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Students, a County Historical Society, & Local History

David Nystuen, Field Services Coordinator for the Minnesota Historical Society, learned of this class when he visited Detroit Lakes in early 1996, and thought it would be of interest to other county and local historical societies who are considering ways to develop links with their local schools. We agreed, and asked Dennis Kral, one of the Detroit Lakes Junior High School teachers, to write the following article about the class for the Interpreter.

"Historians" by Dennis Kral

Local history is seldom taught in our schools. Often, students appear to be more knowledgeable about national history than they are about their own state, county, or community history. The "Historians" class, as taught in Detroit Lakes Junior High, seeks to fill the local history void.

"Historians" is a seven-to-nine week interdisciplinary teaching unit linking the resources and personnel of the Becker County Museum, located in Detroit Lakes, with a technology teacher, a speech teacher, and ninth-grade students from Detroit Lakes Junior High.

The concept behind the class is simple. With the help of museum personnel, the students select a topic based on some aspect of Becker County's history. The

students then research the unit at the Becker County Museum using newspapers, photos and other available archival materials. From the research, the students develop an oral presentation.

To make the presentations as informative and exciting as possible, students are trained in a variety of computer techniques by Mark Geihl, technology teacher at Detroit Lakes

Junior High. These techniques include the use of scanners, digital cameras, digital movies, and software for the creation of multi-media presentations. The presentations are then given to both adult and student audiences in the Detroit Lakes community. In addition to the usual research techniques available at the Becker County



Photo by Josh Laabs

Bev Zitzow (center) is shown being interviewed by Becky Gaines and video taper Josh Mitchell. (students in the 1995-96 class).

Putting the Interpreter to Work

We try to make the *Interpreter* a kind of marketplace of information and ideas—from people around the state, for use by people around the state. Sometimes, however, we feel we are working in a Quiet Zone; we need more contact with readers. In the not-too-distant future we will ask for your comments and suggestions in a readers survey, but please do not wait for the survey to let us know what you think or to contribute material. Over the next several months, we plan to take up such issues as collecting and retention; artifact conservation; heritage tourism; museum security; public relations; issues and methods in electronic communications; controversial exhibit topics; and more. If you would like to suggest particular issues for articles or questions to which we could respond in a "Tech Talk" article, or have material on other topics you believe would be valuable to others in the field, call or write Jim Smith, editor, (612) 296-8196 (345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906).

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“Historians”

Continued from page 1

Museum, students are encouraged to conduct primary source research with Becker County residents who have lived during some of the history being researched. The interviews are videotaped and become a part of these students’ presentations through the use of digitized movies.

As might be expected, these interviews with Becker County’s senior citizens produce one of the most meaningful aspects of this entire project. Many children no longer live very close to their great-grandparents or grandparents, and our social system really does not mix age groups very well, so the opportunity for a 14- or a 15-year-old to interview a 90-year-old man or woman on a subject of mutual interest is rare and meaningful. Long after the details of the class are forgotten, students may remember talking to a person from another generation about a common interest.

The students taking the “Historians” class are not just using the museum and its resources. They also are giving back to the community and the museum. By digitizing old photos, recording the memories of Becker County’s senior citizens, and compiling their research, these students are actually adding to the material of the museum. All materials developed for the class are given to the Becker County Museum so that other researchers may use them.

Additionally, members of the class have been working with the “Historians” teaching team to develop a home page that provides access to the Becker County Museum through the Internet. The home page takes the viewer on a graphic tour through

Becker County history. Through this use of technology, the “Historians” class has an opportunity to share its work with other museums, schools and the world.

The members of the “Historians” teaching team are Danell Haspel and Becky Olerud from the Becker



Photo by Joel Blaha

Andy Foltz, student in the 1995-96 class, is shown inspecting a gas mask.

County Museum, and Dennis Kral and Mark Geihl from Detroit Lakes Junior High. Last summer the “Historians” program was honored with a grant of \$5,000 from the Pioneering Partners Foundation. This grant is presented to teams that generate technology with education and community involvement. The grant provides an opportunity for the team to expand its program into other Minnesota schools.

The members of the “Historians” teaching team believe that students and museums everywhere in Minnesota would find a program like “Historians” meaningful. Questions about the program can be directed by e-mail to team members at dkral@detlakes.k12.mn.us (no period after us). By regular mail: 500 11th Ave., Detroit Lakes, MN 56501; (218) 847-9228; fax, (218) 847-0057.

