

Resource at Risk: The Stillwater Bridge

The threats to historic properties are many and complex. Never has this been more true than in the case of the Stillwater Bridge, which connects Stillwater, Minn., and Houlton, Wis., across the St. Croix River. Built in 1931, it is a rare surviving example of its type. A 10-span, vertical-lift highway bridge, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. Located in the heart of downtown, the bridge is a local landmark: It is adjacent to the Stillwater Commercial Historic District, which is a particularly intact collection of late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings.

Historic bridges, generally, pose challenges for preservationists. The wear caused by years of use, coupled with the fact that these bridges were never designed to accommodate the volume, speed, and scale of present-day highway traffic, has been reason enough for many historic bridge replacement projects. They are even more vulnerable when there is a lack of public interest in preserving structures whose significance may not have a perceived aesthetic appeal.

Curiously, these are not the immediate threats facing the Stillwater Bridge. It is, first, a valued resource in the community. Moreover, maintenance and capacity are not insurmountable issues in its immediate future, though they certainly affect its projected life span.

The bridge is caught in a much larger struggle between commercial, environmental

and historic values in the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. A new St. Croix crossing about a mile south of the city is being planned, and that has generated a myriad of construction permits and approvals. Federal agencies, state agencies in both Minnesota and Wisconsin, and local communities on both sides of the river are involved. But ironically, the federal agency charged with protecting both natural and historic resources, the National Park Service (NPS), has created the most immediate threat to the bridge.

NPS, invoking a planning principle of "non-proliferation" of crossings in scenic and wild river areas, has made its approval of the proposed new river crossing conditional upon the removal of the historic bridge. In our view, though that is a valid planning principle, the NPS should not apply it rigidly, without regard for the cultural resources that characterize the stretch of the river where the historic community of

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SHPO; photograph by J. H. Kammerdiener

The Stillwater Bridge across the St. Croix River as it looked around 1935, looking toward Wisconsin.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

GRANT DEADLINE

Jan. 31: Final deadline for CLG grant applications.



PUBLIC MEETINGS ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The SHPO will host three public meetings to discuss planning for historic preservation as it relates to the needs of the general public, government agencies and communities throughout Minnesota. Your input is needed to help the Office review the goals of the statewide preservation plan issued in 1995 and establish priorities for its 1997-98 work plan. We encourage you to attend one of the meetings listed below. No advance registration is required. For more information, call Michael Koop, (612) 296-5451.

March 20: Fairmont, Holiday Inn Hotel, 7 p.m.

April 17: Austin, Holiday Inn Hotel, 7 p.m.

May 1: Brainerd, Holiday Inn Hotel, 7 p.m.

MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS & EXHIBITS

Feb. 14-April 13: Masterpiecework, a small exhibition at the Weisman Art Center, University of Minnesota. The exhibition chronicles the design and construction of Louis Sullivan and George Elmslie's National Farmers' Bank (a National Historic Landmark) in Owatonna, and features a number of the original blueprints from this landmark design.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Through March 29: Saving Places: Photographs by Jet Lowe, James J. Hill House, St. Paul. The Hill House is host to the Minnesota Historical Society's **Saving Places** traveling exhibit. It features 61 black and white photographs that document significant historic sites. Non-members: \$1 for exhibit only or free with regular tour admission.

March 13: Grants Review Committee Meeting, 1:30 p.m., Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd W., St. Paul. For agenda information call Julie McKenzie, (612) 296-5451.

March 20: State Review Board Meeting, 7 p.m., Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul. For agenda information, call Michele Decker, (612) 296-5434.

April 3 & 10: Compleat Scholar Class. "The Bridges of...Minnesotal" will meet twice at the Minnesota History Center to discuss historic and future bridges. \$34 (age 62 & MHS member, \$30.60). For information or to register, call (612) 624-8880.

May 3-11: Minnesota Archaeology Week. The third annual Minnesota Archaeology Week includes a range of events throughout the state. For more information, write: Minnesota Archaeology Week, Fort Snelling History Center, St. Paul, MN 55111 or call (612) 296-5434.

May 8: State Review Board Meeting, 7 p.m., Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W. For agenda information, call Michele Decker, (612) 296-5434.

May 11-17: National Historic Preservation Week. "Preservation Begins at Home" is the theme of this week-long celebration. The next issue of the **Planner** will include a list of events.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

May 15-16: Annual Meeting for HPCs and CLGs, Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth St., St. Paul. Watch for the next issue of the **Planner** for program details.

