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# THE MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

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## An Unusual Historical Symbol in Kandiyohi County

*The following article is reprinted from June 1996 issue of Kandi Express, the newsletter of the Kandiyohi County Historical Society, with the permission of the society. It tells of a successful search for just the right museum "signature" artifact. One of the lessons this story provides is the proverbial one, "You just never know when you're going to find exactly the right symbolic piece for your museum, so keep your eyes open." Before reading the article, ask yourself if you know the meaning of Kandiyohi. (The answer is somewhere in this article.) Thomas J. H. Bonde, the author, is president of the Kandiyohi Historical Society.*

### Buffalo Fish (the Real Thing) Is Special Acquisition

by Thomas J. H. Bonde

The name *Kandiyohi* has its origin in the language of the Dakota, and loosely translated, it means, "where the buffalo fish abound." It has been used as the title of our society's most recent publication.

Visitors to KCHS often ask, "What is a buffalo fish?" On December 21, 1995, we were fortunate to acquire a specimen out of Foot Lake, which is located, so to speak, just outside our front door.

It happened like this. I was driving across Foot Lake on the part of the road that extends from Highways 23 and 71 to Ella Avenue, and noticed a number of men with trucks and backhoes out on the ice. Being curious, I drove over to the fairgrounds where some of the men were

coming off the ice and saw that they were loading live fish into an aerator tank on the bed of a semi tractor-trailer. They were commercial fishermen from the Raw Fish Company in Browns Valley, and they were catching buffalo fish.

As a fisheries biologist, I have been trying for years to get a specimen for our museum. I immediately drove out on the ice and talked to Dave Raw, and offered to buy a fish from him. Dave, learning that I wanted the fish for the

Kandiyohi County Historical Society, graciously told me to take my pick.

As a result we are now the proud owners of a 36-inch-long, 30 1/2 pound, female buffalo fish which is

Kan-di', n. *the buffalo fish*  
Oh-hi'-yu, v. of hiyu; *to come through*  
Source: *Dakota English Dictionary*,  
Stephen Return Riggs, 1890

➔  
*Continued on page 2*

## Assistance from the State Archives Department

Often county historical societies receive requests for assistance with local government records. These requests usually come from officials at the county courthouse, but also may come from township, city or school district officers. The State Archives Department of the Minnesota Historical Society can provide assistance in identifying records with permanent or historical value and in obtaining permission to properly dispose of unnecessary records. Contact the State Archives Department at (612) 297-4502 for further information.

(Charles Rodgers, Minnesota Historical Society)



# Careful Research in Cemeteries



The etymology of the word *cemetery* tells us that it comes from the Greek word *koimeterion*, which means *sleeping chamber*. When we see that *cemetery* came into common use only in the 19th century, gradually replacing such terms as *burial ground* and *grave yard*, we can reasonably suppose that a corresponding change in social attitudes toward death was taking place. This article does not explore that history, but it might be useful to keep it in mind when visiting a cemetery to do historical research of one kind or another.

This is an elementary, introductory article, intended to suggest resources and issues in the use of a cemetery for the purpose of historical research. About that activity, a word of caution is in order: It might actually be somewhat tactless, or worse, to say “*use* of a cemetery.” We can use cemeteries for a number of legitimate reasons, (see box) but the fact remains that we are *using* them. Since cemeteries are such valued places in communities, a special burden is placed on those who use them for anything but their intended primary purpose. The doing of research in cemeteries cannot be done, in short, without exercising extraordinary care every step of the way.

Tim Talbott, Curator of History at the Early American Museum in Mahomet, Illinois, spells out some of the reasons for doing research in cemeteries in “Unearth’ the Past in Cemeteries,” which is #5 in a series of “How to...” pamphlets published by the Association of Illinois Museums and Historical Societies. Talbott states,

Aside from the obvious genealogical information found on gravestones, cemeteries offer a vast array of other clues about the past. Information about attitudes towards death and religious beliefs, social customs, prevailing architectural and decorative tastes, technological developments, the work of stone carvers, settlement patterns, occupations, fraternal membership, military service and even epidemics and life expectancy are revealed not only in the gravemarkers, but also in the physical layout and design of the cemetery grounds. It is not unusual for cemeteries to also be havens for wildlife, native prairie grasses, and forbs. The opportunities for research and discovery abound in local cemeteries.

