

A detailed historical map of the Mississippi River basin, showing various geographical features, rivers, and place names. The map is overlaid with a dark grey horizontal band containing white text. The text includes the journal title, issue information, and a URL. The map background shows the Mississippi River winding through the center, with numerous tributaries and lakes. Labels include 'CHIPEWAY COUNTRY', 'MISSISSIPPI RIVER', 'M'DEWAKANTON COUNTRY', and 'WARTPEKUTEY'. The text 'ISSUE TWELVE : FALL 2018' is at the top, followed by 'OPEN RIVERS : RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY' in a larger font. The bottom of the map features the URL 'http://openrivers.umn.edu' and the journal's mission statement: 'An interdisciplinary online journal rethinking the Mississippi from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.' The ISSN number 'ISSN 2471-190X' is located in the bottom right corner.

ISSUE TWELVE : FALL 2018
OPEN RIVERS :
RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY

WATERY PLACES & ARCHAEOLOGY

<http://openrivers.umn.edu>

An interdisciplinary online journal rethinking the Mississippi
from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

ISSN 2471-190X

The cover image is a detail from Hydrographical Basin of the Upper Mississippi River From Astronomical and Barometrical Observations Surveys and Information by Joseph Nicolas Nicollet, 1843.

Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/). This means each author holds the copyright to her or his work, and grants all users the rights to: share (copy and/or redistribute the material in any medium or format) or adapt (remix, transform, and/or build upon the material) the article, as long as the original author and source is cited, and the use is for noncommercial purposes.

Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community is produced by the [University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing](https://www.libraries.umn.edu/) and the [University of Minnesota Institute for Advanced Study](https://www.umn.edu/institute-for-advanced-study/).

Editors

Editor:
Patrick Nunnally, Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota

Administrative Editor:
Phyllis Mauch Messenger, Institute for Advanced
Study, University of Minnesota

Assistant Editor:
Laurie Moberg, Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota

Media and Production Manager:
Joanne Richardson, Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota

Contact Us

Open Rivers
Institute for Advanced Study
University of Minnesota
Northrop
84 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Telephone: (612) 626-5054
Fax: (612) 625-8583
E-mail: openrvrs@umn.edu
Web Site: <http://openrivers.umn.edu>

ISSN 2471-190X

Editorial Board

Jay Bell, Soil, Water, and Climate, University of
Minnesota

Tom Fisher, Minnesota Design Center, University
of Minnesota

Lewis E. Gilbert, futurist

Mark Gorman, Policy Analyst, Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Gunn, History of Medicine, University of
Minnesota

Katherine Hayes, Anthropology, University of
Minnesota

Nenette Luarca-Shoaf, Art Institute of Chicago

Charlotte Melin, German, Scandinavian, and
Dutch, University of Minnesota

David Pellow, Environmental Studies, University
of California, Santa Barbara

Laura Salvesson, community member and artist

Mona Smith, Dakota transmedia artist; Allies:
media/art, Healing Place Collaborative

CONTENTS

Introductions

Introduction to Issue Twelve By Patrick Nunnally, Editor	4
Guest Editor's Introduction to Issue Twelve: Watery Places and Archaeology By Amélie Allard	6

Features

The View From Watery Places: Rivers and Portages in the Fur Trade Era By Amélie Allard and Craig N. Cipolla	10
Life, Land, Water, and Time: Archaeologist Doug Birk and the Little Elk Heritage Preserve By Rob Mann	28
Rivers and Bones By Katrina Yezzi-Woodley, Martha Tappen, Reed Coil, and Samantha Gogol	37

Perspectives

Rivers Flood Regularly During Hurricanes, But Get Less Attention Than Coastlines By Craig Colten	51
---	----

Geographies

Past Flowing to Present and Future Along the Upper Mississippi By John Crippen	57
---	----

Primary Sources

Fake News? Tracing the Flows of Public Perceptions in Historic Newspaper Reporting By Katherine Hayes	71
--	----

Teaching And Practice

Putting Suppliers on the Map By Kelly Meza Prado	78
---	----

In Review

Review of <i>Between the World and Me</i> , by Ta-Nehisi Coates By Lark Weller	84
---	----

Editorial

Thank You By <i>Open Rivers</i> Editorial Staff	90
--	----

GEOGRAPHIES

PAST FLOWING TO PRESENT AND FUTURE ALONG THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI

By John Crippen

A turn-of-the-last-century logging camp; a modest house on the Mississippi that sparked the dreams of a young boy; an early-statehood-era farm; a flour mill; a fort and its surroundings that have layers of contested meaning; a collection of houses from the pre-statehood era; a railroad magnate's palatial house. What—if

anything—do these things have in common?

