Request for Proposals

Reconstruction of the Historic Justus Ramsey House
Saint Paul, MN
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ORIGINAL LOCATION
252 7th Street West, Saint Paul, MN 55102

PROJECT
The reconstruction and interpretation of the Justus Ramsey House within Saint Paul to ensure ongoing stewardship of this historic resource.

CONTACT
Julia McColley, Executive Director
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(651) 298-5599
Julia@fortroadfederation.org

PROJECT TIMELINE
Engagement Night: Thursday, June 22, 2023 | 6:30-8:00 pm | Location tbd
Letter of Intent Due: Friday, July 21, 2023 by 11:59 pm
Proposal Invitation: Monday, August 14, 2023
Complete Proposal Due: Friday, September 29, 2023 by 11:59 pm
Questions/Interviews: October 2, 2023 - October 13, 2023 | As Needed
Project Awarded: Week of October 16, 2023

INTRODUCTION
The Justus Ramsey House was a historical stone house that was nestled in the West Seventh Neighborhood of Saint Paul. The house has a rich history having been built in the early 1850s. Prior to the Pioneer Era, before the establishment of Saint Paul and Ramsey County, the area was known as Dakota and Anishinaabe land. The home withstood various economic and cultural shifts from agriculture, industrial and rail system growth and decline, to current day hospitality and entertainment district within the growing community known as the West Seventh Neighborhood. The house was listed as one of Minnesota’s National Registered Historic Places in 1975, and was twice designated a Saint Paul Heritage Designation Site by the City of Saint Paul. As such, that designation placed the house in a protected status. However, due to various challenges and after lengthy efforts to preserve the house where it stood, the house needed to be methodically and expertly deconstructed in the winter of 2023.

A group of diverse community partners and stakeholders, who value the preservation of history and innovation, responded by forming a team of fourteen to create and oversee a Request for Proposal process. The team includes members of the West 7th/Fort Road Federation (District Council 9) and Historic St. Paul. Their ultimate goal is to see the house reconstructed with an inclusive interpretation within the City of Saint Paul.
# PROPOSAL SELECTION & CRITERIA

Copies of the proposal will be distributed to the Justus Ramsey team for final review, score, and award of the project. Project will be selected based on the following criteria and average score of all criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection Criteria &amp; Score Weight</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Reconstruction plan in accordance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards.</td>
<td>Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated on the basis of respondent's commitment, documented in architectural plans, drawings, and supporting construction documents, to reconstruct the Justus Ramsey House as faithfully as possible to its exterior appearance during its period of historic significance, viz. approximately 1852-1920. This criterion will be scored on the basis of the project's (1) use of the materials salvaged from the original building to the maximum extent feasible, (2) adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation, Restoration, and/or Reconstruction (as applicable), and (3) consistency with historic photographs and other documentation. Exterior appearance will be weighted more heavily than interior features and finishes, recognizing the variety of uses the restored structure may serve and the need to accommodate modern utilities, safety and building codes. Rear additions and ancillary structures (e.g. separated garage, storage facilities, etc.) will not negatively impact a respondent's score to the extent such structures are compatible with and subordinate to the historic building, adhere to Secretary of Interior's guidelines, and meaningfully contribute to the viable reuse, upkeep and/or interpretation of the building.</td>
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<td>2. Commitment to Historical Truth Telling</td>
<td>Sharing the deeper inclusive history of the building &amp; historical truth telling to capture the lived experiences of the community, people, and land: From Dakota &amp; Anishinaabe Land, Pioneer Era, Agriculture, Rail and Service Industry through the Civil Rights Era, to current times. Commitment to historical truth telling; (1) public facing signage, (2) responsive to the current process of gathering the house’s social history and sharing it by partnering with community organizations and stakeholders, (3) willingness to participate in occasional public access.</td>
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<td>3. Location</td>
<td>Address of proposed location. Must be in Saint Paul, preferred in the West Seventh Neighborhood. Provide preliminary site plan visuals. Describe setting and its relevancy to the preservation of the structure and its social history. RFP finalists will be required to provide documentation of site control (e.g. purchase agreement, proof of ownership).</td>
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<td>4. Plan for Long Term Stewardship</td>
<td>What is the long term maintenance and preservation plan for the structure? In addition to routine maintenance, is the respondent willing to: (1) enter into a preservation easement agreement with a qualifying preservation or conservation organization that would protect the public view access and preserve the exterior appearance of the historic portion of the building in perpetuity; and (2) consent to and support in writing any future efforts to retain or obtain historic designations for the building at the city, state and/or national levels?</td>
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<td>5. Detailed Project Timeline</td>
<td>Project to be completed within a reasonable time from award, not to exceed 2 years.</td>
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<td>6. Financial Plan &amp; Capability</td>
<td>Provide financial plans for completion of reconstruction, including a preliminary budget that identifies funding sources.</td>
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<td>7. Related Experience</td>
<td>Relative experience of party and team. Describe previous projects and/or community involvement with historic structures.</td>
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LETTER OF INTENT FORMAT

