

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building

Other names/site number: Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company Building,

Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Building

Name of related multiple property listing:

African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 3744 4th Avenue South

City or town: Minneapolis State: Minnesota County: Hennepin

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Date 	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. Signature of commenting official: Date Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government 	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
- District ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Business
COMMERCE/Professional

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Business
COMMERCE/Professional

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Walls: CONCRETE BLOCK

BRICK

GLASS

Roof: SYNTHETICS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building is a one-story office building with a rectangular footprint and a flat roof. The property is located on the west side of 4th Avenue South, north of the intersection with 38th Street East in the Central neighborhood of Minneapolis, Minnesota (Figures 1-2). The building occupies nearly its entire site. Its setting includes commercial and institutional buildings to the south and west, and single-family residences to the north and east.

The building was constructed in 1958, and it is designed in the Mid-Century Modern style. The primary facade is constructed of brick and glass, while the other walls are constructed of concrete block. The building has a flat roof with aluminum coping. The south and north walls form parapets, which are capped with aluminum coping. Its foundation is not visible. The building's interior consists of office spaces. The reception area is on the east side of the building. A central corridor flanked by offices occupies the center of the building. The west side of the building was historically used as production space. It was later converted into offices.

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Narrative Description

Exterior

The primary, east facade is recessed and consists of two pedestrian entrances on its south and north ends within a wall of fixed windows (Photo 1). The entrances consist of single-leaf, aluminum-encased glazed doors. The 1958 south entrance is historic. It is unclear when the north entrance was installed, but it replaced a fixed, storefront window unit and a portion of the brick veneer at the ground level sometime after 1968 (Figures 8 and 13). The fixed, storefront windows have historic aluminum frames. A historic panel consisting of running bond brick veneer is at the center of the facade. Non-historic metal channel letters spelling "MINNESOTA SPOKESMAN RECORDER" are mounted on the brick veneer panel. Brick veneer cladding also runs along some portions of the facade at the foundation level. The roof overhang is clad in stucco. The soffit under the roof overhang has several recessed lights. A historic photograph from 1958 shows that a sunken planter was in front of the building at the windows; it has been replaced with concrete (Figure 8).

On the west elevation, there are secondary entrances consisting of a single-leaf metal door and a set of double-leaf metal doors, which are only operable from the inside (Photo 2). A soldier course of concrete block forms the lintel of the entrance. An address sign spelling out "3744" is above the door. A non-historic twelve-over-three glass block window with a concrete sill is within a historic window opening north of the secondary entrance. Other features of the west elevation include a small vent with concrete surrounds and sill, utility equipment, and gutter and downspouts. A small surface parking lot for the building abuts the west elevation.

The south elevation contains eight historic window openings with non-historic glass block window units with concrete sills (Photo 3). A painted mural highlighting prominent African Americans and Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company leaders runs the length of the wall.

The north elevation has five historic window openings with concrete sills. Non-historic glass block now fills the openings.

Interior

The interior includes staff offices, restrooms, a studio, a conference room, a breakroom, storage areas, a utility room, and a reception area. Walls are generally gypsum board, and some of the historic finishes include aluminum doorknobs, oak doors and trim, and acoustic ceiling tiles. The building is divided into four distinct sections, from east to west: 1) the east section, which includes the reception area and the abutting conference room to the north, 2) the historic offices section, which has a historic hallway flanked by historic offices and other rooms, 3) the remodeled offices section, which is flanked by non-historic offices and other rooms, and 4) the

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west section, which has a utility room with historic and non-historic finishes and a non-historic storage room to the north. A central hallway organizes these spaces, and it is the main circulation route in the building (See Figure 5 for a color-coded floor plan).

East Section

The reception area is inside the main entrance at the southeast corner of the building (Photo 4). The entrance is within a historic window system on the east wall that consists of aluminum framing with glazing. The north side of the east wall has a historic three-quarter-height wall clad in gypsum board, which is under a clerestory window. The south wall is clad in concrete block. The west wall is clad in non-historic shiplap. A north, gypsum board wall has a historic hinged, oak door leading to a historic room currently used as the conference room. The reception area has two non-historic service counters that form an L-shape and separate the public area from the private area. The floor is non-historic tile. The ceiling is historic acoustic tiles with historic fluorescent lighting.

The conference room is north of the reception area (Photo 5). A historic wood door leads to the room, which has historic gypsum board walls. The historic storefront system comprises the east wall; an ancillary, non-historic entrance is at the north end of the wall. Some of the upper, clerestory windows are visible above a historic three-quarter-height wall clad in gypsum board with oak trim, which is attached to the storefront system. It aligns with the brick veneer on the primary facade. A closet on the northwest side of the room has a historic wood door. At the southwest side of the room, a historic wood door is under a bulkhead concealing HVAC ductwork. It leads to the publisher's office to the west. The room has historic acoustic tile ceiling, historic fluorescent lighting, and a non-historic carpeted floor.

Historic Offices Section

A historic central hallway runs east-west through this section of the building from the reception area and contains many historic offices and other rooms (Photo 6). The ceiling has historic acoustic tiles with historic fluorescent light fixtures and historic wood molding. The flooring is non-historic laminate tile. All walls are clad in historic gypsum board. The hallway walls have vinyl wall base molding on either side of the corridor. Several historic door openings with historic wood doors and wood surrounds flank the hallway, which provide access to various offices and other rooms. The rooms appear to retain their historic room sizes and door placements.

The south side of the hallway contains three similar offices which feature historic acoustic tile ceilings, historic fluorescent lighting, and non-historic carpeted floors. Further west on the south side of the hallway is an L-shaped storage room, which provides access to a restroom. The storage room has historic acoustic drop ceiling tiles with historic fluorescent lighting and painted wood molding. A non-historic glass-block window in a historic window opening is on the south wall. A built-in vanity desk with a wall-mounted mirror is in a recessed niche under the window. A non-historic light sconce is in this area. Non-historic features include vinyl wall base molding

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and laminate flooring. The restroom is on the southwest side of the room. It is accessed via a historic wood door with a wood surround.

The north side of the hallway has two offices and a utility closet. The publisher's office is on the far east side of the hallway's north side, and it is directly west of the conference room (Photos 7-9). Once the office of *Minneapolis Spokesman* and *St. Paul Recorder* founder Cecil E. Newman, it has non-historic carpeting, historic wood baseboards, and a historic, iridescent popcorn ceiling with recessed lighting. Its north and south walls are clad in historic oak paneling, and the north wall has a large, non-historic glass-block window in a historic window opening with a wood sill. The east wall has historic, built-in wood bookcases and cabinets, and there are historic wood doors with wood surrounds that lead to a closet, a restroom, and the conference room to the east. A historic wood door on the south side of the west wall leads to an adjacent office, which has a historic acoustic tile ceiling, historic fluorescent lighting, and non-historic carpeted floors. A single-leaf wood door on the north side of the office's west wall leads to a neighboring storage room to the west. West of office entrance in the hallway, there is a historic, single-leaf wood door that leads to a utility closet.

Remodeled Offices Section

An entryway with a historic, single-leaf door with a historic wood surround provides access to the remodeled offices section west of the historic offices section. The layout of this section was reconfigured and remodeled in 2000.¹ Unless otherwise noted, the finishes in the remodeled offices section are non-historic. This section was previously newspaper production space with an open floorplan, and it has since been divided into smaller spaces by gypsum board partition walls. Like the historic offices section, it has a central hallway that continues from the east side of the building (Photo 10). This hallway has acoustic tiles with fluorescent light fixtures and carpet. The walls are gypsum board with vinyl wall base molding on either side of the corridor. Single-leaf wood doors with wood surrounds lead to various rooms along the hallway. Some of the doors have narrow, fixed windows. Some of the rooms have ceiling bulkheads, which conceal HVAC ductwork.

The south side of the hallway—from east to west—has a breakroom with a restroom and a workspace/storage room with an archive room. The breakroom is directly west of the L-shaped storage room with a restroom. It has countertops, cabinets, and laminate flooring. Its ceiling has acoustic-tile ceilings with fluorescent lighting. Another restroom is at the southeast corner of the breakroom. The L-shaped workspace/storage room is west of the breakroom. A single-leaf wood door leads to the space, and there is a fixed window with a wood surround located east of the door that allows for views into the room. The room has carpet flooring, and acoustic drop ceiling tiles with fluorescent lighting. A single-leaf wood door with a narrow window leads to the archive room on the southwest side of the workspace/storage room. The south and west walls are clad in historic concrete block, and the north and east walls are clad in gypsum board. A three-quarter-height wall with a doorless entryway bisects the room into east and west halves. Metal wire covers the area above the doorless entryway. Both halves have historic exposed concrete

¹ Building Permit No. BLDG257746 (November 15, 2000), City of Minneapolis.

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floors, and historic drywall ceilings with historic fluorescent lighting. The west half contains several built-in, open shelves, which appear to be historic, and a glass block window unit within a historic window opening.

The north side of the hallway has single-leaf wood doors that lead to—from east to west— an office, a studio, and another office. The office furthest to the east is L-shaped. On the northeast side of the room, there is a single-leaf wood door next to a fixed window, both of which are on the west wall of two perpendicular walls. The door leads to a storage room to the east. On the far west side of the north wall, there is a glass-block window within a historic window opening. On the north side of the west wall, a single-leaf wood door leads to a studio to the west (Photo 11). The studio has acoustic sound absorbing panels on all four walls. In addition to the door that connects the room to an adjacent office to the east, the studio has another single-leaf wood door on its west wall that leads to another office to the west. The office west of the studio has a single-leaf wood door that leads to a storage room at the northwest corner of the building. The rooms on the north side of the hallway have similar ancillary doorways that connect to adjacent rooms as the historic offices section to the east.

West Section

The west section is accessed from a non-historic, single-leaf door from the hallway in the remodeled offices section. It leads directly into a utility room on the far west side of the building. A non-historic, single-leaf wood door in the utility room is south of this door and leads to the workspace/storage room to the east. The utility/storage room appears to be clad in non-historic gypsum board, and it has a historic exposed concrete floor. Historic metal doors, which include a double door unit and a single-leaf door, provide exterior access. Utility equipment is within a recessed area enclosed by non-historic gypsum board north of the entrances, and there is a covered, non-historic glass-block window unit on the non-historic south wall. Electrical conduits and wiring are exposed on some parts of the walls. A second non-historic, single-leaf wood door with a narrow, fixed window leads to another storage room, which is north of the utility room. The storage room is non-historic and has non-historic glass block windows within historic openings on the north and west wall.

Integrity

This integrity analysis is informed by the *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) Form*, which uses guidance outlined in *National Register Bulletin No. 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.

The historic concrete block, brick veneer, main entrance doorway, and fixed windows from 1958 on the primary facade are all intact. In 2011, non-historic glass block windows were installed on the north, west, and south elevations.² The non-historic windows appear to have replaced historic

² Building Permit No. BLDG126766 (October 17, 2011), City of Minneapolis.

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awning windows. The roof received new single-ply membrane in 1985, and in 2016, that was replaced with fiberboard and thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) membrane.³

On the interior, the east section retains its historic layout. In particular, the reception area continues to serve as the primary public-facing portion of the building. The reception area originally possessed green asphalt tile flooring, oak paneled counters with Formica tops, and an oak paneled wall behind the counter facing the entrance, all of which have been replaced.⁴ Historic acoustic ceiling tiles, fluorescent light fixtures, wood doors and surrounds, wood ceiling moldings from 1958 appear to be intact. Notably, the publisher's office, originally Cecil Newman's office, retains its historic wood finishes, including its door and surround, wall paneling, baseboards, ceiling trim, and built-in cabinetry. Significantly, all of the historic doorways connecting the rooms on the north side of the historic offices section remain intact, which is an important character-defining feature of the property. These doorways provided easy egress for the mostly Black staff in case of an emergency, and it is a safety feature that was likely not present at white newspaper offices during the period of significance. The historic offices section also retains its historic layout and function. The historic hallway floor was originally covered with green asphalt tiles, which have been replaced with non-historic tiles. The offices in the historic hallway section featured light brown asphalt tiles, which have been either covered by, or replaced with, carpeting.⁵

The layout of the west side of the building was heavily altered in 2000. This remodel involved converting newspaper production spaces into general office and storage spaces. Photographs from the period of significance indicate that this area consisted of an open floor plan, contrasting with the partitioned floor plan of today (Figures 9, 12, and 15). Additionally, in ca. 2021, the interior received light remodeling, which involved installing new wall treatments and carpeting, along with repainting various rooms. Taken together, the property's exterior and interior possesses integrity of **materials, design, and workmanship**.

The property remains in its original location at 3744 4th Avenue South in South Minneapolis, and it possesses integrity of **location**. Historically, a block of commercial buildings was south of the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building. They were demolished in the late twentieth century and their absence slightly compromises the property's integrity of setting. However, the property is still part of a small commercial node within a predominantly residential neighborhood. Additionally, enough historic-age properties that were extant during the property's period of significance still exist, which bolsters the integrity of **setting**.

³ Building Permit No. B536433 (May 22, 1985), City of Minneapolis; Building Permit No. BLDG247435 (June 20, 2016), City of Minneapolis.

⁴ "Paper's New Home is Modern with New Furnishings and Equipment," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 31, 1958.

⁵ "Paper's New Home is Modern with New Furnishings and Equipment," *Minneapolis Spokesman*.

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The building's exterior has not been altered substantially, save for some cosmetic changes, and it continues to be a clear articulation of the Mid-Century Modern style common in the late 1950s when it was built. The east side of the interior retains historic elements, including its layout and many historic finishes. Like the exterior, most alterations in this portion of the building have been restricted to cosmetic changes. The building was constructed as the company headquarters for the Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company, which published the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, two newspapers still owned and operated by African Americans. The two papers were consolidated in 2000 and became the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, and African Americans are still the paper's target demographic. The property is still strongly associated with the career of founder Cecil Newman, and it is still owned by Newman's family. Importantly, the property continues to function as the headquarters for a Black newspaper. Therefore, it retains integrity of both **association** and **feeling**.

The MPD states that commercial and professional buildings like the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building often experience alterations, including the "replacement of original doors and windows; application of paint or stucco over original cladding or masonry; the removal and infilling of original fenestration, especially on secondary elevations; changes to and/or addition of exterior signage and awnings; and interior alterations."⁶ It also notes that "assessing integrity should always be grounded in an understanding of a property's features and how they relate to its significance."⁷

The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building has been altered through the replacement of historic windows and some doors, which occurred on secondary elevations, and the application of paint over original cladding. Original exterior signage on the primary facade has been replaced with the current signage. The interior has been altered since the end of the period of significance. Substantial changes include the remodeling of the original composing and press room into offices and replacement of some finishes throughout the building.

These alterations have occurred to accommodate changes in the ways in which mass media companies operate. Since the period of significance in the mid-to-late twentieth century, the rise of digital media and a shift in newspaper production methods means that newspaper publishers no longer require large spaces devoted to newspaper assembly and production onsite. This has allowed these companies to adapt these spaces for other uses. The Minnesota Spokesman Recorder Multimedia Group has converted its old production space into offices typical of those at similar newspaper publishing companies, and the remodeled spaces are complementary to the property's original layout.

The interior of the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building retains its integrity. While non-historic updates have occurred, its original plan is mostly intact. In particular, the east section and historic offices section retain their historic layouts, and the

⁶ Gallo, *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, F-114.

⁷ Ibid.

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historic offices section retains many of its original finishes. These are primary, front-facing sections of the building, and the retention of these features are critical to communicating the building's significance. Alterations to the exterior have been limited to cosmetic changes that are complementary to the property's historic design. The MPD states that a commercial property's "integrity of association, location, and feeling will be of greater importance than design, setting, materials, and workmanship for properties that are eligible under Criteria A or B."⁸ The property retains sufficient historic integrity to support its listing on the National Register.

