



MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

May-June 2003, Vol. XXXI, No. 4

INSIDE

page 6

MHS Press pocket guides

page 8

Preservation Week, May 4-10

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

Wright County Historical Society



The Bonk-Ailsleiger Cabin, of vertical log construction, stands on the Wright County Fairgrounds in Howard Lake. It will be interpreted to the period 1880–1900.

furnishing plans for the three cabins. With a background in museum studies, material culture, decorative arts and exhibit design, Livesay brought to the project a mix of skills and vision that would lay the foundation for a historically accurate and lively interpretive program.

Going to the sources

Livesay, with assistance from Galvin and WCHS archivist Betty Dircks, spent hours poring over courthouse records and the museum's archives to learn more about the cabins' early inhabitants. What he pulled together from primary and secondary sources shaped the furnishing plan for each dwelling.

One cabin, a vertical log dwelling known as the Bonk-Ailsleiger Cabin, was built ca. 1887 by immigrant farmers Christian and Annie Bonk, who came from what is now Poland. The cabin was later inhabited by German immigrant Edward Ailsleiger, his wife and three children. It was moved in 1978 to its present location at the Wright County Fairgrounds, where it will be interpreted to the period 1880–1900.

Tax records revealed that the Bonk family was relatively poor. The tax assessor listed a sewing machine among their possessions but little else of value. However, as Livesay noted in his report, the assessor may have listed only items that *he* deemed valuable, leaving out such basic household goods as cooking utensils and rag rugs.

Hearth and home

Furnishing plan guides interpretation of Wright County log cabins

Years of good intentions didn't move the small staff of the Wright County Historical Society fast enough toward their goal of improving interpretation at the organization's three historic log cabins. Acquired in the 1970s, the cabins provided an important link to the area's agricultural beginnings. But over time the buildings had come to house a mix of furnishings not all

age-appropriate to the dwellings. To better interpret the experiences of the 19th- and early-20th-century families who lived in such cabins, the staff turned to outside experts for advice.

A state grant-in-aid from the Minnesota Historical Society provided just the help they sought. Over the course of six months, WCHS curator Maureen Galvin worked with consultant Fred Livesay to develop

Hearth and home *continued on page 2*

Hearth and home *continued from page 1*

Better documentation remains of the Streich-Tuchenhagen-Gritz Cabin, built in the 1880s and occupied until the 1970s by Elizabeth Tuckenhagen, widow of German immigrant farmer Earnest. Their daughter Betty Gritz donated the cabin to the historical society in 1975; after several moves, it came to rest on the grounds of the Wright County Heritage Center. In a series of interviews with WCHS staff, Gritz shared her memories of growing up in the cabin. That information became the primary source for the furnishing plan, which will interpret the dwelling to the period 1912–25.

Little information could be found about the Collinwood Cabin, probably of Scandinavian construction. Moved decades ago from the Collinwood Park area of Wright County, it too stands on the county fairgrounds in Howard Lake. Because nothing is known of its inhabitants, this cabin will not be furnished with period artifacts but instead will serve as temporary exhibit space for the historical society during the county fair each summer.

Planning for the future

In his report, Livesay explained the need to counter the misguided ideas and false romanticism about “pioneer life” that many visitors bring to historic buildings like these cabins. Despite – or perhaps because of – the pervasiveness of such romantic imagery, he wrote, “visitors come through the door of your museum with a ready interest and curiosity. ... Through thoughtful and creative interpretation, this fervent interest can be channeled to a truer and better understanding of history.”

