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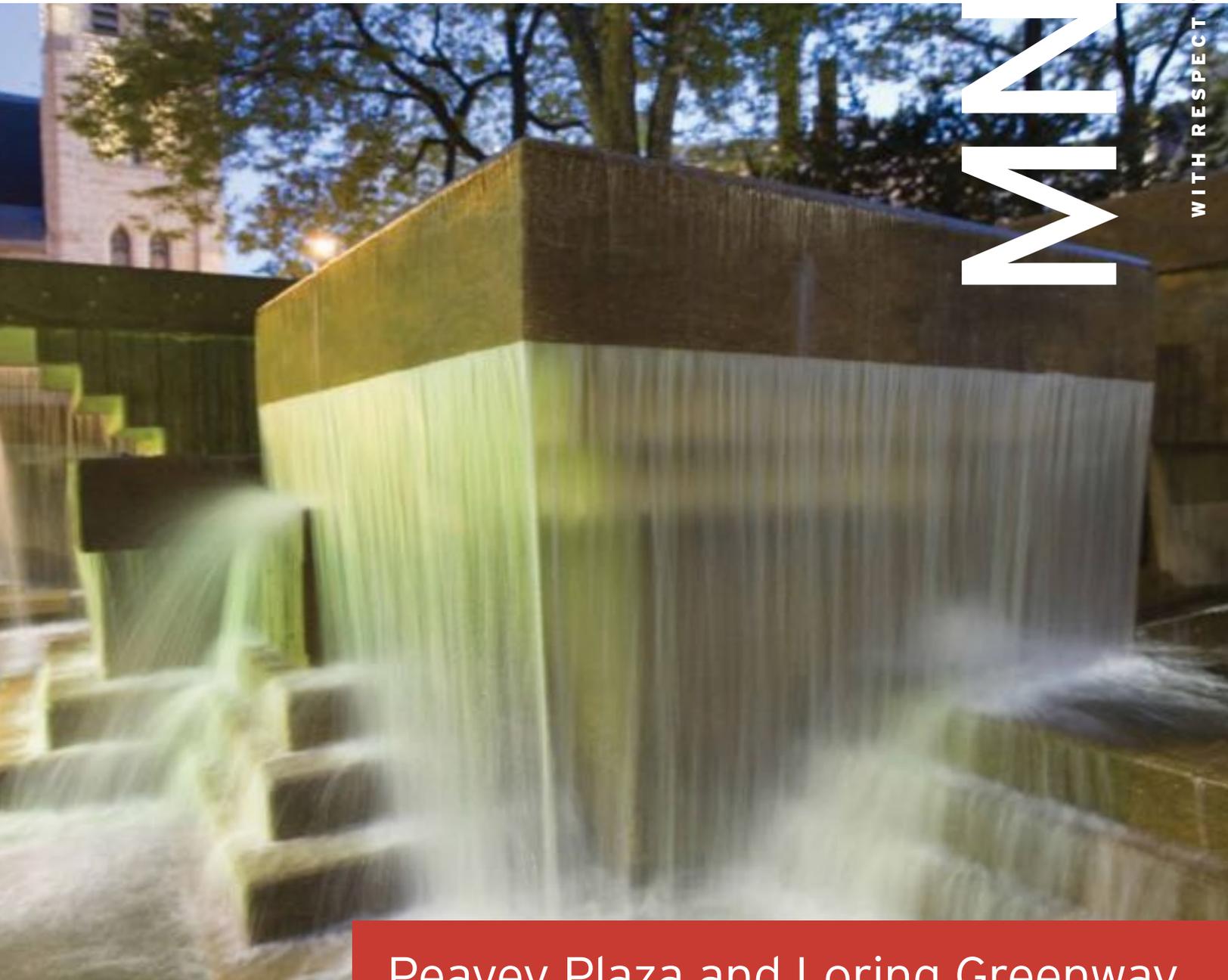
MINNESOTA CHAPTER
OF THE SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

MNSAH Fall Tour

Minneapolis Revival: Peavey Plaza and Loring Greenway
Saturday, October 8, 2022, 9:30 a.m.

