



THE MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

October 1998 Vol. XXVI, No. 10

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FIRST AID — When the Unthinkable Happens to Your Museum

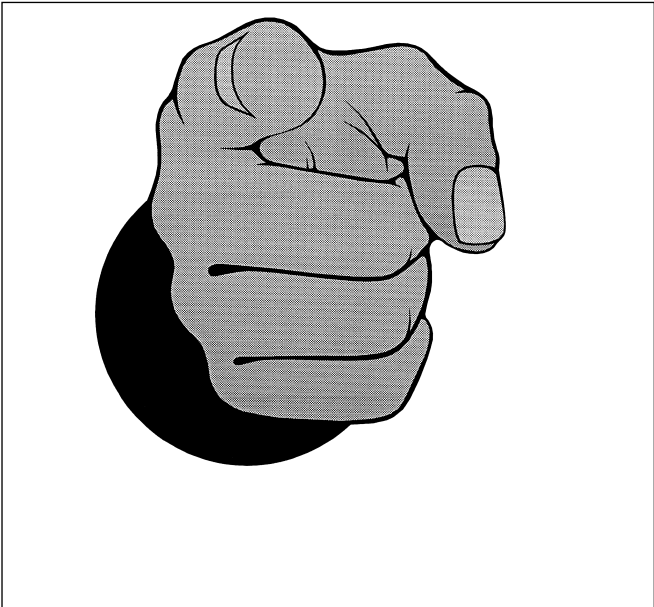


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historical societies
and heritage
preservation
commissions

The Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums knows about the effects of storms and natural disasters on museums and historical organizations, particularly those with limited funds and small staffs. After a tornado severely damaged the Cokato museum in 1995, members of the alliance sought to find a way to distribute some kind of help at those critical times. The alliance has since developed a Mutual Assistance Program (MAP) that “allows many of us to band together to offer aid and our expertise at times when an organization needs it most.”

Any museum or historical organization in Minnesota can become a member of the Minnesota MAP, whether or not it is a member of the alliance. The system is very simple. On one hand, an applicant agrees to come to the assistance of another member of MAP; on the other, in case it calls on another member for assistance, the applicant agrees to reimburse the assisting organization for mileage and incidental costs.

Each applicant completes a form, the Mutual Assistance Agreement, or MAA, on which it provides names of key people and their telephone numbers,



This is the symbol on the introductory flyer for the Mutual Assistance Program.

Courtesy Minnesota Alliance of Museums

along with authorization to participate. Every member of MAP receives a copy of the list, and thus has numbers of people to call, both for advice and for the names of experts who might be of assistance in particular circumstances. Contact people may also volunteer to serve as regional calling representatives, who will start a calling tree when requested. The list must be updated annually by all members of MAP.

The list of current members includes 15 county historical societies, three municipal and area societies, and three special-purpose organizations, located all around the state. Lois Gaetz of the Sherburne County Historical Society is the coordinator for the assistance program. Her address is 13122 First Street, Becker, MN 55308; (612) 261-4433, or 1-800-932-2066.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
**1999 Minnesota Historical Organizations
 Field Workshops**

March 18-19 Mankato
 April 29-30 Morris
 May 20-21 Grand Rapids

These dates are tentative, and specific details are still being worked out, but topics tentatively scheduled include:

- the arts and historic interpretation;
- educational programming;
- artifact deaccessioning;
- basic cataloging.

Check future issues of the *Interpreter* for further information about these useful workshops.



Traveling Trunks: Outreach in Clay County

PAST, for “Packaged Artifacts for School Teachers,” is the second dimension of the Clay County Historical Society’s (CCHS) educational outreach program. (See the *Interpreter*, July 1998, for an article about its traveling exhibit program.) PAST began in 1987 when CCHS received a Title II Block Grant from the Minnesota Department of Education for a collaborative outreach project. Lee Richards, an elementary school teacher at Dilworth School, was project director. He worked closely with teachers from Moorhead and Dilworth, and with several staffers from CCHS and the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center (which shares the building with CCHS). The Lake Agassiz Regional Library compiled the bibliographies used in the trunks.

