



MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

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Minnesota Historical Society



Fergus Falls High School students Adam Nelson (left) and Jonathan Hanson were all smiles after presenting their project to National History Day judges in June. They took home honors in the senior group exhibit category.

Making their mark

Minnesota students win at National History Day

Communism in Otter Tail County? It was a topic that caught the attention of students in Lisa Nesbitt's classroom at Fergus Falls High School when Chris Schuelke came to visit. Schuelke, director of the Otter Tail County Historical Society, was there to suggest project ideas for the 2002 History Day competition. What better fit for that year's theme, "Revolution, Reaction, Reform"?

Of the several students who chose the topic for their History Day projects, it was Adam Nelson and Jonathan Hanson who rose to the top. Winners at the regional and state

levels with their exhibit, "Radicals in the Midwest: Communism in Otter Tail County," the two took home national honors in the senior group exhibit category.

Tapping local sources

Schuelke credits the boys' success to their thorough research in county historical society collections. "They pored over microfilmed newspapers, combed our biography files and listened to oral histories of people who remembered the local

Making their mark continued on page 2

State revenue shortfall affects winter grants cycle

Again this year, the state's revenue shortfall has affected the winter cycle of the Minnesota Historical Society's State Grants-in-Aid program. The shortfall, projected at nearly \$360 million for the biennium ending June 30, 2003, will require budget reductions in almost every state-supported program.

The Minnesota Historical Society needs to reduce spending by \$1,066,000 in the next four months, an amount that will inevitably mean significant reductions in services. Included in the reduction is \$70,000 of the amount that would have been available for matching state grants-in-aid in the winter cycle, leaving just under \$43,000 available to award.

That means competition for the grants will be even greater than usual. There also will be additional restrictions on eligibility. For the Historic Properties category, grants will be awarded only for projects involving properties

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meetings and rallies,” Schuelke said. “The further they got into their research about this radical element in what historically has been a politically conservative community, the better they understood the impact of the agricultural depression that spawned it.”

Such case studies of state and local history make very successful History Day projects, according to Tim Hoogland of the Minnesota Historical Society, which co-sponsors the national social studies enrichment program with the University of Minnesota. Every year more than 30,000 students from schools throughout the state participate, conducting historical research that leads to an exhibit, paper, documentary or original performance presented to a panel of judges at a History Day fair. Winners at the local and regional levels progress to Minnesota History Day in May and from there to the National History Day competition held in June in the Washington, D.C., area.

A three-way partnership

Otter Tail County’s participation in the program has been boosted by a

grant from a local charitable trust that helped build a three-way partnership between the schools, the Minnesota Historical Society and the Otter Tail County Historical Society. “The grant enabled us to combine our resources in the best possible way,” said Hoogland. “The Minnesota Historical Society provided outreach to local teachers, working with them to integrate History Day concepts into the classroom. Adam and Jonathan traveled to the university for a research field trip. And they got advice on exhibit design from the county historical society staff.” Trustees who made the first three-year grant are so pleased with the results that they recently renewed the grant for another three years.

Hoogland urges other communities to explore similar untapped funding sources. “There’s a gold mine of History Day stories and research opportunities right in the



Minnesota’s contingent of 2002 National History Day teachers and students gathered for a group picture before the awards ceremony. In all, 24 students finished in the top 10 for their categories.

students’ own backyards,” he said.

Another case in point: Tom Hilgren, a teacher at Chatfield High School in Fillmore County, has gotten his History Day students involved in local historic preservation. A few years ago two students did research on the city’s historic Potter Auditorium, at risk for demolition. Their project, which also won national honors, helped draw attention to the endangered property. It eventually was saved.

For more information on the History Day program, visit the Society’s web site at www.mnhs.org/historyday or call Hoogland at 651-297-2081.

Grants cycle *continued from page 1*

already listed or determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. For the remaining categories, the maximum amount awarded per grant will be limited to \$3,500.

Tim Glines, manager of the Society’s outreach services, expressed regret at the development. “The number of pre-applications received by mid-January demonstrated a high demand for

grant monies across Minnesota,” he said. “We expected that because many organizations deferred projects last year. Unfortunately, the state’s continuing budget problems come at a time when the overall financial picture for nonprofit historical organizations is already weak.”