⁸ Ibid.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK

COMMERCE

COMMUNICATIONS

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1958-1976

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cecil E. Newman

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Vernon K. Huso

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary Paragraph

The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building is locally significant under Criterion A, in the areas of Ethnic Heritage-Black, Commerce, Communications, and Social History for its association with two long-running, local Black newspapers, the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*. Founded in 1934 as two separate newspapers, they have primarily served the Black community in Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area, but also the African American community in Greater Minnesota. The papers represented significant contributions to the Black mass media ecosystem in the state of Minnesota, and the merged iteration of the papers continues to serve the Minnesota Black community. The building was constructed in 1958, and it is the only extant company headquarters associated with the papers. Its period of significance under Criterion A begins in 1958 with the construction of the building, and it ends in 1976 with the death of its founder and prominent community leader, Cecil Newman. Newman's death marked a transition and an end of an era for the papers, justifying it as the end of the period of significance.

The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building is also significant under Criterion B, in the areas of Ethnic Heritage-Black, Commerce, Communications, and Social History for its association with Black activist, businessman, editor, and publisher, Cecil Newman. Born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1903, Newman was a pioneer Black newspaper publisher who created the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, two important Black newspapers that merged to form the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* in 2000. Additionally, Newman was a social activist and civic leader who championed African American civil rights, both locally and nationally. Its period of significance under Criterion B begins in 1958 with the construction of the building, and it ends in 1976 with the death of publisher Cecil Newman.

The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building was assessed using the Registration Requirements outlined in the *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota* Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) Form.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Early Life of Publisher Cecil E. Newman, 1903-1922

Cecil Earl Newman was born on July 25, 1903, in Kansas City, Missouri. Newman lived in a middle class, integrated neighborhood, but attended segregated schools, which shaped his understanding of Black-white racial dynamics for the rest of his life. His interest in journalism and newspapers developed early. At thirteen, Newman began distributing newspapers from three nationally circulated Black newspapers. This was an endeavor he ostensibly inherited from another student his age; Newman then employed "numerous other boys" to deliver the papers.

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After participating in a work-study program as a student carpenter, he acquired a job with *The Call*, a local Kansas City Black newspaper, during his sophomore year of high school.⁹ *The Call* was a weekly Black newspaper edited by activist Chester Arthur Franklin. Under Franklin's tutelage, Newman learned "both the precepts of journalistic style and the mission of Black newspapers to champion their race." He also began advocating for the equal rights of African Americans early in his life. During his time with *The Call*, Newman wrote an article protesting the dearth of African American administrators in the central school district office. Moreover, his enterprising nature was apparent very early as well. After graduating from high school as senior class president, Newman took over the management of the concession stand of the local theater, and he owned a baseball team called the Kansas City Royals baseball club for a brief period.¹⁰

While young Cecil Newman learned to navigate the oftentimes treacherous and arbitrary world of racial segregation, a specific moment changed the trajectory of his life. While managing the concession stand at the theater, Newman went next door to a drugstore with a lunch counter and sat at the counter. After he ordered his lunch, the waitress told him that he could not consume his meal within the establishment and told him that he would have to take it with him. Newman described the moment as "unexpected," saying that he was momentarily "crushed." He eschewed patronizing the racist lunch counter and went without eating a meal that day, as the nearest Black restaurant was eight blocks away. Newman was confused and demoralized by the experience, noting that his "only fault was that [his] skin was [B]lack." This affront "led directly to [his] leaving Kansas City to go to Minneapolis."¹¹

Newman's interest in politics also began early, when he was still a young man in Kansas City. He read newspapers from different ends of the political spectrum, which included the *New York Times* and Chicago newspapers founded by William Randolph Hearst. Rather than merely shaking hands with candidates, Cecil got involved by offering to pass out brochures and political buttons. Early on, he became interested in a Black candidate who was running for alderman in Kansas City, though he also took part in the campaigns of white candidates. This early interest in politics led Cecil to consider a political career, but he settled on journalism, realizing that he could reach a wider audience and effect a more profound change through that field.¹²

On May 22, 1922, a year after graduating from high school, Newman arrived by train in Minneapolis, where his sister was living. With \$1.57 in his pocket, he began looking for work and landed a job as a bellhop at the Elks Club. With a strong, indefatigable work ethic and

⁹ Tom Davies, "Cecil Newman, Editor and Idealist, Dies," *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 8, 1976; L. Edmond Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher* (T. S. Denison and Company, Inc., 1969), 31; Iric Nathanson, "Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism," *Hennepin History* 69, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 3.

¹⁰ Research indicates that the baseball team Newman owned was not the current Major League Baseball (MLB) team known as the Kansas City Royals, which was founded in 1968. Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 33-35; Samuel G. Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights* (Oxford University Press, 2023), 46.

¹¹ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, 37-39.

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journalism in mind, Newman also began selling subscriptions to the *Northwestern Bulletin*, a local Black newspaper. Indeed, his unflagging interest in newspapers led to employment as a stringer, or copywriter, for two leading national Black newspapers, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*. It appears that he worked remotely from Minneapolis.¹³ Two years after his arrival, Newman's first wife, Willa Coleman, and their son, Oscar, joined him in Minneapolis. With a family to support, Newman realized that his Elks Club salary was inadequate, and he began working for the Pullman Company as a porter.¹⁴ Porterage was not Newman's professional goal. He had a bigger ambition: creating his own Black newspaper. This dream would eventually materialize, and he was about to enter a rich tradition of Black journalism in Minnesota that had been active for nearly forty years by the time he had arrived in the state.

The Early African American Press in Minnesota, 1885-1932

The earliest record of African Americans in what is now Minnesota comes from the late eighteenth century, when the British controlled the fur trade in the Upper Midwest. One fur trader was a free African American named Pierre Bonga (also called Bungo), and his son, George, who were born near present-day Duluth. The next group of African Americans in the area were Blacks who were enslaved by officers stationed at Fort Snelling (Bdote) and owned by Southern whites vacationing in Minnesota in the 1850s and 1860s before the Civil War. After Minnesota became an organized territory in 1849, there were forty African Americans in the territory, per the census. In 1860, there were 259 African Americans living in the state, and that number had risen to 759 in 1870. The state's Black population doubled to 1,564 by 1880.¹⁵

African Americans began forming communities across the state, especially in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. In Minneapolis, Black residents generally settled in the historic Northside, Seven Corners, and Old Southside neighborhoods. In Saint Paul, African Americans formed a thriving community in the Rondo neighborhood.¹⁶ Many Blacks moved to the Twin Cities for economic reasons, and many of them began their own enterprises that served the Black population, including newspapers. The Black press, along with the Black church, was a major pillar of the Black community in the postbellum period. However, whereas the Black church "gave the community substance, the press made it a political and social organism."¹⁷ Together, they fought against racial injustice while fighting for racial uplift and redemption.¹⁸ Media

¹³ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 46, 48, 50; Nathanson, "Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism," 6.

¹⁴ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 52.

¹⁵ Bdote is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota people. Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 19; David Vassar Taylor, "The Blacks," in *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, June Drenning Holmquist, Editor (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 73-74.

¹⁶ Taylor, "The Blacks," in *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, 77-78.

¹⁷ Nicole Foss and Kelly Wilder, "Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context, 1837 to 1975," 2016, prepared by The 106 Group, City of Saint Paul, Saint Paul, Minnesota, https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Planning%20%26%20Economic%20Development/DRAFT_Saint_Paul_African_American_Cultural_Context_Study.pdf, 27.

¹⁸ Foss and Wilder, "Saint Paul African American Historic and Cultural Context, 1837 to 1975."

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outlets owned and operated by African Americans were “integral to the community’s communication, connection, and sense of identity.”¹⁹

While there were Black newspapers in the Twin Cities in the late nineteenth century, they were usually short-lived cultural endeavors, not commercial ones. The first known long-running Black weekly newspaper in Minnesota was the *Western Appeal*, which commenced publication on June 5, 1885, in Saint Paul, when only 1,000 Blacks lived in the city. The *Western Appeal* was founded by two Black businessmen, J. T. Burgett and Samuel E. Hardy, who hired F. D. Parker as editor. The two men created the paper “to serve as a Negro organ, to give advice, rebuffs, criticisms and see that justice was done,” which was a stated mission of Burgett and Hardy.²⁰ It was a six-column tabloid that sold for \$2 a year or for five cents an issue. In its inaugural issue, it excoriated the *Minneapolis Tribune* for its use of derogatory epithets directed at African Americans, and it celebrated successful Black businesses. Politically, the paper favored the Republican Party.²¹

By 1886, the *Western Appeal* was struggling financially. Parker had resigned as editor, and a new management team of Thomas H. Lyles and James Kidd Hilyard took over the paper. They promoted associate editor John Quincy Adams to editor, filling Parker’s place. Adams was the former editor of the *Bulletin*, a Black newspaper in Louisville, Kentucky. Adams opened regional offices in Saint Louis, Des Moines, Chicago, and other Midwestern cities. The paper dropped the “Western” from its title to reflect its regional reach in 1889. The *Appeal* shrank as the twentieth century progressed, and all of its regional offices had closed by 1913. John Adams remained the *Appeal*’s editor until his death in 1922, when his son, John Jr., took over. John Jr. was responsible for hiring young, future-activist Roy Wilkins as editor around 1923. The *Appeal* was sold to the *Northwestern Bulletin*, a competitor and Black newspaper, later that year. In 1924, the paper was rebranded as the *Northwestern Bulletin-Appeal* until 1925, when it folded.²²

In 1888, Will Brown, W. J. Singleton, and Charles S. Sneed founded the *Afro-American Independent* as a Democratic paper to challenge the Republican *Appeal*. Like the *Appeal*, the *Afro-American Independent* was six-columns and priced at \$2 a year. Due to its low advertising rates, it attracted advertisements from the Northern Pacific, Chicago, and Kansas Railroads, and it began pulling defectors from the *Appeal*. However, the paper was short-lived and stopped a

¹⁹ Rachel Peterson, “Rethinking I-94: Black History in the Interstate 94 Corridor,” in “Rethinking I-94 Historic Contexts and Criteria for Evaluation,” 2022, prepared by Hess, Roise and Company, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Saint Paul, Minnesota https://edocs-public.dot.state.mn.us/edocs_public/DMResultSet/download?docId=37173572, 15.33.

²⁰ Mamie Ruth Butler, “Minnesota Negro Press Played Important Part in Group Progress Since ‘85,” *Minneapolis Spokesman* August 26, 1949.

²¹ Molly Huber, “Western Appeal,” MNopedia, June 6, 2011, <https://www.mnhs.org/mnopedia/search/index/thing/western-appeal>; Henry Lewis Suggs, “Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970,” in *The Black Press and the Middle West, 1865-1985*, edited by Henry Lewis Suggs (Greenwood Press, 1996), 167-168.

²² Huber, “Western Appeal;” Suggs, “Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970,” 168; Library of Congress, “The Northwestern Bulletin-Appeal (St. Paul, Minn.; Minneapolis, Minn.) 1924-1925,” <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn90060932/>.

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few months after its debut. In 1899, Black businessman J. M. Griffin created the *Twin-City American*. In its first issue, the *Twin-City American* described itself as a “thoroughly independent race journal in character.”²³ It was one of many Black papers “caught between the continuous migration of African Americans from the South, the aftermath of Reconstruction [following the Civil War], and increasing racial violence nationwide.”²⁴ It sold for one dollar and fifty cents a year and was seven columns. The paper was particularly vocal about housing discrimination in Minneapolis. After three weeks, it merged with the *Colored Citizen*, forming the *Afro-American Advance*. Black businessman J. C. Reid served as editor and owner, and he partnered with L. Walker Smith of Kansas City, Missouri. That paper lasted until 1900.²⁵

Three relatively long-running Black newspapers were in operation at the turn of the nineteenth century in the Twin Cities. The *Negro World* originated in Duluth, but it had moved to Minneapolis by July 1892. It was a six-column paper published by Joseph Houser and cost \$2 a year. It was politically aligned with the Democratic Party, and the paper appears to have closed by 1900. In 1910, Charles Sumner Smith founded the *Twin City Star*, which was the first long-running Black newspaper to originate in Minneapolis. Smith was a member of the National Negro Press Association and served as an officer within the organization. The *Twin City Star* ceased operations in 1919. Smith began another Black newspaper in 1921, called the *Minneapolis Messenger*, which he renamed the *Minnesota Messenger* in 1922, because a white-owned newspaper was using the same name. The *Minnesota Messenger* ended in 1924.²⁶ In 1915, Richard B. Montgomery began the *National Advocate*, a Republican-aligned Black newspaper that served Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Montgomery served as the paper’s editor and publisher. The paper’s run ended in 1924, the same year as the *Minnesota Messenger*.²⁷ Other short-lived Black newspapers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century include *The Protest* (1892), *The World* (1895-1897), and the *Northwestern-Vine* (1901-1903).²⁸

In 1924, Cecil Newman met Joshua Perry, a freelance printer who had a small printing shop on 1st Avenue North in Minneapolis. An eager Newman exhorted Perry to start any kind of newspaper, as long as it represented African Americans in the area and Newman could be part of the endeavor. Perry was hesitant due to the declining *St. Paul Echo*, a local Black newspaper. The *St. Paul Echo* was a weekly newspaper originally published by Roy Wilkins’s brother, Earl.

²³ Library of Congress, “The Twin City American (Minneapolis [Minn.]; St. Paul [Minn.]) 1899-1899,” <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn86058062>.

²⁴ Suggs, “Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970,” in *The Black Press and the Middle West, 1865-1985*, 168-169.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Suggs, “Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970,” in *The Black Press and the Middle West, 1865-1985*, 172-173; Minnesota Historical Society, “The Twin City Star,” <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub/twin-city-star>.

²⁷ Minnesota Historical Society, “National Advocate,” <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub/the-national-advocate>.

²⁸ Minnesota Historical Society, “African American Newspapers,” <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub/african-american-newspapers>.

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It commenced publication in late 1925, and it suspended operations in mid-1927.²⁹ Newman eventually acquiesced to Newman's argument that the Twin Cities' growing African American population could support a new newspaper. They acquired the necessary capital to start the paper through their acquaintances, and formed an ersatz "corporation," although neither signed nor filed any official documents. Perry was publisher, Newman was editor, and other investors were also part of the company. This included railroader Joseph Levy, night club operators Bert "Dutch" Thompson and J. Edward Stewart, Robert Moulden, and Marvin Shivers, all of whom invested a total of approximately \$2,000.³⁰

Perry, whose financial problems were dismal, appointed himself the corporation's treasurer and used most of the \$2,000 investment to pay off his own debts, leaving the paper with only \$27 remaining. Newman was discouraged and dejected, but it did not deter him from preparing the first issue of his newspaper. In the meantime, he was promoted to "porter-in-charge" at the Pullman Company, meaning he was both the porter and the conductor of his car, giving him all decision-making power related to it. According to professor and journalist Samuel G. Freedman, Newman and other Black publishers often traveled to Southern states with Jim Crow laws while portering, which thwarted access to the Black press. Because white postmasters were not dependable, this network of Pullman porters would sneak issues of their papers with them and distribute them to Southern Blacks.³¹

The inaugural issue of Newman's newspaper, the *Twin-City Herald*, was published on April 30, 1927. In the capacity of editor and secretary of the paper, Newman was officially a professional journalist. The paper's masthead stated that it was "independent, not neutral."³² The *Twin-City Herald*'s first office was at 26 1st Street North (nonextant) in Minneapolis, a building it occupied for several years before moving to 242 4th Avenue South (nonextant). During its brief period of operation, the *Twin-City Herald* acted as an incubator of Black journalistic talent in the Upper Midwest. Several staff members would continue their careers in journalism at other Midwestern newspapers, including Ben Peevy, Ester Lillian Bradley, Fred G. Thomas, Marvin Shivers, Bert Thomas, William Penn, and Robert Moulden, among others.³³ Newman also later hired local post office worker William Smith as the newspaper's managing editor.³⁴

²⁹ Minnesota Historical Society, "The St. Paul Echo," <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub/african-american-newspapers>.