Four trunks are in use, and work on another is underway. Each trunk has artifacts, a binder with a brief history of the county, an essay about the topic of the trunk, photographs and a supplemental bibliography. Each also includes activity planners with learner objectives, a materials list, activity sheets, support documents and teacher materials. Three trunks contain videos; two were produced locally and one was purchased.

The most popular trunk is “Down on the Farm: Farm Life in Clay County to 1920.” It includes horseshoes, utensils, and information about schooling and harvesting. Its 25-minute video, “When We Farmed with Horses,” which was produced by Iowa State University, won the CINE Golden Eagle Award in 1979.

The “Good Old Days: Life in the 1920s” trunk includes two videos, “A Model-T Trip through Clay County,” and “Exploring the Artifacts.” In “Coming to Clay County: Immigration from 1870 to 1900,” early settlers tell stories about immigrant life; activities include carding and spinning wool, and reading a plat map. In “Frozen in Time: Clay County Photography,” photographs donated by S. P. Wange of Hawley and O. E. Flaten of Moorhead portray the history of the county, and student activities include making a photograph to view through a stereoscope.

Brochures explaining the PAST program are sent out regularly to schools, nursing/retirement homes, museums, colleges and service organizations. One or more trunks can be reserved, usually for one week at a time, though flexible scheduling is available. Until 1991, CCHS provided delivery services, but that year began to ask the borrowers to pick up and return the trunks.

Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt reports that the trunks “were supposed to be waterproof, but were slightly damaged when a water main broke and flooded the basement in July.” They have been repaired for use this

school year, but because of the water damage and the demands of the museum’s forthcoming move, scheduling has been temporarily reduced.

For further information, contact Pam Burkhardt at (218) 233-4604, or e-mail Archivist Mark Peihl at mpeihl@Juno.com.



Photo (right): The contents of the “Down on the Farm” trunk and the trunk itself.



Stavkirke Dedicated in Moorhead

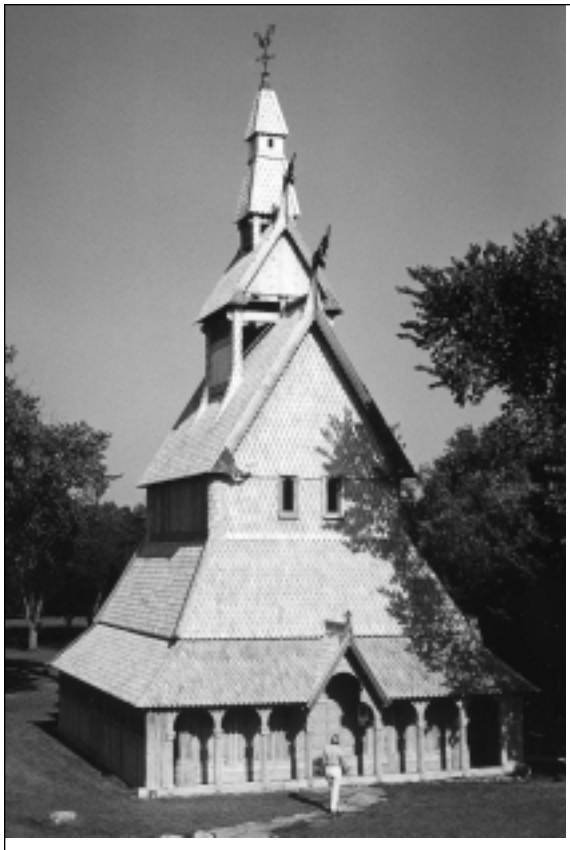
With an architectural style dating back to the 11th century, a “stavkirke” is a church with long log columns as its central support. A stavkirke that is being constructed near the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center in Moorhead’s Viking Ship Park is modeled on the Hopperstad Church in Vik, in west-central Norway.