MNSAH

WITH RESPECT TO ARCHITECTURE | FALL 2022



Peavey Plaza and Loring Greenway



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Downtown Minneapolis was fraying around the edges before World War II, and after the war the city went into a near-death tailspin as businesses and residents streamed to suburbia. Community and government leaders fought back, reinvigorating existing cultural assets like the Minnesota Orchestra and launching new ones, most notably the Guthrie Theater. They transformed the cityscape with an ambitious urban renewal campaign that demolished hundreds of buildings, giving designers a clean slate to reorganize street patterns and introduce new uses.

While opposition to this destruction catalyzed the preservation movement, preservationists have come to acknowledge that some products of urban renewal have architectural and historical significance. Such is the case with the Loring Greenway and Peavey Plaza.

The Loring Greenway was the heart of the Loring Park Development District, a multi-block area totally reconfigured as an urban renewal project. The linear park connected the Nicollet Mall and Loring Park in 1974-1975. Peavey Plaza was also an extension of the Nicollet Mall, which proved so popular after opening in 1966-1967 that a larger gathering space was needed. The plaza, completed in 1975, became the “living room” to Orchestra Hall, finished a year earlier.

Both the Loring Greenway and Peavey Plaza were designed by New York landscape architect M. Paul Friedman, who promoted an innovative approach to urban design, the park plaza. Using urban materials, such as concrete and metal, and rectilinear rather than curvilinear forms, the park plaza was a modern counterpoint to the picturesque greenery that had characterized parks until that time.

Left: Peavey Plaza. Photo Charlene Roise
 Right (top to bottom): Fountain before and after Peavey Plaza restoration. Photos Charlene Roise
 Bottom: Loring Greenway. Photo Liz Gales

The Greenway and Peavey were embraced by the community and received broad acclaim for their pioneering design. After decades of hard use, though, they were deteriorating by the twenty-first century. When the city introduced a plan to overhaul Peavey that would have destroyed the original design, preservationists got the property listed in the National Register, and Preservation Alliance of Minnesota (now Rethos) and The Cultural Landscape Foundation brought a lawsuit under the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act. The city ultimately rehabilitated the plaza in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, retaining its historic character while making modifications to meet modern environmental and accessibility requirements.

The tour will be led by Elizabeth Gales and Charlene Roise, historians/architectural historians with Hess, Roise and Company, Minneapolis-based historical consultants. They prepared the National Register nomination for Peavey Plaza and were involved with the long negotiations that led to its rehabilitation.

Elizabeth became an owner and principal of Hess Roise in 2020, and has been working for the firm since 2002. She assessed the National Register

eligibility of the Loring Greenway and Peavey Plaza as part of a cultural resources survey related to the Southwest Transitway light-rail project. She has prepared National Register nominations for a wide range of properties, traveled the country to document historic dams, and bridges, and prepared historic tax credit applications for buildings throughout the Midwest. She is a founder and former board chair of the non-profit Preserve Minneapolis and past board chair of the Minnesota chapter of DOCOMOMO US.

Since cofounding Hess Roise in 1990, Charlene has worked on a wide spectrum of cultural resource projects around the country. She served as the company’s president from 1997 until it was sold in 2020 and continues to work as a consultant to the firm. She loves to take on problematic rehab projects, complex Section 106 reviews, the “new old” (our mid-to late twentieth-century legacy), and other challenges. As a former board member of The Cultural Landscape Foundation based in Washington, D.C., she strongly supports the organization’s mission of connecting people to places.



Date: Saturday, October 8, 2022

Time: 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Where: Meet at the corner of the Nicollet Mall and 11th Street

Cost: \$15 for members and \$25 for non-members

Register: Online at www.mnsah.org/events/fall-tour or mail a check to MNSAH, c/o Bob Frame, Treasurer, 178 Goodrich Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55102

Questions: Email info@mnsah.org

This walking tour of Peavey Plaza and Loring Greenway will be held rain or shine so please dress accordingly.

