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# THE MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

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## INSIDE

Art history in Mankato. . . . . 2  
Immigration history materials . . . 5  
New quilting exhibit. . . . . 6

## History Day: Program and Potential

*When students use the facilities and resources of county and local historical organizations to do research for their History Day projects, the results are mutually beneficial. The program is a natural bridge between young people and historical organizations, and it is growing in popularity: In 1996, 17,000 students in grades 6–12 from throughout the state participated. To help spread the word about History Day, particularly in Greater Minnesota, we asked Nina Clark to write a brief account of the program. As assistant coordinator for outreach programs, Nina works on all phases of the program with Tim Hoogland, State History Day Coordinator.*

Ask many people about their school experience with history, and the word “boring” comes up all too often. But listen to how Laura Bernard, a sixth grader, described her study of history: “I got to see actual artifacts and it was more hands-on than just reading it out of a book. It was fun to go in depth instead of just covering the basics. It is also neat to look for connections in history.”

Laura and fellow sixth-grader Amanda Schmitzer from Cedar Creek Community School in Anoka County designed and built an exhibit about Andrew J. Volstead (a Minnesotan) and his advocacy of prohibition. They participated in the National History Day program all the way to the finals in Washington, D.C., in June, where they won second place in their division. The two students did extensive research at the Goodhue and Yellow Medicine County Historical Societies. By using these resources and others, these young people were transformed into true historians. Their discovery of history as something beyond textbooks has been shared by hundreds of History Day kids.

A different theme is selected every year. In 1996, the theme was “Taking a Stand in History,” and in 1997 it is “Triumph and Tragedy in History.” Students choose a topic based on the theme and use original

Photo by Dennis Bluhm; courtesy, Minnesota Historical Society



*Jonathan Bluhm of Christ’s Household of Faith high school is shown here as Victor Power in his History Day performance. He also plays two other characters in his presentation: Joe Kerr, an Irish newspaperman, and Iver Lind, a Swede, who reminisces about Power.*

## State Review Board Schedule

The 14-member State Review Board, which reviews National Register nominations and appeals and advises the State Historic Preservation Officer, has scheduled its next five regular meetings for the following Thursdays:

- Nov. 21, 1996
- March 20, 1997
- May 8, 1997
- Sept. 18, 1997
- Nov. 20, 1997

All meetings begin at 7 p.m. and are held in the Cargill Commons room, MacMillan Education Center, 2nd level, Minnesota History Center. Before you leave for a meeting, please call the State Historic Preservation Office (612) 296-5434 in case the schedule should change unexpectedly.

and creative approaches to presentation. They may work as individuals, or collaborate in groups of up to five students. An entry may take the form of an exhibit, a performance, a media presentation, or a historical essay. Students can progress through successive levels of competition: from school, district, state, and all the way to the annual national contest. Many students return year after year, encouraged by the attention given their work, determined to improve upon past efforts.



# 100 Years of Art History in Mankato

The Mankato Art History Club celebrated its centennial on Oct. 5, 1996. Inella Burns did some research in the club's records and wrote about it in the summer issue of *the Blue Earth Historian*, the newsletter of the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

Mrs. L. P. ("Lizzie") Hunt was, evidently, the prime mover of the club, which began with a meeting of five women at her house on Oct. 5, 1896. She led the effort to urge school children to send pennies for the famous Hiawatha statue at Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis, and was the first club member to hold the constitutionally designated office of art critic. "Of Mayflower ancestry, a former teacher and missionary, she was a real stickler for correct pronunciation." According to club records, the office was marked by "...trouble, tears, and threatened resignations until it was legislated out."

The club planned its programs around annual themes of the art of a particular country, period, or style of art. Later, the scope of its interest broadened to include other forms of art and civic projects, such as the status of servant girls and a survey of rural schools to "determine the need for a circulating library."

Today, the club has 17 members. Ms. Burns writes, "Gone are the rigid membership and attendance rules as well as the club's affiliation with the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs, but the Mankato Art History Club continues its interest in promoting art and in contributing to worthy causes." Inella Burns, a retired high school English teacher, is a member of the Art History Club, and is currently working on a history of the club. For more information, contact the Blue Earth Historical Society, (507) 345-5566.