With the completion of each “Historians” unit, the teaching team, both in the Becker County Museum and the junior high, become more convinced that this unit is a winner for the community of Detroit Lakes, the Becker County Museum, and the students of Detroit Lakes Junior High.

Working in the computer lab in the 1995-96 class are Nate Anderson (standing), Karl Beck (seated), and Dennis Kral (teacher).



Photo by Joel Blaha



Old Hotel Is New Itasca Commemorative Figurine

The Hotel Pokegama, a familiar part of downtown Grand Rapids for 105 years, is this year's addition to the Itasca County Historical Society's collection of sculptures of historical sites, the Commemorative Christmas Village Series. The hotel was sculpted by ICHS curator Jo Bjorkman, who described her approach and methods in an article in the fall 1996 issue of *Itasca History News*.



Jo Bjorkman, curator of the Itasca County Historical Society, is shown at work on her model of the Hotel Pokegama.



Photo by John Rossman

She did her research by consulting photographs, but found that most of them showed only the street-face side. She took a tour of the hotel and spoke with Glea Shaw, current owner, who remembered details of the less visible parts of the hotel. Jo then sculpted a clay model, using small tools and waxed string for borders and accents. She needed a wax model to ship to the mold makers, so she built up "several layers of latex and cheese cloth over the clay model and then added a plaster cast over the latex to create what is known as a 'mother mold'."

She broke the mother mold open, removed the clay model, and prepared the mold for casting in wax. She then melted the wax, poured it into the mold, and allowed it to cool. Finally, she removed seam lines from the wax casting and replaced details lost in the process.

Historical figurines can be useful for educational, promotional, and revenue-raising purposes. The ICHS plans to produce ten historical site sculptures in its Village Series, and the Hotel Pokegama is second in the series. To place an order for a figurine, or discuss the project with Jo, call the ICHS at (218) 326-6431.

Scott County Ghost Town Will Come to Life

St. Lawrence, now no more than one building, the Strait House, is one of more than 700 "paper townsites," or ghost towns, in Minnesota. Located in St. Lawrence Township, between Belle Plaine and Jordan, a mile west of the county fair grounds on Scott County Road 57, St. Lawrence is now the focus of the Minnesota River Valley Historic Preservation Project. Funded with a \$280,000 federal grant through ISTEA (the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act; see box), the project brings together the Scott County Historical Society with the Minnesota departments of natural resources and transportation. An additional \$70,000 of state and local funding has been raised.

The project intends to tell the boom-and-bust story of St. Lawrence, from its survey and founding in 1856 to its abandonment only 13 years later, in 1869. The Strait House, an 1857 limestone building, is to be restored as an interpretive center. The project will address the dramatic history of the lower Minnesota River Valley, and will cover transportation, settlement, ghost towns, and social and economic conditions as they can be found at the St. Lawrence site.

The Strait House restoration is to begin this fall, so that by next fall it will be able to share its stories with the many visitors to the Minnesota River Valley Trail and Park Land. For information, contact the Scott County Historical Society at (612) 445-0378.

About ISTEA

The fall 1996 issue of *forum*, the journal of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is devoted to ISTEA, which it calls "A Road Map for the Future." It includes discussions of the imperiled future of ISTEA, scenic byways, an article on transportation enhancements and preservation by Dan Costello, and "ISTEA: A Bill for the American Community," by Rep. James Oberstar, (D-Minn). Oberstar's article features a discussion of the newly restored Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis and the Paul Bunyan Trail in north-central Minnesota as examples of the successful use of funds under the ISTEA Enhancement program.



Preservation Alliance Gives Grassroots Preservation Awards

At its twelfth annual awards program on Oct. 27, 1996, the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota recognized 11 individuals and five groups for their “special contributions toward preserving the historic resources of the state of Minnesota.” In alphabetical order, the award winners are:

Peter & Nancy Albrecht • Minneapolis • for restoration of the 1912 Dr. Oscar Owre house (original architects: Purcell & Elmslie; restoration architects: MacDonald and Mack).

Ron Bates & Glenda Key • Minneapolis • for restoring the 1886 Hinkle-Murphy mansion (original architect: William Channing Whitney; restoration architects: Design for Preservation & HKA Architects).

Citizens of Independent School District No. 492 • Austin • for preservation of the 1928 (with 1935 addition) Austin High School (original architect: G. L. Lockhart; restoration architects: Dana, Larson, Roubal).

City of Duluth & Artspace Projects, Inc. • for adaptive reuse of the 1911 (with 1926 and 1935 additions) Washington Junior High School, for use as artist-oriented housing and a city-sponsored community center (adaptive reuse architects: LHB Engineers and Architects, Inc.).

