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*Above, right:
the kiosk in the
Ulen-Hitterdal
High School.*

*Below: the
kiosk in the
Moorhead
Public Library.*

THE MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

July 1998 Vol. XXVI, No. 7

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Outreach in Clay County

For 10 years, the Clay County Historical Society (CCHS) has made many of its artifacts available for viewing by people in the county who could not or did not come to the museum in Moorhead. The present program utilizes seven on-site display cases and provides rotating mini-exhibits for each.

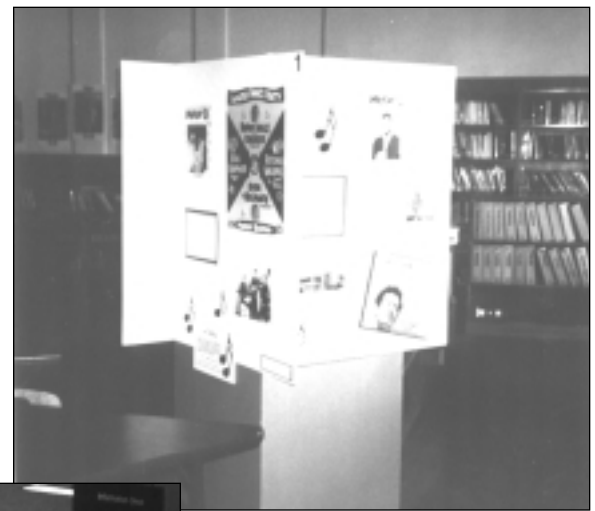
Six cases were purchased by CCHS in 1988. The original cost of each case was \$440, but local sponsors covered \$250 of the cost for each. Three of these cases were purchased outright by sponsors: one by the Hitterdal Lions Club, and two by the Ulen VFW Club. The Glyndon Community Center made a former trophy case available.

Currently seven cases are in use. Three are in the public libraries in Moorhead, Hawley and Barnesville; two are in senior centers in Hitterdal and Ulen; one is in the Glyndon Community Center; and one is in the Ulen-Hitterdal High School.

The cases are of different sizes, which complicates the work of formatting exhibits for different venues. One is on wheels and six are fixed; two are three-sided, and five are viewed only from the front. To date, 331 exhibits have been prepared and distributed, using 5,239 artifacts; 24 of the exhibits have focused on the CCHS photographic collections.

A display requires on average two or three days to create; the contents are changed every two or three months. When displays are changed, they usually require rearranging, which takes two full days.

In an article in the May/June 1998 issue of the CCHS newsletter, collections manager Pam Burkhardt describes the steps involved in preparing a display: "topic selection, research, layout, paperwork,



Courtesy Clay County Historical Society



Courtesy Clay County Historical Society

writing/printing/mounting label copy, mounting graphics, making flyers, making mounts, packing, loading, drive time for take-down and set-up, unloading, more paperwork and returning artifacts to shelves. Creating hands-on binders and making Christmas Craft illustrations take more time."

Plainly, this outreach program is time-consuming, but is considered successful not only from the historical standpoint, but also as a public relations vehicle.

Recent Reader Survey: Question about Bugs

Surveys were sent recently to some 250 of our readers; in a future issue we will summarize the findings and recommendations. However, one respondent asked a question that is worth answering here because other readers may also have the same question. (All respondents remain anonymous.) "We have a bug problem. Can you suggest steps to take to get rid of them? Our things in storage are already in mothballs. We cannot use mothballs in display cases as the smell would drive out visitors! Please help!"

A "Tech Talk" article titled "Pest control in historic wood buildings," in the July 1996 *Interpreter*, might be useful. It was written by Paul Storch, the Society's objects conservator. For a copy of the article, contact the editor.



Re-enacting and Talking about Old-time Baseball

The seven-part series of lectures in June and July at the Historical Society of Washington County (HSWC) in Stillwater includes “Baseball in the St. Croix Valley,” by Brent Peterson, on Sunday, July 19.

On Saturday, July 25, at the Old Athletic Field in Stillwater, the “St. Croixs,” sponsored by HSWC, will re-enact a mid-19th-century game with the “Quicksteps,” a team from the Society of American Baseball Researchers. Call HSWC at (651) 439-5956.

