

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Planning Commission, Committee of the Whole
FROM: John Smoley, Ph. D., Senior City Planner, 612-673-2830
DATE: June 18, 2015
SUBJECT: Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building (2744 4th Avenue South) Designation Study – CPC Review and Comment

Designation Study Review and Comment

Chapter 599, Heritage Preservation, of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances outlines the review process for designation studies. The City is required to submit the designation study to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the City Planning Commission (CPC) for review and comment. A copy of the draft designation study has been submitted to the Minnesota SHPO. Enclosed is a copy of the draft designation study prepared by Ward 8 staff Jeremiah Osokpo and Deebaa Sirdar for your review and comment.

Section 599.260 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations requires the planning director to submit all proposed designations to the City Planning Commission for review and comment on the proposal within thirty (3) days. In its review, the City Planning Commission shall consider but not be limited to the following factors:

- (1) The relationship of the proposed designation to the city’s comprehensive plan.
- (2) The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area.
- (3) The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the city council.

Staff anticipates that this item will be on the June 18, 2015, Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion and comment.

The following memorandum analyzes the proposed designation using the three factors outlined in section 599.260 of the ordinance.

The relationship of the proposed designation to the city’s comprehensive plan: Policy 8.1 states, “Preserve, maintain and designate districts, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city’s architecture, history, and culture.” By designating the subject property as a landmark, the City will require the preservation of a building significant for its association with the twentieth century African American civil rights movement. Policy 8.10 states, “Promote the benefits of preservation as an

economic development tool and a method to achieve greater environmental sustainability and city vitality.” Designating this property and encouraging its maintenance and rehabilitation may provide an anchor property for future redevelopment of this commercial node. Policy 8.10.5 states, “Prioritize the reuse of the city’s historic buildings as a strategy for sustainable development.” Oftentimes, the greenest building is the one that is already built. By designating the subject property and protecting it from any demolition in the future, embodied energy is conserved that would be spent in any demolition and construction of a new structure on this site. Policy 8.11 states, “Raise awareness of the history of Minneapolis and promote the quality of the built environment.” Designation of this property will help to tell the story of Minneapolis’ civil rights history to current and future residents of the city.

The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area: The proposed designation of the subject property will set an example of the value of rehabilitating and maintaining existing commercial building stock.

The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the City council: The 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Small Area/Corridor Framework Plan identifies historically significant structures in the area, to include the subject property. In the Sabathani / 4th Avenue Focus Area (immediately adjacent to the subject property) the plan recommends no alterations to the subject property, calling instead for the redevelopment of vacant land on the south side of the 38th Street and 4th Avenue intersection.

DESIGNATION STUDY:

Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building
3744 4th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55409



June 18, 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mayor and City Council of the City of Minneapolis

Betsy Hodges, Mayor

Barbara Johnson, Council President
Elizabeth Glidden, Council Vice President

Kevin Reich
Cam Gordon
Jacob Frey
Blong Yang
Abdi Warsame
Lisa Goodman

Alondra Cano
Lisa Bender
John Quincy
Andrew Johnson
Linea Palmisano

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission

Laura Faucher, Chair
Paul Bengtson
Alex Haecker
Chris Hartnett
Susan Hunter Weir
Ginny Lackovic
Linda Mack
Dan Olson
Ian Stade
Constance Vork

Minneapolis City Planning Commission

Theodore Tucker, Chair
Council Member Lisa Bender
Mathew Brown
Ben Gisselman
Meg Forney

Rebecca Gagnon
Ryan Kronzer
Alissa Luepke-Pier
John Slack

Minneapolis City Council

Ward Eight Council Member Elizabeth Glidden
Jeremiah Osokpo and Deebaa Sirdar, Ward Eight Council Office, Principal Investigators

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Designation Study Purpose and Background.....	page 5
Part 1: Physical Description of the Property.....	page 6
• Parcel location, shape, and size	
• Description of building(s) on the property	
• Description of landscape and landscape features	
Part 2: Discussion of Historic Significance.....	page 9
• Twentieth Century African American Civil Rights Movement	
• Cecil Newman	
• Neighborhood identity	
Part 3: Rationale for Local Historic Designation.....	page 17
• Designation criteria	
• Integrity of historic resource	
• Other considerations	
Part 4: Registration and Classification Information.....	page 22
Part 5: Photographs, drawings, and other documents.....	page 24
• Figure 1. 3744 4 th Avenue South, front (east) side, 1958, source: Minnesota Historical Society Visual Resources Database	
• Figure 2. 3744 4 th Avenue South, front (east) side, July 2014, source: Ward 8	
• Figure 3. 3744 4 th Avenue South, south side, July 2014, source: Ward 8	
• Figure 4. 3744 4 th Avenue South, north side, July 2014, source: Ward 8	
• Figure 5. 3744 4 th Avenue South, rear (west) side, July 2014, source: Ward 8	
• Figure 6. 3744 4 th Avenue South, main hallway, July 2014, source: Ward 8	
• Figure 7. Newman's office inside the <i>Spokesman-Recorder</i> building, 3744 4 th Avenue South, July 2014, source: Ward 8	
• Figure 8. A young Cecil Newman, source: Leipold, 21	
• Figure 9. Cecil Newman at work, source: Leipold, 24	
• Figure 10. Cecil Newman (5 th from left) as a member of Mayor Humphrey's Human Relations Commission, source: Leipold, 80	
• Figure 11. Cecil Newman with Governor Orville Freeman and County Commissioner George Matthews in front of the <i>Spokesman-Recorder</i> building, source: Leipold, 115, 118	

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development
Designation Study for Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building

- Figure 12. Newman and Vice President Hubert Humphrey chatting with the President of the Ivory Coast, 1967, source: Leipold 161
- Figure 13. Walter Mondale with Newman in his office at the *Spokesman-Recorder* building, 3744 4th Avenue South, 1967, source: Leipold, 127
- Figure 14. 1940 self portrait of Gordon Parks in Minneapolis, source: *To Smile in Autumn: A Memoir* by Gordon Parks
- Figure 15. Gordon Parks circa 1970, source: Minnesota Historical Society

Sourcespage 32

Appendices.....page 34

- Appendix A: Action initiating nomination
- Appendix B: Nomination staff report
- Appendix C: HPC Actions from Nomination hearing
- Appendix D: Letter to SHPO
- Appendix E: Letter from SHPO (*forthcoming*)
- Appendix F: Memorandum to City Planning Commission (*forthcoming*)
- Appendix G; Staff report to Heritage Preservation Commission (*forthcoming*)
- Appendix H: HPC Actions from Designation hearing (*forthcoming*)
- Appendix I: Request for Council Action (*forthcoming*)
- Appendix J: Zoning and Planning Committee Actions (*forthcoming*)
- Appendix K: Actions of the Full City Council (*forthcoming*)
- Appendix L: Publication in *Finance and Commerce* (*forthcoming*)

Designation Study Purpose and Background

In June, 2014 Elizabeth Glidden submitted an application for nomination to the City of Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) for the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building at 3744 4th Avenue South in Minneapolis. The submission was in result to proactive steps that Tracey Williams-Dillard initiated to consider a designation for an important African American resource that has served the community for over 80 years.

