

The Noerenberg barn as seen from Maxwell Bay.
Photo Rolf Anderson

MINNESOTA CHAPTER
OF THE SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

MNSAH Fall Tour

Noerenberg Farm and Gardens
Saturday, October 16, 2021, 9:30 a.m.

MNSAH

WITH RESPECT TO ARCHITECTURE | FALL 2021



Noerenberg Farm and Gardens



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Saturday, October 16, 2021

2865 North Shore Drive, Orono

9:30-11:30 a.m.

Noerenberg Farm and Gardens

In a secluded cove on a quiet bay, a barn in a 58-acre wooded setting rises majestically above the water. This image might not be particularly surprising if it were not located on Lake Minnetonka, one of the state's most popular lakes where homes crowd the shoreline and an undeveloped parcel of land is rare.

The barn was part of the farm on the former Noerenberg estate, now operated by Three Rivers Park District and known as Noerenberg Gardens. The public may visit the gardens, which are located on a 16-acre parcel overlooking Crystal Bay. But the barn and land associated with the farm, which overlook Maxwell Bay, are separated from the gardens by North Shore Drive and are rarely open to the public.

The story of the property begins with Frederick Noerenberg, who had come with his family to the United States from Germany as a young boy and settled in St. Paul. He became involved in the brewing business and eventually became the owner of a

brewery in Minneapolis. Noerenberg and his wife, Johanna, lived next to the brewery in an industrial area located along the Mississippi River near the present-day West Bank campus of the University of Minnesota. In 1890, Noerenberg's company consolidated with several other breweries to form the Minneapolis Brewing Company. He eventually became the company's president, which was later renamed the Grain Belt Brewery. The company's immense complex in northeast Minneapolis still exists.

Frederick and Johanna Noerenberg purchased their property on Lake Minnetonka in 1892. But unlike the typical summer visitors to the lake in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries who stayed in tourist hotels or built summer homes, the Noerenbergs settled permanently on the lake. Life on the lake must have been a dramatic change from the densely populated industrial scene that they left behind in Minneapolis.

Left: The south and west elevations of the Noerenberg barn. Photo Phil Mueller

Right: Historic photograph of the Noerenberg family on the shores of Crystal Bay, ca. 1900. Photo courtesy Three Rivers Park District

Bottom: The stable for the horses. Photo Phil Mueller

The Noerenbergs built a Queen Anne style house (no longer extant), a carriage house, a pump house, and a combination boat house/gazebo, which was rebuilt in an exotic Oriental style following a trip to Japan in 1907. Throughout the years the property was known for its elaborate gardens. The Noerenbergs also developed the farm, which included the barn, a water tower, and a number of other buildings as well as pastures, cultivated fields, fruit trees, and vegetable gardens.

The Noerenberg children continued living on the property after the death of their parents. When Lora Noerenberg Hoppe died in 1972 she bequeathed the estate to the public as a memorial to her parents. Her will stipulated that the area of the estate south of North Shore Drive should be maintained for "public park purposes as an arboretum for flowers, shrubs and trees" and for "general display garden purposes." The northern portion of the estate was to be maintained as a natural area.

The MNSAH tour will begin with the Noerenberg farm and the high-style barn, which features Palladian windows and classical details. Built in 1912, it is likely the barn was designed by Christopher Boehme, who, along with his partner Victor Cordella, designed the American Swedish Institute

in Minneapolis. Boehme was handling other design work for Frederick Noerenberg at the same time the barn was built and is therefore the likely architect. In addition to its elaborate architecture, the barn included innovative interior features that provided for the comfort of the farm animals.

The tour will continue on the south side of the property where Three Rivers Park District continues the tradition of the elaborate gardens established by the Noerenbergs. The overall original landscape design of the estate is also notable. Circulation patterns and the areas devoted to gardens and domestic and recreational activities are still evident. There are also specimen trees and plants collected by the Noerenbergs that still exist as well as other landscape features.

