



THE MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

July 2000

Vol. XXVIII, No. 7

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Project Breckenridge Hosts Opening of Red River Millennium Canoe Tour

From Breckenridge, Minn., and Wahpeton, N.D., neighbors across the Red River of the North, it is approximately 550 water miles to Selkirk, Manitoba, Canada. A canoe tour the length of the river is being organized as a way to celebrate the river's history in the transportation and commerce of the region, and to draw attention to the river's potential for further economic and recreational development. Phase I of the tour began on May 22 at its headwaters (see photo); the tour is scheduled to end on June 24 in Selkirk, whose mayor, Bud Oliver, attended the ceremony.



Originally printed in the Wahpeton-Breckenridge Daily News, May 23, 2000; photo by Mark A. Walters

Only one canoeist so far has announced plans to row the entire distance: Jim Dale Huot-Vickery, from Ely, Minn. At the "shove-off" on May 22, Breckenridge Mayor Cliff Barth presented a proclamation and American flag to Huot-Vickery to take to Selkirk.

The Red River of the North Trail Group, called the River Keepers, located in Fargo, N.D, a consortium of individuals, agencies and organizations interested in developing the river, has written a proposal for \$450,000 to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources to develop the route from Breckenridge - Wahpeton to Georgetown, Minn. The proposal calls for construction of primitive campsites and canoe access spots and to set up mile markers to designate the historic features of the route, including oxcart trail crossings, Fort Abercrombie, burial grounds and abandoned towns and trading posts. Neoma Laken, secretary-treasurer of Project Breckenridge, said "If we receive the grant and get the work done [for phase I] we plan then to go all the way to Selkirk, Canada,

and Lake Winnipeg. Canada is also interested in this venture."

PART TWO: *Historic King of Trails on Highway 75*

A related effort, still underway, is to develop a passageway from Winnipeg, Canada, to Mexico, along Highway 75 (part of which runs parallel to the Red River of the North). The passageway extends 20 to 40 miles east and west of Highway 75, and when developed, will affect approximately 209 cities from Manitoba through Minnesota and North and South Dakota. On Sept. 9, a tour will travel the corridor from Moorhead, Minn., to Emerson, Manitoba, where the Royal Mounted Canadian Police organization was founded.

For further information about these programs, contact Neoma Laken, Project Breckenridge, 404 North 14th St., #1, Breckenridge, MN, 56520; 218/643-3942; or River Keepers, 325 7th St. S., Fargo, ND 58103; 701/235-2895; e-mail, rkeepers@i29.net.



Published
by the Minnesota
Historical Society
for local and county
historical societies
and heritage
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Right: Canoists
leave Headwaters
Park in
Breckenridge on
the first leg of the
Red River
Millennium
Canoe Tour, May
22. Canoists who
sign a liability
waiver can join or
leave the tour
along the way.



Two New Books

New Book from Afton Historical Society Press about Minnesota's Small Towns

In his foreword to Tony Andersen's *Small Town Minnesota A-Z*, acclaimed Minnesota writer, poet and small-town resident Bill Holm wrote, "The small town has had a bad time of it in American literature, as in American life. ... Meanwhile, in the presence of this national psychic schizophrenia, life stumbles on in these un-romantic, un-politically correct and most decidedly un-rich, unfashionable small towns that Tony Andersen has chosen to photograph in this lovely book."

Andersen began his photo expedition in the spring of 1998 and set out to "highlight a Minnesota road map with 26 towns—one for each letter of the alphabet." He limited his search to towns with population under 1,000 and sought an even distribution throughout the state. The towns (and counties in parentheses) he visited are listed below.

Argyle (**Marshall**); Buckman (**Morrison**); Cosmos (**Meeker**); Donnelly (**Stevens**); Effie (**Itasca**); Freeborn (**Freeborn**); Gonvick (**Clearwater**); Halstad (**Norman**); Isle (**Mille Lacs**); Jasper (**Pipestone, Rock**); Kelliher (**Beltrami**); Longville (**Cass**); Miltona (**Douglas**); Nicollet (**Nicollet**); Odessa (**Big Stone**); Palisade (**Aitkin**); Quamba (**Kanabec**); Roosevelt (**Roseau, Lake of the Woods**); Storden (**Cottonwood**); Taunton (**Lyon**); Upsala (**Morrison**); Vergas (**Otter Tail**); Winton (**St. Louis**); Xylophone*; Yucatan (**Houston**); Zumbro Falls (**Wabasha**).

