



INSIDE

page 3

History in service to community

page 7

Online manual for managing government records

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

Bill Latady



Newly opened on the Bois Forte Reservation is the Bois Forte Heritage Center, designed by architect Mike Thomas of Damberg, Scott, Gerzina and Wagner, a Virginia, Minn., firm. Exhibits will tell the story of the Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe.

'Through Ojibwe eyes, With Ojibwe voices'

Two new exhibits in St. Louis County grow from cross-cultural collaboration

Cround has been broken, both literally and figuratively, with the creation of two new museum facilities that will tell the story of the Ojibwe people. Together, the projects represent a new level of collaboration between Indian and non-Indian communities in northern Minnesota.

Due to open first is the Bois Forte Heritage Center on the Bois Forte Reservation west of Orr. Phase one is slated for completion this month, the rest by June 2002. The St. Louis

County Historical Society expects to open its new Lake Superior Ojibwe Gallery at the Depot in Duluth sometime in 2004.

The two projects will share a museum developer/curator position, filled by Bill Latady, former curator of Anasazi State Park Museum in Utah.

Years in the planning

The seeds for this remarkable collaboration were sewn in the 1990s during negotiations over compliance

with the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). During the process, local Ojibwe tribes noted inaccuracies and other serious shortcomings in the St. Louis County Historical Society's Ojibwe exhibits, developed 20 years earlier.

To address their concerns, SLCHS staff in 1994 formed an American Indian Advisory Committee, composed of county historical society representatives; tribal appointees from the Fond du Lac, Bois Forte and Grand Portage communities; and members from the community at large. The committee's charge: to ensure an accurate and sensitive portrayal of Ojibwe culture and its place in the history of St. Louis County.

Grants were key

Funds to support the committee's work came through a grant from the Julia Newell Marshall Gift Trust, which financed a planning retreat at Bois Forte, a comprehensive fund-raising plan and an inaugural exhibit.

Next, a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities brought in consultants to begin developing an exhibit plan. Exhibit themes identified by the Ojibwe community – a sense of place, tradition, history and contemporary life – will form the core of SLCHS's Lake Superior Ojibwe Gallery. Rounding out the exhibits there will be a section devoted to the county society's extensive collection of artworks by Eastman Johnson, who painted and sketched the Ojibwe at

Ojibwe continued on page 2

Ojibwe *continued from page 1*

Grand Portage in the 1850s. The consultation grant also funded the services of an exhibit designer who will guide staff through the process of creating the exhibit.

Job-share symbolizes spirit of cooperation

A second major NEH grant, this one a planning grant, will fund Bill Latady's work. With degrees in history and anthropology and expertise in cultures of the Great Basin, southwestern and southeastern U.S., and northern Plains, he will head up research and development of exhibits at both locations. His position is funded jointly by the St. Louis County Historical Society and the tribal community.

On the job since August, Latady will initially spend most of his time at the Bois Forte Heritage Center. There he and manager Rosemary Berens will develop 3,000 square feet of new exhibits that address themes similar to those at the historical society but with a focus on the Bois Forte Band – seasonal activities, the boarding school era and Bois Forte veterans, among others. Once that facility is up and running, Latady will turn his attention to exhibits at the Lake Superior Ojibwe Gallery, titled *Through Ojibwe Eyes, With Ojibwe Voices*.

"It's very exciting to be in on the ground floor of these two projects," says Latady. "We expect our work to set standards for cross-cultural collaborations. The two cultures – Indian and non-Indian – approach their histories from such different frames of reference. One group has an oral tradition, the other a written one. So we're exploring new ways to present the stories."

Berens shares his excitement. "The tribal museum will be an important

educational tool for everyone," she says. "Many young Bois Forte people don't know enough about their own culture. This will help them understand who we are. Non-Indian people who come here will learn more about us, too. Even though we've lived side by side, I believe they'll get a new perspective on what the Ojibwe people have contributed to Minnesota."