After completing an initial review, CPED recommended to the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) on July 22, 2014 that the property exhibited at least one of the local designation criteria found in section 599.210 of the Heritage Preservation Ordinance. The HPC adopted CPED’s findings and placed the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building under interim protection and called for a designation study to be conducted.

This Study is intended to fulfill the requirements for local historic designation outlined in Title 23, Chapter 599.230 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances. The study is based on a review of resources including books, newspaper clippings, articles, oral interviews, historic building permits, archival materials of the Minneapolis Collection of the Hennepin County Library and documentaries. Significant contributions to the research for this study were made by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park Legacy Council, Tracey Williams-Dillard, Wayne Glanton, Greg McMoore, Peter McLaughlin, Clorasteen Wilson and more.

BASIC PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Current name	<i>Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building</i>
Historic Name	<i>Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Building</i>
Current Address	3744 4 th Avenue South
Historic Address	3744 4 th Avenue South
Original Construction Date	1958
Original Contractor	Carlson – LaVine
Original Architect, Master builder, engineer, designer, artist, or craftsmen	Vernon K. Hosso
Historic Use	Print Shop & Office
Current Use	Office
Ward:	8
Neighborhood:	Central

PART 1: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY

Parcel location, shape, and size

The *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building is located at 3744 4th Avenue South, in the Central Neighborhood of South Minneapolis. Located one block behind the northwest corner of this property is the Sabathani Community Center and Garden and on the southwest corner of the property sits Fire Station 17. The buildings and homes surrounding the *Spokesman-Recorder* building contribute to the sense of a welcoming environment, built on community programs and services which bring people together. Situated just across the street, on the east side of 4th Avenue South, is a local barbershop by the name of Vo's Family Barber Shop. The *Spokesman-Recorder* building is a one-story rectangular building that sits on a 45,000 cubic foot rectangular lot.

Description of building(s) on the property

This lot possesses the main one-story building with no additional structures added to it over time.

Description of the primary structure

Date(s) of construction: The *Spokesman-Recorder* building was designed by architect Vernon K. Hosso, and constructed by Carlson – LaVine in 1958 for an estimated cost of \$22,000.¹

Size and massing: This one-story building is laid out in a massed plan three units deep by two units wide. The rectangular structure holds all of the newspaper's offices and once housed a printing press whereby the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* printed its publications in-house. The printing press area was later converted into more office and storage space. The building's dimensions are 39 feet in width, 100 feet in depth and 10 feet in height.

Architectural style: The *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building is a quality example of Modern architecture designed to accommodate office and heavy commercial uses. The building does not possess ornamental features. It appears sturdy and durable, and it complements the surrounding neighborhood.

The building is constructed such that the front façade is set back by approximately five feet from the brick side walls and concrete overhang (see cover photo). There are two clear glass doors on the front façade of the building (facing east on 4th Avenue South). Only one door on the facade, the one at the south edge of the brick structure, is used for

entry/exit. Two large rectangular, fixed, 1/1 windows abut the (north) side of this door. The other door, on the northern end of the façade, is flanked by similar rectangular, fixed, 1/1 windows. During the time Cecil Newman ran the paper, this door was used as entry into a space that he rented out. At one point, Glover's Insurance rented and operated out of this space according to Tracey Williams-Dillard, its current owner and granddaughter of original Owner Cecil Newman. This additional income helped with making mortgage payments on the property. It is now used as a conference room.

Above these doors and windows is a row of ten fixed transom windows. Metal framing is used on the façade for all windows and doors. The clear glass and metal framing help to break up the largely brick composition of the building, lending some transparency into the building so that it does not appear as a cold, nameless and mysterious brick structure from the outside.

While the rest of the exterior is comprised of cream-colored painted concrete block, the façade contains an area of red and brown natural brick.

The south wall contains eight rectangular window openings filled with glass block. The windows vary in size as they are proportionate to each room. The north wall contains five such windows.

The west side of the building is the rear wall where there is a glass block filled window opening along with a set of double doors flanked by a single door. According to owner Tracey Williams-Dillard these doors are the work of her uncle who built a very secure set of doors, nearly impenetrable from the outside. The double doors are secured on the interior by a long, metal bar with padlock.

Known original elements that are deteriorated or missing:

Shortly after the building was first constructed, stainless steel letters were installed on the façade that read "Minneapolis Spokesman." Due to theft that ensued, these letters are no longer there. Since each letter cost \$25, they were never replaced. Therefore, there is no sign indicating that this building is home to the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* newspaper company, only door/window decals with an abbreviated "MSR" inscribed.²

Building permit records indicate that, in 1985, the building's roof was replaced when miscellaneous interior and exterior repairs were also made, and in 2011 glass block windows were installed. Historical and current photographs also identify what is arguably the most notable change to the

building: the replacement of one front window with a door on the northern end of the facade.

Description of secondary structure(s)

There are no secondary structures on the property.

Description of interior features

The interior of the building is split by a hallway that runs the length of the structure. This lends to the impression of a long and narrow rectangular structure.

The largest of offices appears to be that of the original owner Cecil Newman (Figure 7). This office now belongs to the owner and granddaughter of Mr. Newman, Tracey Williams-Dillard. The room was designed to accommodate Mr. Newman's busy, hard working lifestyle. It was important to him to have an area where he could keep a sofa for resting in case he had to stay overnight or for long hours. He also needed to be able to change attire as needed, especially since he met regularly with distinguished political figures and dignitaries.³

The rooms that run the length of the north side of the building, beginning with the conference room when you first enter, are all connected by an interior door leading to the adjacent room or office. These connected offices span the length of the building. Due to the nature of his reporting on controversial issues, owner Tracey Williams-Dillard believes this feature was designed to allow Mr. Newman a private entry into the building and into his office with the ability to exit out of the back door, where he would not need to utilize (or be seen in) the hallway. He could discretely access the building through the "side" door and go from his office down the line of rooms and exit through the back door, making it difficult to track his comings and goings.