Those intending to respond to the Request for Proposals must first provide a Letter of Intent outlining their interest in and general approach to the project. Letters should include the following:

- Proposed location (address with map of location, photos)
- Proposed use of the structure
- Commitment to historical truth telling
- Preliminary financial plan
- Anticipated timeline for project completion
- Relevant experience/interest of proposer

Please submit Letter of Intent as a PDF to julia@fortroadfederation.org by Friday, July 21, 2023. Letters will be reviewed by the team and finalists selected to develop a full proposal.

FULL PROPOSAL FORMAT

Selected finalists will be invited to submit a full proposal that includes:

- Project Narrative – Description of project plans and summary of team members.
- Selection Criteria
  - Reconstruction plan in accordance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards.
  - Commitment to Historical Truth Telling
  - Location
  - Plan for long term stewardship
  - Project Timeline
  - Financial Plan & Capability
  - Relevant Experience

Please submit the full proposal as a PDF to julia@fortroadfederation.org by Friday, September 29, 2023.

NOTICE OF AWARD

Selected proposal will be notified via email the week of October 16, 2023. A signed agreement will be required for transfer of preserved materials.
RESOURCES

* Denotes they are scheduled to attend the engagement night.

* Dave Cunnien of Capital Masonry Restoration
  Mason involved with the deconstruction of building

Don Peltier of Pelco Construction
General contractor involved in the deconstruction of building

* John Yust
  Architect that has developed preliminary drawings of building

* Jim Sazevich
  Local historian with knowledge of building

Frank White
Local historian with extensive knowledge of Black History in Saint Paul & MN

* Jeremy Nienow
  Archeologist who performed preliminary excavation on the site after building was deconstructed

MacDonald and Mack Architects
Architectural firm who performed the assessment prior to deconstruction

MEDIA COVERAGE OF PROCESS

3/10/23 – Pioneer Press
2/14/23 – Minnesota Public Radio
2/13/23 – Star Tribune
2/08/23 – Pioneer Press Update
2/08/23 – Star Tribune Update
1/30/23 – Public Television Report
1/26/23 – Pioneer Press
1/26/23 – Star Tribune
1/26/23 – CBS News
1/26/23 – KSTP
1/26/23 – WCCO
1/26/23 – MPR (MN Public Radio)
1/26/23 – Bring me the News
1/24/23 – KSTP
1/24/23 – MPR
1/23/23 – KSTP
1/23/23 – Joy in Minnesota
1/02/23 – Community Reporter
12/5/23 – Star Tribune
SUPPLEMENTAL SOCIAL HISTORY CONTEXT

Land Acknowledgement - Nativegov.org
Pioneer-Era Limestone - Storymaps.arcgis.com
A Greater Victory - Collections.mnhs.org

In the social history, the home spans over 170 years. The Justus Ramsey House embodies possibly the widest arc of social-political history of any building in Saint Paul.

- It was constructed years before the Dakota War of 1862 at a time when Dakota people, fur traders and settlers coexisted in the area.
- It is an opportunity to discuss and learn about the treaties of 1837 and 1851, and better understand how the Dakota people were forcibly removed from their ancestral homeland.
- It is directly connected to very early land speculation – with names that include Irvine, Sibley, Rice, and Ramsey.
- It allows us to reflect on how property is often recognized for its association with wealthy landowners vs. the stories of working people who lived there and labored to build the city and serve its growing populace.
- It is an opportunity to tell the story of how free and formerly enslaved Blacks came to Saint Paul seeking work and entrepreneurial opportunities and established roots for the early Black community, including in the West 7th neighborhood and their subsequent displacement.
- It is the opportunity to explore local gay history, including openly gay partners living and doing business together and identifying as such in the 1940 census.

A working timeline of social-political history through the lens of the Justus Ramsey House with links to relevant topics and resources is available online here.
This rare surviving example of a solid limestone masonry cottage has a richer and more diverse history than has been documented to date. Despite its name, no primary source material provides any evidence that Justus C. Ramsey had anything to do with the Justus Ramsey House.\(^1\) A brief tie-in with St. Paul’s former eight-term mayor and prolific officer-holder Robert A. Smith has been established by the latter’s wistful remarks 50 years after the fact to a newspaper reporter visiting Smith’s mansion on Summit Avenue in 1903: “[T]hat [Christmas of] [18]53 was just as enjoyable and surrounded with as many comforts as the one you will celebrate in a few days.... I lived on Seventh Street, near Walnut, in a small stone house and, by the way, it is still standing[.]”\(^2\) What has been overlooked are the people who lived in the house at the time Smith made those remarks. Their history, no less than his, is important to tell—and to preserve.

