



MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

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for county and local historical societies and heritage preservation commissions

Dakota County Parks Department



Historian-led bike tours in Dakota County follow the Big Rivers Regional Trail.

History hits the trail

Tours mix recreation and historical interpretation

More and more Minnesotans are climbing aboard the heritage tourism bandwagon. Increasingly, we recognize our historic resources not only as keys to interpreting the past but as assets that can bring economic benefits to our communities and our organizations.

Among today's most popular heritage tourism tools are educational tours. Put together the appeal of your community's unique history with a participatory experience and you have a winning combination –

an interpretive program that fits communities of all sizes and appeals equally to residents or visitors just passing through.

Travel the state and you'll find tours of all descriptions – driving, walking, biking; self-guided and historian-led; general-interest and thematic. They're sponsored by county and local historical societies, heritage preservation commissions, state and local parks and recreation departments. And they all share one quality: they're great ways to promote

public appreciation of history. Here's a look at just some of the touring adventures developed by history-minded groups across Minnesota.

Working all the angles

"I'm the Pied Piper of Winona," says Mark Peterson, executive director of the Winona County Historical Society. He's talking about his role as leader of the society's "Bike, Skate and Scooter" tours that take folks on wheels meandering through the streets of the historic river city. "I love architecture and I love Winona," he explains. "It's fun sharing that with people. And this is a great city for biking: it's flat, it's easy to get around in, and it's beautiful. On every tour someone discovers something they hadn't seen before."

Bike tours are just one of the ways the Winona County Historical Society connects with its members and with visitors to the community. There's also "Exploring the Back Roads of Winona County," an all-day charter bus tour with stops throughout the county. "That program brings in a lot of new members," says Peterson. "They sign on to get the tour discount."

For do-it-yourselfers, there's a driving tour that visitors can follow by map, with a narration on cassette tape available for rent at Winona's visitor information center and the history museum. "We rent out a tape player, too," explains Peterson, "so that people can take the tape with them

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when they leave the car to view the scenic overlooks.”

For 20 years Peterson also has led Winona area tours sponsored by other organizations. He does architectural walking tours for students at vocational-technical colleges in the region. He has directed on-shore tours for the steamboat companies that stopped in Winona. And he and a cadre of volunteers serve as step-on guides for dozens of bus tours during the tourist season, earning three dollars a head for the Winona County Historical Society. “We’ve built up repeat business with several tour operators,” Peterson says. “It’s a good moneymaker for us – especially the fall foliage tours. All in all, tours are a big part of what we do. Not only do they bring in significant revenue but they also generate lots of interest in our historical society. We always include a stop at the museum.”

Windshield touring

A mix of historical and agricultural points of interest

characterizes the Scott County Historical Society’s annual “City to Country” driving tour, co-sponsored with the county office of the University of Minnesota Extension Service. “Community involvement is central to our success,” says SCHS director John Gutteter.

A joint committee selects the sites, then property owners and event organizers plan programming at each stop. Last year’s sites included an alpaca farm and a round barn on the National Register of Historic Places. The year before, members of Shakopee’s Mdewakanton Sioux

Community talked with visitors at a site with spiritual significance to the Dakota. To promote the weekend event, fliers with a map of the tour are sent home with Scott County students, and local businesses and organizations are solicited for financial support.

On foot or by Internet

Self-guided walking tours are a good way to introduce newcomers to your community – or to get longtime residents to take a closer look. From the Riverwalk in Thief River Falls to the Historic Mall District in Red



Home of the Pipestone County Historical Society, the 1896 Pipestone City Hall, built of pink and red Sioux quartzite, is featured on the National Park Service’s web site.



Wing, tour-takers with brochure in hand can stroll through a city’s architectural past. It’s a program idea adopted by growing numbers of heritage preservation commissions seeking to impart the value of preserving irreplaceable historic resources.

