



March - April 2006, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2

MINNESOTA HISTORY

Interpreter

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Plan now for Preservation Month

insert

**Spring local history workshops
schedule and registration form**

Published by the Minnesota Historical Society for county and local historical organizations and heritage preservation commissions

The debate to affiliate

Whether you choose the chamber of commerce or convention and visitors bureau, it pays to join forces

In a recent discussion on the MNLOCALHISTORY listserv, leaders of Minnesota's historical organizations weighed the merits of affiliating with their community's chamber of commerce or convention and visitors bureau.

Some cited the benefits of belonging to the local chamber of commerce. Others said they get more mileage from close ties with the CVB. A few reported working with both. Whatever their affiliation, all share the conviction that such community ties present networking opportunities not to be missed. How does *your* experience compare?

Chambers of commerce

"We hold a membership in every chamber of commerce in the county," reports Kurt Kragness, executive director of the Sherburne County Historical Society. "At each of the four chambers we belong to, we've developed important relationships that have served us well." Among the benefits the Sherburne society has reaped from its chamber affiliations: new members, donated services and contributions to its annual silent auction.

"Belonging to the chambers of commerce has given us good visibility,"

says Kragness. "They let us mail our program flyers in their chamber newsletters, we post our events on their electronic message boards and we have a booth at their business expos. When we had to make cuts in our organizational memberships a while back, we kept our chamber memberships." He has some advice for others

experiencing tight budgets: "Be sure to ask for a nonprofit rate."

Mike Worchester, director of the Cokato Historical Society and Museum, also values the business contacts provided by chamber



Sherburne County Historical Society

Business executive Bob Eddy (center), whose company foundation supports the Sherburne County Historical Society, helps event chair Linda Paulson auction donated goods at the society's annual Fund Fest. The item at hand: raspberries from the garden of Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer, a Big Lake resident.

Debate to affiliate continued on page 2

Debate to affiliate *continued from page 1*

membership. "The local business community gets to know us beyond what they read in the newspaper or hear on the radio," he says. "Those personal contacts put a human face on our organization - we're not just an amenity for a certain segment of the community. That familiarity comes in handy when we need to promote an event or seek help with a project."

"Sponsorships for our annual fundraiser have jumped."

*Nancy Vaillancourt
Steele County Historical Society*

Nancy Vaillancourt, a board member of the Steele County Historical Society, has seen firsthand the benefits of chamber membership. "During the 10 years I've been involved with the society, there were times when we belonged to the chamber of commerce and times when we did not," she notes.

"When we were not members, fewer group tours came our way and local businesses were less supportive. For four years now, we've been chamber members and we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of businesses purchasing historical society memberships. Sponsorships for our annual fundraiser have jumped, too. We also make sure that our own board members and staff serve on tourism committees and historic preservation boards in the county. That combination of chamber membership and our personal involvement has opened doors for us."

Convention and visitors bureaus

Some historical organizations find greater benefits from affiliation with the local tourism bureau. For Mary De Roos of the Wabasha County Historical Society, it's a matter of shared goals. "Joining forces with the

tourism bureau works better for us," she says, "because they're in the business of promoting local attractions like our Read's Landing site. We also are

members of the Mississippi Valley Partners organization, a coalition of 13 communities working to promote tourism around Lake Pepin. The



Mark Peterson (left) of the Winona County Historical Society forged a partnership with Pat Mutter of the Winona Convention and Visitors Bureau (recently renamed Visit Winona) when the bureau moved into the county museum.

chamber of commerce focuses more on economic development issues and downtown business promotion."

The Chippewa County Historical Society's ties to the local convention and visitors bureau are especially strong. Explains CCHS executive director June Lynne, "Two years ago we became a walk-in travel center for our CVB. We work hand-in-hand - I even design many of their brochures so I make sure that we're included in the promotions. I also sit on the board of a regional tourism organization. As for the local chamber of commerce, we exchange newsletters but we're not members - though we do share the job of promoting the local area. In a small rural area like ours, where we work closely together anyway, I don't think chamber membership is vital."

