

The Minnesota Scholar

Journal of the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum

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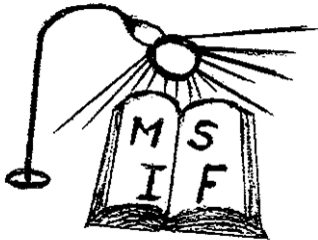


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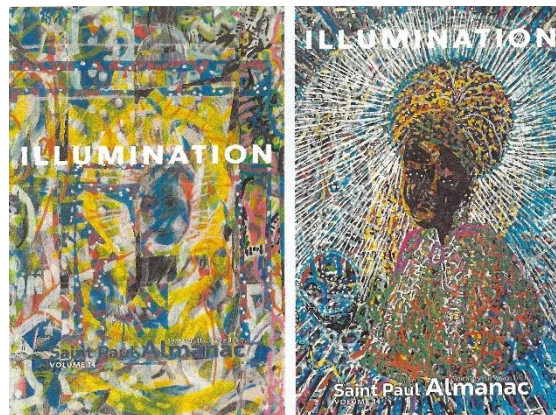
January through May

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Saint Paul Almanac 20th Anniversary Celebration

On October 16, 2025 the *Saint Paul Almanac* celebrated its 20th anniversary with its Volume 14, *Illumination*, publication and book launch at the W Wilder building in St. Paul. Attendees were welcomed at their arrival by a band of musicians that helped instill welcome and an air of celebration. Pamela Fletcher Bush, Publisher and CEO, Wendy Brown-Báez, Executive Editor, and Katie Vagnino, Board Secretary, all, welcomed guests. Attendees were treated to readings on topics of daily living by ten selected, varied poets included in the publication.

Interestingly, the *Saint Paul Almanac* was founded by Kimberly Nightingale, who was also on hand at the celebration. The *Saint Paul Almanac* began primarily as a Saint Paul calendar of events spiced up with stories, essays, poetry, and art about Saint Paul. As community editors were added to the editing process, the *Saint Paul Almanac*, grew beyond the almanac and blossomed over the years into the full-fledged, esteemed literary anthology it is today. In the introduction of *Illumination*, Wendy Brown-Báez notes, “Our goal is to publish the most compelling stories and poems...[also] from voices that are not heard so often...” She further states, “This year we expanded beyond stories” of St Paul “to include writers and poets from all over Minnesota.” The result is a compelling reading experience.

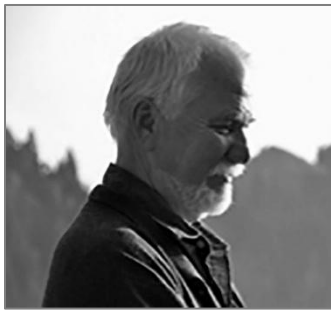


This year's *Saint Paul Almanac* has inspired the choice of two different covers.

~Evelyn D. Klein

TMS Editor

See Evelyn Klein's poem, "Sewing Basket" in *Illumination*



Feature Article

Local History: Inspiration and Fruition

by Joseph Landsberger

My research began in the glacial age, or rather with the glacial age, and culminated with publication of two versions of “The Origin Story of Fort Road/West Seventh Street, Township/City of St Paul, Territory/State of Minnesota.” It built on my first history project in 2002 and was coincident with the 125th anniversary of Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, 383 Michigan Avenue. I was serving as president and archivist and thought it timely to capture reflections of the more senior members, many of whom have since passed. Its title was *Gateway to a New World: Building Čech and Slovak Communities in the West End*.

Little did I realize where this would lead. Czech-Slovak immigrants were one of several founding communities of the West End of Saint Paul, and of the State of Minnesota. At the time I wanted to document history and character within my neighborhood. I researched, authored and compiled this book, *Gateway* celebrating the contributions of Czech and Slovak immigrants and families in the West End of St. Paul since the 1860s. It was published as a fund raiser for the North High Bridge Park. It included a timeline of Czech-Slovak immigration into America since 1633 and histories of immigrant families in St. Paul, Minnesota since 1860.

At about the same time a core group of neighbors started the West End Neighbors’ Garden Tour. We wanted both to elevate perceptions of this inner-city neighborhood and awaken our city to the beauty and vistas of its riverside neighborhoods. We succeeded handsomely to the current year, despite a pause for COVID. While gardens lined Fort Road/West Seventh Street, on our tenth anniversary in 2016, I decided to feature our breweries histories from 1848. The next year we decided to focus on neighborhoods to make the tours more accessible—and as principal organizer, I decided to continue and augment the thirteen tours with their respective histories. *The West End Neighbors Garden and History Tours* emerged!

Little did I conceive the task ahead. It was not just that each neighborhood was built *and conserved* with a unique set of immigrants and volunteers. I soon

realized that historians ignored the role of the West End in the founding and formation of both our capitol city and state. From downtown/Seven Corners, I worked my way west along the north side of West Seventh Street out to Bdote/Fort Snelling, then back eastwards along the Mississippi River. The last of the neighborhood histories focused on the Upper Landing vital to the founding of our city.

