



THE MINNESOTA HISTORY **Interpreter**

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Capturing the History of the 1997 Flood

This article is adapted from one in the July/August 1997 issue of *Member News*. Some of you may have received a copy of that issue of *Member News* already, but the subject is so significant that we decided to tell the story again to the entire readership of *The Interpreter*. Please note that in this adaptation we use quotation marks only for speakers quoted in the original article.

A Joint Project: Oral Histories of People Affected by The Flood of 1997

The Red River of the North flooded in 1897, too, but we know very little about that disaster. Terry Shoptaugh, director of the Northwest Minnesota Historical Center at Moorhead State University, said, "We really don't know how many individuals were affected, how many of them left the area, and why they left. We know only a little bit more about the other major floods that followed, with not much perspective on how they affected people's lives."

A collaboration between the Minnesota Historical Society and the Northwest Minnesota Historical Center will see to it that there is a historical record of the 1997 flood. Jim Fogerty, head of the Society's Acquisitions and Curatorial Department, knew in the early days of the disaster that it had to be documented, and in May he contacted Shoptaugh. They planned a six-month-long oral history project



Minnesota Historical Society

This is the Red River at high water flood stage in Moorhead in 1882. A Northern Pacific Railroad train has been driven onto the bridge to prevent it from being washed away. (Originally published in Roots, Spring 1978.)

that will, he says, "document people's experiences as they cope with the realities of the flood: reconstructing and moving homes, dealing with government paperwork, and handling the simple necessities of daily life such as finding groceries and making car repairs. It will be a story about the frustrations and small successes of people long after the TV cameras have left, when they're still dealing with sludge in the basement, closed stores and jobs that have not completely reappeared." This oral history "will capture the real, honest reactions and coping mechanisms of people at the time, rather than asking people 30 years after the fact, when time will inevitably mute people's feelings and experiences. To record the experience as it's happening creates an immediate and far more accurate record."

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Treaty Commemoration Encampment in St. Peter in September

This year's re-enactment of the 1851 signing of the Traverse des Sioux treaty will be held Friday through Sunday, Sept. 5, 6 and 7, at the park next to the Treaty Site History Center, one mile north of St. Peter on Highway 169. The program this year includes a special guest, Bill "Deer Hawks" BlueStone, a great-great-grandson of Chief Sitting Bull. A medallion will be cast honoring the descendants of one of the chiefs present at the treaty signing; this year's honorees are descendants of Chief Sleepy Eye. Tickets: \$5/adult, \$2.50/student, with a maximum of \$15/family; call the Nicollet County Historical Society for information: (507) 931-2160. (See *Interpreter* article, May 1997.)

Continued on p. 2



Indexing Newspapers in Scott County

Volunteers are playing key roles in a project that goes to the heart of the efforts of the Scott County Historical Society (SCHS) to save and share the history and cultural heritage of the county. They are indexing information about people and events from all the newspapers published in Scott County. The indexing system for this huge task was organized by Betty Dols, a volunteer from Shakopee, and Teresa Takala, a staff member of SCHS.

The volunteers read the newspapers and note the significant information on two types of index cards: one for people, and one for subjects. The "people" cards include such information as marriages, obituaries, new homes and anniversaries. The "subject" cards include topics such as the formation of businesses, the coming of electricity, tragic events, founding of churches and sports events. After the notes are made, the cards are filed alphabetically so

that visitors seeking specific information can have ready access to the cards. The card files often lead researchers to do further research in the census and naturalization records and the local weekly newspapers, all of which are on microfilm at SCHS/Stans Museum in Shakopee.

There are now 20 volunteers at work on the project in four Scott County cities. Their participation frees staff members for administrative tasks, fund raising, program research, and implementing new ideas and activities. According to Betty Dols, "Since Scott County has no written history, the old newspapers 'are where it's at.' Although we started the index only eleven months ago, we are up to 1913 (in the Shakopee newspapers) and it is already a useful tool."

For further information, contact SCHS at (612) 445-0378.

Oral History of the Flood of 1997

Continued from p. 1

Shoptaugh will conduct interviews from June through the fall of 1997. First, he will talk to city officials, business and institutional representatives, employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and members of the Army Corps of Engineers. Later, he'll interview farmers and residents of Breckenridge, Ada, Moorhead and East Grand Forks. Shoptaugh says, "Not until the fall will the residents be able to deal fully with how the flood has changed their lives."