Also sharing quarters are the Winona County Historical Society and the Winona Convention and Visitors Bureau. When the CVB



Visitors from Minneapolis peruse the brochure rack at the Travel Welcome and Information Center located in the Chippewa County Historical Society. Also on display are photos of county properties on the National Register of Historic Places.

separated from the Winona Chamber of Commerce in 2004, WCHS executive director Mark Peterson spied an opportunity to strengthen an already good working relationship. "I offered them the use of two empty offices in our Armory Museum," he says. "Now they're saving money by sharing our receptionist and we make money from the rent they pay."

There are other benefits as well. "We have more foot traffic

into the museum now," says Peterson. "And this partnership raised the historical society's visibility as a key player in Winona's efforts to boost tourism."

Covering both bases

In Goodhue County's largest city, the Red Wing Chamber of Commerce and the Red Wing Visitors and Convention Bureau have an agreement. "If you belong to one,

you must belong to both," explains Char Henn, director of Goodhue County Historical Society. "I'm active on the tourism committees of both groups. So I make sure our museum gets listed in their brochures and linked to their web sites. Those connections used to be more haphazard."

One of the best outcomes of her connection to the two groups? The Goodhue County History Center is now a stop on familiarization tours for regional tour coordinators.

Turning the question around

Playing devil's advocate, Mary Warner of the Morrison County Historical Society wonders, "Why not ask the reverse question? How many chambers of commerce belong to their local historical societies? If you believe that your

organization and its mission are not as important to your community as the chamber of commerce, then let me try to change your mind.

"How do chambers and CVBs promote their communities? Among other things, they tout must-see local attractions like your historical society. Your museum adds value to the community that the chamber draws on to promote their business members. In Little Falls, where we're located, the historical society plays an active role in promoting the community by working on historical signs posted around town, some generated by the city and some by the CVB."

"This partnership raised [our] visibility as a key player."

*Mark Peterson
Winona County Historical Society*

Due to budget constraints, the Morrison County society decided it couldn't afford memberships in every chamber in the county. Instead, the society exchanges newsletters with all of them. This keeps the chambers informed about society events and brings chamber newsletters into the historical society archives.

"Think of other ways you add value," says Warner. "For example, our archives have provided key information for the preservation of many historic buildings downtown that are owned by - you guessed it - chamber members. You can build on those relationships by hosting an annual event for business people at your historical society.

"Remember," Warner concludes, borrowing a turn of phrase, "your historical society is good enough, it's smart enough, and, doggone it, people - and chambers of commerce - find it useful!"

Morrison County Historical Society



Mary Warner of the Morrison County Historical Society helped the City of Little Falls select names of historical significance for some of its parks and parking lots. This one was named after storekeeper O. A. Churchill, whose business once stood on the site.

Paying a visit

County society directors join leadership project delegation

When Jessica Potter was invited to join a large delegation of community leaders bound for the West Coast, she jumped at the chance. As executive director of the Blue Earth County Historical Society, she knew the trip would provide networking opportunities she could never have lined up on her own.

In October, Potter and 87 other delegates from Blue Earth and Nicollet counties traveled to Bellingham, Washington, to learn firsthand how that community addressed issues of interest to the Minnesota group. Nicollet County Historical Society executive director Ben Leonard also made the trip, along with representatives from the region's business, government, education and nonprofit sectors. Scholarships for attendees from nonprofit organizations were paid for by local sponsors of the trip.

Commitment to community

The pairing of the two regions took place under the auspices of a nationwide program called the InterCity Leadership Visit (ICLV), designed to foster the growth and development of regional centers. Leaders from the greater Mankato and St. Peter areas took the three-day trip together, seeking ways to strengthen their communities by creating successful public-private partnerships.

