RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Three Extraordinary Years in St. Paul Millinery: 1908, 1909, 1911
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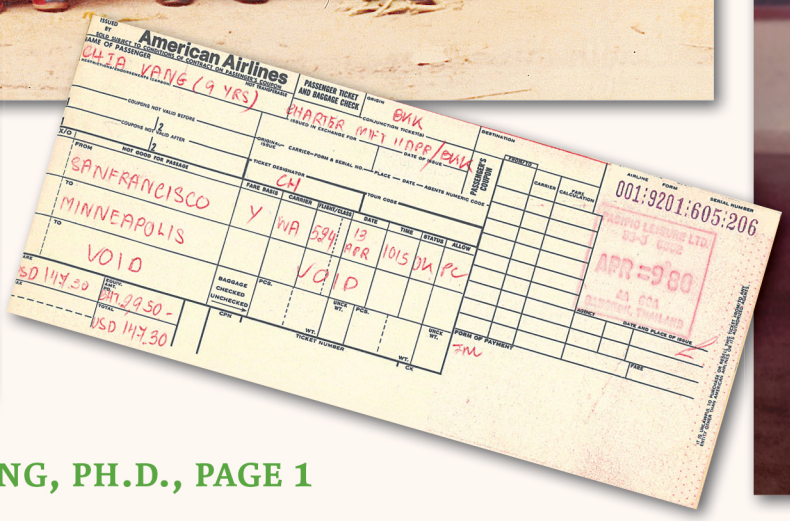
Reflections from the 1.5 Generation

Fifty Years of Hmong Lives in Ramsey County



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Spring 2025 Volume 60 • Number 2

By the Numbers . . .

In his article "First Show at Dusk," local history lover Pete Boulay, who helped co-found the Maplewood Area Historical Society, turns the clock back to the midcentury—a time when drive-in theaters were all the rage across the US, including in Ramsey County. The county's first foray into the drive-in craze was the Rose Drive-in, which sat on the corner of Snelling Avenue and County Road C from 1948 until its demise in 1979.

Total cost to build the Rose:
$200,000

The height of the art deco rose that was installed on the back of the screen:
36 feet

The number of bulbs it took to light the rose, along with several miles of neon tubing:
1,700

The number of plastic loudspeakers that were installed throughout the Rose Drive-in:
650

Cost to replace a single loudspeaker, which were regularly stolen by moviegoers at the Rose, in 1948:
$21.85

Source: *Minneapolis Star and Minneapolis Tribune* archives.

ON THE COVER

The collage of images on our cover are featured in our cover story, "Reflections from the 1.5 Generation," which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first arrival of Hmong refugees in Ramsey County. Pictured are (clockwise from top left): author Chia Youyee Vang with her mother, Pang Thao, and sister, Mao, wearing traditional Green Hmong skirts and handmade clothing in 1981; contributor Lee Pao Xiong standing on the 35E overpass in the 1980s; contributor MayKao Y. Hang wearing a White Hmong outfit at Hmong New Year at the St. Paul Civic Center in 1985; author Chia Youyee Vang's plane ticket to MSP Airport in April 1980; and contributor Lee Pao Xiong's mother, Mee Vang, and brothers Bing Xiong and Kao Xiong in St. Paul's North End neighborhood in the 1980s. *All photographs courtesy of the authors.*

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Message from the Editorial Board

I went to my first drive-in movie with my aunt and her boyfriend. I was 6 years old and I sat between them in the front seat in my pajamas. The movie was *The Monkey's Uncle* with Annette Funicello and after only a few minutes the film broke. We went home. In this month's issue, Pete Boulay's article, "First Show at Dusk," brought back that early memory of visiting the drive-in movie theater, a uniquely American idea and ritual, an outgrowth of our post-war prosperity.

Prosperity is often measured by the clothes we wear and if, at the turn of the twentieth century, you were a woman of any means, you wore a large hat festooned with bird plumage and secured with elaborate pins. Janice R. Quick tells us the tale of three dramatic years in the St. Paul millinery trade, a story of fashion, fellowship and feathers.

Now imagine you are a refugee from a southeast Asian country radically different from the United States. Your country was in a long and devasting war, and uncertainty, poverty and often danger dominated your young life. Finally, you were brought to Minnesota and expected to plant yourself and grow. How strange it must have been to settle in a place with things like drive-in movie theaters and fancy, elaborate clothing.

But that's exactly what our authors Chia Youyee Vang, Lee Pao Xiong, and MayKao Y. Hang did with their families. In our cover story, "Reflections from the 1.5 Generation," they look back on the fifty years since Hmong families began relocating to the US. These families went from displacement and disorientation to Little League baseball, college, professions, political positions, community leadership—all while keeping their Hmong culture and traditions alive—in just a generation and a half, making Ramsey County so much richer in the process.

As chair of the *Ramsey County History* editorial board, it's been my pleasure to write this column for each new issue. I've learned so much about the incredible variety and depth of Ramsey County history along the way and I hope you did, too. It's time for me to pass the pen to a new chair who I know will share my enthusiasm for the stories and storytellers that live among us. Small historical societies like RCHS keep history alive and vibrant. Thank you for letting me be part of *Ramsey County History*.

Anne Field
Chair, Editorial Board

Publication of Ramsey County History *is 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.*

Reflections from the 1.5 Generation

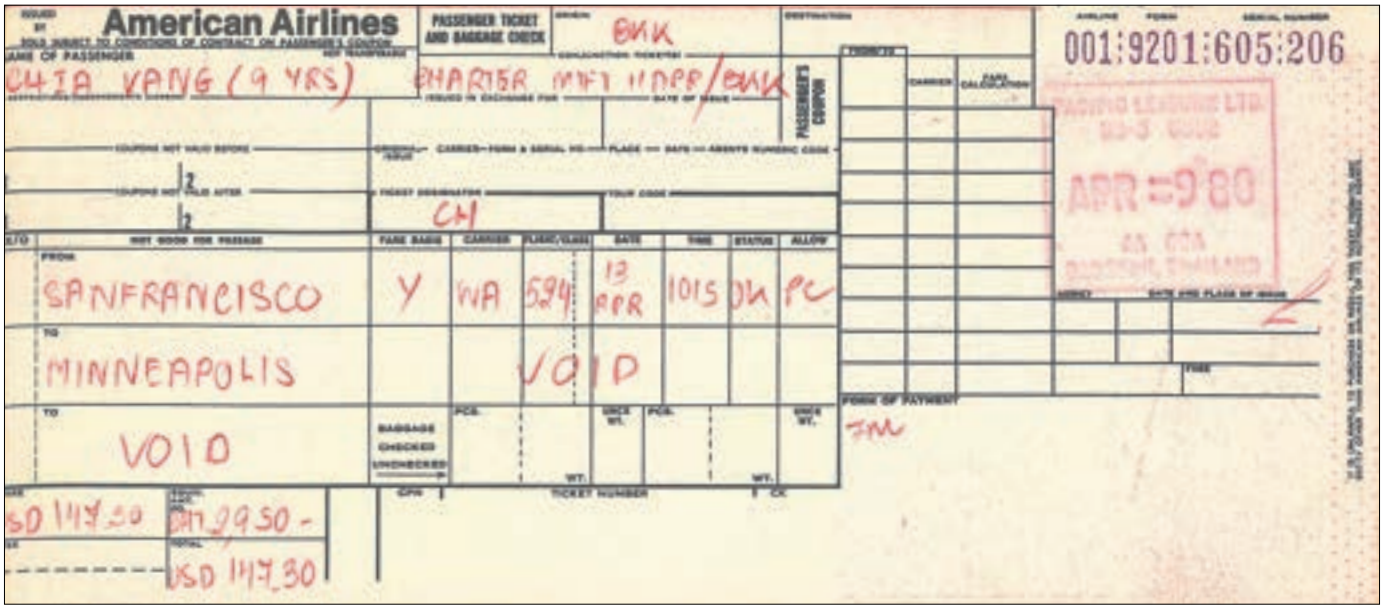
Fifty Years of Hmong Lives in Ramsey County

CHIA YOUYEE VANG, PH.D.

On April 11, 1980, my family of eight boarded an American Airlines charter flight at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand. The day before, my father, You Yee Vang, had signed a promissory note for a travel loan in the amount of $1,632. We arrived exhausted and disoriented in San Francisco. My father was 41 and my mother was 39. Years later, my parents shared that they were afraid throughout the international journey. Fear was accompanied by emptiness and a sense of helplessness because it was impossible to imagine what life would be like in America.

The six of us ranged in age from 2 to 14. We had spent the previous six months in Ban Vinai Refugee Camp, before we were accepted for resettlement under the auspices of the American Council Nationalities Services. Our local sponsorship was the International Institute of Minnesota. We arrived with not much more than the clothes on our backs and were processed along with many other refugees. On the morning of April 13, we flew to Minnesota and were greeted by my father's younger brother, Tong Vang, and his wife, May A Yang, at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International airport. They had settled in Minnesota in 1976, just a year after the first Hmong refugees arrived in the state.

As a refugee child raised in St. Paul's under-resourced neighborhoods, I had to overcome many barriers, including the insecurity caused by displacement on multiple levels; my family moved *seven times* before my high school graduation. Despite these challenges, I was able to go to college and eventually earn a doctoral degree, become a tenured professor, travel to many parts of the world, and now serve as vice chancellor at a large American university. While my personal experiences are mine alone, my story is certainly not unique. Out of the nearly 1.4 million people from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam who sought refuge in the United States following America's disengagement from the Vietnam War, Hmong from Laos represented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My 1980 plane ticket stub for the flight from San Francisco International Airport to Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport. *In author's collection.*

about ten percent.[1] During the last few decades, the role Hmong played in the U.S. Secret War in Laos that occurred parallel to the larger war in Vietnam has been explored in films, books, as well as popular and academic articles.[2]

People of the diaspora have also been the subject of advocacy efforts to secure well-deserved recognition for both Hmong and American veterans who fought this secret war. About a dozen memorials have been erected to recognize their wartime contributions, including a small plaque on Grant Drive in Arlington National Cemetery and the Minnesota Memorial for the United States and Alliance Special Forces in Laos on the grounds of the Minnesota State Capitol. While there are more stories from this immigrant generation to be told, in locations where many Hmong Americans reside, there has been increased awareness among the general population about why ethnic minority people like them were forced to leave their way of life and escape to the United States. Much has been written about their struggles to integrate into American society.[3] Parallel to these struggles were the tremendous sacrifices by the immigrant generation to survive at all costs, as well as an intense desire by us, their children who are the 1.5 generation, to overcome a range of barriers and realize the American Dream.

Although I have lived in the Milwaukee area for the last nineteen years, I consider St. Paul home. The physical location is where my immediate and extended family set down roots. It is the answer I give when people ask where I am from. It is also where I travel for most major holidays. In this article, I reflect on how Ramsey County became the county with the largest Hmong population in the United States, and what it was like growing up in St. Paul during the 1980s. In addition to my own reflections, I invited two of Ramsey County's prominent Hmong leaders from my generation to share their memories. Collectively, our experiences demonstrate how our adherence to the Hmong values of hard work and commitment to family and community allowed us to create impactful personal and professional lives. In doing so, we and those from our generation were able to leave behind the margins to which we and our

Minnesota Memorial for the United States and Alliance Special Forces in Laos. *Photo by author.*

elders were initially relegated in order to build one of the strongest and most vibrant Hmong communities in this country.