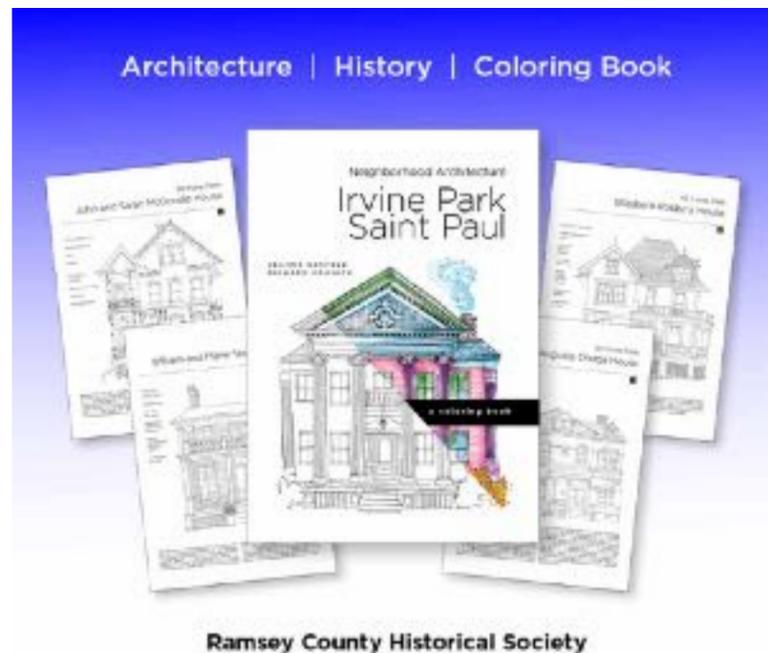
Winners of the 2022 Gebhard Awards Announced

Early Saint Paul history was the focus of three winning publications in MNSAH's 2022 Gebhard Award program, although viewed from very different perspectives. Adding to the diversity of topics in this round of winners was a book about a trailblazing architect who influenced modern architecture in Minnesota and beyond. This bi-annual competition for outstanding research and writing on Minnesota's architectural history is one of the few ways stories of the social, cultural, and economic forces of the past that led to Minnesota's built environment today are recognized.



The book award went to Jane King Hession for *Elizabeth Scheu Close: A Life in Modern Architecture*, published by the University of Minnesota Press. The book offers a comprehensive telling of the architect's life story and her influence on modern architecture. Scheu Close grew up in an early modern house in Vienna, immigrated to the U.S. in 1932, and graduated from MIT with degrees in architecture. She moved to Minneapolis in 1936, married Winston Close in 1938, and for the next 60 years their firm, Close Associates, was dedicated to modern design. They were best known for the design of 250 modern residences, and medical and laboratory facilities. The book is richly illustrated with photographs and drawings.

Honorable mention went to Jeanne Kosfeld and Richard Kronick for the book *Neighborhood Architecture—Irvine Park Saint Paul: A Coloring Book*, published by the Ramsey County Historical Society. The book provides a summary of the history of each house arrayed around Irvine Park, as well as the park itself. The hand-drawn illustrations of the houses are inviting for walking tours of the neighborhood and for coloring, making the book appealing to all ages. The houses are treated equally in their historical summaries, whether owned by a carpenter, like Alonzo Eaton, or by one of nineteenth-century Minnesota's most prominent citizens, such as Alexander Ramsey.



Left top: Jane King Hession and Lisel Close. Photo courtesy Jane Hession
 Left bottom: Images from Irvine Park coloring book.
 Below: Group portrait at the Sterling Club, ca. 1950s - 1960s. MNHS Photo
 Bottom: Frederick Spangenberg Farmhouse, 1864, St. Paul. Photo Rolf Anderson



The article award went to Jeremiah E. Ellis for "St. Paul's Distinct Leadership Tradition: A Century of the Sterling Club," published in *Ramsey County History* magazine. Founded in 1919 by a select group of community leaders from St. Paul's African American community, the Sterling Club had a fine line to walk between creating a setting of hospitality and distinction for its members while blending into a landscape of racial discrimination. The article tells the story of establishing a place for a community that was not welcome in many Twin Cities establishments at the time, and shines a light on one of Minnesota's lesser-known landmarks. The original clubhouse, at 315 N Dale Street, was designed by Sterling Club member and architect Clarence "Cap" Wigington. This building was demolished in 1962 but the club continued and built a new home in 1979, which remains as the clubhouse today. The Sterling Club celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2019.

Honorable mention went to architect and researcher Diane Trout-Oertel for the article "Built to Last: The Historic Spangenberg Farmhouses," published in *Minnesota History* magazine. Trout-Oertel takes us down the bluffs along what is now Mississippi River Boulevard in St. Paul, where a German immigrant dairy farmer quarried limestone for his house and farm buildings near the river, as well as for his brother's farmhouse 15 miles away in Woodbury. Trout-Oertel fills in the story with an account of the political and economic background in the German states at the time, which provided the impetus for so many people to seek new opportunities abroad, and how the families responded to rural-to-urban changes in the two cities.