Mary Catherine Enochson (right) and Molly Ryan, of White Bear Lake high school, are shown in their History Day performance, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Called to Die and Killed for His Courage." The group won first place in the senior group performance category at the Minnesota History Day contest. They also performed (shown here) at the History Day Benefit on May 30, held at the Minnesota History Center, at which author David McCullough spoke.

## History Day

*Continued from page 1*

Teachers often encourage their students to connect local issues to larger historical themes. Eighth-graders Julie Halvorson and Tristen Greenslade from Chosen Valley Junior High School in Chatfield, Olmsted County, using a computer presentation, described how the New Deal enabled

interviewed residents who were acquainted with Power. From his research, he said he learned "that history is all around us, not just on national and international levels but even in our smallest levels of communities and government." Jonathan, a student at Christ's Household of Faith school in St. Paul, won fifth place at the national contest in 1996.

Educators utilize the program to introduce students to history in a new way, by emphasizing research based on primary sources. History Day rules require students to use primary sources in their research. Primary source research is a concept often new to a teacher, as well as to the students. As they step into this new territory, History Day teachers often turn to local history and eagerly seek access to resources in their area. County and local historical societies are especially useful: For students who learn "cool" things about their area's past while receiving positive, personal attention from enthusiastic reference staff, the rewards are rich.

The next state History Day will be held at the University of Minnesota on Saturday, May 3, 1997. If you would like to become involved in History Day, or would like more information about the program, including a free complete Instructor's Packet, please contact State Coordinator Tim Hoogland at (612) 297-3533, or write to History Day, Education Department, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Boulevard West, St. Paul, MN, 55102, fax (612) 282-2484.



Photo, Robert Gabrielle; courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

their home town to construct a new auditorium during a difficult time in rural Minnesota. The two could not have illustrated their topic without extensive use of local sources.

Another example: To create his dramatic portrayal of Victor Power, "the Fighting Mayor of Hibbing," junior high student Jonathan Bluhm visited the Hibbing Historical Society and



## From 107 to 20,000-plus, in only 60 Years

The Clay County Historical Society Museum is displaying the most popular artifacts in its collections in its current exhibit, *60 Years of Collecting*. The photo below shows a section of the exhibit, including two of its more famous pieces, the sofa, to the right, and the horn chair, in the center.

The sofa is of particular interest, for it came with information that would make it not only an excellent example of the Empire style of furniture, but a historically significant artifact: perhaps George

Washington sat on it in 1957.

On the other hand, a notarized statement from 1937 appears to trace the George King davenport to the Town Tavern in Tarrytown, N.Y., in pre-Revolutionary days. It was recorded along the way that Gen. George Washington visited the Town Tavern around 1777 and sat on the davenport, planning battles. Washington Irving, author of *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, was a native of Tarrytown, so he, too, may have sat on it.

But, alas, the Empire style of furniture was popular from around 1825 to 1840, and George Washington died in 1797. So it is more likely that the davenport is a valuable artifact in the collection because it is such a good example of the Empire style. And this in itself is interesting because that style used firm upholstery before springs were common in furniture design: one sat on it, not in it.

The horn chair, with its feet, sides, and back partly of buffalo horns, partly of antelope horns, came to the museum in 1955. It had been purchased from Blackfoot Indians in Montana around 1900. According to the accession card, “the mother kept it covered to protect the upholstery.”

For information about the exhibit, contact the Clay County Museum, located in the lower level of the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead; (218) 233-4604.



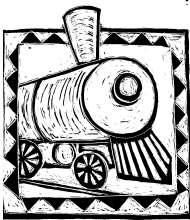
Part of the Clay County Historical Society exhibit, *60 Years of Collecting*, showing the horn chair (center) and sofa (right).

Courtesy Clay County Historical Society

Washington and Washington Irving sat on it.