Updated information will be posted on the Society’s web site at www.mnhs.org/about/grants/index.html. Applicants also may call

or e-mail Glines (651-296-5460; timothy.glines@mnhs.org) or grants/field programs assistant David Grabitske (651-297-4416; david.grabitske@mnhs.org).

The Certified Local Government (CLG) grants program is not affected by the state revenue shortfall. That program awards federal matching grants to cities for planning, preservation, surveys and public education.

Life in a tent

Outdoor presence boosts Sibley Site attendance

“It was the best season ever!” That’s what one interpreter told Sibley Historic Site manager Lisa Krahn after spending the 2002 visitor season in a tent.

Last spring Krahn and her staff expected to move into a new visitor center in the rehabilitated 1854 Hypolite Dupuis House on the grounds of the Mendota site. But construction delays left the center incomplete and off limits to the public. Ever resourceful, site workers resurrected a 19th-century Marquee tent acquired some years earlier, traded their desk chairs for lawn chairs and opened for business. From cold spring rains to stifling summer heat to biting flies, the interpretive staff weathered it all in good humor.

Being highly visible to passers-by brought unexpected benefits. Many users of the nearby Mendota Trail and

Fort Snelling State Park added guided house tours to their outings after coming upon the outdoor interpreters. So successful was the tent at boosting the site’s visibility and pulling visitors in that Krahn may station an interpreter outdoors next season, too.

For details on this unplanned but beneficial experiment, call Krahn at 651-452-1596.



Sibley Historic Site

An eye-catching, 19th-century Marquee tent served as temporary quarters last summer for staff at the Sibley Historic Site.

To the rescue

Emergency grants aid properties hit by natural disasters

Quick action and an emergency grant from the Minnesota Historical Society kept the roof from falling in

on the historic Fairmont Opera House last fall. After cracks appeared in the theater’s balcony, engineers were called in to determine the cause. What they found spelled disaster: roof trusses were giving way, threatening the entire structure with collapse. Within days, shoring equipment was in place and interior towers of scaffolding had been erected from basement to roof. The grant covered partial cost of the temporary shoring. Now the opera house board faces the daunting task of raising the funds needed for permanent repairs.

An emergency matching grant also helped the Roseau County Historical

Society begin its recovery from devastating floods in the summer of 2002. Although its collections sustained only minimal damage, the county society needed to move them to safer storage and replace ruined shelving, cabinets and archival storage materials.

“Emergency grants such as these are quite rare,” stressed David Grabitske, the Society’s grants/field programs assistant. “Even though grant funding is tight right now, we’re able to step in to relieve the effects of natural disasters. Problems caused by delayed maintenance – though they, too, may be urgent – do not qualify for emergency assistance.”

Fairmont Opera House



Stated for demolition in 1980, the Fairmont Opera House was saved by a grassroots effort to create a regional center for the arts. Facing a crisis once again, the temporarily shored-up building awaits permanent repairs.

Eating Out

Clay County exhibit covers all the angles

Whether it's toting a lunchbox to school, snacking from a car-window tray at the local drive-in or dining at

church-basement suppers, all of us share the experience of eating away from home. The Clay County

Historical Society has captured that experience in a new exhibit, *Eating Out in Clay County*, which opened in November at Moorhead's Hjemkomst Center.

The exhibit explores such topics as the fellowship of eating

out, the evolution of the restaurant business and the popularity of community events centered on food

(think Ulen Turkey Days and the Concordia Corn Feed). There's even a display of archaeological remains found along the Red River from turn-of-the-20th-century Moorhead saloons. When they need a break, visitors can stop in the "History Café" for food- and nutrition-themed games and activities.

CCHS staff have also planned a series of programs offered through the Fargo-Moorhead Communiversity, including a brown-bag lunch and a talk at a local restaurant. For more information call CCHS director Lisa Hanson at 218-299-5520. The exhibit runs through mid-October.

Clay County Historical Society



At C. J. Hammerstrom's restaurant in Hawley in 1900, a full meal cost 25 cents. Businessmen (right) and laborers kept to their separate tables.