Seeking Refuge

Following the April 30, 1975, fall of Saigon, some Hmong leaders in Laos who had worked with the Royal Lao Government and the American-sponsored clandestine secret army, along with their families, were airlifted to Thailand. Thousands found their own way out in the immediate aftermath. Over the course of the next two decades, many more escaped and sought temporary refuge in Thailand. Since 1975, about 145,000 Hmong were resettled in the United States as refugees. Where the new arrivals initially settled reflected the availability of state and local efforts to sponsor refugees, which resulted in people being dispersed across the country.[4]

The first Hmong family, Dang Her and Shoua Moua, arrived in Minnesota in December 1975. Dang was a parolee since he had served as a US Agency for International Development field assistant. More came the following year. Leng Wong (formerly Vang) and his family were the first Hmong refugees to be resettled in the state. As the situation in Southeast Asia further deteriorated, the number of arrivals continued to increase. From 1975 to 1980, more than 40,000 had been resettled throughout the country, but the 1980 Census counted only 5,208 people of Hmong ethnicity.[5] In the subsequent decades, the U.S. Hmong population increased exponentially. The United Nations-sponsored refugee camps in Thailand closed in the mid-1990s. Thereafter, the growth of the population was attributed largely to natural increase.

Table 1: U.S. and Minnesota Hmong Population Over Time

Year	Total U.S. Hmong Population	Total Minnesota Hmong Population
1980	5,208	1,331
1990	94,439	17,764
2000	186,310	45,443
2010	260,076	66,181
2020	355,919	95,094

Source: U.S. Census Bureau[6]

Today, Ramsey County is the county with the largest Hmong population (48,189) in the United States and St. Paul (36,177) is the *city* with the highest Hmong population in the country.[7] Altogether, Hmong Americans represent about nine percent of the county's 550,000 residents, spread across sixteen cities. Minnesota's Hmong population remains second to California (107,458) with Wisconsin in third place (62,331). In addition to St. Paul, three other cities have Hmong populations over 10,000. Two are in California (Fresno, 27,705 and Sacramento, 17,483) and one in Wisconsin (Milwaukee, 12,251).[8]

What contributed to the concentration of Hmong in Ramsey County? The early refugees found this region to be a place where the private and public sectors collaborated to support them. There were many obstacles to overcome for all involved, but what made the adjustment to an unfamiliar place manageable was the way in which individuals and organizations were committed to providing access and support to the refugees.[9] The refugees, for their part, reached out to friends and relatives who had been resettled elsewhere and tried to encourage them to move to Minnesota. They knew that they could better support themselves and other refugees if they were in close proximity to Hmong already settled there.

As more Hmong people moved to St. Paul, they were able to advocate for interpreters and a plethora of support staff in schools, health care facilities, and workplaces. They soon established community-based organizations to provide basic needs support as well as education and training to newcomers. They started businesses that catered primarily to the Hmong population, participated in the U.S. political process to ensure they have representation, accessed resources to establish Hmong-focused schools as well as other nonprofit organizations, and hosted a wide range of community gatherings such as the Hmong International Freedom Festival held annually for more than four decades at Como Park's McMurray Fields. Though the name of the event and specific activities have changed over time, sports competitions have been an integral part of the festival.

The critical mass has enabled the endurance of a vibrant community where Hmong

My mother bought Green Hmong skirts for her *(middle),* my younger sister Mao *(right)*, and me. She made the shirts, sashes, and my headwear. This was taken in August 1981 in the back of our first home on Marshall Avenue in St. Paul. In winter, Mao and I wore these outfits to the Hmong New Year. *In the author's collection.*

culture and its traditions can also be sustained. As a result of the concentration of Hmong in Ramsey County, over time, Hmong American professionals of all fields from other locations chose to move to this area to use their expertise in service of the community. This phenomenon contributed to diverse socioeconomic experiences among Hmong in this region. In the early years of resettlement, few people lived outside of St. Paul. With a growing professional class, Hmong residential settlement expanded to suburban areas, as illustrated by the presence of Hmong Americans in most cities within Ramsey County.

Table 2: Hmong Population Distribution in Ramsey County

City	Hmong Population	City	Hmong Population
St. Paul	36,177	Mounds View	472
Maplewood	5,614	Shoreview	335
Blaine*	1,963	New Brighton	251
North St. Paul	1,497	Spring Lake Park	157
Little Canada	895	Arden Hills	140
Vadnais Heights	871	St. Anthony	46
Roseville	789	Falcon Heights	41
White Bear Lake	722	Lauderdale	29

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020[10]
**Located in both Ramsey and Anoka Counties*

Hiawatha is one of the long-standing soccer teams made up of mostly my brothers and relatives. The team was formed in summer 1988. The children and grandchildren of the founders continue to compete at the annual sports tournament in St. Paul. Back *(L-R):* Thong Vang, Teng Vang, Xeng Khai Vang, True Vang, Bla Ying Vang, Kou Vang, and Leng Vang. Front row *(L-R):* Chang Vang, Ber Yang, Phong Vang, Yia Vang, and Neng Vang. *Photo courtesy Chance Vang.*

Growing Up in Ramsey County

As I reflect on my experiences of growing up in St. Paul during the 1980s, I realize that we had so little, yet we managed to keep our heads high. Once I learned how to read and write, I immersed myself in books. It was a way for me to cope with everyday challenges. We were poor financially, but what we and many other refugee families like us had was that we were not deficient in love and community. What we have had to overcome to reach a place like the United States has made us resilient. As a teenager, I realized that I had access to opportunities that were unimaginable only a few years ago. If people like my parents and the thousands of people who had to be uprooted can keep going, then I had no excuse to not make something of myself. While remaining deeply committed to Hmong culture and traditions, my parents, You Yee Vang and Pang Thao, were openminded and supported my interests in and outside of the classroom.

In the mid-1980s, my family began seasonal gardening. Each spring, my parents went to order plants, buy the fertilizer, and other necessary supplies. Because of school, my four brothers, younger sister, and I only helped on weekends. As soon as school was out, we were obligated to work in the fields. While our classmates attended summer enrichment programs, we toiled the land with our parents. While our friends went swimming in the afternoons, we enjoyed fermented mustard green with a bowl of *mov ntse dlej* (rice in water) with our parents.

My summer Saturday mornings often went as follows. My parents got out of bed still fatigued but accompanied by a sense of excitement about the most financially rewarding day of the week—at the farmers' market. They cracked the doors of our bedrooms and demanded, "*Sawv os! Txug moos moog muag khoom lawm. Sawv tseeg!*" Our minds responded, "OK, we're coming," but our tired bodies wanted to scream, "It's only 5 a.m.! It's summer vacation! We want to sleep for another five minutes. Just five more minutes, please!" Since we did not own the land we farmed, we had to bring the vegetables to

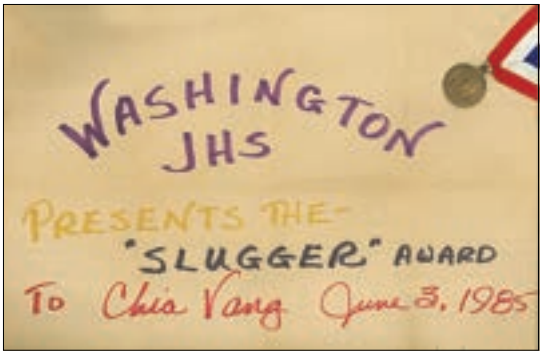
My younger brother, Yang, and me at St. Paul Farmer's Market in the early 1990s. *In the author's collection.*

our home in St. Paul and prepare them to sell the next day. Saturday was the busiest day at the St. Paul Farmers' Market. Hundreds of prospective customers strolled through the aisles. Some came merely to enjoy the vibrant atmosphere, while others purchased fresh vegetables until their arms could no longer handle the weight.

Working on the farm was tiresome. But being in the country afforded us many experiences that one could not have in the city. For example, at the farm in Hugo, I asked my father to teach me how to operate a car. I was 14. He would let me drive from one end of the field to the other. As soon as I turned 15, I signed up for driver's education. Just as he did to teach my mother and two older brothers to drive, my father filled milk containers with dirt from the farm. He would then get up early on weekends to take me to practice parallel parking at the Aldrich Arena parking lot. If there were cars present, then he would find another empty lot. At the empty lots, he inserted a branch inside each container high enough so you can see from inside the car. Then he placed the containers far enough from each other to parallel park.

As soon as I turned 16, I took my driver's exam. During the first attempt, I was intimidated by the male examiner's tone of voice—monotonous, uninterested. I was incredibly nervous that I turned right at a stop light where a sign said "no turn on red." I failed. Over the years, each time I saw a "no turn on red" sign, it reminded me of my failure. I did pass on the second try. I loved to drive and fought my siblings to do so anytime I could. As a short person driving a van loaded with vegetables to the farmer's market, I felt a sense of control. No matter how busy the market was, I always succeeded to parallel park.

As a student at Washington Junior High (now Washington Technology High School), I began to join extracurricular activities. I played volleyball and softball. My favorite sport was softball. I was an infielder (third base and shortstop) in seventh grade, and I was the pitcher in eighth grade. My love for the game earned me the "Slugger Award." A fond memory was that my family rented the lower unit of a duplex in the Thomas-Dale neighborhood (a.k.a. Frogtown) that was owned by the legendary Minnesota



My middle school softball coach Don Martin gave me the "Slugger Award" and a medal. Our seventh-grade softball team celebrated at Mr. Martin's house. *(I am top left.)* In the third photo, I pitched during softball practice at Washington Junior High, 1986. *In the author's collection.*

Twins player, Tony Oliva. Every time he came to collect the rent I would serve as interpreter for my parents so that I could talk to Tony. He was always interested in what I had to say. Although he was retired from baseball at the time, he even got me autographs I wanted of Twins players Kirby Puckett and Kent Hrbek.

I attended Como Park High School for the first semester of ninth grade but then transferred to Johnson High School on the East Side once my family received a Section 8 voucher for a single-family home. It was the first such house we lived in, so my siblings and I were ecstatic. We had gotten used to moving, but I had hoped for some stability to finish high school with the friends I had made in middle school. I transferred in the middle of the school year with apprehension, but I became involved in several extracurricular activities immediately and made some new friends within a short period of time. I competed for and won leadership roles that allowed me to spearhead special projects. I did not know how to swim well, but I dared to join the Catalina Club, which was Johnson High's synchronized swim team. Practicing for hours after school greatly improved my swimming skills. During my junior year, I participated in the Close-Up program, where I traveled to Washington D.C. to learn about the political process and visit many historical sites.

During my senior year, I received two recognitions that were defining moments for me as a young person. Since there were many other students who ranked much higher than I did academically, I initially did not think I would have a chance, but I decided to submit my essay anyway. When I was chosen as the 1989/'90 recipient of the Chief Justice Warren E. Burger/Edna Moore Writing Scholarship, it significantly increased my confidence. Justice Burger was an alumnus who started the scholarship in 1985 to honor his English teacher, Edna Moore. Regarding the second recognition, I was nominated as a Homecoming Queen candidate. At the time, Johnson High School was racially diverse, but

My senior yearbook photo with activities and achievements. *In the author's collection.*

the candidates always overwhelmingly consisted of our white peers. Although I did not win, I came in second and was the school's first Hmong student to be Lady-in-Waiting. Due to some school violation by the queen, she was dethroned, and I became Homecoming Queen. In the grand scheme of things, it is such a small moment, but what it meant for me and the hundreds of Hmong students at Johnson High School was that we too belonged and had the right to claim our places in that space.

As one of the first few girls from my extended family to graduate from high school with grand plans to go to college, my parents held a soul calling ceremony for me. My father was a shaman. He performed the ceremony in the basement of our house on Luella Street. We did not have room in the main living area so his alter was in the basement. While he carried out the rituals, my mother prepared a bundle of white strings. The women relatives helped to prepare food. Before the meal, everyone present took turns to tie strings around my wrists wishing me good health and luck to achieve all my goals.

My father, You Yee Vang, finished the soul calling ceremony for me by offering the food to the ancestors before we ate, 1990. *In the author's collection.*

Lee Pao Xiong

Lee Pao Xiong is Director of the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University-St. Paul, a role he has held for nearly two decades. His prior roles included Director of Housing Policy and Development for the City of Minneapolis, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Urban Coalition, and Executive Director of the State Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, the Hmong American Partnership, and the Hmong Youth Association of Minnesota.

