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Developing an Exhibit at the Wright County Historical Society

In the Autumn 1999 issue of the Wright County Historical Society (WCHS) newsletter, Heritage Herald, Maureen Galvin, WCHS curator/coordinator, described the process of putting together a recent WCHS exhibit. The exhibit, titled Instruments of Torture: A Look at the Eclectic Collections of the Wright County Historical Society, is a whimsical display of items representing various aspects of the social history of the area. The following is from her description, which should be useful to readers whose work involves researching and mounting exhibits.

A few committee meetings had generated objects and ideas for the exhibit, and an intern then researched and wrote the text for the labels. Over several more committee meetings, the labels were edited at least six times and then declared ready. Staff then decided how to use four connecting themes to divide the artifacts: fashion, health, play and work. New walls for backdrops were made, and theme colors were chosen, using a box of 64 Crayola crayons as a guide. The previous exhibit was then dismantled and its objects put back into storage or returned to the people who had loaned them.

Matching paint was purchased and the new exhibit walls, pedestals, platforms and railings were installed and painted. Then came a month of waiting for the paint to offgas before artifacts could be set in



Courtesy Wright County Historical Society

Part of the "Health" section of the Instruments of Torture exhibit at the Wright County Historical Society.

the area. In the meantime, staff ordered the Plexiglas tops for the pedestals, found and framed photographs, produced a majority of the labels, and figured out the spaces where other artifacts and labels should be placed.

Students from the local vocational high school helped design the lettering for the title panel and the four theme words as part of a school project. The students brought in a choice of fonts that they thought fit each theme, and also supplied color samples for the vinyl. The students and Ms. Galvin choose the colors to match the paint on the wall of each theme section. WCHS paid only for the cost of the vinyl.

Staff then had to write the identification label for each of the artifacts and objects within the exhibit. One artifact was found to be broken and had to be taken to a conservation lab to be repaired. Once the painted exhibit mounts and platforms were stable, objects were placed in the exhibit area, labels were mounted onto the railings or on the walls, artwork was completed, production items put away and the whole area vacuumed. Though lacking a few large labels and some object identification labels, the exhibit opened to the public as scheduled, on Oct. 4.

For further information, contact WCHS, 2001 Hwy. 25 North, Buffalo, MN 55313; 612/682-7323; or e-mail at wchsmg@visi.com.



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American Historical Association Annual Meeting in January

The 114th annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) will be held next Jan. 6-9 in Chicago at the Sheraton Chicago and Chicago Marriott Downtown hotels. The Hyatt Regency Chicago and the Hotel Inter-Continental Chicago are also offering special rates for conference attendees. Reservations must be made on the form to be found in the September issue of the AHA newsletter, *Perspectives*. Call 1-800-424-5248 for information, but reservations must be made through One-Stop Chicago; fax at 1-800-521-6017. Pre-registration closes Dec. 3, and housing reservations close Dec. 9.



American Association of Museums Publishes Kit to Help Museums Communicate with the Media and Policy Makers

The graphic to the right is one of the "Info-graphics" from the new AAM communications kit. Others are "Free Museum Admissions," "When did you last visit a museum?" and "Collecting and Preserving." The info-graphics are in color as well as black and white.

In a letter to members of the American Association of Museums (AAM) in June, AAM director Richard West stated, "Things are going well now for many museums. Perhaps yours is among them. Museum attendance is up overall, many local economies are doing well, and there's a museum building boom going on. In part, that is because your museum and others have communicated well with the general public about what we do. **But some of the most important people to your future don't understand the value of what you are doing.**"