Well, for starters, they are all part of Minnesota's state network of historic sites—but then again, so are another couple dozen places around the state. A more compelling connector is their location on the Mississippi River. The river was often



View of the Mississippi River and the city of Grand Rapids from the Fire Tower at the Forest History Center. Photo courtesy Minnesota Historical Society, Tumblr.

the reason for their locations, and it provides an ongoing power to give them identity and meaning in our current era. But what are these mysterious places, anyway?

The representation of a 1900 logging camp is found at the Forest History Center, in Grand Rapids. First created in the 1970s, it is meant to act as an example of the mobile timber cutting operations from the height of the white pine

logging era. Rivers like the Mississippi were critical elements of this work, as they carried the logs away to the lumber mills. In recent years, the Forest History Center has worked hard to expand their programming from that original concept, now talking about people and forests over time, and weaving together human history, environmental issues, and a wide variety of recreational activities.



*1900 Logging Camp demonstration at the Forest History Center.
Photo by Dan Marshall/Charlie Vaughn, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*



*Dogsledding demonstration at the Forest History Center.
Photographer Paul Pluskwik, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

ISSUE TWELVE : FALL 2018

A little bit downriver at Little Falls is the Charles Lindbergh House and Museum—the place where young Charles learned to tinker with machines and hatched a dream to fly airplanes. In many ways, this house is a springboard to look out, rather than a haven to stay in. One of the most compelling places here is the three-season porch, where Charles slept to the sounds of rustling pine

trees and woke up to views of the river flowing by. And while Lindbergh’s adult life was marked by a famous flight, a horrific kidnapping of his child, and racially charged rhetoric of isolationism prior to World War II, visiting this place makes it seem that it was no accident that he spent his final decades engaged in environmental activism.



View of Mississippi River through the pine trees from the Lindbergh House porch. Photo courtesy of Charles Lindbergh House and Museum, Facebook.

As the river flows through the Anoka Sand Plain, it broadens and gets shallower—and here you will find the Oliver Kelley Farm in Elk River. Oliver Kelley pursued land speculation and then farming by the book, but became most famous for being a key founder of the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry—usually known simply

as The Grange. Like the Forest History Center, the Kelley Farm was long defined by this narrow slice of history but has since expanded its scope. Now, a visitor can explore agriculture—and its relationship to the surrounding environment—in a more holistic way, and over time.



In the new FarmLab area, the Oliver Kelley Farm has developed programs from different eras, including this 1968 garden. Image courtesy of Oliver Kelley Farm, Facebook.

And on, then, to St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis, where Mill City Museum inhabits the remains of the Washburn A Mill. The Museum explores the power of the Mississippi, where logs from the north woods and grain from the farms were processed for the use of the world. Although a great deal of time is spent celebrating the wonderment of what remarkable people once achieved here, the museum also helps visitors create new cultural connections in the present moment, and to understand the more hidden environmental and cultural costs of this global business.

Following—backwards—the route of St. Anthony Falls through the only gorge on the Mississippi, you will find Historic Fort Snelling at Bdote. Like the sites at St. Anthony Falls, the river looms largest here. Bdote is a key place in the Dakota homeland, where Hahá Wakpá and Wakpá Mni Sóta come together. Not coincidentally, it is the strategic vantagepoint that the U.S. government commandeered in the nineteenth century to exert its influence westward—first for trade, then for settlement, and at various times, for war. The story of this place is still being written, and contested.



*Native Foods Cooking Demo with Chef Austin Bartold in the Baking Lab at Mill City Museum.
Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*



*The gorge of the Mississippi River, viewed from Fort Snelling.
Photographer Tom Lalim, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

On the other side of Pike Island from Fort Snelling, on the Minnesota River, is the Sibley Historic Site. Saved in the early twentieth century as “Minnesota’s Mount Vernon,” it features the house of Henry H. Sibley—fur trader, first state governor, and a key participant in the U.S./Dakota War and subsequent tragic events of 1862. But the site also contains the houses of the DuPuis and Faribault families, which have their own stories to tell from that pre- and post-statehood era, as well as burial mounds from further back in time. Complicated, multi-racial history here is personal and close. But it is also removed and distant, with the houses standing uninhabited, and a later-era railroad bed standing as an imposing and disorienting barrier to the river system that was once just outside the front doors.

And then, finally—the James J. Hill House in St. Paul, not technically on the river, but high on one of its bluffs, surveying it from afar. Hill got his start down on the river flats, but made his name by replacing it as a transportation giant with his railroads. This place, too, ties back to St. Anthony Falls, where Hill built the iconic Stone Arch Bridge to connect places in defiance of the river’s reality.