The interior of the building is not recommended for designation. It is a private commercial space only accessible to members of the public with the newspaper's permission.

Description of landscape and landscape features

No landscaping exists on the property.

PART 2: DISCUSSION OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The subject property is historically significant for its association with the twentieth century African American civil rights movement; significant persons Cecil Newman and Gordon Parks; and its embodiment of neighborhood identity.

Twentieth Century African American Civil Rights Movement

The *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building is highly emblematic of the twentieth century African American civil rights movement in Minnesota. The building was built for, and continues to house, the longest running family owned African American newspaper in the state. Originally known as the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and *St. Paul Recorder* before being combined, the two newspapers were a creation of publisher Cecil Newman in 1934.⁴

Prior to the *Spokesman-Recorder* one local African American newspaper dominated Twin Cities newsstands from 1885 to 1925: the *Western Appeal*, later shortened to the *Appeal* after this St. Paul-based paper attempted to broaden its circulation beyond the Twin Cities and Chicago. Although the newspaper strived to become a source for local and national news, its beginning years were characterized as a tumultuous start.⁵ After years of continuous change within the *Appeal* and “the death of the sole proprietor, co-editor, editor, and contributing author John Quincy Adams, the *Appeal* finally merged with the *Northwestern Bulletin* on January 1, 1924. Shortly after the merger, the *Northwestern-Bulletin Appeal* closed its doors, ending its history as the longest running African American newspaper published in Minnesota at the time.”⁶

After the closing of the *Northwestern-Bulletin Appeal*, the *St. Paul Recorder* and *Minneapolis Spokesman* began publication on October 8, 1934. The first issues demonstrated Newman’s vision which was to collect and publish the stories of African Americans in the community while appealing to all races. Through the age of the civil rights movement, five American wars, and segregation, the *Spokesman-Recorder* has retained its value within the community, publishing ongoing news about how African Americans affect, and are affected by, the political and social happenings in the world. The *Spokesman* often blended the news from the community with what was going on around the U.S. in order to show the continuing challenge that African Americans faced and still struggle with today.⁷

During a time of legalized oppression, segregation, and widespread racism, the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* became the only African American newspaper in Minnesota. It was part of the Black press in America that led the struggle for freedom and equality through the stories told in articles and editorials. It gave voice to those that were oppressed despite efforts to silence those voices.

Over its 80 plus years, the *Spokesman-Recorder* has used a solid journalism background to help mobilize Minnesota's Africa-American communities in understanding the issues and events that are happening that either affect them or go unnoticed until it is too late.⁸ Tracey Williams-Dillard, granddaughter of Cecil Newman, still honors the foundation which the *Spokesman-Recorder* was founded upon. The motto is as follows:

*As it was spoken let us record.
We live in an ever-changing world. As technology blurs
boundaries, we come in closer contact with our brothers
and sisters from around the world. As the Minnesota
Spokesman-Recorder approaches a new millennium, we
are expanding in concert with our constituency, to serve
the changing demographics of the African global
community. Our goal is to Unite, Serve and Represent
that constituency.*⁹

Ms. Williams-Dillard has not only upheld this slogan but has also focused on recognizing the achievements of African Americans within local communities and printing the stories that matter to them.

Cecil Newman

This property is historically significant for its association with the newspaper's founder, editor, publisher, and civic leader, Cecil Newman, who established *The Minneapolis Spokesman and the St. Paul Recorder* on October 8, 1934. On this day the *Spokesman-Recorder* sold its first copies to the public. Newman's influence upon the community shaped opportunities for minorities, particularly African Americans, and gave them a chance to see the news and information that was not found in the local papers; neither was it published in the larger newspapers throughout the state of Minnesota.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, in July, 1903, Newman grew up in a neighborhood that did not seem concerned with the color of his skin. Although this was true, he did receive some abusive comments from adults. Upon starting school he witnessed the evils of segregation. Although he didn't understand the reasoning behind the separation of schools, he accepted and adjusted to the restrictions even though he despised the system and had a strong desire to affect change.¹⁰

During his early school years, Newman was an avid reader. "Reading fascinated me and because it did, I was regarded as somewhat of a prodigy by my elders." At the age of seven, Newman was given a library of 400 books from the woman that his mother worked for by the name of Thornton. Newman's love for reading was undaunted, and his skills in reading and writing exponentially grew because of his exposure to a large variety of books. Newman says, "As I look back upon

my life I can see that I have much to be grateful for. I have made progress. It is a long way from where I was a boy in Kansas City or even later as a Pullman porter to being a close adviser to one of America's greatest men, one who came within a hair of being President of the United States."¹¹

Upon arriving in Minneapolis on May 22, 1922, he soon started working as a bellhop at the Elk's Club in order to take care of his daily needs. While working at the Elk's Club he wanted to still pursue his lifelong dream. So he decided to apply to the *Northwestern Bulletin*, one of two weekly African American newspapers in the Twin Cities at that time, and to his joy he was accepted. "His interest in writing led to his employment as a 'stringer' (part-time correspondent) for the *Pittsburg Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*," which were the leading national Negro papers at the time.¹²

Success did not come quickly or easily for Newman. While he did enter the newspaper business immediately, he had to take second jobs to support himself, first as a bellhop for the Elks Club and then as a Pullman porter. It was two years before Newman earned enough, even with his second job, to allow his wife and son to join him in Minneapolis. Newman tried his hand at publishing, first at a newspaper called the *Twin City Herald*, and then a monthly magazine called the *Timely Digest*. After these ventures ended in failure, he boldly quit his job at the Pullman Company and began not one but two newspapers.¹³

It was Newman's determination for affecting social change and his ability to connect with people that brought him the connections necessary for establishing his newspapers. Newman was a likeable individual. Wayne Glanton, US Army veteran and longtime local contractor in charge of building the *Spokesman*, described Cecil as a truly influential person with a lot of connected friends. Notes Mr. Glanton, one such friend, Charles L. Horn, owned Northern Pump. Cecil was friends with Charlie Horn and Eli Whitney; these were people who wanted to know what was happening after coming out of the war. They sought to eliminate segregation but mortgage lenders still practiced segregation by keeping blacks from getting loans. Cecil himself experienced this in his attempt to secure loan funding for the *Spokesman-Recorder* building. Eventually the building was financed through Midwest Federal (for about \$40,000) which had done business with him previously.¹⁴

