

A newsletter on historic preservation from the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Meetings and Workshops

April 14, May 5, May 12, June 2

Historic Preservation Series offered by the Midwest Preservation Institute, 9 a.m.-noon. Tuition: \$296. For more information call 763-433-1405; to register call 763-433-1200.

May 8-9

"NEPA Compliance and Cultural Resources," a seminar by the National Preservation Institute. HDR, 701 Xenia Ave. S., Minneapolis. Cost: \$375. For more information call NPI, 703-765-0100, or go to www.npi.org/sem-icrec.html.

May 15

State Review Board meeting, 7 p.m., Minnesota History Center, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul. For agenda information call Michele Decker, 651-259-3450.

June 12

SHPO Preservation Workshop, Minnesota History Center, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul. See page 4 for details.

June 23-30

Preservation Leadership Training, Owatonna. Application deadline: March 30. See page 2 for details.

May Is Preservation Month

This year's theme is "Making Preservation Work." For tips on planning Preservation Month events, visit the web site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation at www.nationaltrust.org/preservationmonth. To publicize your events, e-mail localhistorynews@mnhs.org. Include the event name, date, time, location, a brief description, sponsors and contact information.

Archaeological discovery in Walker makes news

by Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Minnesota, while rich in archaeological evidence, has not been widely known for the rarity of those resources. All that may be about to change. Last fall, archaeologists for the Leech Lake Heritage Sites Program discovered what could be among the oldest known archaeological sites in North and South America.

The discovery was made almost by accident. A new community center for the Walker area, funded in part by the Rural Development program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), was to be built on a hilly site at the edge of town. As part of its environmental review, the federal agency required an archaeological survey of the project site. When archaeologists unearthed a historical dug-out feature along the proposed access road, they called for further investigation.

It was during the second dig that the archaeologists made a startling find. Below a level of disturbed soil that turned out to be a play fort from the mid-20th century, they uncovered stone tools and other artifacts. Buried at levels deeper than standard archaeological testing would reach, the lithic artifacts lay within what appeared to be glacial-age deposits. The team estimated their age at as much as 14,000 years old. This

evidence of human occupation dating from the glacial period would be Minnesota's oldest documented site. It could also be among the oldest on the continent.

What do archaeologists do when such an unprecedented discovery is made? They proceed cautiously. SHPO National Register archaeologist David Mather knew that reports of the discovery would be met with skepticism. So he invited experts in soil science and glacial geology to visit the site and consult on the find.

Discovery continued on page 2



In December 2006, archaeologists and glacial geologists from the Minnesota Geological Survey, St. Cloud State University and the Leech Lake Heritage Sites Program examined the Walker hill site.

Discovery – continued

The initial peer review supports the preliminary conclusion that the artifacts may be genuine and appear to be buried under glacial-age sediments, which would date the site as much as 3,500 years earlier than previously believed possible in Minnesota.

Despite the potential significance of the discovery, now the question is whether the site will be preserved. When a Memorandum of Agreement was signed last September by the USDA, the Minnesota SHPO, the East Ottertail Telephone Company, the Walker Area

Community Center and the Leech Lake Tribal Historic Preservation Office, none of the parties anticipated such an unexpected outcome. The agreement, acknowledging that no feasible road-access alternatives had been found, calls only for data recovery at the site.

But because the site is now more important to understanding Minnesota archaeology than originally assessed, at press time the Minnesota SHPO and USDA have begun further consultation with the City of Walker and other parties on avoidance alternatives.

The find is simply too significant not to put in the additional time and care and effort it would take to preserve the site for study by future archaeologists.

My hope is that the spotlight now shining on Minnesota archaeology will provide a teachable moment about the potential significance of our still-undiscovered resources and about our shared role as stewards of the past. ■

Owatonna to host Preservation Leadership Training

The National Trust for Historic Preservation will hold its 2007 Preservation Leadership Training (PLT) in Owatonna June 23-30. Tailored to the needs of community preservationists, PLT is designed for boards and staff of preservation organizations and agencies, Main Street communities and others in a position to influence community preservation efforts.