"It was exciting to be included," says Potter. "History and arts organizations are often overlooked in this kind of coalition-building. One of the sites we visited was Bellingham's Museum of History and Art, which had an exhibit on downtown revitalization. That was a great reminder of the role



Greater Mankato Economic Development Corp.



Jessica Potter (front row, fourth from right) traveled to Bellingham, Washington, with community leaders from Blue Earth and Nicollet counties to study public-private partnerships. Stops included Bellingham's Museum of History and Art (left) for an exhibit on downtown revitalization.


museums can play in bringing communities together."

Ongoing benefits

Both Potter and Leonard expect the benefits of the trip to be long-lasting. "So many resources have opened up to us, thanks to the contacts we made," says Potter. "New business memberships have come in. And now I know who to call to get things done." She points to a recent visit from a fellow delegate who owns a local construction company. "He stopped by our museum recently to offer advice on a number of small projects."

New contacts have paid off for the Nicollet County society, too. "I got to spend quality time with the region's movers and shakers," says Leonard. Among them is St. Peter executive Mark Davis, also a Minnesota Historical Society board member, who sent Leonard an unsolicited donation after their return from Washington.

Leonard looks forward to building on those new acquaintances as the group continues to meet to work on a regional long-range plan called Envision 2020. "They know us now," he says. "We history organizations have a place at the table. We can make our voices heard; we can be proactive about our future role in the community."

Nothing, it seems, beats face time with a travel companion. 

For more information about the InterCity Leadership Visit program, go to www.iclvisit.org, or call Jessica Potter at 507-345-5566 or Ben Leonard at 507-934-2160.

Anoka County goes to the movies

Film series spotlights history topics

What can the movies teach about preservation of historic documents? Plenty, decided Vickie Wendel of the Anoka County Historical Society, upon viewing "National Treasure," a 2004 film starring Nicolas Cage. The movie tells the tale of a treasure map hidden on the back of the Declaration of Independence, with clues left by the founding fathers.

"We decided to have some fun with Hollywood's idea of 'archival,'" says Wendel. "The film presented teachable moments about preservation - what's realistic in dealing with historic documents and what should not be done. So we invited the public to the museum to view the film, then stay for a mini-workshop on basic preservation measures using documents from our collection." Audience members had the opportunity to ask questions about their own important papers.

This was not the Anoka museum's first "History and Hollywood" event, an idea inspired by the History Channel. Last year they screened "We Were Soldiers" in conjunction with an exhibit on Anoka County's Vietnam War veterans. Veterans in attendance assessed the accuracy of historical events depicted and shared their personal experiences.

Plans call for continuation of the free series, with future titles yet to be selected. For more information and tips on legal requirements for showing commercially released films, call Wendel at 763-421-0600.



After a film viewing at the Anoka County Historical Society, program manager Vickie Wendel explains proper archival practices using tools of the trade and documents from the collections.

Anoka County Historical Society

Historians in the making

For seven years the Washington County Historical Society has set aside \$2,000 annually for scholarships for local students pursuing post-secondary studies in history-related fields. Here, WCHS executive director Brent Peterson congratulates 2005 scholarship recipient Melisa Chial of Stillwater.

The scholarships, underwritten by a local foundation, go to graduating seniors or college students residing in the county. Recipients must have a grade point average of 3.0 or higher and be a WCHS family member. A historical society board committee makes the selection after reviewing applications, transcripts and references and conducting candidate interviews. For more information, call Peterson at 651-439-5956.



Melisa Chial and Brent Peterson

Washington County Historical Society

Minnesota Maps Online

New to the Minnesota Historical Society web site is Minnesota Maps Online at www.mnhs.org/collections/digitalmaps/index.htm. The site offers a searchable selection of maps from Society collections and the Office of the Secretary of State.

Among the maps featured are Minnesota's original land survey maps, created by the U.S. Surveyor General's Office between 1848 and 1907. These survey plat maps, constituting the legal records for all Minnesota real estate, serve as an essential resource for surveyors and a rich source of information about the state's physical geography before European settlement.