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1. At most, Justus Ramsey can be connected with the real estate underlying and surrounding the house. After 1852, he held an undivided ownership in approximately one-eighth of the lots in Rice & Irvine’s Addition, including Lot 8 on which the house was or would eventually be built. Book K of Deeds 686, Ramsey County Recorder’s Office.
It is not an easy history to pin down. The street address of the house remained in flux long after the pioneer era, being variously assigned as 254, 252, 252 rear, 252 ½, and 242 West 7th Street. But despite the potential confusion, one thing remains clear: between the late 1890s until 1933, almost all the residents of the house were Black men, women and children. From 1900 to 1908, the cottage was the home of George and Maria Perkins, formerly enslaved people from Kentucky and South Carolina respectively. George worked as a porter for the Pullman Company, headquartered in Chicago, while Maria raised the couple’s sole surviving child—three others had died. During later times the small two-room home served as a multi-tenant boarding house. In 1920, John and Daisy Hall lived there with Hattie Key, her daughter Lucy, and Hattie’s sister Alice Dean, all from Alabama, together with a lodger from Tennessee named Charles Alexander. Hattie and her daughter both worked as maids, Charles as a construction worker, and John Hall as a butcher for Armour Packing Co. At other times the house supported the one-story wood-framed retail shop that was built in front in about 1915 (Image 2)—as when in 1919, Lizzie Battles operated the latter as a hairdresser and millinery shop (Image 3) while residing in the stone house. In the decades between, the city directories list numerous other residents, most apparently unrelated and having a variety of occupations such as waiter, domestic servant, janitor, rail car cleaner, dishwasher, hairdresser and laborer.

But by far the most common occupation of residents of the Justus Ramsey House was that of porter—specifically, railway porters. An astonishing number boarded there. In addition to George Perkins, boarders Lee Barber, James Thomas, and Charles Alexander also worked for the Pullman Company. Monroe Duncan, C.S. Page, Curtis James, Henry Reed, William Hines, and Victor Towles all worked as porters for Great Northern Railway; William

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3 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota (“Sanborn Map”) plate 27 (Sanborn Map Co., vol. 1, 1885).
5 See, e.g., St. Paul City Directories 1895, 1899 and 1917 (R. L. Polk & Co) (“City Directories”).
6 See, e.g., City Directories 1914-1922.
7 This is the building’s address today for property tax purposes. See Ramsey County Property Map, https://maps.co.ramsey.mn.us/MapRamsey/. The numerous references to the house after 1914 to “252 rear” and “252 ½” likely correspond to the construction at about that time of a small, one-story wood-framed building between the Justus Ramsey House and West 7th Street. This building housed a retail shop and still more boarders, and became the new 252 West 7th. It was clad with steel siding, bore a commercial false-front and functioned variously as a small restaurant, hairdresser’s shop, and a fruit stand. See Image 2. See also City Directories, 1916-22.
8 1900 U.S. Census, Ramsey County Minn., City of St. Paul, 5th Ward (Enum. Dist. 93, sheet 3); City Directories 1901, 1902, 1906, 1907 and 1908.
9 This appears to be the same Charles Alexander who boarded in the house in 1907, when he worked as a railway porter. See footnote 14.
11 City Directories, var. 1900-1922.
12 City Directories 1902-5, 1917.
13 City Directories 1901, 1904-5.
14 City Directory 1907.
15 City Directory 1899.
16 City Directory 1904.
17 City Directories 1906-7.
18 City Directories 1909-10.
19 City Directory 1901, 1904.
20 City Directory 1916.
Manning worked for Chicago Great Western Railway;21 and the employers of porters Dixon Woods,22 George Williams,23 Charles Parker and Joseph Lewers24 were not specified in the directories. The history of the Pullman Company and of Black railroad porters generally is a major historical context in its own right. At its peak, Saint Paul’s Union Depot served more than 280 trains and 20,000 passengers daily, and was a point of entry and major employer of Black job-seekers. Although most porters were confined to menial roles, their combined efforts ultimately formed the nation’s first Black labor union ever to sign a collective bargaining agreement, thereby securing improved working conditions and a degree of upward mobility. Moreover, “[r]egardless of job status, black station employees were important ambassadors. They were often the first friendly face for a new arrival, and their networks of information about where to find shelter and a good meal were invaluable.”25 Porters typically travelled the rails for 400 hours or more per month covering as many as 11,000 miles. It is little wonder that census-takers and city directory writers often missed them at home.26