2022 Gebhard Award Winners

BOOKS:

Winner

Elizabeth Scheu Close: A Life in Modern Architecture
 By Jane King Hession
 University of Minnesota Press, 2020

Honorable Mention

Neighborhood Architecture—Irvine Park—A Coloring Book
 By Jeanne Kosfeld and Richard Kronick
 Ramsey County Historical Society, 2021

ARTICLES:

Winner

"St. Paul's Distinct Leadership Tradition: A Century of the Sterling Club"
 By Jeremiah E. Ellis
Ramsey County History, Summer 2019

Honorable Mention

"Built to Last: The Historic Spangenberg Farmhouses"
 By Diane Trout-Oertel
Minnesota History, Spring 2020

The 2022 Gebhard Awards mark the 13th time the awards have been made. Named in honor of the late David Stanley Gebhard, distinguished Minnesota-born architectural historian, the award recognizes the outstanding books and articles on Minnesota's built environment published in the preceding two years.



Hamline Midway Library Threatened with Demolition

The St. Paul Public Library administration, in concert with the City Council and the Mayor's office, have decided that the 1930 Henry Hale Memorial Library, Hamline Branch (now called the Hamline Midway Library), must be replaced in order to meet current needs, rather than renovating the building and perhaps adding an addition. At the same time, the State Historic Preservation Office has declared the building eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and a nomination has been submitted.



Hamline Midway Library. Photo courtesy Midway Como Frogtown Monitor

The small gem of a library, located at Minnehaha and Snelling, has a fascinating history, which begins with the discovery that Carl H. Buetow was the architect. It was known that Buetow worked for the St. Paul City Architect's office sometime in the 1920s, but the extent of involvement wasn't known until recent investigations of his work for St. Paul Public Schools. There were at least a half-dozen school plans from 1923-1930 with his signature, sometimes appearing alongside Clarence "Cap" Wigington's initials. Wigington was an African American architect who only in recent years has been credited for his work in the city architect's office.

The social history, too, was slowly uncovered. The building's existence is owed to a bequest from a wealthy local attorney and property owner, Henry Hale. In 1890 he created a will that would fund a "free" public library (most were still subscription) and a free medical dispensary (clinic). In what today might be considered remarkably progressive language from a white businessperson in 1890, he wrote that "one half of said estate to found, establish, and maintain for the benefit of the poor of the City of St. Paul and of the County of Ramsey . . . without reference to the religious sect to which such poor may belong or to their race, color or condition of life, a Free Medical Dispensary and the other equal one-half of the said estate for all inhabitants of the City of St. Paul and of said County of Ramsey without distinction to found, establish and maintain a free library..." The funds were not to be made available until 25 years after Hale's death.

At the same time, women's clubs around the country were turning their interests from the standard topics of art, literature, music, and history, toward discussions and actions in the areas of civic interest, such as public health and education. In the Hamline neighborhood alone there were over a half dozen such clubs, and the most active in social issues was the Hamline Fortnightly Club, chaired by Mrs. Mary Akers. Together with the Hamline Commercial Club, Akers and others began to advocate for a library in their community. By 1908, they helped establish a "Lending Station" on Snelling, which remained in various locations along the nearby blocks until 1930 when the present building was constructed with Hale's bequest.

MNSAH held its annual Works in Progress program at the library in 2015. Our Advocacy Committee wrote a letter of support of preserving the building earlier this year. It is hoped that the library can be preserved, and that an addition to the rear of the building will add the desired space.

Phelps Mill Consultation Process Begins

On June 29, 2022, the first consultation meeting was held to discuss a proposal by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to introduce fish passage at the Phelps Mill and Dam on the Otter Tail River in west central Minnesota. This proposal is part of a larger project to remove a number of dams on the Otter Tail River and other streams in the Red River system. Similar proposals are in progress in other areas of the state. The meeting was held at Phelps Mill.

The consultation is required because the DNR has requested federal funding for the project from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). As stipulated in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, federal agencies must consider the effects on historic properties for projects they implement, approve, or fund.