Few communities have as distinctive a collection of historic buildings as Pipestone, a city situated amidst large deposits of Sioux quartzite. During Pipestone’s 19th-century building boom, local quarrymen, masons and builders worked together to line the streets with structures of this distinctive stone. Urban renewal took its toll during the 1960s as many of the quartzite buildings were razed. But historic preservationists stepped in, first to create a downtown historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places and then to



Young visitors take in the sites at a dairy farm, one of the stops on Scott County’s “City to Country” driving tour.

designate a larger local heritage preservation district. Both are the subject of "Pipestone: Past and Present," a walking/driving tour published by the Pipestone Heritage Preservation Commission.

The area's unique historic resources, including the nearby Pipestone National Monument, caught the eye of staff at the National Park Service developing a new web site to promote visits to historic places. Partnering with the NPS, the Pipestone Heritage Preservation Commission created an online travel itinerary featuring properties listed on the National Register (see *Preservation Planner*, Spring 2002). For an armchair traveler's tour of the area's historic sites, go to www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/pipestone.

Tours with a twist

There's no end to the creative turns taken by Minnesota's many history tour organizers.

In Mankato, fans of Maud Hart Lovelace books explore the hilly neighborhood where her young heroines grew up, thanks to a driving-tour guide from the Betsy-Tacy Society.

Visitors to Eveleth wind their way past the stylish homes of mining company "captains" and the meeting halls where mine workers socialized, guided by a walking-tour brochure from the Eveleth Heritage Committee.

The St. Cloud Historical and Neighborhood Preservation Association is using proceeds from its annual house tour to fund designation of a local historic district.

The Blue Earth County Historical Society's "Travel Like Bert" tours commemorate a longtime member who loved to visit out-of-the-way places.

Combining aspects of its environmental, educational, cultural and recreational programs, the Dakota County Parks Department offers "Bike with the Riding Historians" along the Big Rivers Regional Trail through Old Mendota.

When conditions allow, snowmobile enthusiasts with a penchant for history follow Rice County historian Jon Velishek on designated snowmobile routes past historic mills and churches.

And then there are the cemetery tours. Growing in popularity among county historical societies, they often feature costumed interpreters portraying community leaders whose graves are visited by tour-takers. It doesn't get any spookier than the Washington County Historical Society's evening tours of Fairview Cemetery by flashlight, led by library manager Brent Peterson in the guise



Mark Peterson, executive director of the Winona County Historical Society, points out restoration work on the county courthouse during a "Bike, Skate and Scooter" tour of Winona.

of a gravedigger. But the Winona County Historical Society draws perhaps the biggest crowds with its four-day "Voices from the Past" program in Woodlawn Cemetery, where, every fall, hundreds of schoolchildren and families gather for lively discussions with the dead.

For more information

There are countless other tour programs offered by Minnesota's many historical organizations. For additional information on some of those mentioned here, call:

- Mark Peterson, Winona County Historical Society, 507-454-2723.
- John Gutteter, Scott County Historical Society, 952-445-0378.
- Thief River Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau, 218-681-3720.
- Red Wing Heritage Preservation Commission, 651-388-6734.
- Pipestone Heritage Preservation Commission, 507-825-3324.
- Eveleth Chamber of Commerce, 218-744-1940.
- Rich Kelly, St. Cloud Historical and Neighborhood Preservation Association, 320-259-8955.
- James Lundgren, Blue Earth County Historical Society, 507-345-5566.
- Stephanie LeGros, Dakota County Parks Department, 651-438-4676.
- Jon Velishek, Rice County Historical Society, 507-332-2121.
- Brent Peterson, Washington County Historical Society, 651-439-5956.



Brother Paul Ostendorf (center) portrays grocer John Latsch during the 1999 "Voices from the Past" tour of Winona's Woodlawn Cemetery.

Behind the scenes

'Back-room' projects lack visibility but add value

Mounting a new exhibit can be taxing. Building a museum addition can be downright daunting. But sometimes the biggest challenges lie behind the scenes. That's what the Washington County and Richfield Historical Societies learned when they took seemingly routine steps to improve their facilities. As they also came to understand, it's often the projects few people see that have the most long-lasting public impact.

The case of the elusive shelving

All the Washington County Historical Society needed to complete improvements to its collections storage area was new shelving. But that simple shelving proved to be a stumbling block.