The guide for the fall tour will be MNSAH president Rolf Anderson who prepared the National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the barn. He will be assisted by staff from Three Rivers Park District who will also discuss their efforts to preserve the Noerenberg property. A park horticulturist will discuss the gardens.



The tour will be largely outdoors so please dress appropriately in case of inclement weather. Participants will be able to remain socially distanced. You may register for MNSAH's Fall Tour online at www.mnsah.org/events/fall-tour. Or mail a check (\$15 for members and \$25 for non-members) and the names of those attending to Rolf Anderson, 212 West 36th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55408. Please register by Thursday, October 14, 2021.

1957-2021

Carol Ann Ahlgren



FRANK EDGERTON MARTIN

Carol Ann Ahlgren, a long-time member of MNSAH and one of the founders of its Modern Masters video oral history project, passed away on May 15th from a brief illness. She grew up in rural Prescott and in 1975 enrolled at Beloit College, graduating with a degree in History that would lead to an innovative career in Historic Preservation.

In 1983, Carol joined the pioneering graduate program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison focusing on Historic and Cultural Landscape Preservation and Landscape History with Professor Arnold Alanen as advisor and mentor. Here is where I met Carol—and I can safely state that I learned as much from her as I did from our years of classwork and projects.

Carol wrote her Master's thesis on the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in building some of the most historically significant and beautiful Wisconsin State Parks, including Wyalusing, Perrot, Interstate, Devil's Lake, and Rib Mountain. Carol visited several alumni reunions of former CCC "enrollees" who, by then, were in their early seventies.

She conducted interviews with many of them to gather first-person stories for her thesis that would have been lost without her work.

PRESERVATION LEADERSHIP IN HIGHWAY HISTORY

After graduating in 1986, Carol joined the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office in Lincoln to document historic buildings and sites across the state from Omaha to the Sand Hills in the northwest. She became active in the Society for Commercial Archaeology, serving on the board of this national organization dedicated to studying the history of roadside motels, gas stations, diners and other pop commercial architecture.

While in Lincoln, she began an extensive study of the Nebraska segment of the Lincoln Highway (U.S. Hwy. 30)—the first road to run coast to coast. It actually connected several existing roads and was "named" to promote tourism. Carol soon became a national leader in the history of American highways, serving on the Board of the national Lincoln Highway Association. She pursued some of the first work in studying the topic of racial segregation in the

Left: Carol at the 2015 ArtCar Ice Parade. Photo Frank Edgerton Martin
Below right: Graeser Park in 1940. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

roadside—documenting how Black travelers were restricted from almost every hotel, restaurant, and campground along highways across the South and beyond.

STEWARDED NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

In 1997, Carol joined the Historic Preservation team at the regional National Park Service office in Omaha. As the coordinator for the National Historic Landmarks in both Indiana and Illinois, Carol oversaw the preservation of a number of American landmarks, including many works by Frank Lloyd Wright such as Unity Temple in Oak Park and the Farnsworth House by modernist architect Mies van der Rohe in Plano, Illinois.

Holding one of the most important federal preservation positions in the country, Carol challenged the Richard Daley Jr. Administration in Chicago over the drastic proposed renovation of Soldiers Field, home of the Chicago Bears. She argued that the addition of massive structural elements for seating and skyboxes would compromise this National Historic Landmark's architectural integrity.

After repeated pressure from the mayor's office and their clear intent to pursue their project, Carol "de-listed" Soldiers Field as a National Historic Landmark—perhaps the most significant preservation action that the federal government can take. The controversy was national news in the historic preservation community and Carol was interviewed in the Chicago Tribune coverage.

HIGH SCHOOL REUNION

Carol was lured back to the Twin Cities area in 2006 through meeting her old classmate, Mark Mueske, who she later married, at their 30th class reunion in Prescott. They had been friends in high school—and rivals too. During their senior year, the two were opponents in the election for Student Council Vice-President. Carol won by one vote—and the validity of that election result remained a topic of debate for several years after they met again.

