



Ramsey Hill Association

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF AN HISTORIC
NEIGHBORHOOD IN SAINT PAUL



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NEIGHBORHOOD IN SAINT PAUL



400 Selby Avenue, Suite M
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WILLIAM ORDWAY
PARTRIDGE'S
SCULPTURE OF
NATHAN HALE
STANDS IN NATHAN
HALE PARK IN
RAMSEY HILL, THE
DAUGHTERS OF THE
AMERICAN
REVOLUTION
COMMISSIONED THE
1907 WORK WHICH
WAS RESTORED IN
1995 THROUGH
EFFORTS
COORDINATED BY
PUBLIC ART SAINT
PAUL.

THE HISTORY OF THE
SCULPTURE
PARALLELS THAT OF
RAMSEY HILL AS A
REVITALIZED,
PRESERVED,
HISTORIC SAINT PAUL
NEIGHBORHOOD
READY FOR THE NEXT
100 YEARS.
GOVERNMENT
GRANTS HAVE BEEN
IMPORTANT,
HOWEVER, PERSONAL
RISK AND PRIVATE
INVESTMENT HAVE
BEEN THE KEY TO
NEIGHBORHOOD
RESTORATION. THE
RISKS AND
INVESTMENTS ARE
NOT JUST OF MONEY.
ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT
IN THE LIFE OF THE
NEIGHBORHOOD HAS
BEEN AND REMAINS
ESSENTIAL.

RAMSEY HILL IS A
NEIGHBORHOOD
FILLED WITH
ARCHITECTURAL AND
ARTISTIC
TREASURES,
INTRIGUING
FOLKLORE, AND A
DIVERSE CULTURAL,
ETHNIC, SOCIAL, AND
ECONOMIC HERITAGE.
WITH EACH PASSING
YEAR, THE
NEIGHBORHOOD HAS
GROWN MORE
APPEALING AS A
PLACE TO LIVE,
RAISE A FAMILY,
WORK, AND PLAY.

Welcome

TO RAMSEY HILL!

Welcome! We believe we all made a great decision to move to this neighborhood where neighbors work together. The Ramsey Hill Association (RHA) is our neighborhood organization, and we encourage you to join. We invite your participation with us in continuing to make Ramsey Hill a great place to live, raise a family, work, and play.

Ramsey Hill is bordered on the east by Pleasant Avenue, on the south by Grand Avenue, on the west by Dale Street, and on the north by Interstate 94. Most of this area is in the Historic Hill District.

Ramsey Hill is a neighborhood of cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity. It is home to artists, housekeepers, lawyers, inventors, chefs, brokers and realtors, electricians, actors, photographers, nuns, students, candle makers, writers, truck drivers, tool and die makers, dancers, bureaucrats, physicians, merchants, teachers, and entrepreneurs.

Ramsey Hill also offers beautiful parks and playgrounds and an array of commercial enterprises providing products and services, as well as jobs to the community. In addition to inviting stores and wonderful restaurants, Ramsey Hill is home to neighborhood churches, social service agencies, and premier schools and colleges.

RAMSEY HILL ASSOCIATION

RHA is a membership organization committed to the vitality and overall well-being of the Ramsey Hill neighborhood. Membership is open to all. The rates for household, organization, and life membership dues are determined by the RHA board of directors.

RHA, founded in 1972, has built a solid record of accomplishments in historic preservation and has demonstrated significant neighborhood leadership to improve crime prevention, public safety, public parks, and recreation facilities. RHA actively partners with other community organizations to promote economic development, jobs, youth development, food shelves, music and theater groups, immigrant and other social services, and the performing and visual arts.

RHA membership provides opportunities to be involved in these community partnerships as well as in an array of other activities throughout the year. We have several service programs focused on the needs of various neighborhood groups including children and youth and senior citizens, a grants program designed to meet other community needs, and a full calendar of social events to keep you acquainted with your neighbors--even in the depth of winter-- and a neighborhood beautification program targeting parks, gardens and other public green space. Every other year brings the big 300-plus volunteer event--*Gables, Gardens, & Ghosts*--the RHA house and garden tour--to raise the money that makes all these other programs and services possible. Altogether, RHA membership provides opportunities to have fun, know your neighbors, and make a difference.

Keeping Ramsey Hill a welcoming, safe, and pleasant place to live, raise a family, work, and play is our goal. We welcome you and invite your participation as an active RHA member. RHA membership is an investment that pays!

RHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A board of directors with 15 members is charged with providing RHA leadership and direction. RHA officers and other directors are elected to serve two-year terms. Half of the officers and directors are elected each January by the RHA membership at its annual meeting.

Four officers comprise the RHA executive committee, a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Eleven other directors round out the composition of the board, with each director heading a major RHA committee.

The board committees--on which all RHA members are encouraged and welcomed to serve!--reflect the nature and scope of RHA engagement in the life of the community. The committee structure reflects current RHA initiatives:

- a) community partnerships,
- b) crime prevention,
- c) fundraising,
- d) historic preservation,
- e) house and garden tour,
- f) land use,
- g) membership,
- h) parks and gardens,
- i) public relations,
- j) social events, and
- k) youth development.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

RHA long ago realized that the strength of the community depends upon the well-being of all its residents. Over the years, RHA has worked actively with other neighborhood groups to address issues of mutual concern. Partnering has become more and more the RHA way of doing business, and nearly all aspects of RHA initiatives now involve partnerships.

Most evident are core partnerships that have focused on youth, economic development, crime prevention, and neighborhood parks and recreational facilities.

Key partners have included an array of organizations, including members of the Selby Avenue Business Association, the Selby Area Community Development Corporation, the District 8 Planning Council, the Selby Avenue Community Storefront, and the Virginia Street Church.

RHA funds a neighborhood grants program. Funded activities over the past few years include youth music programs, summer camp scholarships, Hmong health services, home nursing programs, foodshelves, and after-school enrichment activities.

CRIME PREVENTION

Keeping our neighborhood safe is a high RHA priority to which considerable resources are directed each year. Ramsey Hill is a safe and secure place because we endeavor to make it so. The RHA community organizer, funded with a city grant, works to develop active block clubs to keep neighbors informed of current and potential problems and to encourage preventive measures. RHA supports the police department and the beat officers on Selby Avenue to identify and resolve problems before they get out of hand.

FUNDRAISING

The primary source of RHA operating revenues is ticket sales from *Gables, Gardens, & Ghosts*, the RHA biennial house and garden tour. The annual RHA silent auction generates revenue earmarked for the neighborhood grants program. The RHA annual golf tournament was initiated to raise matching funds to restore Summit Lookout Park. Funds are also raised from government and foundation grants and the sale of note cards, tee shirts, cookbooks, and other items.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

RHA roots lie deep in neighborhood commitment to preserve Ramsey Hill as an architecturally unique community. In the early 1970s, this neighborhood was in great peril and close to losing much of its magnificent Victorian housing stock. Thanks to the foresight of a handful of residents, the architectural integrity of the area has been preserved and is today one of the nation's premier historic Victorian neighborhoods.

Creating both the Historic Hill District and the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission brought the community together and augmented efforts to achieve the high level of preservation found throughout the area today. Although most of the preservation work is complete, historic preservation remains a top RHA priority. RHA is keenly aware that due diligence is key to ensuring that public support for historic preservation does not suffer setbacks. Instead, RHA directs its efforts to sustain historic preservation as a public policy priority at the city, state, and national levels.

RHA contributions include erecting public plaques in public areas, such as parks, to tell the story of Ramsey Hill. RHA also encourages local residents to acquire official Historic Hill District plaques to identify and tell the story of their own houses and other neighborhood edifices of architectural and structural significance.

HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR

Every two years, Ramsey Hill opens the doors and invites the public into its homes, churches, and other neighborhood institutions for public tours. Private gardens, too, are on display on this occasion held on the second Sunday of September in odd-numbered years. More than 300 volunteers stage the RHA house and garden tour, an event known as *Gables, Gardens, & Ghosts*. Carriage and trolley rides, strolling costumed storytellers, and vendors hawking their goods enhance the Victorian ambiance of the day.

The tour initially was a means to showcase the early preservation efforts in the neighborhood and attract new residents. Today, a quarter of century later after the first tour, *Gables, Gardens, & Ghosts* provides a national showcase of the interiors and exteriors of the buildings in this historic Victorian neighborhood, attracting house tourists from throughout the Midwest and around the country. Ramsey Hill's social, cultural, ethnic, and architectural heritage is reflected in the extensive variety of neighborhood residences, churches, and other buildings on the tour.