³⁰ While Minnesota's Black population was not growing at the same rapid pace as states in the lower Midwest, its African American population grew from 8,809 in 1920 to 9,445 in 1930, a 7% increase. Earl Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota* (T. S. Denison and Company, Inc., 1961), 96-97; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 55-56, 58.

³¹ Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

³² African Americans were not usually allowed to be porters-in-charge or conductors, but the company made an exception for Newman. Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 48; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 58-59; Masthead of Vol. 1, No. 1, *Twin-City Herald*, April 30, 1927.

³³ Suggs, "Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970," in *The Black Press and the Middle West, 1865-1985*, 177.

³⁴ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 63.

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Newman was the driving force behind the *Twin-City Herald*, serving as editor, secretary, and journalist. Through this first paper, he established himself as a political advocate, championing Black civil rights and condemning both police brutality and crime within the Black community in Minneapolis. Newman's impartiality earned him a reputation for fairness among the broader Twin Cities community, which would become a cornerstone of his personal and professional reputation throughout his career.³⁵

Between his porter job and his newspaper, which he edited while traveling for work on the train, Newman also found time to work on another venture. In 1931, he and Perry collaborated once more and published a magazine called *Timely Digest*, with activist and writer Ethel Ray Nance as a contributor. Newman described it as "a sort of bastard combination of *Time* and *Literary Digest*," and it featured actor, singer, scholar, and athlete Paul Robeson on its premiere front page. Inspired by these publications, the 8.5" by 11.5" magazine covered business, politics, science, education, religion, art, books, theater, and other topics typical of a news magazine. However, sluggish sales led to the publication's demise in February 1932. Around this time, Newman made significant changes in his professional life. He severed ties with the *Twin-City Herald*, and also resigned from the Pullman Company, recognizing that the job diverted valuable time from his journalism projects. Through these decisions, Newman was poised to begin work on the publications that would define his legacy.³⁶

**"I Didn't Have Enough Money to Begin One Newspaper, So I Began Publishing Two:"³⁷
The Early Years of the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, 1934-1949**

For many reasons, it became clear to Newman that his days at the *Twin-City Herald* would end. One of those reasons was that the paper was always on the brink of bankruptcy due to Perry. Newman attempted to purchase the newspaper from him, but he refused to sell it. Additionally, Perry had become an unreliable business partner, often failing to pay bills and publish new issues on time. Newman cut ties with Perry after he failed to release an issue at all. By 1934, Newman had some editing and entrepreneurial experience under his belt and informal journalism training from Professor Ralph Casey at the University of Minnesota (UMN), and he was ready to begin his own Black newspaper.³⁸

Newman rented half of a building shared with Ellis Houston and his Particular Barbershop at 305 3rd Street South in Minneapolis (nonextant), just around the corner from the *Twin-City Herald*

³⁵ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 61-62.

³⁶ Masthead of Vol. 1, No. 1, *Timely Digest*, April 1, 1931; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 67, 69-70.

³⁷ University of Minnesota, Radio Station KUOM, April 6, 1972, "Cecil Newman," University of Minnesota Libraries, University Archives, <https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll171:1518>.

³⁸ Research indicates that Perry eventually sold the paper to C. A. Suel, a white journalist from Robbinsdale, Minnesota. Perry began another short-lived Black newspaper, in 1940, called the *Twin-City Leader*. Its first issue was published on July 20, 1940, and it remained in publication until August 1941. Suggs, "Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970," in *The Black Press and the Middle West, 1865-1985*, 177; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 62, 71-72; Minnesota Historical Society; "Twin-City Herald," <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub/twin-city-herald>.

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office. After accounting for rent and telephone service, which took almost half of his semi-monthly paycheck, Newman had a meager \$20, which acted as the seed money for his new enterprise. He found a printer who agreed to print 300 copies of the papers for \$68-per-week. The print stock cost an additional \$45, and the typesetting cost about \$250, which was the paper's largest expenditure. The *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder* (hereafter referred to as the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder*) debuted on Friday, August 10, 1934, with an initial press run of 600 issues, and the papers had a six-column layout. Early members of the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder*'s staff included William Smith, who had been the *Twin-City Herald*'s managing editor; Arthur Allen, the advertising manager, who worked on commission; and Nell Dodson, the paper's columnist. The *St. Paul Recorder* office was run by Robert Jones. At the time, the *Spokesman*, the *Recorder*, and the *Twin-City Herald* were the only three Black newspapers in Minnesota.³⁹ The papers were a source of both civil and political news for the Black community in the Twin Cities."⁴⁰ In addition to being a purveyor of news, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* also functioned as a printing company, specializing in supplying business cards, announcements, wedding invitations, letterheads, envelopes, programs, placards, hand bills, and more.⁴¹ Notably, in the November 1958 issue of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, columnist George Grim wrote that the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* "once printed Greyhound bus tickets for much of the nation."⁴²

Newman emphasized the importance of having papers for both Minneapolis and Saint Paul, saying that he "believ[ed] in Minnesota and its people" and that both cities would support "an outspoken Negro organ in each of the cities."⁴³ A content analysis of the papers' histories indicates that the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder* were essentially identical papers with different mastheads and some individual coverage of social events. The same news from both cities appeared in both papers. According to Newman's granddaughter and the current CEO and Publisher, Tracey Williams-Dillard, most of Newman's staff worked out of the Minneapolis office, likely because the *St. Paul Recorder* was a smaller operation with fewer staff.⁴⁴ Unlike the *Spokesman* and *Recorder* headquarters in Minneapolis, the Saint Paul office functioned more as a field office to better serve subscribers in Saint Paul. Newman, who made all major decisions affecting the papers, always worked from the Minneapolis headquarters. For its first decade, the *St. Paul Recorder* operated from various addresses in the historic Rondo neighborhood of Saint Paul. Many of these properties appear to have been single-family houses, and most of them are nonextant. The paper relocated to downtown Saint Paul in 1945, where it

³⁹ "Negro Papers Get New Plant," *Minneapolis Star*, November 14, 1958; Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 50; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 72-73; Nathanson, "Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism," 7; Suggs, "Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970," in *The Black Press and the Middle West, 1865-1985*, 178.

⁴⁰ Gallo et al, *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, E-69.

⁴¹ Display advertisement for Printing Services, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, August 31, 1934.

⁴² George Grim, "I Like It Here," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 19, 1958.

⁴³ "We Have Faith and Confidence in Minneapolis and St. Paul," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, August 10, 1934.

⁴⁴ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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occupied rented space in various large office buildings, most of which are nonextant. Its final downtown office was in the Endicott Building (National Register-listed) before it moved back to the Rondo neighborhood at 909 Selby Avenue (extant) in the late twentieth century.

The first issue of the papers described themselves as “unbiased, impartial, and worthwhile” on the right side of its title masthead, even though Newman was aligned with the Democratic party.⁴⁵ The issue featured an editorial by Newman lamenting the poor working conditions and low pay of African Americans who worked on a government-funded construction project along the Mississippi River levees in the Deep South. Other featured content included accounts of local social events in the area’s Black communities, advertisements, classifieds, cartoons, church worship schedules, and more. Newman produced much of the newspapers’ content. For each issue, he typically wrote two or three editorials, a bylined column, and he sometimes wrote bylined major news stories on the front page. Later in 1934, the papers’ headquarters moved from the 305 3rd Street South address into an office at 309 3rd Street South (nonextant) in Minneapolis. The Northwest Publishing Company served as the publisher. Newman was Editor-in-Chief and Smith was the Associate Editor.⁴⁶ In April 1937, Newman moved the Minneapolis headquarters to a new location at 306 3rd Street South (nonextant), across the street from its previous office.⁴⁷

From the very beginning, the papers were interested in issues like “racial uplift, business advertisement, interracial goodwill, and financial enrichment,” according to Suggs.⁴⁸ As it stated in the May 28, 1937, issue:

From the beginning of the publication of the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and *St. Paul Recorder*, the publisher and his co-workers have looked forward to the time when public approval and support and the proven need of its services would justify their enlargement. The time has come sooner than we had reason to expect. Both the reading public and the business advertisers have given such generous encouragement to these two periodicals that we can no longer delay in making them in appearance what they have been in fact, the leading Negro journals of the Northwest.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ The current Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor-Party (DFL) Party was not established until 1944, when the Minnesota Democratic and the Minnesota Farmer-Labor parties united. Minnesota DFL, “About Us,” accessed July 2, 2026, <https://dfl.org/about/?srsltid=AfmBOopPaZ70YqGFKZYEqOHu0J8rB9LnN2rLliAcxcXAbgdq03oF3Xyf>; Newman, “We Have Faith and Confidence in Minneapolis and St. Paul,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*.

⁴⁶ Notably, NAACP civil rights attorney Lena Olive Smith purchased advertisement space in the paper’s first issue. Newman, “We Have Faith and Confidence in Minneapolis and St. Paul,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*; Nathanson, “Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism, 7; Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 64; Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

⁴⁷ Masthead of Vol. 3, No. 34, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, April 9, 1937.

⁴⁸ Research did not yield information regarding the *Twin-City Herald*’s dimensions, but it was four pages long (compared to the *Spokesman-Recorder*’s six pages), and it was also six columns in August 1934. Suggs, “Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970,” in *The Black Press and the Middle West, 1865-1985*, 178; Volume 8, No. 14, *Twin-City Herald*, August 11, 1934.

⁴⁹ Cecil E. Newman, “Your Paper Will Be Larger Next Week, Friends!” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 28, 1937.

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The papers' dimensions and circulation numbers grew rapidly during this time. Beginning with their June 4, 1937 issue, the six columns would be expanded to seven columns, and the new size would give space for an additional 144 inches of content. New features of interest and importance to the Black community would also be included. Notably, there would not be a price increase.⁵⁰ The *Spokesman's* and the *Recorder's* circulation and staff grew rapidly at this time. In August 1934, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* had 300 subscribers and four full-time employees, including Newman, but by 1939, they had nine full-time employees and boasted 3,400 subscribers. Between November 1936 and November 1937, there was an 85 percent increase in circulation to about 5,000 subscribers. By the early 1940s, circulation had grown to 7,000.⁵¹ Population figures from this period illustrate the magnitude of these subscription numbers and the papers' impact across the community. According to federal census data, in 1940, Minneapolis's Black population was 4,646, and Saint Paul's was 4,139. Both the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* had white subscribers, but a large proportion of the local African American community were their primary consumers.⁵² In September 1943, the papers moved their Minneapolis headquarters to a larger building at 314 3rd Avenue South (nonextant).⁵³

Part of the reason for this growth was Newman's insistence on reaching white readers. While Newman's primary audience was the Twin Cities Black community, he recognized that white businessmen and merchants also had a vested financial interest in the community. Financial pressures were common during the early years of the paper's history, and so Newman would solicit subscriptions from both businesses and individuals in the white community in downtown Minneapolis. He observed that the white community was happy to receive business from Blacks but made no effort to solicit it themselves. On a practical level, he pointed out to white residents that the Black community purchased and read white newspapers, and so white people should reciprocate and purchase and read Black papers. This method proved effective: Newman would often walk out of a white businessman's office with "a check for a year's subscription to [the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder*]." ⁵⁴

Newman also recognized that while de facto segregation existed in both Kansas City and Minneapolis, the conditions he faced in Minneapolis were markedly better. For example, Blacks and whites often attended the same schools, patronized the same businesses, and even worshipped at the same churches in Minneapolis.⁵⁵ Newman's granddaughter, Tracey Williams-Dillard, has said that Newman believed that he would have "to reach white readers as well as [Black readers]" to improve race relationships.⁵⁶ Still, while they did have some interaction in

⁵⁰ Newman, "Your Paper Will Be Larger Next Week, Friends!"

⁵¹ Nathanson, "Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism, 9.

⁵² Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1940, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota; Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1940; Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota.

⁵³ "Spokesman Office in New Location September 1st at 314 Third Ave. So." *Minneapolis Spokesman*, August 13, 1943.

⁵⁴ Nathanson, "Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism, 8; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 87.

⁵⁵ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 81-83.

⁵⁶ Cecil E. Newman quoted in Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 83.

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the public sphere, Blacks and whites in the Twin Cities still lived relatively isolated lives from one another, and he wanted that to change.⁵⁷

Williams-Dillard says that Newman used “his pen...on the editorial page” of the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder*, and his social and professional influence, to confront racial injustice in the Twin Cities. When he was passionate about a particular issue, Newman “didn’t just mention it once. He stayed on that topic on the opinion page [and continued] to talk about it...until change occurred.” This dedication to issues and advocacy was central to Newman’s ethos of publishing and contributed to his impact as a community leader. Newman strove to “continually keep the community that he was serving involved and engaged and informed so that the issue[s did] not go away.” He saw the papers as “vehicle[s] for...advocating for positive social change.”⁵⁸

One way he achieved this was by targeting companies that he believed were engaging in discriminatory hiring and promotional policies. The earliest example, and one of the most prominent, involved the local brewing industry. As local breweries began hiring after the end of Prohibition in 1933, Newman noticed that African Americans were not being selected to join their payrolls. Newman wrote a front-page editorial haranguing local breweries for not hiring Blacks, and he called for a boycott of the industry. He noted in his editorial that “not a single brewery in Minneapolis or St. Paul [had] one of the Negro group in its employ.”⁵⁹ The effects of the boycott were felt almost immediately. Eventually, a delegation of local brewery owners offered Newman a \$1,500 advertising contract, which Newman categorically declined, saying: “If I had accepted that advertising offer, I would be admitting that I was a hypocrite of the first order. I would be advertising the boycotted products at the same time that the companies manufacturing them were still denying employment to members of my race...”⁶⁰ He ended the boycott and denied advertising space from breweries in the papers, contending that he had made his point. However, the boycott was not successful as, ultimately, no local breweries ended up hiring African Americans.⁶¹

The papers also took the University of Minnesota to task for racial discrimination in its student housing policies. Their January 21, 1938, issue highlighted UMN’s tacit policy of prohibiting Black students from living in campus housing. The story, and the publicity it garnered, triggered the university to reverse this unwritten rule by February 4 of that year.⁶² Also in 1938, the papers

⁵⁷ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 81-83.

⁵⁸ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

⁵⁹ Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 74; Nathanson, “Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism, 9-11.

⁶⁰ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 93.

⁶¹ “Hamm’s Brewery Loses Picnic Beer Order,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, June 21, 1935; Nathanson, “Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism, 11; Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 75; Suggs, “Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970,” in *The Black Press and the Middle West, 1865-1985*, 189.

⁶² “Grissom Blames University Administration Officials for Race Exclusion,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, January 21, 1938; Nathanson, “Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism, 11.