On Saturday, August 22, the “Rochester Roosters,” a re-enactor team of volunteers for the Olmsted County Historical Society (OCHS), end their season with the OCHS 1st Annual Historic Baseball Tournament on the History Center grounds in Rochester. They will be joined by the “St. Croixs” and the “Quicksteps.” Call OCHS at (507) 282-9447.

The lead article of the Spring 1998 issue of the newsletter of the Cokato Historical Society (CHS), is a memoir of baseball in Cokato in a “golden era,” the years 1933 through 1939. What made these seasons so special, according to the author, Gordon W. Nelson,

was the Cokato pitcher Harold Anderson and catcher Clay Calgren. Anderson, coach and teacher at the high school, had played at least briefly in the big leagues. Nelson states that he “was among the best pitchers in the state,” and Calgren was “one of Cokato’s and Macalester College’s all-time great athletes.”

Nelson re-creates the scene of a typical game, with “eyewitness” observations such as “The aroma of freshly popped corn from Wally Peterson’s refreshment stand is starting to permeate the park as his son, Fisk, completes the last remaining task—smoothing the infield dirt by dragging a piece of carpet behind his Model A Ford.” On Saturday, Fisk and Nelson carried water from Brooks Lake to “harden the pitcher’s mound and homeplate area.” Some fans parked their cars behind the fence down the baselines.

Nelson lives in Cokato and is a long-time member of the CHS. Contact CHS at P.O. Box 686 (a new box number), or call (320)-286-2427.



Cokato Historical Society

This is an undated photograph of some of the Cokato team members sitting on a curb outside the Sweet Shop. From left to right: Gordy Forsman, Clair Peterson, Wayne Larson, Alden Burkstrand, Harold Anderson, Clay Calgren, and Gordy Nelson (the author, who was the team mascot).

Freeborn County Historical Society’s ‘Discover History’ Program

Over a period of two months in early 1998, 11th-grade students from Jim Haney’s junior humanities class at Albert Lea High School visited the Freeborn County Historical Society Museum (FCHS) and Pioneer Village. They did research on various topics related to local history, preparing themselves to conduct 12 mini-workshops for fifth-grade students from Halvorson School in Albert Lea.

On April 29, the Halvorson students visited the museum, divided into 12 groups of six students each, and visited the various workshop sites in the museum and village that were staffed by the 11th-graders. Each group was able to visit each of four sites for about an hour.

As FCHS executive director Bev Jackson said in a letter, the students learned about “Freeborn County’s connections to the history of immigration, agriculture, homes, shopping, meeting places, transportation, churches, the American Indian lifestyle, schools, law enforcement,

the military and even cooking.” The fifth-graders churned butter, sampled scratch pancakes, were fingerprinted and jailed, rode the railway handcar, and compared the lifestyles of today with those of turn-of-the-century residents.

The idea for the program was generated in the meetings of the FCHS education committee, headed by Gary Koeder, in the course of figuring out ways to get young people more interested in local history. The fifth-graders had an unusual in-depth learning experience with the help of the 11th-grade students, the 11th-grader “mentors” increased their interest and knowledge of local history, and the adult supervisors saw first-hand the educational possibilities of the museum and pioneer village. The program also was an illustration of a way to address the new set of graduation

standards that will go into effect in Minnesota schools next year.



Courtesy: Freeborn County Historical Society

Two Albert Lea 11th-graders conduct a mini-workshop in the Freeborn County Pioneer Village during the “Discover History” program in March 1998. The adult supervisor is Donna Widenhoefer.



TECH TALK

This issue: Photographs • Part II



In this issue, Bonnie Wilson, curator of sound and visual collections at the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), discusses working with photographic prints, and Eric Morenson, supervisor of the MHS photo lab, discusses the pros and cons of digitizing photographs for preservation.

Care of Photographic Materials: Prints by Bonnie Wilson



Basic care of prints

Photographic prints are somewhat easier to care for than photographic negatives. For instance, if the print has a good negative in the archives, a replacement print can be made if something harms the original photograph. However, there is no true substitute for a vintage print, a print made at the time the photograph was taken. Vintage prints are historical artifacts, and must be treated with the same care taken with original negatives.