Newman says, "I didn't have enough money to begin one newspaper, so I began publishing two." This was how the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder* started its long-lasting years within the community. At this time in the 1930s a severe depression took hold of the nation and most of the world. Businesses closed their doors; jobs and money were scarce; prices dropped and wages were lowered. This was when Cecil Newman began the publication of his newspapers. After a decade the paper was reaching well over 7,000 people and there were only 15,000 African Americans in the Twin Cities, therefore he was

virtually reaching almost all of them as well as many white people. Newman felt that, "...his Negro newspaper should serve a dual purpose. In the first place, it must publish the news of the Negro community, telling about the goings-on among the black members of the group." Traditional news outlets were filled with sensational matter about a robbery or a murder that African Americans committed but never the successes within the community. Newman's paper was also a source for educating its audience on national news.¹⁵

Newman used the *Spokesman* editorials to stand for justice. He began a campaign to boycott four breweries; Hamm, Schmidt, Grain Belt and Gluek beer; which during this time period had policies dictating that they must not hire African Americans. Newman was aware that a large majority of those among his own race consumed these beers. Therefore, they must have a share in producing it. This boycott involved local African American owners of beer parlors, night clubs, trains and many African American porters. The affected breweries offered a bribe, but he refused and stood alongside his race.¹⁶

The first mail subscriber to the *Spokesman-Recorder*, Charles Horn, who was known throughout America as a manufacturer of arms and ammunition called for the help of Newman. He wanted Newman to help integrate African Americans into his defense plant and get them better paying jobs. Newman's position within the plant was the Director of Personnel for Negroes. Other plants followed the procedures that Newman established, which eventually became the standard in most war production plants. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited, he offered his approval of this program.¹⁷

Newman was an instrumental voice for the African American community in Minnesota because few others cared to share the stories of their community. Newman was known as a distinguished, local African American citizen through his lifetime work for the newspaper and with the backing of a supportive group of friends and those that worked alongside him. These individuals included Walter Mondale, Donald Fraser and other individuals that worked on civil rights issues with him, such as Nellie Stone Johnson, Gordon Parks, and Carl Rowan. As Newman worked diligently as a publisher, he started to form closer relationships with governors, judges, congressional members, and mayors.

In particular, Newman established a longstanding relationship with late U.S. Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. Newman became associated with Humphrey during the Great Depression due to Humphrey's determination to secure jobs for African Americans in the Works Progress Administration, where Humphrey was a staff member. Humphrey's relationship towards African Americans came from his family's attitudes towards African Americans when they came into their small South Dakota town. When African Americans were barred from staying in any of the local hotels, Hubert's father took them into his home. For this action and

other reasons, Newman knew that the beliefs of Humphrey's were genuine and true.¹⁸

During Humphrey's first unsuccessful bid to become Minneapolis' mayor, Newman's *Minneapolis Spokesman* and *St. Paul Recorder* were the only two newspapers to support Humphrey, unlike all other Twin Cities newspapers in publication at that time. The second time he ran for mayor, to their delight, was a successful campaign. Part of Mayor Humphrey's agenda included the establishment of a Council on Human Relations to improve the welfare of minorities. Humphrey first looked to the editor of the *Spokesman-Recorder* as the speaker for the African American community to nominate someone, but later insisted that Newman himself become a member of council. As their relationship grew, Humphrey led a fight for fair employment practices for minorities which was a focus for the *Spokesman-Recorder* and especially Cecil Newman. On the day that Minneapolis' City Council passed the ordinance, Cecil out of over 15,000 African Americans in Minneapolis was the only African American present in council chambers to see the change happen. Newman biographer L. Edmond Leipold noted the African American community's positive appraisal of the development. "Nevertheless the black community was pleased. The Negroes of the city now called Cecil Newman Hubert Humphrey's 'soul brother.'"¹⁹

Cecil Newman helped Mayor Humphrey appoint African Americans to many committees which African Americans had never served on. When Hubert Humphrey became a Senator, he brought this fight for equality to the Democratic convention in Philadelphia in 1948 and won. This fight was brought forth by not only Humphrey but Newman, which was why Senator Humphrey asked Newman to come with him to Washington around 1949. Although Newman was his trusted adviser and friend he knew that there was a necessity to remain in Minnesota and continue to build up his community through his efforts at the *Spokesman-Recorder*. Through it all, their relationship brought changes to the African American community in Minnesota as well as across the nation. When Senator Humphrey introduced his first bill in 1949, it was civil rights legislation. It would serve as a model for the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964.²⁰

"Publishing the news about our Negro community raised our morale...it made us feel that we were really a part of the big city," Newman said. "It also showed the white population that we were responsible citizens with our own rights. It helped them to understand us. My newspapers became an instrument of force, a means of hitting both sides of the problem at the same time."²¹ Newman skillfully used the *Spokesman-Recorder* to amplify the voice of the black community and improve its opportunities, securing a proud place for himself and his news organization in the African American civil rights movement of the twentieth century.

Gordon Parks

The subject property is also historically significant for its association with the late photographer, film maker, writer, and composer Gordon Parks. Parks began his career as a photographer in the Twin Cities working for the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* very early in his career.

Gordon Parks was born in 1912, the youngest of 15 children in Fort Scott, Kansas, into poverty and segregation. As a young man he was always drawn to photography, but his early memories were filled with bigotry and constant negative comments about African Americans. When his mother passed away at the age of 14 he was sent to live in Minnesota with his sister until her husband kicked him out. This left Parks homeless in winter, living on the streets of St. Paul, and struggling to make ends meet.²²

In the years following, Parks struggled to survive. Among his ever-changing jobs, he worked as a piano player in a bordello, a hotel busboy, a civilian conservation corpsman, a porter, and later a waiter on the transcontinental North Coast Limited. After seeing the movie "Bombing of U.S.S. Panay" he was inspired by the photographer that stayed by his post to record all that happened. This inspired him to get a camera at 25 years old for \$7.50 which he used to teach himself the skills of being a photographer. In choosing the camera he rose to the top of his profession as an African American in the 1940s.²³

Starting as a newspaper boy at the *Spokesman-Recorder*, he considered his camera, "his weapon against poverty and racism," and over time started taking photographs, which were well represented in the column that Cecil Newman created for him called, "Beauty of the Week."²⁴ This provided Parks with the resources as a staff photographer to succeed and a career that led him to take memorable photos of Muhammad Ali, Malcom X, and Stokely Carmichael. Parks overcame severe discrimination to become the first black photographer at *Life* magazine and achieve pioneering accomplishments in publishing and film. Throughout his career, Parks used his power to bring the poverty and injustice experienced by African Americans into the national spotlight. His ability to capture what happened during the civil rights movement, as well as the segregation in Alabama in 1956, the movement of the Nation of Islam in the 1960s, and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., have made him arguably the most important black photographer in the history of photojournalism.