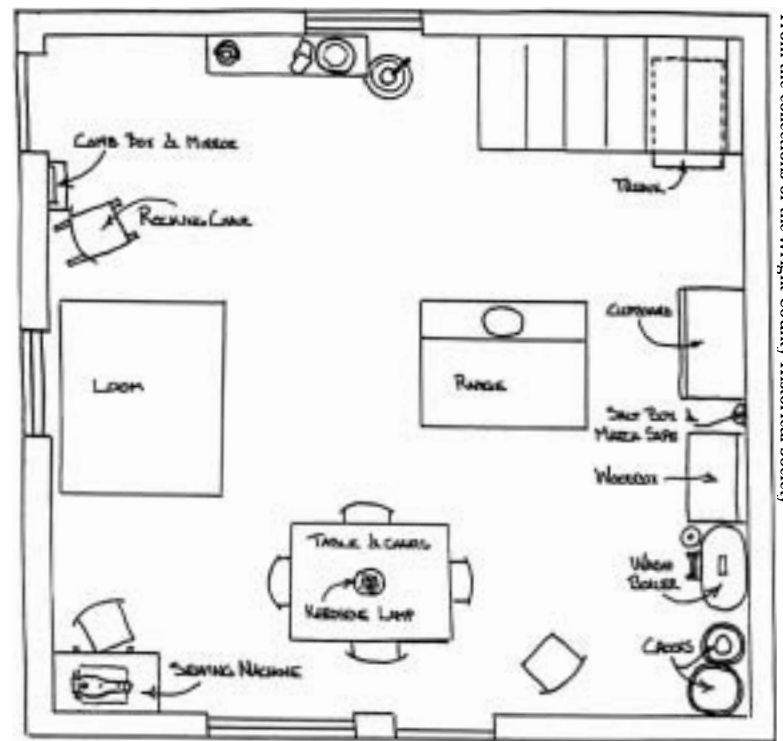
So inside and out, room by room, Livesay made recommendations for

changes to the cabins’ appearance. He provided lists of appropriate furnishings, with supporting documentation, and suggested how the furnishings might be arranged. He even drew floor plans for the staff to follow as they search for just the right items.

“The cabins will probably look quite spare to visitors,” said Galvin. “Fred’s floor plans remind us how many fewer possessions people had then.”

Galvin is using the plans for the project’s next phase – purchase and acquisition of objects to interpret life in the cabins. “Because the buildings are not environmentally controlled,” she explained, “those objects will become part of our education collection, not our museum artifact collection.” But even before all the new furnishings are in place, tour guides are using Livesay’s research to give visitors a more accurate view of daily life during each period of interpretation.

“We’re planning eventually to have the Streich Cabin staffed on Saturdays with volunteer families – parents and children together,” said Galvin. “And, although the fairgrounds site is currently open only during the five days of the fair, we hope to have



From the collections of the Wright County Historical Society

A furnishing plan for the Bonk-Ailsleiger Cabin shows that family life revolved around the cooking range.

more education programs there in the future.”

High praise

Kevin Maijala of the Minnesota Historical Society education department, one of the reviewers of Wright County’s final grant report, had high praise for the project. “This is a great example of how to do this kind of interpretive work,” he said. “They’ve moved from simply having the resource to developing a plan for improving the resource, to undertaking thorough research and documentation, to implementing their vision.”

Galvin welcomes calls from other historical societies that own similar properties. For details on how she put this project together, call her at 763-682-7322.

North by northeast

Grants aid three projects in Arrowhead region

State grants-in-aid from the Minnesota Historical Society recently helped three organizations in northeastern Minnesota carry out projects ranging from oral histories to collections storage to roof replacement. In each case, local communities stepped up to match grant monies with cash and in-kind support.

North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum

The Tofte Historical Society's own bylaws stated the need clearly: its fledgling North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum was to have one designated place in which to preserve its collections. Dispersed among THS board members and scattered throughout the museum basement, the collection of photographs and artifacts needed to be centralized so that storage conditions and access could be monitored.

A state grant-in-aid helped the group transform a corner of the basement into an environmentally stable storage area. The enclosed

storage room now has temperature and humidity controls in place, new shelving and an access log to monitor who enters the area. Staff also acquired the collections management software PastPerfect to facilitate proper cataloging of the collections. All of these steps will help the museum fulfill its mission as public stewards of the area's material heritage.

