

Top: Keble College Chapel by William Butterfield, 1876. Photo Victoria Young

Bottom: Keble College main chapel interior by William Butterfield, 1876. Photo Victoria Young

Right: Keble College side chapel interior by John Micklethwaite, 1895. Photo Victoria Young

MINNESOTA CHAPTER  
OF THE SOCIETY OF  
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

# MNSAH

WITH RESPECT TO ARCHITECTURE | SPRING 2024



MNSAH Annual Meeting  
Minnesota Humanities Center  
Tuesday, April 30, 2024



Keble College Chapel

VICTORIA YOUNG, KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**MNSAH Annual Meeting  
and Gebhard Awards**  
Minnesota Humanities Center  
Tuesday, April 30, 2024



Victoria Young in the University of St. Thomas Chapel. Photo courtesy Victoria Young

# Keble College Chapel: John Thomas Micklethwaite Renovates the "Holy Zebra"

**Victoria Young, keynote speaker**

This year's annual meeting presentation transports MNSAH members to England where we'll learn about Victoria Young's groundbreaking research that shines new light on the 1895 completion of a side chapel in the Chapel at Keble College, Oxford University, by the Yorkshire-born John Thomas Micklethwaite, an underappreciated architect of the Gothic Revival.

The 1876 main chapel by William Butterfield is known for its exuberant High Victorian Gothic style, a harmony between exterior structural polychromy and an interior decorative program in colorful glass, mosaics, and tiles. Butterfield knew the chapel was a complete and fully integrated building project, but his patrons did not understand it in the same way. Before the chapel had been completed, Keble College's Council accepted from donor Martha Combe, William Holman Hunt's 1853 painting "The Light of the World," with the stipulation that it hang in Butterfield's chapel. Butterfield vehemently disagreed and for years "Light" sat in storage before being placed in the new library in 1878. Just over a decade later, the Council revisited the idea of hanging the painting in the chapel.

Nearly all scholars who have researched Butterfield, Keble, or Hunt concluded that a new side chapel for Hunt's painting was added on to Butterfield's structure. This is incorrect, however, as it was a renovation of existing space completed by Micklethwaite, a protégé of George Gilbert Scott known for his new church designs in a late nineteenth-century Gothic Revival style, restorations of medieval churches, writings and lectures, and his role as the Surveyor of the Fabric of Westminster Abbey (1898-1906).

Victoria's archival research has uncovered that Micklethwaite renovated a sacristy and transept not only to house "Light" but also to provide better acoustics, additional liturgical solutions, and memorials for Mrs. Combe and a recently deceased Council member. Micklethwaite's architectural solution not only responded to functional needs, but also successfully complemented Butterfield's High Victorian Gothic, a style dubbed by local critics as the "holy zebra."

**Dr. Victoria M. Young, Ph.D.**, is Professor of Modern Architectural History at the University of St. Thomas. She is a past president of both MNSAH and the national SAH. Her 2014 book, *Saint John's Abbey Church: Marcel Breuer and the Creation of a Modern Sacred Space*, explored how the relationship between Breuer and Associates and the Benedictines shaped mid-twentieth-century Catholic space. Recently published is Victoria's chapter on the National World War II Museum in New Orleans in *War and Remembrance* and a chapter in Anat Geva's edited volume, *Water and Sacred Architecture*, which considered Breuer's baptistry designs for Catholic churches in the United States. Her current research on John Thomas Micklethwaite (1843-1906) is part of a larger book project on the understudied architect's career.

## MNSAH Nominating Committee Report

MNSAH members who attend the annual meeting on April 30, 2024 will vote on the following slate of officers and board members submitted by the nominating committee. New board nominations may come from the floor.

<b>President</b>	<b>Rolf Anderson</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Martha Douglas</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Bob Frame</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Barb Bezat</b>
<b>At Large</b>	<b>Renee Barnes</b>
	<b>Leslie Coburn</b>
	<b>Nicole Foss</b>
	<b>Katie Ohland</b>
	<b>Matt Seltzer</b>

All officers are nominated for one-year terms. New board members Leslie Coburn and Katie Ohland (see bios below) will serve for two-year terms. Board members Rolf Anderson, Bob Frame, Barb Bezat, Renee Barnes, and Matt Seltzer are nominated for an additional two-year term. The remaining board members will be serving the second year of the two-year term to which they were elected in 2023.

**Leslie Coburn** is an Environmental Review Specialist at the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office. She received a master's degree in Urban Planning, with a focus on historic preservation, from the University of Minnesota and B.A.s in Journalism and French from the University of Iowa. She is a certified planner and meets the Secretary of the Interior's professional standards for architectural history.

**Katie Ohland** is a Historian in the Cultural Resources Unit at the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Previously she was a Cultural Resources Specialist at the consulting firm of Mead and Hunt. Katie received a master's degree in Architecture, Preservation, and Conservation from the University of Minnesota, and a bachelor's degree in studio arts and mathematics from St. Olaf College.