Plans to create proper storage for WCHS collections had been laid years before. The historical society's home base since 1941 – a house built in 1853 for the warden of Minnesota's

territorial prison – was popular with visitors but lacked adequate space for museum artifacts. In the 1970s, construction drawings were commissioned for a carriage house to be built near the Warden's House Museum that would accommodate offices, a workspace and collections storage. Twenty years later that dream finally became a reality.

With the carriage house built, an HVAC system installed and collections storage boxes purchased, WCHS staff obtained a Minnesota Historical Society state grant-in-aid, ordered shelving and eagerly awaited its arrival. They were in for another long wait. "We learned too late that the product we specified was back-ordered," reports Brent Peterson, WCHS project manager. "We also didn't find out until later that the company gave us a discount on our

large purchase – a nice surprise but it threw off the figures on our grant. My advice: Ask the right questions up front to avoid delays. And be sure to inquire about discounts."

WCHS collections – photographs, documents, textiles and other three-dimensional artifacts – now fill the new shelving and storage units. "This project may not have been

as visible to the public as our new building," Peterson observed "but it's one of the most important steps



Washington County Historical Society photos

Warden's House Museum site manager Rebecca Ostrom shelves collections stored in the climate-controlled carriage house.

we've undertaken. We're preserving the community's heritage for generations to come."

The case of the wayward ducts

Bigger challenges faced the Richfield Historical Society when it undertook installation of an HVAC system in 1998, also with a state grant-in-aid. What should have taken six months and \$5,000 stretched into four long years and a whopping \$20,000. It all started with those dreaded words, "You have a structural problem."

"Anyone working with an old building should start with a pre-inspection."

*Ruthann Clay
Richfield Historical Society*

RHS director/curator Ruthann Clay remembers the day the city inspector delivered the bad news. Their quarters, a 1940s tractor garage on the grounds of the historic Bartholomew House, needed extensive repairs. "Instead of



The 1853 warden's residence for Minnesota's territorial prison is now a museum operated by the Washington County Historical Society.

converting one small room of our museum facility into a climate-controlled storage space,” Clay said, “we faced the prospect of having to shore up the whole building.”

Under the guidance of a structural engineer, RHS volunteers plunged ahead, gutting the building so the sagging roof could be raised and the bulging walls straightened. “In retrospect,” Clay said, “we would have been better off starting from scratch – because, as we soon found out, that wasn’t the end of our problems.”

Their heating contractor, it seems, had a mind of his own. Instead of installing the furnace according to the plans, he moved it to another location, resulting in another red tag from the inspector for improperly placed ductwork. After a months-long work stoppage and protracted negotiations with the contractor, the problems were corrected by building a fire-rated mechanical room around the furnace and redirecting the ducts.

“We learned a lot from our mistakes,” Clay reported upon completion of the project. “I advise anyone working with an old building like ours to start with a pre-inspection by a city inspector. Then choose your contractors carefully and prepare a contract that clearly spells out responsibilities. To help you monitor their work, familiarize yourself as much as possible with current building codes, and make sure you understand the project drawings. Finally, stay optimistic and remember the light at the end of the tunnel.”

In the end, said Clay, “we got more than we had set our sights on – two climate-controlled rooms and all-new wiring, insulation, roof, doors and windows. We still have a long way to



Structural problems slowed work on the Richfield Historical Society's facility. A new roof and HVAC system are in place. Still to come: new siding.

go in our museum’s evolution but this project set the stage for great things to come – better exhibit space and research facilities, community meeting rooms, and program partnerships with the schools and senior citizen groups. The benefits to both our organization and the public cannot be measured only in dollars.”

For more wisdom gained from their grant-project experiences, call Brent Peterson at 651-439-5956 or Ruthann Clay at 612-861-2049.



An intrepid crew of Richfield Historical Society volunteers cleared the way for work to begin on the museum's climate-control room.

Orphanage film to premiere Oct. 26



Boys from the Owatonna State School enjoy a cook-out, ca. 1940.