*See note, above right.

Small Town Minnesota A-Z: soft cover, 120 pages, 160 color photographs; \$24.95. Contact the Afton Historical Society Press, P.O. Box 1000, Afton, MN 55001; toll-free, 1-800-436-8443; phone 651/436-8443; e-mail, aftonpress@aftonpress.com.

*Note: No town in Minnesota begins with the letter "X," so owners, guests and neighbors of Olstad's Resort on Lake Miltona in Douglas County agreed to appear in a picture holding a sign, "Xylophone, pop. 13."

Burnsville Community History Updated

In 1998, a group of Burnsville residents formed the Burnsville History Book Committee and began work to preserve the history of the continued growth and change in their community since 1976, when *Burnsville '76: A Community History* was published. In December, 1999, the committee completed its work and published *Burnsville 2000: A Community History*.

The new book emphasizes stories and photos about Burnsville people, events and places since 1976, but it includes selected material from earlier years, personal vignettes and accounts of key events, which are presented in thematic sections such as "Preserving the Best of Nature" "Providing a Positive Business Climate." Then-and-now photographs and individual portraits accompany many of the stories.

Burnsville 2000: A Community History: hard cover, 150 pages, \$15; it can be purchased at Burnsville City Hall, 100 Civic Center Parkway, Burnsville, MN 55337, or by mail for \$19. For further information,

Log Building Restoration Workshop in August

The Dee Log Cabin at the Olmsted County History Center (OCHC) in Rochester will be the subject of a restoration workshop Aug. 7-11. Charles Nelson, historical architect of the Minnesota Historical Society, will be the instructor, and Tom Metzler of OCHC is project coordinator. The workshop will include instruction on each of the steps of restoration, handout materials and hands-on work. By the end of the week, all the rotten logs will have been replaced and new chinking applied.

Participants should dress appropriately for this kind of work. Heavy-duty work gloves, eye protection and hard hats are particularly recommended. You may wish to bring your own hammer and trowel. There also will be opportunities for volunteers, food helpers and gophers, and spectator seating will be available.

The registration fee is \$100, which includes noon meals and snacks, handouts and a detailed logbook to be kept throughout the workshop. Depending on approval by the Minnesota Department of Commerce, continuing education credits totaling seven points may be available for workshop participants.

Call OCHC at 507/282-9447 for registration forms and more information.





Recommendations for Applying Accession Numbers to Museum Objects: Part 2

by Gina Nicole Delfino

This is the second of two Tech Talk articles adapted from Nicole Delfino's booklet, "Suggested Procedures for Labeling Artifacts." The first, which appeared in the May 2000 issue of the Interpreter, discussed textiles, clothing and fine basketry, three-dimensional objects, and included a bibliography and list of supplies and suppliers. The booklet may be obtained by contacting Delfino at her labeling kit firm, Archival Collection Systems, 651/457-5399.

Three-Dimensional Objects(continued)

Removal

If a mistake or change is made in an applied label, it can be carefully removed with solvents. All layers can be removed with acetone applied with a cotton swab. Be sure never to re-dip a dirty swab into your supply of solvent. It is important to keep your solvents clean.

Use solvents sparingly. They should not come in contact with an object's surface more than necessary.

Do not pour solvents into the sink. Dispose of solvents in accordance with local, county, state and federal regulations.

Alternative methods

The approved methods for labeling three-dimensional artifacts can vary widely, both because of the multitude of materials that make up three-dimensional collections, and the number of acceptable materials available for labeling them. Beyond the suggestions described so far, there are several alternatives that may be more appropriate for your collections or staff.

Other barrier layers

Acryloid B-67 dissolved in mineral spirits (or other petroleum distillates such as petroleum benzene, naphtha, or Stoddard's Solvent) is slightly less-aggressive on most material surfaces and slightly less hazardous to operators; however, it may yellow slightly over time and it requires a longer drying period.

Soluvar is a commercial version of Acryloid B-67, often combined with another acrylic resin. An

inherent problem with commercial brands is that the formulations may change without notice.

Rhoplex is a water-based acrylic emulsion similar to the acrylic gloss medium used for the seal coat, and it is much less hazardous to operators. Once dry it is only soluble in ethanol or acetone, though it is sometimes easier to peel off mechanically. Like the acrylic gloss medium, it is not as durable as the Acryloid B-72 and therefore not the most ideal barrier layer for most materials.

