



**INSIDE**

page 2

**Community partnerships**

page 4

**Map project mushrooms**

page 6

**Managing your collections**

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

## When opportunity knocks Winona County Courthouse fights for survival

Just after 3 a.m. on a Sunday in September, the ceiling fell in on a courtroom at the historic Winona County Courthouse, shearing off several fire sprinklers. Before firefighters could turn off the water, more than 4,000 gallons had poured down through four floors of the five-story structure, soaking county records and the building's interior. The disaster set off a storm of controversy in the community over what should be done with the damaged building.

One of the first Minnesota properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (in 1970), the 1888 Romanesque courthouse had weathered earlier threats to its preservation. In the 1960s a failed campaign to replace the old courthouse resulted in a voter referendum to remodel

the building's interior. A floor was added, courtrooms divided and offices squeezed into every nook and cranny. Later construction of a courthouse annex nearby and the purchase of a downtown mall building attempted to solve the county government's growing space needs.

Today the historic courthouse once again faces an uncertain future. We asked Mark Peterson, executive director of the Winona County Historical Society, for his views on the community's struggle to determine the building's fate.

### How did the Winona County Historical Society get involved?

**Peterson:** After the flood, county commissioners came to us for names of state experts to advise on paper



Winona County Historical Society

Despite its imposing presence, the 1888 Winona County Courthouse faces an uncertain future after flooding damaged the interior.

preservation and other conservation work. They also hired an architect to begin exploring the cost of a new government center. Right away people became concerned about what would happen to the historic courthouse if the county abandoned it. Because the Winona County Historical Society had been involved in earlier community preservation issues, people called us to ask what could be done to save the building.

Local opinions were so divided that the commissioners decided to form an options committee to recommend a course of action. I was asked to serve on the committee, along with two judges, one commissioner, the sheriff, assistant county attorney, county assessor, county facilities director and county administrator.

## Field Services in transition

by **Britta L. Bloomberg**, *Head, Historic Preservation, Field Services and Grants Department, Minnesota Historical Society*

This is a unique time in the history of the Field Services program at the Society. In September we bade farewell to David Nystuen, long-time field services coordinator, as he began retirement. Judging by the phone calls and letters I've received since then, there's considerable interest in the program's future.

I want to assure readers that the Society is committed to continuing a strong field services program in the years ahead that will serve Minnesota's historical organizations. Today the organizations you represent are more than 500 strong and diverse in size, focus and reach. You are all crucial partners in advancing the cause of history statewide.

In preparing for this transition to the next generation of field services programming, I asked two questions. First, how do we best build on the strong foundation that has been laid? Second, where is growth or a new vision needed to lead the way in the new century?

**Field Services** continued on page 3

**Winona County** continued on page 7

# Building community support

## Partnerships pay off in unexpected ways

Whether you're planning programs, raising funds or cataloging your collections, it may pay to take on a partner.

As historical societies around the state have discovered, partnering with local organizations can reap big rewards. Partnerships help build audiences by bringing your group to the attention of new segments of the community. Partnerships can broaden your funding base by tapping new sources of revenue or by demonstrating community support when applying for a grant. And partnerships work to strengthen your position as a community leader and indispensable resource.

Few groups rival the Chisago County Historical Society when it comes to cultivating community partners. Says executive director Sherry Stirling, "Working with partner organizations

means going to a few more meetings. But it also means having access to many more resources – from volunteers to new audiences to financial support. It's definitely worth the extra time!"

Here are just some of the many ways in which Minnesota's county and local historical organizations have teamed with partners to preserve and interpret the history of their communities. Give them a call to learn the secrets to their successes.

### Program collaborations

**Chisago County:** Perusing publicity about fall programs of the Chisago County Historical Society and its many partners serves as a good introduction to the area's business, civic and cultural communities. A sampling:

- Almelund's Apple Festival, co-sponsored by the CCHS with Friends of Amador Heritage Center, Almelund Lion's Club and S & C Bank, among others.
- Cultural Heritage Program Series, held this fall at Wild River State Park, partially funded by the East Central Regional Arts Council and co-sponsored with Friends of Wild River State Park, Minnesota State Park Interpretive Services, St. Croix Valley Heritage Coalition and two nearby townships.
- Women in History Celebration, funded by the Minnesota Humanities Commission and co-sponsored with Working Women

Scott County Historical Society



Young visitors take in the sites at Casey Acres, a 260-acre dairy farm – one of the stops on Scott County's City to Country Tour.

