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*Right: Visitors
line up to go
inside the one-
room school
during Grand
History Days at
Dakota City
Heritage
Village.*

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INSIDE

India/Minn oral history project . . . 2
Tech Talk: Architectural styles V . . . 3
MHS grants-in-aid 7

Dakota City Heritage Village Hosts Children and Families at Grand History Days

by Jean Beckman, Executive Director, Dakota City Heritage Village

“This is how great-grandma did it,” was heard repeatedly from parents and grandparents accompanying children on a foray into the past at the third Grand History Days program on Oct. 21 and 22. More than 2,000 children and adults enjoyed experiencing hands-on activities of a hundred years ago.

Flyers distributed through all of the grade schools in Dakota County proved to be an effective and economical way to reach the target audience of grade school-age children and their families. Younger children also were able to participate in many of the activities.

Grand History Days is designed to give grandparents and parents an opportunity to share family stories of the past with the younger generation and to enlarge children’s understanding of the past in ways that are fun and memorable for them. Participants achieve a better understanding of typical activities of the past by doing them; when possible, original equipment is used.

The visit begins at the admission gate, where every child is given a “station card.” This is a visual diary for sharing their experiences later.

The adults are given maps with locations and explanations of the 15 activity stations that are located in village buildings, outdoors and in the museum. Visitors are free to choose which activities they will do and in what order; many choose to participate in all 15. The stations run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This year the stations included writing on slates in the one-room school, apple cider-making at the cabin, horse-drawn wagon rides around the village,

talking on a crank telephone at the depot, trying on old clothes at the Town Hall, operating the printing press at the Dakota Free Press and grinding coffee at the General Store.

Grandparents or parents could also have their portraits taken with their children in the 1900-era photography studio. Period costumes and authentic backgrounds and posing benches were used to provide the look of 100 years ago.

Staffing the Program

This two-day program requires more than 200 personnel shifts. Staffing for these shifts is provided

by two groups of volunteers. At every station, each shift includes at least one trained adult volunteer and one or more Farmington High School volunteers. The adults belong to the group of more than 400 regular Dakota City volunteers. The high school volunteers are recruited by the Farmington High School social studies teachers and are given extra credit for assisting at Grand History Days.



Courtesy Dakota City Heritage Village

All station volunteers attend training on the Sunday morning prior to the program. They become familiar with the station activity and the historical background for it, learn volunteer procedures, and select costumes. This training is an additional educational experience for the volunteers, especially those from the high school.

Dakota City is located on the Dakota County Fairgrounds, 4008 220th St. in Farmington; 651/460-8050. Visit the Dakota City web site at www.co.dakota.mn.us/museum.



India and Minnesota: An Oral History Collaboration

by James E. Fogerty

Head, Acquisitions and Curatorial Department, Minnesota Historical Society

Twelve of the 15 participants in the second MHS-India Association of Minnesota oral history project are shown in the photograph to the right, taken Oct. 2. Project adviser Godan Nambudiripad is in the back row on the far left, project advisor Ram Gada is third from the right in the back row, and project interviewer Polly Sonifer is fourth from the left in the back row.

I first met Godan Nambudiripad and Ram Gada of the India Association of Minnesota (IAM) in 1993. The Minnesota Historical Society's (MHS) History Center had opened the previous autumn, and in touring the building exhibits and its library, neither had found much on the history of Minnesotans who had come to the state from India. Through David Nystuen, MHS Field Services Coordinator, we met to discuss how that absence of information might be addressed.

The result of that meeting was IAM'S first oral history project. The 16 narrators in that project, chosen with an eye to diversity of birthplace in India and religion, provided remarkable perspective on their lives and on the many facets of adjustment to American life and culture, and to settlement in

Minnesota. The success of that project, and the rich historical information it provided, launched a joint effort of MHS and IAM to ensure ongoing documentation of Minnesota's important and growing Indian community.