Neighborhood Identity

One of the most important and unique aspects of the *Spokesman-Recorder* was that it provided the African American community with a newspaper that told the stories going on in their community.²⁵ These stories reveal the history of the neighborhood and the political significance of the community that surrounds the

Spokesman-Recorder building. Although there were other newspapers in Minnesota that covered city and state news, the *Spokesman-Recorder* was the only newspaper to additionally cover the stories of the local African American community. Around this time the larger local newspapers did not have an interest in covering the stories of the 15, 000 plus African Americans living in the Twin Cities because they were not the target audience.

The *Spokesman-Recorder* building is located along 4th Avenue South at 38th Street East: a central location for South Minneapolis' African American community. During and after World War II, the Central neighborhood and this intersection in particular attracted a large group of African American families. This immigration came with churches and other institutions that are still serving the community today. In the 1940s and 50s the neighborhood was home to grocery stores, banks, shoe stores, barber shops, Central High School, Sabathani Church, small community stores and the *Spokesman-Recorder* building. This area has a history of being a healthy, family-oriented area for middle to lower-middle class African Americans.²⁶

The location of the *Spokesman-Recorder* building is ideal for its purpose of covering the local African American community, and from this strategic location it evolved into a prime resource utilized by African Americans in the neighborhood. Not only did the *Spokesman's* reporting keep its audience abreast of local and national news that pertained to blacks, it was also a place where African Americans could identify local resources that served their needs during an era of legal and de facto segregation. Clorasteen Wilson describes a time when she was turned down for dental work due to the racist practice of a particular dentist. Her natural instinct was to turn to the office of Cecil Newman to get a referral for a dentist who would take black patients; simultaneously she was informing him of a story that could be considered newsworthy in the community. As incidents of racism and de facto segregation happened in real time, the *Spokesman-Recorder* could easily capture them and report on them. This intrinsic neighborhood connection to the paper and to Cecil Newman helped connect African Americans to needed services while forging a path that called for social change.²⁷

The character of the neighborhood around the *Spokesman-Recorder* building, since the time it was built in the late 1950s, may have changed slightly, yet the neighborhood maintains its structures and many resources. The neighborhood still has its single-family homes, Sabathani Community Center, and a few local stores, including a barber shop. Unfortunately this area that was once a hub for African Americans in Minneapolis is no longer as vibrant as it once was. Yet the Minneapolis *Spokesman-Recorder*, Minneapolis Urban League, and the old building of Bryant Junior High School, which today is the Sabathani Community Center, have proven to be mainstays of the community.

While the neighborhood's racial identity has expanded, so too has the reporting of the *Spokesman-Recorder*, in order to remain inclusive of newer populations in the local community. When the *Spokesman-Recorder* building was built the surrounding population was predominantly African American, but entering the 1990s the neighborhood began to see a burgeoning Latino population. More recently many refugees from areas of Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin American are immigrating into the Central neighborhood, making it increasingly diverse. This has opened up opportunities for the *Spokesman-Recorder* to incorporate the stories of these new waves of immigrants as it had done for African Americans migrating to this area as early as the mid-19th century.

DRAFT

PART 3: RATIONALE FOR LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION

Local historic designation is an official action that promotes the preservation of historic resources by recognizing specific people, places, and events that are deemed to be significant in relation to the history and heritage of Minneapolis. Through the requirements set out in the Heritage Preservation Chapter of the City's Code of Ordinances, the act of designation establishes a series of protections that are administered through the ordinance to ensure protection of significant places throughout the city against demolition or inappropriate alterations.

Designation Criteria

Title 23, Chapter 599.210 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances lists seven criteria which are considered when trying to determine whether a property is worthy of local designation as a Landmark because of its particular significance. The *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building is considered below in relation to each of the seven designation criteria.

Criteria #1: The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic, or social history.

The property is associated with the twentieth century African American civil rights movement, as discussed in part two of this designation study.

Criteria #2: The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.

The property is associated with the lives of Cecil Newman and Gordon Parks, as discussed in part two of this designation study.

Criteria #3: The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity.

The property is associated with distinctive elements of South Minneapolis' identity, as discussed in part two of this designation study.

Criteria #4: The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.

The subject property does not appear significant under criterion 4. While the building is a quality example of Modern architecture, neither its design, its materials, nor its workmanship make it a distinctive example of this style.

Criteria #5: The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.

The property does not appear significant under criterion 5. No landscaping exists on the property, and the building post-dates the majority of structures at this commercial node.

Criteria #6: The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects.

The property does not appear significant under criterion 6. While Vernon Hosso and Carlson-Lavine, Incorporated appear to have designed and constructed fine buildings, neither appear to have merited recognition within their field as masters.

Criteria #7: The property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The subject property has not yielded information important in prehistory or history. Records available at the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office indicate that no archaeological sites have been identified on the subject property nor have any archaeological surveys been conducted on or near the property in question.

The subject property is not likely to yield information important in prehistory. The subject property is located approximately five hundred feet northwest of depressions of water or wet soil near the surface. These terrain features did not funnel traffic by this site in particular. Given these conditions, it is possible that the site might yield information important to prehistory. Because there is no basement on the lot there is only a low chance of archeological deposits to be present that are likely to yield information important to prehistory, and the building would have to be raised or demolished to access those deposits.

Furthermore, the site is more than five hundred feet from the nearest pre-contact body of water. As these features generally served as sources of water, food, and transportation, areas in close proximity (generally five hundred feet or less) to such sites have a higher than average potential to include archaeological evidence of pre-contact human habitation. Being further than five hundred feet from this feature, the subject property is far less likely to possess such evidence.

The subject property is unlikely to yield information important to history. Building permit records indicate the presence of a building on the property prior to the construction of the present building in 1958, but it was demolished in 1941, nearly two decades before the newspaper building was constructed. Furthermore, city records indicate the lot was connected to the municipal sewer

system the year of June 18, 1915. There is very little chance that the lot may contain privy vaults bearing archaeological evidence. Other archaeological sources of information such as sheet refuse (general surface trash scatters that accumulate over time), trash pits, and builder's trenches may still be present on the lot. Generally, this sort of evidence is found in the back yards of residences. The back yard of this property has been almost completely covered by a paved parking area.

