

HENNEPIN HISTORY MUSEUM



A community without a knowledge of its past is like a person with amnesia
...its lack of memory leaves it without a feeling of purpose, direction, or identity.

—Hy Berman

Who We Are

Our mission is to collect, preserve, and share Hennepin County history to educate, enlighten, and inspire. To achieve this, we bring the diverse histories of the people of Hennepin County to life and help people understand their world through exhibits, collections, public programs, a magazine, and a research library.

The county and its people have changed dramatically since the museum's founding in 1938. In recent years we have been laying the groundwork to similarly transform. No longer content to quietly tell the stories of and for a select few, we understand that to thrive we must embrace a more inclusive history and energetically engage with the community. We tell stories that challenge people's assumptions and help them understand their world in a more honest, comprehensive, and nuanced way.

Hennepin History Museum is uniquely positioned to become a bridge from our complex past to our unknown future. As a community museum for all, we can help enhance and sustain shared memory by highlighting the stories of the past that help us understand how our current reality came to be. Only then, through an honest understanding of our history, can we work together to create solutions for a more inclusive and equitable future.

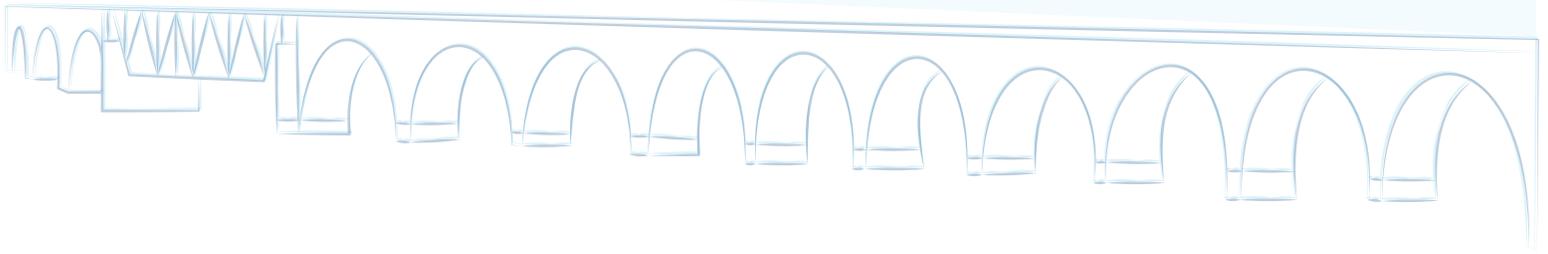
We are transforming our organization. Our board and staff are focused on renewing our infrastructure, collections, and programs. We know this can only be done by looking outward, strengthening our relationship with current audiences, and getting new perspectives by expanding our reach to new people across the county.

Our partners and supporters understand the pivotal time we are living in, and value the critical role that history can play as a force for community identity, understanding, and purpose. By embracing all members of our community and honoring all histories that have brought us to this point in time, Hennepin History Museum can take its place as an indispensable institution that is an engaged partner in change.

