliation.com/>



McWatt Fellow James Curry (right) with Seitu Jones, a McKnight Distinguished Artist Award winner and community leader, at a recent kinara (community gathering). *Courtesy of Kim Ly Curry.*



Amira McLendon, Semhar Solomon, Dani Follet-Dion, Arthur C. McWatt Fellow Leesa Kelly, and Hannah Yee at the opening of the second annual “Justice for George Exhibit: Our Strength, Our Story.” *Courtesy of Leesa Kelly.*

- “Building Remembrance for Reconciliation (BR4R)” project: Continued researching the exodus of Black families from small Minnesota towns in response to acts of racially motivated violence in the post-reconstruction era.

Fellow Leesa Kelly, founder of Memorialize the Movement
Hennepin History Museum
<https://www.memorializethemovement.com/>

- Second Annual “Justice for George Exhibit: Our Strength, Our Story:” Curated an exhibition of up-rising mural art created in the wake of the murder of George Floyd.

Fellow Greg McMoore, restorative justice consultant
Hennepin History Museum

- “416 E. 25th Street” project: Told the story of families displaced by the demolition of a thriving African American community in South Minneapolis to make way for the construction of I-35W.

Fellow Adem Ojulu
Anoka County Historical Society

- Documented the experiences of African immigrant women now residing in Anoka County.

All of these projects have components that can be continued in the future and expanded on to create new exhibitions, articles, interviews, websites, or even television programs. Ramsey County Historical Society and its partners will continue to work with the fellows to the extent possible to help make each project more accessible to the public.

scheduled time for their leadership and staff to work with fellows over the nineteen-week program. We provided memberships and research subscriptions, computers and technology stipends, expense reimbursement, and funds to compensate community members for their time. Fellows met regularly with partner museums and as a cohort. We hosted fellows at the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums conference, arranged meetings with community leaders, and helped fund a kinara (community gathering) committed to preserving and presenting Black history.

The first iteration of the McWatt Fellowship concluded June 30, 2022, culminating with presentations by fellows on their projects and an assessment to improve future iterations of the program. Over time, the program will evolve to address the specific needs and cultural norms of additional communities in the Twin Cities. We are working together to ensure the preservation of a more complete history of our communities that includes all of our fellow residents and to ensure this history is accessible to all.

The Work Continues

RCCHS will continue to recruit talented and diverse individuals to serve on our board, committees, and staff. We will amplify stories that were previously ignored or erased in our publications and exhibitions. We also are committed to maintaining the community of action created via the American Alliance of Museums' nationwide *Facing Change*¹ initiative we participated in the past several years.

The Bell Museum and RCCHS hosted a gathering of *Facing Change* alums in the spring of 2022. Two others in our cohort will host the next one. At these gatherings, we share experiences, problem solve, and maintain the energy



we have built. The work of the entire cohort is essential for lasting change in our community, and the cohort must grow to include museums that could not participate in the first iteration of the program.

There is real momentum at each of our individual museums to preserve and present more comprehensive local history. By continuing our work individually and together, we just may create that better world where everyone feels welcomed, engaged, and represented in our local museums.

Chad P. Roberts is the president of the Ramsey County Historical Society and has been privileged to serve with outstanding colleagues at organizations preserving and sharing local and Indigenous history for the past twenty years. He is a member of Rotary Club of Saint Paul #10, the Minnesota Association of Museums, and the American Alliance of Museums, where he has served on the boards of the organization's development and membership professional network. He is a frequent presenter at local and national museum conferences.

A kinara brought McWatt Fellows, local community leaders and changemakers, and members of partner organizations together at the Anderson Center in Red Wing, Minnesota, on May 27, 2022. Courtesy of Kim Ly Curry.

NOTES

1. "51 Museums Selected for Board Diversity and Inclusion Program as Part of \$4 Million National Initiative," American Alliance of Museums, July 23, 2019, accessed July 7, 2022, <https://www.aam-us.org/2019/07/23/51-museums-selected-for-board-diversity-and-inclusion-program-as-part-of-4-million-national-initiative/>.

The American Alliance of Museums' nationwide *Facing Change* initiative invites museums across the country to apply to a multi-year program that works to diversify museum boards and leadership.

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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 Ĥeyáta Othújwe (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 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.

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. 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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Color postcard labeled "Governor's Room, Minn. State Capitol, St. Paul, Minn." Date unknown. Studio: A. C. Bosselman & Co., New York. *Courtesy of RCHS Collection.*

Podcasts are available at:

<https://publishing.rchs.com/publishing/audio-visual/>



Grasshoppers in My Bed:

Lillie Belle Gibbs, Minnesota Farm Girl, 1877

Written by Terry Swanson; Illustrated by Peggy Stern

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society

This work of historical fiction for readers of all ages tells the story of a real eleven-year-old girl based on actual events and historical documents and artifacts from Gibbs Farm and in the RCHS archives. RCHS Member Price: \$18.00 Regular Price: \$20.00

For more information and to purchase:

<https://www.rchs.com/news/grasshoppers-in-my-bed/>

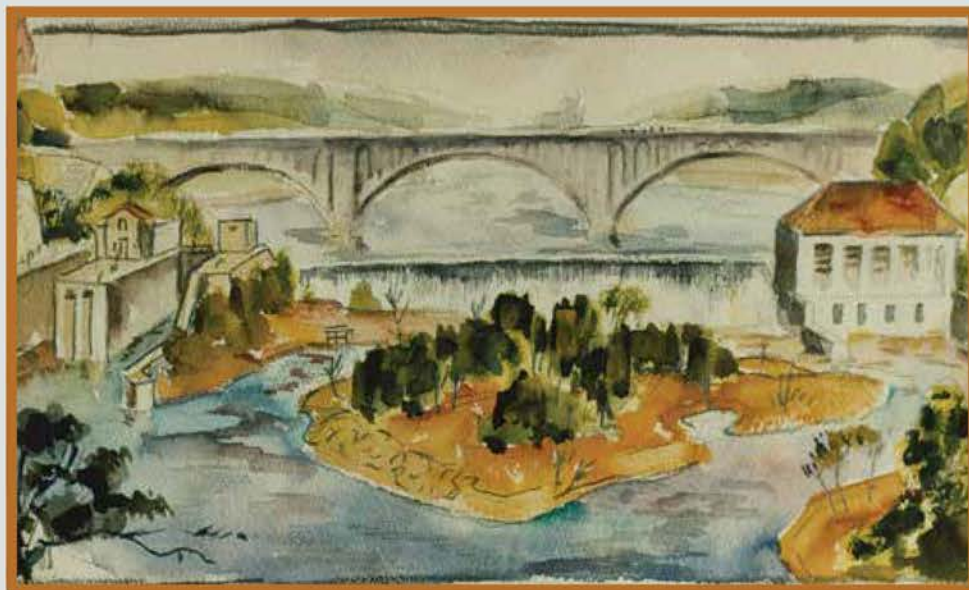
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Bob Brown: "Paint What You See"

PAUL NELSON, PAGE 14



Bob Brown was taught to "paint what you see," and so he did—creating scores of paintings of recognizable sights and scenes throughout St. Paul and nearby counties, including these depictions of the Ford Bridge and Swede Hollow. *Courtesy of Deborah LeSueur Photograph Collection of Bob Brown Originals and Minnesota Historical Society.*