Carol became a Board member of the Jefferson Highway Association, a group celebrating another

national "named" tourist road that extended from Winnipeg to New Orleans—with its slogan From Pines to Palms. She made several road tours with the Jefferson Highway group—traveling sections of the road and documenting its conditions today.

In 2017, Carol received a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society to make use of their archives in writing about the Jefferson Highway's route through Minnesota. She spoke to many groups about her project and published her findings in MNopedia—the Historical Society's online encyclopedia of state history. [<https://www.mnopedia.org/thing/jefferson-highway>]

Carol always loved to be part of something larger than herself. She served as historian for the ongoing preservation effort to preserve Graeser Park, a WPA roadside rest along the old Lilac Way (now Hwy. 100) in Robbinsdale. [<https://restorelilacway.com/parks/graeser-robbinsdale-mn/about/>]

ARTCARS

Carol always had a knack for making friends and she collected friends everywhere she went. In recent years she met people from the Minnesota ArtCars + Art Bikes Artists group, who were so supportive of her and the TOY-oh-TAH ArtCar—complete with its own Facebook page.

Among my many odd yet wonderful experiences I had with Carol happened with the ArtCar group's winter 2015 ArtCar "Ice Parade" across the main channel of Lake Minnetonka from Excelsior to Big Island, once home to the Big Island Amusement Park.

I sat in the back seat of the TOY-oh-TAH as we raced across the ice. There had been no real snow yet—so it was great for ice boating but terrifying for me as I sat in the back seat, clutching a stuffed kewpie doll—part of the ArtCar's decor—as we raced across the massive sheet of ice at high speed.

Finally, we all stopped by Big Island, and I took this photo of Carol holding another Toy-oh-Tah toy..... This is how I will always remember her.



In July, John Guenther, president of the St. Louis Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, visited Minneapolis. In 2020, John invited MNSAH members to virtually attend several of his talks, including presentations on Norwegian Architecture, Harvey Ellis, and Bernard Maybeck. He recently invited MNSAH to attend his talk on Louis Sullivan.

While in Minneapolis, MNSAH member John Yust arranged for John Guenther to visit a number of historic buildings including Pillsbury Hall by Ellis. MNSAH president Rolf Anderson gave John a tour of Christ Church Lutheran, a National Historic Landmark by Eliel and Eero Saarinen.

MNSAH is very appreciative of the friendship we have formed with John and the connection to the St. Louis Chapter!

We await the initiation of the federal consultation process about the Phelps Mill, which is featured in the article below. The consultation has been delayed for quite some time and MNSAH is concerned about any impact the delay might have on the ability to engage in thoughtful and thorough discussions that will consider alternatives to the removal of the historic dam. Because it has recently been determined that the Phelps Mill is the most complete mill complex in the 5-state region, it is imperative that

every effort is made to preserve the mill in its entirety.

We are so looking forward to our fall tour of the Noerenberg Farm and Gardens on October 16th. This will be MNSAH's first in-person event since COVID-19 changed our world. We consider the event to be a reunion of our MNSAH family! But because there are still concerns about COVID-19, we want to assure our members that the tour will be largely out-of-doors and we will be able to keep socially distant. We look forward to seeing you in person!

Rolf Anderson
MNSAH President

Phelps Mill: A Minnesota Landmark



Photo Katie Ohland, Mead and Hunt

The consultation process concerning the future of Phelps Mill involves Otter Tail County, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with a number of consulting parties, including MNSAH. Our goal is to ensure that the historic integrity of this important property is preserved.

For MNSAH's Spring Event on June 29, historical consultant Sue Granger presented her substantial research on the history and significance of the historic 1889 Phelps Mill, 20 miles northeast of Fergus Falls in Otter Tail County. She also provided an update on the proposal to remove the mill's 1908 stone dam to facilitate fish passage on the Otter Tail River. As a consulting party to the Section 106

Review on the proposed project, MNSAH has been following the process since 2019.