Charting new territory

"There is no guide book for what we're doing," wrote SLCHS director Jo Anne Coombe in the NEH grant application. "Developing the kind of positive relationships necessary to presenting a native culture accurately and sensitively is a long and uncharted process. We hope our approach will serve as a model for other museums."

For information on this groundbreaking partnership, call Latady or Berens at the Bois Forte Heritage Center, 218-753-6017, or Coombe at the St. Louis County Historical Society, 218-733-7581.



St. Louis County Historical Society

The St. Louis County Historical Society's collection of artworks by Eastman Johnson includes this 1857 charcoal sketch titled *Midosuay Beek*. For its display at the society's Lake Superior Ojibwe Gallery, now in development, the collection has been cleaned and restored.

History in service to community

by Barbara Franco

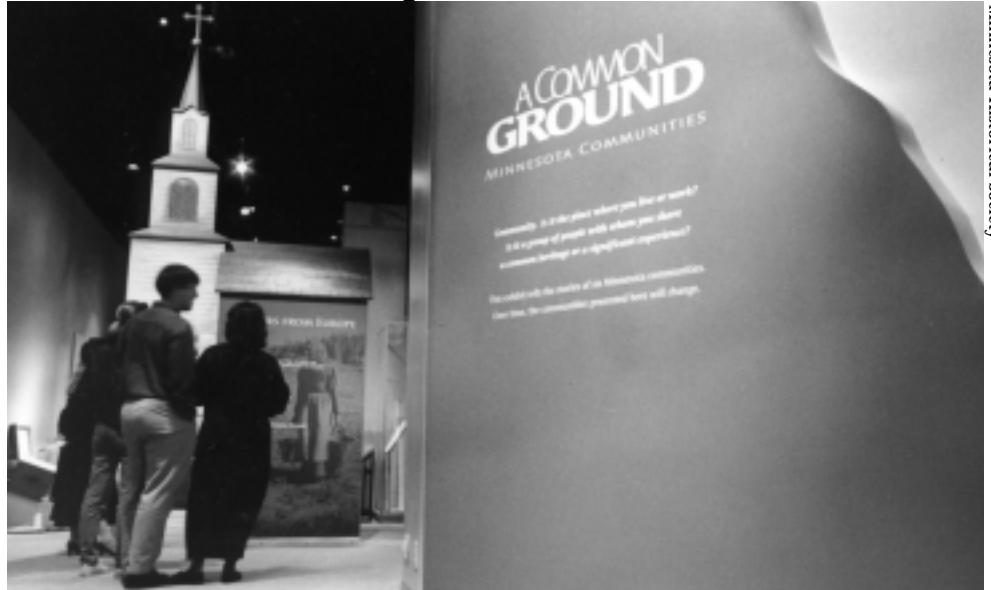
Barbara Franco, former assistant director for museums at the Minnesota Historical Society and now executive director of The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., shares her thoughts on the ongoing search for relevance by museums large and small in these changing times. Her article was adapted, with permission, from the Summer 2000 issue of History News, published by the American Association for State and Local History.

The question of how history museums serve their communities has become an important issue of survival for many organizations that must daily persuade individuals, foundations and governments to continue supporting their work.

In recent decades, history organizations everywhere discovered that their membership, their audiences and their support were coming from a dwindling number of old families and history buffs, while diverse populations of new immigrants and younger citizens rarely appeared on visitor surveys. Those populations found little connection between their own stories and those told in the museums' exhibits and collections. So partly out of necessity and partly from a sense of responsibility, museums began exploring ways to broaden their appeal.

Searching for answers

Among the first attempts by many museums to diversify audiences were special programming and temporary exhibitions aimed at specific underserved groups. The annual flurry of black history programs scheduled every February for Black History



Minnesota Historical Society

This groundbreaking 1993 exhibit at the Minnesota History Center explored the meaning of community. Six varied communities took part in the research and planning: St. Paul's Lower West Side; Chokio, a struggling small town; Vietnam veterans; the Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Indians; the deaf, a community of sign language; and Dalarna, a parish of Swedish immigrants.