I anticipated a document of a couple hundred pages, but it grew, in number of pages, layout, content, and version (30 in all). The first challenge and editorial decision was to describe 8,000 years of Native life pre-contact. That implied understanding the natural environment and how it came to be, particularly the Glacial Age and formation of the river corridor and the Great Mississippi River gorge at Saint Paul. “The relationship of a people to the lands where they live is crucial for understanding their history and culture” (Westerman/White, 2012). The implications for the built environment were huge. The Great Woods covered both bogs and limestone terraces along and above the river. It was inhospitable for Natives (no villages). Bluffs and density restricted access between Bdote and the Lower Landing at Phelan Creek. That was a primitive French voyageur/métis settlement out of the fur trading center of Mendota from the 1600s. In 1843 John Irvine cleared and developed the Upper Landing—the second break in the bluffs. The rest is history.

Research

The journey to document both contributions of immigrants in building their neighborhoods and of volunteers to rebuild and reorganize them for the 21st Century was done with multiple sources. In the 1980s I was reporter, editor and publisher of the West End’s Community Reporter newspaper. I consulted with a professor at my university that prepared me for the editorial tasks ahead. But I, also, became aware of Community Reporter’s history since the 1970s and contributions of historians that pre-dated and contributed to my research. Chief among them was

Professor Gary Brueggemann who not only serialized my neighborhood's history but also its breweries.

My next major contribution developed the North High Bridge Park gateway gardens and artistic installations. I wrote the grants that plumbed the history of and cause for the bridge since it was built in 1887 and rebuilt in 1996. I began to accumulate an archive of historic images of the neighborhood and the river's bluffs.

Those first two efforts were done under the guidance of Betty Moran, our community organizer of 40 years. She was invaluable. She knew "where the bodies were" but was always discrete about perpetrators. She also knew who in government to contact and when. Our collaboration of thirty years ended with her death, June 1, 2024. The *Origin Story* is dedicated to her.

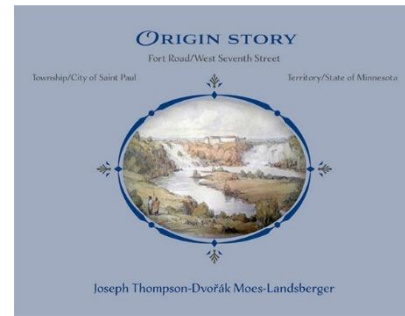
I accumulated an extensive bibliography that is donated to the local neighborhood council. It included a variety of information, such as 13 books by or about Native Americans, seven books about Minnesota, 23 books on the Fort Road Corridor, 41 books about Saint Paul, and 23 plus books on West Seventh Street.

Vintage images were edited, acquired from multiple sources, including the Minnesota Historical Society, Ramsey County Historical Society, Library of Congress, Hennepin County Library Digital Collections, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, New York Public Library Digital Collections, and local family contributors.

Commissioned works included artistry of Stuart Loughridge, photography of Craig Johnson, geographic mapping of Nat Case, marbling by Caron Moore. Paul Nylander provided the layout template, and Michelle Hovde provided publications guidance for the garden tour books and the ambitious, 420-page *Origin Story*.

Commercial buildings and residences with immigrant histories began online with Ramsey County Historical Society's St. Paul Building Permit Collection (1883-1975) that identified owners and contractors through those years by address. Genealogical sites' (familysearch.com) census records provided country of origin, immigration, employment, family lineage. Newspaper archives (Library of Congress Digital Collections Chronicling

America) provided news stories and obituaries. Librarians filled in the gaps.



Origin Story Focus

As I began to coalesce and organize resources, themes emerged. The first was that East Coast English-speaking entrepreneurs, speculators, traders. Developers and the like soon displaced French-speaking settlers. Easterners aggressively acquired and traded claims and began to focus development on the midtown between Upper and Lower Landings. The Lower became a transportation and commercial hub, while the Upper an immigrant hub.

Treaties impoverished and dislocated Native tribes. Extractive colonialism morphed from fur to lumber trade and agricultural expansion. Chaotic government annuities for Natives decreased and shifted the economy fed by steamboat, then railroad transportation. Entrepreneurs began to develop the midtown and, by extension, the Military Reserve along Fort Road. Fort Road/West Seventh Street lost its arterial importance to the fort but assumed an economic role in supporting the emerging city, agriculturally and industrially.

Along West Seventh Street, mansions were populated by governors, supreme court justices, mayors, and the well to do. However, they soon fled to the summit terrace, Summit Avenue, when human and industrial pollution streamed down the bluffs to the river. By the 1930s, the river failed to flow, impacted and without oxygen, save for the spring floods.

Waves of immigrants disembarked at the Upper Landing. Its flats provided primitive shelter and entry level jobs. In 1860, the German population of the state, German-born persons and their children, amounted to 2,425, or 15.8 percent of the state's total population, centered at Seven Corners or Beantown up its hill.

In the next neighborhood out, Slavs, first Polish then Czech and Slovak, settled. Beyond was more of a linguistic amalgam: High and Low German of Prussia, Swabian or Alemannic of Baden-Württemberg and Bavarian of southern Germany, Kashubian of Poland, Molisan of Campobasso, Italian, Bohemian/Moravian/Silesian in the Czech Republic, Goralski of Lendak in Slovakia, even a lilt of Irish.

They established cultural infrastructures and enterprises along the main arteries of Fort Road, Jefferson and Randolph Avenues. The primarily frame, first-period buildings set on muddy, barely graded streets were soon replaced by a new generation of commercial buildings and vernacular housing, both, downtown and out West Seventh. Not even the “long depression” of the 1870s slowed the entrepreneurial immigrant spirit along West Seventh—a future study in the making.

