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**HERITAGE, OPEN SPACE & WATER**

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from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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The cover image is of Pike Island at Fort Snelling State Park in Minnesota, looking west, showing the Mississippi River. Photographer Brett Whaley. (CC BY-NC 2.0)

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## INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE FIVE

By Patrick Nunnally, Editor

Almost everyone has some experience with open space and with “heritage,” perhaps through visiting historic sites, or through family trips to that place “where Grandma always used to go as a girl.” Water, of course, is intimately connected to all of our most cherished open spaces and heritage places, whether the connection is evident in the landscape or not. The articles in this issue of *Open Rivers* make explicit the connections between water, place, and community, expanding our range of vision away from rivers or other water bodies per se toward an approach that intentionally explores the integration of water and human experience.

Our three features in this issue bring new perspectives to landscapes that are deeply considered, although not always as “water places.” The anthracite region in Pennsylvania’s coal country became a regionally important energy source when industrialization on the Eastern seaboard outstripped the capacity of falling water to power the mills of places like Lowell, MA and Paterson, NJ. Ironically, as Paul Shackel shows, part of the heritage of the anthracite region is that groundwater is permanently damaged by polluted effluent from decades of mining activity.



*Pike Island at Fort Snelling State Park in Minnesota, looking west. The Mississippi River is on the right, the Minnesota River is on the left. Photographer Brett Whaley. (CC BY-NC 2.0)*

The Upper River section of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis is home to a parallel, albeit less dramatic story. Anna Bierbrauer lays out important dimensions of the history of this place, arguing that the region's future depends on careful redefinition of city, park, river, and the relations between those fundamental core experiences of place. In a similar way, Barbara Little and Katie Crawford-Lackey demonstrate the potential for "re-seeing" a familiar landscape. The Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C. is an iconic landscape, but when we see it as a water landscape, other dimensions come into focus. In the case of this place, understanding the water history of the basin raises the visibility of racial inequality that is part of its heritage.

Issues of heritage, open space, and water run through this issue's columns as well. Alex Messenger's discussion of the St. Louis River in northern Minnesota makes clear how that river is a microcosm of rivers across the state and region in terms of how it has been used and is being restored and re-imagined as part of new regional economic identities. Angie Tillges, staff for the Great River Passage program in St. Paul, puts the concept of reimagining a river corridor at the center of her piece, which describes a photography program run by the city that invites intentionally new perspectives, turning away from the typical river photographs that most of us have taken all our lives. No picturesque standard scenic shots here, but rather a very different kind

of visual identity for the Mississippi River. Reba Juetten, a graduate student in History of Science, Technology, and Medicine at the University of Minnesota, was asked to research "health" and the "Mississippi River," and found that both concepts are hard to pin down in the archives.

Not many of us can say we grew up in a historic site, much less a historic site that has now substantially been erased to make way for "progress." Catherine Watson can and does make this claim, in her account of a child's life at the Fort Snelling Army base in the mid twentieth century. Her piece reminds us of the myriad ways that personal narratives become primary sources for understanding key dimensions of change in landscapes, helping us understand that configurations of land and water that we take for granted have not always been this way. Watson's stories reflect in one place the sorts of changes that the National Park Service is grappling with across the country, as my review of a recent edited volume on the National Park Service makes clear.

Heritage. Open Space. Water. The articles in this issue of *Open Rivers* illustrate how deeply connected those three concepts can be. In fact, they begin to lay out an argument for the necessity of understanding the three ideas in relation to each other in order to come fully to terms with any of them. Plus, the authors included here tell stories well, which is important for summer reading.

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## About the Author

Patrick Nunnally coordinates the River Life Program in the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota. He serves as editor for *Open Rivers* and was one of the lead scholars for the University's John E. Sawyer Seminar, "Making the Mississippi: Formulating New Water Narratives for the 21st Century and Beyond," funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.