Month is an example of this approach. The hope was that if we could just get people to come once for a special program, they would understand what wonderful work we do and become regular participants. It didn't work. The new audiences did not come back.

Other history organizations moved beyond audience-building to experiment with using communities as a subject for research and scholarship. Oral history projects in the 1970s focused on communities that had been left out of traditional historical narratives – working classes, for example, or ethnic groups previously overlooked – and sought to engage those communities in the process of creating their narratives. Often, however, the community's agenda did not match the research agenda.

Slowly, historians came to realize that unless such local history efforts

are firmly rooted in the communities being studied, unless such projects have well-developed links to local institutions and organizations, they will result in nothing more than a series of awkward public meetings, a collection of oral history tapes or perhaps an exhibit of photographs. While such efforts may for a time stir up some enthusiasm, they ultimately go nowhere.

Building relationships

During the 1990s a new genre of community exhibitions emerged. The Minnesota Historical Society, among others, developed programs that involved community members in the research and planning of exhibitions on specific communities. For a 1993 exhibit project at the Minnesota History Center, titled *A Common Ground: Minnesota Communities*

History in service *continued on page 4*

History in service

continued from page 3

the historical society chose as its definition of community not shared geography but shared experience.

In order to accurately portray an “insider’s” perspective, community members were enlisted as essential partners in the exhibit process. The project offered valuable insights and experience in museum-community relationships, even when results were mixed. The exhibit became a lesson in how difficult it is for “outsiders” on an exhibit team to initiate the process of telling a community’s story, especially when the group itself may not yet have agreed on the “insider” message.

Moving beyond four walls

The next step in our museums’ quest for relevance in the new century will involve more than adjustments to programming. It will mean a strategic shift – from thinking of our facilities as containers for collections within four walls to thinking of the whole community as a complex artifact to be interpreted. Going further, it will mean once again shifting our concept of service to community – from treating the community as object or subject to treating the community as a partner. Partnerships and collaboration in the 21st century no longer will be seen as strategies for special projects but will become essential to all the work we do.

At the new City Museum now being developed by The Historical Society of Washington, D.C. (HSW), a building will house exhibitions, educational programs, a research library and collections, much as visitors would expect. But rather than regarding its building as the destination, the City Museum will serve as an introductory exhibit that prepares visitors to venture beyond



Members of the groups featured in the exhibit *A Common Ground: Minnesota Communities* joined Minnesota Historical Society director Nina Archabal (left) for the ribbon-cutting ceremony in 1993.

the museum walls and experience the city in open-ended, self-directed explorations.

Promoting heritage tourism

When it opens in 2003, Washington’s City Museum will complete HSW’s transformation from an internally focused institution to a dynamic organization playing a leadership role in citywide initiatives such as heritage tourism. The DC Heritage Tourism Coalition, which HSW helped form, now numbers more than 80 members representing museums, historic houses, churches, businesses and community development corporations. That coalition has worked successfully to incorporate local heritage tourism into the city’s marketing plans.

In a citywide partnership, HSW has developed a neighborhood map with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities that identifies some of the city’s many distinctive neighborhoods as tourist destinations. The map, titled “Washington Beyond the Monuments,” will be distributed with rack cards for trains and buses developed by the Heritage Tourism Coalition and the Convention Center to boost off-peak ridership. That kind of collaboration

has been crucial in our efforts to treat the whole city as our story.

Our new role

As communities everywhere look for ways to reinvigorate themselves, history museums and the stories they tell are looked to as one of the ingredients essential for community understanding. Increasingly, we are being asked to provide services to fill community needs – to develop educational opportunities for a struggling school system, for example, or to create new strategies for economic survival.

We must continue to think of ourselves as more than buildings, exhibit galleries and collections repositories. We can best serve our communities by giving them an accessible and relevant past. This new approach to our work is making our institutions more viable and sustainable because we are vital contributors to our communities.

A century ago, community service for museums meant inviting the public into our buildings to see our collections. In the 21st century, communities will invite us out of our buildings to be partners in preserving and interpreting history for a public that demands participation.