The second project in this joint effort is contained in 15 interviews that tell the stories of the next generation—the first to be born in America. Many of these narrators are the children of those interviewed in the first project, thus providing an intergenerational look at this important community.

In 1996 the second project began to track the adjustment and development of the younger generation. Although the majority of these

interviews are indeed with the children of the first generation, some additional narrators have been included to provide balance and perspective.

The second-generation narrators either were born in the United States or came here as very young

children. At the time of the interviews they were between 18 and 40 years of age, with the majority in their mid-to-late 20s. Most of them grew up in homes that were bilingual and in some cases even trilingual. They faced the challenges of understanding two cultures as young children. They found that the social lives of their parents revolved primarily around the Indian immigrant community, while their school lives often included few if any other Indian students. Most

have proven themselves to be apt scholars who attended college and have proudly taken their place as young professionals. They firmly believe in their skills and in their ability to contribute to American society.

A major focus of these interviews was the passing-on of cultures and values from one generation

to the next. Many narrators also shared impressions and stories of visits to India. Though some became fluent in two or more languages, many understand but cannot read or write their parent's spoken language. Some have embraced the food and dress of their parents, while others have become mainstream "American."

The leadership of Godan Nambudiripad and Ram Gada has been crucial to the continued success of this oral history project series, augmented by the interviewing skill of Polly Sonifer. As the second

series of oral history interviews goes into print, a third series is ready to be launched—testifying to the importance attached to their

history by both MHS and the Indian community.

The projects have received funding from a number of individual donors, from IAM, the Hindu Society of Minnesota, and from three MHS departments: the Oral History Office and the grants programs of the Research Department and of the Historic Preservation, Field Services and Grants Department.



Courtesy India Association of Minnesota; photo by Tim Rummelhof

Gain access to the MHS oral history collections through its website at www.mnhs.org/library/index.html.



STYLES OF THE MODERN ERA: PRAIRIE SCHOOL, BUNGALOW, ART DECO, INTERNATIONAL & REVIVALS

by Charles Nelson • Historical Architect, Minnesota Historical Society

This is the last in a series of five Tech Talk articles on Minnesota's architectural styles.

The era of modern architecture as we know it began shortly after the beginning of the 20th century with early innovations in residential design by master architect Frank Lloyd Wright. These innovative designs became known as the Prairie School, which considered the integration of the building and its site to be of paramount importance. Rather than towering above its surroundings like the Victorians of the previous century, Prairie School buildings “hugged the ground” and emphasized this characteristic through

broad expanses of hipped roofs with spreading eaves and horizontal bands of masonry and windows. The “anchor” of the house to the site was a massive chimney at its center,

symbolizing the trunk of a tree, from which the rooms spread like branches. Wright's first fully developed Prairie School design was the Ward Willets House in Highland Park, Ill., built in 1902.

The Prairie School (or Prairie Style) was quick to gain popularity and a number of architects “hopped on the bandwagon” to promote it. Among these architects were George Grant Elmslie, who had been chief draftsman for Wright's mentor, Louis Sullivan, and William Gray Purcell. Their partnership attained national fame as the Midwest's most prominent Prairie School architects.

Minnesota has a significant number of Prairie designs, ranging from residences to community buildings to libraries, though not all were designed by Purcell and Elmslie. In general, these buildings date from the second decade of the century, for the

popularity of the style began to wane after World War I. It has been ventured among architectural scholars that the “rambler” of the 1950s is a Prairie School resurgence in a simpler, mass-produced guise.

Characteristics of Prairie School design emphasize the horizontal and integration of the building site with its natural setting; residences are seldom more than two stories in height. The spatial emphasis is carried into the interior of the building, which is remarkable for its open plan with a variety of spaces interacting physically and visually with each other. The plan is comprised of rectangular or geometric spaces radiating out from a central point, usually designated by the chimney mass and hearth. Roofs in early versions are broad and hipped with wide sheltering eaves. In Wright's later “Usonian” houses of the 1930s and 1940s, the roof profile evolved from a hip to a flat slab. (“Usonian” was a term he coined to make the point that this style was directly suited to the “U.S. of A.”)