However, the stresses of inner-city life emerged on the Upper Landing in the later 19th and early 20th Centuries. Industry and its accompanying pollution were coupled with a concentration of brothels and saloons. Chief of Police John J. O’Connor’s solution was the infamous “safe haven” system for notorious criminals in the early decades of the twentieth century through Prohibition, marked by the growth of organized crime and a few murders. The layover agreement came to an end due to rampant corruption, concerned local citizens, the federal government, and the Hamm and Bremer kidnappings. Prominent citizens were alarmed.

Despite the questionable “industries” at the Upper Landing, neighborhoods thrived along West Seventh. Saint Paul became a center for brewing in the U.S. with a large concentration of German immigrants and their thirst for beer. Its labor force included grocers, wagon makers, lumbermen, bar and restaurant owners, confectioners, shoemakers, merchants, even bankers and contractors. They owned the major breweries and many saloons. Brewmasters took advantage of Minnesota’s agricultural climate for the essential ingredients of hops and barley, and ample fresh water and cooling caves hollowed out of its limestone bluffs for lagering.

While the major German institution of the Schmidt Brewery remains, others were lost with global events and discrimination. However, the

C.S.P.S. Hall (Česko-Slovanský Podporující Spolek), built in 1887, stands as reflective icon as the longest serving national hall and theater in Minnesota and longest serving Czech-Slovak hall in the United States. Its three-story brick building is symbolic: “...if all the buildings were erected in Saint Paul during 1888 were to be placed together and in one straight line, without cross streets, that line would be 15-2/8 miles in length...” (Saint Paul Daily Globe, December 23, 1888). However, the riverside of West Seventh lost them all when razed for street widening of sixteen feet in the early 1930s.

Entering the 1950s, the postwar period was not kind to West Seventh, compounded by White flight to the suburbs, absentee landlords, deteriorating housing, and misaligned social programming. Amazing volunteer activist decades began in the 1970s, centered on its neighborhood council, the West Seventh/Fort Road Federation, and its Community Development Corporation. The city was both adversary and advocate. At the Upper Landing, Irvine Park was saved from “urban renewal” as were the C.S.P.S. Hall and Schmidt Brewery and placed on the National Historic Register. Whole neighborhoods were saved including Kipp’s Glenn Terrace, Little Bohemia, Irvine Avenue Hillside, and the Brewery Neighborhood. The latter was rescued from a concentration of group homes for mentally disabled with the State of Minnesota’s de-institutionalization movement.

While neighborhoods were lost along the Mississippi River for Shepard Road and replaced on Pleasant Avenue for 35E, the Federation achieved minor success in mitigating its negative impact. Other successes include saving the local school, building two community centers, replacing the Exxon Mobil Oil Tank Farm with a Quarry Farm Park and residential development.

The *Origin Story* is now in its second printing. The first sold out January/February 2025. Although it was self-financed/self-published, all proceeds (\$14,138) benefited the Legacy Fund of the C.S.P.S. Hall. Proceeds for this second printed benefit the Federation, our neighborhood council.

~Joe Landsberger served as president of Czech and SOKOL Minnesota and the West 7th Business Association. He has an MS in International Management and an MS in Curriculum and Education Systems. (Also see TMS Events Page.)



The Mother Tongue

by Evelyn D. Klein

What is it about the mother tongue? February 21, 2025 saw the Silver Jubilee Celebration of International Mother Language Day. It was “first proclaimed by UNESCO” in 1999 and then adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002. According to the UN, the day is observed every year “to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism” (<http://undocs.org>).

Established in 1945, the United Nations today consists of 193 member states and recognizes English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic as its official languages. UNESCO, United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the offshoot of UN, recognizes 10 official languages, among them English with the largest number of speakers, 1,450,000,000; Mandarin the second largest, 1,130,000,000; Hindi the third largest, 610,000,000; Spanish the fourth, 559,000,000, Arabic the fifth, 274,000,000, and Russian sixth, 255,000,000, among them.

The *Ethnologue* considers that 7,159 languages are spoken today but reminds us the number is “always in flux.” That is because some languages may disappear from use and others may be revealed.

We rarely ponder the important role language, let alone other languages may play in our lives. As we go about our daily business, we may not pay much attention to the intricacies of our language. After all, we are on automatic pilot. And, yes, we have Copilot, AI and the Internet willing to answer questions, no matter how dubious and help us out when we try to compose a piece of writing on the computer. Education observers lament the slipping of test scores in reading and writing among them, all pointing to the conclusion that America is falling

behind other western countries. Are many of us even aware that we are slipping in our language skills and the ability to think and reason ourselves to our goal by letting technology do the work for us?

As writer, poet, editor, and teacher, it is obvious to me that language propels and communicates the beginning, development, progress, and growth, and end of most of our life experiences. As social creatures, we would be isolated and live like wild creatures, if it were not for our language. Everything we do is connected to language. Whether we prepare a meal, go to work, listen to or read about the news, talk to cohorts or friends, language reveals and directs the function of our world and determines our place in it.

As a matter of fact, the more languages we know the more we are in tune with not only ourselves but with our community, the country, and the world. Our higher institutions of learning give credence to that, to some degree, by requiring a second, even third language for a higher degree. The Silver Jubilee Celebration of International Mother Language Day gives recognition to the importance of language which can extend well beyond the significance of its words and single languages..

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines “mother tongue” as “one’s native language, a parent language.” In German the expression is “Muttersprache,” (mother language), in Spanish it is “lengua materna,” (mother language), in Latin “materna lingua.”