In describing the dedication ceremony held on June 27, Christina Larson, former staff member of the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center, wrote, “Threatening clouds crept in to accompany the 85-

Lost relatives were found, and families such as Guy Paulson’s (builder, carver and donor) were united to share in the celebration. Most of these families had never been together like this. It isn’t every day that history can meet the present or that a dream can meet reality.”

The church was donated by Guy Paulson, his wife Beva and sister DeMaris Mathison, as a tribute to their parents and their Christian heritage. The stavkirke will have no pews; in the oldest churches, people would stand for the 2-3 hour services, though pews may have been added later. The original churches did not have many windows, so light and heat were provided by candles. The wood (cedar, redwood and pine) will be treated with an oil sealant similar to that used on log homes, and some of the cracks in the wood will be filled. The wood will color naturally as it weathers. Completion is expected in 2000-2001.

For further information, call the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center, (218) 233-5604.



A front view of the stavkirke earlier this year.

Courtesy Heritage/Hjemkomst Center; Photograph by Sara Pudas

degree heat and suffocating humidity. Nevertheless the crowd grew to more than 500 and so did the anticipation for the arrival of the parade. The parade was accompanied not with beating drums, but with melodies from Norwegian violinist Jon Sunde. He and his followers, young and old, in festive national costumes (*bunads*), made their way to the stage.

“Many of the Norwegians attending the ceremony were making their first visit to America.



Courtesy Heritage/Hjemkomst Center; Photograph by Claire Haugen

The staves, or logs, that give the church its name.

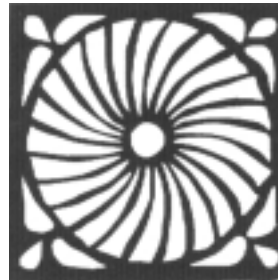


June 1998 Minnesota Humanities Commission Grants

The Minnesota Humanities Commission logo (right) is taken from one of the original tiles along the walls of its building, the former Gillette Children's Hospital administration building and library on St. Paul's East Side. The tiles were installed at eye level for children in wheelchairs.

At its June 1998 meeting, the Minnesota Humanities Commission (MHC) made grants in three categories: nine "Works in Progress" grants of \$2,500 each to support humanities research by Minnesota scholars; 21 "Humanities Organization Network Grants" of \$4,000 each; and 12 project grants. The following might be of particular interest to *Interpreter* readers.

- Suzanne Bunkers, Mankato State University: \$2,500 for "Women's Diaries: A Midwestern Sampler," in which Bunkers examines the role of diaries in the lives of Midwestern women from 1840-1950.
- Clearwater County Historical Society, Bagley: \$2,700 for *Our County's Past: History for Everyone*; primary research on county townships.
- Minnesota Architectural Foundation, Minneapolis: \$3,000 for *Yesterday's Tomorrows:*



Historical Concept Houses of Minnesota; an exhibit on modern domestic architecture.

- Nicollet County Historical Society, St. Peter: \$3,000 for Minnesota Archaeology Week; a series of lectures, discussions and site interpretations in the county.

Among the 21 Organization Network Grants are the following: American Swedish Institute, Minneapolis; Friends of the Immigration History Research Center, St. Paul; Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center, Moorhead; Minnesota Preservation Alliance, Minneapolis; Murphy's Landing, Shakopee; and the Society for the Study of Local and Regional History, Marshall.

For further information, contact MHC at 987 E. Ivy Ave., St. Paul, MN 55106-2046; (651) 774-0105; www.thinkmhc.org.

Conferences & Workshops

Midwest Museum Conference in Madison Oct. 28-31

This year's Midwest Museum Conference (MMC) will be held in Madison, Wis., from Wednesday, Oct. 28, through Saturday, Oct. 31. The theme is "Forward! Money, Mission and Priorities." Some of the topics of the 29 workshops include learning theory, interpreting historic cemeteries, evaluating collections management software, making your museum store work, and how to identify and reach tourists. Keynote addresses will be presented by Marie C. Malero from George Washington University and William Moynihan, Colgate University. The luncheon speaker will be Edward T. Linenthal, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, author of the award-winning *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, who spoke at the 1996 annual meeting of Minnesota Historical Organizations.