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reported on community efforts to block the transfer of eight local Black members of the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to Southern camps. The papers' coverage of the issue helped thwart this potentially negative action, and the head of the local CCC camp decided not to transfer the eight men from the Minnesota camp.⁶³

The papers publicized occurrences of police brutality against African Americans in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, as well. For example, in its July 23, 1937, issue, it highlighted the Monday, July 19 police beating of Curtis Jordan and Willie Steele by Minneapolis detectives Arthur Uglem and E. R. "Casey" Jones. Both detectives were intoxicated and neither was on duty. They had beaten Jordan so badly that he required an overnight stay at the Northside Station due to the severity of his face wounds. Steele and a witness, Cozell Heath, went to the *Spokesman* and *Recorder* headquarters to alert Newman of the attack, reflecting the papers' prominence as a community advocate. Newman, in defiance of the racial hierarchy of the day, went to Acting Police Chief, Fritz Ohman, and demanded an investigation. After Ohman granted a meeting the next day, Newman and twenty witnesses gave their testimony about what happened to Steele and Jordan. Notably, the title of the article claimed that the violence against the two men had "stir[ed] the] entire city," yet none of the mainstream, white daily newspapers reported the attack. This disparity in reporting between the Black and white presses underscores the importance of the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* and their place within the Black community.⁶⁴

Newman's rising profile as a community leader brought him to the attention of professional organizations and business leaders who sought out his contributions. In May 1942, Newman was appointed as the Industrial Relations Advisor to Lloyd McAloon, Supervisor of Industrial Relations at the Federal Cartridge Company (FCC) by company President Charles L. Horn, a local industrialist. The FCC was the prime contractor that manufactured military equipment and supplies at their large, new Twin Cities Ordnance Plant (TCOP) in New Brighton, Minnesota, about thirteen miles north of Saint Paul. Newman was appointed to help qualified African Americans secure employment with the firm. Horn eventually appointed Newman to review and approve job applications from African Americans at the plant; he was responsible for helping more than 1,000 local Black applicants get hired at the TCOP.⁶⁵

⁶³ Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 72; "We Must Fight This Out," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 23, 1938; Nathanson, "Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism," 11-12.

⁶⁴ "Brutal Attack by Mill City Police Stirs Entire City," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, July 23, 1937; Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 76-77.

⁶⁵ During this time, Newman's second wife, DeVelma, who had expertise in bookkeeping rather than journalism, oversaw the day-to-day control of the *Spokesman-Recorder*. Gallo et al, *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, E-45; "Horn Says No Discrimination at Brighton Plant," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 19, 1941; "Newman to Join Federal Cartridge Company Staff," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 15, 1942; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 93-94; Nathanson, "Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism," 13-14; Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 175.

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While many papers gestured toward the idea of public service, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* realized this in the form of its Public Service Bureau (PSB), which was a “community project by the *Minneapolis Spokesman*” established in 1937.⁶⁶ The PSB was created “specifically to aid hospitalized [B]lacks and those without family and friends in the city.” The staff, including Newman, would visit hospitals, write letters, notify relatives, and act as “guardian[s] of the people’s welfare without compensation.”⁶⁷

During the early years of running his papers, Newman was active in civic affairs, and community members in the Twin Cities took notice. In October 1943, a testimonial banquet was held in his honor at the Hotel Nicollet. According to *Minneapolis Spokesman* News Editor Nell Dodson Russell, 500 people attended the event, which recognized Newman’s sixteen years of civic service to broader Twin Cities community. In 1946, Newman was elected President of the Minneapolis Urban League board, and he was the first African American elected to this position. At this time, Newman was a board member of the National Negro Publishers Association (NNPA), the Minnesota Editorial Association, the Minneapolis National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Phyllis Wheatley settlement house, the Minnesota Planned Parenthood Association, and many other organizations.⁶⁸

In 1949, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* were formally incorporated into a business enterprise as the Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company. The articles of incorporation stated that the purpose of the corporation was to, among other actions:

Carry on business as proprietors and publishers of newspapers, journals, magazines, books and other literary works and undertakings; to carry on business as printers, booksellers, bookbinders, papermakers, stationers, engravers, photographers, photographic printers, stereotypers, electrotypes, lithographers, machinists, and mechanical engineers, ink manufacturers, or any business or manufacture that may seem expedient...⁶⁹

Cecil Newman served as President, Publisher, and Treasurer; Curtis C. Chivers was First Vice President; Newman’s son, Oscar, was Second Vice President; Robert A. Jones was Third Vice President; and his second wife, DeVelma Newman, was Secretary. The Board of Directors would be elected from and by the company’s shareholders.⁷⁰ The papers had been running for fifteen years at the time of its incorporation, and this formalization signaled that Newman was making a long-term investment in the field of local Black journalism.

⁶⁶ “Public Service Bureau,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, April 30, 1937.

⁶⁷ “Public Service Bureau,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, April 30, 1937; Suggs, “Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970,” 178.

⁶⁸ Nell Dodson Russell, “Cecil Newman Elected Urban League President,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 10, 1946.

⁶⁹ Articles of Incorporation for the Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company, Department of the Minnesota Secretary of State, September 1, 1949.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

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Cecil Newman and Hubert Humphrey, 1943-1964

Beginning in the 1940s, Newman established a close, meaningful relationship with Hubert H. Humphrey, former Minneapolis mayor (1945-1948), United States Senator (DFL-MN) (1949-1964), and the Thirty-eighth United States Vice President under President Lyndon B. Johnson (1965-1969). Their personal and professional connection lasted for over three decades, and it allowed Newman to advocate directly for the Twin Cities' Black community on broad issues and specific events.

Newman began covering Humphrey in the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* in April 1943, and it continued to feature him prominently over the next two years. Humphrey was the former State Director of War Industry and Training and Employment for the Minnesota Works Progress Administration (WPA). According to Newman's biographer, L. Edmond Leipold, Newman heard that Humphrey had gone "beyond what was actually necessary to get Negroes involved in [WPA] projects and onto payrolls." Humphrey's willingness to face opposition and risk ostracization on this issue impressed Newman.⁷¹ The June 8, 1945, edition of the papers listed Humphrey as a voter suggestion in the mayoral race, describing him as a "proven friend."⁷² Newman used the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* to campaign for Humphrey, and were the only papers to endorse him for mayor. Humphrey won the office in June 1945.⁷³

One of Humphrey's first official acts as Minneapolis mayor was creating the Council on Human Relations (the Council or CHR) to "further the interests and welfare of minority groups."⁷⁴ Though it was a privately supported organization, the Council was among the first to address problems facing Blacks in Minneapolis, whose population was about 5,000 in the mid-1940s. Humphrey wanted an African American member on the Council, and asked Newman to join, which he accepted. Newman, attorney Douglas Hall, labor leader Robert Wishart, and Humphrey successfully fought for a fair employment practices law. The new ordinance made it illegal to discriminate in the employment of men and women, the first such law in the country. Eventually, Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Duluth all had fair employment laws, which eventually led to the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) at the state level offering similar protections.⁷⁵

With the establishment of the CHR and the FEPC, Newman had new legislative levers to combat racial discrimination, in addition to his journalistic ones. These tools were tested in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the American Bowling Association (ABA) planned to hold its

⁷¹ "Humphrey Files for Mayor," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, April 23, 1943; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 160.

⁷² "Monday is Election Day in Minneapolis," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, June 8, 1945.

⁷³ "Humphrey Calls for Minneapolis FEPC in His Inaugural Address," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, July 6, 1945; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 157-160.

⁷⁴ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 162.

⁷⁵ Fair Employment Practices Commission, Chapter 516—H. F. No. 778, <https://www.lrl.mn.gov/agencies/detail?AgencyID=493>; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 164; Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 252; Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1940, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota; Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1950, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

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annual tournament in Saint Paul. The ABA prohibited anyone who was not “of the white male sex” from participating in its tournaments. Newman urged the FEPC to challenge this discriminatory rule. The FEPC gave notice that it would take legal action to have the entire tournament canceled unless African Americans were allowed to participate. Additionally, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* covered the situation closely on their pages. Newman and the FEPC eventually prevailed.⁷⁶

An event in August 1945 illustrates how Newman’s relationship with Humphrey put him in a position to directly intervene in moments of injustice. That month, several white members of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) stormed the Dreamland Cafe (3755 4th Avenue South; extant; across the street from the current Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building) looking for suspects connected to the murder of Marvin Lewis, a local Black man. The group of MPD members, headed by Eugene Bernath of the morals squad, frisked several restaurant patrons without identifying themselves or their reason for being there. Specifically, they targeted and arrested two women, Anita Bloedorn and Emma Crews. During the interrogation, Crews placed her one permitted phone call to Newman, who had been exposing police brutality in his papers for nearly ten years. Newman and his second wife, DeVelma, asked several community members and Humphrey to meet them at the police station. Officer Bernath also asked Humphrey to come to the station.⁷⁷ Humphrey was in a conundrum: he had to decide whether to support Bernath, who helped him battle organized crime and corrupt law enforcement, or Newman, who was his “moral conscience on matters of race,” according to Freedman.⁷⁸ He ultimately sided with Newman and ordered Bernath to release Bloedorn and Crews from custody and drop the charges against them.⁷⁹

Newman continued to support Humphrey’s political career as it entered the national stage in the 1960s. Author, columnist, and Columbia Journalism School professor Samuel G. Freedman, a Hubert Humphrey specialist, has written extensively about Newman’s relationship with Humphrey. Freedman has described Newman as a “tremendously important behind-the-scenes person in the civil rights successes [of both] Hubert Humphrey and [Lyndon B. Johnson],” adding that much of this was thanks to the mass Civil Rights Movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others. By the mid-1960s Newman and Humphrey had been talking about racial equality and the need for legislation to support it for over twenty years.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ “Bowling, Civic Groups Hear Mayor Humphrey Make Recommendations,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 19, 1947; “‘American’ Bowling Congress Fails,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, March 18, 1949; “Citizens Launch Attack on ABC Practices All Over the Country,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 28, 1949; “Victory for Fair Play in Bowling and Democracy,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 19, 1950; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 164-165.

⁷⁷ “Bernath Poppcock,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 7, 1945; “Humphrey Came Through,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 7, 1945; “Self-Defense Plea Frees Faltico Girl,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 7, 1945; Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 236.

⁷⁸ Freedman, *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*, 236.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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The papers enthusiastically endorsed the Lyndon B. Johnson-Hubert Humphrey presidential ticket in 1964.⁸¹ When Johnson and Humphrey won, Humphrey invited Newman to have an active role in national politics. Newman declined, opting to stay in Minnesota, but he maintained the relationship and connected Humphrey with other leaders working to improve the lives of Black Americans. However, he did have a tacit role in the Johnson Administration. In 1964, Humphrey made sure that Newman was invited to the presidential inauguration in January 1965, and very early on during his tenure as Vice President, Newman joined him on one of his first trips to Africa, a testament to Humphrey's respect for Newman.⁸² In 1968, Newman arranged for Opportunity Industrialization Center (OIC) founder Leon Sullivan to meet with Humphrey, asking him to back the OIC in forty-five cities. The OIC was developed to provide "a vocational, educational, and life skills training program designed to prepare [disadvantaged] young men and women for full-time employment."⁸³

Of all civil rights leaders during this period, "Cecil Newman [was] the one [Humphrey lifted] up above all others," according to Freedman.⁸⁴ Freedman also stated that "Newman played an instrumental personal role in pushing Humphrey forward on [the issue of civil rights] and on the landmark federal [civil rights] legislation enacted during [President Lyndon B. Johnson's] presidency."⁸⁵ Humphrey's relationship with Newman accentuates the primacy of the publisher's status as a significant figure related to civil rights, and the local Twin Cities African American community, in the twentieth century.

Move to 3744 4th Avenue South, 1958

The construction of the 3744 4th Avenue South building further marks Newman's investment in local Black journalism. Specifically, it highlights his investment in papers that would continue to serve as major sources of information for Black Minnesotans into the twenty-first century.

By the mid-1950s, Newman decided that it was time to relocate the papers offices to a new, permanent location. Between 1934 and 1957, the papers' headquarters had moved four times, and each move led to a larger or better building. At this time, in 1957, the papers' headquarters were located at 242 3rd Avenue South (nonextant), which was in downtown Minneapolis' "skid row" within the historic Gateway District.⁸⁶ Anticipating urban renewal plans that would lead to the demolition of the papers' headquarters, Newman decided to leave downtown. The papers were successful enough that Newman believed that their offices could be located anywhere in the metropolitan area. The new headquarters would eventually be located in his own neighborhood

⁸¹ Political advertisement for Lyndon B. Johnson and Humbert H. Humphrey, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 29, 1964; Political advertisement for Eugene J. McCarthy, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 29, 1964.

⁸² Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

⁸³ Daniel Bergin, "Newman, Cecil (1903–1976)," MNopedia, June 15, 2021, <https://www.mnhs.org/mnopedia/search/index/person/newman-cecil-1903-1976>; Jason T. Bartlett, "Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC)," Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/oic/>.

⁸⁴ Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

⁸⁵ Samuel G. Freedman, email message to the author, July 7, 2026.

⁸⁶ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 170.

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in South Minneapolis, with its thriving Black community.⁸⁷ This area of the Old Southside has sometimes been referred to as “Black Wall Street.” The intersection of 4th Avenue South and 38th Street East “was one of the few areas in the city where Black people could own their own homes, properties, and businesses.” Historically, the intersection was a thriving commercial hub for the Minneapolis Black community. As a Black business owner, Newman was joining a community that had been serving African Americans for decades when he constructed his new office building.⁸⁸

Prior to its move to the Old Southside, the production of the papers, in Newman’s words, had been “farmed out” to other businesses. This included typesetting and printing. Newman decided that these two phases of production could, and would, take place in the new building.

Anticipating this arrangement, he purchased a Linotype machine in 1948. Six years later, he bought a press to complete his own printing, which allowed Newman to vertically integrate the Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company’s operations.⁸⁹

Notably, local Black contractor Wayne Glanton served as a project engineer and helped with the planning and development of the building.⁹⁰ In a 2020 video profile, Glanton stated that he had purchased the lot at 3744 4th Avenue South “because it was commercial,” anticipating that he might want to construct a building on it. Instead of developing the site for himself, Glanton worked with Newman to finance and build the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building. He also stated that he “had enough money to finance the building out of [his own] pocket.”⁹¹ Through Glanton’s involvement, the building was one of few local projects both financed and owned by African Americans.

The new building was designed by Vernon K. Huso, and the general contractor was Carlson-LaVine.⁹² Newman admitted that he “was not entitled” to a new plant, but the “stubbornness on [his] part,” along with enthusiasm and faith, propelled his decision to construct the new building.

⁸⁷ Building permit index card for 3744 4th Avenue South, City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County Public Library; Hennepin County Property Map, Hennepin County, Minnesota; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 171.

⁸⁸ Gallo et al, *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, E-49-E-50.

⁸⁹ Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 171-173.

⁹⁰ Another account of how the building was financed can be found in a 1969 biography about Newman written by L. Edmond Leipold. Leipold claimed that Newman secured a \$4,000 loan, which served as the downpayment on the construction contract. Leipold also claimed that several community members raised an extra \$800 to go toward the project, and that several thousand dollars more were needed to fund the construction. Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 171-173; Display advertisement for the Glanton Construction Company, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 31, 1958; Charles Hallman, “Wayne Glanton: Tribute to a Man Who Helped Build Minneapolis’ Black Community,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, June 23, 2023.

⁹¹ A certificate of survey shows that Glanton was planning to construct a building on the lot as early as 1956. Certificate of Survey for 3744 4th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Egan, Field and Nowak Surveyors, July 7, 1956, Minneapolis Lot Survey Collection, Hennepin County Library; Wayne Glanton, “Community Builder: Wayne Glanton,” directed by Daniel Bergin, posted November 9, 2020, Pillsbury House Theatre, Vimeo, 3:52-4:10, <https://vimeo.com/477198069>.

⁹² Building permit index card for 3744 4th Avenue South.