Bringing generations together

Grant spawns yearlong genealogy project in Cottonwood County

It's not often that grantmakers call and ask you to apply for funding. But that's what happened in Windom last year. It seems the community wasn't taking advantage of intergenerational grants offered by the Southwest Minnesota Foundation. When Cathy Peterson, director of Windom Community Education, got the call, she turned to Cottonwood County Historical Society director Linda Fransen for ideas. Together they came up with a yearlong project to involve local youth in genealogy.

Aided by volunteers from the area's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), a group of students in grades 4-7 gathers once a month after school to explore the topic. Working with mentors, they learn how to use historical society sources, conduct interviews with older family members

and make family-tree charts. This summer, building on the success of that venture, the Cottonwood County Historical Society will offer a genealogy day camp.

For adults in the community, the grant funded a lecture series with speakers from the Minnesota Genealogical Society. "We even managed a tie-in to Riverfest, Windom's annual celebration," reports Fransen. "This year's theme will be 'Climbing Your Family Tree in 2003.'" To raise funds for the grant match, program participants of all ages are pitching in to make a quilted wall-hanging featuring images of historic buildings



Cottonwood County Citizen

Student Brannon Peterson looked through old newspapers at the Cottonwood County Historical Society with help from director Linda Fransen (right), Cathy Peterson (left) of Windom Community Education and two RSVP volunteers.

in Cottonwood County. For more information on this intergenerational project, call Fransen at 507-831-1134.

Designed to excite and delight

Exhibit features pioneering Duluth hardware firm

A storefront display, colorful sales catalogs and a collection of tools highlight an exhibit about Duluth's Marshall-Wells Hardware Company that opened in December at the St. Louis County Heritage and Arts Center. Dominating the city's waterfront for over 60 years, the company grew into one of the world's largest hardware wholesalers.

Aided by a grant from the Julia Newell Marshall Trust, the St. Louis County Historical Society realized the exhibit with help from Venture Exhibits of Duluth, which designed, fabricated and installed the displays. Inspired by photographs in the Marshall-Wells trade magazine, Venture Exhibits recreated a Christmas-themed front-window display as the exhibit

centerpiece. Opening night featured an unveiling ceremony for society members and former employees of the company, which operated from 1893 to 1958. The exhibit will run through June. For more information call Bryan Lean, museum operations manager, at 218-733-7582 or e-mail bryan@thehistorypeople.org.



Reprinted by permission of Duluth News-Tribune

Bryan Lean, manager of museum operations for the St. Louis County Historical Society, put the finishing touches on an exhibit about Duluth's Marshall-Wells Hardware Company.

Picking up the pieces

Territorial Prison fire leads to fundraising venture

After Minnesota's Territorial Prison in Stillwater went up in flames last September, all that remained of the 150-year-old complex was a heap of rubble. But in that rubble the Washington County Historical Society saw opportunity.

With budget cuts looming, members hit upon the idea of salvaging bricks from the site and selling them to people eager to buy a bit of history. "We were given one day to collect bricks from designated areas of the prison site," said Brent Peterson of the county society staff. "Volunteers helped us gather about 4,500 bricks." Their efforts yielded the desired results: a two-day sale at the prison

site in November raised about \$10,000. Each brick came with a certificate of authenticity signed by Stillwater's mayor, a history of the prison and information on the county society's Warden's House museum.

"We're planning another sale this fall at Jesse James Days in Northfield," said Peterson. "The Younger Brothers, members of the James gang that



Washington County Historical Society

Volunteers salvaged bricks after the Territorial Prison fire to sell as a fundraiser for the Washington County Historical Society.

botched a Northfield bank robbery in 1876, were among the prison's most notorious inmates." For details call Peterson at 651-439-5956.

Sharpen your pencils

Annual survey to broaden reach, focus on information technology

by Tim Glines, manager of outreach services

With spring just around the corner, it's nearly time for the Minnesota Historical Society's annual survey of the state's historical organizations. Survey forms will be mailed around May 1. We're counting on you to help us reach our goal of 100-percent participation.