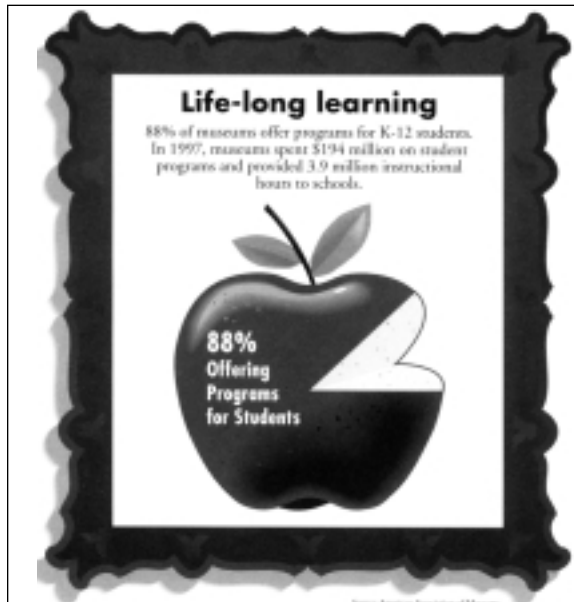
To help museums communicate more effectively with policy makers and the media, the AAM developed a kit of suggestions, guidelines and statistics that can be customized by

museums of all sizes. Titled *America's Museums: Building Community*, the kit is available as a three-

ring binder. The seven chapters include suggestions for working with the public, media and policy makers at local, regional and national levels; and collections of salient facts about the positive contributions museums make to society. Also included are eye-catching "Info-graphics" that can be used as camera-ready advertisements in newsletters, newspapers and posters, etc.

AAM member museums should have received a copy of the kit in September, but copies can be purchased for \$7. Contact AAM, Attn: Nichole, 1575 Eye St., N.W.,

Suite 400, Washington, D.C., 20005; call 202/289-1818, or fax 202/289-6578.



CAP Announces 1999 Grants and Deadlines for 2000 Grants

The Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) recently announced that it awarded 1999 grants to the Hennepin History Museum in Minneapolis and the Renville County Historical Society in Morton. Nationwide, 1999 CAP grants were awarded to 156 museums in 43 states and Puerto Rico; in its nine years of operation, CAP has awarded grants to 1,551 museums.

CAP is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency, and administered by Heritage Preservation. CAP grants support a general and comprehensive survey of conservation policies and practices for small- and medium-sized museums. Professional conservators visit the sites to

identify conservation priorities and write assessment reports that help the museums identify specific needs, develop long-range plans, raise funds, and educate board and staff members about collections care.

The deadline for applications for 2000 grants is **Dec. 1, 1999**. To receive an application, contact Kyra Skvir right away at the Conservation Assessment Program, Heritage Preservation; 1730 K Street, N.W., Suite 566; Washington, D.C. 20006-3836. Telephone: 202/634-1422, ext 236; fax: 202/634-1435; e-mail: kskvir@heritagepreservation.org. You may also download the application from Heritage Preservation's website: www.heritagepreservation.org/programs/capover.htm.



THE ACADEMIC REVIVAL STYLES

by Charles Nelson
Historical Architect, Minnesota Historical Society

NOTE: Words marked with an asterisk () are discussed briefly in the glossary on p. 6.*

According to many historians, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 heralded the end of the Victorian era. Held in Chicago, the Exposition brought together the talents of architects from across the country to create the "White City," hundreds of acres of exposition halls, pavilions, sculpture gardens and promenades—all linked by a man-made canal system. As was the case with the Centennial Exposition 17 years earlier, the Columbian Exposition's promoters regarded it as an event that would popularize the "cutting edge" of taste and design. When the scale, expense and impact of the Columbian Exposition are considered in comparison with previous—as well as later—expositions or fairs, it may be considered to have had the greatest impact on society of all the others up to the present day. (See sidebar.)

The architectural styles that rose to popularity as a result of the Columbian Exposition are described briefly below.

- The Neo-Classic Revival style, which was based upon the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome.
- The Medieval Revival style harkened back to the English and Norman architecture of the Pre-Renaissance period (1100-1300).
- The Renaissance Revival style drew inspiration from Italian architecture of the Renaissance period (1400-1600).
- The Colonial/Georgian Revival looked to early American buildings of the 1600s and early 1700s.
- The American Foursquare style was based on farmhouse architecture of the Midwest.
- The roots of the Spanish Colonial Revival style were in the Spanish colonial period of the 1700s and early 1800s.