Integrity of historic resource

The following is an assessment of the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building as it relates to the seven aspects of integrity as defined by the Department of the Interior:

Location: The original building permit for this edifice notes that the building was constructed on the property, indicating that the property maintains integrity of location.

Design: Extremely few alterations have been made to the exterior of the building since its construction. Beyond the removal of the original *Spokesman-Recorder* sign, the most notable change is the replacement of one front window with a door, which has not obliterated the property's integrity of design.

Setting: The subject property is considered emblematic of neighborhood identity in an area where structures and their functions have changed little over time, as discussed in part two of this study.

Materials: Extremely few alterations have been made to the exterior of the building since its construction. It retains integrity of materials.

Workmanship: The property retains its brick, glass, and aluminum façade, characteristic of mid-century Modern buildings in the United States.

Feeling: The property retains the look and feel of a newspaper publishing office, although printing functions have been relocated.

Association: The property continues to serve as the home of the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* newspaper.

Relationship to the body of locally-designated properties in Minneapolis

The City of Minneapolis designates properties that represent and reflect elements of the city's culture, social, economic, religious, political, architectural, or aesthetic history as Landmarks. As of March 2015, 166 individual properties have been designated as Landmarks by the City of Minneapolis, including places like the Lena O. Smith House.

The *Spokesman-Recorder* building is unique in the City of Minneapolis and among those properties currently listed as Landmarks. No buildings emblematic of significant media heritage have been designated as Landmarks. Only one structure emblematic of the twentieth century civil rights struggle for African Americans has been designated as a Landmark, and this property is an early twentieth century period revival residence, not a mid-century Modern commercial building. The Henry Neils house and Christ Church Lutheran are the only two examples of mid-century Modern Landmarks designated by the City of Minneapolis, and neither are commercial buildings. In the Central neighborhood, where the *Spokesman-Recorder* building lies, only one Landmark has been designated to date: the Hosmer Library, an early twentieth century institutional building designed in a period revival style.

Relationship to the Minneapolis Preservation Plan

The proposed designation helps fulfill the goals outlined in the 1990 *Preservation Plan for the City of Minneapolis* by systematically studying a property for its potential for preservation.

Comprehensive and Long-Range Planning

Title 23, Chapter 599.260 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances requires the planning director to submit all proposed designations to the Minneapolis City Planning Commission for review and comment on the proposed designation. In its review, the City Planning Commission shall consider but not be limited to the following factors:

- (1) The relationship of the proposed designation to the city's comprehensive plan.
- (2) The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area.
- (3) The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the city council.

The designation of the subject property meets relevant policies of the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth.

The relationship of the proposed designation to the city's comprehensive plan:

- Policy 8.1 states, "Preserve, maintain and designate districts, Landmarks and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history and culture." By designating the subject property as a Landmark, the City will require the preservation of a building significant for its association with the twentieth century African American civil rights movement.
- Policy 8.10 states, "Promote the benefits of preservation as an economic development tool and a method to achieve greater environmental sustainability and city vitality." Designating this property and

encouraging its maintenance and rehabilitation may provide an anchor property for future redevelopment of this commercial node.

- Policy 8.10.5 States, “Prioritize the reuse of the city’s historic buildings as a strategy for sustainable development.” Oftentimes, the greenest building is the one that is already built. By designating the subject property and protecting it from any demolition in the future, embodied energy is conserved that would be spent in any demolition and construction of a new structure on this site.
- Policy 8.11 states, “Raise awareness of the history on Minneapolis and Promote the quality of the built environment.” Designation of this property will help to tell the story of Minneapolis’ civil rights history to current and future residents of the city.

The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area: The proposed designation of the subject property will set an example of the value of rehabilitating and maintaining existing commercial building stock.

The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the City Council: The 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Small Area/Corridor Framework Plan identifies historically significant structures in the area, to include the subject property. In the Sabathani / 4th Avenue focus Area (immediately adjacent to the subject property) the plan recommends no alterations to the subject property, calling instead for the redevelopment of vacant land on the south side of the 38th Street and 4th Avenue intersection.

National Register Status

This property is not currently listed in the Nation Register of Historic Places (NHRP). The owner is encouraged to pursue such designation in the future.

State Designation

This property has not been designated by the state of Minnesota as a historic district, historic place, or historic site.

Period of Significance

The period of significance is 1958, the date the building was constructed, until 1976, when Cecil Newman passed away.

PART 4: REGISTRATION AND CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION

NAME OF PROPERTY	
Historic Name	<i>Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Building</i>
Current Name	<i>Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building</i>
Other Names Used	None
LOCATION OF PROPERTY	
Street and Number	3744 4 th Avenue South
Is building located on its original site?	Yes
Date if moved	Not applicable
OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY	
Owner's Name	Tracey Williams-Dillard
Owner's Address	3744 4 th Avenue South Minneapolis, MN 55409
CLASSIFICATION	
Ownership of Property	Private
Category of property	Building
Number of contributing resources within property	Buildings: 1 Structures: 0 Sites: 0 Objects: 0
Number of non-contributing resources within property	Buildings: 0 Structures: 0 Sites: 0 Objects: 0
Listed on the National Register of Historic Places?	No
Date of NRHP listing?	Not applicable
USE AND FUNCTION	
Historic Use	Print Shop and Office
Current Use	Office

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
 Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development
Designation Study for Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building

DESCRIPTION	
Architectural classification/style	Modern
<u>Materials:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation • Roof • Walls • Windows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slab on grade • EPDM • Cement block and brick • Fixed and glass block
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	
Applicable local designation criteria	599.210(1)(2)(3)
Related local context (s)	Business and Industry Civic Residential Development
Significant dates	1958, 1976
Period (s) of significance	1958-1976
Cultural affiliation	African American
Names of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen, and/or architects	Not applicable
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES	
	See Sources section
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA	
Size of parcel	5,720 square feet
PIN number	0302824440155
Legal Description	Lot 5, block 14 of the Vinton Park Addition to Minneapolis, including the adjacent ½ part of alley vac.