Exteriors are constructed of wood or brick, often with upper areas or entire walls sheathed with stucco. The stucco often was pigmented or painted a tan or



The E.S. Hoyt house in Red Wing, Goodhue County, was designed by W.G. Purcell and G.G. Elmslie and built in 1913. An example of Prairie School architecture, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

SHPO file photo



The Willey House in Minneapolis, an example of a Usonian residence. Built in 1934, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The architect was Frank Lloyd Wright.

SHPO file photo

Editor's note:

TECH TALK is a bimonthly column offering technical assistance on management, preservation and conservation matters that affect historical societies and museums of all sizes and interests. Comments and suggestions for future topics are welcome.

light pink to blend with exposed wooden trim, which could either be stained or left in its natural state to weather. Much of the wooden trim found in these buildings was painted at a later time, which has detracted from its intended natural quality. When ornamental treatments are employed, they include: horizontal wood trimboards or banding; horizontal groupings of casement windows with a combination



Continued from p. 3

of leaded and stained glass in geometric patterns; and a distinctive treatment of brick courses, by raking horizontal joints—recessing them to give a horizontal shadow line—and using a pigmented mortar to finish vertical joints so they were flush with the surface.

The Bungalow Style

With its beginnings in the second decade of the 20th century, the Bungalow style is contemporaneous with the Prairie School and incorporates a similar affinity for simple design and natural materials. Inspiration for the bungalow is said to originate in India during the late 19th century, from the Hindi word for “house in the Bengal style.”

Idealized as the efficient home for working-class Americans, it remained popular until World War II, when it was superseded by the suburban tract house. Over the years the name “bungalow” has become synonymous with “small, comfortable home.” Its earliest manifestation in America was in California, and from there it spread like wildfire throughout the country.

It was well-received as a solution to the dilemma of affordable housing suitable for communities experiencing the pressures of rapid population growth and a limited, and antiquated, housing stock, and as a solution for urban expansion into planned neighborhoods in suburbia. A great variety of designs was soon readily available through a proliferation of builders’ catalogues, which depicted mass-produced elements that were available at local lumber yards everywhere. Entire neighborhoods of bungalows sprang up seemingly overnight.

A Bungalow style house, however, was well-constructed and durable. A typical bungalow relegated all living space to one floor, with a half-story designated on the building plans as an “expansion.” The expansion allowed for the future construction of one or two additional rooms to accommodate a growing family. More space was provided by a full basement and a three-season porch that usually opened directly off the living room. Built-ins, such as buffets, sideboards, bookcases, cabinets and nooks, emphasized a conscientious use

of space, where everything was required to have utility rather than frivolity.

A premier feature of a bungalow was the fireplace, massive in appearance and faced in brick or stone with the characteristic wooden mantle; on the exterior of the house, the chimney provided a visual signature of the style. Woodwork in the principal rooms was hardwood, most often quarter-sawn oak or maple, with pine or fir in secondary rooms. A stained or natural varnished finish was used, paint being prescribed for walls and ceilings. A common wall and ceiling treatment was a textured plaster finish.

Characteristics of the Bungalow style include a simple rectangular plan and a massing of one to one-and-one-half stories. Bungalows usually have gable roofs, which either sweep from the ridge to the porch or form a series of repetitive gables, punctuated with dormers.

The exteriors are clad in wooden clapboards, shingles or stucco, sometimes with areas of rustic, wire-cut brick. Ornamental treatments include massive angular brackets and exposed rafter tails that support broad overhanging

eaves. The angularity of the brackets and supporting porch posts, as well as the extensive use of natural wood on the interiors, earned the Bungalow style its nickname as the “Craftsman Style.” (The Bungalow style has experienced a recent surge of popularity. A number of publications have been written on the style and its care and preservation, and a “Bungalow Club” made up of bungalow owners and aficionados has been formed in Minnesota.)

