The cover image is of St. Anthony Falls Lock, closed in June 2015. Image courtesy River Life, University of Minnesota.

Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. 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 the Mississippi is produced by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing and the University of Minnesota 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, Doctoral Candidate, Anthropology, University of Minnesota

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, Metropolitan Design Center, University of Minnesota

Lewis E. Gilbert, Institute on the Environment, University of Minnesota

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 Salveson, Mill City Museum, Minnesota Historical Society

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

Introductions

Introduction to Issue Four
By Patrick Nunnally, Editor ...................................................................................................................................................4

Features

What do you see when you look at a river?
By Jessica Kozarek ...................................................................................................................................................................6
The Once and Future River: A Present Snapshot
By Jane E. Mazack .....................................................................................................................................................................17
Why so much sand in the Lower Minnesota River?
By Carrie E. Jennings ...............................................................................................................................................................27
Princeville and the Environmental Landscape of Race
By Richard M. Mizelle Jr. ........................................................................................................................................................34

Perspectives

Owámniyomni, a Dakota Name for “St. Anthony Falls”
By Mona M. Smith ....................................................................................................................................................................48

In Review

Troubled Waters: Rivers in Latin American Imagination
By Tim Frye ..................................................................................................................................................................................50
Learning with the flow: My journey as a student working in the “real world” of research and communication
By Maxyne Friesen ...................................................................................................................................................................55

Primary Sources

Minneapolis’ Upper Harbor Terminal: A Geostory of Collaborative Creation
By Laurie Moberg ......................................................................................................................................................................59

Geographies

Perspectives on River Interventions
By Patrick Nunnally .................................................................................................................................................................66
EMBEDDED IN LANDSCAPES ARE THE SOCIAL
HISTORIES OF HOW A SPACE HAS BEEN SHAPED
AND RESHAPED BY HUMAN AND NONHUMAN FORCES
OVER TIME. EACH REINVIGORATION OF A GEOGRAPHY
TO SUIT HUMAN INTERESTS, DESIRES, EVEN HUMAN
UNDERSTANDINGS OF NONHUMAN CAPACITIES LEAVES
TRACES, SOMETIMES OBSCURING, ERODING, OR EVEN
ERASING THE PREVIOUS HUMAN INTENTIONS. YET
HOW DO OUR ITERATIVE LANDSCAPE RECONFIGURATIONS
DEMONSTRATE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MATERIAL
EARTH AND ITS DYNAMIC CAPACITIES? IN THE ERA OF
THE ANTHROPOCENE, AS ARGUMENTS ARTICULATE HOW
HUMAN PROJECTS AND PRACTICES HAVE IRREPARABLY
ALTERED AND CONTINUE TO TRANSFORM THE PLANET
GEOLOGICALLY, ECOLOGICALLY, AND ATMOSPHERICALLY,
I POSE THIS QUESTION NEITHER AS A THEORETICAL ENTER-
PRISE OF INTELLECTUAL ABSTRACTION NOR AS A CALL FOR
SCRUTINY OF ECLOGICAL CHANGES OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVIDENCE. INSTEAD, I ASK THIS QUESTION IN THIS WAY
BECAUSE THE ERA OF THE ANTHROPOCENE IS BOTH
DAUNTING AND FULL OF POTENTIAL: DAUNTING BECAUSE
WE TEETER NEAR THE PRECIPICE OF AN IRREVERSIBLE
TIPPING POINT BEYOND WHICH HUMANITY’S EXISTENCE
IS DRAWN INTO QUESTION; FULL OF POTENTIAL BECAUSE
IN THE FACE OF AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE, WE HAVE THE
CAPACITY TO REEVALUATE OUR HISTORIES AND REIMAGINE
OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PLANET IN MORE COLLAB-
ORATIVE TERMS.

SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE REPOSITION HUMANITY
NOT AS THE CENTRAL FIGURE IN SHAPING THE WORLD BUT
AS ONE OF MANY CO-CREATING AGENTS, FROM RIVERS
TO FIBER OPTIC CABLES TO INSECTS? SOCIAL THEORIST
BRUNO LATOUR SUGGESTS THAT RECOGNIZING THAT WE
SHARE AGENCY WITH THE EARTH AND CREATE THE WORLD
TOGETHER IS A STEP TOWARD BEGINNING TO TELL WHAT
HE CALLS “OUR COMMON GEOSTORY” (2014:3). USING
THE FOLLOWING THREE IMAGES, I’D LIKE TO BEGIN TO TELL
A KIND OF ABREVIATED HISTORIC GEOSTORY GROUNDED
IN A PARTICULAR PLACE: A STRETCH OF THE MISSISSIPPI
RIVER ABUTTED BY WHAT IS CURRENTLY KNOWN AS
THE UPPER HARBOR TERMINAL (UHT) IN NORTH
MINNEAPOLIS. PERHAPS NOT PARTICULARLY PHOTOGENIC
OR SCENIC ACCORDING TO TYPICAL AESTHETIC STANDARDS,
THIS STRETCH OF RIVERFRONT BETWEEN THE LOWRY
AVENUE AND CAMDEN BRIDGES ON THE WEST BANK
OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER HAS BEEN RECONFIGURED TO SUIT
THE NEEDS AND VISIONS OF A PARTICULAR PERIOD. THE IMAGES HERE SHOW THREE
CONFIGURATIONS OF THE UHT LANDSCAPE ACROSS A
CENTURY. TOGETHER, THESE IMAGES DEMONSTRATE
THE TEMPORAL LAYERING OF A PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL
LANDSCAPE, HIGHLIGHTING CHANGES OVER TIME; MY
ANALYSIS AIDS TO ILLUMINATE HOW THESE CHANGES
EMERGE AT THE INTERSECTION OF HUMANS AND
NONHUMANS, AND POINT US TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE
PERCEPTION AND ETHIC OF CO-CREATING THE WORLD.
The Logging Trunk Line

At the turn of the twentieth century, much of Minneapolis’ riverfront area was dominated by mills. As the St. Anthony Falls area became the primary home for flour mills, lumber mills eventually moved upstream to more spacious sites that could accommodate the need for growing lumber and train yards. From the 1890s through the first decade of the 1900s, the UHT in north Minneapolis was a key lumbering hub for the Upper Midwest, and the Mississippi River became a prosperous trunk line, carrying felled trees downstream from across northern Minnesota.

The Bovey-DeLaittre sawmill and lumber yard pictured here was one of the myriad successful lumbering enterprises in Minneapolis. Opening its doors in 1869, the Bovey-DeLaittre sawmill found security by providing for lumber yards in smaller, rapidly developing agricultural prairie towns across the Upper Midwest (Larson [1949] 2007). After fire took their first sawmill operation...
on the east side of St. Anthony Falls, the Bovey-
DeLaittre Company rebuilt upstream on what was
previously farmland (Hotchkiss 1898) and what
would later become the UHT. They remained at
that site until closing their doors permanently in
In this image, human effort, industrial prowess,
and development drive are evident. This era of
American growth transformed forests into eco-
nomic resources and rivers like the Mississippi
into conduits for expanding the logging enter-
prise. In this portion of the geostory, the material
presence of the river is a critical contributor to
the shape of the UHT. The image shows the way
log booms were erected in the water, the way
the waters carried the logs and directed them to
their destination. What it cannot show, however,
is that the logging industry depended on early
spring flows of meltwater to make the rivers run
high enough and forcefully enough to carry their
timbers downstream. By reevaluating the mighty
force of the river waters in this image, we can
begin to appreciate the waters not as manipulated
by human ingenuity but as a partner in shaping
and reshaping the material and social worlds of
the logging era. After 1905, logging companies
would gradually begin to close their doors; fewer
and fewer logs would flow on the Mississippi’s
mainstream to Minneapolis. The river that carved
its course through the area long before the log-
ning industry fleetingly marshalled its forces for
particular ends, however, would continue to flow
and to design the social and geological landscape
into the future.

The River at the Center

In the 1940s, the lumber business in Minneapolis
had disappeared as the northern pine and fir
sources diminished and the UHT site was in
the process of a reformulation. After years of
negotiations with the Army Corps of Engineers
and federal legislators and offices, Minneapolis
received congressional support and funding to
build the Upper and Lower St. Anthony locks
and dams (City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis
Park & Recreation Board 2016). The aerial image
here from the United States Geological Survey
(USGS) was taken in 1947 as the Army Corps of
Engineers made plans for the locks and dams that
would allow for an industrial port upstream from
downtown Minneapolis.

Complementary to the preliminary planning
process for the UHT, this aerial image is some-
what indiscriminate in what it depicts: residential
streets, industrial spaces, railroad tracks, bridges,
and, of course, the Mississippi River as the
centerpiece. Here, the river runs like a dark,
narrow band dotted with islands, its subtle curves
disrupting the linear grid of city streets. The area
that would become the UHT is featured along
the lower west bank of the Mississippi River,
distinguishable because it lacks the tree canopy
and gridded repetition of neighboring urban
residential landscapes. This riverfront area,
previously occupied by lumber yards and later
a shipping terminal, creates a border territory
between the river and the residential spaces of
north Minneapolis.