The theme of the Exposition originated in the École Des Beaux Arts in Paris, the world's leading school of architecture. The École's curriculum was founded upon the art and architecture of Classical Greece and Rome and of the Renaissance in Italy and Europe. The École mandated "recording from life"

as a necessary part of each student's education, and aspiring architects ventured throughout Europe and Britain to fill sketch books with details from antiquity. With the aid of modern technology and materials, these details were translated into contemporary building designs. Hence, the resulting styles came to be called "Academic" Revivals. They remained popular through the 1930s until World War II.

Neo-Classic Revival

The Neo-Classic Revival style is noted for its monumental scale, colonnaded porticoes and classical ornament, used in public buildings and residences alike. The influence of the Beaux Arts movement is

A Few Facts about the Columbian Exposition of 1893

The event ultimately cost more than \$28 million, and during its six-month life span—from May 1 to Oct. 30, 1893—it attracted more than 27 million visitors. It occupied 633 acres in Jackson Park on south Chicago's lakefront, where the Museum of Science and Industry now stands. It was a model for many succeeding expositions and fairs, and gave us the first Ferris Wheel, a 263-foot-high, \$300,000 marvel with 36 cars, each of which could carry 60 passengers. (Source: *The Vanishing City, A Photographic Encyclopedia of the World's Columbian Exposition*. Chicago, Laird & Lee Publishers, 1893.)



The Statue of the Republic looks down the Court of Honor lagoon toward the exposition's administration building. Lake Michigan lies beyond the administration building.

This is the fourth in a series of five Tech Talk articles on Minnesota's architectural styles. The next one is scheduled for the Jan. 2000 issue of *The Interpreter*.

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.



Continued from p. 3

evident in the use of sculpture as an integral element in the building design. Buildings in this style are usually rectangular in plan; if wings are used, they are most often symmetrically positioned to accent the central building mass. Symmetry in design of the building facade and its components is critical. When the classical orders are used, preference is given to the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders, and they often reach a height of two or more stories.

The portico roofs are usually gabled and have prominent pediments or cornices adorned with dentils or modillions*. (See the glossary on p. 6.) In more elaborate examples, pediments are embellished with sculptural elements such as figures, garlands and swags*, or medallions. Neo-Classic public buildings are usually of masonry construction, veneered with a polished or bush-hammered stone. (Rusticated surfaces are not used).

The most elaborate of the Neo-Classic Revival style buildings are given the distinction of being labeled Beaux Arts Classic. Ornamentation is extremely important and often includes a raised

portico with a formal entry, monumental staircases, paired columns, domes, sculptural finials* or acroteria*, balustrades, garlands and swags, and statuary. Corners are accentuated by slightly projecting rectangular stones called quoins.

Semi-circular forms are introduced in window and door openings and loggias with arcades and vaulted ceilings. Minnesota's current State Capitol, begun in 1895, is a premier example of Beaux Arts Classicism.

Renaissance Revival

Incorporating many of the characteristics of the Neo-Classical style is the Renaissance Revival, inspired by the Italian Renaissance palazzo. Although the style is usually associated with large-scale buildings such as libraries, city halls, hotels, offices and museums, many wealthy individuals chose the style for their urban "palaces." The plan and massing of Renaissance Revival buildings are usually rectangular. Facades are arranged symmetrically, and



The George Peavey residence, 2210 Park Avenue in Minneapolis, was built in 1903. It is an example of the Renaissance Revival style of architecture.

the roof is either flat or a low hip, concealed by a balustrade or parapet. An elaborate bracketed cornice defines the transition between the facade and roof. Ornamental treatments include classical columns and pilasters, arched windows and entries, corner quoins, prominent window surrounds, and urn-shaped balusters. They are usually constructed of masonry with facades sheathed in brick, stone or stucco, or combinations thereof.