My family arrived in the United States from Ban Vinai Refugee Camp on October 22, 1976. We initially settled in Menomonee, Wisconsin but moved to St. Paul, Minnesota in 1979 to be closer to my mom's family. One of my mom's cousins and stepbrother were among the first Hmong refugees to resettle in Minnesota. We lived in the North End neighborhood until 1982, then moved to McDonough Homes, a public housing project, and lived there until 1985. One of my best memories about living in the North End was waking up early on Saturday to stand in line at the Salvation Army store on East Seventh Street to dig through piles of free clothing. As I got older, I also recalled going to the Salvation Army store on University Avenue East in St. Paul to similarly sort through the piles of free clothes.

Growing up at McDonough Homes, we faced a great deal of racism. People did not know why we were there. There were lots of racial fights because many of us got picked on. For example, one day while I was taking out the trash, a kid threw a rock and hit me. I was furious, so I chased him to his house. His older brother came out and held me down while the kid who threw the rock punched me. I felt helpless and was hurt pretty bad. After that incident, I decided I would not allow myself to be treated that way again. As a result, I took up martial arts. At the time, Lao Family Community of Minnesota was in the YMCA building in downtown St. Paul. The YMCA allowed the theater to be used to teach martial arts for free. Many of us enrolled in the course were taught by Grandmaster Xay Long Yang. This building is no longer there. In its place is a parking ramp. I also have fond memories of my high school

(Top): My mom, Mee Vang, along with my brothers Bing Xiong *(in her arms)* and Kao Xiong, who is now a police officer in the North End neighborhood of St. Paul. *(Bottom):* I am standing on the Highway 35E overpass; the pants I am wearing were from the Salvation Army store on East Seventh Street. *Photos courtesy Lee Pao Xiong.*

Martial arts students *(I am in the front row, left)*, and my senior picture from Como Park Senior High School in 1985. *Photos courtesy Lee Pao Xiong.*

years when I was an active student. I was inducted into the Como Park Senior High School Hall of Fame in 1992.

In reflecting about Hmong experiences in Ramsey County over the last fifty years, I'm proud that the Hmong have contributed greatly to the political, economic, cultural, and education of this region. A notable achievement is political engagement. Choua Lee became the first Hmong person elected to public office in the United States when she won a St. Paul school board election in 1991, and we now have nine members of the state legislature who are of Hmong descent. The youngest person to be elected to the St. Paul City Council is Nelsie Yang. When May Chong Xiong was elected to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners in 2023, she became the first Asian, the first Hmong-American, and the youngest to serve. Another contribution to the state is the Hmong population's buying power, which exceeds one billion dollars. Finally, I am also pleased that we have two major Hmong shopping malls in Minnesota: Hmongtown Marketplace and Hmong Village.

MayKao Y. Hang, DPA

MayKao Y. Hang is Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Founding Dean of the Morrison Family College of Health, University of St. Thomas. Dr. Hang's former roles include President and CEO of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation; Adult Services Director with Ramsey County Human Services; and Resident Services Direct with the Saint Paul Public Housing Agency.

Upon our arrival, we were resettled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in August 1976, and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota in September of 1978. We moved to St. Paul because my dad fell in love with the city after visiting earlier that spring. Our family included my mom, dad, three sisters, and a brother. We lived at McDonough Homes initially, but within three years bought a house in St. Paul. We were proud to be one of the first Hmong homeowners. All my siblings and I graduated from college, and three of us would go on to earn graduate degrees. I have great memories of being a student at Como

Park Senior High School, where I played varsity tennis and participated in various other clubs. Highlights included winning "Rookie of the Season" in gymnastics and many high school debate rounds.

My fondest memories are being in meadows, parks, and lakes in St. Paul and Ramsey County: swimming during long summers at McCarrons Lake, fishing at Lake Phalen, and taking walks on Wheelock Parkway, and gardening with my mom. Unfortunately, I have no pictures of us doing these activities; we didn't always have a camera during these early days in St. Paul.

My family is service-oriented, and the other memories I have include my parents always being engaged in community activities to preserve Hmong culture and heritage. My dad, Blong Yang, was one of the co-founders of the Hmong New Year, Lao Family Community Center, the Hmong Youth Association, the Hmong Sports Festival, and the Hmong Cultural Center.

A picture of my dad in the early 1980s shows him working as he enjoyed the Hmong New Year from behind the scenes. He was monitoring the sound system and making sure all of us could see and hear the main stage. The Hmong New Year would become an annual get-together.

Overall, I am proud of the civic, economic, and educational contributions of the Hmong community in Ramsey County. The Hmong have helped fuel the growth and quality of life in Ramsey County. They are leaders, administrators, teachers, physicians, and deans. From humble origins, the Hmong have greatly increased their impact on society as Americans.

My dad, Blong Yang, monitoring the sound system at Hmong New Year in the early 1980s at the St. Paul Civic Center, and me at Hmong New Year in 1985 at Aldrich Arena. In this photo I am 13 years old, and am wearing a White Hmong outfit that my mother made for me. This was my first time wearing high heels as a teenager, and I remember lasting about an hour in these. I took them off and wore flip flops the rest of the day. *Photos courtesy MayKao Y. Hang.*

The Next Generation

It is undeniable that refugees, often fleeing conflict, persecution, or natural disasters, face incredible hardships as they embark on their journey to find safety. Arriving in a new country, they must confront language barriers, cultural differences, and the daunting task of rebuilding their lives from scratch. Despite these obstacles, many refugee groups like the Hmong exhibit remarkable resilience and determination. They draw upon their inner strength and the support of their communities to overcome adversity. The belief in the transformative impact of formal education has motivated the younger generation to realize their refugee parents' dream of a better life. The many traditions that their refugee parents and grandparents brought with them have

certainly changed over the course of the last five decades, but we have witnessed that through hard work, education, and the willingness to adapt, the Hmong community in Minnesota broadly and in Ramsey County specifically, has succeeded in contributing to this region in meaningful ways. Individuals like Sunisa (Suni) Lee, born to Hmong refugee children who grew up in St. Paul, serve as the embodiment of resilience and determination. As the first Hmong American gymnast to make the U.S. Olympic team and win an Olympic gold medal at the 2021 Tokyo games, and one gold and two bronze medals at the 2024 Paris games, her achievements have focused even greater positive attention on a community which, fifty years ago, knew little about Hmong people but opened their homes and community to welcome us.

Chia Youyee Vang *is Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where she also serves as Vice Chancellor for Community Empowerment and Institutional Inclusivity. Dr. Vang is an internationally known expert on Hmong history, culture, and contemporary life. She is author of four books:* Prisoner of Wars: A Hmong Fighter Pilot's Story of Escaping Death and Confronting Life *(Temple University Press, 2020),* Fly Until You Die: An Oral History of Hmong Pilots in the Vietnam War *(Oxford University Press, 2019),* Hmong America: Reconstructing Community in Diaspora *(University of Illinois Press, 2010), and* Hmong in Minnesota *(Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008). In March 2016, the University of Minnesota Press released her co-edited volume,* Claiming Place: On the Agency of Hmong Women.

NOTES

1. Chia Youyee Vang, *Hmong America: Reconstructing Community in Diaspora,* University of Illinois Press, 2010.

2. See Ken Levine, Ivory Waterworth Levine (Producers), *Becoming American: The Odyssey of a Hmong Refugee* (New Day Film, 1983); Christopher Robbins, *The Ravens: The Men Who Flew in America's Secret War in Laos* (New York: Crown, 1987); Jane Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1945-1992* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Roger Warner, *Backfire: CIA's Secret War in Laos and Its Link to the War in Vietnam* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); "The Hmong and the Secret War," Valley PBS, May 6, 2021.

3. Chia Youyee Vang, *Hmong America: Reconstructing Community in Diaspora* (University of Illinois Press, 2010); Jeremy Hein, *Ethnic Origins: The Adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong Refugees in Four American Cities* (New York: Russell Page Foundation, 2006); Lillian Faderman, *I Begin My Life All Over: The Hmong and the American Immigrant Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

4. As an eight-year-old child, I remember only bits and pieces of how my family escaped from Laos in 1979. Much of what I know has been informed by my research in western countries where Hmong resettled and in Southeast Asia. As a historian, I have spent the last two decades sifting through archival materials and conducting interviews with hundreds of veterans and civilians who had been driven to fight in and for their villages and towns.

5. Mark Pfeifer, "Hmong Population Trends in the 2020 U.S. Census," *Hmong Studies Journal,* vol. 26, no. 1 (2024), 1-12.

6. Pfeifer, 8.

7. Pfeifer, 9.

8. Pfeifer, 8.

9. Chia Youyee Vang, *Hmong in Minnesota,* Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008.

10. Hmong Studies Journal, Hmong Census Data analysis. https://www.hmongstudiesjournal.org/hmong-census-data.html.

Feather Frenzy

Three Extraordinary Years in St. Paul Millinery: 1908, 1909, 1911

JANICE R. QUICK

Prosperous St. Paul milliners in the early 1900s periodically traveled to Milan, Paris, and other fashion centers of Europe, where they viewed the latest styles in ladies' hats and purchased luxurious materials for construction of similar hats at their downtown St. Paul businesses. St. Paul belles flaunted the finest in millinery fashion, and millinery establishments flourished, amid a fashion fad that survived flames and felons, but soon fell to a new fad.

The word "millinery" originated centuries ago, in the fashion center of Milan, Italy. It described fine fabrics and ribbons that came from Milan and were combined to create fashionable hats. Over time, in the United States, the word came to mean the making and selling of ladies' hats. In St. Paul, a bustling Midwest fashion center in the early 1900s, the word "millinery" described enormous wide-brimmed ladies' hats that local milliners trimmed with mounds of artificial flowers and genuine bird feathers. Some hats were elaborately decorated with the wings of birds or even entire birds.[1]

Feather Fashion

Across the United States in the early 1900s, more than 83,000 wholesale and retail milliners decorated hats with the colorful feathers of North American birds, such as pheasants, orioles, ospreys, woodpeckers, blue jays, quails, egrets, eagles, swans, and turkeys. But the most prized plumes were the graceful fluffy feathers of the North African ostrich. Ostrich feathers, in lengths of six inches to three feet, promised elegant height and pomp for any lady's hat and could be bleached to a stunning white or dyed to complement the color of any gown.[2]

Ostrich farms flourished in California, Arizona, Texas, Arkansas, and Florida, and they supplied coveted ostrich plumes for millinery shops in St. Paul and throughout the United States.[3] Hats made of millinery straw and adorned with ostrich feathers were featured in newspaper ads for large department stores and wholesale millinery establishments in downtown St. Paul. Stores with spacious retail millinery departments included: M. Philipsborn Co., advertised as "women's and children's outfitters," located at the southwest corner of Seventh and Cedar Streets; J. Rothschild & Co., a women's fine clothing establishment at Fourth Street near Sibley Street; and Mannheimer Brothers, a five-story department store that offered millinery, furs, dry goods, shoes, carpets, furniture, and interior decorations, at the northwest corner of Sixth and Robert Streets.[4]

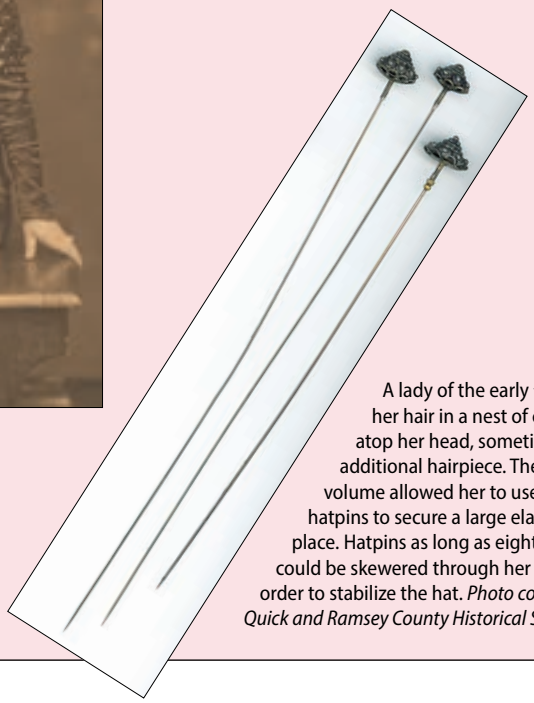
Prominent wholesale milliners included: Stronge & Warner Co., which occupied a seven-story building at 65-73 East Seventh Street; Robinson Straus & Co., "importers and jobbers