Each of these places helps us understand our evolving relationship with the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers; and often, our evolving relationship helps us see these places in a newly relevant light. Truthfully, only the most dedicated river aficionados dutifully tick visits to each place off their bucket lists to complete the set.



View of the Sibley House, with the Minnesota River only 400 feet in front of it but completely obscured. Photo by Charlie Vaughn, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.

More often, people come to one of these places for other reasons, then find to their delight that it is yet another place with a connection to the beloved Mississippi River.

In Minneapolis, the mantra during the recent decades of riverfront revitalization has been that the city “turned its back on the river.” But that is not really true. People just used it in a different way—for industry rather than recreation and marketing. Since the side effects of industry were so toxic, of course people would look elsewhere for recreation or daily living. But the laborers who went to the river every day would look quizzically at someone who accused them of turning their backs. Rather, we just have different people looking at the river now, for different reasons.

At the Oliver Kelley Farm, intrusive development on the other side of the river has caused managers to accentuate the screen of trees that grew up through the twentieth century between the farm and the river. This makes it harder to understand the Kelley family’s initial dependence on the river. A windmill drew water from where? The house is facing away from the highway for what reason? But intrepid visitors are rewarded by surprising river encounters. People who look in the distance will notice a heron rookery, and then begin to understand the place in a new way. And as the site continues to engage with modern agriculture in relation to people today, having the river nearby can help them tell the story of the relationship between farms and environments.



*View of the Kelley Farm, with the Mississippi River obscured in the distance behind the treeline.
Image courtesy of Oliver Kelley Farm, Facebook.*

ISSUE TWELVE : FALL 2018

In Little Falls and Grand Rapids, new trails give people more points of access and highlight the river's current use as balm and inspiration for people who seek to connect with the natural world. Or, if they'd rather, they can look across

the smooth waters and contemplate the legacy and future of a golf course and a paper mill—both hallmarks of twentieth-century life that are struggling to know their place today.



View of the Mississippi River from the Lindbergh site, with Little Falls Golf Course on the opposite bank. Image courtesy of Melissa Peterson.

And while James J. Hill would have looked out of his bedroom window to see the epicenter of his sprawling empire—acres and acres of railroad tracks going in and out of the city, with engines belching soot across the river valley—today’s guest in that room sees a very different landscape. The most noticeable pollution point at this time is noise, from the freeway that swooshes by at the base of the property. The old St. Paul levees are now home to a museum, parks, housing

developments, and people on the river for recreation.

And what of Bdote? The rivers have always been present there, and central to the narrative at Historic Fort Snelling even when it was limited to a narrow military story of the early nineteenth century. The Sibley Historic Site, as mentioned previously, has been physically removed from the rivers. The compromised landscapes of both



The view of St. Paul and the Mississippi River from the Hill House, present day. The old St. Paul levees are now home to a museum, a hospital complex, parks, housing developments, and people on the river for recreation. Image courtesy of Christine Herbaly.

sites add to the difficulties in reaching their full potential to engage in diverse, meaningful stories with broader audiences.

As people more fully appreciate the power and grace of Bdote in the Dakota homeland, how will that shape their understanding of our world? As people explore the confluence in canoes, how does this refresh and restore their daily lives? As people continue to celebrate achievements and mourn tragedies at this place, how can the rivers help each emotion live in relation to the other?

At their best, all of these historic places will continue to be part of the conversation, continue to ground people in the realities of the past and help them shape the future. And after all, this fits with the paradox built into rivers—they are at once constant and ever-changing. These historic sites share that trait. They appear at first glance to be anchors to an unchanged past. But as we change and our understanding of the past changes, our relationships with places change accordingly. So the conversations with each other and with our collective pasts continue, and enrich our understanding of our world.



*Bdote, the meeting of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers.
Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

Recommended Citation

Crippen, John. 2018. "Past Flowing to Present and Future Along the Upper Mississippi." *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, no. 12. <http://editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers/article/past-flowing-to-present-and-future/>.

About the Author

John Crippen was a staff member with the Minnesota Historical Society for nearly 30 years, and in that time held the positions of Director of Mill City Museum and Director of Historic Sites & Museums. In that latter role, he oversaw Minnesota's network of State Historic Sites, including Mill City Museum, Historic Fort Snelling, Split Rock Lighthouse, and 28 other properties. He recently completed a term as Chair of the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership, and is active as a preservation and strategic consultant to help organizations realize the potential of their historic properties.