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The largely Black neighborhood anxiously anticipated the building's completion and was pleased with the move. The office became "a symbol to thousands of [B]lacks," offering a record of Black achievement and success.⁹³ Groundbreaking took place on Thursday, May 15, 1958, and the building was formally opened to the public on Saturday, November 15, 1958. The South Minneapolis office was one of the few that was constructed "solely for the home of a Negro weekly newspaper of which there [were] over 120 in the U.S."⁹⁴ At the time that the new building opened, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* had "the largest paid [circulation] ever achieved by Negro mediums published in the state of which there have been approximately 25 since 1870."⁹⁵ Newman's mother cut the ribbon symbolizing the formal opening of the new building.⁹⁶

An article from the October 31, 1958, issue of the papers described the new headquarters in great detail. The office layout included a reception area on the east side of the building. A central hallway flanked by offices and other rooms led from the reception area to the composing and press rooms at the back of the building.⁹⁷ The reception area wall that faced the entrance was clad in oak paneling, and the doors and door surrounds were oak. The ceilings were acoustic tile with "new type" fluorescent lights. The front facade was "a combination of glass and brick with aluminum trim," and its "top front [was clad] in stucco." A sign mounted on the brick veneer panel was illuminated by "soft flood lights." The composing and press rooms had five "double windows" that gave the area "an almost daylight appearance" even when the lights were turned off. Cecil Newman's office was "paneled on two walls in oak." The office had built-in bookcases, a built-in storage cabinet, a clothes closet, and a restroom. There were offices for the advertising manager, the editor-publisher's administrative assistant, and the bookkeeping department. All hardware, such as doorknobs, was aluminum.⁹⁸ Many of these finishes are currently extant, including the oak surrounds, trim, built-ins, and doors; the acoustic tile ceilings on the east side of the building, and the front facade's aluminum trim and brick veneer.

A notable feature of the property was a series of doors that connected each room on the north side of the building's central hallway. Newman insisted on this component for safety reasons, according to Williams-Dillard. The *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* staff was mostly Black, and outspoken, prominent figures such as Newman and his staff, could have easily become the targets of violence. The interconnected rooms on the north side of the building allowed staff to make a quick exit from the back of the building without having to walk through the hallway. After the composing and press rooms were converted into offices in 2000, this feature was carried over into the new offices on the north side of the hallway to provide a second means of exiting.⁹⁹

⁹³"Building Permits," *Minneapolis Star*, June 5, 1958; Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 174.

⁹⁴ "Dedication of Newly Constructed Home of Papers in November," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 31, 1958.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ "Social and Personal," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 28, 1958.

⁹⁷ "Paper's New Home is Modern with New Furnishings and Equipment," *Minneapolis Spokesman*.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Tracey Williams-Dillard, conversation with Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026.

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The Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company rented space to tenants, including Johnson and Associates in the 1960s, and Uniworld Business Systems in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹⁰⁰

An Incubator of Black Journalism: Staff at the *Spokesman and Recorder*

Unlike many of his predecessors, Newman made training his new staff members one of his main objectives. According to Freedman, Cecil Newman was an effective “talent scout and mentor,” and many African Americans in the Twin Cities who worked in journalism in the twentieth century “received some training with [the papers] or with the *Twin-City Herald*.”¹⁰¹ For example, two early staff members who later went on to achieve great success included nationally recognized journalist Carl Rowan, who was later the United States Ambassador to Finland during the Johnson Administration, and internationally renowned photographer and photojournalist Gordon Parks. Both men worked for Newman early in their careers during the 1930s or 1940s.¹⁰² For a period of eight months during the early run of the papers, Era Bell Thompson worked as an author-editor. She was one of Newman’s proteges and went on to edit the *Negro Digest*. Eventually, she became its managing editor and then international editor of *Ebony* magazine.¹⁰³

One of the papers’ most prolific figures was columnist and sports editor Nell Dodson. Professor Samuel G. Freedman described Dodson as “probably the most important person writing regularly for the *Spokesman* [and *Recorder*] besides Newman himself” and as a “tremendously important figure in Black journalism and in women’s journalism in American history.”¹⁰⁴ Dodson began her journalism career early while writing for the *Ski-U-Mah* student newspaper at UMN at which time, Cecil Newman hired her to work for the papers. In mid-1935, she became the papers’ college correspondent. Dodson spent the next several years reporting on Black student life at UMN, and she also reported about sports, a traditionally male-dominated field. In 1938, she moved to Baltimore to work as a sportswriter for the *Baltimore Afro-American*. She was later promoted to Sports Editor and was likely the first Black female sports editor in the United States.¹⁰⁵

After marrying William Russell in 1941, Dodson Russell moved to New York City but returned to Minneapolis to care for her ailing father in 1945. This allowed her to rejoin the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* staff, where she began covering politics. After moving back to New York in 1949, Dodson Russell continued to work for the papers and wrote her column remotely until

¹⁰⁰ “Classified Ads,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, June 2, 1961; “Classified Ads,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 25, 1965; “Secretary,” *Star Tribune*, December 31, 1989; Display Advertisement for Uniworld Business Systems, *Star Tribune*, December 20, 1992.

¹⁰¹ Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Scott Sr., *The Scott Collection: Minnesota’s Black Community in the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s*, 319.

¹⁰² Leipold, *Cecil Newman: Newspaper Publisher*, 199.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 200.

¹⁰⁴ Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026.

¹⁰⁵ Donna L. Halper, “Remembering Nell Dodson Russell: Reporter, Columnist, Truth-Teller,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, August 15, 2017.

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September 1959. In addition to writing for the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder*, she also wrote as a freelance writer, and she wrote for the *Amsterdam News*, the *People's Voice* in New York, and the *Associated Negro Press*. While in New York, her writing was often quoted in national entertainment publications like *Billboard* and *Variety*.¹⁰⁶

Curtis Chivers, a distinguished advertiser, was also a significant figure within the history of the Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company. He arrived in Minneapolis in 1930 and, like Cecil Newman, worked as a Pullman porter before joining the staff in 1939. According to his obituary in the *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Chivers was likely the first—and, at times, only—Black Minnesotan “to make a full-time career of advertising.” He was also involved in the local community and in DFL political activities; he was a state central committeeman and served as a state delegate at DFL conventions. In 1952, Chivers ran for alderman, and he was a confidant of many DFL political figures. A lifetime member of the NAACP, Chivers was elected head of the state chapter in 1964 and chaired the NAACP national convention that met in Minneapolis in 1971. Other affiliations included Saint Peter’s African Methodist Episcopal Church, where he served as a trustee; the Minnesota Human Rights Commission; and the Minnesota Press Club.¹⁰⁷

In 1983, sports columnist Larry Fitzgerald, Sr. began enjoying popularity as author of the “Fitz Beat.”¹⁰⁸ According to Freedman, Fitzgerald was a member of a “groundbreaking generation of sports journalists” who understood sports as more than game stories. For Fitzgerald, a leader in his field at the time, sports were also about politics, race, and social change. Fitzgerald stopped writing his regular column around 2021 and passed away in 2026.¹⁰⁹

The *Spokesman* and *Recorder*’s News Coverage During the Civil Rights Movement, 1960-1969

During the stormy Civil Rights era, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* served as important sources of information about both local and national news that affected African Americans. Between the mid-1950s and late 1960s, a mass protest movement against racial discrimination and segregation took place in the United States, as African Americans began resisting racial oppression and demanding equal treatment on par with white Americans. Several landmark United States Supreme Court cases were decided, many pieces of federal legislation were passed, and thousands of everyday people participated in various forms of protest. In the Twin Cities, the

¹⁰⁶ Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Halper, “Remembering Nell Dodson Russell: Reporter, Columnist, Truth-Teller,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*; “Nellie Dodson, Former Mpls. Writer, Married,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, June 20, 1941; George Grim, “City to Lose ‘Our Nell.’ But She’ll Keep Fighting,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* July 27, 1949; Nell Dodson Russell, “The Way I See It,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 4, 1959; Find a Grave, “Nell Eleen [sic] Dodson Russell,” <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/2877738/nellie-eleen-russell>.

¹⁰⁷ “Curtis Chivers Elected Head of State NAACP,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 5, 1964; “Curtis C. Chivers 1905-1976,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, July 8, 1976.

¹⁰⁸ Nathanson, “Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism,” 19.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Larry Fitzgerald, “Vikings Defeat Chicago Again,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 13, 1983; Masthead of Vol. 87, No. 35, *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, April 1, 2021.

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papers covered both national and local news that affected the growing African American community.¹¹⁰ In Minneapolis, the number of African Americans increased from 6,807 in 1950 to 11,785 in 1960. Saint Paul's African American population grew from 5,665 in 1950 to 8,240 in 1960. These figures amount to growth rates of about 73 percent and 46 percent, respectively.¹¹¹

One of the major events impacting the Black community during this period was highway construction, which the papers covered closely. In the mid-1950s, the Minnesota Highway Department (MHD) began planning two Interstate Highways: I-35W in Minneapolis and I-94 in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Both freeways would eventually rip through historically Black neighborhoods: the Old Southside and Northside in Minneapolis and Rondo in Saint Paul. The *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* published several editorials stating their belief that the planned freeways did not have "provisions for mass transportation," which triggered a condescending response from the MHD. It also routinely provided opinion-editorials and updates to Black Minneapolitans and Saint Paulites about all aspects of freeway construction. For example, the papers criticized the MHD's "arbitrary," "noncooperative," and "hostile" attitude regarding the displacement of Black residents in affected neighborhoods, among other issues related to highway construction.¹¹²

In 1967, beginning on July 19, racial tension arose along Plymouth Avenue in predominately Black North Minneapolis during Minneapolis' and the nation's so-called "long hot summer."¹¹³ The disturbance lasted for three days, and it involved protesters destroying property along Plymouth Avenue. Specifically, rioters protested discrimination and mistreatment by the MPD and local Jewish merchants. In response, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* denounced the looting and property damage, noting that such destruction was harming Blacks more than any other group. It implored protesters who were dissatisfied with the current situation to seek out those in power and make their voices heard. Specifically, it asserted that "there [had] never been a time in the past 40 years when officials [had] not been approachable to those who wanted to present grievances in an orderly fashion." The papers also highlighted that Jews, among others, supported Blacks during the March on Washington in 1963. Perhaps to emphasize its anti-

¹¹⁰ Claybourne Carson, "American Civil Rights Movement," Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/American-civil-rights-movement>.

¹¹¹ Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1950, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota; Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1950, Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota; Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1960, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota; Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1960, Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota.

¹¹² Both freeways were completed by the early 1980s. "The Highway Commissioner Needs Some Good Advice," *St. Paul Recorder*, March 9, 1962; "Metropolitan Transit: The Highway Department Replies," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, July 6, 1962.

¹¹³ The term "long, hot summer" was originally used in a more literal way to describe the humid summers of the southern United States. Beginning in the 1960s, however, the term was often deployed to describe rising tensions in urban communities related to racial injustice, specifically anti-Black violence. Martin Luther King, Jr. used the term as early as 1964 to describe the phenomenon, and the term was subsequently used to describe "conflicts in cities across the United States." The long, hot summer of 1967 represented the peak of this protest of anti-Black violence. Malcolm McLaughlin, *The Long, Hot Summer of 1967* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 1-2.

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violence stance, the following week, the papers published a letter from a mother lamenting the property damage on Plymouth Avenue and its effects on her family.¹¹⁴

In 1969, over seventy Black students who were members of the Afro-American Action Committee (AAAC) at UMN took over the bursar and records office in Morrill Hall on the Minneapolis campus. The participants occupied the building for twenty-four hours, where they denounced the hostile campus environment toward African Americans and the absence of an African American Studies department. The results were the establishment of the Afro-American Studies Department, the funding of a Black students' conference, and the addition of several community members to the board of the Martin Luther King scholarship fund.¹¹⁵ The *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* covered the initial occupation, as well as African American students' planning of the Black student national conference at the university.¹¹⁶

The Black Newspaper Ecosystem in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, 1958-1976

When the papers moved into their new headquarters in South Minneapolis in 1958, two other Black newspapers also existed in the Twin Cities. In 1943, nearly a decade after Newman began the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, Milton G. Williams created the *Twin City Observer* and, in 1951, the *St. Paul Sun*. He served as editor and publisher of both the *Observer* and the *Sun*. Like the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder*, Williams's two papers were sister publications. However, unlike Newman's papers, which were aligned with Democratic issues and supported candidates, the Williams papers were politically conservative publications that supported Republicans.¹¹⁷ Williams had worked for Cecil Newman as the advertising manager at the *Timely Digest* in 1931. He also worked on other Newman papers, including as reporter, columnist, sports editor, and advertising salesman for the *Twin-City Herald*, and briefly in the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* offices.¹¹⁸

Williams's *Twin City Observer* was a six-column, four-page paper that was later expanded to eight pages in 1945. It covered local, national, and international news, especially as it related to Black people. In 1951, Williams began publishing the *Saint Paul Sun*. After he died in 1963,

¹¹⁴ Susan Marks, "Civil Unrest on Plymouth Avenue, Minneapolis, 1967," MNopedia, December 21, 2015, <https://www.mnhs.org/mnopedia/search/index/event/civil-unrest-plymouth-avenue-minneapolis-1967>; "Disorder Threatens to Become Anarchy Here and Elsewhere," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, July 27, 1967; "Mother of Five Suffers Because of Burning of Plymouth Stores," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, August 3, 1967.

¹¹⁵ The Afro-American Studies Department is now the Department of African American and African Studies. University of Minnesota, History of the Department of African American and African Studies, <https://cla.umn.edu/aaas/about/history>; Gallo et al, *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, E-81-E-82.

¹¹⁶ Tina Burnside, "Morrill Hall Takeover, University of Minnesota," MNopedia, May 18, 2018, <https://www.mnhs.org/mnopedia/search/index/event/morrill-hall-takeover-university-minnesota>; "Seventy Black Students Stage 'U' Protest Tuesday," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, January 16, 1969; "Afro-American Students on 'U' Campus Plan Five Day National Conference Here," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, February 6, 1969.

¹¹⁷ Library of Congress, "Twin City Observer," <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn90060227/>.

¹¹⁸ Library of Congress, "Twin City Observer;" "Editor's Death is Loss for Twin Cities," *Twin City Observer*, January 17, 1963; "Milton Williams, Editor-Publisher, Dies at 59," *Minneapolis Star*, January 11, 1963; Eileen Chapman, "Woman Fights to Keep Running Two Newspapers She Inherited," *Minneapolis Star*, February 13, 1963.

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Williams's sister, Alvai J. Stephens, became publisher and manager, and her daughter, Jeanne Cooper, helped secure advertising for the papers. Cooper became executive manager of the papers in 1966 and the editor-publisher in 1967. Mary J. Kyle oversaw editorial duties for the papers.¹¹⁹ Available research indicates that between 1958 and 1965, the *Twin City Observer* office was located at 23 6th Street South in downtown Minneapolis (nonextant). The *Saint Paul Sun* had an office at 809 Dayton Avenue in Saint Paul (extant), which appears to be a single-family dwelling. It also temporarily had an office at 540 Rondo Avenue (nonextant).¹²⁰

Two other Black papers in the region emerged in the 1960s: *The Banner* and the *Twin Cities Courier*. *The Banner* was created in 1962 by Edwin A. Hayden, who had worked briefly in the advertising department at the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* and wrote some articles. *The Banner* ended publication in 1963.¹²¹ In 1966, the *Twin Cities Courier* began publication in Minneapolis. The paper was part of the nationally published Courier chain of Black newspapers, which was headed by conservative Black entrepreneur Samuel B. Fuller. Minneapolis public relations professional Frank Kent, a Republican, also helped establish the new paper. Neither Fuller nor Kent worked on the paper directly.¹²² Like the two Williams newspapers, the *Twin Cities Courier* was a "conservative voice among the African American newspapers," according to *Star Tribune* staff writer, David Chanen.¹²³ Additionally, like the other Black newspapers, the *Twin Cities Courier* championed Black rights, reported news important to the Black community, and prominently featured African Americans in its pages. When it was established, its office was at 322 48th Street West (extant) in the present-day Tangletown neighborhood of Southwest Minneapolis.¹²⁴ By the 1970s, the paper's offices were located at 84 6th Street South in downtown Minneapolis, which appears to have been associated with the Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank building (National Register-listed). Both properties are extant, but neither building

¹¹⁹ Walter R. Scott, Sr., *The Scott Collection: Minnesota's Black Community in the '50s, '60s, and '70s* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2018), 335; Library of Congress, "Twin City Observer," "Last Rites Monday for Milton G. Williams, Publisher, Weekly Papers," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, January 17, 1963; "Woman Fights to Keep Running Two Newspapers She Inherited," *Minneapolis Star*.