A 1908 newspaper ad for Philipsborn's featured line drawings of lovely urbane ladies wearing elaborately decorated hats and "dainty silk dresses" priced from $16.50 to $25, the equivalent of $566 to $857 in today's economy. *In the* St. Paul Pioneer Press, *May 17, 1908.*

Hazel Prudence Patrick, 20, modeled a wide-brimmed hat trimmed with the body of a stuffed black bird and a fetching flurry of white ostrich feathers. She was employed as a hat trimmer at a millinery shop owned by her sister Besse May Berkheimer. The shop was located at 49 East Sixth Street in downtown St. Paul. Besse might have purchased the stuffed bird from one of three taxidermy shops in downtown St. Paul, but similar items were also conveniently available through wholesale milliners.[5] *Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

Celia Theresa Tauer, 19, donned a stunning hat adorned with black ostrich feathers as she posed for a studio photo. In 1910, she was employed as Second Cook at the home of railroad magnate James J. Hill, 240 Summit Avenue; during the Christmas season of that year, she received a decorative hatpin holder as a gift from the Hill household. In the spring of 1912, she married her New Ulm hometown sweetheart, Henry Forstner, an enterprising auto mechanic who later owned an auto repair shop in Madelia. *Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

Elizabeth Goodell Scott, 33, is pictured wearing a fashionable Merry Widow hat in 1910. A Merry Widow was typically black, with a very wide brim and a profusion of black ostrich plumes. The name referred to a similar hat, designed by Lady Duff Gordon of the designer house Lucille, and worn by the British actress Lily Elsie in the 1907 London premiere of the operetta The Merry Widow. Elizabeth Goodell Scott resided at 286 Nelson Avenue (an adjunct of Summit Avenue) with her husband, Louis Napoleon Scott, manager of the Metropolitan Opera House at Sixth and St. Peter Streets. Following her husband's death in 1929, Elizabeth managed the theater. She was also on the board of directors of the St. Paul Business and Professional Women's Association. *Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*



A lady of the early 1900s arranged her hair in a nest of curls and swirls atop her head, sometimes with an additional hairpiece. The additional volume allowed her to use decorative hatpins to secure a large elaborate hat in place. Hatpins as long as eighteen inches could be skewered through her hat and hair in order to stabilize the hat. *Photo courtesy of Janice Quick and Ramsey County Historical Society.*

of ribbons, silks, millinery goods," filling 10,000 square feet of floor space in a six-story building at 213-223 East Fourth Street; and S. W. Weiss & Co., 234 E. Fourth Street. These ambitious, prosperous wholesalers actively participated in a Midwest fraternity of milliners and feather merchants, established in 1892 as the Millinery Jobbers Association. Through their leadership and business expertise, the city of St. Paul became known as a hub for feather fashion. In 1908, delegates of the association eagerly accepted an invitation to visit St. Paul and Minneapolis as part of an elite annual convention.[6]

Feather Fellowship

The Millinery Jobbers Association proudly held their sixteenth annual convention in the Twin Cities, housing out-of-town guests at the elegant Ryan Hotel, located at the northeast corner of Sixth and Robert Streets in downtown St. Paul. On Wednesday evening, May 13, 1908, early arrivals gathered for a smoker in a hotel lounge. More of the forty-three attendees arrived by train, early the next morning, at nearby Union Depot. They arrived from: Chicago, Illinois; Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska; St. Louis and Kansas City, Missouri; Dallas, Texas; Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Fort Wayne and Indianapolis, Indiana; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Louisville, Kentucky. Coveys of spouses and other female guests of these prosperous businessmen likely dazzled onlookers with impromptu style shows as they traveled from the train station to the hotel,

Feather Frenzy

Milliners in the early 1900s purchased electrotype illustrations from *The Millinery Trade Review,* for inclusion in local newspapers. The January 1908 issue of the trade journal declared:

> There is nothing more attractive in an advertisement of a millinery establishment than trimmed hats. The average woman looking over a newspaper to learn what is being advertised by dealers in her city or town will be attracted by an illustration of a trimmed hat. Her eye lights on that at once. Whether she wants a hat like the one illustrated or not, she is interested and that is sufficient. She reads the balance of the 'ad' and a customer may be made.

Millinery retailer Charles Lembke purchased electrotype engravings of fashionable feather hats. He ordered the engravings from *The Millinery Trade Review* for fifty cents each ($14 each in today's dollars), and the Albert Lea Evening Tribune used them to illustrate Lembke's advertisements. For the 1908 grand re-opening of Lembke's store, he displayed an ostrich feather that was six feet long and valued at $14,000 in today's dollars.

Lembke opened the Lembke Dry Goods Company in 1906 in Albert Lea, Minnesota. Following a devastating fire two years later, he re-established the store at the same site. A review in the *Albert Lea Evening Tribune* praised the new millinery department: "The millinery department on the balcony . . . is very attractive. Hats of artistic beauty and great value are to be seen on the display tables, while the showcases are filled with plumes and other articles of feminine adornment."

Although feather millinery fell from fashion prior to World War I, Lembke later revitalized the millinery departments of several prominent St. Paul establishments. Employed as floorman, he assisted customers and supervised employees in the millinery departments of the Golden Rule (1926-1929), Schuneman's & Mannheimer's (1934-1938), and Field Schlick (1946-1954).

Millinery retailers like Charles Lembke would purchase electrotype engravings of feather hats such as those in the upper corners of the first ad. After operating a shop in Albert Lea, Lembke would become a prominent fixture at several St. Paul department stores. *First ad from* The Millinery Trade Review, *January 1908; advertisement for Lembke Dry Goods Co. from* Freeborn County Standard, *March 24, 1909.*

conspicuously modeling hats bedecked with showy ostrich feathers.

Attendees from St. Paul included:

- Louis J. Rothschild, 28, residence 496 Holly Avenue; vice president of J. Rothschild & Co., later president of Louis J. Rothschild Wholesale & Retail Millinery;
- Hugo Hirschman, 31, residence 648 Hague Avenue; secretary/treasurer of J. Rothschild & Co.; son-in-law of Joseph Rothschild; later president of Hugo Hirschman Co. wholesale dry goods;
- Joseph Stronge, 45, residence White Bear Lake; president of Stronge & Warner Co. millinery;
- Frank W. Lightner, 40, residence Minnesota Club; secretary/treasurer of Stronge & Warner Co. millinery;
- William S. Vent, 42, residence 805 Fairmount Avenue; vice president of Stronge & Warner Co. millinery; later president of Cook's Taxicab & Transfer Co.;
- Augustus W. Ritzinger, 60, residence 661 Fairmount Avenue; vice president/treasurer of Robinson, Straus & Co. millinery; and
- William E. Davis, editor of the *Twin City Commercial Bulletin,* a weekly publication for St. Paul and Minneapolis wholesalers.[7]

Thursday and Friday mornings at the hotel, members discussed important business matters, such as the rising cost of freight, and the bother of customers who wanted to return goods. They devoted afternoons and evenings

Carling's Up-Town Café served sumptuous meals for members of the Millinery Jobbers Association who met for a 1908 conference in St. Paul. *Photo postcard from 1909 courtesy of Janice Quick.*

MENU.

Little Neck Clams
Olives Radishes *Martinez*
Clear Green Turtle Soup
Amontillado
Planked Boned Shad
Parisian Potatoes Sliced Cucumbers *Haut Sauterne*
Mignons of Beef Windsor
Peas
Sorbet au Mint *Krug*
Roast Jumbo Squab sur Canape
Lettuce and Tomatoes
Frozen Custard and Cakes
Stilton Cheese Toasted Crackers *Liquer*
Coffee

TOASTS.

On the closing night of the milliners' convention, guests enjoyed a lavish meal at Carling's Up-Town Cafe. Joseph Stronge, president of Stronge & Warner Co., served as toastmaster for the evening. *In* The Millinery Trade Review, *vol. 33, June 1908.*

to amusement, camaraderie, and fine dining. Thursday evening, milliners attended a vaudeville program at the new Orpheum theater, at the northwest corner of Fifth and St. Peter Streets. Prior to their arrival in St. Paul, members had received an advance description of the convention. The description had hinted that "many of the delegates will be accompanied by ladies." The vaudeville performance might have been considered inappropriate for ladies, as a review of the convention noted that "delegates attended the Orpheum theater," while "ladies who had accompanied the delegates spent the evening at the [Metropolitan Opera House] where they enjoyed Henry Miller and Margaret Anglin in their delightful production of *The Great Divide."* The entertainment committee for the convention had comprised St. Paul delegates Hugo Hirschman, Joseph Stronge, F. W. Lightner, A. W. Ritzinger, and Minneapolis delegate Dawson Bradshaw of Bradshaw Brothers millinery establishment. At the close of the vaudeville program, milliners crossed the street for a late supper at Carling's Up-Town Café, at the northeast corner of Fifth and St. Peter Streets, where the banquet hall was "decorated profusely with ferns and American beauty roses, and each guest found at his place a white boutonniere."[8]

Friday afternoon, members boarded two deluxe chartered streetcars, including the private streetcar of Thomas Lowry, president of the streetcar company. On a sightseeing journey

to Minnetonka, they passed Como Park, the University of Minnesota, and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes. At Minnetonka, they enjoyed a cruise on the steamer *Hopkins,* and they feasted in the elegant dining room of the Lafayette Club House. Friday evening, the group gathered for a sumptuous meal in the banquet room of Carling's Up-Town Cafe.[9]

Feather Fire

Amid a fierce winter storm on Friday, January 29, 1909, a fire in downtown St. Paul threatened to destroy the city's retail district, where M. Philipsborn Co. and other retailers specialized in women's clothing and hats. The fire started at 7:30 p.m. from unknown causes, on the second floor of the four-story White House department store, on the northeast corner of Seventh and Cedar Streets. In a short time, flames burst through the roof, and the entire four floors collapsed.[10]

The St. Paul Daily News reported that fireman Michael Burns, of steam-powered Fire Engine No. 8, was severely burned while the engine company worked directly in front of the White House store. "His canvas coat repeatedly caught fire and was finally burned off his back." With the help of firefighter Michael Mattocks, Burns rolled in a "water-filled gutter every few minutes to extinguish the flames." The clothing of firefighter William Dunbar also caught fire, "but his stoker turned the hose on him before he had been badly burned."[11]

Firemen of horse-drawn Engine No. 8 were photographed at Engine House No. 8, located at Fifth and Minnesota Streets. *Photo in the Ramsey County Historical Society archives.*

Flames from the White House roared across Seventh Street and engulfed a three-story brick building occupied by the California Wine House, on the southeast corner of Seventh and Cedar Streets. James Mattocks, engineer of Engine No. 8, and coal-stoker John Ryan, were surrounded by flames and their clothing ignited. They too "threw themselves down in the running water a foot deep in the gutter and extinguished the flames."[12]

The catastrophic 1929 fire in downtown St. Paul started on the second floor of the White House Department Store, which sat on the northeast corner of Seventh and Cedar Streets. *Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

Sub-zero temperatures, and winds blowing at forty-five miles per hour from the northeast, carried flames across Cedar Street from the White House, and destroyed the Fey Hotel, a five-story brick building on the northwest corner of Seventh and Cedar Streets. Horse-drawn Fire Truck No. 2, positioned between the White House and the Fey Hotel, was destroyed by flames. Heat from the burning truck was so intense that five nearby horses were injured when the hair was burned from their backs.[13]

The local newspaper reported that 274 firemen from nineteen engine companies battled the blaze. Firefighters included St. Paul Fire Chief J. J. Strapp and Assistant Fire Chiefs John Devlin, Myles McNalley, Edward Hein Jr., and Joseph Levagood. Hose Supply No. 5 of Minneapolis responded to a call for assistance from the St. Paul Fire Chief, and the horse-drawn Minneapolis equipment "made the long cold drive over Lake Street, to Marshall Avenue, down Nelson Avenue to Summit Avenue and thence down town [sic] in forty minutes."[14]

Total damage in the city was estimated at more than $13 million in today's dollars. Insurance fully covered the loss of the White House. At other businesses, not all losses were covered by insurance.