Lights down, curtain up . . .

Historic Austin theater restored to former splendor

“It’s been a labor of love,” says Scott Anderson, head of the Austin Area Commission for the Arts. He’s talking about the restoration of the city’s Paramount Theatre, built in 1929 to show “all talking, all singing pictures,” as an original sign boasted.

A first-run movie theater until 1975, the building served a succession of uses over the next 14 years – comedy club, disco, live-music venue, teen club. Along the way the building suffered major changes, including the removal of all theater seating and loss of its marquee to street widening.

In 1989 a group of local citizens, dismayed to learn that road construction threatened the building itself, established the nonprofit arts commission to restore the theater to its original condition. “Austin had torn down so many of its historic

buildings,” says Anderson. “We couldn’t stand by and watch this one go, too.”

The Paramount is one of only four “atmospheric” theaters left in the state. In its heyday, filmgoers came not only to see the featured film but also to

experience the grand auditorium, a treasure trove of picturesque details meant to evoke a Spanish village. In their seats, patrons found themselves surrounded by exotic Moorish architecture, while overhead, stars twinkled in the sky. One puzzled young visitor, attending a recent event in the theater, was overhead asking his father, “Dad, when did we go outside?”

Since the art commission took over the building, the theater has begun its slow transformation from gutted moviehouse to sparkling theatrical palace. A new electrical system was installed. And a restoration artist painstakingly removed layer after layer of paint to reveal the original painted ceiling. As funds become available, workers will add theatrical rigging and stage curtains, paned front doors and display cases. The orchestra pit will be



The Paramount Theatre’s new marquee, recreated from historical photographs, was funded by a local donor.

restored, the original carpet reproduced and ornamental plasterwork repaired. An addition on the back of the building will accommodate ADA-compliant dressing rooms and a new loading dock.

The new marquee went up last summer. “It’s a very visible sign that historic preservation is alive and well in Austin,” says Anderson. “The Paramount is now a cultural magnet for the whole area. We’re hosting community events, concerts, weddings, class reunions, business meetings. And it’s the new home of Austin’s Matchbox Children’s Theatre.”

One more thing: The restored theater has earned nomination to the National Register of Historic Places – a fitting reward for a fine old building with a long new life ahead.

For more information on the theater restoration, call Anderson weekday mornings at 507-434-0934.



Moviegoers lined up around the block for the Paramount’s grand opening in 1929.

'Pour the Floor' event draws a crowd Isanti County Heritage Museum to open in 2002

A crew of volunteers and local contractors scrambled this fall to ready the Isanti County Heritage Museum for its new concrete floor. In a creatively packaged "Pour the Floor" event, the team laid the foundation for the Isanti County Historical Society's new home at the edge of the county fairgrounds outside Cambridge.

Volunteers have also dug trenches, hauled sand, laid insulation, nailed sheetrock, taped walls and tackled countless other tasks large and small to bring the project to completion. Labor and materials for much of the work, from the skidsteer to the well, have been donated, according to ICHS program director Valorie Arrowsmith. "With such great local support," she says, "we expect to open sometime in 2002."

The Heritage Center will be filled with exhibits illustrating the county's past and will serve as home base for the ICHS's well-known Pie Day



Isanti County Historical Society

Volunteers help a local contractor level the ground for the Isanti County Historical Society's "Pour the Floor" event.

celebration and many Swedish cultural programs. A special focus of the exhibits will be potato growing, once the staple of the local economy. "Our Swedish immigrants arrived with experience growing the crop, soil and weather conditions were right, and there was transportation to

markets," explains Arrowsmith. "Every town had its own potato warehouse. And the potato harvester was invented here."

For more information on everything from cement pouring to spud growing, call Arrowsmith at 763-689-4229.

'Discover History' program puts down roots Curriculum adopted by Albert Lea school district

For three years young people have flocked to the Freeborn County Historical Society's Historical Village for "Discover History" day. An inventive program that brings together high school and elementary students, Discovery Day celebrates both the county's past and the creativity of youth.