Lake County Historical Society

Built by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1892, the Two Harbors Light Station guided iron ore shipments through what was then Lake Superior's busiest port. In 1998 the station was transferred to the Lake County Historical Society, which now operates it as a bed-and-breakfast inn.

Several years ago the historical society began a total exterior restoration of the building that had once housed both the light tower and the keeper's family. A state grant-in-aid funded replacement of the roof, fascia boards, gutters and downspouts, and removal and replacement of the chimney's outer layer. Preservation of this Lake Superior icon, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is thus ensured for generations to come.

Cook County Historical Society

Twenty years ago the Cook County Historical Society received a state grant-in-aid to conduct oral histories with proprietors of the area's resorts, which constitute a major North Shore industry. The resort business then was largely a home-grown affair, dominated by "mom and pop" cabins with repeat customers – families who



The reroofed Two Harbors Light Station awaits completion of a new paint job.

returned summer after summer, many for extended stays.

In 2002 the historical society was awarded a second grant to continue the project. The goal: to see how the resort industry had changed, from marketing and staffing to vacationers' length of stay and preferred activities.

Among resorts included in the second round of interviews were those still in the same family ownership as well as newer resort complexes and an additional category of vacation properties – bed-and-breakfast inns. What interviewers learned – about soaring land values, diminishing profitability and corporate ownership – points to profound changes ahead for the region's lodging tourism. For more information on the project's methodology and results, call CCHS director Pat Zankman, 218-387-9131.



An enclosed room will provide locked, environmentally controlled storage for the North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum's collection of photographs and artifacts.



Owners of Clearwater Lodge, built in the 1920s along the Gunflint Trail, were interviewed for both of the Cook County Historical Society's oral history projects. The lodge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

'In Times of War'

Beltrami County exhibit honors those who served

In a new exhibit more timely than they ever imagined, staff of the Beltrami County Historical Society tackle the subject of war and its effects on citizens at home and away. "In Times of War: Voices and Visions of Beltrami County" opened in March at the Beltrami County History Center with a series of receptions for members and veterans. They came to read the letters, see the uniforms and study the photographs of their compatriots who served in wars from the Civil War to Vietnam.

"The exhibit is very dramatic, very theatrical," said BCHS executive director Wanda Hoyum. "It's sure to evoke strong feelings and stir memories."

She credits that to exhibit designer Steve Sundahl, associate professor of visual arts at Bemidji State University. In one gallery he recreated a Red Cross tent where visitors, using a touch-screen display, can follow the experiences of a local World War I nurse. In a display on the USO, visitors can gain access to music from every war era at one of eight push-button stations throughout the

exhibit. Students from BSU's Industrial Technology department helped develop the interactive components.

Not to be forgotten, those on the home front made their contributions felt as well. For more information about the exhibit, which will be on view for two years, call Hoyum at 218-444-3376.

Silk stockings were just one of the things that Beltrami County citizens collected on the home front to aid the war effort during World War II.



Beltrami County Historical Society

Weekend sleuths

On doing family history in Chisago County

If you're a Chisago County resident interested in family history, you eventually find your way to the County History Center in Lindstrom. There for the past three years, on the second Sunday evening of the month, the Chisago County Historical Society has offered workshops for

genealogy enthusiasts. The research library is open all afternoon on workshop Sundays.

Each month there's a speaker or presentation on some aspect of genealogical research or family history. It might be an expert on Irish family history or a staff member from

the University of Minnesota's Immigration History Research Center or a veteran scrapbooker discussing archivally sound ways to save old photographs. For information on future programs, call CCHS executive director Sherry Sterling, 651-257-5310.

Painting the town

Le Sueur mural resurrects 1940s Main Street

Dack in the early 1970s, one full block of downtown Le Sueur was razed in the name of urban renewal. Valleygreen Square Mall rose in its place. Three decades later, many townspeople didn't know what the town used to look like – a gap in the community's memory that bothered local businessman Loren Edberg.