It is also important to ask permission first before entering a cemetery to do any kind of research. It is not only the courteous thing to do, it is prudent. Section 306.13 of Minnesota Statutes provides that cemetery employees may be entitled to police powers:

The trustees of any cemetery association may appoint such superintendents, security guards, gardeners, and agents as they may deem advisable, and, upon taking and subscribing an oath similar to that required from constables, every such appointee shall have all the rights and powers of a police officer within and adjacent to the cemetery grounds.

Continued on page 3

## Kandiyohi County Symbol

Continued from page 1

This fish will soon have a place of honor in the KCHS museum, interpreting the history of the county that carries its name. The photograph was taken shortly after the fish was caught in Foot Lake, December 21, 1995.



being prepared by Greg Johnson of Mid-State Taxidermy in Spicer. Fishery biologists from the Department of Natural Resources area office are assisting us in aging the fish. If everything works out as planned, we should have a buffalo fish on exhibit soon. [Editor’s note: Since this article was first written, the mounted fish has been put on display. An exhibit about buffalo fish is under construction, and is expected to open within the next few months.]



## Cemetery Research

*Continued from page 2*



Research in cemeteries includes the study of grave markers and tombstones. (The former is a general term for the objects that mark a burial site that is below the surface of the ground, which may or may not be made of stone. “Tombstones,” strictly speaking, refer to above-the-ground burial places, where bodies are entombed. \*) Experts advise paying attention to the content, style, and design of the inscriptions, the material used, and the general orientation of the marker relative to its surroundings.

You will find a useful general presentation of the factors that one should consider in Veronica Taylor’s “Caring for Your Local Cemetery,” Number 9, 1988, in the Illinois Preservation Series, published by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. (Old State Capitol, Springfield, IL 62701) She discusses how to plot the physical features of a cemetery, interpreting the type of stone used for the grave markers, types of

discusses the historical context for research in cemeteries, how to develop a comprehensive conservation plan, and technical aspects of monumental stone. He presents several illustrative case studies, and offers “Five Commandments of Cemetery Conservation.” Briefly stated, these are:

1. Adopt a Minimum Intervention Approach. That is, “Less is always more.” Resist the urge to “improve” the site; tidying up is not conservation. “Do not rearrange markers. Do not recarve inscriptions.”

2. Ensure new solutions do not introduce new problems. This can arise, for example, in resetting stones on new, more solid foundations, which is an especially tricky business, calling for expert assistance.

3. Invest in maintenance. “A conscientiously applied maintenance program is the best

insurance available against future budget demands on the community.”

4. Invest in planning and documentation. “Stay away from ad hoc repair.” That is, individual acts of repair should be done within a comprehensive plan.

5. Invest in education. Secure support by engaging community members. For example, keep them informed about the project through workshops on the various key issues.

SHPD, Minnesota Historical Society



*The gateway to the cemetery is on the former site of the Pleasant View Church (187–1955) in Rock County.*

weathering, techniques of repairing and maintenance, and even how to promote a cemetery conservation project.

For a more thorough, more technical treatment of these issues, see A. K. Zielinski, *Conservation of Cemeteries: The Treatment, Repair and Maintenance of Cemetery Objects and Their Environment*, a Special Publication of Roberts Seymour & Associates Ltd.; Toronto: RestorTech Press, 1988. Zielinski

\* This distinction is from Loren H. Horton’s pamphlet, “Cemeteries: Research Tools for the Past,” No. 2 in “The Idea Series, Practical Guides for the Historian.” (Iowa City: DCL, 1989)

### Tips for gathering information

When *copying* the inscription on a grave marker, copy it exactly, in every regard, including errors. *Rubbings* capture the entire inscription, are fun to do, and can become works of art in their own right. They can be difficult to do correctly and without damaging fragile markers. For obtaining information from the marker, *photography* is probably the best way. Mary-ellen Jones, of the Manuscripts Division of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, wrote “Photographing Tombstones: equipment and techniques,” AASLH Technical Leaflet #92, in 1977. Though many of its suggestions for particular kinds of equipment are now out of date, the leaflet addresses basic principles and questions of methodology in useful ways.



# Cemetery Research

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The booklet, "Tracing Your Ancestors," from the MHS Reference Library, gives interesting specific techniques for cemetery research.

When checking gravestones in a small cemetery, you will notice that the graves are laid out in rows, with an occasional aisle. If you want to be certain you check each stone, follow this procedure:

1. Determine which way the aisles run, and how it will be easiest to check the cemetery.
2. Take four sharpened sticks with bright ribbons attached, and lay out the markers shown on the map: A and B.
3. When you have examined the stones within the area marked by sticks A and B, move sticks A to positions C, and continue until the entire cemetery is checked.
4. Draw a rough map of the cemetery, and put numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.) showing the locations of gravestones you recorded. Number the inscriptions to correspond with the map.