## The Details

### DATE AND PLACE:

Tuesday, April 30, 2024  
Minnesota Humanities Center  
987 Ivy Avenue East  
Saint Paul, MN 55106

6:00 p.m. Reception

6:30 p.m. Dinner

7:30 p.m. Annual Meeting & David Gebhard Awards

8:00 p.m. Keynote Presentation

9:00 p.m. Adjourn

### COST:

\$48.00 for MNSAH members

\$58.00 for nonmembers

### REGISTRATION:

Deadline: Wednesday, April 24, 2024

Please register online at [www.mnsah.org/events/annual-meeting/](http://www.mnsah.org/events/annual-meeting/) or mail your check and menu choice (payable to MNSAH) to:

MNSAH  
c/o Bob Frame, Treasurer  
178 Goodrich Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55102

*Note: Members who wish to attend the annual meeting and presentation, but not the dinner, may do so at no cost. Please notify MNSAH at [info@mnsah.org](mailto:info@mnsah.org) if you plan to attend only the meeting and presentation.*

### MENU:

Beef Bourguignon or  
Butternut Squash and Wild Mushroom Lasagna

Dinners will be accompanied by a salad and dessert.

### DIRECTIONS:

From Highway 35E, exit onto Maryland Avenue, proceed east 1.7 miles to Earl Street, turn left and go four blocks to Ivy Avenue East, turn left and the Humanities Center will be on your right.

# MNSAH's Fall Tour of Modernist Homes in Saint Paul



Architect Jeri Zuber (left) speaks to tour attendees about the Fry II house. Photo Rolf Anderson

On a magnificent fall day, MNSAH toured two fascinating houses on South Lexington Parkway in Saint Paul. Landscape architect Marion Fry commissioned both houses. The first house (Fry I) was built in 1956 and designed by Lisl Close. The second house (Fry II) was built in 1979 immediately to the north of the first house. Both are sited on a dramatic, heavily-wooded hillside. The event may have attracted a record turnout for a MNSAH tour!

In the course of planning the tour, a mystery presented itself. While it is well-documented that the Fry I house was designed by Lisl Close, no documentation could be located to associate Lisl with the Fry II house, even though it had been passed down through subsequent owners that

Lisl had also designed Fry II. Jane Hession and Rolf Anderson unraveled the mystery and determined that Fry II was in fact designed by architect Jeri Zuber. MNSAH contacted Jeri and he was able to attend the tour, along with his wife, architect Wylie Baker Zuber, and speak about the complex design of the house.

Our gracious hosts included Hamlin Metzger and Lisa Arnold, the owners of Fry I, and Paul Olson and Kelly Johnson, the owners of Fry II. Paul and Kelly were particularly pleased to meet the architect of their home!

**ROLF ANDERSON**



From left to right, Paul Olson, Kelly Johnson, Wylie Baker Zuber, and Jeri Zuber pictured in the Fry II house. Photo Rolf Anderson



From left to right, Hamlin Metzger, Lisa Arnold, and Rolf Anderson pictured in the Fry I house. Photo courtesy Rolf Anderson

news FROM THE BOARD

MNSAH's recent Works in Progress program featured two speakers, Ginny Way, National Register Historian at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and Jeanne Kilde, a cultural historian of religion and Director Emerita of the Religious Studies Program at the University of Minnesota. Ginny demonstrated a new website available to the public that provides access to information on over 100,000 properties in Minnesota. The project involved digitizing SHPO's voluminous files compiled over the decades. Jeanne spoke on the development of the interfaith chapel and its emergence as a successful building type, which was not easily achieved. A focus of her talk was the conceptualization of religious space on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) that culminated in Eero Saarinen's innovative Kresge Chapel in 1955.

The Minnesota Modern Masters Committee is in the process of conducting interviews with AIA-MN 2020 Gold Medal Winners James Garrett, Jr. and Nathan Johnson, principals of 4RM+ULA architects in St. Paul; and Mohammed Lawal, FAIA, and Quin Scott, principals of Minneapolis-based LSE Architects, which won the 2023 AIA Minnesota Firm Award. These interviews will round out the Minnesota Modern Masters oral history project with a total of 32 hour-and-a-half video interviews. The interviews, along with transcripts and accompanying biographies, are available to researchers at the Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota. Edited fifteen-minute versions of the interviews are available on the MNSAH website.

A reporter from *The Buffalo News* in Buffalo, New York, contacted MNSAH to ask for information about architect Dennis SunRhodes. A building in Niagara Falls, designed by Dennis and known as The Turtle, is threatened with demolition and the reporter is covering the story. The remarkable building was built as a Native American cultural center but no longer serves that purpose. This is the second time over the last year that MNSAH has been contacted about a threatened building located in another state, which was designed by a Minnesota architect. The previous situation involved a chapel in Ohio designed by Ed Sovik, which we reported in this newsletter.

We hope you can join us for MNSAH's Annual Meeting on April 30, 2024 at the Minnesota Humanities Center!

**ROLF ANDERSON**  
MNSAH PRESIDENT

transportation costs. Car parts made in Detroit would be efficiently loaded onto rail cars and then shipped to local markets where they would be assembled. Ford understood that the bitter rivalry between Minneapolis and St. Paul made it inadvisable to favor one city with a plant -- so he decided to build two. Minneapolis received the larger plant, a ten-story structure at 5th Avenue North and 5th Street, and St. Paul received the consolation prize, a three story "sub-assembly" plant at 117 University Avenue, at Rice Street.