In 1886 the State Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children in Owatonna opened its doors to house and educate children who had become wards of the state. Now the school and its young charges are the subject of a documentary film by Kathleen Laughlin that will premiere at the Minnesota History Center Oct. 26 at 1 p.m. Through interviews with former residents and staff, Laughlin captures the stories of the

children who called the institution home. Former resident Harvey Ronglien, who shared his story in the May 2002 issue of the *Interpreter*, was historical advisor for the film. Co-sponsors of the free public screening are the State Historic Preservation Office and the Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum.

Internet resource for Minnesota arts and artists

Seeking an artist in your area to include in your event or to commission for an artwork? Choices are plentiful at www.mnartists.org.

This comprehensive Internet guide to Minnesota artists and art educators is a joint project of the McKnight Foundation and Walker Art Center. The web site showcases artists in all disciplines – musicians, filmmakers, stage designers and directors, writers and visual artists of all kinds, from painters to dollmakers to needleworkers. It also features arts organizations and arts resources statewide. Just search the site by county for resources in your area.

For questions about the site or artists near you, call your regional arts council:

- *Region 1*, Northwest Regional Arts Council, Warren: Mara Wittman, 1-800-646-2240 or 218-745-6733.
- *Region 2*, Region 2 Arts Council, Bemidji: Terri Widman, 1-800-275-5447 or 218-751-5447.
- *Region 3*, Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, Duluth: Robert DeArmond, 1-800-569-8134 or 218-722-0952.
- *Region 4*, Lake Region Arts Council, Fergus Falls: Sonja Peterson, 218-739-5780.
- *Region 5*, Five Wings Arts Council, Staples: Mark Turner, 218-894-5485.
- *Region 6*, Southwest Minnesota Arts and Humanities Council, Marshall: Greta Murray, 1-800-622-5284 or 507-537-1471.
- *Region 7E*, East Central Arts Council, Mora: Mary Minnick Daniels, 320-679-4065.
- *Region 7W*, Central Minnesota Arts Board, Elk River: Charles Gilliam, 763-241-9517.
- *Region 9*, Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, Waseca: Brenda Flintrop, 1-800-298-1254 or 507-833-8721.
- *Region 10*, Southeast Minnesota Arts Council, Rochester: Patricia Alcott, 507-281-4848.
- *Region 11*, Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, St. Paul: Carolyn Bye, 651-645-0402.



IMLS introduces Learning Opportunities grants

Program helps museums strengthen public service role

The Institute for Museum and Library Services is refocusing its former general operating support grants to meet the changing needs of museums in the 21st century. As it continues to study those needs, IMLS will offer a one-time funding opportunity in 2003 for museums across the country to address the critical area of public service. The goal: to help museums build their capacity to serve a wider, more diverse public through education, partnerships and technology.

Learning Opportunities grants will support projects and activities that address one or more strategic goals: building public access, expanding

educational services, reaching families and children, and using technology more effectively in support of those goals. This IMLS funding program encourages museums to invest in their own abilities, using their collections, exhibits and services to strengthen their role as resources for lifelong learning – in the schools, in the home and in partnership with other community organizations.

IMLS will distribute funding for Learning Opportunities grants to museum of all types and sizes. Applicants may apply in one of three funding categories: \$5,000-\$24,999; \$25,000-\$74,999; and \$75,000-\$150,000. In each category a 1:1 match

of grant funds is required. The grant period will generally be up to two years, or three years with strong justification. All applications must demonstrate evidence of institutional strategic planning and the relationship between the grant project and the institution's plan. Projects should reflect an investment in institutional capacity rather than a one-time program.

Applications will be available online and in hard copy in October. The application deadline is Jan. 15, 2003. Go to www.imls.gov/grants/museum/mus_gen.asp#vitals. For more information call Dan Lukash, IMLS program officer, at 202-606-4644 or e-mail dlukash@imls.gov.

MHS Reference Department classes

The Minnesota Historical Society's Reference Department offers one-session classes to acquaint you with historical sources at the Minnesota History Center. All sessions are held in the history center library.

Registration is required and class size is limited. For fee information and to register, call 651-296-2143. Or register online at www.mnhs.org/library/classes/index.html.