Photographic prints of any kind should be stored separately from negatives. The negatives may emit harmful chemicals, or the researcher handling the prints may inadvertently damage negatives while perusing the collection. If negatives and prints are stored together as a temporary measure, make sure the researcher uses white gloves to examine the collection.

Prints that are in poor condition or are likely to be handled frequently should be protected with polyester sleeves. If the photo or its mount is torn,

support it with a PAT-tested, unbuffered (2-ply) board before it is inserted into the sleeve. (PAT stands for "Photo Activity Test," a procedure devised by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for assuring that material is of archival quality.) For large unmounted fragile items, "handling folders" (see illustration below) can be purchased or made. These are composed of acid-free 4-ply board mounted on two sides to polyester sheets.

The most useful and basic storage units are the acid-free unbuffered file folder and the "flip-top" box (see illustration). Both items are available from the archival supply companies in the list of resources. When storing photos on edge in boxes, make sure they are supported with PAT-tested boards so that there is not any excess space that would cause the photos to slump into a curve. Most historical photos are roughly 8" x 10" or smaller, so the majority of your research requests will use this portion of your collection.

Vertical folders in boxes are easy to transport and use. Flat horizontal storage is useful for larger photos. When storing photos flat in boxes, lay no more than 20 in a stack. The photos on the bottom could be damaged by too much weight, and access to the box contents is less convenient for the researcher.

Albums

Some of the most interesting photographs come to us in albums. They should be respected as individual works by a compiler, much as a diary is the work of an individual writer. Just as we would never



MHS collections; photograph by Eric Mortenson

Flip-top boxes like these are useful for storing photographs in folders and for storing film negatives. Glass plate negatives need sturdier boxes.

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. We welcome comments and suggestions for future topics.





TECH TALK

This issue: Photographs • Part II



think of pulling apart the pages of a diary, we should not dismantle albums. They were made according to some design, chronological order, or story line. They can best be cared for by placing them in acid-free boxes, or making a PAT-tested wrapper for them. If you have reason to believe that the ink, paper or images on one page are contaminating the photos on the opposite page, use unbuffered PAT-tested tissue between endangered pages. The interleaving can cause the album to become too thick, so use it sparingly.

you may want to keep it for future display. Mark the frame with the number or location of the photo and store it separately.

If the photo must stay in the frame, remove any old wooden backing boards and replace them with PAT-tested board, such as a good-quality 100 percent rag board. Clean and examine the glass for signs of deterioration. You may decide to replace it with new plain- or UV-filtered glass. Finally, make sure you install the photo with a barrier between the photo and the glass. If a window mat is appropriate, that is fine. Otherwise make a PAT-tested board barrier that is concealed between the photo and the glass under the frame. Do not store photos in frames that hold the photo against the glass because moisture will cause them to bond together, creating a conservation disaster.



MHS collections; photograph by Eric Mortenson

Handling folders provide a safe viewing and storage environment for large photos. The polyester sheet is secured on the left and bottom edges. No adhesive is used to hold the photo in place.

There is one type of album that must be taken apart and reassembled into another album: the “magnetic” or self-adhesive album. These albums destroy their contents, so extraordinary measures are necessary. Purchase an archival scrapbook and photo corners as a replacement. Before you dismantle it, photocopy the pages of the magnetic album to record any captions and the original order. Transfer the now-sticky photos immediately into the new scrapbook.

Framed Photos

Framed photos are easy to display and difficult to store. Each frame, mat, glass and backing creates a microenvironment for the photo. It can preserve the photo or cause a disaster. Whenever possible, unframe the photo and store it like the others. If its frame evokes the vintage of the photo and is in good shape,

Conclusion

The essence of photo care can be stated simply: To extend the life of your collection into the next generation, provide good environmental conditions and good storage materials. In addition, get acquainted with the materials that comprise your photos, negatives and storage materials, not just the content of the images. That will help you understand their vulnerabilities and predict their longevity.