The story of the two eminent sitters resulted from documents that mix in intriguing ways. On the one hand, the sofa was used in the Columbia Hotel in Barnesville, Clay County, by the George King family, owners of the hotel. The Kings donated it to the Clay

## Staff and Location Changes of Note



Irene Bender, director of the Cokato Museum for 14 years, has been appointed the director of the new Hubert H. Humphrey Museum in Waverly. She wrote a note of leavetaking to the members and patrons of the museum in the fall 1996 issue of *In the Midst Of*, newsletter of the Cokato Historical Society. Bender said that the decision was a particularly difficult one for her, “...because of you. Your membership, volunteer work, financial support, and ‘coffee treats’ have been a constant source of energy and enthusiasm to me.” And, “Each board and the many volunteers have been supportive in all our projects....I know the Cokato Museum will continue to be a vital part in the community and beyond.”

The Chisago County Historical Society will move to a new office this fall, in the renovated turn-of-the-century home of Hilda Bauer. The City of Lindstrom had purchased the property to help with parking problems. The City sold it to Marlene and Frank Messin, who donated the home to the Society, arranged for it to be moved to its new location at 13100-3rd Avenue in Lindstrom, and agreed to underwrite major costs of renovation. The new headquarters will be a new office, research center, and will feature rotating exhibits of county artifacts.



# Minnesota's 1st Hospital for the Mentally Ill Marks 130th Year

*In 1866, the stage coaches came through St. Peter, the Civil War was fresh in mind, tides of immigrants had arrived, and there had been clashes with native cultures. Towns were building, planning being done, and life was changing. A state was growing up and in that growth admitting the necessity to acknowledge some of its citizens' needs at home....In 1866 the State Legislature acted to establish the first Minnesota Hospital dealing with the mentally ill. (Colleen Kent)*

In December of 1866, the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center admitted its first patients. The hospital, then known as the St. Peter State Hospital, was housed in the (still-standing) Ewing House. The

St. Peter State Hospital Museum. The program will include a premier showing of silent films of hospital life made during the 1940s and 50s, refreshments, and horse-drawn wagon rides.

The museum is located in the original hospital building, on which construction began in 1866. It was allowed to retain "State Hospital" in its name after all such facilities were mandated to become treatment centers in 1985.

The quotation above is from Colleen Kent's article, "1866," which she wrote for the 125th Anniversary Celebration. Her accompanying article, "Programs through the Years," describes in interesting detail the remarkable scale and scope of the hospital's activities since it opened. (For instance, during one year in the 1950s, "...the Beauty Shop was turning out 1,400 monthly shampoos and 2,400 finger waves—Barber Shop 1,850 haircuts and 6,000 shaves." (Colleen Kent was a long-time staff member at the Center; she died in 1992.)

For information and copies of the articles, contact Virginia Carr, Volunteer Coordinator, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center, (507) 931-7182.



Courtesy Saint Peter State Hospital

cornerstone of the present hospital was laid in 1874. To mark these founding events, the Center's staff has planned a commemorative program for Oct. 16 in the

*Boating and picnics were frequent summer activities for clients and staff alike. This photograph was probably taken in the mid-1950s.*

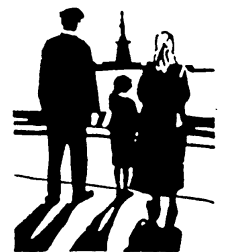
## Christmas Exhibits & Festivals Planned at Swedish Institute

Fanfares from the birch-bark horn (*Näverlur*) open the American Swedish Institute's annual Christmas Fairs, to be held on Saturday, Nov. 2, and Saturday, Nov. 16, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The seasonal Museum Christmas Shop is featured on Nov. 2, and a *Kaffebord*, loaded with baked goods, crafts and gifts for sale, is the featured attraction on Nov. 16.

Two seasonal exhibits open on Friday, Nov. 29 and run through Jan. 12, 1997. *Christmas in Scandinavia* displays holiday tables representing Christmas traditions from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The tables are set with linens, china and glassware from each country and accompanied by a decorated tree.