Together, a local business and professional women's group.

- Natural Heritage Workshop on native landscapes past and present, co-sponsored with the Department of

Natural Resources, Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission and Upland Restoration Alliance. *Chisago County Historical Society, 651-257-5310.*

**"Working with partners means going to a few more meetings. But it also means having access to many more resources – from volunteers to new audiences to financial support."**

*Sherry Stirling, executive director  
Chisago County Historical Society*

**Scott County:** For two years the Scott County Historical Society and the county office of the University of Minnesota Extension Service have joined forces to sponsor a self-guided, city-country tour. A joint committee selects the sites – this year a century farm, a local orchard and a geological site with spiritual significance to the Dakota – then the property owners and event organizers plan programming at each stop on the tour.

"We like to get other members of the community involved," says SCHS director John Gutteter, who this year arranged for representatives of Shakopee's Mdewakanton Sioux Community to talk with visitors at Boiling Springs on Eagle Creek, a site managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The event is promoted by the local media and in the county's newsletter, mailed to all residents. The only cost to the historical society: fliers with a map of the tour, sent home with 15,000 Scott County elementary school students. *Scott County Historical Society, 612-445-0378.*



### Fund-raising partnerships

**Carlton County:** For its annual fall kickoff event and fund raiser, the Carlton County Historical Society enlisted a local business, the Aid Association for Lutherans, to match all funds raised at the county society's swing dance, dinner and silent auction. Monies will be used to upgrade the air conditioning and electrical systems at the Carlton County History and Heritage Center. *Carlton County Historical Society, 218-879-1938.*

**Edina:** When Edina residents do their grocery shopping at the local Jerry's Foods store, they send their receipts to the Edina Historical Society, one of several community organizations to which the store donates funds. For every dollar on receipts redeemed, the stores contributes half a penny. "It may not sound like much," says one museum volunteer, "but it adds up fast." *Edina Historical Society, 612-928-4577.*

**Kanabec County:** The Kanabec History Center began a new tradition this summer with its first annual garden tour, a fund raiser sponsored jointly with the Mora Town and Country Garden Club. During the day-long event, the county historical society welcomed more than 125 tour takers for a luncheon at the History Center, a first visit there for some of the garden enthusiasts. *Kanabec County Historical Society, 320-679-1665.*

**Clay County:** For three hours on a Sunday afternoon in October, the Clay County Historical Society reaped part of the profits from a local Barnes & Noble

**In 1999 students from Chisago Lakes High School's landscape design and horticulture classes designed a new sidewalk for the Chisago County History Center in Lindstrom. Teacher Jeff Lindeman (left) supervised the installation. This year students designed and planted a perennial garden on the museum grounds.**

store. During the retail giant's book fair, customers turning in a special coupon with their purchase could designate the historical society as the recipient of a percentage of the sale. No Barnes & Noble store in your community? Try selling the idea to a local merchant. *Clay County Historical Society, 218-299-5520.*

### Technology partners

**Cook County:** When the Cook County Historical Society acquired a large collection of photographs from a local resident, it faced a daunting task: how to identify 30 years of pictures chronicling community life. To enlist the aid of county residents, the CCHS turned to Cook County's Internet service provider, Boreal Access. Boreal scans several of the photographs at a time, puts them on its homepage and asks users for help. All identifying information submitted by the public goes directly to the historical society for photo documentation. Thanks to today's widespread Internet access, even Cook County natives who no longer live in the area can participate. To check it out, look for "Who-What-Where" on Boreal's homepage, [www.boreal.org](http://www.boreal.org). *Cook County Historical Society, 218-387-9131.*