Eagle Building L.L.C. • Red Wing • for restoration of the 1909 Red Wing Printing Co. building (original architect: C. H. Johnston; restoration architect: Steven Setzer).

Robert Frame, III, Ph.D. • for his many years of dedicated efforts for the cause of preservation.

Louis Hruska • Waterville • for 30 years of dedicated effort to the Le Sueur County Historical Society.

Martin County Preservation Association • Fairmont • for preservation and restoration of the 1867 Chubb House.



*The 1867 Chubb House, Fairmont
(SHPO, Minnesota Historical Society)*



*The Christian F. Uytendale Farmstead, Benson Township
(SHPO, Minnesota Historical Society)*

William Morgan, Ph.D. • professor of American Studies, St. Cloud State University • for his efforts in educating our (mainly) younger generations about the value of preserving our heritage.

Fred Peterson, Ph.D. • professor of art history, University of Minnesota-Morris • for his many years of research into and educating about our rural heritage, particularly barns and farm houses.

Restoration of the Clubhouse • Itasca State Park • for restoring the clubhouse, a classic 1911 log building, in the park (restoration architect: Architectural Resources, Inc.).

Anna Ulstad & Agnette and Ronald Duncan • Benson Township • for historically accurate repairs to the Christian F. Uytendale Farmstead.

For questions about and/or nominations for 1997 awards, contact Chuck Liddy; Miller-Dunwiddie, Inc.; 123 No. 3rd St, Suite 104; Minneapolis, MN 55401-1657; (612) 337-0000; fax (612) 337-0031.



Notes: Money Matters and Grassroots Conference



Research Grants from the Minnesota Historical Society

Four categories of grants to support research and writing on the history of Minnesota are available from the MHS Research Department. The four categories are: research expenses (\$500); Visiting Scholar grants (up to \$1,000); *Minnesota History* article grants (up to \$1,500); and large-scale project grants (up to \$5,000). The department encourages projects that add a multicultural dimension to the area's history, and that cover subjects not well represented by existing publications, including agriculture, urban history, workers and work, historic preservation, and sports. For information, write Deborah Miller, Research Department, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102, or call Florence Regan at (612) 297-2221.

Scholarships for History Majors at North Dakota State University

First-year students majoring in history at North Dakota State University may apply for Corwin Carlyle Roach Memorial Endowment Scholarships. Up to two scholarships of \$500 each will be awarded, depending on the quality of the applications. Corwin Roach was a distinguished professor at NDSU for nearly 20 years; the endowment was established by his widow and daughter. For additional information or to submit an application, contact Larry Peterson, Corwin Roach Scholarship, Department of History, Minard Hall 412J, Box 5075, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND 58105, or call (701) 231-8824.

Museum Funding: Congress Creates New Combined Agency

In its Omnibus Spending Bill, Congress combined the Institute of Museum Services (IMS) with the public library program formerly housed in the U.S. Department of Education. The new agency, called the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), has been authorized for six years. Diane Frankel, current director of the IMS, will be the first head of the new agency; in the future, directors will alternate between persons from libraries and museums.

The new IMLS will have two deputy directors, one for museums and one for libraries; the two separate boards will continue; and appropriations will continue to come from separate (non-competing) accounts. (Page Putnam Miller, director of the National Council for the Promotion of History (pagem@capaccess.org), provides information about government decisions such as this to associations of cultural organizations. This notice appeared in the November 1996 issue of *Dispatch*, from the American Association for State and Local History.)

Blegen Tradition Comes to Life in Grassroots History Conference

The second annual Theodore Blegen Conference will be a great opportunity for local historians to share the results of their current research with others doing local history. At last year's conference, one presentation showed how the citizens of Gibbon rescued and restored their town hall; another was an oral history project involving members of the India Association of Minnesota; and another told the story of the discovery of inspiring stories of St. Paul's African-American community.

Papers by non-academic historians are especially welcome, as are reports of exhibit development, archival methods, oral histories, and collections management in the area of local history. Research in

genealogy, cultural resources, folklore, and social and cultural history also will be considered.

The conference will be on Saturday, March 22, 1997, at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.

Entries must be typed and include the name, address, and telephone number of a contact person and a brief (250-300 word) description

of the project. Entrants must be willing to give a 20-minute presentation to a general audience at the Minnesota History Center. To submit proposals or receive information, contact Peggy Korsmo-Kennon, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd W. St. Paul, MN 55102-1906; (612) 297-2080.