His method is a simple one. He will place the microphone before his interviewees and ask them to describe what happened to them. "I'd rather they just tell me what they did, and what happened next, instead of trying to interpret the event. What did they do when they were told to evacuate? What did they

take with them? Did they notice the river was rising? Were they concerned about the water level? I'll ask questions that lead them to telling me what they were doing and thinking at the moment."

The project will also preserve the content of the many Internet web sites that linked people during the flood. Fogerty says, "These are records that need to be saved. This was one of the first natural disasters that benefited significantly from the Internet." Transcripts of the interviews will be available to researchers at the Minnesota History Center and the Northwest Minnesota Historical Center at Moorhead State University later this summer. Eventually, the tapes and transcripts will become part of the Society's Agriculture and Rural Life Documentation Project.

Resources for Recovery

To receive information on recovering flood-damaged belongings, call 1-888-234-5711, or by e-mail: conservationhelp@mnhs.org.

For information about damage to government records, call the Society's State Archives Department, (612) 297-4502, or e-mail: robert.horton@mnhs.org.

The Society's web site has further flood-related information: www.mnhs.org.

A forthcoming book describes and illustrates the river's impact from Lake Traverse to Lake Winnipeg: *Common Waters: A Story of Life Along the Red River of the North, 1995-97* (Moorhead: Moorhead State University, Department of Mass Communications).



Carlton County Mounts Exhibit of the Mounties of Northwest Paper

In the 1930s, Northwest Paper Company began an advertising campaign that it hoped would symbolize certain prized qualities of its paper products, including “strength, integrity, performance, and getting the job done right,” to quote the *Carlton County Historical Society News* of June 1997. The company commissioned some 350 paintings of Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officers, the “Mounties,” by 16 illustrators. The paintings, used in ads and numerous marketing devices such as the famous calendars and note pads, were on display in the



Courtesy Carlton County Historical Society

This is one of the familiar Mountie illustrations used in the Northwest Paper Company's advertising campaign that began in the 1930s.

company offices in Cloquet and Brainerd and around the country.

Fourteen original “Mounties” paintings and other memorabilia from the history of Northwest Paper are on display at the Carlton County History and Heritage Center in Cloquet until August 29. Some paintings show activities typical of the Carlton County area; Mounties are shown with log rollers, a train, voyageurs and a forest fire. The exhibit includes several paintings by the most prolific of the illustrators, Arnold Friberg, who did 180 paintings, and a watercolor by Hal Foster, who later created the Prince Valiant cartoon strip.

To house the exhibit, the Carlton County Historical Society (CCHS) created a changing exhibit space for this and future exhibits. “Sentencing to Service” crews—people sentenced by local courts to community service for various infractions—helped move an office, clear the space and renovate it.

The paintings are on loan from the Potlatch Collection at the Tweed Museum of Art at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. (The Northwest Paper Company merged with the Potlatch Corporation in 1964, which donated the paintings to the Tweed Museum in 1981.) The Potlatch Corporation also provided financial support for the exhibit and for renovating the museum.

For further information, contact Marlene Wisuri at CCHS, (218) 879-1938.

Women and Railroads Exhibit in Duluth

The exhibit *Women and the American Railroads* presents photographs and text that describe the roles women have played in the history of railroads since 1838. It will be on display at the Lake Superior Museum of Transportation in Duluth until Sept. 8, 1997. The photographs range from wartime overall-clad locomotive laborers to wholesome images of the “Harvey Girls,” who staffed the Harvey eating places along railroad lines in the late 1800s. Topics include women in advertising campaigns and offices, as nurses and hostesses, and in on-line jobs such as conductors, brakemen and mechanics.

The display is in the museum's Gallery Car 255, which will also feature summer programs about women's role in the railroads of the region. The curator of the exhibit is Shirley Burman, photographer, historian and lecturer, of Sacramento, Calif.

For more information, call Tom Gannon at (218) 733-7590 or Karie Vincent at (218) 733-7594.





Washington County Historical Society Receives Grant to Preserve Tax Records

RiverTown Restoration, Inc., of Stillwater, recently awarded \$750 to the Washington County Historical Society (WCHS) for preservation work on antique tax records. The society will transcribe and

reproduce the 1847 and 1848 assessment records for St. Croix County in Wisconsin Territory. The county had been organized in 1840 and included what is now Forest Lake, Marine on St. Croix, Stillwater, Cottage Grove and St. Paul.

Assessment records are valuations on personal property such as dwellings, horses, wagons and carts. The sums of the values served as the basis for taxation. The records will provide detailed information about the material goods of early settlers in these areas. WCHS will transcribe the documents and publish a booklet that will be available for public research; the original documents will be preserved and stored in the society's collections of fragile documents.