1986, Chapter 307, "Private Cemeteries." In particular, see section 307.8, "Damages, Illegal Molestation of Human Remains; Burials; Cemeteries; Penalty." Subdivision 1 of that section is explicit and comprehensive:

It is a declaration and statement of legislative intent that all human burials and human skeletal remains shall be accorded equal treatment and respect for human dignity without reference to their ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds, or religious affiliations. The provisions of this section shall apply to all human burials or human skeletal remains found on or in all public or private lands or waters in Minnesota."

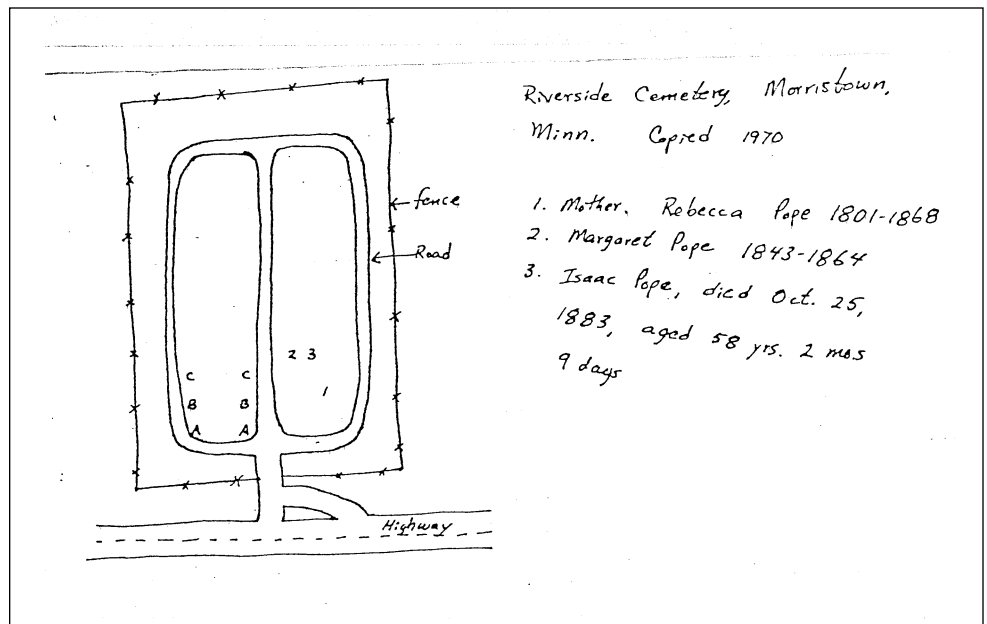
The remaining nine subdivisions spell out penalties, conditions, accountability, staffing and organization of enforcement. Basically, it is a felony to willfully disturb a burial ground. The State Archaeologist's office can provide further information on these matters.

## Human remains

In the course of studying or conserving a cemetery, human remains may be involved. The State Archaeologist's Office (SAO) and the Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) have devised explicit procedures for handling accidental uncover of human remains.

These issues are also covered in state law, specifically in *Minnesota Statutes*

*This is a copy of a chart made during actual cemetery research in Morristown, Minnesota, in 1970.*



Minnesota Historical Society

## For further reading:

National Register Bulletin #41  
 Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering  
 Cemeteries and Burial Sites  
 U.S. Department of the Interior  
 National Park Service  
 Cultural Resources

American Institute for Conservation  
 1400 16th St., NW, Suite 340  
 Washington, D.C. 20036  
 (202) 232-6636

Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS)  
 30 Elm Street  
 Worcester, MA 01609  
 (508) 831-7753

Schlereth, Thomas J.  
*Material Culture Studies in America*  
 Nashville: American Association for State and Local  
 History

Strangstad, Lynnette  
*A Graveyard Preservation Primer*  
 Nashville: American Association for State and Local  
 History, 1988



## Preservation Decision Time: State Review Board Meets

At its meeting on Nov. 21, the State Review Board will consider the nominations of five historic properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The five are:

- Virginia Commercial Historic District:  
*Virginia, St. Louis County*
- John Harris Hearing Grammar and High School and the John A. Johnson Grammar School: *Aurora, St. Louis County*
- Ann Bickle House (pictured here):  
*Glenwood, Pope County*
- Owatonna City and Fireman's Hall: *Owatonna, Steele County*
- Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church: *Minneapolis, Hennepin County*



