

Top: Stairway by Garth Rockcastle and Karen Wirth. Photo Rolf Anderson

Bottom: Open Book. Photo Rolf Anderson

Right: Rooftop terrace, Open Book. Photo Rolf Anderson

MINNESOTA CHAPTER
OF THE SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

MNSAH

WITH RESPECT TO ARCHITECTURE | FALL 2024



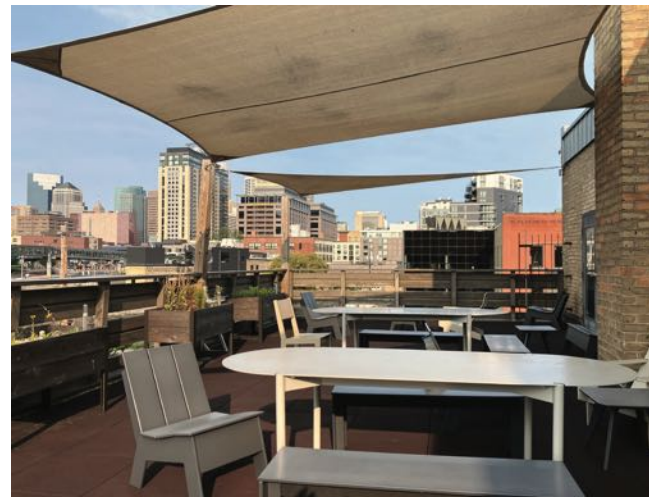
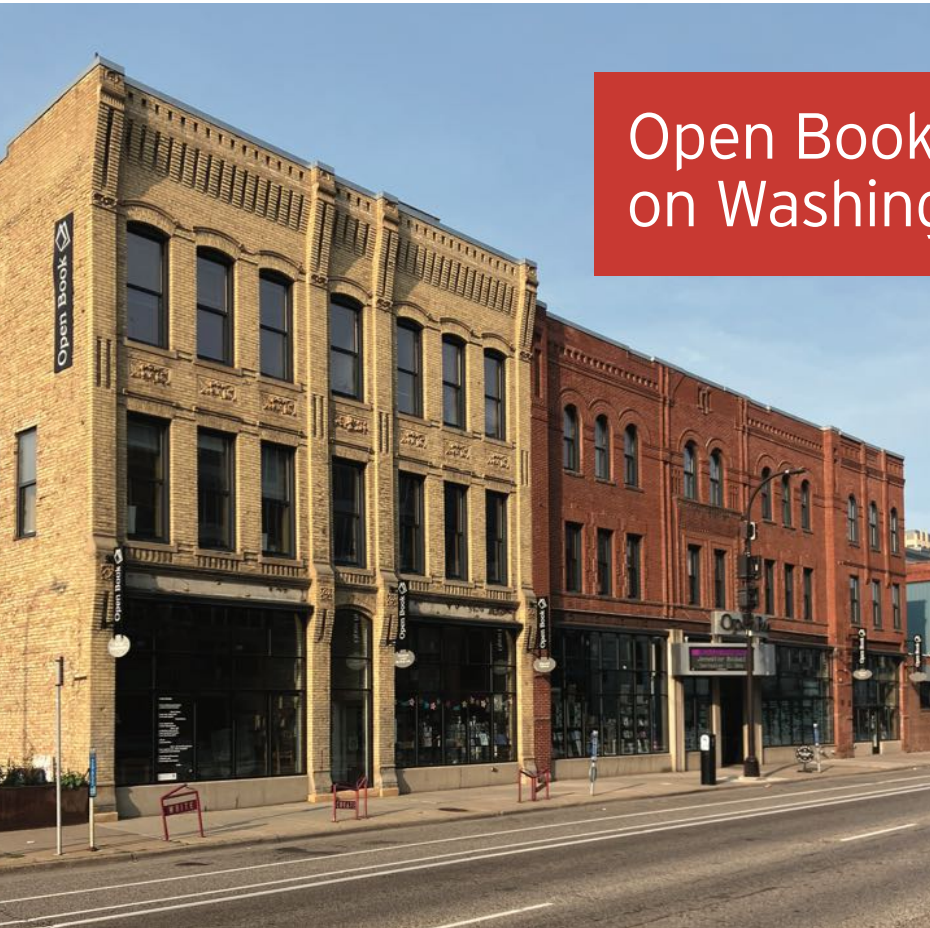
MNSAH Fall Tour

Saturday, October 26, 2024, 9:30 a.m.

*"They've made magic of
a building."*

—Nancy Gaschott, former Open Book project manager

Open Book and Revitalization
on Washington Avenue





Stairway to nowhere. Photo Rolf Anderson

The Details

DATE AND TIME

Saturday, October 26, 2024
9:30-11:30 a.m.

LOCATION

Meet in the second-floor reception area
at Open Book for coffee and pastries
1011 Washington Avenue South, Minneapolis

COST

\$15 for MNSAH members
\$25 for nonmembers

REGISTRATION

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

PARKING

Free parking on the east side of the building

QUESTIONS

Email info@mnsah.org

Fall Tour at Open Book

MNSAH's fall tour will feature **Open Book**, a center for reading, writing, and book arts located on Washington Avenue in downtown Minneapolis. Open Book is the umbrella organization formed by three nonprofits, The Loft Literary Center (an educational and support organization for writers), The Minnesota Center for Book Arts (a visual arts center offering programs in letterpress printing, bookbinding, and papermaking), and Milkwood Editions (an independent publisher of literary fiction, nonfiction, and poetry).