Feather Felons

The first week of August 1911, the owner of S. Weiss & Co. millinery store in downtown St. Paul received an alarming circular from a member of *The Millinery Trade Review,* headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio. The flier had been mailed to all Midwest members of the Millinery Jobbers Association and to "the chief of police in all of the larger cities." It warned milliners and police officers to be on the lookout for an interstate thief who had robbed an Indianapolis, Indiana, wholesale milliner of "$1,000 worth of fine ostrich plumes" ($33,000 in today's economy). The flier included a detailed description of the thief, who was thought to be 29-year-old John Lewis of Louisville, Kentucky:

> "Lewis, which police believe to be an assumed name, is small in stature, probably five feet, three inches tall, a bit stout, weighing probably 160 pounds, has swarthy complexion, black hair and black eyes."[15]

Late Saturday afternoon, August 12, Samuel Weiss spotted Lewis loitering at the store, located at 234 East Fourth Street. Weiss suspected that Lewis was casing the establishment in preparation for a nighttime robbery of ostrich plumes. Weiss phoned the Central police station, and plainclothes detective Frank Fraser, a twenty-year veteran of the police force, was immediately dispatched to the scene.[16]

When the store closed as usual at 5:00 p.m., Lewis left the store. Fraser followed him to Fourth and Wacouta Streets, where Lewis unexpectedly stepped aboard a westbound Selby-Lake streetcar. Fraser followed him onto the streetcar and apparently intended to quietly arrest the unsuspecting thief as the streetcar neared the Central police station, located only eight blocks away, along the streetcar route. He had no knowledge of Lewis's true identity as Peter Juhl, a thief and a desperate armed escapee from the state prison at Stillwater, where he had served only five months of a nine-year sentence for robbery of a jewelry store owned by Harry Lunda at 119 Central Avenue in Minneapolis.[17]

As the streetcar approached the police station at Third and Market Streets, Fraser approached Juhl from behind "and placed his hands on [Juhl's] shoulders, informing him he was under arrest." Juhl "wheeled around,

Peter Juhl, alias John Lewis, was an escapee from the state prison at Stillwater. Prior to his arrest, he had sported medium-length black hair and a moustache. *Photo in the Stillwater State Prison inmate records, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

drawing a revolver from his hip pocket, and fired at the officer." The bullet entered the officer's abdomen and pierced several internal organs.[18]

The wounded detective grappled with Juhl and "tried to wrest the weapon from him. He called for help, but the passengers were panic-stricken, and as the [street]car had been stopped by the motorman (on Fourth Street between St. Peter and Market Streets), most of them made a hasty exit, some going out the windows, and others through the front and rear vestibules."[19]

The commotion attracted the attention of 30-year-old St. Paul Police patrolman Michael Fallon (older brother of William H. Fallon, St. Paul mayor 1938-1940), who had been patrolling at Fourth and St. Peter Streets as the streetcar passed that intersection. He ran a half block toward Market Street and boarded the streetcar. According to St. Paul Police Historical Society records, Fallon clubbed Juhl on the head several times, knocking him unconscious.[20]

An ambulance carried Detective Fraser, age 48, to St. Joseph's Hospital, where he died of his wounds. Fallon dragged Juhl a half block along Fourth Street, to the Central police station, where records received from Stillwater State Prison revealed his criminal career as a diamond thief and a member of a gang of plume thieves, wanted for robberies in Cincinnati, Louisville, and Indianapolis, and for sale of stolen plumes in New York City.[21]

Peter Juhl, 29, pled guilty to murder in the first degree and received a life sentence at the state prison in Stillwater. However, for three years prior to his death in 1930, he had been a patient in a ward for the tubercular insane at St. Peter State Hospital.[22]

Feather Finale

Feather fashion fell from favor as social activists turned their attention to the protection of wildlife. The National Audubon Society established bird watching as a commendable pastime for genteel ladies, and the organization championed the efforts of conservationists and wildlife enthusiasts in a campaign against "the destructive fashion of feathers, which caused the deaths of millions of birds each year."[23] Prominent supporters included President Theodore Roosevelt, an avid outdoorsman and naturalist, and Dr. Frank Chapman, an ornithologist and bird curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. In 1913, Congress enacted a law which placed all migratory birds under federal protection.[24]

In addition, and of equal importance in fads and fashion, a huge hat decorated with a flourish of feathers simply did not fit inside a compact Model "T" Ford. The practical affordable automobile had been introduced in 1908 and had gained rapid popularity. Soon, the enormous feathered hats faded from fashion, yet they remain in our collective memory as a symbol of fun and folly during the lives of our grandmothers or great-grandmothers.[25]

Janice Quick *often wears a fanciful hat from her collection of fifty-five vintage hats. A few feature fluffy feathers from the breasts of domestic turkeys; none were made with ostrich feathers.*

NOTES

1. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, College Edition* (Random House, 1968), 848. The author still consults the dictionary she had been required to purchase for freshman English at the University of Minnesota in 1968. The term *milliner* was in common use at least by 1746 when French artist Francois Boucher created the oil painting *The Milliner.* Bernard Grun, *The Timetables of History: A Horizontal Linkage of People and Events* (Simon & Schuster, 1979), 345; Kathleen Rouser, "Heroes, Heroines and History: Who Went to the Millinery Shop?" http://www.hhhistory.com/2019/02/who-went-to-millinery-shop.html.

2. Adee Braun, *Lapham's Quarterly,* "Roundtable. Fine-Feathered Friends: A fashion craze begets animal activism"; http://americanhistory.si.edu/feather/ftfaex.htm. Rouser, "Heroes, Heroines and History."

3. Untitled document, http://americanhistory.si.edu/feather/ftfaex.htm.

4. *R. L. Polk & Co.'s St. Paul City Directory,* 1908. *The St. Paul Pioneer Press,* May 17, 1908. Postcard "Mannheimer Bros., Dry Goods, St. Paul, Minn.," postmarked 1913.

5. *R. L. Polk & Co.'s St. Paul City Directory,* 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911; U.S. Census, 1910. Besse M. Berkheimer obituary, *The St. Paul Pioneer Press,* February 22, 1951, 5. The name Besse was sometimes mistakenly spelled Bessie. The shop was later located at 370 St. Peter Street. Taxidermists in downtown St. Paul, as listed in *R. L. Polk & Co.'s St. Paul City*

Directory, 1910, included Roy A. Heist, 20-1/2 East Seventh Street; Mentz B. Paasche, 26 East Third Street, 2nd floor; and Edes Robe Tanning Co. "Fur Dressers and Dyers, Furriers and Taxidermists," 221 West Seventh Street.

6. *R. L. Polk & Co.'s St. Paul City Directory,* 1908. *The Millinery Trade Review,* vol. 33, June 1908, 53-55. *The Illustrated Milliner,* April 1908, 26; June 1908, 30. Postcard: "Stronge & Warner Co., St. Paul, Minn.: Finest and Largest Wholesale Millinery Building in the World," postmarked 1910. Postcard: "Jobbers Millinery Importers, Robinson Straus & Company," postmarked 1926.

7. Ibid. 53-55.

8. Ibid. 53-55, 59, 63. "Orpheum" was the name of the production company; it might not have been the name of the building. *The Millinery Trade Review,* June 1908, 59, stated: "In the evening the delegates attended the Orpheum theatre in a body. This building is one of the new sights of St. Paul and is as beautiful as any building on the circuit. The delegates filled the best rows in the parquet and enjoyed a thoroughly good bill." "Forget Merry Widow for Freight Rates," *The St. Paul Daily News,* May 14, 1908, 5.

9. *The Millinery Trade Review,* vol. 33, June 1908, 63-64.

10. "Fire Exacts Heavy Toll from St. Paul: No Lives Are Lost," *The St. Paul Daily News,* January 30, 1909, 1-2.

11. "Fire Exacts Heavy Toll from St. Paul: Water Still Poured on Smoking Ruins," *The St. Paul Daily News,* January 30, 1909, 2.

12. "Fire Exacts Heavy Toll from St. Paul: No Lives Are Lost," *The St. Paul Daily News,* January 30, 1909, 1-2.

13. Ibid., 1-2.

14. Ibid., 1-2. In this article, "Hein" was spelled "Hine," and "Levagood" was spelled "Levigood." *R. L. Polk & Co.'s St. Paul City Directory,* 1908.

15. *The Millinery Trade Review,* vol. 36, July-December 1911, 436; "Detective Fraser Shot by Man He Arrested," *The St. Paul Pioneer Press-Dispatch,* August 13, 1911, 1; "Fraser Victim of Desperado," *The St. Paul Pioneer Press,* August 14, 1911, 11; Inflation calculator, officialdata.org. Minnesota death certificate 1930-MN-009299 records Juhl's birthplace as Germany; "Funeral of Detective Fraser on Thursday," *The St. Paul Daily News,* August 15, 1911, 1, reported that John Lewis, later identified as Peter Juhl, was born in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, and he arrived in the United States in 1904. John J. O'Connor, St. Paul police chief in 1911, "was the architect of the . . . agreement which guaranteed safe haven for 'public enemies' visiting St. Paul during the gangster era," St. Paul Police Historical Society, http://www.spph.com/history/timeline.php. The average height of a 21-year-old male in the United States in 1912 was five feet, eight inches. https://ahundredyears ago.com. "Stealing from Import Cases," *The Millinery Trade Review,* January 1908, 40.

16. "Most Notorious: A True Crime History Podcast," 2012, stated that Fraser had served as President Taft's personal bodyguard during the president's visit to St. Paul in 1910. www.mostnotorious.com/2012/11/07/the-murder-of-detective-frank-fraser.

17. "Detective Fraser Shot on Car by Man He Arrested," *The St. Paul Pioneer Press,* August 13, 1911, 1; "Detective Fraser Shot by Desperate Prisoner," *The St. Paul Daily News,* August 13, 1911, 1.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. "Detective Fraser Shot on Car by Man He Arrested," *The St. Paul Pioneer Press,* August 13, 1911, 1; Jeff Neuberger, historian, and John J. DeNoma, Commander Retired, St. Paul Police Historical Society, letter to the author, 2016, and interview with the author, February 3, 2021. Minnesota death certificate 1911-MN-021420; Calvary Cemetery records.

21. "Detective Fraser Shot on Car by Man He Arrested," *The St. Paul Pioneer Press,* August 13, 1911, 1; Minnesota death certificate 1911-MN-021420, Frank Fraser.

22. Minnesota death certificate 1930-MN-009299, Peter Juhl.

23. Adee Braun, "Roundtable. Fine-Feathered Friends: A fashion craze begets animal activism," *Lapham's Quarterly.* www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/fine-feathered-friends.php.

24. The National Audubon Society was founded in the United States in 1905. The Weeks-McLean Act was enacted in 1913; it was replaced by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918. "History of Audubon and Science-based Bird Conservation," https://www.audubon.org/about/history-audubon-and-waterbird-conservation.

25. Adee Braun, "Roundtable." The author's grandmother Charlotte "Ruth" Maurer (nee Thurston) (1887-1965) flaunted fanciful feathered hats, circa 1908-1911. As a St. Paul resident from 1944-1965, she enthusiastically purchased cosmopolitan hats in the millinery departments of the Golden Rule, Schuneman's, Field-Schlick, and Dayton's.