Minnesota Maps Online

Historic maps from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Office of the Secretary of State.

- Original Land Survey Maps
- Plat Books & Atlases

More recent resources on the site are maps up to the year 2001 from the General Land Office and the Bureau of Land Management.

Also featured are a selection of the Society's 1,350 county atlases and plat books that show land ownership, in some cases back to the 1860s. Currently available online are:

- An Illustrated Historical Atlas of

- the State of Minnesota, 1874;
- Map of Hennepin County, 1873;
- Plat book of Winona County, 1894;
- Plat book of Dakota County, 1896; and
- Plat book of Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, 1898.

Minnesota Maps Online is a project of the Minnesota Digital Library.



'Minnesota Reflections' proves popular

Digital photo library features images from dozens of collections

"Minnesota Reflections," launched last fall, is the first collection from the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition (MDLC) to go online.

The web site, at <http://reflections.mndigital.org>, provides access to more than 5,000 digital images of Minnesota subjects dating from before 1909.

Thirty-four county and local historical societies are among more than 50 organizations so far that have shared photos from their collections.

Together, the images offer an overview of Minnesota history for researchers, educators, students and the public.

A sampling of photos posted on the site reveals a range of topics:

- Scenes of Minneapolis's flour milling industry from the Hennepin History Museum.
- Development of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester and portraits of the W.W. Mayo family, submitted by the Olmsted County Historical Society.

- Construction of the iron ore docks in Two Harbors, from the collections of the Lake County Historical Society.
- Growth of central Minnesota's resort industry, documented in the collections of the Douglas County Historical Society.

The Renville County Historical Society took a different approach, submitting five photos from each of the county's 10 towns.

The MDLC invites other historical societies, museums and libraries to submit proposals for the "Minnesota Reflections" project. E-mail project manager Jim Dildine at jim.dildine@mnhs.org for guidelines and other information. "Minnesota Reflections," documenting the state's first 50 years, is one of many projects paving the way for celebration of Minnesota's sesquicentennial in 2008.



MINNESOTA DIGITAL LIBRARY

minnesota relections

WELCOME!

Minnesota Relections brings you more than 5,000 images shared by more than 50 cultural heritage organizations from across the state. This site offers a broad view of Minnesota's history for researchers, educators, students and the public. Also visit Minnesota Maps Online, another MDL-supported project.

May is Preservation Month

What is your community planning?

This May, thousands of state and local community groups across the country will celebrate their historic preservation successes. Spearheading the nationwide observance of Preservation Month is the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

There are many ways your community can participate and plenty of help to guide your planning. To get you thinking, here are a few ideas for audiences of all ages: Hold an open house at a historic building that's been recently restored or that needs attention. Work with students to research a local landmark. Encourage downtown merchants to create window displays highlighting their history.

Get started now

The National Trust's web site offers advice and tools for mounting successful Preservation Month events. You'll find a proclamation template, steps for creating a publicity plan, and sample press releases and media kits. For details go to www.nationaltrust.org/preservationmonth/index.asp.

Spread the word

Let your colleagues know what you're planning. You can post a notice of your Preservation Month events in two easy ways:

- On MNLOCALHISTORY, the Minnesota Historical Society's listserv (see page 1 of the enclosed Preservation Planner for instructions).
- On the web site of the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota (e-mail bmcdonald@mnpreservation.org).

Preservation Alliance events

Playing a lead role for Preservation Month in Minnesota is the Preservation Alliance of



State Historic Preservation Office

Transformation of Fairmont's First Church of Christ Scientist into the Red Rock Center for the Arts was nothing short of miraculous. The 1898 Richardsonian Romanesque church, shown before and after rehabilitation, was designed by Harry Wild Jones and built of Sioux quartzite. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Minnesota, celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. The Alliance kicks things off on April 7 with the opening of "Minnesota Saved! A Quarter Century of Historic Preservation in Minnesota" at the Mill City Museum in Minneapolis. Says Alliance executive director Bonnie McDonald, "The exhibit features our pick of the 25 best preservation stories in the state. Mill City Museum

is one of them. The rest are a surprise until the opening."