Recommended reading

- Keefe, Laurence E., Jr., and Dennis Inch. *The Life of a Photograph*. Boston: Focal Press, 1990.
- Reilly, James M. *Care and Identification of 19th-Century Photographic Prints*. Rochester, N.Y.: Eastman Kodak Co., 1986.
- Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn, Gerald J. Munoff, and Margery S. Long. *Administration of Photographic Collections*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1984.
- Wilhelm, Henry and Carol Brower. *The Permanence and Care of Color Photographs*. Grinnell, Iowa: Preservation Publishing Company, 1993.

Bonnie Wilson, curator of sound and visual collections, has cared for the photography, film, videotape, and recorded sound collections at the Minnesota Historical Society since 1972. She gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Andrew Robb in preparing this article. She can be reached at (651) 296-1275 or [bonnie.wilson@mnhs.org].



Digitizing Photographic Images as a Preservation Tool by Eric Mortenson

Inexpensive scanners and computer workstations are now in use at most small libraries and historical societies, and staff and patrons are attracted by the capabilities of digitization of photographs. In this article I will discuss digitization as a preservation tool.

First, a general comment: Scanning photographic images for the purpose of preservation needs to be

considered in relation to the goals and objectives of the individual's or institution's collection. The labor and costs involved in creating an electronic collection can often be better spent on re-

you should upgrade your computer and scanning equipment, you will also need new software for "migrating" the digital files to the newer mediums, for reading them, and for transferring files to different stations on a network. This is because at this time, downloading a file is limited to the capability of the current computer system for viewing (i.e., the maximum resolution of a computer screen is 72 dpi) and for file transfer over a network.

Perhaps the most important consideration is that the resolution or information within, for example, a 300 dpi, 24.5 MB file of an 8" x 10" print is approximately one-tenth of the information that is in the original image. Admittedly, the definition of "information captured" used here may become outmoded at some future date, but in the meantime, anyone considering digitization will have to be willing to accept the loss of possibly valuable information and/or detail contained within an image.

For example, in a photo album of landscapes, automobiles and buildings, there were no indications of the date on which the photographs were made. Upon closer examination of the license plate of the car in the photograph to the left, we saw the yearly license tab that enabled us to date the image to the year rather than to the era. Even in the highest quality digitized image, this information would have been lost. (See the photograph and insert below.)

In practice, after a researcher has chosen an image for use, he or she has to find out which kind of file transfer or hard copy output will be needed. For most purposes the digital image is adequate for research, for it is comparable to a high quality photocopy. But for reproduction in a publication, the color



MHS collections: photograph by Norton & Peel



MHS collections: photograph by Norton & Peel

Above: This print was made from a 4" x 5" negative of an 8" x 10" black and white print, scanned at 200 dpi.

Right: This is a digitized image from a 35 mm slide, scanned at 200 dpi.

Far right: A blowup made from a 4" x 5" negative of the top photo, scanned here at 200 dpi

Insert: a blowup from the digitized slide image., also scanned at 200 dpi.

housing and cataloging images you already have. In other words, do not be lured into false expectations about creating an accessible collection. We may assume that once the computer file is created there will be less handling of the original, but the reality is more often an increased demand for the original.

Next, caution is in order. Scanning an 8" x 10" image can require a considerable amount of computer storage space. For example, the top picture above, scanned at 200 dpi (dots, or pixels, per inch) creates a file of just under 1 megabyte (MB); at 300 dpi—2.2 MB; at 600 dpi—8.6 MB; at 800 dpi—15.4 MB; etc. If



MHS collections: photographs by Norton & Peel



TECH TALK

This issue: Photographs • Part II



and resolution is far greater when a 35mm color slide is made from the original image. (It is also worth pointing out that, while handling several digitized images in files of this size, e.g. 15.4 MB, is possible, the computer storage ramifications of dealing with 1,000 to 10,000 digital images could be very costly.)

Duplicating 35mm slides is becoming a more efficient option with the accelerated rate of scanner improvements and the push towards chemical-free image-setting technologies. The 35mm color slide can still be re-scanned and the copy, rather than the original, used to meet current demands. By relying on the higher-quality 35mm slide rather than the high-resolution file, the original image does not need to be rescanned whenever hardware is upgraded, nor does one have to be concerned with using electronic formats that may become obsolete in a few years.