The term evolved in the Middle Ages, when it was used by Catholic monks to refer to a language they used in sermons, namely the vernacular of the people, in place of Latin. Today, in linguistics, “mother language” refers to

a person's first language, the language heard from mother and father, and siblings. It expands as children grow into the larger world around them, including school, work, organizations, and so on. It may not necessarily make them experts at its grammar, but it imparts in them the musicality of the language, its usage, idioms, and special expressions. In effect, it imparts in them a cultural identity through customs, values, schooling, work ethic, social, political, economic, and environmental influences.

Since each language has its own culture and system of existence. Some expressions and idioms are coined that may not exist in another language but express or refer to that culture's individuality, perspective, circumstances, development, or environment. That is why literal translations or translations in general can be awkward, misleading, wrong, even funny, because the expression's source may not exist in another language. For example, the term "good afternoon" in English is not used in German, even though it makes sense, eliciting a smile from native speakers. Conversely, the popular German saying, "Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund," with its literal translation of "morning hour has gold in its mouth," may evoke a smile from an English speaker.

Therefore, we come to realize languages are individuals and cannot always be translated literally. Since separation, environments and cultures differ, we need to take into account that different languages function with various language structures, usage, vocabulary and idioms, not to speak of grammar, phonetics, and script that vary widely in world languages.

However, to our benefit for centuries, terms have filtered from one language to another in shared usage. These often concern inventions, discoveries, philosophies, ideas, or products that surface in a specific country and language and are, then, adopted by other languages. These may include words like "blitz" from German, "menu" from French, "city" from English, "coffee" over Italian from Turkish, "watt" named after British

engineer and inventor, James Watt, "solo" from Italian, "Viking" from Old Norse, "amigo" from Spanish, all listed in the *American Heritage Dictionary*.

And in this modern age of technology and easy access to travel and the internet, social media and such, vocabulary keeps crossing borders to be borrowed or absorbed. English is probably today's greatest language of influence, particularly in technological terms but in popular terms as well. For instance, words may come into the German language, possibly even alongside already existing German words, where they may or may not enjoy an adaptation of spelling, words such as video, city center, expert, identity, and so on. Conversely, English has adopted German words, such as angst, fest, weltanschauung, to name a few, adapting the nouns to lower case spelling to conform to English.

As speaker and teacher of a second language, learning and teaching a second language can be challenging. It requires concentrated effort in the classroom. But exposure to the language by mingling with native speakers and using the second language on its own terms is a good combination of approaches. The rewards garnered in this approach are great, because in this manner, language learning comes close to the way people learn the mother tongue. And yes, with the right supplementary instruction of pronunciation technique and the ability to go with the flow, of the second language, it is possible to learn a second language as well as the first, particularly if the needed concentration, adaptability, and desire to acquire it exist in the learner.

Language learning can be as much deliberate as instinctive. The reason is that humans are all capable by nature to learn making these different sounds, particularly in younger years when habits are not so set. Once we have learned that initial language, as adults it is more difficult to embark on the exercise of new sounds. Yet when we hear the music of another language, we can let ourselves follow the sounds

like we follow a song. From an instructor, we can learn the roll of the Spanish “r,” follow the soft sound of the American English “r” roll off the tongue or engage the German guttural “r.” It is a physical exercise of mouth, tongue, throat, and mind. And while the symbols of these letters may be the same, the sound emitted in each language is quite different. Creating them is, literally, a physical exercise linked to a sound that we may not be accustomed to.

Can a second language become as fluent for the learner as the mother tongue? Absolutely. Particularly if speakers either live in the country where it is spoken or associate regularly with native speakers of that language. It is fun to meet these folks at work and in the community. Given enough time, the second language can become their other “mother tongue” in association with life in the new environment, including family, friends, school, work, and adaptation to the community, the country. Outwardly, it may seem like a personality change for that person when speaking the new language, when it will likely, also, be accompanied by a change in appearance or body language and/or approach to life situations.

While the experiences people encountered in the first language may unconsciously always be a part of their lives, the second language will add to the richness and perspective of the individuals in the new days ahead. They can foster the intimate feeling of home and connection in the second language, just as in the first language, just with different associations of family, friends, and community. It is like living in a home, where they walk from one room to the other, and each room fulfills an important part in the speaker’s life.

Rooted in cultural traditions and environmental features, language, as a system of communication, creates identity, community, progress, and development. As the most applied aspect of our lives, often taken for granted, it truly calls for celebration.

~Evelyn D. Klein is an independent scholar, author, poet, and artist. She has a B.S. in Secondary Education and an MST in the Teaching of English. She taught in the public schools, at the Loft Literary Center and at Century College. She has authored four volumes of poetry and prose and her most recent book on language, *Power Behind Your Writing, What Every Writer Needs to Know*. She is the editor of TMS.

The Minnesota Scholar Information

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The Minnesota Scholar welcomes submissions. We are especially interested in topical issues. We print essays/articles reviews, and memoirs.

Submission guidelines: Articles/ essays should be between 1,000-1,800 words. Use Times New Roman font, size 12. Submit electronically in a Word Document, images in a jpg. Manuscripts will be edited and minor adjustments may be made. Submissions will be acknowledged. The editor reserves the right to decline to publish an article deemed unsuitable. For more specific guidelines and information contact the editor.