The Rose sat at the corner of Snelling Avenue and County Road C in Roseville from 1948 to 1979, and was Ramsey County's first drive-in movie theater. *Photo by Robert Murphy.*

"First Show at Dusk"

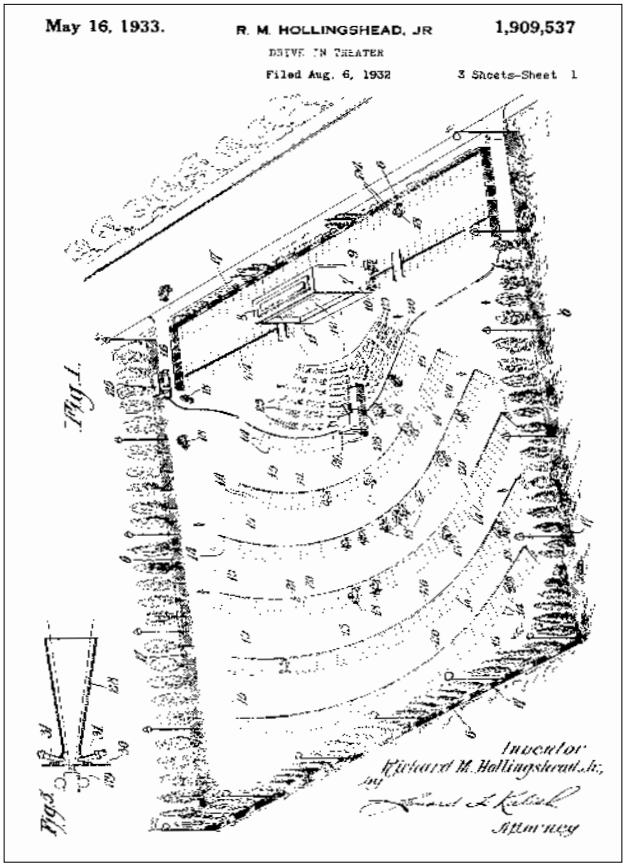
A History of Drive-in Movie Theaters in Ramsey County

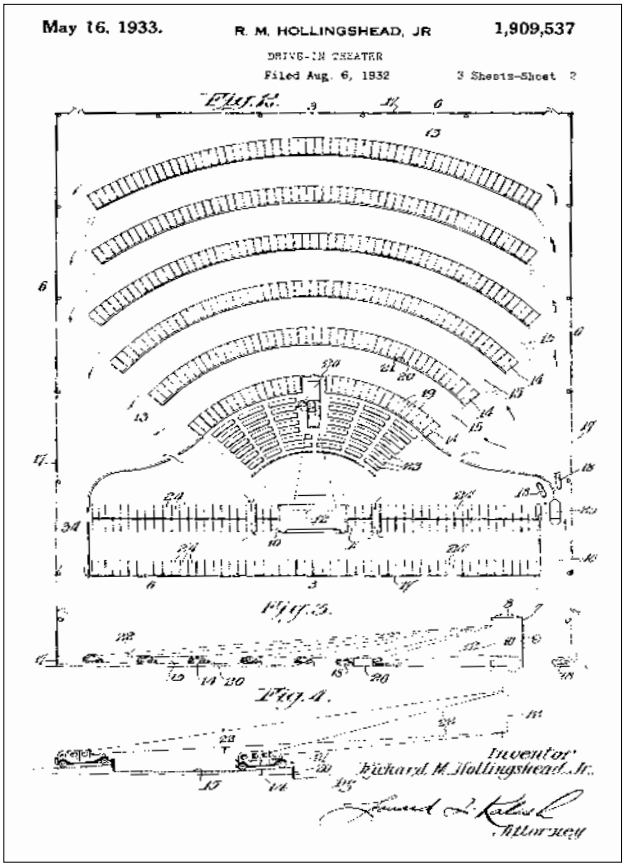
PETE BOULAY

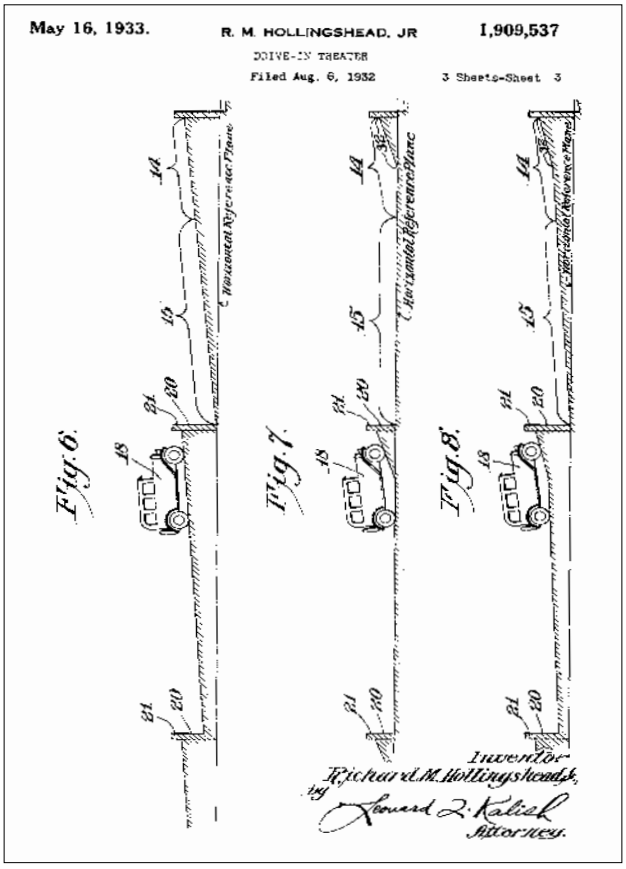
In June 1979, my parents were eating dinner (and perhaps consuming a beverage) at the old Keller Golf Course Clubhouse, which was perched high on a hill with an expansive vista to the west overlooking Keller Lake. The enormous white screen of the Maple Leaf drive-in loomed in the distance. My sister Patty and I were waiting impatiently at home for our parents to pick us up to see *Superman*. Our parents lingered at the clubhouse until the screen came to life with the "ten minutes to showtime" countdown cartoon. They hurried home to get us, but we were late, and I missed how Superman came to earth. I groused a bit about that but was still thrilled to be at the drive-in.

Going to the drive-in became part of the fabric of Twin Cities entertainment when the first drive-in theater was built in Bloomington (called fittingly enough, "The Bloomington") in 1947. The era came to a close when Lake Elmo's Vali-Hi shut its doors for good in 2022. During the peak of operation, viewers could choose from nineteen drive-in theaters in the metro area, if one included the Hilltop Theater just across the river from Stillwater. There were three in Ramsey County. The Rose in Roseville at Snelling and County Road C, which ran from 1948-1979; and two in Maplewood: the Minnehaha, perched on the southeast corner of Minnehaha Avenue and East McKnight Road and operated from 1949-1982, and the Maple Leaf—the last built and the last to close—at the northwest junction of Highways 36 and 61. It operated for thirty-five years, from 1959-1994.

Minnesota was late to the drive-in movie craze. There were already 200 in operation across the US by the time Minnesota earth was graded for such a purpose. Operational logistics







A sketch from Richard Hollingshead, Jr.'s patent application shows the original concept for a drive-in theater, filed in 1932. *Courtesy of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.*

for a drive-in operator in Minnesota proved challenging in this northern climate. The drive-in season in the Land of 10,000 Lakes was limited to May through September; however, taxes were assessed for twelve months. According to owners, this was one reason why running a drive-in was looked at as something of a real estate opportunity. Each death of a screen meant that a bank, housing development, or shopping center was born on land that was more profitable for another use.

Who Dreamed Up the Drive-in?

It's an often-told tale of how drive-in theaters get their start. The story begins with a son wanting to do something nice for his mom. His mother didn't fit comfortably in standard indoor theater seats, but she did like to go to the movies. Her son was Richard Hollingshead, Jr., and he conceived a clever idea of watching movies from the comfort of your automobile with a movie projected on a sheet. He opened the world's first drive-in on June 6, 1933, in Camden, New Jersey. It was fitting that

the first movie shown at a drive-in turned out to be an odd, (not from Hollywood) British comedy called *Wife Beware*.

Richard must have realized he had something special because he applied for and received a patent for his invention.[1] Patent or not, the idea caught on quickly. According to *Film Daily,* by 1941 there were ninety-five theaters across twenty-seven states. However, World War II put the brakes on expansion plans. Still, by 1945, 102 theaters dotted the countryside. Once the post-war boom was underway from 1946-1956 the number of theaters soared, with 4,000 opening their gates.[2] Some of them were giants such as the Troy Drive-in Detroit, Michigan, which had space for 3,000 cars. Minnesota theaters were more modest, although one of the larger ones—the 100 Twin in Fridley—could accommodate an estimated 2,000 cars. The drive-in became a mainstay in the Twin Cities for the next fifty years.

Drive-ins were slow to arrive in Minnesota and it was not just the weather. The local operators of the indoor theaters felt that the added outdoor features would sap away business. Fifteen years after the first drive-in theater was built in the country, the first one was built in Minnesota: The Bloomington by Flexer Drive-In Theaters, Inc. opened on August 26, 1947. It was located on East 78th Street between Portland and Cedar Avenues South. Owner David Flexer had his eyes on the north metro and had plans to build another theater.

In a "if you can't beat them, join them" moment, a consortium of Minnesota theater owners called Minnesota Entertainment Enterprises, Inc., or MEE, dove into the drive-in business in the Twin Cities. Flexer sold the Bloomington to the group along with another site in Roseville (then Rose Township) that was slated to open in 1948, dubbed the Rose.[3]

The Rose—1948-1979

1525 West County Road C, Roseville MN 55113
In 2025: An Olive Garden restaurant and other businesses

At a cost of $200,000 to build with an eye-catching thirty-six-foot neon rose on the back of the screen, the Rose provided splashiness and something novel to the citizens of Ramsey County. It had a capacity of 650 cars (plus another

The Rose Drive-in Theatre, circa 1976. *Photos by Steven W. Plattner, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

An advertisement for the opening of the Rose Drive-in Theatre promised refreshments, movies under the stars, and a kid-friendly experience that "eliminates the baby-sitter problem." *In the* Minneapolis Star, *June 22, 1948.*

In a composite image designed by the photographer, rows of cars take in a screening of *A Street Car Named Desire* at the Rose. *Image created by Robert Murphy.*

450 in a waiting area, hoping to get in). The manager William Sears announced to a *Minneapolis Tribune* reporter that the gates would open at 6 p.m. so families "may enjoy a picnic lunch before the first picture started at 8:15 p.m."[4] Note that this was in the days before daylight saving time. (The Uniform Time Act was passed in 1966, standardizing DST across the country.) Keeping with the family theme there was a bottle-warming service available to keep babies fed and happy during the show. The first fifty cars on opening night got a free 45 RPM vinyl record featuring a dreamy tune called "Blue Bird of Happiness" by Art Mooney and his Orchestra, with Mooney's "Sunset to Sunrise" on the B-side. The first movie was the 1948 swashbuckling American film: *The Swordsman* (in Technicolor) starting Larry Parks and Ellen Drew. It was basically a western cowboy movie with swords.

An effort to add a second screen to the Rose in 1962 was denied by the village council, but the owners gave another try to expand capacity from 750 to 1,000 cars in 1964.

