

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

LONG BEFORE I joined the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) team, I was an admirer of this amazing and yet imperfect organization. As a public history professional, I knew I could look to the MNHS and find innovation, excellence, and relevance. It was not enough to preserve and interpret the past.

Every day the MNHS wrestles with why it matters and then boldly proclaims that, in fact, "History Matters!" Through every program, publication, exhibit, collection, service, and event, the Society strives to demonstrate how and why history matters. This pursuit takes us to places of discovery, empathy, pain, inspiration, hope, and sometimes transformation.

What a journey the first 175 years have been—full of learning, growing (in all senses of the word), and yes, impact! We are grateful to have one of the largest state historical society memberships in the country. We are proud of how our network of sites and museums has served millions of visitors. For more than 100 years, Minnesotans and beyond have engaged with this magazine and some of the most rigorous scholarship on our state's history. And for over three decades, sixth graders have used our Minnesota history textbook, *Northern Lights*. Yet, so often the impact is felt on an individual level. Recently, I met one of our college interns. Emma is now a sophomore at St. Olaf College. She shared her joy when she learned she would be an MNHS intern, excited for the opportunity to further explore her dual love of history and multimedia. Who knows where that will lead!

While much of our story is worth celebrating, we are humbled and called to account when history requires a reckoning. I'm remembering a conversation I had with a gentleman after a presentation I gave shortly after arriving here years ago. I was inspired by his combination of humility and accountability as he encountered difficult history. He told me, "Sometimes I have to get comfortable being uncomfortable because that is when I grow." Our institutional growth is exhibited regularly at MNHS. One example is the creation of our Native American Undergraduate Museum Fellows (NAUMF) program. The fellows connect deeply with their own histories and their capstone projects inspire us to reflect on themes of identity, heritage, and place. Today we have more than 100 alumni from this program making an impact across the historical and cultural sector.

In reflecting on the Society's 175 years, I find myself gravitating to the people and relationships that make MNHS such a strong organization. From our board members of the Executive Council to MNHS members and donors, from colleagues at the History Center and sites throughout the state to our volunteers and interns, and from community partners to legislators, there is and always has been a deep commitment to steward our Minnesota history well. Happy 175th, MNHS!

—Kent Whitworth, Director and CEO, MNHS

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mnhs.org/mnhistory

Minnesota History (ISSN 00265497) (USPS 351660) published quarterly, copyright 2024 by the Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102-1906. Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Minnesota History*/Membership Office, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102-1906.

Membership in MNHS includes a subscription to *Minnesota History*. Basic individual memberships start at \$65; for more information, write the Membership Office at the address above or at membership@mnhs.org or call 651-259-3131. Join securely online at mnhs.org/member.

Individual print issues of *Minnesota History* are \$10 each plus Minnesota tax and handling; go to mnhs.org/mnhistory. Free digital article downloads of all back issues are available at mnhs.org/mnhistory.

Magazine text is available in alternative format: contact mnhistmag@mnhs.org.

Minnesota History welcomes the submission of articles and edited documents dealing with the social, economic, political, intellectual, and cultural history of the state and the surrounding region. Author guidelines are at mnhs.org/mnhistory.

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