Special-interest groups added

Since it began 30 years ago, this survey has become an important tool for measuring the health and well-being of Minnesota's historical organizations (see the *Interpreter*, January-February 2003, for a report on last year's results). In 2002, for the first time, 194 local historical organizations were surveyed along with the 87 county historical societies.

In 2003 the survey will also be mailed to historical organizations not focused on a particular place. That list includes groups dedicated to the history of various ethnic communities and those focused on specific historical topics ranging from agriculture to music to transportation. Including those special-interest organizations will give a more complete picture of the state of history in Minnesota.

New angles

Although the basic survey questions remain the same from year to year, each survey is designed to assess a different aspect of your operations. This year the survey will focus on how historical organizations use information technology. With the explosion of computer applications in all aspects of museum work, we want to know what technology tools you're using,

how you're keeping up and where you may need additional services.

To help the Society's field programs staff manage this expanded survey, we've turned to experienced volunteer Carol Geiger. She'll bring her considerable computer skills to bear in helping us distribute the survey and tabulate results. That's just one more example of how historical organizations of all sizes depend on volunteers to add value to our work.

Why another survey?

Last year several of you asked if the Society could coordinate its survey activities with those of other service organizations such as the American Association of Museums. Such a joint project would eliminate duplication of your efforts and save time, you said. But the Society's survey is the only one specifically tailored to Minnesota historical organizations. Without extensive data on our own state organizations, we would be less able to respond to your specific needs.

We hope you agree that our annual survey is not a difficult one to complete. We're assuming, of course, that you can put your fingers on such

standard information as the size of your annual budget and the number of people you served in the past year.

Benefits abound

Results from the 2002 survey gave us important feedback about your training needs and led directly to the selection of topics for the 2003 regional workshops (see page 8). Survey data can be put to other immediate uses as well. A number of historical organizations contacted the Field Services office to request information showing how government funding in their county compared with similar counties. In several instances, data from our surveys helped make the case for increased support.

The success of the 2003 survey depends on you. Please watch for your survey in the mail, take a little time to complete it and return it promptly. Your responses will help us serve you better in the coming year. We hope to hear from every one of you.

Questions? Call Tim Glines at 651-296-5460 (e-mail timothy.glines@mnhs.org) or David Grabitske at 651-297-4416 (e-mail david.grabitske@mnhs.org).

Check your mailing lists

Is "Interpreter Editor" on your mailing list? If not, your newsletters and press releases may not be reaching us. We rely on our mail for news about your programs, exhibits and community events so that we can share the news with other historical organizations.

Take a minute right now to make sure you have the following address on your list. It's the best way to ensure that your newsletters get to us in a timely manner:

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Minnesota Historical Society
345 Kellogg Blvd. W.
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

A cause for celebration

Minnesota Local History Listserv reaches one-year mark

One year ago Minnesota gained an important new communications tool – MNLOCALHISTORY, the free online list service that serves as an electronic meeting place for the state's local history community. Designed to share information and exchange messages, the listserv has seen a steady growth in subscribers. It currently reaches a total of 226 individuals and nonprofit history

organizations throughout Minnesota.

Assessing the first year

Since it debuted in March 2002, the weekly digest has proven to be a popular tool for sharing time-sensitive information. "We use it to publicize coming events, training opportunities, grant deadlines and job openings," says Tim Glines, manager of outreach services for the Minnesota Historical

Society. "It's also a forum for dialogue, where subscribers can ask questions of their colleagues and brainstorm on topics of shared interest."

That aspect of the listserv could be better used, Glines notes. While there have been lively exchanges on some topics, he suspects that users often respond only to the person who initiated the topic rather than to all listserv subscribers. "I hope to see more online discussion and debate as people become more familiar with the tool," he says.

How the listserv works

MNLOCALHISTORY is an open list where members can subscribe and unsubscribe at will. The digest of news and announcements is e-mailed to subscribers every Wednesday. All items submitted for inclusion are sent to a list moderator for approval.