## Field Services

*continued from page 1*

To grapple with these questions, Society staff met in September with representatives from eight of Minnesota's historical organizations. The planning group identified numerous accomplishments that we will continue to build on:

- increased professionalism
- improved museum facilities and collections care
- creative programming
- heightened awareness of the value of local history
- increased funding

There is good reason to celebrate gains already made. At the same time, our work is cut out for us. Among future issues we all must take into consideration in planning:

- changing community demographics
- new technologies
- a need to reach new audiences through relevant programming
- the challenge of increasing funding amidst competing priorities

The opportunity to build on a strong foundation while setting strategic direction for the future doesn't come along very often in the life of an organization. Field Services will continue to reside in the Society's Historic Preservation, Field Services and Grants Department. Within the department, we will strive to strengthen the infrastructure that supports our field services through better internal coordination with the Grants Office and other outreach activities. As this newsletter goes to press, we are well into the process of recruiting a new field services manager; if all goes as planned, that person will be on board in January. The new field services manager will play an important role in continuing to shape a vision for the future of this program. Your input is always welcome.

# Putting Yellow Medicine County on the map

*Advocate Tribune*

It began as a simple idea: lay sidewalks between the buildings at Minnesota's Machinery Museum in Hanley Falls to save visitors a trek through wet grass. It ended with the whole of Yellow Medicine County carved in granite.

The project grew in the course of raising funds. "David Nystuen [recently retired Minnesota Historical Society field services coordinator] suggested we sell bricks for the sidewalk. Then someone proposed making a map of the whole county and getting contributions from every city and township pictured," explained museum director Mavis Gustafson.

**With community support and local materials, Minnesota's Machinery Museum dedicates new county landmark.**

Eventually, much more than present-day cities were depicted. Using a county centennial history book as a resource, the project team decided to include all townsites – some long since vanished and some platted but never settled – that once had post offices. They also included all country school districts from days gone by. To accommodate all the locations to be marked, the map took on



**A granite map of Yellow Medicine County, set in the sidewalk at Minnesota's Machinery Museum in Hanley Falls, gives visitors a bird's-eye view of the county.**

grand proportions, stretching 25 feet long and 5 feet wide. Set into the ground in front of the museum and bordered by stone benches, it mirrors the long, narrow shape of Yellow Medicine County.

Museum board member Tim Velde took the project under his wing, arranging for a local company, Echo Granite Works, to fabricate the township blocks that made up the giant map. The company partially donated its services. Local quartzite from Jasper was used for the benches. Many individuals and civic organizations contributed funds to make the ambitious project possible.

### **Exhibit features county residents**

Dedication of the one-of-a-kind map in September coincided with the opening of a photo exhibit at the museum. Titled *Listening to Each Other*, it's the work of



**David Morano (left), associate professor at Minnesota State University, Mankato, talks with Gene Oftedahl, one of 25 Yellow Medicine County residents featured in Morano's photography exhibit, *Listening to Each Other*.**

David Morano, associate professor of art at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Morano spent last summer interviewing and photographing county residents, choosing the stories of 25 people for the exhibit. He selected Yellow Medicine County for his documentary project at the suggestion of Nystuen, who told him, "There are good people there, they're interested in history and they've had some rough times."

Says Morano, "I was drawn to all those things." He traveled the county with Gustafson along to make introductions. "The people responded to us, and their stories were wonderful."

After the exhibition at Minnesota's Machinery Museum, the show will travel to other cities in the county, thanks to a grant from the Southwest Minnesota Arts and Humanities Council. "The people talked about their roots, about education, about young people leaving their communities," says Morano. "I think visitors to the exhibit will hear themselves when they read the stories."

## A quartet of new venues adds to Minnesota's museum mix

Two took shape in bricks and mortar. One you can visit only on the Internet. And one is still just a gleam in the eye. Whatever the form of these four new venues, each is a notable addition to Minnesota's museum community.

September marked the grand opening of the **Anishinaabe Cultural Arts Center and Gallery** in Detroit Lakes. Part community center, part American Indian arts gallery, the new facility is a place for the Anishinaabe to experience and share their culture. Among the many programs and services offered are language classes, drum and dance instruction and displays of artwork by local artists. For information on these and other events and activities, call the center at 218-846-9463 or 1-800-890-9399.