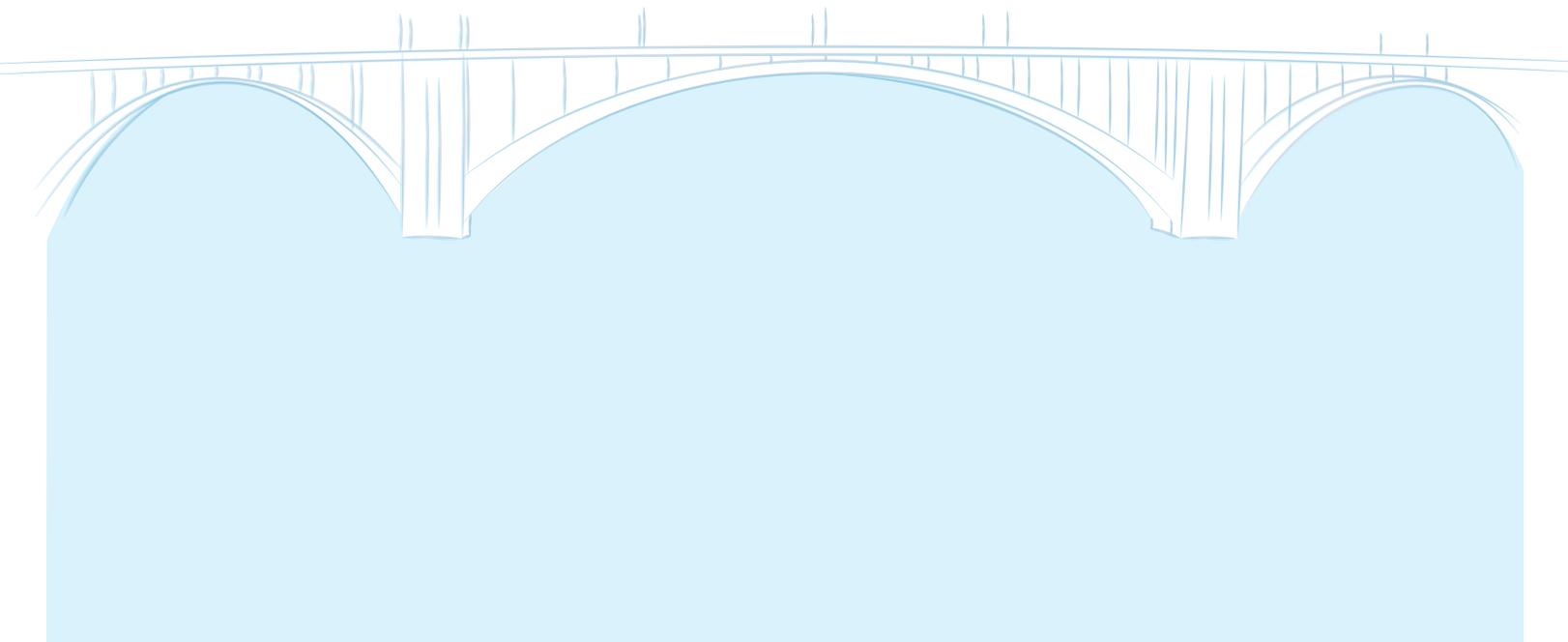
Lessons Learned

In 2018, we experienced first-hand the power of how history is relevant to peoples' lives today. Our partnership with the Heritage Studies and Public History program at the University of Minnesota led to *Owning Up: Racism and Housing in Minneapolis*, an exhibit that told the story of the devastating impact of redlining and discriminatory federal and local housing policies that created a framework for institutionalized poverty and inequity. This exhibit touched a nerve. There was a palpable need for this story to be told.

In 2020 we were reminded with new urgency that a society in crisis and searching for answers benefits from an organization that helps people understand that past-to-present relationship. The confluence of a global pandemic and the inequities laid bare by the murder of George Floyd in Hennepin County have forced people to understand how our world was shaped by past people and events, and how lessons in history can offer a path toward transformative change.



There is such an incredible opportunity to decide how you want to show up in the new world. Because it will be a new world. And my greatest hope is that we don't reach for normal, we reach for better.
—Michele Norris



Building a Bridge

Hennepin History Museum has a remarkable opportunity: to play a pivotal role in helping our regional community use history to reexamine previous assumptions and create a more inclusive and equitable future.

These goals are being accomplished through four critical initiatives:

1. Institutional Renewal

Hennepin History Museum is committed to critically assessing our “organizational DNA” to create an equitable and sustainable foundation for growth. This initiative has begun with attention to our leadership through the *Facing Change* project spearheaded by the American Alliance of Museums, and with our Collections Project, a multi-year inventory of our collections and archives to understand the strengths and weaknesses of our collections.

2. Accessibility for All

Hennepin History Museum is housed in a historic mansion completed in 1920. The building is not ADA compliant and for decades the museum has not been able to address its obstacles to physical accessibility. While we work on solving that problem, we are using the lessons of the COVID pandemic to develop and expand our online and virtual programs. As in-person activity renews we will develop more program offerings outside of our museum building throughout the county.

3. Relationship Building

In order to tell the many histories of the communities of Hennepin County, we need to embrace multiple perspectives. Developing robust partnerships with people and organizations throughout the county is the best way to share the broad and diverse stories of our communities. Hennepin History Museum will continue to partner with local colleges and universities to provide hands-on experiences for emerging historians and researchers.