PART 5: PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWINGS, AND OTHER DOCUMENTS



Figure 1. 3744 4th Avenue South, front (east) side, 1958, source: Minnesota Historical Society Visual Resources Database



Figure 2. 3744 4th Avenue South, front (east) side, July 2014, source: Ward 8

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development
Designation Study for Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building



Figure 3. 3744 4th Avenue South, south side, July 2014, source: Ward 8



Figure 4. 3744 4th Avenue South, north side, July 2014, source: Ward 8

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development
Designation Study for Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building



Figure 5. 3744 4th Avenue South, rear (west) side, July 2014, source: Ward 8



Figure 6. 3744 4th Avenue South, main hallway, July 2014, source: Ward 8



Figure 7. Newman's office inside the *Spokesman-Recorder* building, 3744 4th Avenue South, July 2014, source: Ward 8

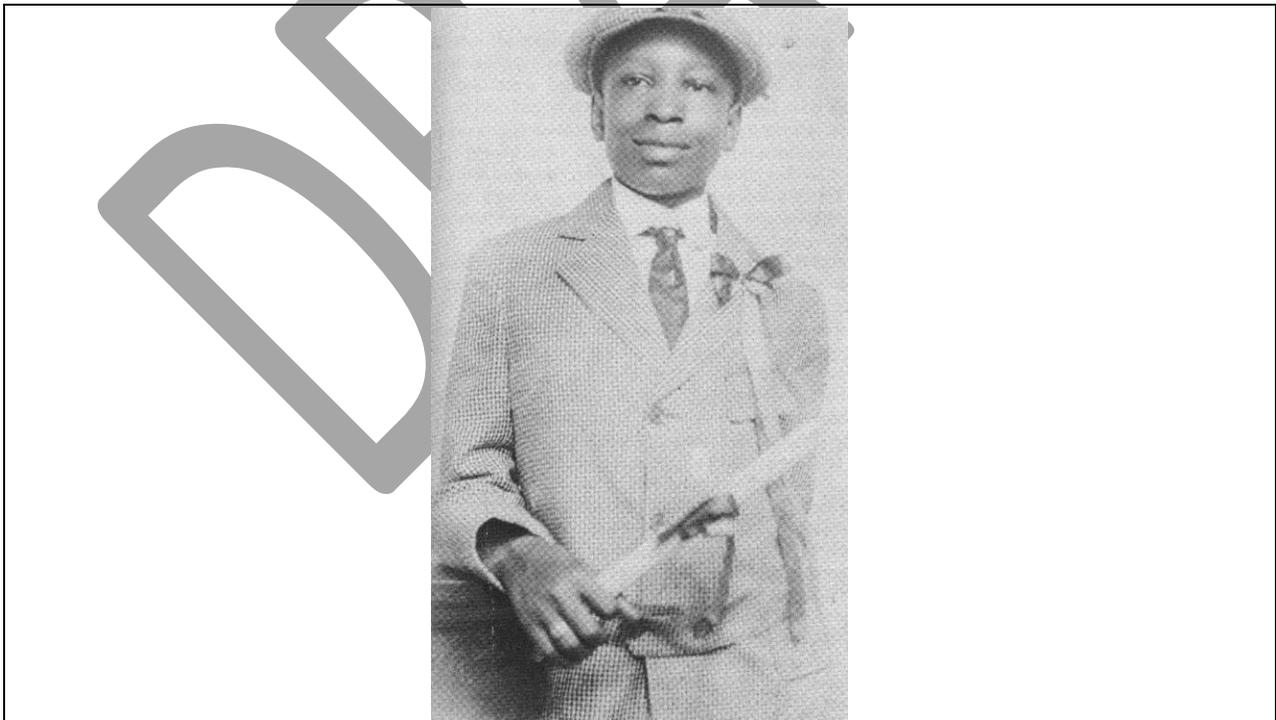


Figure 8. A young Cecil Newman, source: Leipold, 21



Figure 9. Cecil Newman at work, source: Leipold, 24



Figure 10. Cecil Newman (5th from left) as a member of Mayor Humphrey's Human Relations Commission, source: Leipold, 80



Figure 11. Cecil Newman with Governor Orville Freeman and County Commissioner George Matthews in front of the *Spokesman-Recorder* building, source: Leipold, 115, 118



Figure 12. Newman and Vice President Hubert Humphrey chatting with the President of the Ivory Coast, 1967, source: Leipold 161