When Edberg began some remodeling work at the mall last winter, he decided to give the city something to help them remember. He tapped the talents of his sister, artist Lana Beck, to paint a mural of Main Street storefronts as they looked in the 1940s. Working from historic

Valleygreen Square Mall



photographs, Beck recreated the corner of Main and Bridge Streets. As she worked, passersby stopped to offer suggestions and share their experiences shopping at the old stores.



Le Sueur News Herald

Longtime Le Sueur resident Arnulf Aalid (right) stopped by daily to check the progress on artist Lana Beck's mural (inset).

"It starts conversations," said Beck of her wall-sized mural. For more information about the project, call Le Sueur historian Jean Haas at 507-665-6698.

Accentuate the positive

Goodhue County creates photo database of special collections

Several years ago the Goodhue County Historical Society acquired two invaluable collections of

photographs – one the work of Fred "Scoop" Jonson, for 30 years the managing editor of the Republican Daily Eagle, and the other documenting four decades of life at the Minnesota State Training School in Red Wing. The only problem: both collections, numbering more than 2,000 images, consisted

entirely of negatives. have to be created. So the GCHS staff got to work researching possible solutions, identifying the necessary equipment and securing a state grant-in-aid from the Minnesota Historical Society. With the help of 145 volunteer hours, all negatives were scanned and positive images entered into a photo collection database. The result: both staff and the public can gain access to the photos on in-house computers without having to retrieve the original negatives from the archives.

"While the dollar amount of our grant was not enormous," reports GCHS archivist Sharon Schroeder, "the impact of the grant was. We've already been contacted by two other county museums considering similar projects." To learn more, call Schroeder at 651-388-6024.

Goodhue County Historical Society



The Goodhue County Historical Society will enlist longtime residents to identify the people in this and other Fred "Scoop" Jonson photographs from the 1940s.

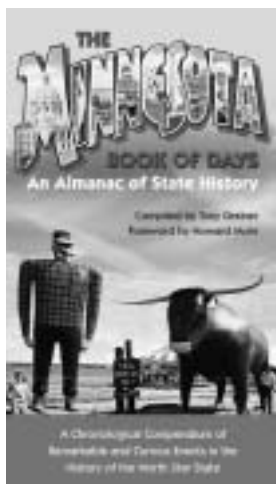
entirely of negatives.

To make the collections accessible to researchers, positive images would

Pocket guides keep Minnesota history handy

The Minnesota Historical Society Press has packaged some of Minnesota's rich history in a series of colorful pocket-sized, paperback guidebooks. Sure to delight lifelong residents and visitors alike, these handy guides offer an introduction to the state's place names, historic buildings, historic markers and notable events.

All guides, sized for easy handling at 8 by 4.5 inches, are available for purchase or for resale in your museum gift shops. To order, see below.



First in the series, published in 2001, was *The Minnesota Book of Days: An Almanac of State History* by Tony Greiner. This day-by-day account of Minnesota history

chronicles, in quick and quirky entries, important events, famous firsts, notable individuals and interesting incidents. You'll discover when Scotch™ tape was invented, when Hubert H. Humphrey gave his famous civil rights speech and when the Kensington runestone was unearthed. Part serious history, part unexpected fun.

The Minnesota Book of Days, \$13.95, paper, ISBN 0-87351-416-5, 208 pages, 100 b&w illus.

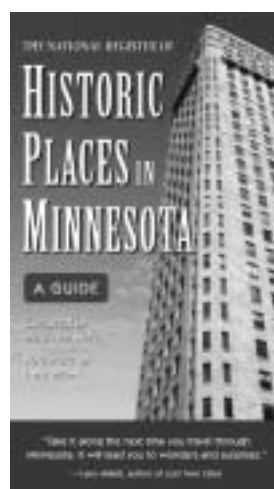
Next in the series came *The Pocket Guide to Minnesota Place Names* by Michael Fedo, a handy abridgement to the classic reference work *Minnesota Place Names* by



Warren Upham (also published by MHS Press). The pocket guide contains the stories behind 1,200 place names in the state, culled from over 20,000 entries in the larger

volume. Included are all the names you'd expect – counties, larger towns and cities, major lakes and rivers – as well as the curious and odd, from Looneyville and Chickentown to Pig's Eye and Nowhere.