Bill Bruentrup, who grew up on a dairy farm in Maplewood, remembers going on a double date, bringing his future wife, Raydelle, for their first date in 1963. He had no idea what movie they saw but certainly remembered the car he was in—a 1962 Pontiac Catalina. Bill hit on a key point about drive-ins: the movie was sometimes (and maybe often) not as important as simply "going" to the drive-in.[5]

While the Rose was the second drive-in movie theater in the state, it became the first to be robbed in a well-planned heist. The thieves waited until the end of a lucrative weekend showing had ended. Then, in the early morning hours of June 19, 1950, the bandits surprised the night watchman at gunpoint. He was tied up and locked in the projection room while the 750-pound safe containing $500 in change and $40 in bills was carried away. The watchman, Lee Hanson of St. Paul, was released and unharmed when a deliveryman arrived to pick up movie film at about 7:30 a.m.[6]

The Search for Schlock

Aside from speakers getting stolen at times—which was a real problem at the Twin 100 in Fridley, where three hundred speakers were stolen in 1961 at a cost of $12 each—a pressing issue was the ongoing battle of the types of movies shown at drive-ins. The flickering screen could be seen by the peeping eyes of neighbors, and this posed a bit of a dilemma. During the summer of 1968, movies at the Rose, including opening sequences

from the latest James Bond movie, *You Only Live Twice,* attracted the unwanted attention of the Roseville Cinema Group. Father Vavra, the assistant pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church brought up the matter with the Roseville Village Council on July 8, 1968. Father Vavra lamented the lack of quality films at the Rose, compared to what was being shown at other drive-ins. Apparently, the council took no action, other than going on record with "moral support."[7] The issue did not go away, and on May 22, 1972, the Roseville Village Council passed an ordinance banning "nudity films." The tipping point came when neighbors who lived within eyesight of a triple feature of *Cindy and Donna, The Young Graduate,* and *Fountain of Love* got an unwelcome free show. That was "the straw that broke the camel's back."[8] An olive branch may have been offered by the management of the Rose, for an ad ran in the *Minneapolis Star,* announcing an outdoor worship service by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Bob Williams, a former Globe Trotter, was the keynote speaker on July 15, 1973.[9]

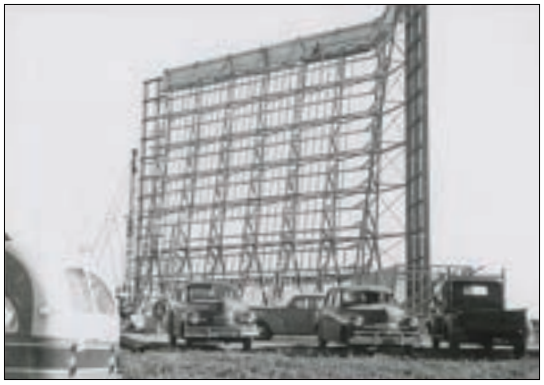
The threat of unsavory films was nothing compared to the firestorm of protest that erupted two years later. Zayre Shoppers City had its eyes on the thirty-three acres that the Rose was parked on. A petition opposing the project circulated, with 120 signatures.[10] The Roseville City Council moved its meeting to the gymnasium of Alexander Ramsey School to hold the crowd, estimated at 350. The council rejected the development on a technicality. The lack of a dedicated traffic signal at a key intersection was the deal-breaker. Residents were also concerned about traffic, noise, and that "the additional shopping facility wasn't needed."[11]

As land values continued to rise over the years, it was just a matter of time. The Rose showed its last movie, the truly dreadful *City on Fire,* and was closed by 1979. There is no trace of the theater today, but there are plenty of traffic signals and retail!

The Minnehaha–1949-1984

670 McKnight Rd N, St. Paul MN 55119
In 2025: Wells Fargo Bank

The Rose was not alone for long in Ramsey County. While the Minnehaha did not have the artistic flourish of the Rose, it caught folks' attention with its art-deco marquee sign and screen



The Minnehaha's screen was designed by theater architects Liebenberg and Kaplan. *Photos in the University of Minnesota Libraries' Northwest Architectural Archives.*

designed by prominent Minneapolis theater architects Liebenberg & Kaplan. There were only a few drive-ins designed by this team. Maplewood was not a city yet in 1949, so the builders had to approach New Canada Township for permission to rezone the land. The board was a bit nervous about these newfangled drive-ins with the "large number of automobiles" they attracted. A set of resolutions was hammered out, and they tacked on a hefty annual fee of $150—the equivalent of nearly $2,000 today.

Maplewood Area Historical Society member Edna Ledo remembers taking the children to the show in the family station wagon. The small children loved the back seat, which could be straightened so they could lay down. Her daughter Cynthia (Ledo) Meier worked there as a ticket attendant in the summer of 1974. Because of her connection, the family saw many movies for free.[12] And the price was right—it cost $2 per carload.

In a familiar pattern, the Minnehaha was accused of showing less-than-family-friendly fare. The biggest brouhaha was in in April 1970 when the Minnehaha (along with the Coral Drive-in in West St. Paul) decided to show the

The Maple Leaf was the last drive-in to open in Ramsey County—and the last to close. *Photo by Earl C. Leatherberry.*

1968 Swedish version of *Fanny Hill,* based on the 1748 erotic novel *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,* penned by John Cleland. Although the rating was technically "R," ads in the papers proclaimed it "Rated X Naturally." Protesters from Holy Cross Lutheran Church and Transfiguration Catholic Church showed up to the theater with signs that read "Stop Dirty Movies" and "Down with Filth." In 1974, a theater owner in Verndale, Minnesota showed the movie *Deep Throat,* despite objections from other theater owners around the state. The rumor mill took it from there, with multiple theaters accused of showing the film, including the Minnehaha. A two-year campaign to ban adult film came to a head with testimony at the Minnesota State Capitol. John Markert, the executive director of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, told lawmakers that one of his children saw a screening of *Deep Throat* at the Minnehaha but quicky left. At the hearing, a telegram was read from Sylvester Price, general manager of Venture Theaters, which ran the Minnehaha. He insisted that the film nor any other "X-rated" films were ever shown at the theater. With no proof of the showing, Markert apologized to the senate committee and the company.[13]

After surviving this battle, the Minnehaha proceeded to die a slow death. One way that theater tried to bring in a bit of extra income was to host "the world's largest garage sale," which transformed the parking area into a giant flea market every Sunday. Movies continued to be shown into the early '80s; advertisements for the movie *Meatballs* (rated PG) ran during the summer of 1980. By 1982, the back of the screen started to look a bit shabby. Chunks of the screen were missing, but the "Minnehaha" lettering was still as bold as ever.

The theater's final gasp came with a liquidation sale in April 1984, which showcased playground equipment, a stainless-steel refrigerator, and a cash register. While the Minnehaha never lived up to the flashiness of the other two theaters in the county, it did get the last laugh. A Wells Fargo Bank complex was eventually built on the site. The shape of the parking lot and Margaret Street behind it echoes the footprint of the theater. One can stand looking toward the back of the building (roughly where the screen was) and visualize the setting. The Rose and the Maple Leaf sites were completely erased without a trace.

The Maple Leaf—1959-1994

2457 Maplewood Drive, Maplewood, MN 55109
In 2025: Acorn Mini Storage and homes

Times changed. Ten years after the Rose and the Minnehaha were built, Chet Herringer appeared before the new Village of Maplewood on September 4, 1958, petitioning to construct a drive-in just north of the intersection of Highways 36 and 61. There were no objections. The following spring, the massive concrete footings were poured for

An ad for the Maple Leaf included a map showing its location on Highway 36 and Highway 61. *In the* Minneapolis Star, *July 31, 1959.*

the sign, and the new drive-in rose up behind the "new and modern" Northern Aire Motel.

The Maple Leaf was a very standard drive-in. With a 630-car capacity, it was average size with a single screen. However, the screen was slightly curved for a better projection fit, and astute movie enthusiasts noted this upgrade from the traditional "flat" screens. In general, the Maple Leaf showed more first-run movies and had a better reputation than the Minnehaha. The Maple Leaf concession stand sat in the middle, with a projection booth in front of it and a playground behind it. The most distinctive feature was the wonderful neon and light marquee on the recently expanded Highway 61.

Former Maplewood Mayor George Rossbach was in the construction business and remembered talking to the site's well-driller, who described the intentional grading so drivers could park their cars at slight angles for better screen viewing—a practice many drive-in theaters followed. He also remembered that mosquitoes were a problem, and before the movie, a big fogger on a truck drove up and down the lanes, spraying chemicals to keep them at bay. When that happened, it was important to keep your windows shut. Some movie-goers even made screens to insert in car windows to keep the pests away and still enjoy a breeze. Rossbach noted daylight saving time also posed problems because the first movie couldn't be shown until the sky darkened—at 9:30 p.m. Of course, small children weren't concerned with the darkness. They'd make a beeline to the playground with its swings and teeter-totters. These were still in place right up to the theater's closure in 1994. George wasn't impressed by the sound quality of the "little tin speakers," and many times people forgot to take them off the window and would drive off with them still attached.[14]

Maplewood Area Historical Society member Kathy McCoy lived down the street from the Minnehaha. "We as children made friends with the caretaker, and he'd treat us to candy and allowed us to play in the playground for hours. Imagine our surprise in the evening when patrons would come in and we had to share the facilities," she recalled. She couldn't hear the movies from her house, but she remembers trying to read the lips of the movie actors from far away. Her habit of watching "silent" movies changed when, as a teenager, she subbed at the concession stand for a vacationing friend at the Maple Leaf. McCoy said it wasn't like working at all. The movie shown at the time was called *Grand Prix*. After listening to the dialogue from the same movie for two weeks, she got to know it well. Her friends would show up and would see the movie for free.[15]

The End of an Era

By the 1980s, drive-in theaters were on the decline nationwide. The industry peaked with 4,063 outdoor screens in 1958 and had dropped to 2,813 in 1986, according to the National Association of Theater Owners. The Twin Cities' count fell to six, with just one left in Ramsey County—the Maple Leaf. In an interview for the *Star Tribune* in October 1986, the owner of the Maple Leaf, Gerry Herringer shared his insight on the world of drive-ins and their decline. He blamed smaller families, smaller cars, and the banning of DDT to combat mosquitoes among other factors. He guessed the Maple Leaf might have only a year or two left in it and the Cottage View in Cottage Grove a couple more after that.[16] Instead, the Maple Leaf lasted for another eight years, and Cottage View held on for another quarter century, closing in 2012 with a final showing of *Spiderman*.

The Maple Leaf continued to show first-run movies and escaped much of the bad reputations some theaters developed. Although, many (most?) patrons did not bother to heed the "No Alcoholic Beverages Allowed on These Premises" sign. The warning on the sign was not strictly enforced, as this author can attest. I was once also coaxed to ride in the back of a trunk of an early '70s Camaro. I suddenly developed a bout of claustrophobia and demurred.

In the end, the land beneath the Maple Leaf became too valuable and the drive-in quietly closed at the end of the seasonal run in 1994. The old screen was torn down and the building demolished in June 1995. Acorn Mini Storage now occupies the site along with housing.

Paying Tribute

In the summer of 1994, I was taking a summer TV production course at St. Cloud State, and because of that I got a behind-the-scenes look at the operation of the Maple Leaf. I wanted to cover a "light news story" so I called Stephen

The Maple Leaf's Final Act

In order to get a degree in Mass Communications with the emphasis on television production at St. Cloud State, students had to take a required summer session and the entire class had to "run" a TV station for the summer. We came up with a good fake name: WINN TV.

We had to produce news stories for the station. Many hours go into a news story "package" that only lasts a few minutes. I had an idea to rent a video camera recorder (also known as a camcorder) from the Learning Resources Library, an inferior way to produce a package even for school.

Nevertheless, I was able to craft a news story on my favorite drive-in theatre that I went to as a kid. These video stills show some of the B-roll that was captured for my package on the Maple Leaf in 1994, just a year before it was closed and torn down. *Images courtesy of the author.*

Mann, son of Mann Theatres founder Marvin Mann (and the nephew of another theater kingpin, Ted Mann), and had a friendly chat with him. He wondered aloud why the media always wanted to write stories on drive-in theaters. He noted that behind the "intrigue," and good earnings throughout theater season, taxes are still due twelvemonths of the year. He said I could film all I wanted at the Maple Leaf, but I couldn't interview any of the staff. I was unaware at the time that it was the last season for the theater.

A double feature of *The Lion King* and *Angels in the Outfield* was playing. The theater had changed very little since I had been there with my parents as one of those kids in pajamas. I felt like I'd traveled in a time machine back to the 1950s. About an hour before showtime, the staff were busy preparing concessions for the night. Warm, buttery popcorn filled big buckets and dozens of cheeseburgers fried on the grill. The night was clear and warm—a good night for a crowd. The phone on the wall of the projection room was constantly ringing, but I never saw anyone picking it up.