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Deadline for the next issue:

Friday, May 8, 2026

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Programs & Meetings



June 28, 2025

Annual Meeting

President Emily Pollack called the membership meeting to order at about 10:35 a.m. and proceeded to report on –

The State of Membership:

MISF currently has 57 active members.
MISF activities include the following:

Monthly Programs and Events:

Programs are led by Steven Miller.
Recording of programs is done by AV team lead, Charlie Roger.
Social Events are coordinated by Peter Simmons

Journal:

The Minnesota Scholar publishes two issues per year and is edited by Evelyn Klein.
The journal looks for submissions in the following areas: book reviews, current events, “Why” genealogy (a passion of favorite activity).

Study Groups:

History – Does book discussions, led by Emily Pollack.
Philosophy – Discussions led by Curt Hillstrom.
History research group – is currently working with the Historical Society off site.

Treasurer’s Report :

Finance Report 2024 was given by Emily Pollack who currently also occupies the treasurer’s position.
Support revenue: \$2,518.37, from donations, membership, interest.
Expenses: \$3,074.19, including journal, meetings, membership, office, online, partnerships, affiliations.

Board of Directors:

President Steven Miller’s term expired in 2024.
2025 President is Emily Pollack.

Current Board Member Terms Up for Renewal this Year:

Barb Sommer, Curt Hillstrom, and Peter Simmons.

Election Results:

Curt Hillstrom and Peter Simmons were unanimously reelected.

Open Seat Nominations:

Bill McTeer was unanimously elected.

Board Members Whose Terms Expire Next Year:

Lucy Brusic, Evelyn Klein, Mike Woolsey, Dale Schwie, Ruth Campbell.

Board Members Whose Terms Expire the Following Year:

Steven Miller, Charlie Rogers, Charles Yancey.

Volunteer Opportunities:

The Minnesota Scholar: There is a call for articles, book reviews, meeting summaries.

Audio/Visual Team:

Someone to record meetings.

Study Group Leads and Members:

History group is looking for a new leader or co-leader.

Content Creator:

Member only pages; update/publish documents

Promotion and Marketing:

Facebook updates, member drives, committee members.

Grants and Fiscal Agency:

Identify people who would benefit.

Remembering Members:

Joe Amato, Bob Thimmesh, George Anderson.

Thank You

Barb Sommer and Lucy Brusic who are both retiring from the board.

Current Board Members:

Bill McTeer, Curt Hillstrom, Peter Simmons, Evelyn Klein, Mike Woolsey, Dale Schwie, Ruth Campbell, Steven Miller, Charlie Rogers, Charles Yancey.

President: Emily Pollack.

Emily Pollack presented book marks as a sign of recognition to board members.

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Email: info@mnindependentscholars.org

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Approximately 20 attendees were present at this meeting.

June 28, 2024 Program:

When Minnehaha Flowed with Whiskey: A Spirited History of the Falls

Presenter: Karen E. Cooper

The story of Minnehaha Falls encompasses a rough beginning with rowdies, ruckus, and dance for fun seekers.

It begins in the mid-19th century at Fort Snelling when the area was isolated and whiskey was very important. Three influences made Minnehaha Falls famous at that time: Photography, travel by steamboat on the Mississippi River, and the statue of Hiawatha.

In 1857 Franklin Steele bought Fort Snelling. He set up a saloon, and in about 1867 he built the Minnehaha Hotel. By 1860 he lived at Minnehaha Falls, called the place “Little Falls, and paid people to farm the land.

George Lincoln built the Minnehaha Hotel into a nice-looking place on the south side, where the pergola is today. Isadore “Dutch” Henry, then, developed the Minnehaha Hotel to cater to soldiers from the fort. It was called Minnesota Soldiers Home. Later, Booth Gardens were a popular attraction at the Falls.

In 1886, a map of a state park at Minnehaha Falls was submitted. Minnehaha Park Pride was spelled out in flowers as the Minneapolis Park. And here the lost story of mayhem at the Minnehaha Falls lies hidden.

Louis Cass and wife Sophia ran a business outside the park, but things got out of hand at night, as there was dancing at the pavilions. Drunks and

criminals came and women of all sorts, some looking for husbands, came by street cars. This business was located at Minnehaha Parkway and Hiawatha Avenue today.

People in the area called police when alcohol was sold without a license, and people complained. In the 19th century, however, bad behavior was rarely photographed. Yet bad behavior was going on all the time.

In 1903 people had fun at the Minnehaha Midway which persisted and grew. Neighborhood people tried to get the police to police the area because of the noise and goings-on. A fence was constructed. They tried to get an injunction to remove it but were not successful. So, people who came went around the buildings. Then new partitions were set up west of Hiawatha Avenue. Eventually the fence was taken down and the city was dared to put it back up.

Sergeant John F. O’Brien of the Minneapolis Park Police had no authority outside the park. But he would threaten to arrest people and shook them down.

The John Stevens House was moved to the park in 1896. Less than ten years later, Sgt. John F. O’Brien had beer parties there. Camp Cold Water is the fort.

Karen E. Cooper, author, historian, and researcher uncovered the lost, disgraceful past at Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis. Her work reveals the power structure in the city that allowed Minnehaha to become a criminal haven and then

battle those who wanted Minnehaha to be a place where families felt safe and welcome. *When Minnehaha Flowed with Whiskey: A Spirited History of the Falls* won the Emilie Buchwald Award for Minnesota non-fiction in 2023.

August 16, 2025

MISF Annual Picnic

The annual picnic was held at Cherokee Park in Saint Paul, as usual. Everyone contributed to the pot

luck for this informal gathering. Twelve adults attended as well as four children.