LAND USE

Land use issues are often at the heart of RHA efforts and have been since it was established over a quarter century ago. These issues are often complex and resolutions are sustained by the commitment and good faith efforts on the part of all involved.

The commercial vitality of Selby Avenue is key to meeting the needs of neighborhood residents, augmenting the quality of life in the community, and enhancing the neighborhood property tax base. RHA actively encourages and strongly supports the continuing revitalization and commercial growth of Selby Avenue.

RHA is sensitive to the needs of individual property owners and, at the same time, is responsive to the potential impact that new or

changing uses can have on both the immediate neighbors and the larger Ramsey Hill community. RHA is respectful and supportive of heritage preservation efforts and is committed to maintaining current zoning standards.

RHA reviews and advises the city on a wide variety of issues regarding the use of commercial and residential property in the neighborhood and immediate surrounding area. RHA reviews usually are conducted jointly with those of the District 8 Planning Council and occur primarily as part of the application process for city building and use permits. RHA recommendations may be for approval, approval with restrictions, denial, or denial with the option to submit a revised plan. RHA recommendations are presented to city officials for their consideration.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to all. Neighborhood residents and organizations are especially encouraged to join. Members receive an annual membership directory and the RHA newsletter issued 10 times each year. All members are welcomed and encouraged to participate in all RHA activities and events. Special notice is given to all members for all events. The rates for household, organization, and life membership dues are determined by the RHA board of directors.

PARKS AND GARDENS

BOYD PARK was dedicated during 1995 to the memory of Frank Boyd (1881-1962), an African American labor leader and community activist. The son of a Kentucky slave, Boyd worked for the Pullman Company from 1905 to 1926 when he was fired for his union activities. A year earlier, Boyd organized the Pullman porters and became an officer in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. He was appointed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt as one of the first two African-American members of the electoral college. The park is two blocks west of the Cathedral of Saint Paul on Selby Avenue. It has a well-equipped children's playground and inviting space for summer picnics and simply enjoying the outdoors. In recent years, Boyd Park has been the site of the picnic held at the close of the RHA house and garden tour. It is one of the neighborhood parks that RHA and the city decorate with holiday lights each winter.

The park at the **MARTIN LUTHER KING CENTER** is bordered on the west by Kent Street, on the south by Marshall Avenue, and on the east by Mackubin Street. Dedicated to the memory of the African-American civil rights leader and Nobel laureate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this community recreation center provides a number of facilities. Outdoor park facilities include tennis courts, a basketball court, and a tot lot. Picnic tables and charcoal grills are shaded by large trees for summer outings. Indoor facilities include meeting rooms, a kitchen, a large gymnasium, a warming room, and a weight room. The center also houses the nationally-acclaimed Penumbra Theater, famed for productions of August Wilson plays and its annual holiday musical, *Black Nativity*. The RHA board conducts its monthly meetings at the center.

Two other parks in Ramsey Hill are also equipped specifically for play and recreation, the **HOLLY AVENUE TOT LOT**, a playground for young children on Holly Avenue between Kent Street and Mackubin Street, and **MCQUILLAN PARK** on the corner of Laurel Avenue and Mackubin Street. Dedicated in 1957, McQuillan Park is named for plumbing contractor Arthur J. McQuillan (1896-1954). This park has a large well-equipped children's playground and tennis courts for public use. McQuillan was known as the "Mayor of Selby" for his service as a key social,

political, and civic leader. In the 1940s, his firm, McQuillan Brothers Plumbing, was the first business in Saint Paul to hire and train African-American plumbers.

SUMMIT LOOKOUT PARK, a city park established in 1887, is the oldest of the public parks in Ramsey Hill. On the site where Carpenter's Lookout Hotel once stood, Summit Lookout Park is at the junction of Ramsey Hill and Summit Avenue. The park looks out over downtown Saint Paul with the Mississippi River Valley below. During weekends in the summer, Summit Lookout Park is often the site of games played by a croquet society whose players dress in Victorian whites.

NATHAN HALE PARK, directly across Summit Avenue from Summit Lookout Park, is a triangle of green space adorned by Partridge's sculpture of Nathan Hale, an American Revolutionary War hero. Each winter, Nathan Hale Park is the site of the RHA family ice skating party and is home to one of the most beautiful and spectacular displays of holiday lights in the city.

