

DEDICATED TO BUILDING BRIDGES

Annette Whaley was watching a play at the History Theatre about Coco Irvine, a privileged, precocious European American teen growing up on St. Paul's Summit Avenue in the 1920s. During the 2012 performance, Annette's mind drifted to a diverse group of high school students in the audience. She recalls thinking, "They must be bored to tears."

Chatting with the students' teacher during intermission, Annette learned that, in fact, the students, including those not born in the United States, were loving the play.

"Coco talks about how she doesn't get along with her parents, she sneaks out, she was mischievous in school; this was stuff kids can all relate to," Annette says. "That cultural divide bridged quickly, in my mind."

Annette and her husband, John, are dedicated to building such bridges in K-12 history classrooms across Minnesota, and the Minnesota Historical Society is a part of their efforts. "I had never thought of MNHS as a place of curriculum development," John says. "Once we understood that it's a big part of what MNHS does, then it became much more relevant to us and in our interest in funding education. This is becoming increasingly important as we view and interpret the past through a contemporary lens."

The John and Annette Whaley Endowment Fund for History Education supports MNHS programs that train K-12 history teachers to creatively inspire students of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The fund also supports the production and delivery of educational materials that bring primary sources, including items from MNHS collections, into the classroom.

"The Whaleys' generous gift shows a strong commitment to teachers and students, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of this endowment," says Jennifer Cadwell-Vaughan, MNHS manager of teacher education and curriculum development.

The Whaleys see that Minnesota's demographics have changed from when they grew up in St. Paul in the 1950s and 1960s, just as the St. Paul they grew up in had changed



ABOVE: Annette and John Whaley talk with Jennifer Cadwell-Vaughan (left) in the education wing of the Minnesota History Center.

LEFT: The Whaley's Endowment Fund for History Education supports teacher training and the creation of social studies curriculum materials. (MNHS)



since Coco Irvine's 1920s youth. They understand that Minnesota history can still be relevant to all the state's citizens.

"History can bridge cultural divides, especially for newer residents and immigrants to make them feel like this is now part of their history and their home," Annette says. "And whether you were born here or came here recently, we are all part of this history going forward."

—Julianna Olsen

If you would like to invest in the Minnesota Historical Society, please contact Jennifer Pogatchnik at 651-259-3116 or jennifer.pogatchnik@mnhs.org.



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