NOTE: All proposals must be received by Monday, February 3, 1997.

...the pivot of history is not the uncommon, but the usual, and the true makers of history are "the people, yes."
Theodore C. Blegen (historian, university administrator, and former director of the Minnesota Historical Society)



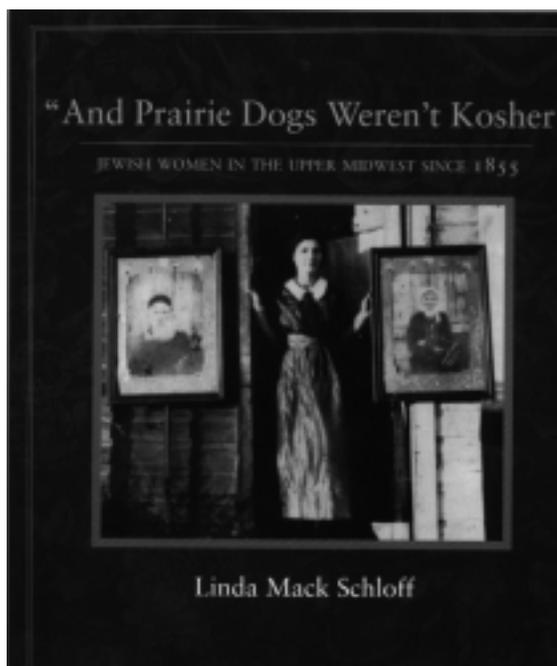
Women in History: Three New Publications

Two MHS Press Books

And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher uses the voices of four generations of Jewish women who settled in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, and Wisconsin to show how they transported to and transformed their cultural and religious life in a region inhabited by few Jews. More than 120 personal accounts and 85 period photographs are included. Each chapter (Jewish life in the Old Country, immigration and settlement, challenges of keeping kosher in the new land, work, synagogues, women's organizations) is prefaced with an essay by author Linda Mack Schloff, director of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest (JHUM) in St. Paul. This book is a companion to the new exhibit, *Unpacking on the Prairie, Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest*, which opened in October at the History Center. 254 pages, 85 illustrations, 4 maps; cloth, \$29.95; paper, \$14.95.

An essay contest will be held in conjunction with the exhibit. Co-sponsored by the JHUM and the journal *American Jewish World*, it will award up to two prizes of \$500 each for essays relating to the experience of Jews in the Upper Midwest. For further details, contact the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, (612) 641-2407. Deadline: July 1, 1997.

Bookjacket for
*And Prairie
Dogs Weren't
Kosher*, by
Linda Schloff;
MHS Press



Minnesota Historical Society

In *In the Company of Women*, 83 Minnesota women give their personal accounts of how they became feminists and how the women's movement changed the ways they saw themselves and their

world. Included are stories from homemakers and business owners, explorers and artists, prostitutes and policewomen, and many more. In her foreword, Gloria Steinem says, "Women in all parts of the country—and in many other countries—will find themselves here. *In the Company of Women* affirms the importance of every woman's story. It affirms the power of hearing our own and each other's words unfiltered by interpretation." The authors are Nina Rothchild, former director of the Minnesota Legislature's Commission on the Economic Status of Women, and Bonnie Watkins, a former assistant director of that same agency. 378 pages; cloth, \$29.95; paper, \$16.95.

For information about MHS Press books, contact Nordis Heyerdahl-Fowler, marketing manager, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102, (612) 296-7539. To order, contact MHS Press Order Dept., same address, (612) 297-3243 or 1-800-647-7827, or fax (612) 297-1345.

A New Newsletter

The Preservationist is published under the auspices of the Alice Paul Centennial Foundation, Inc. It grew out of the conference, Reclaiming Women's History Through Historic Preservation, held in June, 1994, at Bryn Mawr College. In a statement in the Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sept. 96) issue, Lynn Sherr, author of *Susan B. Anthony Slept Here*, asked the readers of the newsletter to

...remember that there simply would be no preservation without women. Starting with Mt. Vernon, it is women who have made the effort, [given their] time and collected the funds to keep history alive. But of course, George Washington isn't the only historic figure to remember. In fact, the landmarks and places celebrating American women have been sadly neglected. These are the sites we need to commemorate with a new and vigorous dedication. It is one thing to read about a famous woman in history; it is quite another to visit the place where she actually wrote or created or rebelled. Without continued vigilance our children and grandchildren will never understand how rich our heritage is.