Medieval Revival

The Medieval Revival drew its inspiration from the architecture of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and from northern Europe. As was the case with the academic styles, elements from various eras or building types were often merged within a single building. Recognizing this, architectural historian Marcus Whiffen labels the result "Jacobethan." These buildings are characterized by irregular plans, high-pitched roofs and a combination of brick and stucco wall surfaces. A mock half-timber detailing is often employed, most often in upper stories and gables. Roofs are prominent features, being either gabled



The Henry S. Plummer house (1917) on Quarry Hill in Rochester, Minn., is an example of the Medieval Revival style. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Above: The Cottonwood County Courthouse in Windom (1904) is an example of the Neo-Classic Revival style. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Continued from p. 4

or a combination of gables, hips and jerkins*. It is common for a roof to sweep from the uppermost gable to the first floor and to incorporate a catenary curve*. Chimneys are massive and ornamental, often incorporating patterned brick or stonework and ceramic chimney pots. Windows are either of the double-hung or casement type, and in any case, they have small panes of glass set either in wooden muntins* or lead comes*.

Colonial/Georgian Revival

The Colonial/Georgian Revival was an attempt to recognize an American, rather than European, architectural heritage. It focused on the building styles of the period from the mid-1600s through the mid-1700s, as found in New England and through Virginia and Pennsylvania. The simpler designs were called Colonial, as they were reminiscent of the earlier, clapboard structures with small windows, large chimneys and sparse ornament, that appealed to those

seeking a "rustic charm." The Georgian, on the other hand, was rather refined in proportion and its use of building materials and ornament, and conveyed a more classical inspiration and proportions.

This style, in

particular, was widely promoted in pattern books as "truly American" architecture. This building type was adaptable to a broad range of costs and lifestyles, ranging from small city lots to expansive country estates. The style was universally accepted for its ability to fit in anywhere. It remained popular for nearly 40 years, until World War II, and experienced another revival in the 1990s.

General characteristics of the style include a rectangular plan, often with wings of smaller rectangles, and a two- or three-story massing. (The wings are often lower, being one- to one-and-a-half story in height, and would function as porches or sunrooms, garages or utility areas.) Roofs may be either gabled, hipped or gambrel, most often with narrow, pedimented dormers. Windows are typically multi-pane and double-hung. In the case of the Colonial Revival buildings, the siding is usually wooden clapboard or shingles, whereas the Georgian Revival employs brick or a combination of brick and

wood. The principal facades are symmetrically arranged into an odd number of bays (three, five, seven, etc.); emphasis is placed on a formal central entry that may be embellished with a fanlight transom and sidelights. Ornamental treatments, when used, include small porticoes, shutters, Palladian windows*, eave brackets or modillions, and classical columns and pilasters. The ornament is typically mass-produced and available from millwork catalogues.

American Foursquare

A building type from this era that can be classified under several styles, according to the use of ornament, is the American Foursquare, or "Cornbelt Cube." It is typically square in plan, two stories in height, and has a prominent dormered hip roof and a full front porch. The facade arrangement is not necessarily symmetrical, but the overall composition is one of order. When classical columns are employed on the porch and on corner pilasters, the Foursquare becomes Neo-Classic; when "Gothic"-inspired bargeboards are found on dormers and polygonal columns with foliate capitals are used on porches, the Foursquare becomes Medieval Revival; and when a



Photo (of drawing) by Charles Nelson

Above: A drawing of the O.H. Freeman residence in Minneapolis (1888), designed by Harry W. Jones, prominent Minnesota architect. It is an example of the Colonial/Georgian Revival style; note the Palladian window in the center of the second floor.



Photo (of catalog cut) by Charles Nelson

An example of the Foursquare style, this house was advertised as "Gordon-Van Tine Home No. 506," probably in that company's 1910 catalog. At the top, the catalog promises "Guaranteed Prices-No Extras."

Palladian window graces the facade, the Foursquare becomes Georgian Revival. In its simplest form, it is, however, a Foursquare.