Phelps Mill, with all its original equipment, was purchased by Otter Tail County in the 1960s and the county has operated the property as a historic site and county park since that time. The mill and dam complex were listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1974. The larger Phelps Mill Historic District was listed in the NRHP in 1984 and includes the mill and dam as well as nearby properties



Left to right, Rolf Anderson (MNSAH), Sue Granger (Gemini Research), Dennis Gimmetstad (MNSAH), and Tim Tumberg (SIA) with Phelps Mill in the background. Photo Ginny Way

associated with the mill. An evaluation conducted by Gemini Research in 2019 confirmed the historic district has statewide significance and also determined there is no similar mill complex anywhere in the five-state region with the high historic integrity of Phelps Mill. A study is now underway to determine if Phelps Mill is of national significance.

Interested individuals and organizations applied to serve as consulting parties in the consultation process. The consulting parties for the Phelps Mills project include Otter Tail County, Otter Tail County Historical Society, the DNR, Friends of Phelps Mill, Gemini Research, property owner Regina Bergantine, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Great Northern Chapter of the Society of Industrial Archeology (SIA), and MNSAH. Rolf Anderson and Dennis Gimmetstad represented MNSAH at the meeting.

Three proposed alternatives for the site were discussed at the meeting.

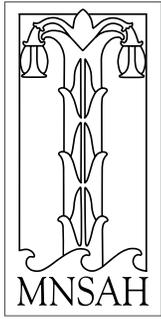
- "No Action," which would mean that fish passage would not take place at Phelps Mill and there would be no changes to the historic site.
- "Downstream Rock Rapids," which involves constructing a rapids that would span two-thirds of the river channel. Fish could then navigate over the rapids. The mill race near the mill building would remain in place but the dam structure on the opposite bank would be removed. The rock rapids would bury the remainder of the dam and extend 350 feet downstream. A sheet piling wall along the rapids would split the river into two sections. The estimated cost of the "Downstream Rock Rapids" is \$2.8 million.



Members of the consulting parties on the Phelps Mill bridge. Photo Rolf Anderson

- "Nature Like Fish Bypass Channel," which would involve excavating a channel over 500 feet long immediately west of the dam and constructing a rock rapids. Fish could navigate through the bypass. The bypass would reach a maximum width of 180 feet, including the channel and sloping sidewalls. By comparison, the river is 110 feet wide at this location. Because the bypass would require excavating through a steep hillside, the channel would reach a maximum depth of 30 feet when measured from the base of the channel to the top of the hillside. The estimated cost of the "Nature Like Fish Bypass Channel" is \$2.7 million.

Since the in-person meeting at Phelps Mill, the USFWS has decided to remove the "Downstream Rock Rapids" from the list of alternatives. The consulting parties are now awaiting additional information about the project from the USFWS. The parties will then have the opportunity to provide formal comments about the proposed alternatives. The public will also have an opportunity to comment. Then many decisions will need to be made. The USFWS will need to decide if they would agree to provide funding, and Otter Tail County must decide its position in the matter. MNSAH will continue to participate in the discussions until the consultation about this important historic site is concluded.



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FROM THE BOARD

In this issue we're pleased to recognize the winners of the 2022 David Gebhard Awards. The winning books and articles represent diverse stories about the Minnesota built environment, often calling attention to little known buildings and events. And the whimsical architectural coloring book is certainly a nice inclusion and unexpected publication. Our congratulations to the winners. We encourage them to continue to share their fascinating and creative research with us.

One unanticipated theme emerged in the articles in this issue; namely, the complexity in preserving our historic resources and how the number of preservation issues seems to have increased in recent years. The consultation process is now underway concerning the possible implementation

of fish passage at Phelps Mill and its potential effect. What was not previously known was the rarity of the site, which should be taken into account when any decisions are made about any changes to the property.

The Hamline Midway Library was the location of a MNSAH Works in Progress event back in 2015. Now the city of St. Paul is proposing its demolition and the construction of a new library rather than considering the expansion of the existing building. Very importantly, the building has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Our fall tour of modern landscapes in downtown Minneapolis will also illustrate a preservation issue.

The city of Minneapolis proposed significant alterations to Peavey Plaza, a modernist landscape designed by Paul Friedman. A lawsuit was required in order to convince the city to modify its plans so that the plaza could be rehabilitated but still retain its historic character.

We look forward to seeing you on our fall tour, an in-person event, which we will hope will signal the return to our usual in-person programs. Plus it should be an opportunity to learn about modern landscape designs and why they are important and worthy of preservation.

Thank you for being a member of the MNSAH family!

Rolf Anderson
MNSAH President