In 1933 the City of Saint Paul vacated the south 20 feet of West 7th Street, obliterating many of the homes and businesses on that side—including the shop that once supported Lizzie Battles. But for decades before that time the Justus Ramsey House’s residents were a vibrant part of a larger Black community that flourished around the “Uptown” neighborhood centered near Seven Corners, just prior to the boom of the Rondo neighborhood to the west.27 Owen Howell, owner of the Uptown Sanitary Shop on Wabasha, organized a Black baseball team called The Uptowns that played throughout the region, including against Chicago teams.28 The most recognized Black baseball team in Minnesota was the St. Paul Colored Gophers, from 1907-1910. (Image 5) The team’s owner, Phil E. Reid, played for the team and operated an Uptown saloon at 4th & Cedar Street. Reid was a prominent St. Paulite; his funeral at Pilgrim Baptist Church was among the largest in Saint Paul history at the time.29 A 1935 map of the “natural areas” of Saint Paul reflecting then-prevalent redlining trends characterizes most of residential Uptown as the “Rooming House District,” juxtaposed to the white “Workingmen’s Homes” to the south and west.30 Of the approximately 3,200 Blacks living in the city in 1903, only 71 owned their own homes.31 With these few exceptions, the homes of most Black people, like the Justus Ramsey House, were built by and for someone else.

21 City Directory 1903.
22 City Directory 1917.
23 City Directory 1910.
24 City Directory 1914 (listing both boarding together at 252½ W7th).
26 McWatt at 204.
27 Uptown was a sub-community of the larger Uppertown neighborhood, which began at the former steamboat landing at the foot of Chestnut Street and extended for more than a mile south and west down West 7th Street.
29 Interview with Frank M. White, Saint Paul, October 25, 2022.
31 Address by Frederick L. McGhee to Christian Endeavor Society, Central Presbyterian Church, reported in Saint Paul Globe, Mar. 9, 1903.
Yet despite these barriers, by 1900, Black people in Saint Paul had secured positions in the police and fire departments, sat on local juries, and established a Black company of the city militia.32 Simpson & Wills, the city’s first Black undertakers, operated across the street and two blocks north of the Justus Ramsey House, at 234 West 4th Street (near today’s Holiday Inn on Kellogg Boulevard).33 One block east of the house resided Victoria Page, at 276 Chestnut Street, a Black female owner of a popular restaurant frequented by whites patronizing the saloons and brothels of nearby Hill Street—the only Black-owned restaurant in the city.34 Page was born into enslavement in Tennessee, could neither read nor write and was unable to identify her parents to census takers.

The strength and courage of this community had diversifying effects in neighboring communities. Around the corner at 242 Eagle Street, Black families resided in the same complex with recent Italian immigrants—including Michael and Irene Cossetta, whose small fruit stand would grow into a multi-generation grocery and restaurant business that operates in the neighborhood to this day.35 In Frogtown to the northwest, Black congregants of St. Vincent de Paul Church worked for racial inclusiveness by sponsoring the neighborhood’s Chinese catholic converts.36 The Saint Paul Labor and Trades Assembly—a powerful early labor union—elected Charles James, its first Black president that year;37 and within the same decade the city would hire the nation’s first Black municipal architect, Clarence Wigington.38

By 1940, the widening of West 7th Street together with the commercial development of the city led to a declining residential population and gradual regentrification of the Uptown community. The Justus Ramsey House became incorporated into an antique shop (Image 4), and later into the outdoor patio of an adjacent restaurant (Image 5)—the rear of which is the same building once known as Poverty Flats.40

Author’s Note: I wish to express my gratitude to Saint Paul historians Jim A. Sazevich, who provided a wealth of primary resource material for this study, and Frank M. White, who greatly expanded my knowledge and appreciation of the Uptown community through the lens of the early Black baseball teams. This article was researched and written over the span of just three weeks following the news of the Justus Ramsey House’s potential demolition. I am the first to admit that

33 City Directory 1920.
34 1920 U.S. Census, Ramsey County Minn., City of St. Paul, 5th Ward (Enum. Dist. 44, Sheet 2).
36 Wingerd at 109.
37 Id. at 77.
40 City Directory 1898. Formerly numbered 250 West 7th Street, this frame building forms the rear of Burger Moe’s, and sits across the patio to the east from the Justus Ramsey House.
much more work needs to be done. In particular, more voices and diverse perspectives need to be included in this conversation. Let’s hope there is time.
**Image 2:** 252 West 7th Street, front (St. Paul Public Works, 1933).

**Image 3:** Advertisement for Lizzie Battles’ hair-dressers shop, 252 West 7th Street (front), The Appeal, Jan. 11, 1919.

Ladies, doubtless you will want your hair washed, new switches, transformations, curls, etc. If so, call at the hair parlors of Mrs. Lizzie Battles’, 252 W. Seventh street, and she will supply your wants. Switches dyed for 50 cents.
Image 5: The Saint Paul Colored Gophers, 1908 (MNHS collections).
Image 4: Wilm & Gregory Antique Dealers, 1936 (MNHS collections).