The Pocket Guide to Minnesota Place Names, \$11.95, paper, ISBN 0-87351-424-6, 168 pages, index by county.

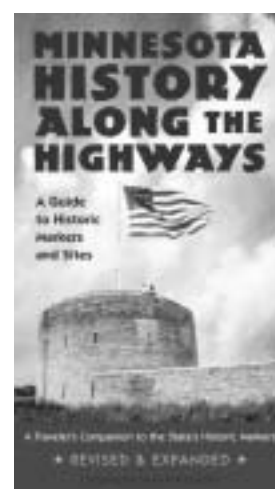


Two new additions to the pocket guide series are scheduled for publication this May. *The National Register of Historic Places in Minnesota: A Guide*, compiled by

Mary Ann Nord, is a county-by-county inventory of Minnesota's more than 1,500 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, the country's official list of historic properties. Log houses, courthouses, water towers, mine pits, flour mills and fur-trade depots – they're all here, along with a

brief description of each property's significance to the state's history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture.

The National Register of Historic Places in Minnesota, \$13.95, paper, ISBN 0-87351-448-3, 280 pages, 180 b&w photos, appendixes, index. Produced by Minnesota's State Historic Preservation Office.



Also useful for travel or armchair research is *Minnesota History along the Highways: A Guide to Historic Markers and Sites*, compiled by Sarah P. Rubinstein.

This handy guide presents the locations and texts of 254 historic markers, 60 geologic markers and 29 historic monuments in all corners of the state. Some have stood for over a century; others are more recent, enhancing interstate highways with informative historical sketches. Entries are grouped by region and county to make this the perfect travel companion.

Minnesota History along the Highways, \$13.95, paper, ISBN 0-87351-456-4, 270 pages, 40 b&w photos, 5 maps, index.

How to order

To request a copy of the latest MHS Press catalog, call Leslie Rask, 651-297-3243, or e-mail leslie.rask@mnhs.org. For sales information, go to www.mnhs.org/market/mhspress. All inquiries about MHS Press titles should be directed to the Chicago Distribution Center, 1-800-621-2736.

Workshops tackle care of paper, textiles

The Upper Midwest Conservation Association (UMCA) will present a two-day workshop, "Preservation and Conservation Techniques for Paper Artifacts," May 15–16, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Neil C. Cockerline, UMCA conservator and director of field services, will cover all aspects of paper care, including identification of paper types, agents of deterioration, proper storage, basic conservation techniques and presentation options for works on paper. Workshop participants will gain practical

experience handling paper artifacts and artworks from UMCA's teaching collection. They may also bring examples from their own collections for examination and analysis.

On June 26–27, also at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, UMCA will sponsor a "Care of Textiles" workshop conducted by textile conservator Patricia Ewer. She will discuss environmental requirements, storage furniture, hanging systems and support structures for various types of costumes. Participants will have the opportunity to try out techniques for

the proper care and handling of costumes.

Registration for each two-day workshop, which includes lunches and a notebook of related materials, is \$165 for UMCA institutional members and \$200 for nonmembers. Enrollment is limited to 20 per workshop. For more information or to register, call Melinda Markell, UMCA field services coordinator, at 612-870-3128; fax 612-870-3118; or e-mail UMCA@aol.com.

Statewide Historic Preservation Conference slated for Sept. 18–19

New Ulm's historic Turner Hall is the setting for Minnesota's 24th Annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference, to be held Sept. 18–19.

Sponsored by the State Historic Preservation Office, the conference will be hosted by the City of New Ulm, the New Ulm Heritage Preservation Commission, the

Brown County Historical Society and the New Ulm Area Chamber of Commerce.