September 27, 2025

Electricity, Magnetism and Birds

Presenter: Michael Hurben, PhD

The program centered around how migrating birds may sense the earth's magnetic field.

The author disclosed at the outset that he is challenged by being legally blind. But he can get a recording of birds and then identify them and so was able to do his research.

We may not think of birds and the aerodynamics of flight, the mechanics of feathers and bills, optics of vision, pigments and structural features and colors, thermodynamics of living and birdsong and how they relate to fields of electricity and magnetism. Yet Michael Hurben presented a study on the mechanism by which birds may work with the earth's magnetic field in their navigation, with some of his insights detailed below.

Interested in the sounds, colors, and movement of birds, he began by studying the physics of birds and the underlying unity of nature. The Physics of Birds Involves:

1. Mechanics: Flight, feather, structure. These are light flexible and strong.
2. Fluids: Phalarope spinning, hydrophobicity. These help birds catch fish.
3. Acoustics: These include singing, owl hearing, microphones, spectrograms.
4. Thermodynamics: These involve temperature extremes and energy budgets.
5. Optics: They include scopes, binoculars, cameras, avian eyesight.

6. Material Properties: These include scattering, interference, iridescence (structural colors).
7. Other colors: Pigmentation, molecular and quantum physics.
- 8.

Electricity and Magnetism:

Some of these are related to birds. They include: Charge, electrical fields and moving charges, magnetic fields. Electrical currents are moving charges. The electromagnetic field creates effects. There are two mechanisms for magnetic field production.

Magnetism and Bird Migration:

It is long suspected that expert migrational navigation could be exploiting some innate compass. Question is: How might birds sense magnetic fields? By electron (spin) behavior in an external magnetic field. Many things can happen, depending how magnets line up; by Precession, the frequency or rate of precession that is proportional to field strength; by magnetic resonance. There are, of course, still additional considerations.

The presenter concluded that there, likely, is a bizarre link between bird migration and quantum physics. He asserted that birds navigate using quantum mechanics – literally.

Michael Hurben earned a PhD in physics, has worked in academic and industrial settings, particularly in magnetic recordings. He is also a naturalist and birder, author of *The Physics of Birds and Birding*, 2025.

Thirteen people attended this enlightening program. For more details see website recording.

October 25, 2025

Christian Nationalism: A Dangerous Manifestation of a Deeper Problem

Presenter: Rev. Grant Abbott

The Rev. Grant Abbott began his discussion by stating that the world has many different religions of credibility. Yet he asserted that Christian Nationalism has a long history that pits liberalism vs. anti-liberalism. He, then, posed the questions: What is Christian Nationalism, and where does it come from?

The speaker continued by pointing out that the book by Amanda Taylor on Christian Nationalism is an excellent source of information.

He continued by explaining that Christian Nationalism is a religious political ideology and movement that understands the United States as founded by God as a white Protestant Evangelical Christian Nation. Secondly, Christian Nationalism maintains that the secular liberal democracy has failed God's America by allowing such institutions as abortion, LGBTQ, gay marriage, illegal immigration, and religious diversity, among them. The purpose of Christian Nationalism, then, is to restore righteousness through the Christian Nation and that white Evangelical Protestant churches should be restored.

Grant Abbott explained who the Christian Nationalist are as well as those who reject them.

Christian Evangelists want a return to God's America with a leader to fight for the cause. Evangelical support for Trump was no aberration nor was it merely a pragmatic choice. Evangelicals embrace militant masculinity and patriarchal authority. They also want a warrior king like Cyrus, the Persian, and King David to fight for the return of Christian values. Under these circumstances, such new institutions as gay marriage would be outlawed.

Among the Christian Nationalists is the New Apostolic Reformation, a very fundamentalist,

charismatic evangelical Christian movement. Among them is the Rev. Douglas Wilson, founder of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches. Their interpretation of the bible and their purpose is to lean the bible in ways that promote their goals.

Where did Christian Nationalism come from? It emanated from such movements and ideologies as populism, nationalism, and anti-liberalism. Actually, it has been in American history from the beginning. Populism is a movement by common people against those who they consider the "elite" and who they believe have mistreated them and use the government against them.

Christian Nationalism, actually, came from nationalism and anti-liberalism. It is evident in Christian opposition to liberal democracy in early America and also in Christian anti-communism movements after World War II.

In opposition, we find the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Yet Christian Nationalists remained anchored in such notions as racism, anti-abortion, and disruptive change.

White Evangelical Christian Nationalism is part of the recent Project 2025. Trump and his administration are using this plan.

How can people resist Christian Nationalism? One way Rev. Grant Abbott suggested was by the actions considered by Amanda Taylor in: *How to End Christian Nationalism*. Among the suggestion are: Understand; ground yourself in God's love; denounce violence. Another way to end Christian Nationalism is the importance of widely shared economic growth.

At the beginning of the program, the speaker grounded his discussion by passing out an essay and

an extensive bibliography that he used to write his essay on “White Evangelical Christian Nationalism.”

Lively discussions took place during the presentation, encouraged by the speaker. Rev. Grant Abbott, an Episcopal priest, is former executive

director of the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches. He is convener of the “Real American History Book Group: Learning the Whole Story.”

23 people attended the program.

November 15, 2025

Mystery in the Midwest

Presenter: David Housewright

Three-time Minnesota book award winner, David Housewright, discussed the modern American mystery novel, addressing questions on the topic as he went along.