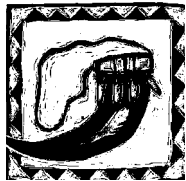
Other labels

Some institutions do not like to have a white field used for labeling their dark objects. While there are no suitable white markers that can be used with the same ease as the IDenti-pen, there are a few paint pen options available. The white Zig pen has been found to be acceptable, as well as the Tria pen filled with white fluid acrylic paint or ink. Both of these require some practice and skill, as the paint is liable to blot or smear easily.

If consistently good penmanship is a problem, some have found that cutout printed accession numbers are a useful alternative. A four-to-eight point accession number is printed on archival-quality paper on a laser printer. The number is cut out and placed on the barrier layer while it is still tacky. A seal coat is still advisable, once the barrier layer is dry. The stability of the inks with this method is somewhat questionable, however, because of the variability of laser printer inks.

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

Paper and Photographs

Materials to use

Hard pencil, 2H
Soft pencils, 2B and 6B
White Staedtler Mars-Plastic vinyl eraser

Where to label

Both paper and photographs are labeled on the backside (verso), lower right corner. Try to write behind the border of a photograph, rather than behind the printed image. If a paper article has printing on both sides, choose the side where the label would seem least obtrusive for exhibition.

Method of labeling

Make sure the surface on which you lay the front of the paper/photograph is clean and dry. It is a good idea to put a piece of white paper on the surface first.

With a suitable pencil, as prescribed below, lightly write the accession number onto the appropriate area. The pencil should not be dull, yet not so sharp that it could cause damage. Be certain not to press so hard that the pencil leaves an imprint. You should not be able to see the label from the front side.

Most normal papers with smooth surfaces and in stable condition can be labeled with a 2H pencil. Some papers are very fibrous and could be damaged by a hard pencil. For these, use the softer, 2B or 6B pencils. They are more likely to smudge, but they won't tear the fibers in the paper. Photographs can be labeled with a 6B pencil.

Mistakes may be erased with a gentle touch of the white vinyl eraser.

Hard-to-Label Objects and Secondary Labels

Materials to use

2H pencil
Archival paper tags with soft cotton string

Where to label

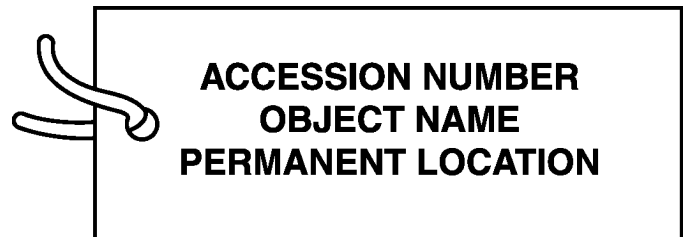
Objects made of fur (skin), leather, or which have heavily corroded or porous surfaces cannot hold an applied label. Instead, their primary label will be a paper and string tag, or, if appropriate, a cotton cloth tape loop (see Part 1, page 4).

Textiles and three-dimensional objects can receive a secondary, paper and string tag label for storage. Paper and string tags are not used alone (unless the material demands it, as above) because they can be easily lost or mutilated. For storage purposes, they do provide more accessible identification, reducing the amount of handling of the objects, and also allow you to include more information.

Choose a strong holding point that will not break, tear or abrade easily if the tag is pulled or caught. If the sharp edges of the tag seem to be a potential hazard, round them off or use soft Tyvek™ paper instead. If no safe area can be found, the tag may lie next to the object without being attached. If a garment is stored on a hanger, attach the tag to the hanger and make sure it does not rest on the fabric. If a textile lies flat in storage, situate the tag to its side, so it does not rest directly on the fabric.

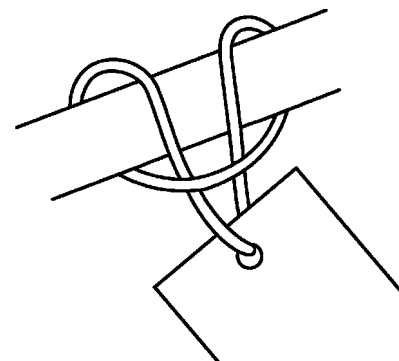
Method of labeling

With a 2H pencil and all uppercase letters, neatly write the following information onto a tag:



The backside may have various additional kinds of information, such as date, style, source, etc.