Otter Tail County purchased the 45-acre site in the 1960s to preserve the mill property as a county park. The mill and dam were listed in the National Register in 1975, followed by the 1984 listing of the larger historic district. Gemini Research, Sue's consulting firm, was hired by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, lead federal agency for the project, to establish the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the work and to review the existing National Register evaluation and identify the historic properties involved.

Sue's recent investigation determined that Phelps is one of only three historic water-powered mills remaining in Minnesota that retain a well-preserved mill building and a historic-era dam. Even more significant, the Phelps Mill Historic

District, including six contributing buildings in the adjacent hamlet, as well as the mill pond, dam, and truss bridge, is unique as the most complete surviving rural mill complex in the five-state region. The mill and dam combination retains all the original waterpower system components, including two turbines, as well as the entire complement of original equipment in the mill. In recent decades, the site has been recognized for the significance of its historic cultural landscape, centered on the mill, dam, and bridge. There are no non-contributing intrusions.

Sue established the APE by mapping the outer boundary of the area where the sound of water rushing over the stone dam was audible, one of the key features of the water-powered mill site. If the dam were removed the auditory effect would be lost throughout this area, which extends beyond the historic district in some directions.

Submissions on Minnesota Architectural History Sought for Gebhard Award

The Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (MNSAH) invites the submission of articles and books on the history of Minnesota's built environment for the thirteenth David Stanley Gebhard Award, which honors the Minnesota-born SAH president and nationally renowned writer, whose subjects included this state's architectural history. MNSAH sponsors this award in order to help bring new works of architectural history to the widest possible audience.

Eligible books and articles must have been published between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2021. Publication may be in print or online. Although submissions must have a Minnesota focus, there is no restriction on the author's place of residence. There will be separate award categories for books and articles.

Submissions must be received no later than October 15, 2021. MNSAH will publish a list of all submissions in the Spring 2022 edition of its newsletter and on its webpage (<https://mnsah.org>).

A panel of three judges appointed by the MNSAH board will select the award recipients. Awards will be presented at its Annual Meeting in Spring 2022 and include an honorarium (\$300 for a book; \$100 for an article), a one-year membership in MNSAH, and a framed certificate.

The books and articles will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Whether the work advances or deepens a reader's understanding of the Minnesota built environment.
2. Whether the sources upon which the work is based are documented.
3. Whether the work balances sound scholarship with broad accessibility.
4. Whether the work is adequately and effectively illustrated.



Gebhard Award winners receive a framed certificate recognizing their award.

Applicants should send three copies of the nominated work by October 15th to:

David Stanley Gebhard Award
c/o Greg Gaut
1235 Yale Place #408
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Materials will not be returned. Thank you for your interest.

MNSAH Receives Grant for Modern Masters

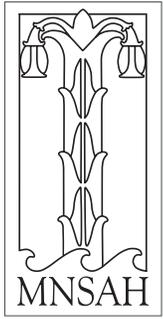
We are pleased to announce that MNSAH has received a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant in the amount of \$10,000 for the Minnesota Modern Masters project. Also known as Legacy Grants, these funds provide financial support for projects focused on preserving Minnesota's history and culture.

The Modern Masters project began some years ago to document architectural professionals who have made significant contributions to Minnesota's built environment from mid-century to the present through digital video interviews. Thus far, the project has produced 27 interviews on 38 subjects, with 45 interviewees. From 2016-2019, the project was funded through three grants from the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants program.

This latest grant will be used to enhance the viewer experience by adding contextual information that will explain more about who the interviewees are and why

they were chosen to be interviewed. The grant will pay for architectural history writers to research and compile biographical, career, and other pertinent information that is not currently available on the MNSAH website or in the interviews.

The Minnesota Modern Masters oral history project has generated considerable interest among architects, historians, and others, and has been featured in public programs hosted by several architectural organizations. The experience of seeing and hearing directly from some of the people who made and are making a significant impact on Minnesota's architectural heritage has received much applause. This new work will build on the value of the project to date, increasing the awareness and understanding of Minnesota's built environment and making the interviews more accessible and usable to a wide range of people.



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The Japanese-inspired boat house and gazebo.
Photo Rolf Anderson