Each year high school humanities teachers select from a list of topics offered by FCHS staff – agriculture, immigration, transportation and school, for example. Their 11th-grade students research the topics, prepare

presentations, then team-teach at the Historical Village for groups of fifth-graders from local elementary schools. The youngsters come for the whole day, spending an hour on each of four topics.

"The program has proved so popular that it's now written into the school district curriculum," says Bev Jackson, FCHS director. "We worked with district staff to ensure that the program meets their learning goals." For more information call Jackson at 507-373-8003.



Freeborn County Historical Society

Fifth-graders get a shave and catch up on the news in the village barbershop for a lesson called "Meeting Places" at the Freeborn County Museum and Historical Village. An Albert Lea High School student does the teaching.

Managing government records

Online manual offers guidelines for archives, agencies

In July the State Archives department of the Minnesota Historical Society published online a new educational resource, *Managing Your Government Records: Guidelines for Archives and Agencies*. The manual is designed to help county and local historical societies and local governments manage the government records in their repositories. It is a comprehensive, easy-to-use introduction to basic archival principles and practices.

Work began on the project in 1999 with an appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature to assess the state's information policies. As a member of the Information Policy Task Force, the State Archives was charged with studying management of local government records.

Managing Your Government Records: Guidelines for Archives and Agencies

<http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/recordsguidelines/guidelinestoc.html>

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. What do you need to know about government records?
3. How do you appraise government records?
4. How do you describe government records?
5. What are the issues regarding information technology and electronic records?
6. How do you preserve and store government records?
7. How do you provide reference service to government records?
8. Appendices
9. Glossary

Focus groups identify issues

In 1999 and 2000, State Archives staff convened a series of focus groups with representatives of local government, county and local historical societies, and researchers interested in local government records. They were unanimous in their desire to learn more about the practical aspects of managing records. To address this need, the State Archives designed

a one-day workshop on the records issues identified as most important. After a field test in June 2000 at the Anoka County Historical Society, the workshop was presented in Tofte, Rochester and New Ulm.

To make the information more widely available, the State Archives department created a manual based on the workshop's content. The final product is now online. Chapters are organized around frequently asked questions (see sidebar), with essential information and practical advice on each topic. Additional resources, available both in print and on the Web, also are listed. Among the resources that may be of special interest to county and local historical societies are model agreements and guidelines for the transfer of local government records to local repositories.



Your records storage may not look as disorganized as this, but if you see room for improvement in your own repository, check out the State Archives' online manual on basic archival practices for managing government records.

Available in two formats

The manual is available in two formats: HTML, for use and reference online, and PDF, for printing and studying offline. The State Archives plans regular updates and revisions of the online manual as necessary; the department cannot provide printed copies.

Comments and suggestions for improvement are welcome. To comment or for more information, call 651-297-4502. Or e-mail Robert Horton, state archivist, at robert.horton@mnhs.org or Charles Rodgers, government records analyst, at charles.rodgers@mnhs.org.

In search of bandolier bags

Curator seeks examples of Ojibwe beadwork in local collections

Marcia Anderson, head of museum collections and chief curator for the Minnesota Historical Society, is on a mission. For her forthcoming book on Ojibwe bandolier bags, she's tracking down examples in collections, both public and private, across Minnesota and beyond.

Bandolier bags are a type of shoulder bag that came into use in the Great Lakes region during the second half of the 19th century. Made primarily by Ojibwe women, they are richly decorated with beadwork woven or stitched in floral and geometric designs.

The focus of Anderson's research is the Society's collection of 100 bags,

collected largely from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe by Harry D. and Jeannette O. Ayer. She now seeks examples in the collections of other museums and individuals. Anderson is particularly interested in:

- bags with a Minnesota provenance.
- historic photographs of bags being made or used.

If you have such items in your collection, Anderson asks that you send her a written description and photographic or scanned images (photocopies will do). Write to her at the Minnesota Historical Society (see return address below) or e-mail marcia.anderson@mnhs.org.



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*, November-December 2001, Vol. XXIX, No. 9, 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
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