COCHRAN PARK, refurbished by the city during 1997, lies to the north of Nathan Hale Park on Summit Avenue, where it intersects with Western Avenue. Emilie B. Cochran gave the park to the city in 1923, noting that the park had been a playground for neighborhood children for at least 40 years. Cochran Park is the home of another premier piece of Saint Paul's outdoor sculpture, *Indian Runner and His Dog*, created in 1926 by sculptor Paul Howard Manship, a Saint Paul native. The park also displays a plaque honoring Alma Joseph (1923-1994), who lived next door to the park and cared for its flower gardens for many years.

RHA works with the city to keep the neighborhood parks clean and inviting. Each summer RHA members plant and maintain colorful and inviting flower gardens in Boyd Park, Cochran Park, Nathan Hale Park, McQuillan Park, and the Martin Luther King Center Park. From Thanksgiving Day through Saint Patrick's Day each year, RHA provides for a dazzling array of holiday lights on trees and hedges at Boyd Park, Cochran Park, and Nathan Hale Park. RHA has expanded both the gardening and holiday lights projects each year. RHA also provides bags for luminaria for members' homes and installs and lights luminaria in the neighborhood parks and gardens each Christmas Eve.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Ramsey Hill is a unique neighborhood in a city with a rich history as one of the great frontier river towns on the Mississippi. Balancing the challenges of living in a society nearing the dawn of the 21st century with the preservation of a neighborhood that formed in the late 19th century occasionally presents difficulties, some of which are not necessarily apparent to all. RHA has a story to tell about living, raising families, working, and playing in a community dedicated to preserving the architecture and ambiance of one of the nation's premier Victorian neighborhoods.

The RHA newsletter is the primary means by which neighborhood information is shared and the Ramsey Hill story is told. RHA typically produces ten issues of the newsletter each year. Public relations efforts also include on-going contact with other print media as well as broadcast media in the Saint Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area. RHA is an active participant in local events including Rondo Days, the Selby Celebration, and National Night Out. Recently, RHA efforts increased to target Midwestern, Victorian, and preservation media in response to the enhanced and widespread reputation of the Ramsey Hill house and garden tour.

SOCIAL EVENTS

PROGRESSIVE DINNER. The progressive dinner is a rite of spring, giving RHA members the chance to renew acquaintances after the long winter indoors. Dinner is four courses, with each participant serving one course and being someone else's guest for each of the other three. All diners make a food shelf contribution at the first course, and RHA matches the contributions with a cash donation. First held during the spring of 1976, the progressive dinner continues to be the RHA social event of the year. The 25th Annual Progressive Dinner will be in the year 2000.

SILENT AUCTION. Held at the close of the festivities surrounding the progressive dinner each year, the silent auction raises funds specifically dedicated to address human needs. Items for auction range from gifts from local merchants to goods and services contributed by RHA members.

WINTER HOLIDAY PARTY. A favorite holiday event for many RHA members, the winter holiday party provides a late-Sunday-afternoon, early evening respite in mid-December. In recent years, this event has been held in the homes of three or four RHA members who live within a short distance of each other. Party-goers make the rounds, first delivering their treat for the party and their contributions for the local food shelf.

FAMILY ICE SKATING PARTY. The annual family ice skating party is held on a Sunday afternoon in late winter in Nathan Hale Park. RHA is the host and serves food and drink to meet the challenge of a winter afternoon outdoors. A showing of family pets, dogs in particular, is not uncommon at this get-together.

GOLF TOURNAMENT. The Ramsey Hill golf tournament raises money for RHA community partnership initiatives. Tournament sponsors represent a wide range of Minnesota enterprises. Golfers from throughout the Saint Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area, including western Wisconsin, play in the tournament. The inaugural tournament was held during 1997.

ANNUAL MEETING. The RHA annual meeting is a January event. At this meeting, RHA members review activities and accomplishments of the year just ended, elect members to the RHA board, recognize and applaud exemplary service to RHA and the community, and look to the future and the coming of spring.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT Partnerships with the Virginia Street Church and the Selby Avenue Community Storefront regularly provide social and recreational functions for neighborhood youth. RHA grants also provide neighborhood youth with opportunities for camping and other adventures, including Timberwolves games and Disney World.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
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COCHRAN PARK IS
HOME TO *INDIAN
RUNNER AND HIS
DOG* BY SCULPTOR
PAUL HOWARD
MANSHIP.