St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph recently celebrated the opening of the **Art and Heritage Place**, dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of the Benedictine sisters. The Benedictines, who settled in central Minnesota in 1857, have a history rich in the arts. Exhibits at the center's Haehn Museum feature some of the monastery's 4,000 artifacts, including its distinctive collection of needlework, one of the many art forms practiced by the sisters. At artisan studios nearby, women artists from central Minnesota – potters, painters, weavers, papermakers, photographers – can rent space to create their work. And in the center's Whitby Gallery, periodic art shows showcase the work of the sisters and other artists.

For information on museum hours and exhibits, call 320-363-7100.

When **Veterans' Memorial Hall** in Duluth shut down at summer's end to make way for Depot renovation, the exhibits didn't disappear from view. They just moved to cyberspace. Coming soon will be a new

electronic version of the museum, thanks to a joint project of the St. Louis County Historical Society and Barr Engineering Company. Barr, a Twin Cities-based firm with offices in Duluth, will develop a web site that features the biographies of 4,000 World War II veterans from



Robert Langmuir, LLC

**Ruth Nierengarten, OSB, director of the Haehn Museum at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, displays hand-embroidered ecclesiastical vestments stored at the museum.**

St. Louis County. The site will serve as an interactive museum, allowing visitors to enter their own military stories for review and eventual inclusion in the database. Eventually the database will be expanded to include veterans of other wars from St. Louis, Lake, Cook and Carlton counties. Veteran's Memorial Hall will reopen in 2001. Meanwhile, take a virtual tour at [www.vets-hall.org](http://www.vets-hall.org).

Last year a highway construction project through tiny Schroeder in Cook County gave the Schroeder Area Historical Society a golden opportunity. In the way of progress stood the Cross River General Store, a local landmark dating to the 1920s, when resort owner Horace Stickney built it to replace an earlier store lost to fire. Because highway routing could not accommodate adequate parking for the store, the Minnesota Department of Transportation bought it and transferred the title to Schroeder Township. The township in turn granted the area historical society a 99-year lease to operate the **Stickney/Cross River Store** as a museum and heritage center. Renovation and restoration are underway; watch for the grand opening in June 2001 during the annual John Schroeder Days celebration.



Diane Towalski

**Fiber artist Margaret VanKempen, OSB, works at St. Benedict's artisan studios, brushing dyes on silk panels for a wall hanging at a Fargo, N.D., church.**

## Collections management workshops to set standards for smaller museums

**N**eed advice on managing your museum's archives and artifacts? Help is on the way, thanks to a major grant awarded to the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums. The \$80,000 grant from the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS) will fund the development of a resource manual and series of workshops on collections management for Minnesota's small and mid-sized museums.

The Collections Resource Manual will define a set of professional standards that can be adapted by museums diverse in size, budget, staffing and access to technology. Topics include collections documentation, the processing of new accessions and basic legal issues for museums. Workshops, to be led by museum professionals from a variety of art, history and science museums both large and small, will provide training on the standards outlined in the manual.

Eight workshops are scheduled to run from April 2001 to September 2002. Two all-day sessions will be conducted in a traditional face-to-face conference setting; they are planned for October 2001 in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and September 2002 in Fergus Falls. Six half-day workshops will use the state's teleconferencing system, enabling museum staff and volunteers who cannot attend in person to tune in via video feed at any of the following locations: Bemidji, Crookston, Duluth, Morris, Rochester, St. Paul or Windom. Promotional materials with registration information will be mailed later this fall.

Augmenting the manual and workshops will be the alliance's web site, [www.cokato.mn.us/alliance](http://www.cokato.mn.us/alliance), where workshop participants and their colleagues can continue a statewide dialogue on collections management issues. Videotapes of the workshops also

will be available in the future.

The Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums was founded in 1991 to foster collaboration among Minnesota's local history organizations. The group's Collections Initiative drew praise from the IMLS, a federal agency that fosters innovation and leadership in the nation's museums and libraries. Said one grant reviewer, "This project will serve as a model for other states to follow, with the ambitious but attainable goal of raising nationwide standards" for collections management.