For more information, call Anita Buck, (612) 439-5655.



Courtesy Washington County Historical Society

Amy Scott (left), president of RiverTown Restoration, Inc., presents a check for \$750 to Nancy Goodman, president of the Washington County Historical Society.

New Group for Art History

To encourage people to study the history of art and write about it in clear and jargon-free language, two professors have formed the Association for Art History (AAH). The founders are Bruce Cole, distinguished professor of fine arts at Indiana University, and Andrew Ladis, Franklin Professor of art history at the University of Georgia. For more information, contact Rachel Duel, Executive Coordinator, University of Indiana, Bloomington, IN 47405-3809; (812) 855-5193.

Two Transportation History Journals

The Minnesota Transportation Museum, Inc. (MTM), situated in several locations—in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Excelsior, Minn. and Osceola, Wis.—publishes *Minnegazette*, a picture-filled quarterly journal dedicated to the history of Minnesota's surface transportation industry. The spring 1997 issue includes a story about forthcoming restoration work on the Jackson Street Roundhouse, located northwest of the State Capitol in St. Paul. The article includes wide-angle photographs of crews from 1936, 1946 and 1958 in a four-panel centerfold. Other articles feature the Fort Lincoln Trolley Co. in Mandan, N.D., and the New Brighton Arsenal, built during World War II and now used as storage by MTM. The photography throughout is remarkable,

including aerial shots of the pleasure steamer *Minnehaha* on Lake Minnetonka.

Subscriptions to *Minnegazette* are included in MTM membership dues, which range from \$25 for individuals to \$100 for sponsors. For more information, call (612) 228-0263 or 1-800-711-2591.

Aaron Isaacs, editor of *Minnegazette*, is also editor of the new journal published by the Association of Railway Museums (ARM), *Railway Museum Quarterly*. It succeeds *Locomotive & Railway Preservation Magazine*, which is no longer published. Subscriptions are \$15/year; write to *Railway Museum Quarterly*, P.O. Box 3311, City of Industry, CA 91744-0311.





Reprinted Classic Travel Essays & A New Prairie Journal

The Far Islands

Elizabeth Taylor, born in St. Paul in 1856, became a widely read travel writer. She began traveling in the 1870s, at first to visit her father, who was American Consul in Winnipeg, but later for the sake of travel. In 1892, she visited the mouth of Canada's Mackenzie River, traveling on the boats of the Hudson Bay Company. The next year found her in the Hardanger Vidda of northern Norway, the first English-speaking woman to visit that wild spot.

Taylor stayed in the Faroe Islands, Danish islands



This is the cover picture of *The Far Islands and Other Cold Places*. It shows the author shortly before—according to her journal—the cart toppled over. She wrote that the horse was slightly injured, but only her dignity was hurt.

Courtesy Pogo Press

in the North Atlantic between Scotland and the Shetlands, for 10 years. While there, she wrote essays about whale hunting, folklore, cooking, rituals and the scenery that are still being used in guidebooks.

Officially recognized by the U.S. government in 1908 as an explorer of the

Arctic region, Taylor collected specimens of plants and fish for several notable museums, including the Smithsonian Institution and the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford University. Two plants that she discovered now carry her name.

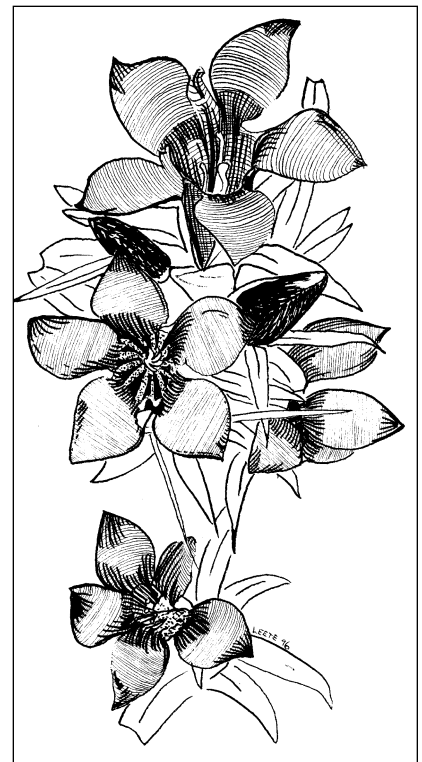
Her essays, illustrated with her own sketches and photographs, were published in American and English periodicals such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The London Globe*. In 1948, James Taylor Dunn, her grandnephew and former librarian of the Minnesota Historical Society, obtained the archival collection of her articles, notes, journals and correspondence. Now her travel essays have been collected, edited and reprinted in *The Far Islands and Other Cold Places: Travel Essays of a Victorian Lady*. (308 pages, illustrated, with bibliography; \$16.95 plus applicable sales tax plus \$3 for postage and handling.) To order, contact Pogo Press, Inc., Four Cardinal Lane, St. Paul, MN 55127; (612) 483-4692.