Registration fees for MMC members is \$160; for non-members, \$190 (which includes a \$30 one-year MMC membership); and students, \$70. For program information and registration, contact Pat Gaitan (608) 262-6696, or by e-mail at gaitan@admin.uwex.edu.

Upper Midwest Conservation Association Workshops in November and May

Two workshops on issues in conservation of collections will be presented by the Upper Midwest Conservation Association (UMCA) this November and next May. Both will be held at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in Minneapolis.

- "Capitalize on Collections Care: A Fund-raising Workshop," Nov. 5.
- "Integrated Pest Management," May 20-21, 1999.

For further information, contact UMCA, 2400 3rd Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55404. Call (612) 870-3128, or e-mail: umca@mtn.org.

Notice: Name and Hour Changes at the Minnesota Historical Society

The Research Center at the Minnesota History Center is now known as the Library, and is open until 9 p.m. on Tuesdays. The History Center museum is now open until 8 p.m. on Tuesday evenings instead of Thursday evenings. For full details, call the Society's information desk, (651) 296-6126.





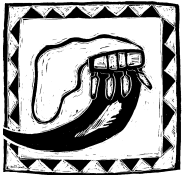
Conservation Assessment Grants Available

Grants from the Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) are administered by Heritage Preservation with funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency. The program provides matching grants for a general conservation assessment or a survey of a museum's collections, sites and environmental conditions. Professional conservators spend two days at a site and three days writing a report; the report helps museums decide how to improve their collections care, and provides a tool for long-range planning and fund-raising.

CAP serves museums with small- to medium-sized collections and sites that can be surveyed in two days. Awards to most museums support an objects conservator to assess the collections, and awards to

museums in historic structures support an architectural assessor. CAP grants are non-competitive, and larger museums should contact IMLS for information about its Conservation Project Support grant program (CP). These grants support surveys that take more than two days of site visit time and three days for report writing.

Applications will be mailed on Oct. 9, 1998, to museums on the CAP mailing list. For further information and application forms, contact Heritage Preservation, 1730 K St. NW, Suite 566, Washington, D.C. 20006-3836; (202) 634-1422; fax, (202) 634-1435, or eblackburn@heritagepreservation.org. Applications must be returned to Heritage Preservation no later than Dec. 4.



Conservation Information and Supplies

The Northern States Conservation Center (NSCC) presents workshops, sells basic conservation supplies, and publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Collections Caretaker*. Recent disaster recovery workshops were held at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa for the Oklahoma Conservation Congress and at Yellow Medicine County Historical Society in Granite Falls, and a basic mannequin workshop was presented for the Campbell Center in Mt. Carroll, Ill. Supplies available include vacuum cleaners and accessories, collection numbering materials, storage and display materials, and emergency preparedness tools. An annual subscription to *Collections Caretaker* (four issues) costs \$15. Contact Helen Alten, NSCC, P.O. Box 8081, St. Paul, MN 55108; (651) 659-9420; e-mail, altenhuber@wavetech.net; web site, www.collectioncare.org.

Two New Books of Note

REVISED EDITION OF *WOMEN OF MINNESOTA* PUBLISHED BY MHS PRESS

Women of Minnesota: Selected Biographical Essays was first published in 1977 to wide acclaim, and Jean Brookins, retired director of the Society's Press, spurred the editors of that volume, Gretchen Kreuter and Barbara Stuhler, to update it. The editors provide an essay, "Afterword: The Last Twenty Years"; the chapter on women in the Minnesota Legislature was updated by Sue Holbert; and "Brief Biographies of Other Minnesota Women" was expanded by Patricia Harpole. The 16 chapters include biographical essays on women in a wide variety of fields, including education, politics, philanthropy, music, journalism and others. Paper, \$15.95; 467 pages; photos and index. Contact Nordis Heyerdahl-Fowler at (651) 296-7539, fax (651) 297-1345, or e-mail: nordis.heyerdahl-fowler@mnhs.org.