Stillwater Bridge Threatened

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Stillwater is sited. The National Register vertical lift bridge should be seen not as in conflict with, but as a component of, the scenic values of the river.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) has held that the construction of the new bridge will not affect the historic bridge. It was the understanding of all parties when SHPO signed the Memorandum of Agreement in 1994 that the lift bridge will remain on the state highway system carrying local traffic after completion of the new crossing. However, with pressure from the NPS to connect the new bridge construction with the future of the first bridge, and in the interest of moving the new bridge project forward, Mn/DOT agreed in a letter to NPS to consider removal of the old one in 10 to 15 years.

These threats have served to mobilize local interest in preserving the bridge. A local preservation group, River Town Restoration (RTR), has been leading the way, and the city has appointed a task force to plan for the future of the bridge. Recent efforts have focused on changing the mind of the NPS and on educating the community regarding the real issues facing the historic bridge. Over 1,500 petitions have been signed, and the local interest continues to grow.

To muddy the waters still more, the Sierra Club and other environmental groups have filed suit in federal court about the siting of the new bridge. Many environmentalists favor the site of the historic bridge as one alternate site for the new one. So, even if the NPS is persuaded to change its position, the lawsuit could mean that the future of the historic Stillwater Bridge would still hang in the balance. The historic center of the community of Stillwater, not only the Stillwater Bridge, would be at risk if this scenario were to play out.

*by Britta L. Bloomberg
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer*

NOTE AT PRESS TIME: As this issue goes to press, the plot thickens. On Dec. 30 the U.S. Interior Department (of which NPS is part) vetoed the new river crossing, citing the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and ordered two other federal agencies not to issue construction permits for the project. The decision will be contested in federal court, so the future of the historic bridge remains uncertain and the center of what promises to be a long debate. —BLB

REGISTRATION

Recent Additions to the National Register of Historic Places

Beltrami County: Buena Vista Archaeological Historic District, Puposky vicinity. Prepared by John McCarthy and Jeanne Ward.

Goodhue County: Spring Creek Petroglyphs, Red Wing vicinity. Prepared by Mark Dudzik.

Houston County: Yucatan Fort Site, Spring Grove vicinity. Prepared by Clark Dobbs.

St. Louis County: Jun Fujita Cabin, Voyageurs National Park, Ranier vicinity. Prepared by John Hurley.



SHPO collection.

T. H. Lewis first described the Spring Creek Petroglyphs in Goodhue County in 1885, noting a variety of "carvings of animals, snakes, birds, men and other pictographs." A number of glyphs are visible in the upper right corner of this illustration.

Beneath Minnesota Waters: Developing a Plan for Minnesota's Submerged Cultural Resources

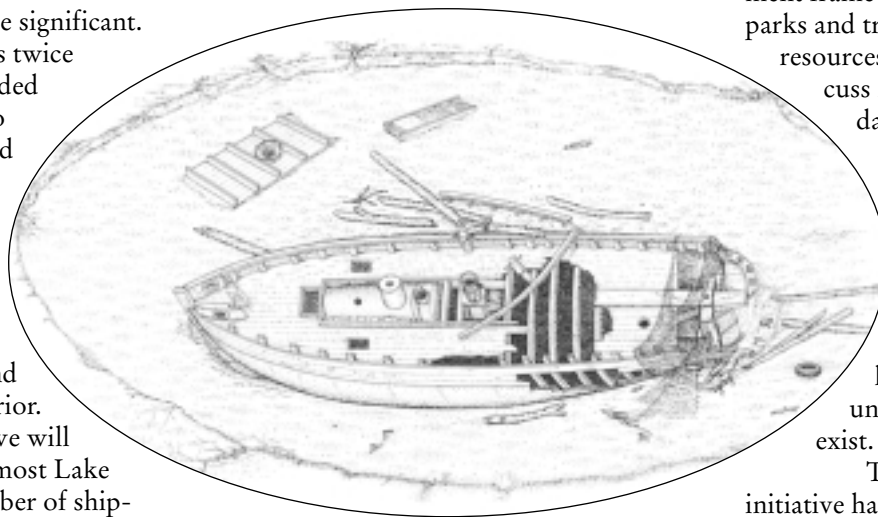
In 1988, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) received funds from the Minnesota Legislature as recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) to study shipwrecks in Minnesota waters of Lake Superior. The request for funding was spurred by the federal Abandoned Shipwrecks Act of 1987, which gave to the states management responsibilities for shipwrecks in submerged sites within U.S. territorial waters. The first steps in fulfilling the management obligations were: 1) to identify what shipwrecks were present; 2) to develop a framework for evaluating their significance; and 3) to determine which shipwrecks were significant.