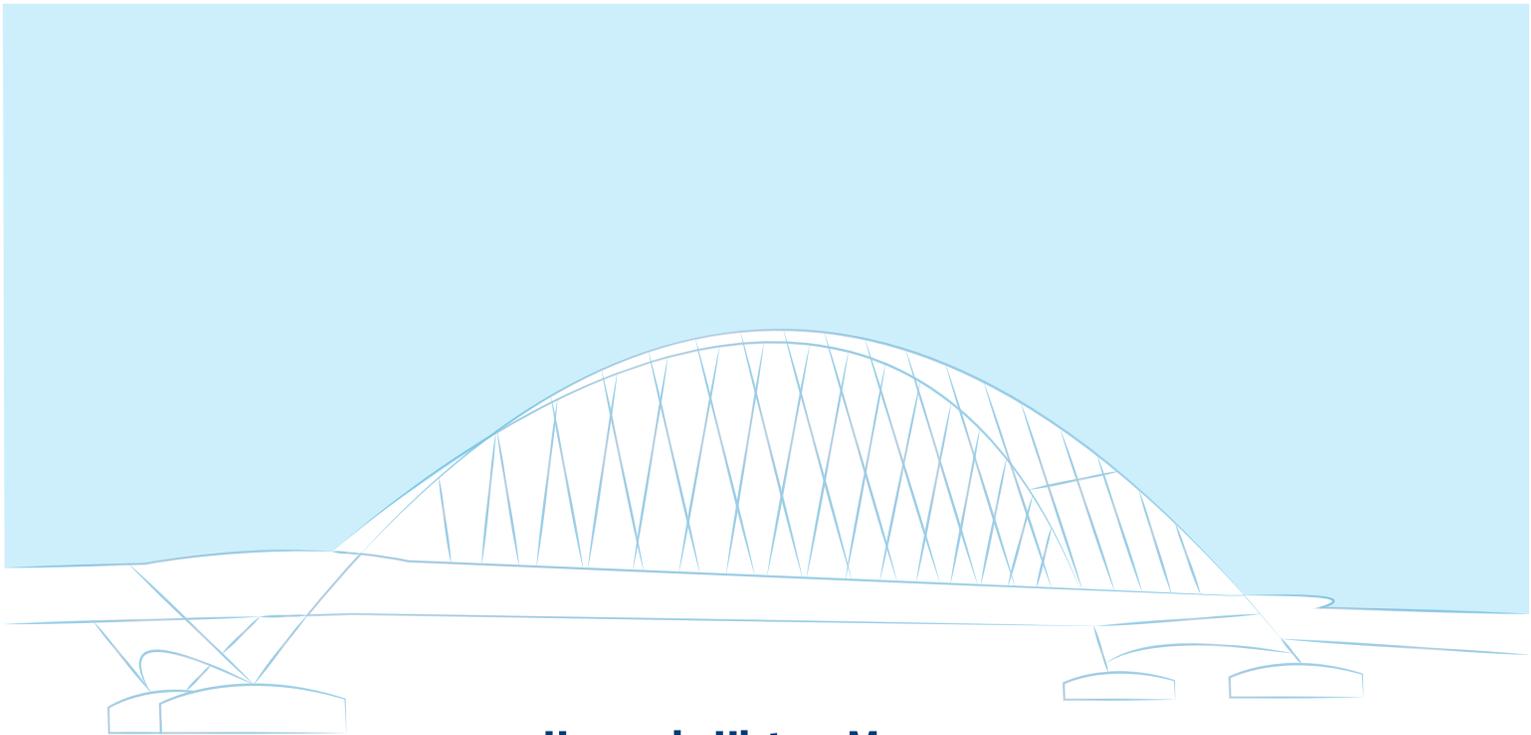
4. History as an Agent of Change

Hennepin History Museum has developed three areas of focus for this work.

1) Confronting Our Past. First with *Owning Up* and now with *A Public History of 35W*, we continue to explore the difficult chapters of the region’s history through new research and collaborative programming.

2) Made in Hennepin. The people, places, and things of Hennepin County—from corporate innovators and technological inventors to cultural influencers—are introduced to lifelong residents and newcomers alike to show how this place has influenced the country and the world.

3) History Up Close. Whether through engaging walking tours, engrossing magazine articles, or the creation of seed art, we tailor our menu of offerings to meet all learning styles.



Hennepin History Museum

2303 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404

hennepinhistory.org

612 870 1329