METHODS FOR REGISTERING ITEMS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

The American Association of Museums (AAM) has recently published *The New Museum Registration Methods*, edited by Rebecca A. Buck and Jean Allman Gilmore. This is fully revised edition with 50 new chapters that cover all aspects of museum registration procedures. These include documentation, computerization of records, shipping and handling, insurance, and other topics. The 427-page book was prepared by the Registrars Standing Professional Committee of AAM. It is priced at \$40 for AAM members, \$55 for non-members; order from the AAM bookstore, (202) 289-9127; e-mail, bookstore@aam-us.org; or on-line, www.aam-us.org.



ACCESSIBILITY IN MUSEUMS: SOME STANDARD SYMBOLS

Accessibility guidelines recommended by the Smithsonian Institution were briefly discussed in the August issue of the *Interpreter*. Included in those guidelines was a set of symbols used to guide people to special services. Six commonly used symbols are shown below, with paraphrases of the guidelines' explanations. The Smithsonian emphasizes that "any language accompanying the symbols should focus on the accommodation or service, not on who uses it," and also states, "language that fosters dignity is important, too." (For example, the wheelchair symbol in a parking area may be accompanied by a sign that says "Accessible Parking.")

Information Symbol



This symbol may be used (for example, on a sign or floorplan) to indicate the location of an information or security desk, where more specific information about access accommodations and services can be obtained.

Sign-Language Interpreted



This symbol indicates that sign-language interpretation is provided for a program (lecture, tour, performance, conference, etc.).

International Symbol of Accessibility



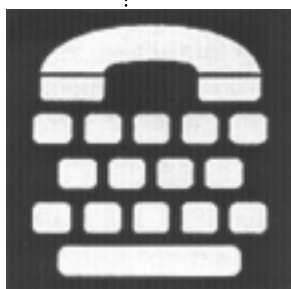
Use this symbol only to indicate access for individuals with limited mobility, for example an accessible entrance for a bathroom or that a phone has been lowered for wheelchair use.

Access (other than print or Braille) for people who are blind or have low vision



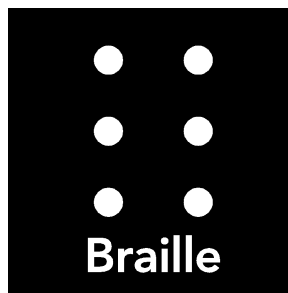
This symbol indicates access to such features and services as, a guided tour, a nature trail, a scented garden, a tactile tour, or an exhibit that may be touched.

Telephone Typewriter (TTY)



Also known as telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), this symbol indicates the presence of a device used with the telephone for communication between hearing persons and deaf, hard-of-hearing, and speech-impaired persons.

Braille symbol



Use this symbol to indicate that printed matter—such as exhibit labels, publications, signs—is available in Braille.

The accessibility guidelines can be reached at the Smithsonian Institution's web site:
www.si.edu/resource/tours/access/.



Survey of Interpreter Readers

Earlier this year, we sent a questionnaire to a randomly selected group of the people to whom the *Interpreter* is mailed. Our purpose was to obtain information that could guide us in making publication decisions, particularly concerning the content and frequency of publication. Andrea Cutting, audience research specialist for the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), coordinated the preparation, distribution and analysis of the questionnaire, with the participation of MHS staff. Her report, issued in May, was immediately useful in MHS budget discussions and will continue to be consulted as a source of information about readers' preferences. This article highlights the report's method and main findings; the full report is available by e-mail: jim.smith@mnhs.org.



The questionnaire consisted of a one-page form, printed on both sides; it was mailed with a stamped return envelope to 250 addresses selected randomly from a list of 1,950. (The *Interpreter* is sent to approximately 2,300 addresses each month, including libraries, but the questionnaire was sent only to individuals.)