The projectionist had the nightly feature on two large spools ready to play. The trailers for other movies sat with their smaller spools on the shelf. Somewhere hidden from view was the strip of film with the animated fudgesicles, ice cream, and "assorted tasty candy" that tempted patrons to visit the refreshment center. On the inside door of the projection booth I noticed a poster of the 1992 family-friendly flick *The Return to the Lost World,* with a (kind of) menacing T. rex on it.

The gates opened and a steady stream of cars and vans entered the open lot dotted with speakers on poles. The flashing sign flickered in the twilight, with its bright green and red maple leaf. Almost like magic, a horde of kids appeared at the "Candy Cane City" playground with its old squeaky swings and its black asphalt jungle of animal-themed slides. The sky dimmed, and the manager asked, "Would you like to stay and watch the show for free?" I politely declined. In retrospect, I wish I had stayed. Instead, I packed up my camcorder as dusk turned to night not realizing that the end was near for the last Ramsey County drive-in.

Pete Boulay *was born in St. Paul and was raised in Maplewood. He caught the history bug when he took a Minnesota History class in college and the final project was to write a report on his hometown. He turned the report into a book,* The Lost City of Gladstone. *He was part of the group that formed the Maplewood Area Historical Society and served on the Maplewood Heritage Preservation Commission. He previously wrote "A Roof Over Their Heads" for Ramsey County History, Summer 2000.*

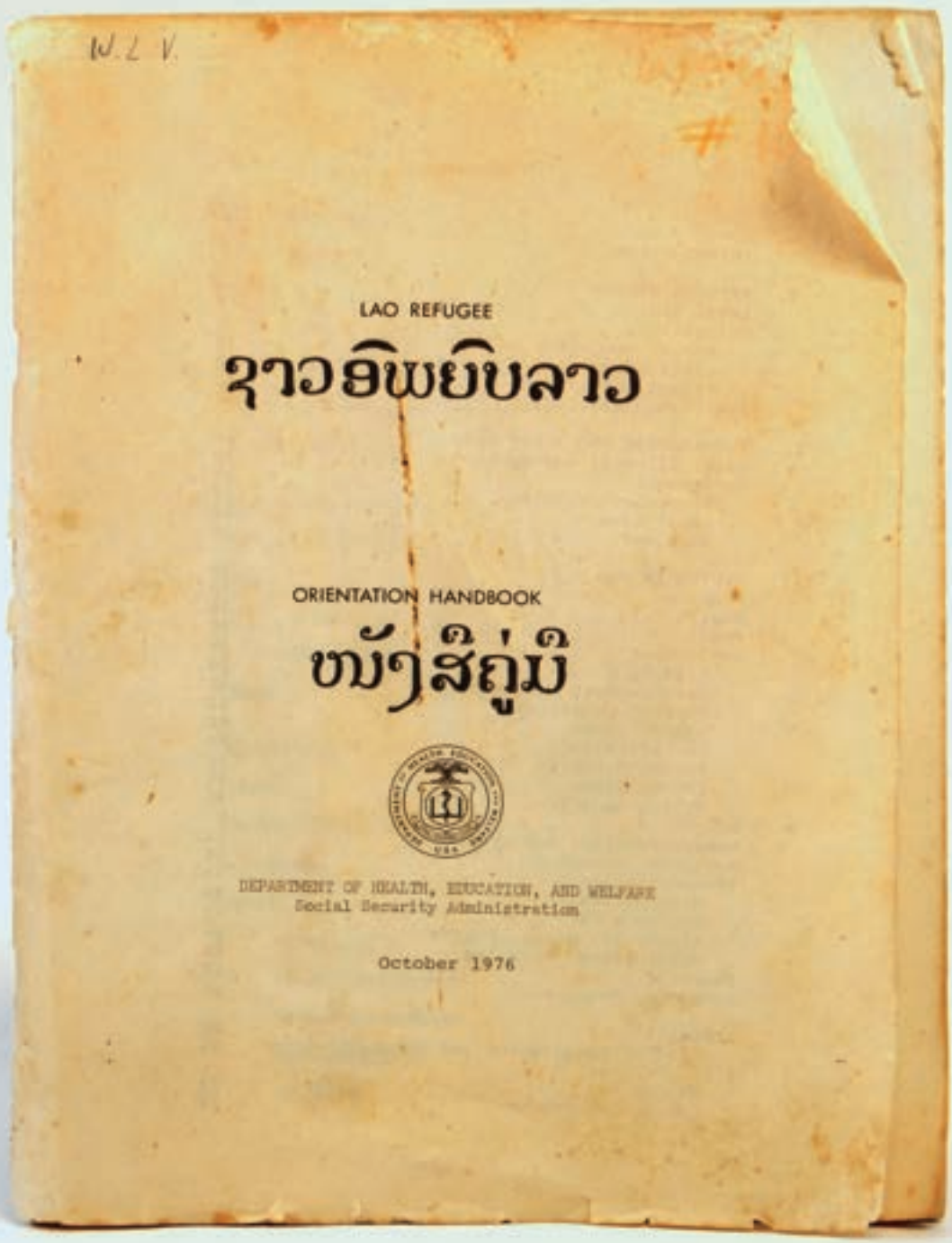
NOTES

1. R.M. Hollingshead, Jr., "Drive-In Theater" patent application No. 1,909,537, filed August 6, 1932, and patented May 16, 1933, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.
2. Phillips, W. D. "A Cinema Under the Stars (and Stripes): David Milgram's Boulevard Drive-In Theatre and the Political-Economic Landscape of America's Post-War Drive-In Boom." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television,* 40, no. 2 (June 2020), 275–296.
3. "Drive-in Theater Changes Hands," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* April 11, 1948.
4. "Rose Drive-In Unveiling Scheduled Thursday Night," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* June 20, 1948.
5. Bill Bruentrup, interview with the author, March 14, 2024.
6. "Drive-in Safe Carried Away; Watchman Tied," *Minneapolis Star,* June 19, 1950.
7. "Priest Protests Drive-In's Films," *Minneapolis Star,* July 9, 1968.
8. "Drive-in Nudity Films Banned in Roseville," *Minneapolis Star,* May 23, 1972.
9. Rose Drive-in Theater advertisement in the *Minneapolis Star,* July 14, 1973.
10. "City Council in Roseville moves meeting," *Minneapolis Star,* March 21, 1974.
11. "Development for Roseville site rejected," *Minneapolis Star,* March 28, 1974.
12. Edna Ledo, interview with the author, November 2002.
13. "One incident may have led to move to bar X-rated films," *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* March 10, 1979.
14. George Rossbach, interview with the author, November 2002.
15. Kathy McCoy, interview with the author, November 2002.
16. "Statistics, other signs show drive-in theaters are in their twilight," *Star Tribune,* October 26, 1986.

IN OUR COLLECTION

LAO REFUGEE ORIENTATION HANDBOOK AND HMONG EMBROIDERY, PAJ NTAUB, STORY CLOTH

DONATED BY: YOUA VANG
ACQUIRED: 2024
RCHS COLLECTION: 2025.7



In Our Collection shares the pieces acquired by Ramsey County Historical Society.

The collection contains tens of thousands of pieces, including archives, books, objects, and photographs, which are maintained by Director of Collections and Exhibitions, Mollie Spillman, in Downtown St. Paul.

CLOSE UP OF STORYCLOTH DEPICTING VILLAGE LIFE AND HARVEST

DONATED BY: GEORGIANN AND JOSEPH ERRIGO
ACQUIRED: 2021
RCHS COLLECTION: 2021.53

LAO REFUGEE ORIENTATION BOOK

Each Hmong family received a Lao Refugee orientation book when they left Laos by way of Thailand to help integrate into American culture.

Written in Lao and English, the book provided legal advice on how to report to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) along with information on the land, climate, and people of the United States. It also shared information about housing, shopping for groceries and basic necessity items, job seeking, and community resources in the late '70s.

The initials on the book are in the handwriting of the donor's father, Walor Vang; Hmong men take on an elder name in older age. Walor, originally Yeng, took his name earlier because he was in hiding from the Laotian government after the Vietnam War, having fought for the U.S. in the Secret War.

HMONG EMBROIDERY, PAJ NTAUB, STORY CLOTH

Hmong embroidery, paj ntaub, has many uses: fashion statements–daily and during the Hmong New Year;, blankets and linens;, and storytelling. The story cloths are a way to pass on stories and tales of past generations, rendered in the form of needle and thread, and to depict the history of the Hmong people that may have been lost. It was only within the twentieth century that Hmong people gained access to education, so stories were mainly passed to the next generation either orally or through embroidery. The cloths can be read from bottom to top or in any direction, for they do not follow any certain pattern.

While many pieces may have similar elements, each piece is unique as they are created by hand. Each embroidery artist has their own technique that changes with colors used, the shapes created by a tiny snip of the scissor, and even how each thread is stretched. Depending on how fast an artist works, these pieces can take up to a year to create.

From the 1980s through the 2010s, the story cloths sold at markets in the United States were handmade and developed the tourist trade and created income for artists. This fed the entrepreneurial spirit, and by the late 2010s, access to machine embroidery became prevalent. In 2025, most story cloths pieces are rendered from machine embroidery for efficiency.

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RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Established by a community of history lovers led by Mrs. Ethel Stewart, Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) has been preserving, interpreting, and presenting the remarkable history of our capital county since 1949. Created to preserve the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, a National Register of Historic Places site since 1974, RCHS has expanded to include publishing, exhibits, preservation, research, and public programming spanning the entire county.

RCHS's vision for the future recognizes the trusted role it plays in our community as a key steward of our shared heritage. As we strive to preserve and share the lessons of the past, our hope is that it will help all of us build a better future for our descendants.

The largest and most popular program of RCHS is Gibbs Farm, serving more than 15,000 students every year as well as thousands of teachers, families and individuals. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, RCHS began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, now telling the stories of the remarkable relationship between Jane Gibbs and the Dakota people of Ȟeyáta Othúŋwe (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 and in 2010, it created the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center. Collections entrusted to RCHS total more than four million items ranging from a historic farmstead to building permits to images and maps that capture the unique history of our community.

Our mission, vision, and values guide our work and unite a team of volunteers, members, donors, and staff to serve more than 50,000 people every year while ensuring our history is preserved and accessible. We are honored to have the support of so many in our community and welcome you to join us if you have not already.

Acknowledging This Sacred Dakota Land

Mnisóta Makhóčhe, 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 Makhóčhe. 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.

www.rchs.com info@rchs.com (651) 222-0701

WWW.RCHS.COM

RCHS UPDATES

HMONG FELLOWS

In partnership with the Center for Hmong Studies, Ramsey County Historical Society worked with four fellows in 2024-25 to preserve the Hmong heritage and culture and to inspire future generations of Hmong Americans to know more about their ancestry.

Fellows (clockwise from top left) Kalia Vue, Wone Vang, Linda Lor, and KaoLee Vang centered their research on preserving physical items, storytelling through folk tales, cataloguing Hmong film works, and studying fashion and music, along with other mediums.

Learn more about the projects and the fellows at www.rchs.com.

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Admission:
$10 for adults
$7 for seniors (62+)
$5 for children 4-16
free for children 3 and under.

Members of Ramsey County Historical Society receive free admission.

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"First Show at Dusk"

A History of Drive-in Movie Theaters in Ramsey County

PETE BOULAY, PAGE 21

At the midcentury, the drive-in movie theater was more than just a place to catch the latest film—it was a cultural touchstone and a communal gathering place for a whole generation of young people across America. In his article "First Show at Dusk," Pete Boulay tells the story of the three drive-in movie theaters that once sat in Ramsey County: The Rose in Roseville (known when the theater opened in 1948 as Rose Township); the Minnehaha, which opened in Maplewood in 1949; and the Maple Leaf, which was the last to open (in 1959) and the last in the county to close in 1994.

Pictured is the only known color image of the back of the movie screen at the Rose, which featured a towering 36-foot-tall art deco neon rose. The picture comes courtesy of Roseville-based photographer Robert Murphy, who has spent the last several decades documenting local life in Ramsey County.