Access

Databases need cross-referenced information to be useful. Because of the way a database functions, information that cannot be cross-referenced will not allow for a complete search or query. Before a database can be designed or developed, the collection must be cataloged and indexed. Unfortunately, off-the-shelf databases that are designed to handle the complexities of historical collections are not yet available. Since the selling point in promoting the idea of digitizing collections is being able to search your collection electronically, it seems to me that at this time, resources would be better used if focused on the priorities of preserving the original.

During the cataloging process, many things can be done simultaneously. A 35mm slide can be made and the original can be re-housed. The added step of scanning a slide at this time would be much more efficient in this format. The labor and equipment costs to deal with just one format, rather than originals of various formats, will easily outweigh the cost of creating the slide. Use of the 35mm slide will provide a consistent format for digitization and access. Therefore, when the researcher's final choice is made, the color slide could easily be duplicated or loaned for reproduction. Ideally, any photo reproduction should be made in a 4" x 5" format, but for comparison and practicality the 35mm slide is most useful.

Reproducing Original Images

To create quality reproductions of originals, you will probably need an experienced and qualified photographer. There are a few criteria to keep in mind when choosing a photographer.

- Will the photographer provide examples or references for the same type of work?
- Does the photographer's format work for your collection?
- Will the photographer turn over all films produced from the project?
- Is the photographer aware of the fragile nature of collection materials?
- Can the photographer produce color-matching film (i.e., color-corrected slides)?
- Will the photographer work on location or from his or her own facilities?

Before hiring a photographer, consider also whether a specific film format is important for your purposes. For example: Does it matter if the copies are in a 35mm slide format, or do you need 4" x 5" negatives and transparencies? The standard format at MHS is a 4" x 5" black-and-white copy negative and an 8" x 10" black-and-white file print. For works of art we make color slides and 4" x 5" transparencies.

The capabilities and experience of the individual are not as important as his or her interest in producing a technically accurate reproduction of the original item. Often you can find an individual who may not be employed professionally as a photographer, but who has the necessary skills and attitude for photographic copy work. One place to start is with your local newspaper or portrait studios. These photographers will have access to studio and dark-room facilities, but they may charge more for their services. You may also want to consider purchasing the equipment and training your own employee to do this work.

Recommended Readings

- “Can Your Images Stand the Test of Time?” John Stewart. *Imaging Magazine*, May 1998
- “Resolution ABCs”, *PC Photo*, March/April 1998, Vol. 2, No. 2.
- “The Right Chemistry,” *Digital Imaging*, September/October, 1995. (Discusses the pace of advances in digital imaging.)

Eric Mortenson has been supervisor of the Society's photo lab since October 1995. Before coming to the Society, he operated his own commercial studio, and did location and architectural photography. Several of his photographs of MHS historic sites are on display in Café Minnesota in the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. He can be reached at (651) 297-3895 or [eric.mortenson@mnhs.org].





Two New Books about Notable People: A Family & an Artist

With their cousins in the Cargill family, the MacMillan family built the world's largest privately owned company. The MacMillans are the subject of a new book from the Afton Historical Society Press by W. Duncan MacMillan, titled *MacMillan: The American Grain Family*. John Steele Gordon wrote an introduction and the epilogue. The author is the great-grandson of W. W. Cargill, who founded the company, and the grandson and son of Cargill presidents and chairmen John H. MacMillan, Sr., and John H. MacMillan, Jr. (350 pages, 325 black-and-white photographs; \$30.) Contact the Afton Historical Society Press, P.O. Box 100, Afton, MN 55001; call (651) 436-8443.

George Morrison is shown in his studio in Grand Portage, in 1973.

The life and work of George Morrison, renowned Ojibwe artist from Grand Portage, are the subjects of *Turning the Feather Around: My Life in Art*, recently published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press. It is an unusual book both because of Morrison (who said of himself "I never said I was an Indian artist; I was an artist who happened to be Indian"), and because of the way Margot Fortunato Galt gathered conversations with Morrison and photographs of his work. Galt, a St. Paul writer and teacher, met with Morrison more than 30 times over three years, and recorded conversations with him and his former wife, artist Hazel Belvo.