Art Deco or Moderne

The Art Deco, or Moderne, style was introduced at the Exposition Internationale des Artes Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris in 1929. At its onset, it was a decorative arts movement that “streamlined” the revival of Art Nouveau, which was popular at the turn of the century. It rapidly became a style of architecture as well, which by the late 1920s had reached the United States. It attained instant popularity and continued to influence the building industry into the 1950s.



SHPO file photo

Right: This Bungalow style house in Blue Earth, Faribault County, was built ca 1915.





Continued from p. 4

The Art Deco style (or Moderne, which is the term specific to the classification in architecture) experienced two distinct phases of development. The



Above: the Greyhound Bus Depot in Brainerd, Crow Wing County, built ca. 1950. It is a good example of the streamlining found in Art Moderne buildings.

The stadium at International Falls, Koochiching County, built ca 1935.

first phase characterized the style during its emergence in America through the mid-1930s. It was labeled “Zig-Zag” Moderne for its profusion of geometric, angular forms. The second phase emerged in the mid-

1930s and incorporated curvilinear forms; it was labeled “Streamline” Moderne.

The Moderne style reached its zenith during the Great Depression of the 1930s and became closely associated with federal building projects often undertaken by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). A number of public buildings such as post offices, city halls and community centers were erected as a result of WPA programs.

For the most part, these buildings combine the decorative qualities of the Art Deco style with a restrained formalism reminiscent of the Classical. This can be seen in symmetrical facades, fluted columns or pilasters and low-relief sculptural panels. Another product of federal assistance was a movement to revitalize commercial districts within communities, in which new buildings and developments adopted the Moderne style in order to make a statement of the quest for progress and prosperity.

In addition to its decorative qualities, the Moderne style is noted for innovation in building materials and technology. Poured and reinforced concrete, along with the steel skeletal frame, became the standard for the structural framework. Both in residences and in public buildings, common treatment for floors was

terrazzo (marble chips mixed with cement mortar, laid and polished). Exteriors (and in some instances, interiors) were clad in fine stone veneers and metal panels; stucco or split stone was also popular. Metal panels were either polished or matte-finished. Bronze and aluminum were extensively utilized for hardware, entrance portals and lighting fixtures.

An innovative building material for the period was glass block. It was used for walls, windows and decorative panels, which often incorporated concealed colored lights, and it was considered a “state of the art” building material for the times. Another innovation was neon lighting, used not only for signage, but also to accentuate architectural forms. One of the most popular technological innovations was a pigmented glass tile called Virtolite; it was most often used as an exterior cladding material, primarily on commercial buildings. Finally, many Moderne buildings incorporate sculptural treatments, in the form of low-relief panels with stylized figures, distinctive light standards, metal railings and fine millwork.

In residential construction, Midwesterners preferred traditional styles such as the Colonial/Georgian Revival and the Bungalow rather than the Moderne. As a result, few intact Moderne style residences remain in Minnesota. The style was extremely popular, however, in the realm of public and commercial architecture. Virtually every community had a Moderne commercial building, post office, city hall, park structure or theater. Of these, theaters have been subjected to the most alterations as a result of the changing tastes in preferences for entertainment. Some have experienced revitalization

as community performance theaters rather than movie houses, but the majority have been lost.

It also may be said that, until recently, Art Deco or Moderne architecture has been unrecognized as a candidate for preservation because of its relative “newness” in collective memory. Only within the last 10 years have the merits of this era been subjected to scholarly investigation. As a result, Art Deco has been popularized in art forms and interior design, which has fostered a new respect for its architecture.



SHPO file photo



Continued from p. 5

The International Style

During the years between World War I and World War II, there was a synthesis between industrial technology and architecture in Germany, France and Holland. The combination of these with art resulted in the formation of the *Bauhaus* in Weimar by Walter Gropius. As both a place and a movement, Bauhaus, which means “house of building,” became a primary force in the development of the International style.