Spanish Colonial Revival (or "Hollywood Modern")

While the Colonial/Georgian Revival rose to great popularity in the East and Midwest, a contemporary revival of historic American architecture germinated in the Southwest. It found its roots in the adobe buildings of the Spanish Colonial



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period of the 1700s and early 1800s. Even when translated into stucco-clad buildings with flat or low-hipped tile roofs, the Spanish Colonial Revival architecture seemed out of place in the harsh northern climate of Minnesota, and as such, found only limited popularity. The rise of the style was contemporaneous with the golden age of Hollywood and was preferred by the wealthy jet set of the time, so the style was nicknamed “Hollywood Modern.”

Its characteristics include irregular plans, one or two stories capped with low flat or hipped roofs, and construction of concrete or wood sheathed with stucco to resemble adobe. Its ornamentation consisted of terra cotta door and window surrounds made to resemble carved stone, projecting



SHPPO file photo

St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church in Morgan Park, Duluth (1918), is an example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

beams and rafters called “vigas,” wrought-iron grillwork, flat or arched recessed openings, and red tile roofs. Few full-blown examples of the Spanish Colonial style exist in Minnesota, though a number of buildings constructed during the late 1920s incorporate elements of Southwestern inspiration.

Academic Revival Materials

Due to the relatively recent popularity of the Academic Revival styles, materials and treatments are familiar to many in the building trades. Information on construction and decoration is readily available at libraries, bookstores and newsstands. Reproduction parts ranging from classical columns to leaded casement windows to cast stone fireplace mantles are again on the market, manufactured by companies across the country. Suppliers, as well as craftspeople, can easily be found on the Internet.

Since much of the design and ornament in Academic Revival styles is integral, the survival rate of representative buildings is high. Elements such as

balustrades, column capitals and distinctive roof treatments are most vulnerable to weathering and deterioration, but because materials of high quality were most often used in their manufacture, their lifespan can be extended indefinitely with a program of periodic maintenance. When new replacement elements are necessary, the key to success is to acquire identical substitutes for the originals and to take sufficient time in preparation and installation. Preparation may require back-priming* or moisture-proofing; replacement of flashings, crowns and coves; and also modern technology repairs, such as epoxy consolidation of rotted window stiles or column cases. Or it may require a sympathetic introduction of energy conservation measures such as weather-stripping, insulation or storm/screen units to preserve and maintain historic window sashes.

As in any project, it is imperative to understand the building before attempting to work on it. From that point on, it's Academic.

Brief Glossary

- **Acroteria:** projecting bases at the tops and ends of pediments, and the statues or ornaments that stand on top of them.
- **Back-priming:** painting the reverse side of a board or element before the board is applied to an exterior wall.
- **Comes:** strips used in leaded glass windows to support individual pieces of glass.
- **Catenary curve:** the curve made by a string hanging between two points.
- **Finial:** an ornament at the top of a gable, pinnacle, etc.
- **Garlands and swags:** festoons; carved ornaments in the form of garlands or flowers, tied at the ends with ribbons and suspended at both ends.
- **Jerkin:** the end of a roof that incorporates the forms of gable and hip; also called a “clipped gable.”
- **Modillions:** small scroll-like brackets that support the upper part of the cornice of a column.
- **Muntin:** the vertical, central part of doors, panels, etc, which butts into the horizontal parts at the top and bottom of the door.
- **Palladian:** derived from the work of Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), called the first great professional architect, who aimed to recapture the splendor of antiquity, particularly Roman. A palladian window is a three-part window, the center section of which is taller than the flanking side units. See the picture of the Freeman house, p. 5.

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



Mark Your Calendars for the Next AASLH Awards Program

The American Association for State and Local History conducts an Annual Awards Program to establish and encourage standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state, provincial, and local history throughout North America. By publicly recognizing excellent achievements, the Association strives to increase awareness of the possibilities for small and large organizations, institutions and programs.

Recent award recipients from Minnesota include: William C. Melton for the restoration of the Veblen farmstead; the Minnesota Lake Area Society and David Morano for the "Paper Stories: Photographs and Words from Minnesota Lake" project; and the Minnesota Historical Society for the Mille Lacs Indian Museum.