*Illumination of a Saint: The Legend of Santa Lucia* is an exhibit about Lucia, a 4th-century Christian martyr. Saint Lucia is a very important figure in Swedish Christmas traditions. Lucia Day is celebrated on Dec. 13 by families, schools and businesses in Sweden and in Swedish-American homes.

The American Swedish Institute is located at 2600 Park Ave. in Minneapolis. For information, call (612) 871-4907 or (612) 870-3342.





## The Performing Arts in Immigration History: Touring Exhibit and Videotape

The Immigration Research History Center's 30th Festival of Diversity, held this March, was based on the theme of the performing arts. Out of the festival have come an exhibit, *All the World's a Stage*, and a videotape, *Echoes from the Immigrant Stage*, both soon to be available for touring.

The exhibit, pictured here, incorporates photos, playbills, and other theatrical materials about nine performing arts personalities and organizations from immigrant communities. They include Finnish-American accordionist Viola Turpeinen, a Croatian drama society, an Italian-American vaudevillian, and others. The curator was JoAnn Hanson-Stone.

Prospective sponsors of the exhibit may ask for a free copy of an exhibit catalog that offers a sampling

of exhibit images and commentary. The exhibit will be available beginning in November 1996; there is no rental fee, but the sponsor must pay all transportation costs.

The videotape, produced by Sue Scott (Great American History Theater, St. Paul), is made from segments of the festival's variety show, "Echoes from the Immigrant Stage." The show featured area musicians and actors, and the videotape includes materials from their several acts. The 90-minute-long videotape could be displayed on its own or as a continuous loop complement to the exhibit. The videotape is available for loan for a refundable fee of \$10; the sponsor must pay postage and provide playback equipment.

*The exhibit consists of 10 panels (20 sides), seven feet high and three feet wide, as shown here. There are two five-board configurations, each of which has a 12-foot-by-7-foot footprint. Each panel is framed with a cloth "theater curtain," and the images are laminated to backing boards and attached with velcro.*



*Courtesy Immigration History Research Center*

## Ethnic Art Conference Prelude to Norwegian Folk Art Exhibit

The international exhibit, *Norwegian Folk Art: Migration of a Tradition*, opens to the public at the Landmark Center in St. Paul on Nov. 10. The exhibit is co-sponsored by the Museum of American Folk Art in New York and the Norwegian Folk Museum in Oslo. On Nov. 8 and 9 a conference will explore the broader context of the exhibit's revitalized painting, woodcarving and textile arts. The conference is titled "Visual Diversity: Revitalization of Ethnic Arts and Material Culture since 1960." Representatives of cultural history, art history, and folklore will make presentations, as will representatives of six ethnic groups, who will give their views on recent revitalization of arts and material culture among their people: American Indian, African American, Hispanic, Hmong, Ukrainian and Latvian. Conference co-sponsors are the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Museum of American Art. For information, contact Marion Nelson, Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota, Dept. of Art History, (612) 624-4500.



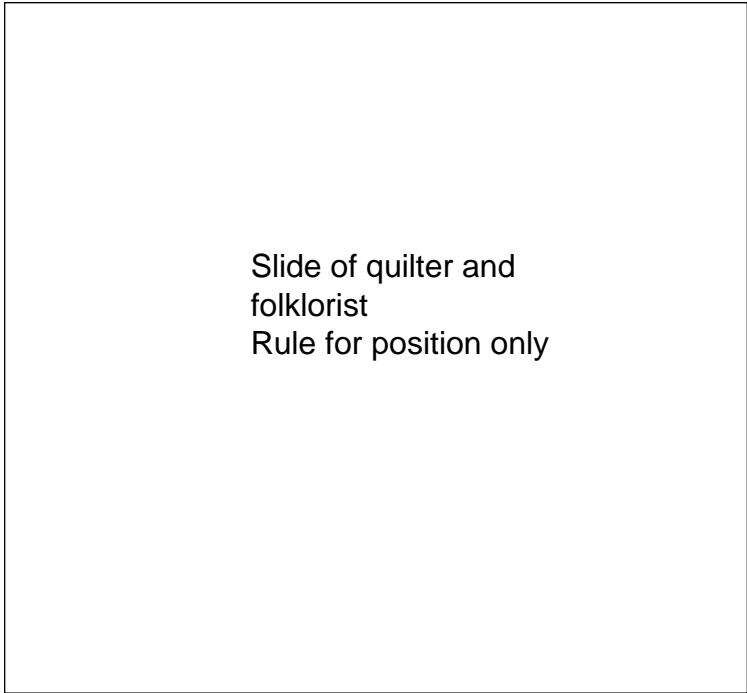
## Quilts: A Grassroots Approach to an Exhibit