In the context of planning for the UHT, this im-
age suggests a particular set of human relations
with and understandings of the river: specifically,
that rivers can be manipulated for human de-
signs. For example, look at the islands protruding
from the river in this aerial photo. While the logs
floating downstream in a previous era could be
maneuvered to avoid these obstacles during the
high waters of spring, a shipping terminal would
require a more consistent channel and flow that
the islands might obstruct. In the context of 1947
imaginings, this photo indexes a set of human
aspirations to restructure the waterway to better
serve shipping interests. By the 1930s, the Army
Corps of Engineers was invested in the nine-foot channel navigation project, which promised deep and consistent shipping avenues (US Army Corps of Engineers 2016). The St. Anthony locks and dams would eventually comply with these standards as well, thus necessarily changing the contours of this stretch of the Upper Mississippi. This image captures a critical moment before this future was enacted, a moment when other futures could have been imagined, but which have since been foreclosed, a moment when a particular understanding of what the river should do for people was organized into the landscape.

Yet even as these plans formed the social and physical landscape, they were informed and ultimately reformed in part due to the untamable capacities of the river itself. The geostory is never complete.

*Aerial photo of north Minneapolis and the UHT area, 1947 (north is the top of the image). USGS Open Access.*
The Upper Harbor Terminal and Its Futures

The final temporal layer is a photo of the Upper Harbor Terminal in action. Taken in the early years of the twenty-first century, the image shows the terminal as an industrial shipping center with mounds of coal, gravel, and road salt on the bank and barges aligning the water’s edge. The UHT opened in the 1960s after the completion of both the Lower and Upper St. Anthony locks and dams made it accessible to barges and boats. Eventually the UHT replaced the municipal port at Bohemian Flats, a downstream area beneath the Washington Avenue Bridge. With the skyline of the Minneapolis skyscrapers in the background, the UHT is positioned as feeding the economic development and growth of the metropolitan area. Once a productive port, The UHT remained an active barge terminal even as the site grew to be financially insolvent. As trains and trucking routes via Interstate-94 (visible on the right/west in this image) increasingly became

The UHT as an active port terminal, circa 2005, looking south toward Minneapolis. Image from the Metropolitan Design Center Image Bank. Copyright Regents of the University of Minnesota, used with permission.
the more economical choices for the transport of goods, the barge terminal became unsustainable. Minneapolis opted to close the terminal in 2014, opening its many acres for more fiscally responsible and possibly more community-engaged enterprises. The closure of the Upper St. Anthony lock followed the next year. As a result, the UHT is being redeveloped once again as a federal “Promise Zone” with both private and public interests guiding its revitalization.

The UHT as an active port terminal, circa 2005, looking south toward Minneapolis. Image from the Metropolitan Design Center Image Bank. Copyright Regents of the University of Minnesota, used with permission.

This photo taken before the harbor closed reflects one set of human relations with the river – economic, industrial, and detached – that aligns with the development trajectory of the UHT’s geostory. The river’s capacities to carry have been molded to be useful to the changing forms of human needs; over time the river became a resource to be used and engineered, a means for economic development in the eyes of many. This stretch of river is grounded in and has enabled these relations for over a century, but the geostory – like the materials that form it – is ever-evolving, constantly in a state of becoming something different. As the future of this place is being reshaped once again, we have reached a critical moment when human relations with the river can be reconfigured to reflect an alternative ethos, possibly an ethos of collaboration and co-creation.

How might our understanding of the Mississippi River change if we considered it a collaborator in our projects, endowed with the agencies to participate in or disrupt our human designs? How might our practices change if we considered the river as kin like many indigenous people do, from the Dakota of the Midwestern U.S. to the Karen of Southeast Asia? How might our geostory change if we consider rivers like the Mississippi to be storytellers themselves (McLean 2009)? Perhaps in reimagining the social and physical landscape of a place, we can begin a practice not only of seeing rivers as collaborating with us, but also of seeing humans as collaborating with rivers. After all, as anthropologist Hugh Raffles explains, nonhumans are “not just deeply present in the world but deeply there, creating it, too” (2010:3).
References


Recommended Citation


About the Author

Laurie Moberg is a PhD candidate in anthropology at the University of Minnesota. Her work investigates recurrent episodes of flooding on rivers in Thailand and queries how the ecological, social, and cosmological entanglements between humans and nonhumans, people and the material world, are reimagined and reconfigured in an era of global climate change. She is the 2016-2017 Graduate Research Assistant for Open Rivers at the Institute for Advanced Study.