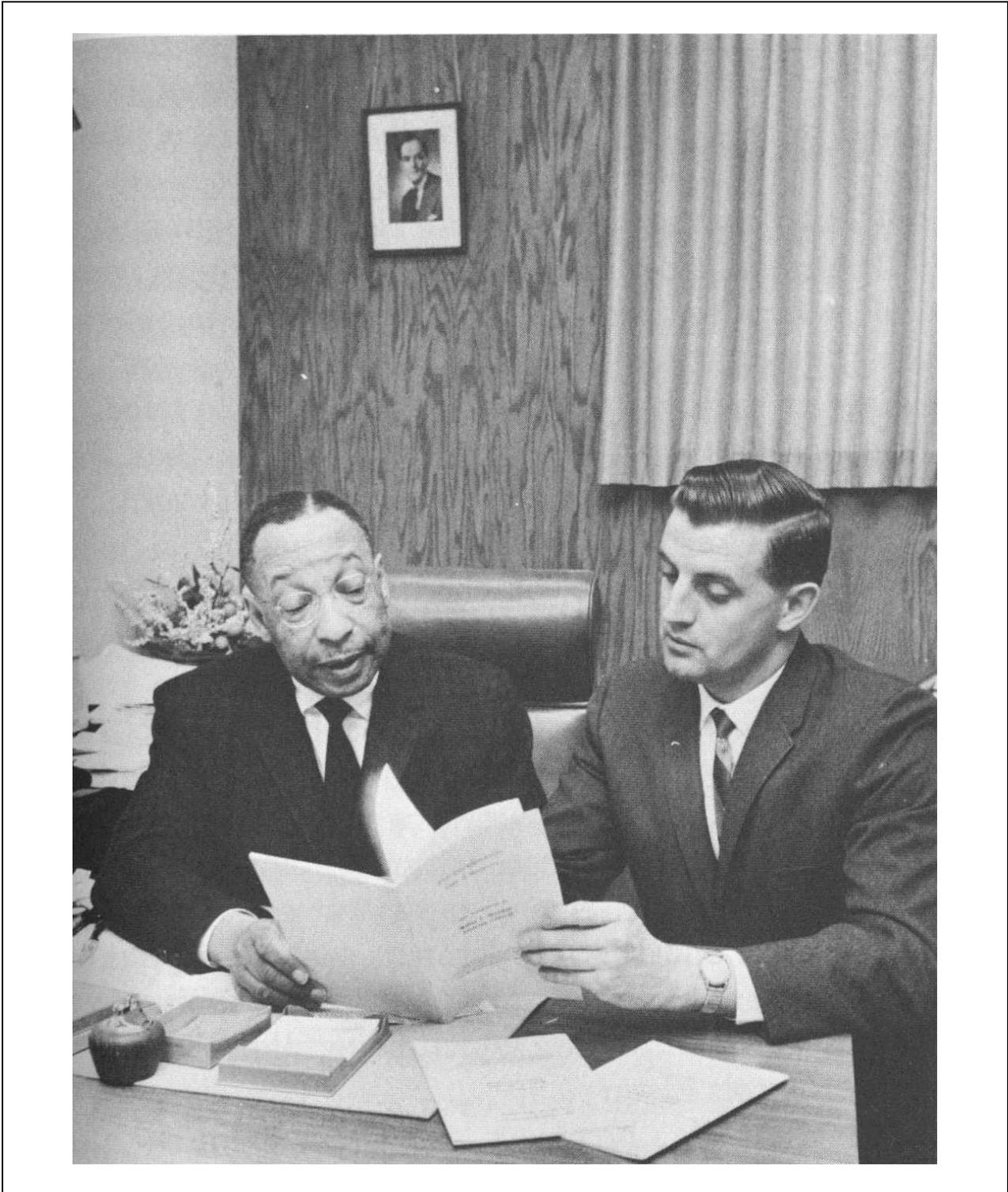


Figure 13. Walter Mondale with Newman in his office at the *Spokesman-Recorder* building, 3744 4th Avenue South, 1967, source: Leipold, 127

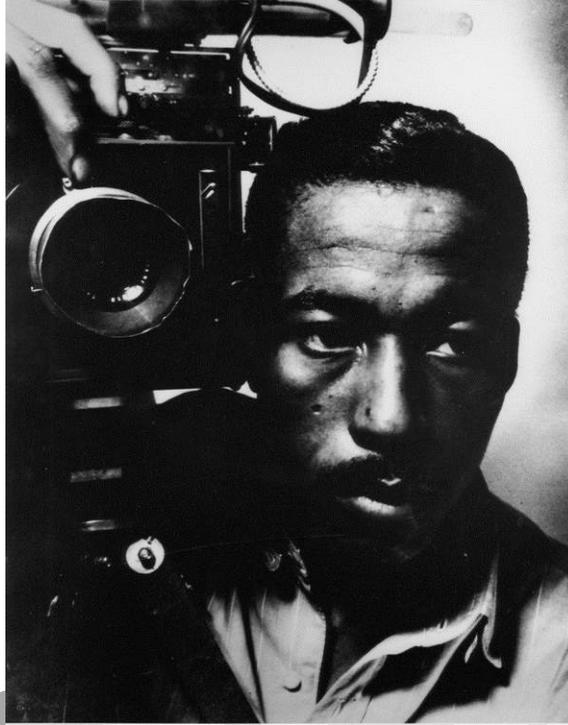


Figure 14. 1940 self portrait of Gordon Parks in Minneapolis, source: *To Smile in Autumn: A Memoir* by Gordon Parks



Figure 15. Gordon Parks circa 1970, source: Minnesota Historical Society

SOURCES

-
- ¹ City of Minneapolis Building Permit #B316750, 3744 4th Street South.
- ² Wayne Glanton, Interview with Jeremiah Osokpo, 21 July 2014, Ward Eight Council Office, City of Minneapolis, MN.
- ³ Wayne Glanton, Interview with Jeremiah Osokpo, 21 July 2014, Ward Eight Council Office, City of Minneapolis, MN.
- ⁴ "Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, a news voice of Black Minnesota," *African American Registry*, accessed June 16, 2014, http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/minnesota-spokesman-recorder-news-voice-black-minnesota; "About," *MSR Online*, accessed June 13, 2014, <http://www.spokesman-recorder.com/about/>.
- ⁵ "About The Appeal, (Saint Paul, Minn.) 1889-19??," *Library of Congress & National Endowment for the Humanities*, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016810/>.
- ⁶ "About The Appeal, (Saint Paul, Minn.) 1889-19??," *Library of Congress & National Endowment for the Humanities*, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016810/>.
- ⁷ "Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, a news voice of Black Minnesota," *African American Registry*, accessed June 16, 2014, http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/minnesota-spokesman-recorder-news-voice-black-minnesota; "About," *MSR Online*, accessed June 13, 2014, <http://www.spokesman-recorder.com/about/>.
- ⁸ James Sanna, "Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder turns 75," *TC Daily Planet*, July 3, 2008, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/article/2008/06/28/minnesota-spokesman-recorder-turns-75.html>.
- ⁹ Tracey Williams-Dillard, Interview with Jon Collins, Spokesman-Recorder's office, January 25, 2011, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/58758509/Tracey-Williams>.
- ¹⁰ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 12-13.
- ¹¹ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 19, 23.
- ¹² L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 46-52, 58-70.
- ¹³ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 46-52, 58-70.
- ¹⁴ Wayne Glanton, Interview with Jeremiah Osokpo, 21 July 2014, Ward Eight Council Office, City of Minneapolis, MN.
- ¹⁵ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 86-88.
- ¹⁶ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 92-93.

¹⁷ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 93-97.

¹⁸ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 158-159.

¹⁹ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 160-164.

²⁰ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 166-167.

²¹ L. E. Leipold, *Cecil E. Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1969) 87.

²² Gordon Parks, *A Choice of Weapons* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010) 1-12.

²³ Gordon Parks, *Voices in the Mirror: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 26-61.

²⁴ Tracey Williams-Dillard, Interview with Jon Collins, Spokesman-Recorder's office, January 25, 2011, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/58758509/Tracey-Williams>; Gordon Parks, *A Choice of Weapons* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010) 191-192.

²⁵ Peter McLaughlin, Interview with Jeremiah Osokpo, 30 July 2014, Ward Eight Council Office, City of Minneapolis, MN.

²⁶ Greg McMoore, Interview with Jeremiah Osokpo, 22 July 2014, Ward Eight Council Office, City of Minneapolis, MN; Hess, Roise and Company, *South Minneapolis: An Historic Context, Prepared for the Minneapolis: Heritage Preservation Commission*, 2000, Community Planning and Economic Development Department, Minneapolis, MN, 57, 72.

²⁷ Clorasteen Wilson, Interview with Jeremiah Osokpo, August 2014, Ward Eight Council Office, City of Minneapolis, MN.