¹²⁰ Masthead of Vol. 16, No. 24, *Twin City Observer*, November 6, 1958; Masthead of Vol. 25, No. 10, *Twin City Observer*, July 15, 1965; Masthead of Vol. 16, No. 24, *Saint Paul Sun*, November 6, 1958; Masthead of Vol. 19, No. 34, *Saint Paul Sun*, January 3, 1960; Masthead of Vol. 24, No. 29, *Saint Paul Sun*, November 26, 1964.

¹²¹ Masthead of Vol. 27, No. 41, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 5, 1961; "Group Calls Paper's Statement 'Libelous', Demands Retraction," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 4, 1962; "Bailie Thomas Notebook," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 2, 1962; "'Banner Didn't Wave' Last Week; Press Breakdown Blamed," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, March 21, 1963; Library of Congress, "The Banner (Minneapolis, Minn.) 1962-196?" <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn90059706/>.

¹²² "New Negro Weekly to Begin Publication," *Minneapolis Star*, February 28, 1966; "New Weekly Set for Publishing," *Chicago Defender*, March 12, 1966; Associated Press, "Aspirations High for Human Rights Department," *Albert Lea Tribune*, April 16, 1968; "Frank Kent Moves Up," *Minneapolis Star*, October 22, 1969.

¹²³ David Chanen, "Mary Kyle, A Publisher Who 'Brought Balance to the Black Experience,' Dies," *Star Tribune*, July 26, 1994.

¹²⁴ "New Negro Weekly to Begin Publication," *Minneapolis Star*, February 28, 1966; "New Weekly Set for Publishing," *Chicago Defender*, March 12, 1966; Associated Press, "Aspirations High for Human Rights Department," *Albert Lea Tribune*, April 16, 1968; "Frank Kent Moves Up," *Minneapolis Star*, October 22, 1969.

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is currently associated with Black mass media. Mary J. Kyle left the Williams papers to join the *Twin Cities Courier* in 1966, and she would eventually become its publisher and editor.¹²⁵

In 1969, seventeen employees worked for the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder*. The two papers' combined circulation was 19,000, and according to Newman's biographer L. E. Leipold, the Minneapolis edition was "somewhat larger" than the Saint Paul one. In comparison, the *Twin Cities Courier* had 10,000 subscribers, and it was eight pages. The *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* were eight to twelve pages each, and over a third of the subscribers were white at this time.¹²⁶ In 1970, over 30,000 Blacks were living in the Twin Cities. This indicates that a large portion of the region's African American population were reading the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* and other Black newspapers, underscoring the importance of these papers as fonts of information vital to the community. During this time, Black papers were usually eight pages printed weekly.¹²⁷

By the mid-1970s, there were six Black newspapers in the Twin Cities: the *Minneapolis Spokesman*, the *Saint Paul Recorder*, the *Twin-City Observer*, the *Saint Paul Sun*, the *Twin Cities Courier*, and *Insight* (now called *Insight News*). Four editor-publishers oversaw the production of these six publications, which were circulated on a weekly or monthly basis. Founded around 1974 by Al McFarlane, the monthly *Insight* was the newest of these papers. At this time, the consensus was that major advertisers were disregarding Black buying power, and that white businesses were participating in a resistance against Black newspapers. Some publishers, such as Newman, said that the Black press was interpreted as "potentially hostile" because they often held offending companies accountable when they discriminated against Blacks.¹²⁸

According to *Minneapolis Star* staff writer Jim Jones in a 1975 article about declining Black newspaper ad revenue, the editor-publishers of the three papers—Cooper, Kyle, and Newman—also noted that they were under pressure from some contingents of the Black community to avoid "appear[ing] to be too much a part of the establishment, too white." The community expected its own newspapers to "stand for human rights" and not be "sellout[s]." For instance, in 1964, the *Spokesman* and *Recorder* Publishing Company headquarters in Minneapolis was damaged when vandals threw large rocks through the front windows and wrote defamations such as "Uncle Tom" and "White Man Lover" on stickers. Additionally, Kyle found the white business community's disregard for Black newspapers "very disappointing," especially because it seemed sensitive to the plight of African Americans in the 1960s. Newman stated that as other Black

¹²⁵ Chanen, "Mary Kyle, A Publisher Who 'Brought Balance to the Black Experience,' Dies," *Star Tribune*; Gayle Anderson, "Mary Kyle, Publisher, Dies at 83," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, July 28, 1994; Information regarding the 84 6th Street South address was retrieved from the "Buyer's Guide" section of the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce publication *Greater Minneapolis* 28, no. 2 (February 1976): 87.

¹²⁶ Of the seventeen employees, thirteen were Black, three were white, and one was Native American. Leipold, *Cecil Newman, Newspaper Publisher*, 196.

¹²⁷ Jim Jones, "Black Papers Not Getting Ads," *Minneapolis Star*, August 27, 1975; Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1970, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota; Population data taken from the United States Federal Census, 1970, Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota.

¹²⁸ Jones, "Black Papers Not Getting Ads."

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papers came into existence, advertisers would go to one of his competitors if his papers “attacked the establishment.” Furthermore, some Black readers resented even the presence of white advertisements in Black papers, and some Black newspaper editors found themselves in the crosshairs of a broader, new social justice movement.¹²⁹

While several Black newspapers were in operation during the period of significance, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* stood head and shoulders above the others in terms of their reach. For example, in 1975, the papers had a combined circulation of 25,000, the highest among local Black papers. The two Williams papers had a combined circulation of about 15,000, and the *Twin Cities Courier* had 15,000 subscribers. The two Williams newspapers temporarily suspended publication in February 1975 because they could not “attract sufficient advertising.”¹³⁰ The papers ceased publication entirely in 1976. The *Twin Cities Courier* ran until December 1986, when it stopped operations. By the mid-1980s, the *Spokesman*, the *Recorder*, and *Insight* were the only three remaining Black newspapers in Minnesota.¹³¹ While *Insight News* is considered a Black newspaper, it started as part of a wave of community newspapers that began publication in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area in the 1970s. It originally served the Near North neighborhood of Minneapolis, which is predominately Black.¹³²

The Cecil E. Newman Era Ends, 1966-1976

Public perception regarding the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* and Cecil Newman changed for some people by the mid-1960s and early 1970s. Amid political turbulence and rapid social change, many Blacks in the Twin Cities had become weary, and wary, of what they perceived as a milquetoast response from the papers on modern issues. New, leftist, more vocal national leaders—Malcolm X, Black Panther Party members Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, and others—had emerged during this time, and followers of this contingent demanded more from their local leaders. Some viewed Newman’s Socratic, give-and-take approach that was predicated on fostering Black-white relationships as outmoded in this new landscape of leftist social justice activism. Newman, who was once considered to be on the vanguard of Black rights and activism, came to be viewed as outdated. According to *Minneapolis Star* staff writer Milton Coleman, Newman “faded into the background of active [B]lack leadership,” and the editorials and news articles from *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* made “less impact” than they had in the 1930s and 1940s.¹³³

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Mary Jane Smetanka, “After 20 Years, Twin Cities Courier Stops Publication,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, December 27, 1986; Jones, “Black Papers Not Getting Ads.”

¹³² *Insight News*, “About Us,” accessed March 16, 2026, <https://www.insightnews.com/site/about.html>; Jean Ward and Cecile Gaziano, “The Urban Neighborhood Press: A Citizen-Based Communications Tool,” *Ekistics* 45, no. 268 (March/April 1978): 117; Peter Ackenberg, “For-Profit Neighborhood Paper Begins,” *Minneapolis Star*, December 30, 1976.

¹³³ Milton Coleman, “Cecil Newman: A Spirit of Patient Civility,” *Minneapolis Star*, February 11, 1976.

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Nonetheless, Cecil Newman was still a respected member of the broader community, and he continued to participate in both civic and social affairs during the last decade of his life.¹³⁴ In 1966, Newman was elected to the board of directors of the Minnesota Press Club. He was “believed to be the only Negro newsman elected to the board of a recognized press club in the nation” by the *Chicago Defender*. In 1970, he was elected president of the organization, serving a one-year term. Regardless of some community members’ perception that Newman was irrelevant, his membership in, and association with, various organizations punctuate his significance as a preeminent civic figure in the Twin Cities.¹³⁵ As of 1969, Newman was a Mason and a Shriner, a member of Sigma Delta Chi fraternity, a trustee of the Minnesota United Negro College Fund, vice chairman of the Minnesota Advisory Committee of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and the chairman of the Board of the Twin Cities Opportunity Industrialization Center (OIC). He was on the Board of Directors of the Midwest Federal Savings and Loan Association, as well, and he was the first African American elected to that board.¹³⁶ Even toward the end of his life, Newman was breaking new ground for the local African American community.¹³⁷

Newman continued to work on the papers through the late 1960s and into the 1970s, but his health was failing. In 1971, he suffered a stroke, and he had been having heart issues. Cecil Newman died of a heart attack on February 7, 1976, at age 72. According to Curtis Chivers, his longtime colleague of nearly forty years, he and Newman had been planning a special issue of the papers that would “spotlight the contributions of [B]lack as part of” an American Bicentennial issue. Not only was Newman still working on his paper at the time of his death; he was also “devot[ing] much time to ... counseling youth who sought his advice and guidance.”¹³⁸ Over 500 people attended his funeral at Saint Peter’s African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Minneapolis. Among them were who Milton Coleman called “Newman’s people,” including powerful then-current and former Minnesota DFL politicians such as U.S. Senators Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale, Governor Wendell Anderson, U.S. Representative Donald Fraser, and Minnesota Attorney General Warren Spannaus. The *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* devoted most of their front pages to celebrating the life of their founder.¹³⁹

Scholars and politicians have noted Newman’s primacy as an editor, publisher, and tireless civic leader at the local, state, and national level. The MPD describes him as “a deeply important and well-connected figure in Twin Cities political life,” and he was also noted as “the juggernaut” of

¹³⁴ Leipold, *Cecil Newman, Newspaper Publisher*, 190.

¹³⁵ “Editor Named to Press Club Board,” *Chicago Defender*, January 29, 1966; “Officers Picked by Press Club,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, January 10, 1970; “Minnesota Press Club Elects New President,” *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, February 8, 1971.

¹³⁶ Leipold, *Cecil Newman, Newspaper Publisher*, 192.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹³⁸ Editorial of Robert T. Smith, *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 25, 1973; Coleman, “Cecil Newman: A Spirit of Patient Civility;” “Cecil E. Newman—1903-1976,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, February 12, 1976; Scott Sr., *The Scott Collection: Minnesota’s Black Community in the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s*, 316.

¹³⁹ Coleman, “Cecil Newman: A Spirit of Patient Civility;” “Cecil E. Newman—1903-1976,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, February 12, 1976.

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his generation of Black newspaper editors, according to historian Rachel Peterson. Summing up Newman's life and role as a respected Black leader, civil rights activist W. Harry Davis opined: "Everything that's happened that's worthwhile to Black people in this state—and for whites, too—Cecil Newman has been a part of. To most who knew him, he was the Martin Luther King of Minnesota." Hubert Humphrey said that Newman "did more for human rights than any man [he had known]," and he also described Newman as an advisor and counselor who inspired him and "helped sensitize [Humphrey] to civil rights issues." Freedman stated that "no person had a greater effect on Humphrey than the journalist Cecil Newman."¹⁴⁰ Historian Earl Spangler referred to Newman as "one of the more aggressive and dynamic leaders of the Negro community of Minnesota, and indeed the United States."¹⁴¹

In the multivolume *History of Minnesota* series, writer-editor and State of Minnesota Treasurer Val Björnson called the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* papers "impressive monuments to their dynamic editor and publisher." He noted that Newman was a frequent delegate to the Democratic National Convention and active in the state's DFL Party while "often displaying the vigorous independence typical of his qualities of character." Björnson continued by saying that Newman was a "fortunate type" to be a major Black leader, "partly because he...extended his interest to broader areas of concern in the community," earning him "the confidence and respect of fellow-citizens among the whites." Significantly, Björnson wrote that Newman "established a national reputation in journalism and as a leader in the cause of civil rights."¹⁴²

Black journalist, editor, and publisher Walter Scott, Sr. summed up Newman's legacy as the preeminent Black publisher, journalist, and activist of his time:

Newman, through his newspapers, led the fight for civil rights in Minneapolis—and assisted in the whole state as well—against discrimination in jobs, housing, and in use of public facilities. Many of today's blacks in communications in Minnesota received some training with these papers or with the *Twin City Herald* a black newspaper which Newman edited before he founded the *Spokesman/Recorder*.¹⁴³

Scott also stated that "Mr. Newman was one of the most respected black newspaper men in America," and he called Newman a "nationally and locally known as a vigorous crusader for human rights from the late '30s through 60s." Indeed, Newman's death marked the end of his four-decade status as one of most prominent and successful African Americans in the Twin Cities, in the twentieth century.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Freedman, "Chapter 11: Miscellaneous Matter," in *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*; Gallo et al, *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, E-91; Peterson, "Rethinking I-94: Black History in the Interstate 94 Corridor," in "Rethinking I-94 Historic Contexts and Criteria for Evaluation," 15.33; Coleman, "Cecil Newman: A Spirit of Patient Civility.

¹⁴¹ Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota*, 149.

¹⁴² Val Björnson, *The History of Minnesota*, vol. 2 (Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1969), 672.

¹⁴³ Scott Sr., *The Scott Collection: Minnesota's Black Community in the '50s, '60s, and '70s*, 319.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 316.