The Prairie Reader

Now in its second year, *The Prairie Reader* (*TPR*) is a 12-page forum for writing and reflection about the prairie. It claims to be the only independent journal in North America with its particular range of topics: it is “devoted to prairie issues, ecology, heritage, restoration, preservation and gardening.” *TPR* aims to broaden the reader's understanding of efforts being made on behalf of the prairie, which is “America's most imperiled ecosystem.” Many of its illustrations are drawings made especially for particular issues.

Camille LeFevre, a widely published writer and editor from St. Paul, is the founder and sole staff person of *TPR*, and a regular contributor. A brief list of articles by other authors illustrates *TPR's* range. Annick Smith contributed “Seeding with Fire—Controlled Burns Nurture Diversity on Oklahoma's Tallgrass Prairie” for the summer 1997 issue; Greg Breining wrote “Where the Buffalo Roam Today—Ranching Spurs Renewal of Bison as Economic and Cultural Resource” for the winter 1996 issue; and Chase Cornelius wrote “The Plains Pocket Gopher—Master Gardener of the Tallgrass Prairie” for the spring 1997 issue. The spring 1997 issue also contains a 4-part feature on “Planting a Prairie Garden—Designs for Diversity.”

Individual subscriptions (4 issues) are \$18; write *The Prairie Reader*, P.O. Box 8227, St. Paul MN 55108. Some back issues are still available.



This drawing of a downy gentian (*Gentiana puberulenta*) by Allison Leete accompanies Cathie Baldwin's “The Prairie Herbarium” in the winter 1996 issue of *The Prairie Reader*.

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HEADS UP! Annual Meeting of MHOs in October

Mark your calendars now for this year's meeting of Minnesota Historical Organizations on Friday, Oct. 17, at the Minnesota History Center. Program details, being worked out now, will be announced in the next issue of the *Interpreter*. Note that this year's meeting will be earlier than last year's; this date gives us a better chance to avoid really bad weather.

The program may include a preview of a new MHS exhibit, *What's New?*, featuring some of the intriguing recent acquisitions by MHS collections.

On the evening of Oct. 17, the Minnesota Historical Society's annual membership meeting will be held. The evening program is for MHS members only; invitations to members will be mailed in September.

Textile Center Holds Fashion Show & Invites Entries for 1998 Members Show

The Textile Center of Minnesota is a group of artists, educators, business owners, collectors and enthusiasts united by a love of fiber arts and promoting and preserving excellence in textiles. Its 1998 members' show, *Material Wealth: The Beautiful Textile*, will be held from Feb. 2 through March 1, 1998, at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul.

Entries from artists over the age of 18 (sorry, no students) are welcome. The work must have been completed within the last two years and not previously exhibited in the Twin Cities. To enter, you must be a member of the center; there is no entry fee, and entry forms must be postmarked no later than Monday, Sept. 1.

The center's 1997 fund-raiser is its first-ever fashion show, *Artwear in Motion*, which will be held at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul on Sunday, Oct. 5. Works to be exhibited range from painted silks to handwovens to outrageous costume designs. Invited artists include Anna Carlson, Tim Harding and Kathleen Richert. There will be a boutique at the show to give ticket holders a chance to meet the artists and purchase wearable art. For more information, call (612) 722-8054.



It's Not Too Late: August 26 Is Women's Equality Day

The National Women's History Project is promoting a national celebration on August 26 to commemorate the signing of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gave women the right to vote. In 1971, Congress designated August 26 as "Women's Equality Day" to honor that historic event.

The National Women's History Project has produced a "Women's Equality Day Program Kit" that contains "everything you need for a one-hour program." The kit includes a 20-minute video, "Votes for Women," and an audiotape of a 15-minute speech, "Taking a New Look at the Woman Suffrage Movement," prepared by project staff, which presents the historical context for understanding the significance of the amendment. The kit also contains a poster, balloons and other program-planning ideas.