Details about the program, which will feature two days of lectures, working sessions and tours of local sites, will be available in the summer. For more information, call SHPO at 651-296-5451 or e-mail mnshpo@mnhs.org.

MHS web site update

The Minnesota Historical Society has updated its web site on information about conservation. Featured are the conservation department's outreach program, offering workshops, equipment loans and a lending library, and an introduction to time capsules, with general and technical information for their construction. See www.mnhs.org/preserve/conservation/index.html.

State grants-in-aid deadlines

Application deadlines for the fall 2003 round of state grants-in-aid are:

Aug. 1 Pre-application due.

Aug. 29 Grant application due.

Oct. 2 Grants Review Committee meets.

Updated information about Minnesota Historical Society budget

reductions and their effect on the grant program will be posted in MNLOCALHISTORY, the Society's free list service. To receive the weekly electronic communications, send an e-mail, with "SUBSCRIBE MNLOCALHISTORY" as the sole text, to majordomo@state.mn.us.

Updates will also be posted on

the Society's web site at www.mnhs.org/about/grants/index.html. Applicants may call or e-mail Tim Glines (651-296-5460; timothy.glines@mnhs.org) or David Grabitske (651-297-4416; david.grabitske@mnhs.org).

Celebrate National Preservation Week

May events explore 'Cities, Suburbs and Countryside' theme

The theme of this year's National Preservation Week, "Cities, Suburbs and Countryside," reflects the country's changing preservation ethic – from saving individual landmark buildings to tackling economic and quality-of-life issues. Among events planned for Minnesota:

- **Minnesota Barn Preservation Workshop, May 3, rural Isanti County.** This all-day workshop on historic barn repair and preservation includes a tour of local barns. Sponsor: State Historic Preservation Office. Fee: \$35 for Minnesota Historical Society members, \$40 for nonmembers. To register call 651-296-5434.
- **Nooks and Crannies of Rice Park, May 4, 12 noon to 5 p.m., downtown St. Paul.** Tour Rice Park's historic buildings, from the newly restored Saint Paul Public Library to hidden corners of the Landmark Center. Sponsor: Minnesota Landmarks. Fee: \$5 (children under 12 free). To register call 651-292-3225.
- **Beyond Buildings: Discussions on Historic Preservation in a New Century, May 6, 5 to 6:30 p.m., F.K. Weyerhaeuser Auditorium, Landmark Center.** In this free public forum Peter Bell, chair of the Metropolitan Council, addresses regional planning in the context of rural, open-space and farmland preservation. A discussion follows with local officials representing urban, suburban and rural areas. Sponsor: Minnesota Landmarks.
- **Minneapolis Theaters Tour, May 10, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Hennepin Center for the Arts, Minneapolis.** See the restored State, Orpheum and Pantages theaters and visit the historic Shubert Theater, currently awaiting restoration. Sponsor: Preservation Alliance of Minnesota. Tickets available day of event. Fee: \$15, \$5 for Alliance members. For details call 612-341-8140.

Minnesota History Interpreter is published nine times a year by the Historic Preservation, Field Services and Grants Department of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Readers are invited to submit information for publication. To be considered, items must reach the editor by the first of the month, two months before publication. Send to Interpreter Editor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906.

Material from this issue may be reprinted with the following credit line: Reprinted with permission from *Minnesota History Interpreter*, May-June 2003, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, published by the Minnesota Historical Society. Do not reprint material taken from another source without permission.

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

For address corrections e-mail michele.decker@mnhs.org or call 651-296-5434. For other matters call Tim Glines at 651-296-5460 or e-mail timothy.glines@mnhs.org.

Britta Bloomberg, Head, Historic Preservation, Field Services and Grants Department
Tim Glines, Manager, Outreach Services
David Grabitske, Grants and Field Programs Assistant
Mary Ann Nord, Editor
Kate Raver, Layout

www.mnhs.org



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

345 Kellogg Boulevard West
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102-1906

Address service requested

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Paul, MN
Permit No. 854