A one-year subscription (three issues) costs \$15. Write Ellen Freedman Schultz, editor, c/o Alice Paul Centennial Foundation, P.O. Box 472, Moorestown, NJ 08057; telephone (215) 542-1154; e-mail: schultzems@aol.com



Members: Tips for Finding and Keeping

Any membership organization will occasionally ask itself whether it is worthwhile to spend time and money to increase its membership. Eric Cardinal, director of the Lake County Historical Society in Mentor, Ohio, addressed that question in 1992 in an article, "Ideas for Membership," which reprinted in the fall 1996 issue of *Tapestry*, the newsletter of the Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations. The article to follow highlights some of Cardinal's main points.

In the course of its long-range planning, a society committee studied the question of membership development. It concluded that membership should be increased and that to do this, development should become "an everyday effort, even in a small organization such as ours." To review the reasons membership is important:

- Membership is the organization's core constituency.
- Funding entities look more favorably on a large membership base.
- Dues are one source of revenue.
- Historical organizations need volunteers, and "an institution's volunteers spring from its membership."
- Members are the voice and face of the organization in the community, and there is strength in numbers.
- Variations in the size of membership can help the institution gauge how well it is serving the community.

After a small survey of similar organizations, which told the Lake County society that "approaches to membership development are almost as numerous as the number of organizations that employ them," Cardinal described the approach they are now using; what follows is a summary his remarks.

The first step is to *learn why people become members in the first place*. The reasons may include free admission to the museum and receiving the organization's publications, but for Cardinal, "the most fundamental reason people will join your group and retain their membership is because they like what you are doing." This can be determined in each case by periodic member surveys.

Define the base, or core, of your membership, and seek to enlist people from outside that core. "Take steps in your programming, publications, and your board's composition to broaden your base within the county."

Set membership goals, based on county population and present membership. That is, set long-term and short-term percentage increase goals: "ambitious but reachable goals each year."

Use every available opportunity to enroll members. Make memberships available at every activity and event the organization sponsors. You should be able to hand out a membership brochure to every visitor to the museum or library.

Pay close attention to non-renewals. This is a complex problem area, involving number, length of time a person has been a member, demographics, and cost-effectiveness of retention methods. Cardinal's committee found "that the most important reason that people failed to

renew was they simply forgot." He recommends, "Avoid sending renewal notices only once and as part of your regular publication, since it is easy for people to overlook or forget these reminders."

When does a membership expire? He recommends that memberships begin when the person first joined, rather than some kind of calendar year measure. This means that "membership drives" are deceptive, for they are relatively short bursts of intensive activity in what should be an ongoing part of the organization's work. (Computerization may not be essential to membership development, but, plainly, it will make it more effective in numerous ways.)

Cardinal closes with the admonition, "An institution can ignore or de-emphasize membership development only at its own peril."

*An institution
can ignore or de-emphasize
membership development
only at its own peril.*

—Eric Cardinal



Note to Interpreter readers:

Let us have your thoughts on membership development, e.g., what steps your organization is taking and what issues confront you, and what membership-related topics you would like to see in future issues, for example in "Tech Talks."



People News

Minnesotan Is New President of National Organization

Helen Meyer of Le Center, director of the Le Sueur Museum and newly elected vice president of Le Sueur County Historical Society, recently was installed as national president of the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War. Barbara Buri Tent #24 in Montgomery was named for Meyer's great-grandmother. Six sons and two grandsons of Barbara and her husband, Benedict, served in the Civil War; several sons were wounded, and one was taken prisoner and died before reaching home. Meyer has been very active in the activities of the Le Sueur County Historical Society since it began 30 years ago. Pat Nusbaum, current president of the LSCHS, calls Meyer "the keeper of the history" in the county.



Sarah Williams to Leave Koochiching

After four years as executive director of the Koochiching County Historical Society, Sarah E. Williams has announced her resignation, effective Dec. 31, 1996. During her tenure, the Bronko Nagurski Museum was opened, the farm exhibit building was constructed at the fairgrounds in Littlefork, and improvements were made to the Koochiching County Historical Museum.

IMS Award to Swedish Institute

The Institute of Museum Services (IMS) awarded a \$112,500 General Operating Support grant for 1996-97 to the American Swedish Institute (ASI) in Minneapolis. To be eligible, the ASI had to complete a self-evaluation that covered every aspect of its operation, from collections care and educational programs to exhibits. General Operating Support grants, generally seen as the most difficult type of funding for museums, are determined by a peer review panel made up of museum professionals with an average of 13 years of experience. There were 953 applications and 192 awards made, totaling \$15 million. For information, call ASI at (612) 871-4907.

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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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