Sessions will offer training in current preservation issues, strategies and practices as well as techniques for organizational development.

Tuition for the program is \$450; members of the National Trust Forum are eligible for discounted tuition of \$350. Lodging, most meals and transportation are extra. The designated group hotel, the Gainey Conference Center in Owatonna, will provide a special rate for lodging and meals.

To help offset the cost of the conference, heritage preservation commissioners from Certified Local Government cities may apply for scholarships from the Minnesota SHPO. Watch for a mailing with complete scholarship information

or contact Mandy Skypala at 651-259-3458 or mandy.skypala@mnhs.org.

The PLT application deadline is March 30. For more information, including NTHP scholarships, go to www.nationaltrust.org/plt. ■



At the National Trust's Preservation Leadership Training, Owatonna's historic downtown will serve as a case study for how to maximize use of historic buildings.

Saved

Carver County: Diedrick Building (1876), Chaska

This brick commercial building in Chaska's Walnut Street Historic District has been rehabilitated into retail and office space using federal historic preservation tax incentives. Work included replacing damaged brick and windows, repointing mortar joints, and installing a new storefront, roof and mechanical system.



The Diedrick Building before (left) and after rehabilitation for retail and office space.

Stearns County: Barden Park Bandstand (1925), St. Cloud

Site of many a community musical event, this granite bandstand was rehabilitated with funds from the State Capital Projects Grants-in-Aid program. Work included replacing the roof and structural supports, repointing mortar joints, repairing windows, installing paving bricks and upgrading the electrical system.



The Barden Park Bandstand before (left) and after rehabilitation.

Registration

Recent additions to the National Register of Historic Places:

Brown County: New Ulm Commercial Historic District (1861-1953), Minnesota Street between First Street South and Third Street North. Prepared by Daniel Hoisington.

Hennepin County: Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House (1912), 1129 University Ave. S.E., Minneapolis. Prepared by Carole Zellie.

Lake of the Woods County: Canadian National Railways Depot (1923), 420 N. Main Ave., Baudette. Prepared by Carmen Tschofen.

Pope County: Little Falls and Dakota Depot (1882), Depot Lane, Starbuck. Prepared by Carmen Tschofen.



Founded in 1854 by an association of German immigrants, New Ulm played an important role in the economic development of south-central Minnesota. The city's Commercial Historic District contains 75 brick buildings, many by noted local architects and brickmasons, in a wide range of styles including Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne and Art Moderne.



A rare example of early European modernism in Minnesota, the Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House was designed by Carl B. Stravs. Strongly influenced by the principles of the Viennese Secession, his design features a crisp main block with wide overhang, pentagonal ground-floor window openings and a thorough integration of structure and decoration.

About this publication

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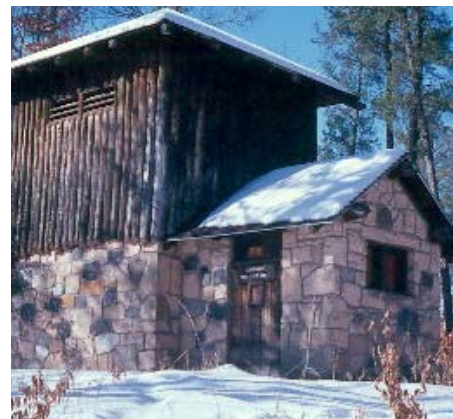
www.mnhs.org

Preservation workshop set for June 12

It will not be business as usual for the Minnesota SHPO this year. In October the Twin Cities play host to the annual conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. So instead of its statewide conference in September, the SHPO is planning a day-long preservation workshop June 12 at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.

Intended primarily for heritage preservation commissioners and staff, the workshop is open to all preservation professionals. On the agenda: the SHPO inventory, archaeological resources, differences between the National Register and local designations, and programs and resources for protecting buildings.

Registration information will be mailed in late April. For details call Michele Decker, 651-259-3450, or e-mail michele.decker@mnhs.org. ■



In the 1980s the SHPO surveyed resources associated with the CCC/WPA Rustic Style, including this structure in St. Croix State Park.



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