The project has also published a resource book, *Celebrating Women's History in the Workplace*, that contains many suggestions for displays and programs.

The kit costs \$49.95 and the book \$6.50 (add shipping & handling). For further information, contact Mary Ruthsdotter at 7738 Bell Road, Dept. P, Windsor, CA 95492-8518, or call (707) 838-6000.

New State Archivist

In February, Robert Horton joined the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society as head of State Archives, a department in the Division of Library and Archives. Bob came to Minnesota from the Indiana State Archives, where he worked as head of the Records Management and Electronic Records Divisions. His primary responsibilities at MHS are to facilitate the department's strategic plan and to foster an electronic records program. Although his fears about the weather have already been confirmed, his first impressions of the state, the community and the Society are entirely positive. In the months to come, he plans to meet with people throughout Minnesota to discuss the directions State Archives is taking.



Protecting Rural Historic Landscapes: A Call to Interested People

Rural historic landscapes (see box below) have subtle qualities that are hard to identify. Historic preservation efforts traditionally focus on historic buildings, historic districts, or archaeological sites, but broader land-use issues are involved with rural historic landscapes. Some portions of this landscape retain significant features reflecting the state's agricultural history, such as fields, windbreaks, barns and farmhouses. These features may illustrate the evolution of farming practices, the types of buildings constructed by a particular ethnic group or the particular settlement patterns of a particular locality.

Good case examples of this kind of documentation would help in recognizing specific areas, and serve as models for local governments, state agencies, and preservation organizations. Such protective strategies will involve alliances with other rural land use mechanisms, and will help to set the pace for other efforts throughout the state.

Virtually no historic agricultural landscapes have been systematically documented in Minnesota. An appropriation of \$80,000 from the 1997 Minnesota Legislature to the Minnesota Historical Society will enable a three-pronged project that will begin to answer this need. (Approved by the Minnesota Legislature, ML 1997, Chapter 216, Sec. 15, Subd. 5(b) as recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources from the Minnesota Trust Fund.) The funds will support documentation of resources and preparation of a management plan for historic agricultural landscapes in the St. Cloud-Rochester growth corridor. The title of the project is "Protecting Rural Historic Landscapes in High Development Areas."

Briefly, the project will proceed as follows. A team of SHPO staff members, following the federal National Park Service standards, will choose two

areas within the corridor for study by a consulting historian, who will carry out the surveying and documentation. A management plan for protecting the



This farm in Lincoln County is typical of the kind of rural landscape to be studied in the project.

Minnesota Historical Society

landscapes will then be developed. The plan will link with local and state level land-use planning mechanisms, and integrate with existing programs. Then two workshops will be conducted with local and state land use planning agencies to explore ways to implement the plan.

During project development, SHPO will solicit feedback from users. Information about the project will be made available on SHPO's Web page and in the *Interpreter* and *Planner*.

We need your help during the initial identification phase of the project. Areas known by a local name, for instance, are often good places to begin this work. If you are interested or know of areas that should be included, please contact Michael Koop in the SHPO at (612) 296-5451.

A rural historic landscape is a geographical area that historically has been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features.

[*The National Register of Historic Places Bulletin*, "Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes," 1990.]





Video on Phelps Mill Wins National Award for Otter Tail County Historical Society

This drawing of the Phelps Mill by Joanne Cress is on a postcard available at the Otter Tail County Historical Society

In the recent Videographers Award nationwide competition, the Award of Excellence—the highest honor awarded—was given to the Otter Tail County Historical Society’s (OTCHS) video production, *A River of Wheat: The Phelps Mill Story*. Out of 2,000 entries, only 10 percent were so honored.

Interpreting the Phelps Mill has been a project of OTCHS for several years. The seven-minute video plays an important part in the interpretation by introducing viewers to the history of the mill, the surrounding community and



Courtesy Otter Tail Historical Society

rural milling in Minnesota. The Phelps Mill is of particular interest because it was built in 1889, is one of the few rural flour mills left in Minnesota and has much of its original equipment still intact.

The video was produced by Wade Barry and Evan Johnson of Ellida Productions. Financial support for the project was provided by a grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission.

For further information, contact Chris Schuelke at OTCHS, (218) 736-6038.

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Readers are invited to submit information for publication. To be considered, items must reach the editor by the 25th of the month, two months before publication (example: publication date, October 1; submission deadline, August 25). Send to: **Interpreter** Editor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906. For more information call (612) 296-5434 or (612) 296-8196.

Upon request, this publication can be made available in alternative formats: audiotape, large print or computer disk.

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