Quilters from around the state will play a key role in revising and expanding the “Q is for Quilts” section of the *Minnesota A to Z* exhibit at the History Center. The new “Q is for Quilts,” scheduled to open in November 1997, will include a selection of loaned quilts that have been documented by the statewide Quilt Discovery Days project, and will feature hands-on activities, lectures, and demonstrations of quilts and quilting.

Three organizations are collaborating on the new exhibit: the Minnesota Quilt Project, Minnesota Quilters, and the Minnesota Historical Society. Their goal is to develop a multi-media experience of the stories behind quilts made by Minnesotans past and present. They want to engage visitors in the personal stories of quilters—stories that show Minnesota history as shaped by quilters and their work.

The support and participation of statewide organizations and individuals are needed to accomplish this goal. The exhibit development team urges all readers of the *Interpreter* to scour archives and attics for dramatic first-person quotations that convey the dynamic processes behind quilting: creating, naming, using, saving, discovering, valuing, and collecting.

The quotations, like the one in the box below, should be concise and readable, both on paper and out loud. They can be intimate and emotional or objective and analytical, and their sources may range from young to old, long ago to the present, or Minnesota to other states or countries.



Slide of quilter and folklorist  
Rule for position only

*Quilter Shirley Kirsch from Duluth was one of the featured presenters at the Minnesota Folk Festival on Aug. 11. She is shown here (left) with one of her quilts and folklorist Remi Kouessi-Tanah Douah from Minneapolis. Remi interviewed Shirley at the festival.*

The team needs quotations and also photographs of people paired with quilts, alone or in groups, making, using or displaying quilts.

So: If you can find quotations and photographs you think the team might be able to use, or could imagine your museum or quilt collection noted in the new “Q is for Quilts,” or would like more information—contact Loris Connolly, Quilts Project Curator, Exhibits Department, Minnesota Historical Society, (612) 297-7955

### A Quilter Remembers

*It took me more than twenty years, nearly twenty-five, I reckon, in the evening after supper when the children were all put to bed. My whole life is in that quilt. It scares me sometimes when I look at it.*

*All my joys and sorrows are stitched into those little pieces. When I was proud of the boys and when I was downright provoked and angry with them. When the girls annoyed me or when they gave me a warm feeling around my heart.*

*And John, too. He was stitched into that quilt and all the thirty years we were married. Sometimes I loved him and sometimes I sat there hating him as I pieced the patches together.*

*So they are all in that quilt, my hopes, and fears, my joys and sorrows, my loves and hates. I tremble sometimes when I remember what that quilt knows about me.*

by an Anonymous quilter. *American Quilts and Coverlets*, 1974



## Invitations from AASLH: Awards Program & 1997 Annual Meeting

Last year, the Renville County Genealogical Society and the Taylors Falls Historical Society received Certificates of Commendation from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). They were recognized for their outstanding work in the collection, preservation and interpretation of local, state and regional history. (See the August 1996 *Interpreter*.) **The deadline for nominations for the 1997 awards is March 1, 1997.**

Awards are conferred for a variety of projects, ranging from education programs and exhibits to publications and videos. Individuals who make outstanding contributions to the field of state and local history also are eligible for AASLH awards.

Nominations are not simple to complete, as Minnesota's recipients can tell you. They also will tell you that the rewards are worth the effort.