The three nonprofits decided to join forces and create a first-of-its-kind center for book and literary arts. To begin the process, they called on **Garth Rockcastle**, of **Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle**, a firm interviewed for MNSAH's Minnesota Modern Masters program, and developer **Chuck Leer** to assist in the selection of a building. Three vacant nineteenth-century buildings were selected for the project—buildings very much in need of revitalization. While the three organizations were somewhat daunted by the condition of the buildings, they forged ahead with the project. At first, they expected that each organization would reside in their own building. But instead, Garth created a remarkable design that integrated the interiors with dynamic spaces that participate with each other, and engage both the staff and visitors. Original architectural features were retained, recalling the past lives of the buildings. At the time, **Nancy Gaschott**, project manager

for Open Book, stated, “They’ve made magic of a building. To me, it’s a revolutionary way to design a building.”

Our program will begin with coffee and pastries in the second-floor reception area and we’ll then proceed to the Performance Hall to hear the story of the creation of Open Book from **Peggy Korsmo-Kennon**. Garth Rockcastle will then take us through the journey that brought this remarkable building to its dynamic form. In his 2017 Minnesota Modern Masters interview, Garth cited Open Book as a particularly inspiring project where many of his ideas and interests converged. Following the talks, we’ll tour the building from top to bottom, from the printing presses in the basement to the terrace on the rooftop.

When the award-winning Open Book opened in 2000, it was an anchor in the renaissance of the area. But revitalization along Washington Avenue continues to this day. After the tour, you may experience other important projects, including the current revitalization of a building on the adjacent corner that is to become the headquarters for the **McKnight Foundation**. Within sight is the new **Red Lake Nation College**, the first Tribal College within an urban center. Two 100-year-old buildings were joined with new infill by Firm Ground Architects & Designers. And along 10th Avenue, don’t miss a charming residence said to be the last single-family home in downtown Minneapolis.

MNSAH Annual Meeting

On April 30, 2024, MNSAH members gathered at the Minnesota Humanities Center for our annual meeting. Following dinner and our business meeting, MNSAH past president Victoria Young presented the keynote talk about her fascinating research on Keble College Chapel at Oxford University, England. Her meticulous research corrected a common misunderstanding about the architectural history of the building and the role of architect John Thomas Micklethwaite, an underappreciated architect of the Gothic Revival. Our thanks to Victoria for correcting the historical record.

Following the presentation, MNSAH announced the David Gebhard Awards for the best book and article on the Minnesota built environment. The winner of the book award was Karen Fults Kaler for *Eastcliff: History of a Home* published by the University of Minnesota Press. The judges noted, “This engaging and well-researched book recounts the architectural and social history of Eastcliff, a former

lumber baron’s house on the East Bank of the Mississippi River that has served as the official residence of the president of the University of Minnesota for more than six decades. Author Karen Fults Kaler, who lived in the house for eight years during her husband’s tenure as president, knows her subject well. In her research, she unearthed a wealth of information, which she imparts with warmth, humor, and authority. The book is richly illustrated with fine historic photos that are accompanied by a full set of architectural plans drawn by Kaler, who is a graphic designer. Photographs and stories of those who were fortunate enough to inhabit Eastcliff over the years further enhance the tale. The book is a well-told, beautifully illustrated documentation of a house that has played a prominent role in the history of the University of Minnesota and the state of Minnesota.”

The winner of the article award was Christine Podas-Larson for “The Aesthetics of Bridge Design: A Paean to Two of St. Paul’s Elegant Park Bridges,”



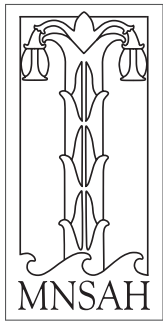
Keynote Speaker Victoria Young with a photo of Keble College Chapel shown on the screen. Photo Rolf Anderson

published in *Ramsey County History*. The judges noted, “Christine Podas-Larson looks at two St. Paul bridges to tell the story of civic philosophies united with the local, transformative engineering of new and novel reinforced concrete. Bridge building became cheaper and stronger at a time when beauty for the public good mattered. Here, the reader is introduced to the characters made familiar by street names such as Cleveland, Wheelock, and others not known as well: Wheeler, Wenzel, Turner, and others whose contributions are well-noted. The illustrations propel the story forward by situating the reader geographically and historically. In describing the legacy of well-applied building technology combined with spirit-lifting aesthetic beauty, Podas-Larson’s work is well-timed and very well done.”

MNSAH congratulates the Gebhard winners and also thanks the Gebhard Award judges, Cheryll Fong, Jane King Hession, and Diane Trout-Oertel.



Karen Fults Kaler, center, accepting the Gebhard Award with Nicole Foss and Rolf Anderson. Photo Todd Grover



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The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District Revisited

In 2002, MNSAH toured the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District. We had lunch at Nikki's Café, and our tour guide, Rolf Anderson, presented a slide show of current and historic images of the district using a Kodak carousel projector.

MNSAH returned to the warehouse district for its 2024 Spring Tour. Much has changed in the intervening 22 years. Sadly, Nikki's Café, with its inventive menu and colorful owner, is no longer extant. Nor is Theatre de la Juene Lune. Nor are there any remaining industrial or wholesale businesses. But some things don't change. Rolf Anderson was still our tour guide. He took us on a journey through this remarkably popular district, with trendy shops and restaurants located throughout, warehouses converted into offices and residences, and new construction occupying nearly every vacant lot.

As architectural historians, we recognize that buildings must change if we are to preserve them. But change also creates preservation issues. We'll return in another 22 years to see how the district has evolved.

Photos courtesy Nicole Foss and Jennifer Olivarez