Attach the tag by pulling it through a loop in the string (see diagram 4 below). If the point of attachment is too wide to pull the tag through without stressing the object, remove the pre-attached string and add a longer one (100 percent cotton) that will comfortably accommodate the object.



Right: Method of attaching paper tags.



Continued from p. 4

Fragmentary and fragile objects

If you are uncertain about the safety or possibility of labeling an object, do not proceed to apply one. Even a paper and string tag is unusable in certain cases. Sometimes it is appropriate to label the housing or support for an object as opposed to the object itself. This not only saves the object from being harmed by the act of labeling it, it also reduces further handling of fragile pieces to locate their identity.



Above: An artifact labeling kit

Dangerous Materials Warning

Removable self-stick notes, as well as any other adhesive tapes or labels, leave residue (sometimes unseen) that will attract dirt and/or cause yellow stains over time. **DO NOT** use these items for temporary labels or any other purpose. While convenient, they ultimately cause harm, and are not appropriate for use with museum objects. Nail polish and correction pens or fluids are also potentially unstable materials and should not be substituted for the proper materials listed in this article. Not even all materials labeled as “archival” or sold by “archival” suppliers are necessarily appropriate for these specific purposes.

Health Hazard Information

Acetone and toluene are moderate-to-serious hazardous materials and can cause some health complications if not handled properly. If you will be using these solvents, either alone or in solution with Acryloid B-72, read the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for each solvent. MSDSs can be obtained on request from the material supplier. When handling these materials, take the following precautionary steps:

1. Work in a space with good ventilation. Avoid breathing vapors and use a respirator if necessary. A half-mask respirator fit-tested for individual use with Organic Vapor filters is recommended.
2. If your hands will be in direct contact with solvents, wear solvent-resistant gloves.
3. If the potential for splashing exists, wear chemical safety goggles.
4. Alert yourself to the nearest accessible location of a water supply.
5. Keep containers tightly closed and upright when not in use.
6. Never place solvents near a heated area or source of ignition. They are highly flammable.
7. Make sure your work space is neat and that solvents are not in danger of tipping over.

Warning signs of over-exposure are:

- Irritation of the skin, eyes, nose, throat or mucous membranes.
- Drowsiness, headache, dizziness, nausea, loss of coordination, or fatigue.
- Redness, burning, drying, and cracking of the skin.
- Burning, tearing, and redness of the eyes.

If you are experiencing any symptoms of over-exposure, discontinue your work in the exposure area and get some fresh air. Wash directly exposed skin with soap and large amounts of water for 15-20 minutes. Flood directly exposed eyes with large amounts of water for 15-20. Alert your supervisor to your symptoms and seek medical help if problems persist.

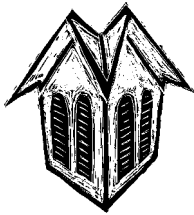
Do not dispose of any solvents in the sink or garbage. Dispose of solvents in accordance with local, county, state, and federal regulations.



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Quick Reference

MATERIAL TYPE	primary LABEL TYPE	LABEL LOCATION
glazed ceramics, glass, metals, wood, stone, ivory, bone, some kinds of basketry	B-72 and ink	unobtrusive area (usually bottom or back)
leather or skin (fur), heavily corroded metals, unglazed ceramics, plastic, wax, lacquered surfaces, other porous surfaces	paper and string tag or cotton cloth tape, loop	unobtrusive spot that will not be harmed by the string; tie loosely
clothes with neckline	cotton cloth tape	inside center back of neck
clothes with waistline	cotton cloth tape	inside center back of waistband
hats	cotton cloth tape	inside center back, where crown and brim meet
shoes without leather soles	B-72 and ink	bottom of sole, close to heel
socks, gloves	cotton cloth tape	inside opening
flat, long, or large textiles	cotton cloth tape	back, lower right and upper left corners
fine basketry	cotton cloth tape, loop	unobtrusive area (usually bottom or back)
paper, photographs	pencil	back, lower right corner
fragile or fragmented objects	pencil	storage support




Gina Nicole Delfino is associate registrar in the administration department, division of library and archives of the Minnesota Historical Society. She worked in the MHS museum collections department prior to her present position. She has been a conservation technician at the Science Museum of Minnesota and Conservation Technical Associates in Connecticut, and worked as an intern at the Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design in New York.