Architects who became the proponents of the style were Walter Gropius, Ludwig Meis van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier. With the advent of World War II, many architects and artisans trained in the Bauhaus school emigrated to the United

States. There they brought the International style to prominence, where it would remain through the decade of the 1970s.

The International style was intended to represent the architecture of the machine age. It was controlled by a strict recipe of design that dictated a lightweight frame and curtain-wall construction, open planning, standardized industrial materials, cubistic forms, a linear geometry of openings, asymmetrical composition, flat roofs, smooth continuous wall surfaces, and the rejection of all applied ornament. To summarize the design principle of the style, Meis van der Rohe coined the dictum, “less is more.”

The characteristics of the International style include an emphasis on volume and proportion, flat roofs, thin membrane walls, large expanses of glass, and the absence of applied surface decoration. Exteriors are often sheathed with metal or plywood panels or stucco. Operable windows are either double-hung or casement; they are often set into groups that extend around corners. Non-residential buildings are often multi-story with exteriors that

present a flat, box-like appearance; patterns are created by relationships of individual wall panels of glass or metal.

Although popular for commercial and institutional buildings, the International style was never strongly supported by residential architects and builders. In particular, the flat roofs, membrane walls and broad expanses of glass were soon found to be problematic in Minnesota, where there was a strong preference for more traditional building types. As a result, many International style buildings have not stood the test of time. Further, machine-produced and synthetic building materials pose special challenges for preservation, as they are often costly and not candidates for the “do-it-yourself-er.” The future of the International style in Minnesota is as yet uncertain.

Modern Revivals

Revivals of architectural styles can be likened to a pendulum. Upon introduction, the pendulum begins its swing to a zenith, or high point, of acceptance, after which the pendulum reverses its swing to a descent. The nadir, or lowest point, of the swing represents the demise of the style and its replacement with a new style. However, the pendulum continues to swing, and the process is repeated. After a number of swings, a revival takes shape and the earlier style again rises to a zenith, however with a new interpretation, new materials and new technology.

Today, a number of styles from various periods in history have again risen to popularity. These revivals are not pure replications of earlier work, but are innovative creations of images and qualities with historical precedents, coupled with a contemporary application of materials and technology. The resulting revivals are aesthetic revivals, rather than a return to the builder’s craft of earlier generations. Such futuristic expressions of Victorian, Prairie and Art Deco styles will lead us well into the 21st century.



SHPO file photo

Above: The headquarters building of General Mills in Golden Valley, Hennepin County, was built in 1959. It illustrates many of the design features of the International style.

Right: The Lake Harriet pavilion in Minneapolis, built in 1990, typifies the variety in Modern Revival style buildings.



SHPO file photo

Charles Nelson, known throughout Minnesota for his preservation work, presentations and workshops, has been Historical Architect at the Minnesota Historical Society since 1971.



State Grants-in-Aid Awards • Fiscal Year 2000 Fall Grant Cycle Listed by County

Becker: *The Aniishinabe Center*, \$1,500 for researching “Neegii, Friends as One” interpretive program, Detroit Lakes.

Brown: *Sleepy Eye Area Historical Society*, \$3,608 for Depot Museum baggage room restoration, Sleepy Eye.

Cass: *Mississippi Headwaters Board*, \$3,000 for “Voices of the River: Tributaries from the Past,” phase II of oral history project, Walker.

Chisago: *Chisago County Historical Society*, \$1,545 for computerized documentation of the “Dalles Visitor” collection project, Lindstrom.

Clearwater: *Clearwater County Historical Society*, \$2,300 for purchase of microfilm reader/printer, Bagley.

Cook: *Cook County Historical Society*, \$1,778 for Church of St. Francis Xavier Church (in Chippewa City) handicap accessibility, Grand Marais.

Cottonwood: *Cottonwood County Historical Society*, \$810 for purchase of microfilm purchase of Cottonwood County newspapers, Windom.