For more information call the grant co-coordinators, Susan Garwood-DeLong at 507-645-7797 or Nicole Murray at 952-496-2247. Project updates will be posted on the alliance's web site.

## New book celebrates Norwegian holiday traditions



Lutefisk. Julebukking. Marzipan pigs. Those are just some of the Norwegian traditions described by author Kathleen Stokker in

*Keeping Christmas: Yuletide Traditions in Norway and the New Land*, new from the Minnesota Historical Society Press. Stokker, a professor of Norwegian at

Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, recounts stories of Christmas customs on both sides of the ocean, from their origins centuries ago to their practice today. Recipes and photographs illustrate the many traditions that still keep Norwegians and Norwegian Americans connected to one another.

Cost: \$34.95. Cloth, 304 pp., 40 illustrations. ISBN 0-87351-389-4. To order by phone, call toll-free 1-800-647-7827; in Minneapolis/St. Paul call 651-297-3243. Or fax orders to 651-297-1345. Order on the web at [www.mnhs.org/mhspress](http://www.mnhs.org/mhspress).

## Digital camcorder serves many uses

Embracing the digital age, the Clay County Historical Society recently purchased a digital video camcorder that already is much in demand. Foremost among its many uses is documentation of the county society's educational programs. VHS copies of taped lectures and demonstrations will be distributed to local libraries for public viewing.

The camcorder also will be used to copy the CCHS's growing 8mm film collection and to shoot video for in-house video productions that can be edited on computer. In addition, the digital equipment can take still photos for publication in the organization's newsletter.

Financed with donations from the Clay County Blandin Alumni and several county society members, the \$700 camcorder will quickly earn its keep. For more information about this project and for specifics on the equipment purchased, call CCHS archivist Mark Peihl at 218-299-5520 or e-mail [mpeihl@Juno.com](mailto:mpeihl@Juno.com).

## History project grants from the Minnesota Humanities Commission

Among the dozens of programs and projects funded each year by grants from the Minnesota Humanities Commission are many with a history focus. This fall grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000 were awarded to:

- Beltrami County Historical Society, Bemidji, for “Pathways through History,” a media installation in their new building.
- Mankato Mdewakanton Association, Mankato, for “Healing History’s Wounds,” programs on Dakota history and culture for adults and children.

- Mesabi Range Community and Technical College, Eveleth, for “A Sense of Place: Writers’ Perspectives on the Iron Range,” a project featuring Iron Range authors.
- Olmsted County Historical Society, Rochester, for research and fabrication of an exhibit, “St. Mary’s Hospital: Early Patient Care.”
- Sibley Historic Site, Mendota, for lectures on Dakota history and culture.

For details about MHC grants and programs, call 651-774-0105 or visit the MHC web site at [www.thinkmhc.org](http://www.thinkmhc.org).

### Spring field workshops set

Mark your calendars now for the spring round of field workshops, open to staff, board members and volunteers of all county, local and special-interest historical societies. Watch for details about these sessions in the January-February issue of the *Interpreter*.

<b>March 30</b>	<b>Hutchinson, McLeod County</b>
<b>April 20</b>	<b>Albert Lea, Freeborn County</b>
<b>May 4</b>	<b>Duluth, St. Louis County</b>

## Winona County Courthouse *continued from page 1*

### What challenges and opportunities did this disaster present?

Everyone saw this as an opportunity but they had very different, often conflicting agendas in mind. Those who want to consolidate county services see an opportunity for a new government center. The courts want to stay in the old courthouse, but with expanded space. The sheriff’s department is looking for ways to improve security – and for a garage to store emergency vehicles. Preservationists would like to remodel the interior again, this time in a manner more sensitive to the building’s original design.

Unlike 30 years ago, nearly everyone says they want to save the old building. But if the county moves out, what other use could the building serve? Neither the county nor taxpayers can afford to heat and cool such a huge empty building for long. Many people suggested giving it to the county historical society. But without considerable additional funding, how could we afford to take care of a five-story, 40,000-square-foot stone courthouse?