The 1997 AASLH annual meeting, cosponsored by the Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums (CWAM), will be held in **Denver, Colo., Oct. 1-4**. The theme for the conference is "Across the Great Divide: Getting There From Here." The program committee is especially interested in proposals for sessions that (a) probe the challenges and shifting assumptions that face museums and historical associations; (b) consider the practical application of current historical scholarship, especially environmental and Western history; (c) explore links among everyone engaged in history; and (d) show how to use humor in facing challenges and lightening the load. **Session proposals must be received at AASLH by Oct. 31, 1996.** (Editor's note: We learned of this deadline after the September issue had gone to press. Sorry.)

Nomination and session proposal forms are available from the AASLH office, 530 Church Street, Suite 600, Nashville, TN 37219; (615) 255-2971.  
(e-mail: aaslh@nashville.net)

## Grant Deadlines for Museum Assessment Program

The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) of the American Association of Museums (AAM) helps museums of all shapes and sizes clarify their mission and reach for a more secure future. Here are the deadlines for the next round of grants:

MAP I: Institutional Assessment (\$1,775)	Oct. 25, 1996
MAP III: Public Dimension Assessment (\$2,970)	Feb. 28, 1997
MAP II: Collections Management Assessment (\$1,775)	March 14, 1997
MAP I: Institutional Assessment (\$1,775)	April 25, 1997

MAP I grants of \$1,975 were awarded in 1996 to five Minnesota museums: Cottonwood County Historical Society; Dakota City Heritage Village; Nobles County Historical Society; Pope County Historical Museum; and Steensland Art Museum, Northfield. A MAP II grant, also for \$1,975, was made to the Goodhue County Historical Society. (See the *Interpreter*, Aug. 1996.)

A MAP III grant made to the Itasca County Historical Society in Grand Rapids brought a team to ICHS this March. An interesting and instructive first-hand description of the activities and programs studied by the MAP team can be found in the Summer 1996 issue of the ICHS newsletter, *Itasca History News*. Don Boese, president of the ICHS board, summarized the team's findings and recommendations in the article. For a copy of the article or information about the MAP visit to ICHS, contact Jodi Abeln, executive director, (218) 326-6431.

In addition to the grants program, the MAP services are available on a fee-for-service basis at any time of the year. For information about any of the MAP programs, contact the MAP staff at the AAM office in Washington, D.C.: (202) 289-1818, or fax (202) 289-6578.



## 1996 MHO Annual Meeting Update

**REMEMBER:** Join your colleagues in St. Paul for the Annual Meeting of Minnesota Historical Organizations on Friday, Nov. 15, at the Minnesota History Center. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. The \$25 fee includes lunch, a tour of St. Paul historic



*Courtesy Edward T. Linenthal*

sites, and a reception. At 10 a.m., Edward T. Linenthal, professor of religion and American culture at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, will present the keynote address, "What Is the Place of History?" Prof. Linenthal is a

noted authority on the issues associated with the often-volatile relationship between the public and historical scholarship.

Just before lunch, a prize-winning History Day performance will be presented. Jonathan Bluhm, from Christ's Household of Faith high school in St. Paul, will become "Victor Power: Little Giant of the North." Power was a vigorous and controversial mayor of Hibbing around 1916. Bluhm's portrayal of him received two awards in the 1996 History Day program: second place at the Minnesota State History Day and fifth place in the Junior Individual Performance category at the national competition.

After lunch, Terry Davis, director of the American Association for State and Local History, will lead a discussion on "History and the 21st Century" in the 3M Auditorium. The AASLH, which provides training opportunities and a voice throughout North America for its members, strives to base its programs on what it hears from its members about their needs and problems. Davis will first bring participants up to date on programs at the AASLH, and then solicit the audience's views on issues not now being addressed by the AASLH or other professional associations.

And don't forget: the Minnesota Historical Society's Annual Membership Meeting begins at 7 p.m. in the History Center.

*Edward T. Linenthal, keynote speaker at the 1996 MHO Annual Meeting this Nov. 15.*

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Readers are invited to submit information for publication. To be considered, items must reach the editor by the 25th of the month, two months before publication (example: publication date, October 1; submission deadline, August 25). Send to: **Interpreter** Editor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906. For more information call (612) 296-5434 or (612) 296-8196.

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