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Launa Q. Newman's Tenure as Editor-Publisher, 1976-2006

Cecil Newman's death left a palpable void at the Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company. After his death, his son, Oscar, served as co-publisher and chief editor for a brief period. However, it was his third wife, Launa Quincy Newman, who inherited the business and became publisher. She would run the papers for the next thirty years. Launa Newman was born on December 30, 1921, in Topeka, Kansas. At age two, she and her family moved to Des Moines, Iowa, where her father established a tailoring and cleaning business. Newman would later remark that she "knew the problems and sacrifices involved" in running a small business because of her father's enterprise. Launa would eventually go to business school and later marry her first husband, Wallace O'Neal Jackman. She and Wallace would have two children, Norma Jean and Wallace "Jack" Jackman, both of whom would later become co-publishers with Launa. In 1958, Launa Newman moved to Minneapolis, and she and Cecil Newman married in 1965.¹⁴⁵

By the time she and Cecil were married, the papers had been successful for over thirty years, and Cecil had been a civic, political, and professional pillar in the local Black community for just as long. Launa Newman began her journey as a Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company staff member in its circulation department in 1969, and according to *Spokesman* staff writer Jerry Freeman, she would later help by "relieving [Cecil] of some of the tedious telephone contact work he had to do." After that, she moved into the "management area," where she reorganized the staff and office procedures "into a system that [was] successful for the paper." This was a boon because Cecil was often busy with the editorial side of publishing. Launa Newman proved to be an efficient and diligent member of the paper's staff.¹⁴⁶

After Cecil Newman's death, Launa's main concern was keeping the papers in operation, and one of her first actions as publisher was assessing the company's financial state. She determined that she had to reduce the papers' staff. Volunteers were enlisted to help, and longtime staff members who had operated the typesetting and printing departments for decades were terminated. A major reason for this was because Launa Newman was looking to the future, and these older methods of publication that utilized hot-metal composition had become obsolete. Newman modernized the paper, shifting to the high production, offset printing system. Under her leadership, the papers remained solvent.¹⁴⁷

Newman's children, Norma Jean Williams and Wallace "Jack" Jackman, became increasingly involved in the papers' production during this period. Williams began working on the papers around 1965, often in the "backroom," where she performed many duties. After Cecil Newman's death, she eventually became a co-publisher and Vice President, worked closely with Launa, and

¹⁴⁵ Not long after Cecil Newman's death, the region's other Black newspaper, *Insight News*, temporarily moved into the Spokesman-Recorder office and printed from its shop. It eventually found a permanent location of its own. Jerry Freeman, "Launa Newman: MSR Publisher and Standard-Bearer," in *MSR: 90 Years of Impact* (Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, 2024), 34; Tim Harlow, "Launa Q. Newman: First and Foremost, a Twin Cities Publisher," *Star Tribune*, February 9, 2009; Marriage Index, 1958-2001, Minnesota Department of Health; Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

¹⁴⁶ Freeman, "Launa Newman: MSR Publisher and Standard-Bearer," 34-35.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

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interviewed local and national celebrities. According to Williams-Dillard, her grandmother was “more of a bookkeeper” at the papers, she also enjoyed writing and penned a dating column called “The Bachelors and Bachelorettes” and also wrote other columns. She later became the first Black female host of two different radios shows on KFAI and KMOJ.¹⁴⁸

Per Williams-Dillard, Jackman oversaw the papers’ operations under his mother’s leadership. This included modernizing the office at a time when many Black newspapers were still utilizing typewriters. Jackman orchestrated the papers’ shift to computers and a modern printing system in the 1980s. He also embarked on a major remodeling project, which entailed converting the backroom into offices equipped with the latest technology. The new printing system proved to be a cost-saving decision, as the old printer required two salaried pressmen to operate it. Printing was eventually contracted out, and the composing and printing rooms were converted into office and storage spaces.¹⁴⁹

Both siblings became co-publishers with Launa Newman at different points—Williams in 1990 and Jackman in 1995—which allowed Launa to become more active in the community.¹⁵⁰ Among her civic pursuits were serving on the board of the Minneapolis Boy’s Club, and working with the Hennepin County Service organization, the Courage Center, and the Minneapolis Women’s Club. In 2007, Newman sold the business to her granddaughter, Tracey Williams-Dillard, and retired from the company.¹⁵¹ In 2019, the section of 4th Avenue South between 36th Street East and 42nd Street East was named Launa Q. Newman Way in her honor by the Minneapolis City Council.¹⁵²

Reflecting on her grandmother, Williams-Dillard says that Launa Newman’s legacy was her resilience after the death of Cecil Newman. Specifically, she says that “her legacy was that she was able to maintain [the papers], keep it going, keep it relevant, [and] keep it alive until she passed it on to [her].” Williams-Dillard added that Newman kept “the mission and the vision of the paper[s] alive” during her tenure; she was “a strong Black woman that stood her ground.”¹⁵³

The Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, 2000-Present

In 2000, the papers changed indelibly when the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder* merged to form the current *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* (hereafter referred to as

¹⁴⁸ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota; “Remembering Norma Jean Williams,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, June 14, 2023; Suprena Kretchman, “Noteworthy Twin Citians,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, February 16, 1995.

¹⁴⁹ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Jasmine McBride, “Remembering Wallace “Jack” Jackman: A Life of Leadership, Laughter, and Legacy,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, November 8, 2025.

¹⁵⁰ Masthead of Vol. 55, No. 48, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 24, 1990; Masthead of Vol. 60, No. 44, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, April 20, 1995.

¹⁵¹ Harlow, “Launa Q. Newman: First and Foremost, a Twin Cities Publisher,” Building Permit No. B535016 (March 22, 1985), City of Minneapolis; Building Permit No. B536433 (May 33, 1985), City of Minneapolis; Freeman, “Launa Newman: MSR Publisher and Standard-Bearer,” 35.

¹⁵² Katy Read, “Parts of Streets Named for Pioneering Black Women,” *Star Tribune*, November 10, 2019.

¹⁵³ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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the *MSR*). According to Williams-Dillard, the “Minneapolis” and “St. Paul” monikers in those respective paper titles put the paper “in a box” and restricted coverage to the state’s two largest cities. The merger allowed the paper to be “all-inclusive to the seven-county metro area,” as “the goal and the desire ha[d] always been to make Duluth, Rochester, Mankato, all the Twin Cities metropolitan area feel like [the *MSR* was] their paper.” This change also allowed the paper to “sell to advertisers statewide.” The merger was successful, and there was no community backlash.¹⁵⁴

In Williams-Dillard’s recollection, her first experience with the paper took place in 1967, when her grandmother brought her and her sister, Vickie, to the office, hoping to instill in them an interest in print media. Williams-Dillard’s first work experience at the paper involved creating labels using the Addressograph machine in the former printing room of the office. She later worked in billing, then as an advertising representative and account executive, and by the late 1990s, she was the paper’s Advertising Manager. In September 2001, Williams-Dillard became President of the *MSR*.¹⁵⁵ In 2006, Williams-Dillard became the paper’s Chief Executive Officer and Publisher.

By this time, the internet was affecting traditional print media, though Williams-Dillard saw this as “both a challenge and an opportunity.” Under her leadership, the company has embraced digital media, which has included creating a website, publishing a digital newsletter, publishing the paper in a digital format, and hiring writers who write digital-only content. The paper went online, but it continues to offer physical print versions of each issue, which subsidizes the electronic version with its paid advertising and subscription fees. Additionally, the paper has embraced various aspects of twenty-first century online business practices, such as having an active social media presence and its own podcast.¹⁵⁶

The *MSR* has faced new twenty-first century challenges. For example, like small newspapers around the country, it has had to be creative and entrepreneurial due to the decline of classified and display advertising revenue in the mass media industry. Additionally, the paper has had to deal with the rise in misinformation and unreliable news, and so it has found non-traditional ways to access “the African American community the *MSR* represents.” An example of this outreach includes events such as Sister Spokesman, which the company has been doing for over twenty years through its nonprofit arm, established in 2010.¹⁵⁷ The *MSR* has also experienced

¹⁵⁴ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

¹⁵⁵ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Mel Reeves, “9th Annual Rondo Days a Hit!” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, July 23, 1992; “Rondo Days Honors Fred Ampey,” *Minneapolis Spokesman* July 27, 1995; Masthead of Vol. 62, No. 47, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 8, 1997; Masthead of Vol. 64, No. 41, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, March 25-31, 1999; Jerry Freeman, “New Spokesman-Recorder President Continues Family Legacy,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, September 27, 2001.

¹⁵⁶ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Nathanson, “Spokesman for the Community: Cecil Newman and His Legacy of African American Journalism,” 19-20.

¹⁵⁷ Nonprofit Corporation Filing for Spokesman-Recorder, File Number 3676156-2, Minnesota Office of the Secretary of State, accessed May 27, 2026,

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recognition for its status as “the longest running African American newspaper in Minnesota.”¹⁵⁸ This occurred when the City of Minneapolis designated the property as a historic local landmark in 2015. It is significant for its association with Neighborhood Identity, Significant Persons, and Social History with a period of significance of 1958 to 1976.¹⁵⁹

Along with covering major events affecting the local African American community, such as its coverage of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May 2020, it has also delivered news for the Black community in other states. Williams-Dillard says that Black newspapers across the country “rely on each other” and have good relationships with one another. Out-of-state newspapers cannot always afford to send reporters to cover news stories across the country, and so sharing news and providing the local perspective is crucial for the Black press to keep their readers abreast of news affecting the community across the country.¹⁶⁰

The paper has navigated the new, twenty-first century media landscape and remains a family-run, Black enterprise. Freedman has compared the *MSR*’s longevity as a local, Black- and family-owned and -operated newspaper to the longevity of long-running national newspapers such as the *New York Times*, saying that:

...you could say that...what has happened at the [*Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*] in Black journalism is sort of what the Sulzberger family has succeeded with [at] the *New York Times* in mainstream journalism...Instead of some corporation coming and buying up the *New York Times*, the Sulzberger family treats it as an important role for their family to keep it in the family.¹⁶¹

In 2021, the *MSR* was the subject of the Deluxe Corporation’s series, *Small Business Revolution*. This resulted in some light remodeling of the offices, including installing new wall treatments, painting, and installing new carpeting. The company also received new computers and office furniture.¹⁶² In 2024, the *MSR* celebrated its ninetieth anniversary, and in 2025, MSR Multimedia launched the *MSR Black Business Directory* “to promote Black-owned businesses across the state amidst growing attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.”¹⁶³

Today, the paper is part of the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Multimedia Group, which “elevate[s] voices, challenge[s] narratives, and ignite[s] change,” and it seeks to “inform, inspire,

<https://mbportal.sos.mn.gov/Business/SearchDetails?filingGuid=89134a2f-95d4-e011-a886-001ec94ffe7f>; Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

¹⁵⁸ City of Minneapolis, “Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder,” accessed June 6, 2026, <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/resident-services/property-housing/preservation/landmarks-districts/landmarks/minnesota-spokesman-recorder/>.

¹⁵⁹ “MSR Building Now a Historic Minnesota Landmark,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, November 23, 2015; City of Minneapolis, “Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder.”

¹⁶⁰ Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

¹⁶¹ Samuel G. Freedman, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

¹⁶² Tracey Williams-Dillard, interview by Eric Hankin-Redmon, March 2, 2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota

¹⁶³ Gallo et al, *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, E-100.

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and impact communities.” The *MSR* is the oldest remaining Black-owned newspaper in Minnesota, and it is “one of the longest continuously operated family-owned Black newspapers in the United States.”¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

Founded in 1934 by publisher and businessman Cecil Newman, the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder* were Black newspapers that were rebranded as the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* in 2000. The paper continues to be an important source of information to the local Black population nearly a century later, and the two papers were the most circulated Black papers in the Twin Cities from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. During this time, the papers reported on local and national issues related to the American Civil Rights Movement, and they were the longest-running Black papers in Minnesota during this period. Additionally, Cecil Newman, its founder, was a pillar of Black civic leadership at the local, state and national level during this time.

Analysis of Significance

The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building was assessed using the Registration Requirements outlined in the *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota* Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) Form.

The MPD states that properties listed under it must meet the following general registration requirements:

1. The property must be located within the 2025 City of Minneapolis city limits as described in Section G [of the MPD].
2. The period of significance for the eligible property must be within the 1819-2025 period of significance defined by [the MPD].
3. The property must demonstrate a close association with the historic contexts presented in Section E [of the MPD] and assert the significance of that association directly through one or more of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.
4. The property must be, at minimum, eligible under any criteria in the area of Ethnic Heritage-Black and at least one additional area of significance.
5. The property must retain sufficient integrity from the period of significance to convey the property’s significance.¹⁶⁵

The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building is in the 2025 City of Minneapolis city limits. The period of significance begins in 1958 and ends in 1976 for both Criteria A and B, and so it is within the 1819-2025 period significance defined by the MPD. The property demonstrates close associations with four contexts presented in Section E of the MPD.

¹⁶⁴ Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, “About the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Multimedia Group,” <https://spokesman-recorder.com/about/>.

¹⁶⁵ Gallo et al, *African American Resources in Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, F-109.

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It is significant under Context IV: Employment and Professional Growth Context, for Cecil Newman's role as a labor activist and business owner; under Context V: Community, Social Organizations, Recreation, and Education, due to Newman's role as a Black civic leader in Minnesota; under Context VI: Arts, Design, Music, and Culture for Cecil Newman's contributions to the local media landscape; and under Context VII: Segregation, Discrimination, Civil Rights, and Reclamation for Newman's activism and involvement with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, the property asserts the significance of that association directly through one or more of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

The property is eligible under the area of Ethnic Heritage-Black and the areas of Commerce, Communications, and Social History. The property also retains sufficient integrity from the period of significance to convey the property's significance.

Specifically, the MPD indicates that for a commercial or professional building to be significant under Criterion A "for their association with a business or a group of businesses that were important to the Black community," it will typically be a business that was "owned or operated by African Americans," but it may include "businesses that offered a significant means of employment or a key service" to the community.¹⁶⁶ The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building is associated with an important commercial district at the intersection of 4th Avenue South and 38th Street East. Between the 1920s and the 1950s, this intersection was a hub of robust Black commercial activity in Minneapolis's Old Southside neighborhood. This intersection has lost many of its historic resources, and the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building is a surviving example of resources from that era. The property is also associated with the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, which are African American newspapers that currently exist as the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*. As the Black newspapers with the highest subscription numbers in Minnesota, the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder* served as critical sources of information for the local Black community within the period of significance. The paper continues to be significant into the twenty-first century. However, the death of founder Cecil Newman in 1976 signaled the end of his significant tenure as the papers' founding editor and publisher, and as the president of the Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company. Newman's wife, Launa, took over after his death and ushered the paper into the twenty-first century. Notably, she also continued the legacy and practice established by her husband. The change in leadership was significant for the papers and makes ending the period of significance in 1976 appropriate. The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building is locally significant under Criterion A, in the areas of Ethnic Heritage-Black, Commerce, Communications, and Social History with a period of significance of 1958 to 1976.

The MPD also states that "a commercial or professional property may be eligible under Criterion B if it is the property most closely associated with the productive life of a historically significant individual."¹⁶⁷ During the period of significance, Cecil Newman was a respected member of the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, F-112- F-113.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, F-115.

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publishing community and a towering civic leader who mentored aspiring journalists. Among his peers who were active Black publishers during this time, he stands out as particularly influential in his community. During the period of significance, Newman earned many awards, was an advisor to U.S. Senator and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, and he was very active in civic affairs in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region. His indefatigable devotion to the Black and local Twin Cities communities was matched by his devotion to his newspapers, as he continued to work until his death in 1976. For his consistent work, Cecil Newman is considered a historically significant person. While three of Newman's residences in South Minneapolis are confirmed to be extant, the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building is the extant property that is most closely associated with his illustrious professional life.

Launa Newman, Cecil Newman's third wife, took over the business after her husband's death in 1976. Launa's contributions to the Spokesman and Recorder Publishing Company include ushering the papers into the digital era and keeping the papers in publication after her husband's death. Launa, like her husband, was involved in the local community. However, there is no evidence that Launa Newman's association with the subject property rises to the same level of significance as Cecil Newman's association. Furthermore, Launa died in 2009, which is relatively recent, and historical perspective on her career and impact is limited. Because of these reasons, Launa Newman was not assessed under Criterion B for this nomination.

The property is locally significant under Criterion B for its association with Cecil Newman, in the areas of Ethnic Heritage-Black, Commerce, Communications, and Social History with a period of significance from 1958 to 1976.