When asked what inspires him, he said everything. Many of his ideas may arise out of everyday situations that may take him in a new direction to a mystery story. Sometimes he sees something or something comes to him, and he will then pursue the idea. The television series *Madmen on the Run* provided inspiration for him and so did the book *John Dillinger Slept Here* by Paul Macabee. *Man in the Water* was also an inspiration for his own writing.

Most of David Housewright’s stories take place in Minnesota and some in Wisconsin, the writer asserts. When asked if he works with a theme, he responded that much will turn out about what he brings to the book. Ideas that come to him may revolve around art theft, how to gather ransom money.

His titles sometimes come after the book is written, sometimes after collaboration with the editor. The reason is that titles have to appeal to more than Minnesotans because of the book distribution. For example, David Housewright’s novel originally titled *Highway 61* was renamed by the editors as *Curse of the Jade Lily*. But it took him a while to find out what a jade lily is.

The author does not write about real crime. But he may take a real idea and make something else out of it. And while he is inspired by real things, he never writes about them. Nobody in the books is real people. Standalones are never written in the first person, interestingly.

When asked if he does his own fact checking, he said: “I do my own research.” Sometimes he does fact check at St. Martin’s Press. Sometimes he makes

mistakes. But he tries to use as many real places as he can. Yet he does not want to embarrass anyone. Every place that is in his books he has been to.

When asked if he has a favorite book, he said “not really.” Some books he is happier with than others. His first book was not meant to be a mystery but about political corruption. Yet a dead body made him think it would be a great mystery. And he is not always concerned with “who done it” but why. For instance, what caused “The Man in the Water,” who did not like water to be in it.

He likes all kinds of other mystery writers, like Krueger. But he does not like to read others’ mysteries while writing his own. It’s too much distraction.

Is a sense of humor important to the author? Yes, it is important to him.

When asked if his books are known outside of Minnesota, he said, yes, in Florida, California, Germany.

The author mentioned that he never had a book put on the big screen. He had one all set to go, but it was canceled. Yet he has been optioned several times, got a call from New York. But then Covid hit, and it was canceled.

When asked again who his favorite author is, he responded with Charles Dicken and Curt Vonnegut.

When asked if he writes plays, he responded that he wrote a short story that he was asked to turn into a play.

When asked if he writes every day or just when the spirit hits him, he said “I do both.” He continued further that “any process that keeps you writing is a good process, the deeper into the book, the more concentrated.” He used to outline carefully. Now not so much, but he always knows how the book

ends. You have to be careful how you do it, but he always knows how to proceed.

He always writes on the computer. He cannot write early. He likes noise around him and was initially trained by newspaper writing.

Dave Housewright is author of 31 novels, earned an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America, a Shamus Award from the PWA, and three

Minnesota Book Awards. He was a newspaper reporter, ad man, and taught at the University of Minnesota and Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. He has been placed on the “Minnesota Writers Map” by the Minnesota Historical Society and Friends of the St. Paul Public Library.

This fascinating meeting was attended by twenty-one people.

Study and Discussion Groups

Study groups meet monthly at 7:00 p.m. over Zoom, unless otherwise designated. Books and topics are chosen by participating, attending members. See Meetup.

Philosophy Group:

Meets second Wednesday of the month, ongoing. Facilitated by Curt Hillstrom.

Upcoming Programs and Events

The MISF January meeting will be held at the Ramsey County Public Library in Shoreview at 4570 Victoria Street North, Shoreview, MN 55126, 651-724-6006.

The venue for meetings from February through June, 2026, has not yet been determined as of publication of this journal. The MISF Board is looking for a more centrally located space. Meetings will proceed as scheduled below. Check the MISF website, www.mnindependentscholars.org, and the email notices for future location(s).

Membership meetings generally occur the fourth Saturday of the month, except for November and May, when they are generally held on the third Saturday. No membership meetings are held in July, August, and December. A picnic is usually held sometime during the summer. Membership meetings begin at 10:30 a.m. and usually last until 12:00 noon or longer, depending on availability of the room. Everyone is welcome.

Saturday, January 24, 2026

Minnesota Origins: Selected Topics

Presenter: Joe Landsberger

Combining a series of neighborhood (garden tour) histories along West Seventh Street into a narrative origin of Saint Paul and Minnesota, Joe Landsberger came to realize historians ignored these first neighborhoods and commercial strip in the history of our state. This resulted in a work of 420 pages, illustrated with 1069 vintage and commissioned images, documented with 246 endnotes. The first edition sold out quickly in January/February 2025. After buyers reported more stories, a second edition was enhanced and published August 2025. The self-published history, locally sourced and locally promoted, committed all proceeds to nonprofits. The presentation, process and product, accentuates contributions of immigrants and volunteers.

Joe Landsberger is a lifelong resident of Saint Paul: 30 years on its West Side, 50 on West Seventh with a break of three in West Africa. His educational journey included thirty years developing the central computer lab/learning center at a university (1976 – 2006). He researched, authored and developed an educational website of study guides and strategies (1995-2012) that was translated into 38 languages with 54,767,483 visitors accessing 118,365,575 webpages. As a community volunteer, he founded West End Arts and developed a public art park, served as president of Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, the West Seventh Business Association, and is a member of Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit (CART). His editorial skills were polished in his community newspaper.

Saturday, February 14, 10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Social Gathering

Nokomis Square Cooperative, 5015 35th Ave. So., Minneapolis

At the security entrance, look for the press the “Party Room Intercom” button to get in. You can enter on either the west or east side of the building. There is plenty of parking.