Douglas: *Douglas County Historical Society*, \$1,440 for computerization of cemetery records, Alexandria.

Kandiyohi: *Pioneerland Library System*, \$3,500 for purchase of microfilm reader/printer and microfilm, Graceville.

Martin: *Sherburn Area Classic American Radio Preservation Guild*, \$4,915 for Sherburn Hotel roof replacement, Sherburn.

McLeod: *McLeod County Historical Society*, \$3,075 for archives accessibility and safety, Hutchinson.

Morrison: *Morrison County Historical Society*, \$1,500 for textile collections management, Little Falls.

Minnesota Fishing Museum, \$1,631 for collections management project for purchase of computer hardware and software, Little Falls.

Mower: *Austin Area Commission for the Arts, Inc.*, \$7,500 for Historic Paramount Theatre restoration lighting and brass plates, Austin.

Norman: *Norman County Historical Society*, \$2,170 for UV light, fire and intruder protection, Shelly School museum, Shelly.

Olmsted: *Olmsted County Historical Society*, \$7,500 for Mayowood Historic District historic structures report, Rochester.

Renville: *Sacred Heart Area Historical Society*, \$2,762 for museum environmental control, Sacred Heart.

Saint Louis: *Kaleva Hall*, by the Knights and Ladies of Kaleva, \$1,000 for “The Story of the Finnish Temperance Society and Hall, Revisited,” Virginia.

Range Genealogical Society, \$2,520 for purchase of microfilm of Minnesota County Naturalization Records, Chisholm.

Stearns: *Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict*, \$5,000 for monastic heritage collections storage, St. Joseph.

Stearns History Museum, \$5,000 for energy management and building automation system conversion, phase III, St. Cloud.

Todd: *City of Long Prairie*, \$2,106 for restoration of Christie House stained glass windows, Long Prairie.

Traverse: *City of Browns Valley*, \$3,300 for Browns Valley Carnegie Public Library front steps replacement, Browns Valley.

Washington: *Arcola Mills Historic Foundation*, \$7,500 for John and Martin Mower House and Arcola Mill Site roof replacement, Stillwater.

Washington County Historical Society, \$7,500 for Territorial/State Prison Warden’s House roof replacement, Stillwater.

Wright: *Wright County Historical Society*, \$590 for collections management, Buffalo.

Yellow Medicine: *Minnesota’s Machinery Museum*, \$2,500 for “Agriculture in the New Millennium,” Hanley Falls.





10 Historical Societies in Central Minnesota Form Self-Help Museums Group

The Hewitt Historical Society hosted the first meeting of a group of representatives from eight county and local historical organizations in Central Minnesota on Sept. 8.



Courtesy Hewitt Historical Society; photo by Marvel Dull Blaske

The Hewitt Museum, home of the Hewitt Historical Society.

Thirty-four people attended the first meeting, at which they discussed such topics as getting young people interested in local history, planning fund-raising events, document preservation and acquiring additional space. Representatives from historical organizations with many years' experience offered welcome advice to representatives of groups just getting started about organizing and managing their operations. The group agreed to get together again soon.

Since then two more meetings have been held. On Oct. 12 in Menahga, 34 representatives of historical organizations met, and 45 people gathered in the Wadena County Historical Society museum on Nov. 17. Both meetings were lively and informative, according to Ethalyn Pearson of the Hewitt Historical Society. The next meeting is scheduled for March at the Todd County Historical Society. Among the topics to be discussed is how to name the group; Ms. Pearson had used "Museum Magic Meetings" for the group's first meeting.

Representatives from a total of 10 historical societies from the following towns have attended the meetings: Bertha, Clarissa, Deer Creek, Hewitt, Long Prairie, Menahga and Verndale; the Otter Tail, Todd and Wadena county historical societies also sent representatives.

For further information, contact Ethalyn Pearson, Hewitt Historical Society, 1429 6th St., SE, Wadena, MN 56482, 218/631-2228.

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