The MPD notes that a property nominated to the National Register under this context must undergo a comparative analysis to demonstrate its eligibility, including a comparison with other examples of a property type or other properties associated with the same historic context. The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building has served as the purpose-built company headquarters since 1958, and it is the sole remaining headquarters associated with the company. While there are extant properties associated with the *St. Paul Recorder*, those properties did not have a strong or lengthy association with the paper, and do not rise to the level of National Register significance. The subject property served as the purpose-built headquarters for both papers during the period of significance, and it continues to serve as the headquarters for the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Multimedia Group

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): HE-MPC-04847

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 44.934618 | Longitude: -93.270477 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property encompasses Lot 5 of Block 14 within the Vinton Park Addition to Minneapolis subdivision.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries encompass the 0.12-acre city lot on which the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building was constructed.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Eric Hankin-Redmon, Historian
organization: Hess, Roise and Company
street & number: 100 1st Street North
city or town: Minneapolis state: Minnesota zip code: 55401
e-mail hankin-redmon@hessroise.com
telephone: (612) 338-1987
date: July 10, 2026

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin State: Minnesota
Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date Photographed: January 8, 2026

Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder
Headquarters Building
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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photograph 1 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0001,
east facade, looking west

Photograph 2 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0002,
south elevation, looking north

Photograph 3 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0003,
west elevation, looking south-southeast

Photograph 4 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0004,
reception area, looking northeast

Photograph 5 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0005,
conference room, looking northeast

Photograph 6 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0006,
corridor, looking west

Photograph 7 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0007,
publisher's office, looking north

Photograph 8 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0008,
publisher's office, looking east

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Photograph 9 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0009,
publisher's office, looking south

Photograph 10 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0010,
corridor, looking west

Photograph 11 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0011,
studio, looking north

Photograph 12 of 12.

MN_Hennepin_Minneapolis Spokesman and St Paul Recorder Headquarters Building_0012,
office, looking north-northwest

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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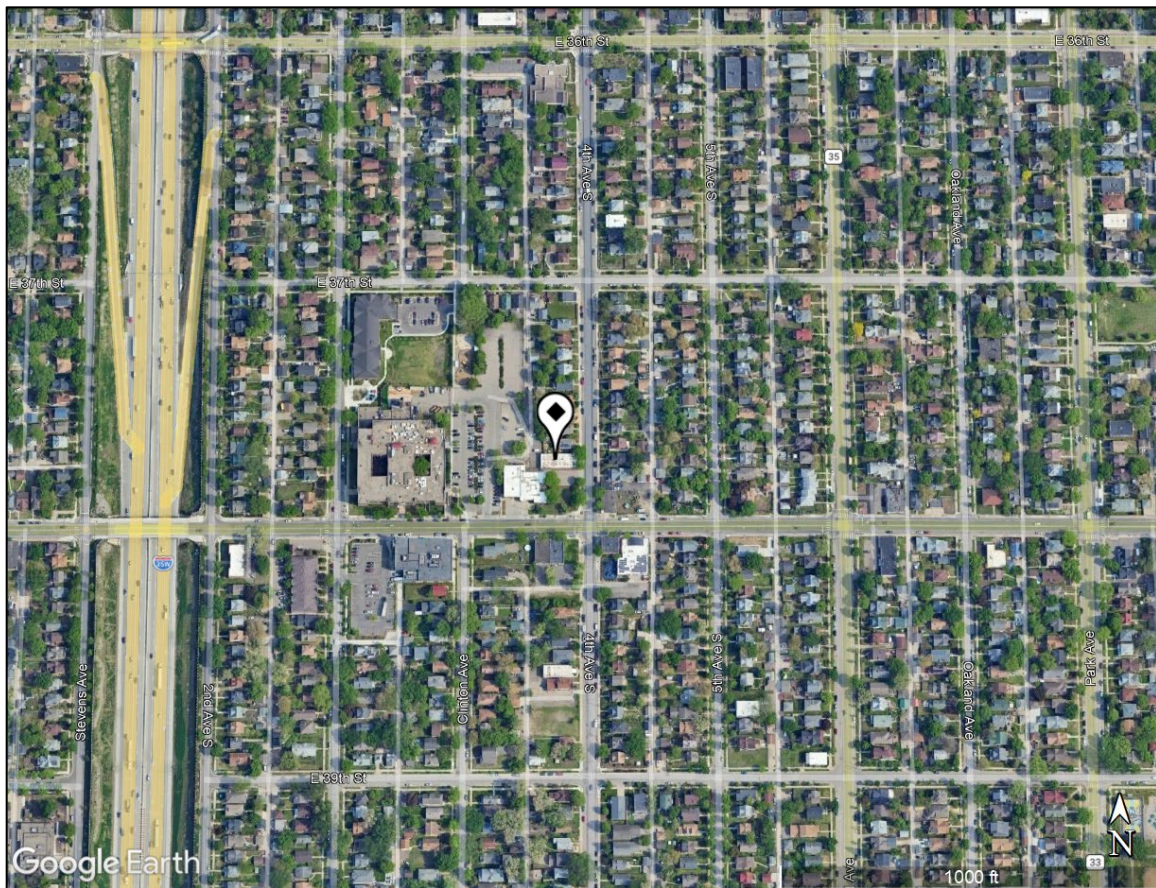


Figure 1. Property map showing the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building in Minneapolis. The property location is denoted by the white pin. (Google Earth)

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Figure 2. Boundary map showing the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building. The building is denoted by the white pin, and the property boundary is denoted by the yellow box. (Google Earth)

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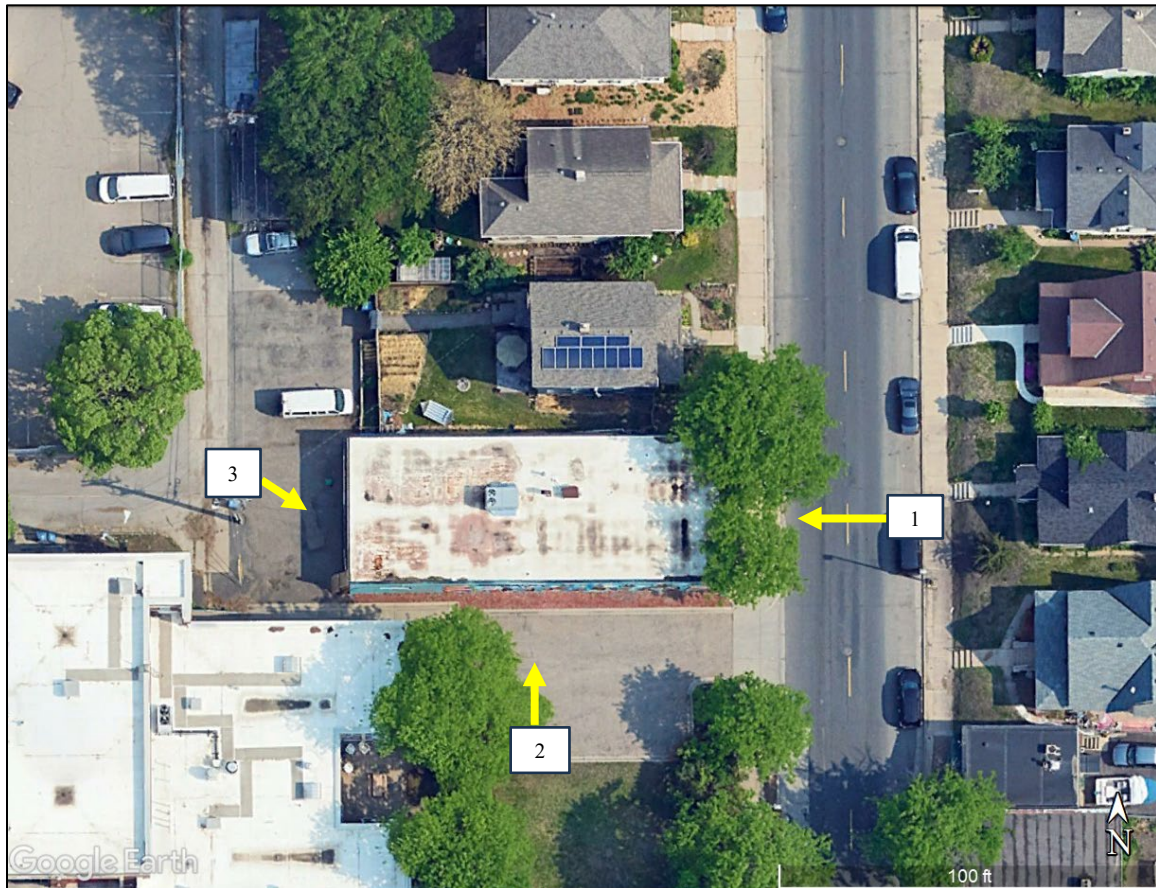


Figure 3. Exterior photo key. (Google Earth)

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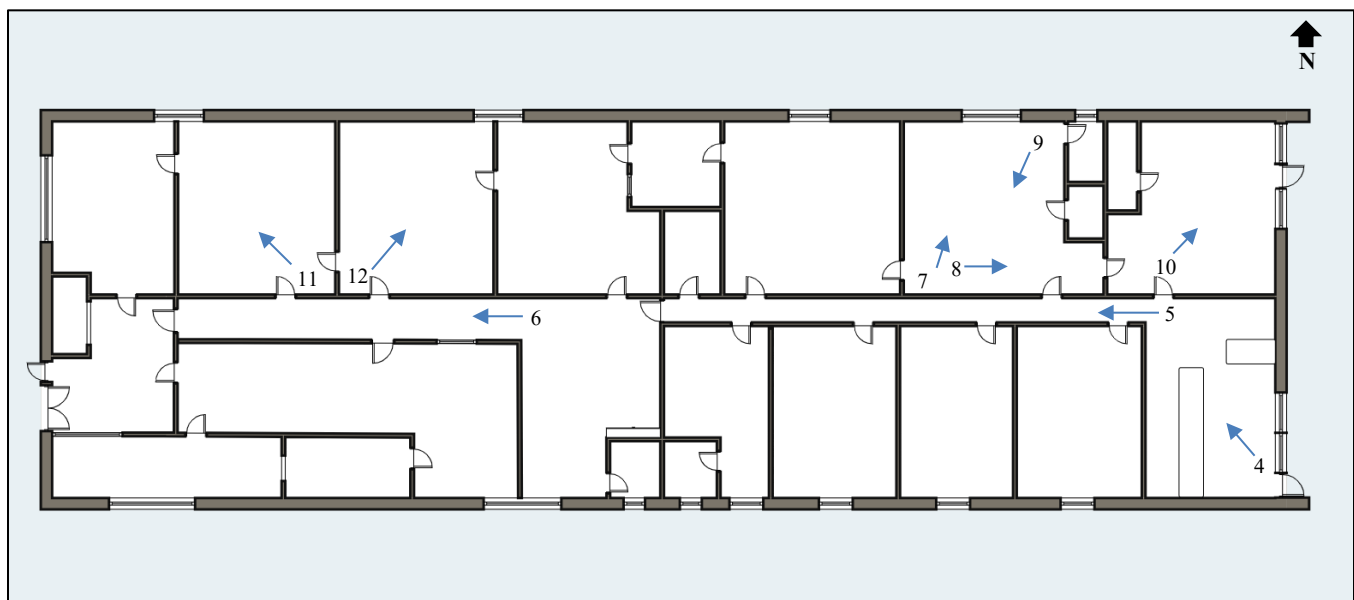


Figure 4. Interior photo key. (Eric Hankin-Redmon)

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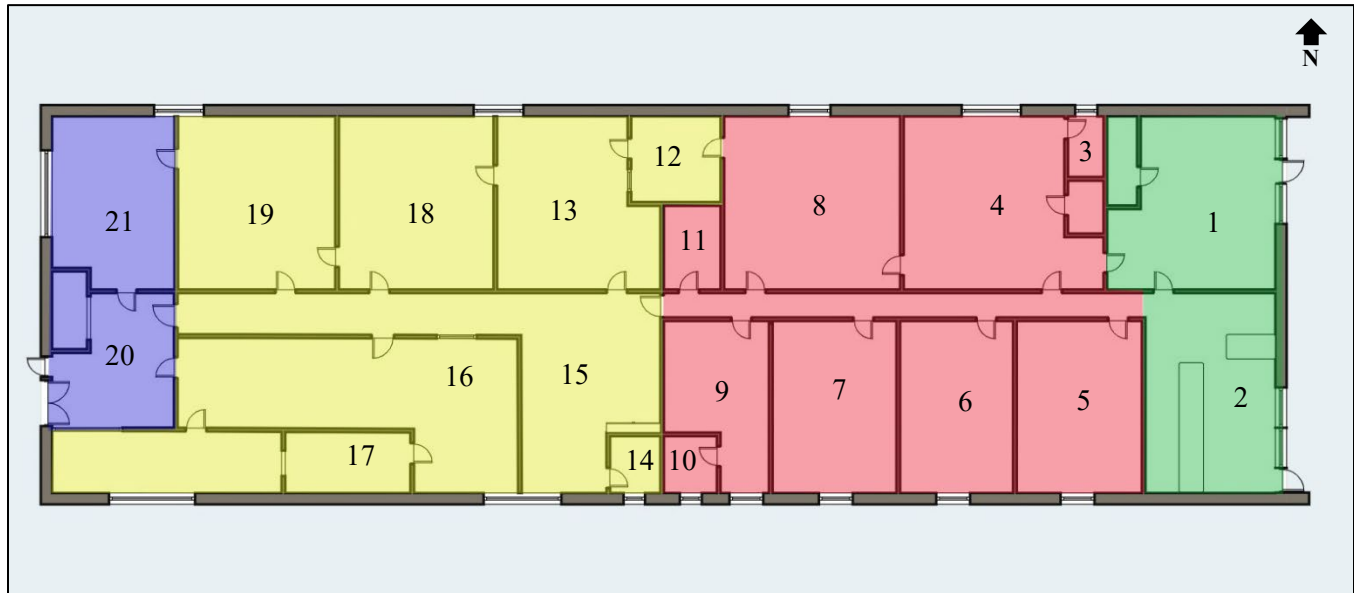
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- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Conference Room | 12. Storage Room |
| 2. Reception Area | 13. Office |
| 3. Restroom | 14. Restroom |
| 4. Publisher's Office | 15. Breakroom |
| 5. Office | 16. Workspace/Storage |
| 6. Office | 17. Archive Room |
| 7. Office | 18. Studio |
| 8. Office | 19. Office |
| 9. Storage Room | 20. Utility Room |
| 10. Restroom | 21. Storage Room |
| 11. Utility Closet | |

Figure 5. Floor plan of the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building and the four sections. From left to right: West Section (blue), Remodeled Offices Section (yellow), Historic Offices Section (red), and East Section (green). (Eric Hankin-Redmon)

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Figure 6. Cecil E. Newman (seated, center) signing contracts for the new building in 1958. Project engineer, and the property's financier, Wayne Glanton is seated next to Newman on the lower right side of the frame. (*Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 31, 1958)

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Figure 7. Groundbreaking for the new building on May 15, 1958. (Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Multimedia Group)

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Figure 8. The Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building as it appeared in 1958, shortly after it was constructed. (Minnesota Historical Society)

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Figure 9. Newman (right) with Minnesota Governor Elmer L. Andersen (center) in the back production area on the west side of the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building. Shop foreman Verner Larson is on the left side of the frame. (*Minneapolis Spokesman*, August 24, 1962)

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Figure 10. Newman (center) in Washington, D.C. during the early stages of the effort to enact the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He is flanked by U.S. Senators Hubert Humphrey (DFL-MN) on the left and Clifford P. Case (R-NJ) on the right. (Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Multimedia Group)

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Figure 11. Newman inspecting damage to the building's primary facade near the main entrance, which was the result of vandalism, in 1964. (*Minneapolis Star*, August 31, 1964)

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Figure 12. Staff members Marlene Shepherd (left) and Georgianna Kennerly (right) working in the old composing room on the west side of the building. (*Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 6, 1966)

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Figure 13. *Minneapolis Spokesman* advertising salesman James Sisson (second from left) with out-of-town guests standing in front of the subject property in 1968. (*Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 7, 1968)

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Figure 14. Undated photograph of Newman in his office at the Minneapolis Spokesman and St. Paul Recorder Headquarters Building. (Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Multimedia Group)

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Figure 15. A ca. 1985 photograph showing the west production area before it was remodeled. Launa Newman is second from the right, and Norma Jean Williams is third from the right next to Launa. (Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder Multimedia Group)