I'm New Here: Introducing the Library

Every Saturday, 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.

Explore the Society's amazing array of sources for researching family, church, organization, business and community history – or any other aspect of Minnesota's rich past. This session introduces you to the library's catalogs, policies and procedures. No fee. Registration preferred.

Whose House Was This?

Nov. 5, 6 to 7 p.m.

Discover the many intriguing resources at the Society for delving into the history of your city residence. Tracey Baker, reference specialist, explains how to use insurance maps, city directories, photographs, manuscript collections, architectural periodicals and State Archives records.

History Behind Bars: Corrections Department Records

Nov. 12, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Archivist Duane Swanson introduces records from Minnesota's correctional system and explains how the pardon process produced information valuable to family historians. Focusing on records of the Stillwater prison, Swanson describes what they contain and how to use them in genealogy research.

Researching the Rails: Great Northern and Northern Pacific Records

Dec. 3, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Manuscripts archivist Dennis Meissner gives an overview of the Society's two largest manuscript collections, identifying the major groups of records in the railroad companies' administrative departments.

Book It! How to Make and Preserve Scrapbooks

Dec. 10, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Scrapbook materials – photographs, newspaper clippings, ribbons and other ephemera – often pose conservation challenges. Even the scrapbook itself might be hazardous to its contents. Reference librarian Kathryn Otto demonstrates basic preservation techniques that will help your scrapbooks last for generations.

Researcher seeks materials on Civil War regiment

During his research on the Civil War-era Third Minnesota Volunteer Infantry regiment, historian Joe Fitzharris of the University of St. Thomas has consulted with several county and local historical societies about their holdings. He would like to hear from others with items relating to the regiment and its soldiers. "I'm particularly interested in materials like letters and diaries rather than artifacts," he explained. You can reach Fitzharris by mail at the Department of History, University of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105; by phone at



Minnesota Historical Society

Members of the Third Minnesota regiment, Company F, in camp at Nashville, Tenn., 1862.

651-962-5734; or by e-mail at jcfitzharris@stthomas.edu.

State grant deadlines for winter 2003 cycle

Grants will be awarded in two Minnesota Historical Society grant programs during the winter 2003 cycle – state grants-in-aid and Certified Local Government (CLG) grants. Both programs share the following deadlines:

Jan. 17, 2003	Pre-application due.
Feb. 21	Grant application due.
April 3	Grants Review Committee meets.

For tips on submitting a successful grant application, see Tech Talk in the June-July 2002 *Interpreter*. For details on the CLG program, see the enclosed *Preservation Planner*. For additional information on eligibility and project parameters, go to www.mnhs.org/about/grants/index.html. Or contact grants assistant David Grabitske by phone at 651-297-4416 or e-mail at david.grabitske@mnhs.org.

Field workshops set for 2003

Sessions to focus on theme "Seeing Results"

It's not too soon to start marking your 2003 calendars. Dates and locations are already set for next year's Minnesota Historical Society field workshops. Choose from the following:

- March 21, 2003** Red Wing,
Goodhue County
- April 11** Fairmont,
Martin County
- May 2** Alexandria,
Douglas County
- May 9** Virginia,
St. Louis County

As for what's on the agenda, your voices have been heard. Topics to be covered come from ideas submitted by

participants in last spring's workshops and from the 2002 surveys. Under the theme "Seeing Results," sessions will address such issues as volunteer recruitment and retention and the effectiveness of visitor surveys. One session, titled "Expressing Our Worth," will examine how to communicate effectively with your constituencies

about your successes.

Watch for more information in future issues of the *Interpreter*. Registration materials will be enclosed with the January-February issue. Meanwhile, questions can be addressed to David Grabitske, grants/field programs assistant, at 651-297-4416 or david.grabitske@mnhs.org.

PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF THE LAST YEAR:

Finding enough time & energy to implement all of the great ideas we have. We need to expand & fine tune our volunteer base.

Responses to survey questions from last season's workshops helped determine topics for the next round. This comment about volunteer recruitment from the White Bear Lake Area Historical Society echoed the concerns of many.

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.

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