Agriculture and Rural Life: Documenting Change

By Ben Leonard



The Minnesota and North Dakota state historical records advisory boards are collaborating on a landmark project, "Agricultural and Rural Life: Documenting Change," the first joint interstate project funded by the National Historic Publications and Records Commission. Centered in the Red River valley border region, the specific study area encompasses Traill, Steele and Griggs counties in North Dakota, and Minnesota's Wild Rice Watershed District, which includes parts of Becker, Clay, Clearwater, Mahnommen and Norman counties.

The project presents an interdisciplinary and grassroots approach for understanding and documenting rural society. It does not propose to collect actual documentation, but rather to serve as a tool to better understand current changes in agriculture and rural life, and thus to propose better ways to document those realities. Specific project goals include:

- a) define important components of change in rural society during the late 20th century;
- b) identify extant records (in and outside repositories) that document those changes;
- c) consider additional, non-traditional sources of documentation;
- d) outline a practical means of creating documentation if necessary;
- e) create appraisal priorities against the space and financial limitations of collecting organizations;
- f) propose methods of accessibility;
- g) develop a set of "best practices" for approaching documentation of rural life, in cooperation with state, regional and local repositories.

Three focus groups - scholars, archivists and citizens - will play pivotal roles in the project. Each of the groups will involve regional community members who represent diverse social, cultural, intellectual and economic backgrounds. This project aims to ensure a realistic and accurate interpretation of the region; the focus groups will provide a critical opportunity to listen to rural citizens discuss the changes affecting their lives, and to learn how best to document those realities.

This project will illustrate the importance of cooperation between local, regional and state organizations, and a key to the project's success is the support and participation of county and local historical societies. The project promises to have national implications, and represents a wonderful opportunity for regional voices to resonate in the archival community. By working together we not only gain far more realistic and accurate results, but also forge lasting cooperative relationships that can lead to increases in funding, documentation, preservation and recognition of Minnesota's rich historical record.

The Minnesota Historical Society's project manager is Ben Leonard, who is based in Fargo-Moorhead for the duration of the project. Please feel free to contact him with any questions or comments, at North Dakota State University Library, Fargo, ND 58105; 701/231-6527; e-mail, ben@earl.lib.ndsu.nodak.edu.

New Grants Assistant in SHPO

On June 1, 2000 David M. Grabitske became the new grants assistant with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). A native of St. Paul, he grew up near Annapolis, Md., and Arlington, Minn. A graduate of Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School in New Ulm and Mankato State University, he has worked at Blue Earth County Historical Society, Dakota County Historical Society, Sibley House Historic Site and Historic Fort Snelling, and most recently in the MHS reference department. He is the author of "Sarah Jane: A Lady's Frontier in Minnesota" (about the life of the state's *first* First Lady, Sarah J. Sibley) in the *Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine* (20, No. 3, 1999).



New Theme for Swift County Historical Society Fund-Raiser



After a discussion at its February meeting, the Swift County Historical Society (SCHS) board of directors decided to change the theme of its annual fund-raiser from a broad approach to the history of the 20th-century to "100 Years of Sports in Swift County." The board is hopeful that the new theme will increase attendance at the fund-raiser.

Among the reasons for the decision cited in the March/April 2000 issue of the SCHS newsletter, *The Echo*, are the large number and variety of sports in the county, the interest in some type of sport by people of all ages, and the presence of a large number of sporting activities in the county. In addition, the

county was the home of such sports notables as Jerry Koosman, star pitcher of the 1969 World Series champion New York Mets, and Brad Rheingans, member of the U.S. Greco-Roman wrestling team in the 1980 Olympic Games that were boycotted by the United States.

The newsletter also requests its readers to notify staff members of the museum of any knowledge they might have of information, pictures or ideas that could be included in the sports exhibit.

For further information, contact SCHS at 2135 Minnesota Ave., No. 2, Benson, MN 56215, 320/843-4467.

Mark Your Calendar

The Winona County Historical Society (WCHS) will hold the Silver Anniversary (25th) Annual Victorian Fair on Sept. 16-17. Entertainment, music, food, arts and crafts, and family activities will combine to help participants relive the late 19th and early 20th centuries in a historic Mississippi River town. For information, contact WCHS, 160 Johnson St., Winona, MN 55987; 507/454-2723; e-mail: wchs@luminet.net. A future issue of the *Interpreter* will offer further details.

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 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; 651/222-7384 or jpcsmh@uswest.net.

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On request, this publication is available in alternative formats: audiotape, large print or computer disk.

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