All nominations must be submitted to a designated state chairperson. Minnesota's state chair is Mandy Skypala of the Minnesota Historical Society. The deadline for submission for the 2000 program is March 1.

Please contact Mandy with possible ideas for nominations or further information about the award criteria and nomination process. She can be contacted by phone at 651/296-5478 or by e-mail at mandy.skypala@mnhs.org.



Winners Announced in Paul Bunyon Genealogical Tall Tales Contest

In the Spring 1999 issue of *Minnesota Genealogist*, the Minnesota Genealogical Society (MGS) named the two winners of the annual Paul Bunyon Tall Tales Writing Contest. The top honor was awarded to "The Case of Probate Before Death!" by Irene Ott of Vadnais Heights, Minn., and the second-place Babe the Blue Ox Award of Merit was awarded to Virginia Quayle of Eau Claire, Wis., for "Scalawags or Advocates for Freedom."

Ott's essay concerned her research into the Horning branch of her family. Her work took an unusual turn because of William Henry Horning, who disappeared from Albert Lea around 1865. He was gone long enough to be declared legally dead and for his estate to be considered under probate law, but he was found alive in a California hospital in 1899. It was the "most bizarre family story" that Ott found in more than 12 years of researching 11 generations of this family line.

Quayle's essay concerned Samuel Gorton, a charismatic man who supported religious freedom for men and women in the early 1600s. Gorton influenced two different ancestral lines of her family through two followers, Randall Holden and Richard Carder, who, along with Gorton, supported Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams and were banished from Massachusetts in 1638.

For more information about the contest and the MGS, call 612/595-9347. Its offices are located at 5768 Olson Memorial Highway, Golden Valley, MN 55422-5014.

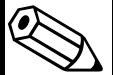
Minnesota Fishing Museum One Year Old, Has New Home and New National Spokesman

The Minnesota Fishing Museum (MFM) opened its doors in June 1998 in the historic Cass Gilbert Depot in Little Falls. The quantity of donations soon overwhelmed the storage space in the depot, so a new location was sought. In April 1999 the MFM moved into the former Bingo Den building, 304 W. Broadway in Little Falls, which provides 7,000 square feet of space.

Babe Winkelman of Brainerd, internationally known professional fisherman and educator, agreed to be the national spokesman for MFM. He was particularly impressed with the museum's educational program, noting, "how critical it is to provide a fishing and aquatic education program for our youth today to guarantee that they will become the environmental and outdoor stewards of tomorrow."

For more information, write the museum at P.O. Box 745, Little Falls, MN 56345, or call 320/616-2011; e-mail, mnfm@fallsnet.com. Or, visit the museum's web site, www.fallsnet.com/~mnfm.





Ground Broken for New Museum at St. Benedict's Monastery



The Sisters of the Order of St. Benedict (OSB) at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph held a ground-breaking ceremony on Sept. 16 for new museum space and a gift shop. The new building, to be called the Monastic Art and Heritage Center, will house the Monastic Heritage Museum.

The center will be a one-story building with approximately 9,600 square feet of space, modeled on a "village" or "pod" concept. There will be two new areas for added exhibit and storage space for the Monastic Heritage Museum, and a third area for a gift shop with a gallery. The center is expected to be open to the public by late summer or early fall, 2000.



Dolores Super, OSB, director of community programs for St. Benedict's Monastery, speaks at the groundbreaking ceremony on Sept. 16.

Photo Courtesy St. Benedict's Monastery

The mission of the museum is to collect, preserve and exhibit objects that relate specifically to the history of American Benedictine women. The first group of sisters traveled from Eichstatt, Germany, to Erie, Pa., and in 1857 continued on to St. Cloud. They settled in St. Joseph, then known as Clinton, Minn., in 1863.

For further information, contact Ruth Nierengarten, OSB, director of the Monastic Heritage Museum, at 320/363-7100, fax 320/363-7130, or visit the Monastery's

web site at www.csbsju.edu/osb.sisters.

The Monastery is located at 104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN 56374-0220.

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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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