Minnesota Historical Society; MHS Press

Galt chose to let the conversations do the writing. In the introduction she writes, "Hearing about George in his own words struck me as an artistic and cultural imperative. I wanted the printed page to capture the rhythms and wit, the nuances and contradictions of George's particular way of seeing his life and art. Let his silences remain silences, unembroidered with speculation; let his avoidance of the brag yield its own sturdy pride...George's life illuminates the complications of an individual Indian who has taken an unusual journey away and back."

Part of what she refers to as his journey is the period of some 30 years that Morrison spent in New York City and Providence, Rhode Island, studying the schools of modern art: Expressionism, abstraction, Surrealism, even Abstract Expressionism. He returned to Minnesota in 1970, but, Galt says, "He had packed his kit with visions and artistic gestures from afar."

Each chapter bears a title from Morrison's series of paintings, *Red Rock Variation* and *Surrealist Landscape*, which are part of the larger *Horizon* series he began painting in the 1980s. (203 pages, 31 color, 38 black-and-white illustrations; cloth, \$40; paper \$24.95.) Contact the Order Department 104, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1096; (651) 297-3243; TOLL FREE 1-800-647-7827.

Cass County Heritage Book in Progress

The Cass County Historical Society (CCHS) and the Heritage Book Committee are compiling the *Cass County Heritage Book* to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the county's founding. It will contain information about the county from its origins down to the present day, including some 900 family biographies that are being assembled with information from past and present residents of the county.

Pre-sale copies will cost \$49.95, plus \$6 postage and handling per copy; send payment to Cass County Heritage Book at the Cass County Historical Society, P.O. Box 505, Walker, MN 56484-0505. Delivery is scheduled for late fall, 1998.



Two New Exhibits at Hjemkomst Center Focus on Norse Heritage

Viking Mythology—Gods, Goddesses and Mythical Figures, and *Norway in America: The Photography of Andrew Dahl* are on display at the Heritage Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead until Oct. 10. The two exhibits augmented the celebration of the dedication of the Stavkirke (Stave Church) on the grounds of the Hjemkomst Center on June 27.

Courtesy Hjemkomst Center



Odin, the one-eyed chief Norse god, as drawn by Bev Ulsrud Van Berkom.

Viking Mythology features the drawings of Bev Ulsrud Van Berkom, now living in Arizona, and poems by Sonja Ulsaker Peterson, who lives in Battle Lake; both grew up in Minnesota. The drawings and poems complement each other, and are drawn from early mythological literature

about such legends as the World Tree.

In a brief 1979 summary of the legend, Van Berkom said that in the world of Norse mythology there were nine worlds, inhabited by various gods and

goddesses, elves, monsters and the mortals. "In the very center of the universe was Yggdrasil, the World Tree." Each day the gods and goddesses would meet at the top of the World Tree and hold council.

One day, "one-eyed Odin heard of a great and final battle that was to be." The battle, which would be known as Ragnarok, would be so overwhelming that only the World Tree would survive. But, as Van Berkom writes, "hidden within the great tree were the two new mortals who would begin again in the new world that was as fresh and green as though it was the beginning of time."

Viking Mythology has been displayed at several notable museums, including the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago and Osla Radhus in Oslo, Norway. *Norway in America* is on loan from the Norwegian Emigrant Museum of Oppestad, Norway.

For further information, contact Bev Woodward at the Hjemkomst Center, (218) 233-5604.

Please Note: Interpreter New Schedule; Address Changes

- Material for the *Interpreter* should be received by the 18th of the month.
- Send address changes directly to David Nystuen, Field Coordinator; (651) 296-5460; [david.nystuen@mnhs.org].

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Readers are invited to submit information for publication. To be considered, items must reach the editor by the 18th of the month, two months before publication (example: the deadline for the October issue is August 18). Send to: **Interpreter** Editor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906; (651) 296-8196 or jim.smith@mnhs.org.

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