Sign up now

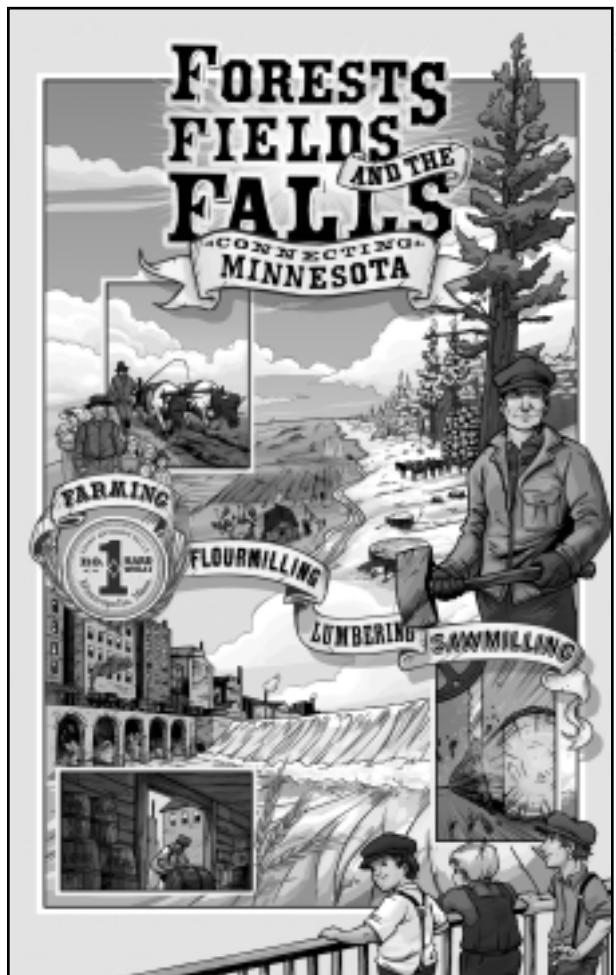
Just send an e-mail, with "Subscribe MNLOCALHISTORY" as the sole text, to majordomo@state.mn.us. You may take yourself off the listserv at any time by sending an e-mail to majordomo@state.mn.us reading simply "Unsubscribe MNLOCALHISTORY." Do not include any other copy in the body of the text.

Use of the listserv is open to all nonprofit organizations and units of local government that interpret and preserve Minnesota history; it is also open to interested citizens. If you have questions, call Glines at 651-296-5460 or e-mail timothy.glines@mnhs.org, or call David Grabitske, grants/field programs assistant, at 651-297-4416 or e-mail david.grabitske@mnhs.org.

Free posters available

Last fall saw the debut, to rave reviews, of the Minnesota Historical Society's online school resource, "Forests, Fields and the Falls." The site, <http://discovery.mnhs.org/ConnectingMN>, explores four stories in Minnesota history: lumbering in northern Minnesota, wheat farming in southern Minnesota, and flour and saw milling at St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis.

Free full-color posters highlighting the site are available. Though the stories are told through the experiences of individuals in Aitkin, Marshall and Minneapolis, the themes of lumbering, agriculture and industry relate to all Minnesotans. Enough posters are available to give away at your museum or to local schools. To order or for further details, call David Grabitske at 651-297-4416 or e-mail david.grabitske@mnhs.org.



Spring field workshops get underway

There's still time to sign up

You can still register for one of this spring's four Minnesota Historical Society field workshops. Your choice of venues:

March 21 Red Wing,
Goodhue County

April 11 Fairmont,
Martin County

May 2 Alexandria,
Douglas County

May 9 Virginia,
St. Louis County

To register, use the form enclosed in the January-February *Interpreter* or available online at www.mnhs.org/preserve/index.html. Or call David Grabitske, grants/field programs

assistant, at 651-297-4416.

The day-long program, to be repeated at each venue, includes sessions on volunteer recruitment, fundraising, audience surveys and communications strategies. A highlight: the keynote address on historic preservation will be delivered by Charles Nelson, the Society's historical architect.

Volunteers (right) helped visitors make buttons to wear at the dedication last summer of the Lindbergh Historic Site's renovated visitor center. It's one of many "make it and take it" activities led by volunteers recruited by the Minnesota Historical Society's Volunteer Services Office, which will share tips with field workshop participants on successful volunteer programs.



Minnesota Historical Society

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Readers are invited to submit information for publication. To be considered, items must reach the editor by the first of the month, two months before publication. Send to Interpreter Editor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906.

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