We received 127 questionnaires, or 51 percent of the original sample. As Cutting says, this "is not high, but neither is it low for a survey conducted by mail." In addition, since uncertainty is unavoidable in surveys such as this, we must be cautious in our interpretation of the results. Cutting advises, "Common sense should be used when applying these findings to the entire *Interpreter* readership." With that in mind, and remembering that preferences for different groups vary and are never unanimous, here are some highlights of the findings.

- One-third of the respondents work for historical organizations, another third are affiliated as board members or volunteers, and the rest are interested members of the public.
- Most of the respondents read most issues of the *Interpreter*. More than half read more than half of each issue, and one-third read the entire issue.
- Most respondents either do not have access to the Internet or prefer to receive the *Interpreter* in print rather than via the Internet.
- Almost as many respondents favored 12 issues a year as six, and 26% had no preference.

- Respondents indicated that the most useful topics in the *Interpreter* are those that, in general, relate to the central mission of historical organizations, such as historic preservation, conservation, collection and interpretation. Topics such as fund raising, administration, staff development and working with boards and volunteers are less useful to the readership, and employment opportunity news is least useful of all. In the middle are topics that provide information from the field: current issues, publications, conferences and workshops, and other organizations' activities.

- The majority of respondents are satisfied with the *Interpreter*.

Comments from individual respondents are also included in the report, but are too numerous and varied to summarize. Here are a few of the more provocative ideas.

Several respondents considered the Tech Talk inserts to be valuable. One suggested a brief "helpful hints" feature on conservation and restoration.

One respondent said the *Interpreter* should relate more to the non-professional, provide more on content, and reduce emphasis on staff activities.

Several respondents recommended a series about ideas that groups have used for fundraisers.

Other comments: re-think history in this day and age; make tie-ins to current ideas, ethics, dilemmas, etc.; include some official statements describing the responsibilities of the director and how board members should fit in; and have an *Interpreter* advisory/editorial board consisting of representatives from around the state.

(Editor's note relating to the last suggestion: The MHS Field Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from each division and many departments, advises the Society's Historic Preservation, Field Services and Grants Department on the *Interpreter*. The steering committee of Minnesota Historical Organizations (MHO), whose members are from historical organizations around the state, also offers advice on the *Interpreter*.)

If you would like to offer suggestions for making the *Interpreter* more useful for you and your organization, please do not hesitate to write or e-mail the editor, at the address on the back page of every issue.



Internet News

MHO Directory • MHS Photograph Collection • New Web Sites

MHO Directory

A reminder: the "Directory of Minnesota County Historical Societies, Chapters and Local Organizations" and the "Directory of Miscellaneous Historical Organizations in Minnesota" are updated every month by David Nystuen, Minnesota Historical Society field services coordinator. Consult the Society's web site at www.mnhs.org to check the entry for your organization and send changes to him at david.nystuen@mnhs.org.



New Web Sites of Interest

National Women's History Project
<http://NWHP.org>

The Society for History Education (an affiliate of the American Historical Association) and its journal, *The History Teacher*
<http://www.csulb.edu/~histeach/>

U.S. Census Bureau
<http://www.census.gov/>

(Source: AASLH *Dispatch*, August 1998)

Minnesota Historical Society Photograph Database

As of Sept. 11, descriptions of 44,000 of the approximately 250,000-plus photographs (not including albums and collections) in the Society's collection have been entered into a database and are accessible through the MHS web site, www.mnhs.org. Approximately 6,500 photographs, with description and locator number, are now viewable. The goals of the project, expected to take about four years, are to describe all photographs in the MHS collections, provide images for about 20 percent of the total, and make ordering information available on-line. The database project is supported in part with funds from the Onan Foundation.

The Minnesota History **Interpreter** is published by the Historic Preservation, Field Services and Grants Department of the Minnesota Historical Society, and distributed to Minnesota's county and local historical societies and heritage preservation commissions.

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: the deadline for the October issue is August 25). Send to: **Interpreter** Editor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906. For more information call (651) 296-5434 or (651) 296-8196.

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