### What steps are being taken to find a solution?

We invited state historical architect Charles Nelson to the first meeting of the options committee. He suggested a reuse study to explore the building’s potential for preservation. We put together a team that, after an intensive one-day study, proposed a plan to the county commissioners: use the historic courthouse for all court-related activities, expand the annex to accommodate additional offices and explore a “county campus” design with the courthouse as the centerpiece.

The future of the courthouse is still very much up in the air. But the process has been a fair one. It remains to be seen how long people will wait for a decision before they start calling for the building to come down.

### What have you learned about the role county historical societies can and should play in preservation issues affecting their communities?

I believe that county historical societies have a responsibility to play a

lead role in preservation issues even when the issue may be unpopular with local officials or business owners. The Winona County Historical Society has been in the middle of several preservation controversies and I think the positions we’ve taken have, in the long run, proven sound. Our members who are concerned about historic preservation have come to expect us to be advocates for them. Too many county and local societies don’t get involved. They think of themselves as custodians of their community’s historic resources, rather than advocates.

A situation like this one with the Winona County Courthouse calls for a coordinated effort, not just on the local level but between the community and the State Historic Preservation Office. SHPO staff were able to respond to many inaccurate assumptions people had about what can and can’t be done with National Register properties. They were very helpful.

At least one unexpected benefit has emerged from all the controversy. In the past two months we’ve welcomed through our doors many county officials who have never been in our museum before.

## Deadlines for winter Grants-in-aid

**D** planning to apply for a state grant-in-aid this winter? You may first need to submit a pre-application. They're **required** for some categories of project and **strongly recommended** for all projects. Deadlines:

**Grant pre-application due:**

Jan. 26, 2001

**Grant application due:**

March 2, 2001

Application forms and the State Grants-in-Aid Manual are available online at [www.mnhs.org/about/grants/stgrants.html](http://www.mnhs.org/about/grants/stgrants.html). For more information about the program, contact grants assistant David Grabitske by phone at 651-297-4416 or e-mail [david.grabitske@mnhs.org](mailto:david.grabitske@mnhs.org).

## Greetings from the editor

**I**t's good to be back. I look forward to working once again with old friends from my previous stint as *Interpreter* editor (1993–1996). And I know I'll be making many new friends as I pore over my mail for news of your projects and activities.

My first job is to get the newsletter back on a regular-as-clockwork publication schedule. To ensure that the *Interpreter* reaches you by the first of the month, we need to back up our submission deadline for newsletter items. To be considered, items must reach me by the **first of the month, two months before publication**. For example, the deadline for the March issue is Jan. 1.

Remember: our new publication schedule of nine issues a year includes

three double issues – January-February, June-July and November-December. Keep that in mind when submitting time-sensitive news for those months.

If you have any questions or concerns, call or e-mail me at the numbers below. And keep those story ideas coming!

*Mary Ann Nord, Interpreter editor*

### Curator wanted

The Dakota County Historical Society seeks a half-time curator to organize and exhibit its collections. Preferred candidates will have experience in designing displays and using database software. Submit a resume by Jan. 26, 2001, to DCHS, 130 Third Ave. N., South St. Paul, MN 55075. For more information call 651-451-6260 or e-mail [dchs@mtn.org](mailto:dchs@mtn.org).

### Minnesota History Interpreter

is published nine times a year 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 first of the month, two months before publication (example: deadline for March issue is Jan. 1). Send to Interpreter Editor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906. Phone: 612-729-4729; e-mail [nordreeves@earthlink.net](mailto:nordreeves@earthlink.net).

Material from this issue may be reprinted with the following credit line: Reprinted with permission from *Minnesota History Interpreter*, November-December 2000, Vol. XXVIII, No. 11, published by the Minnesota Historical Society. Do not reprint material taken from another source without permission from that source.

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

#### Britta Bloomberg,

Head, Historic Preservation,  
Field Services and Grants Department

Mary Ann Nord, Editor

Kim Brink Smith, Layout



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102-1906

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