SHPO, Minnesota Historical Society

*Ann Jones Bickle lived in this house from 1936 until her death in 1984 at the age of 98. Born in Wales, she emigrated to Canada in 1904 and moved to Minneapolis in 1910. She married her second husband, Frank Bickle, in 1936, and moved with him to this house, which he had commissioned in 1913. Ann was tireless in her work with social, cultural, and civic organizations, in particular with the Glenwood and Minnesota Hospital Auxiliaries and as director of Women's Services in Civilian Defense in Pope County during World War II. The house has been nominated under Criterion B of the National Register regulations, which provides for the listing of properties that are associated with the life of a historically significant person.*

## Still Time to Register for the 1996 MHO Annual Meeting

It's not too late to send in your reservation for the 1996 annual meeting of Minnesota Historical Organizations (MHO) at the Minnesota History Center on Friday, Nov. 10. Edward T. Linenthal, authority on the sometimes troubled relationship between scholarly interpretations and the public, will give the keynote address at 10 a.m.

Just before lunch, a prize-winning History Day performance about Victor Power, Hibbing's famous mayor, will be given by Johnathan Bluhm, a student from St. Paul's Christ's Household of Faith high school.

After lunch a roundtable discussion, "History and the 21st Century," will be led by Terry Davis, director of the American Association for State and Local History. The fee of \$25 includes lunch and a tour of historic sites in downtown St. Paul. Call (612) 296-5434 for information and to register.

[**Editor's note:** The *Interpreter* and *Preservation Planner* editorial staffs will attend the meeting and will be very glad to hear your ideas for making the two publications more useful.]

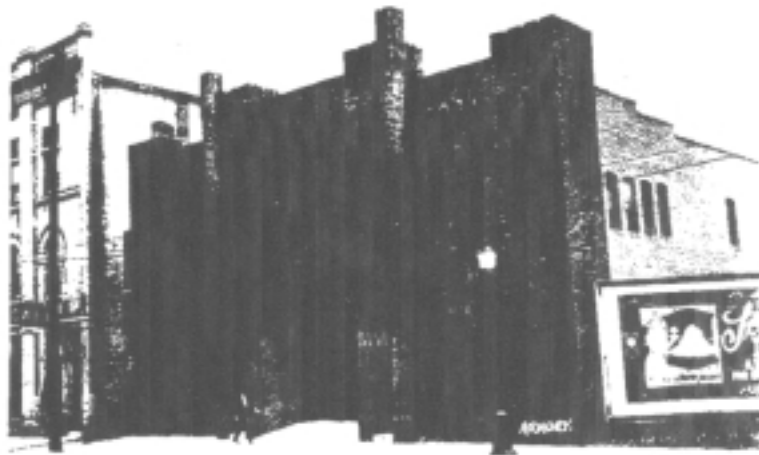


## Winona Capital Campaign Successful

The Winona County Historical Society has exceeded its goal of \$650,000 for its *History for Tomorrow* campaign. The funds received included a \$50,000 challenge grant from the Elizabeth Callender King Foundation and a \$6,000 grant for accessibility work from the Minnesota Historical Society. A \$9,500 grant from the Winona Foundation put the society over the top. More than 700 individuals, businesses, foundations, and organizations made gifts and pledges to the campaign, and more than 80 volunteers worked on it in various ways.

The campaign, begun in December 1994, was an ambitious, multi-purpose project, the first capital campaign in the society's 60-year history. Its original objectives were the following:

- Regional History Education: establish a history education specialist position and a history education center in the Armory Museum;
- Archives Expansion: double the size of the existing library/archive area;
- Accessibility: provide a four-stop elevator and structural modifications at the Armory Museum, e.g., to the entrance ramp;
- Arches Museum: complete renovation of heating, air conditioning, lighting, and storage;
- Museum Maintenance and Improvement—Armory Museum and Bunnell House: structural, storage, and facilities enhancement.



*Courtesy Winona County Historical Society*

Some renovation work began last fall at the Arches Museum. Museum Educator Trudy Balcom began work in April, and the major renovation work at the main museum began in June and will continue until next summer.

For information about WCHS's *History for Tomorrow* campaign and programs, contact Mark Peterson, executive director, at (507) 454-2723; fax (507) 454-0006; e-mail: [wchs@luminet.net](mailto:wchs@luminet.net) (no period after net).