Also on tap are the May 5 announcement of the Alliance's 10 Most Endangered Properties, a May 10 symposium on the recent past, and a May 20 house tour focusing on modern architecture. For more information on these and other Alliance events, go to www.mnpreservation.org.



AASLH helps museums measure visitor response

Do you wonder what visitors think of your history museum? Learn from them, urges the American Association for State and Local History. Their answers could help shape your strategic planning, fundraising and grant-writing efforts.

To tap the wealth of information your visitors hold, the AASLH offers a tool for measuring visitor satisfaction: the Performance Management Program, a package of services developed in partnership with the Center for Nonprofit Management. Program staff will guide your museum through the entire process, which includes a customized survey, training materials, analysis of your survey data and resources to help you incorporate the results.

AASLH member organizations receive the complete survey package for \$3,500. "That's well below the cost of hiring an outside firm to conduct a tested, scientific visitor survey," notes project director Cherie Cook. The application deadline is June 15. For more information, e-mail cook@aaslh.org or call 316-721-9956.

Local history workshops begin

Five venues, one theme: 'Community Collaborations'

How many ways does your organization collaborate? With whom do you partner in your community - schools, genealogical groups, historic preservationists, the local library? Share your own successes and challenges and learn how your colleagues fare at this year's local history workshops sponsored by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Choose from one of these workshop locations, all featuring the same program:

- **March 24, Buffalo**
- **April 7, Austin**
- **April 21, Morris**

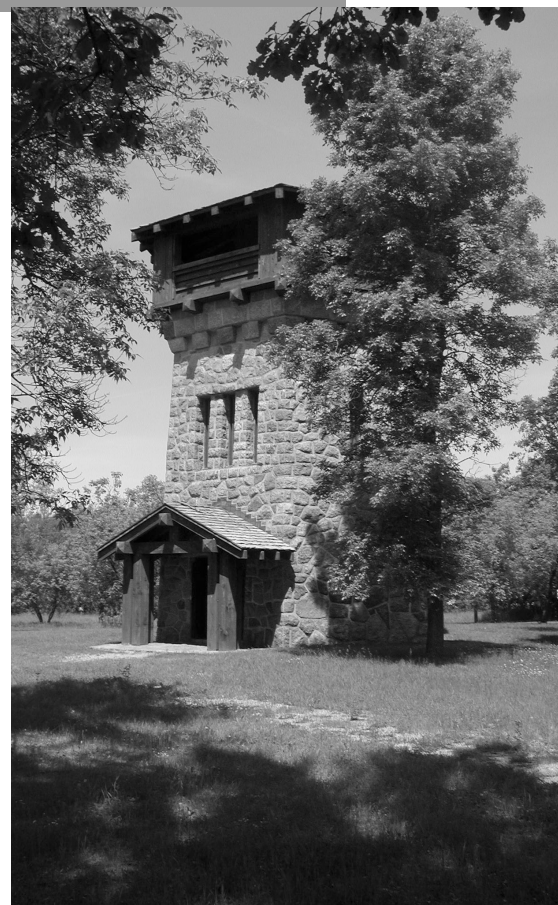
- **April 28, Grand Rapids**
- **May 8, Lake Bronson**

For a complete schedule of workshop sessions, see the enclosed flyer. You may register using the form provided or you can register online at www.mnhs.org/mhowkshp. If you have questions, call David Grabitske at 651-297-4416.

Make a date to join us!



Tours of local sites at each venue are a workshop highlight. One of the stops on the Kittson County tour is this Rustic Style water tower with observation deck, built by WPA workers in Lake Bronson State Park.



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