This is a potluck. Peter Simmons arranger.

Saturday, February 28, 2026

Woman’s World: Women Artists in Russia

Presenter: Carol Veldman Rudie

Where in the world are the women artists? The answer: In the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. This ppt presentation traces the ways in which women artists were vital to the development of their culture’s visual artistry. Textile artists, painters, folk artists and non-conformist women contributed both to their own country and to the international scene.

Carol Veldman Rudie holds a PhD from the University of Minnesota which includes a minor in Art History. She is coordinator of outreach education at the Museum of Russian Art, where she presents background on Russian art and culture. She has been a lead docent since 2005 and developed its docent program. Her special interest involves forming and educating groups to tour Russia.

Saturday, March 28, 2026

From Memoir to Fiction and Today’s Publishing World

Presenter: Vincent Wickoff

Vince Wickoff will reveal the backstory to his first work of non-fiction, *Beware of Cat* and *Other Encounters of a Letter Carrier*, and how it nearly cost him his career amid threats of federal felony charges. His *Black Otter Bay* mystery series has been met with less drama but strong reviews and a loyal following of readers.

Born and raised in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, Mr. Wickoff attended the University of Minnesota and is a veteran of the U.S. Army. His first book, *Beware of Cat*, celebrates the stories of people on his mail route. For a short time, he lived on the north shore of Lake Superior, from which he developed the background for *Black Otter Bay*, his first work of fiction and a finalist for the 2016 Midwest Independent Publishers Award. This was followed by a sequel, *Nightwatchers*, and the third

installment, *Refuge from the Sea*. His stories have been published in several local periodicals as well as the anthology, *Home*. Wyckoff and his wife, Sybil, live in Minneapolis. They have two children and four grandchildren.

Saturday, April 25, 2026

Black Arts Minnesota: An Autoethnographic Approach

Presenter: Davu Underwood Seru

This talk demonstrates how archival research and artistic practices bear witness to a Black presence in Minnesota, dating as far back as the 1860s.

A north Minneapolis native and fifth-generation Minnesotan, Davu Underwood Seru currently serves as the Curator of the Givens Collection of African Literature and Life at the University of Minnesota. Formerly, Davu was an assistant professor of Practice in the Department of English at Hamline University, where he taught courses in research, writing and literature, for which he received the prestigious Dr. Colleen S. Bell Outstanding Faculty Award. Additionally, he is co-author of the book, *Sights, Sounds, Soul: The Twin Cities Through the Lense of Charles Chamblis* (MNHS Press 2017). He is an award-winning, internationally recognized drummer and composer.

Saturday, May 16, 2026

Ginny Hanson Poetry Day

Presenter to be announced.

An open mic reading will follow the program.

Saturday, June 27, 2026

The War at Home: Minnesota during the Great War, 1914-1920

Presenter: Greg Gaut, Author

Americans went to war in 1917, not only against Germany but also against each other at home. The controversial declaration of war came during a contentious time when farmers and workers challenged the wealthy; African Americans struggled against Jim Crow and lynchings; women campaigned for suffrage; and millions crusaded against alcohol. In *The War at Home*, Greg Gaut focuses on the lives of individual Minnesotans to tell the dramatic story of this period, when the state experienced bitter polarization, nativism, flagrant disregard for democratic norms, and intense,

occasionally violent, confrontations. The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety ruled the state with an iron hand during the war. Led by John F. McGee, the commission pursued a “loyalty” campaign especially against trade unions and the Nonpartisan League. McGee’s most prominent adversary was Charles A. Lindbergh Sr., whom the Nonpartisan League nominated to challenge the governor in the fiercely contested 1918 primary. Although Minnesota’s home front experience was the product of a particular confluence of events and personalities, it raises issues about how democracy can give way to authoritarianism when economic inequality, anti-immigration nationalism, and racism rule the day.

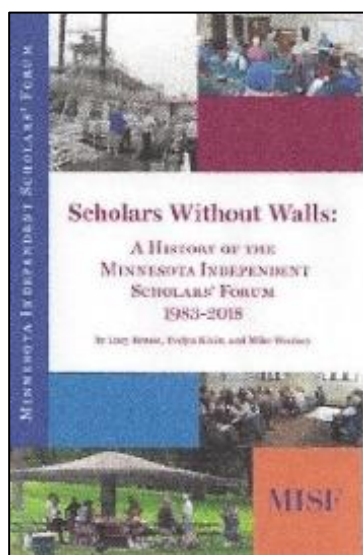
Greg Gaut is a historian whose career has included two decades of teaching at a liberal arts college and a decade of work as a historic preservation consultant, primarily preparing National Register of Historic Places nominations around the state of Minnesota. With his wife and co-author, Marsha Neff, he is a frequent contributor to

Minnesota History. Two of their articles won the David Gebhard Award for the best article on Minnesota’s built environment. A lover of libraries, he published *Laird’s Legacy: A History of the Winona Public Library* which is now the East Side Freedom Library. His article on a World War I espionage case, “Hardware Store Sedition: the Case of Charles W. Anding,” won the Solon J. Buck Award for the best article in *Minnesota History* for 2020. He holds a doctorate in Modern European and Russian history from the University of Minnesota.



Mission Statement of the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum:

The Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum (MISF) exists to foster scholars, whatever their formal credentials or academic involvement. MISF strives to be encouraging and critical, always aware of what distinguishes good scholarship. We encourage all projects of disciplined intellectual inquiry.



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