*The Winona National Guard Armory, circa 1915. Since the early 1970s, the Armory has served as the main museum for the Winona County Historical Society and Archives.*



## Free 1930s Printing Artifact from Chippewa

The Chippewa County Historical Society in Montevideo has decided to deaccession the linotype machine pictured here, and is offering it to another museum at no charge. That is, you would not have to pay for the machine, but you would have to make your own arrangements to load and transport it home. The machine was manufactured sometime in the 1930s by Mergenthaler Linotype Co. of New York, which advertised itself as "Originators and Improvers of the Linotype." A slug feeder



*Courtesy Chippewa County Historical Society*

attached to the machine was made by the Mononelt Co. in Minneapolis. The machine is probably no longer able to produce type, but it makes a great display piece. If you wish additional information, contact June Lynne, executive director, at (320) 269-7636.



## Professional Ethics Standards in Historical Organizations

The September 1996 issue of *Dispatch*, the newsletter of the American Association of State and Local History, carries a discussion and presentation of the AASLH Statement of Professional Ethics. David Crosson, executive director of the Prairie Avenue House Museum in Chicago, served as chair and vice-chair of the AASLH Standards, Tenure and Ethics Committee during the course of writing the standards, which were adopted by the AASLH Council in September 1992. He contributed “A Perspective” in this issue.

He states, first, that “The AASLH Statement of Professional Ethics was not intended to define a profession, but to identify ethical parameters, or conditions of professionalism, for historical organizations and the variety of individuals and professions that they employ.” He goes on to describe the steps in the four-year-long process of preparing the Statement and discusses some issues that remain in putting it into practice.

Crosson offers four main lessons that have been learned over the past four years.

- Institutional size and sophistication are unrelated to the ability or willingness of an institution to act ethically.
- Ethical standards should not be the subject of crisis management.
- Undoubtedly there is need for timely review and revision of the AASLH ethics statement. We should be careful, however, first to address the operating assumptions before we change the statement in response to current but passing situations.
- Whether we like it or not, the courts will be the final arbiters of whether or not we are acting in the public interest.

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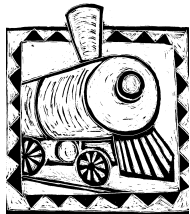
The Statement of Professional Ethics covers the categories listed below; the lead sentence(s) follow in parentheses.

- Collections (“Historical collections, including structures, are the bedrock upon which the practice of history rests.”)
- Interpretation (“Historical interpretation may be presented in a variety of formats.”)
- Management (“The primary responsibility for governance, institutional policies, financial stability, and legal accountability of a historical organization rests with the governing authority. Operational responsibility rests with the staff.”)
- Revenue Producing Activities (“Activities that involve the marketing and sale of products, programs, services, and facilities are acceptable ways to produce support revenues and increase public awareness of and participating in historical activities.”)
- Conflict of Interest (“Historical organizations and agencies exist to serve the public interest and must always act in such a way as to maintain public confidence and trust.”)
- Social Responsibility (“All members of the Association shall ensure actively that the variety of American cultural experiences in all programmatic and operational activities is represented accurately.”)
- Intellectual Freedom (“Historical scholarship and interpretation demand intellectual freedom, with no qualifications. Members shall refrain from any activity that willfully restricts or discredits free and open exploration and interpretation of the human experience.”)





## New Architectural History Award



The Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians has initiated an award in the memory of the late David Stanley Gebhard, author of more than 50 books and undoubtedly the state's most eminent architectural historian. The award will be presented to the author of a book or article that contributes significantly to a wider and more thorough understanding of Minnesota architecture.

To receive the award, a publication must exemplify David Gebhard's commitment to writing that is both scholarly and accessible. To be eligible for the award, a publication must have been published in 1995 or 1996.

The award will be presented at the chapter's annual meeting in xxx on yyy. The recipient will be given a framed certificate and one-year paid

memberships in the Minnesota Chapter and the national Society of Architectural Historians.

Send letters of nomination to Marilyn Chiat, 3812 Drew Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55410, with a copy of the nominee's publication. Books will be returned to senders following evaluation, but articles will not be returned. Nominations must be postmarked not later than Dec. 31, 1996.

Direct your questions to Richard L. Kronick, MNSAH president, at (612) 825-1605; fax (612) 825-4846; e-mail: Kroni002@gold.tc.umn.edu (no period after edu).

(Tim Glines, Minnesota Historical Society)

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