Since 1988, the SHPO has twice received LCMR-recommended funds from the legislature to study shipwrecks and related features in Minnesota. We have expanded the scope of the project beyond shipwrecks to include other submerged historic sites (e.g., harbor facilities) and have also included inland waters as well as Lake Superior.

By the summer of 1997, we will have completed surveys of most Lake Superior shipwrecks, a number of shipwrecks in inland lakes and rivers, and surveys of the harbors of Duluth, Grand Marais, Knife River and Two Harbors. Through the definition of historic contexts and property types, we have developed methods to evaluate the importance of shipwrecks, and we have placed eight shipwrecks on the National Register of Historic Places.

The final step in the SHPO shipwreck initiative is to produce a plan that will guide MHS, other agencies, and the public on protecting, preserving and interpreting underwater cultural resources, and, where appropriate, making them more accessible. Though the plan will not establish new regulations, it will provide some interpretation of existing state and federal regulations and perhaps suggest the need for new legislation.

The SHPO has hired Mitch Marken of Summit Envirosolutions to help write the plan. Dr. Marken is a widely experienced underwater archaeologist. A draft version of the plan was produced in early October and presented at a SHPO-sponsored shipwreck conference in Duluth on Oct. 10, 1996. An open discussion was held in Duluth among sport divers and professional archaeologists to better define the objectives of the plan. A second public meeting was held at the Minnesota History Center on Nov. 11. Both meetings were well-attended.



A perspective drawing of the wreck of the steam tug A. C. Adams in Lake Superior just north of Duluth. The Adams, a 62' x 16' steam tug built in 1881, had a long career on the Great Lakes, including taking part in several rescue operations. Brought to Duluth around 1893, it was used as a floating workshop from around 1906 until 1921-23, when it was scuttled. Found in 118 feet of water during the 1990 Corps of Engineers survey, it is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Martin Peebles assisted with this drawing for Tidewater Atlantic Research, the project contractor.

The public meetings have clearly demonstrated that sport divers are concerned with over-regulation, but that they are eager to do their part in preserving significant underwater historic sites. Many older divers openly admit that they pulled pieces off shipwrecks when they first began diving, but they now regret those actions when they take their children diving on those same sites; the dive isn't as rich an experience for their children as it was for them.

A major part of the final plan will be a discussion of the role of sport divers in managing our underwater resources. Sport divers can assist in monitoring the condition of wrecks, attaching seasonal buoys to make wrecks more accessible and safer, and helping to discover locations of previously unknown wrecks and other submerged historic sites. Within the last year a group called the Great Lakes Shipwreck Preservation Society has been formed in Minnesota, and it has already made major contributions to shipwreck preservation in Lake Superior.

The plan will explore site management frameworks, such as underwater parks and trails, that can make the resources more accessible. It will discuss measures for minimizing damage to underwater cultural resources from vandalism, impacts from construction and accident (e.g. anchoring), and natural forces. And it will present problems and opportunities at individual sites where known wrecks or other underwater historic resources exist.

The state-funded shipwreck initiative has produced a significant amount of research on the history of water transportation in Minnesota. This information is on file at the SHPO office in the Minnesota History Center. We have attempted to make some of the information more widely available by placing it on the World Wide Web. You can view this information on the Minnesota Historical Society's home page (address on p. 4); click on **Preservation** and then **Shipwrecks**. A draft version of the plan is also available at this location.

*by Scott Anfinson
Archaeologist, State Historic
Preservation Office*

Funding for the shipwreck project was approved by the Minnesota Legislature, ML 1995, Chapter 220, Sec. 19, Subd. 12f, as recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources from the Minnesota Futures Resources Fund.



SAVED

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(above) The state bond-funded County and Local Preservation Project Grants-in-Aid program provided funds to complete Phase I of the rehabilitation of the Universal Laboratories Building (1937) in Dassel, where the medicinal fungus ergot was processed during World War II. Work included repairing foundation walls, replacing structural floors, rebuilding stairways and updating electrical service.



(below) New windows were installed throughout the Koochiching County Courthouse (1910) using funds from the state bond-funded County and Local Preservation Project Grants-in-Aid program.

CLG Program Continues to Grow Congratulations to Otsego and New Ulm!

Two more cities have enacted local historic preservation ordinances and successfully applied for participation in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act. Otsego (June 12), and New Ulm (September 16) became the state's 25th and 26th local governments to formalize a relationship with the SHPO and federal preservation programs. New Ulm's certification culminates an effort of more than 20 years to establish a local preservation program. Communities interested in learning more about achieving CLG status should call Michael Koop, historic preservation program specialist, (612) 296-5451.



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