Both buildings were completed in 1914 and designed by John Graham, who was the architect for most of the branch plants. In some cities, there was also a local architect of record. In Minneapolis, the firm of Kees and Colburn was credited with designing the Ford plant, but in St. Paul, both John Graham and Kees and Colburn are listed on the building permit. The smaller sub-assembly plant in St. Paul was more ornate than most Ford plants in deference to its prominent location adjoining the new state capitol and its more sales-oriented purpose.

The two multi-story plants in the Twin Cities quickly became obsolete with the introduction of the assembly line. The St. Paul building was then occupied by a series of Ford dealerships, including one owned by Merritt J. Osborn, who would later establish the Ecolab Company.

The state of Minnesota acquired the building in 1952 and used it for offices for over fifty years. In 2001, the state retained LHB Engineers & Architects to assess options for the Ford Building. Its report stated that, "The existing Ford Building is still a viable building," concluding that preservation is "The most cost effective scenario for the state to consider and pursue." Nonetheless,



Ford Building construction photo, 1913. Note the horse-drawn wagon transporting a fluted column to be installed at the building's entrance. Photo courtesy Brian McMahon

the state announced plans to demolish the building, alarming preservationists who argued that virtually all Ford plants from this period were successfully adapted, including the one in Minneapolis.

In 2005, the Minnesota Department of Administration convened a task force, known as the Ford Building Working Group, which was comprised of over 50 community representatives and elected officials. It explored a range of options, including demolition. Its final report declared, "The Ford Building has historical significance and should not be sold, moved or demolished," emphasizing that, "The least costly scenario evaluated is Scenario #1 [preservation] in which the existing building is extensively renovated." Nonetheless, the state demolished the historic Ford Building on February 5, 2024.

**BRIAN McMAHON**

*Brian is a former MNSAH board member. He won the David Gebhard Award for his book The Ford Century in Minnesota published by the University of Minnesota Press. Brian is a trained architect who has written over forty articles on historic architecture, industry, and urban planning.*



Ford Building, interior photo, 1914. Note the ornate capitals atop the columns. Photo courtesy Brian McMahon



Ford Building, demolition photo, 2024. Photo Fred Melo courtesy St. Paul Pioneer Press

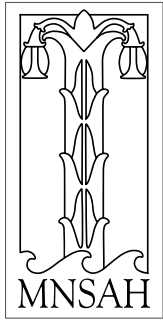
## Historic Ford Building in St. Paul Demolished

The Ford Motor Company was established in 1903 and within ten years its Model T car accounted for over half the cars sold in the United States. Sales were strong in Minnesota. As a 1913 Ford company newsletter noted, "From the very first the Northwest was a very good market for Ford cars. There is something about the hardy life of the farmers, most of them descendants of the Vikings that led them to appreciate peculiarly the clean-cut strength of the Ford."

To keep up with demand, Ford dispersed production to branch plants and service buildings around the country, including Minneapolis and St. Paul. This relieved rail congestion in Detroit and saved on



Ford Building, 1914. Photo courtesy Brian McMahon



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## 2024 Gebhard Award Submissions

MNSAH received the following submissions for the 2024 Gebhard Award. Named in honor of David Stanley Gebhard, distinguished Minnesota-born architectural historian, the award recognizes outstanding books and articles on Minnesota's architectural history published in the preceding two years.

### Books

Dave Beal, *Mairs and Power at 90: A Rich History, A Bright Future*, Ramsey County Historical Society, 2022.

Karen Fults Kaler, *Eastcliff: History of a Home*, University of Minnesota Press, 2023.

George Vrtis and Christopher W. Wells, Editors, *Nature's Crossroads: The Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022.

### Articles

Matt Goff, "A Slow Track to Nowhere: St. Paul's Downtown People Mover." *Ramsey County History*, Vol 58, No. 1 (Spring, 2023).

Eileen McCormack, "Closing the Book: The James Jerome Hill Reference Library, 1921-2021." *Ramsey County History*, Vol 56, No. 3 (Fall, 2021).

Paul Nelson, "The Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County." *Ramsey County History*, Vol 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2023).

Christine Podas-Larson, "The Aesthetics of Bridge Design: A Paean to Two of St. Paul's Elegant Park Bridges." *Ramsey County History*, Vol 56, No. 2 (Summer 2021).

Abigail Venuso, "A New Exhibit Expands the Stories at Split Rock Lighthouse." *Minnesota History*, Vol 68, No. 5 (Spring 2023).

A panel of three judges appointed by the MNSAH board will select the award recipients. MNSAH will present the awards at its Annual Meeting on April 30, 2024. The award will include an honorarium (\$300 for a book; \$100 for an article), a one-year membership in MNSAH, and a framed certificate. For full details about the Gebhard Award go to <https://mnsah.org/programs/gebhard-award>.



Gebhard Award winners receive a framed certificate recognizing their award.