Fort Snelling’s historic Upper Post
named to Most Endangered Places list

In May the Upper Post of the Fort Snelling Historic District received the dubious honor of being named one of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. It’s a designation given annually by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to the nation’s foremost historic places facing the most dire of threats. The announcement sends a call to action to save this significant place before it is lost forever.

The property, a once-active military base, sits across a highway from the 1820s Historic Fort Snelling, operated by the Minnesota Historical Society. Construction of the Upper Post began in 1879 and continued into the early 1900s. During the first half of the 20th century, it served as a major national defense facility, a training site for officers during World War I and later a rehabilitation center for wounded veterans. In time, the Upper Post earned the moniker “Country Club of the Army” for the quality of its recreational and housing facilities. Remodeled before World War II, the post became an induction center for more than 300,000
Dakota County: William G. LeDuc House (1862-65), Hastings. Built for noted merchant, historian, promoter and Civil War veteran William LeDuc, this Gothic Villa estate has been restored as a museum. Project partners include the City of Hastings, Dakota County Historical Society, LeDuc-Simmons Foundation, MacDonald and Mack Architects, Scenic Byways Program, State of Minnesota and Minnesota Historical Society.

Otter Tail County: Hotel Kaddatz (1914-15), Fergus Falls. The Renaissance Revival Hotel Kaddatz was designed by George Hancock for merchant Charles Kaddatz to house U.S. District Court officials. Vacant since 1975, it was rehabilitated for mixed use by Artspace using federal preservation tax incentives. Work included cleaning and repointing brick, repairing windows and floors, and installing new mechanical systems and water service.

REGISTRATION

Recent additions to the National Register of Historic Places

Hennepin County: Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Grade Separation (1912-16), Corridor parallel to 29th St. between Humboldt Ave. S. and 20th Ave. S., Minneapolis. Prepared by Andrea Vermeer and Will Stark.


Winona County: J. R. Watkins Medical Company Complex (1900-14), 150 Liberty St., Winona. Prepared by Robert M. Frame III.
Wanted: Multimillion-dollar citizen advice

Here is your chance to advise the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) about future funding priorities for Minnesota’s environment and natural resources. Beginning July 1, 2007, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund will generate approximately $22 million a year for two years for special projects, which can include historic resources. The LCMR is seeking citizen input on ways to spend the money. Just log on to the LCMR web site at www.lcmr.leg.mn/lcmr.htm and click on the Citizen Input Form.

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Minnesotans called to serve in the war.

After the war, the Army gradually abandoned the buildings of the Upper Post. Today, the 28 buildings remaining on the 141-acre site are vacant and deteriorating. These structures and the site they occupy, with its proximity to the airport and light-rail transportation, are ripe for preservation, development and reuse.

There is reason for hope: efforts are already underway to save and reuse Fort Snelling’s Upper Post. For more than a year, a diverse group of agency partners, convened by the Department of Natural Resources and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, has been meeting to discuss the site’s future. Hennepin County has successfully leveraged resources and is working with the DNR to begin stabilization of some of the buildings. The addition of the property to the 11 Most Endangered Places list promises to galvanize these efforts and bring more voices and resources to the table.

The Upper Post is the third property in Minnesota to be named to the National Trust’s list of endangered historic places. The 1997 list included the Stillwater Bridge over the St. Croix River, and in 2002 Minneapolis’s Guthrie Theater, built in 1963, was deemed endangered. Coincidentally, there were significant developments related to both of those properties in the same week that the 2006 list of 11 Most Endangered Places was announced:

• After years of negotiations about the fate of the Stillwater Bridge among a myriad of stakeholders, the memorandum of agreement addressing all the historic resource issues related to the new St. Croix River crossing was finally signed. When the new bridge opens, the historic lift bridge will be rehabilitated and incorporated into a new recreational loop trail spanning the river.

Introducing...

David Mather has joined the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office as National Register archaeologist. A Ph.D. candidate in interdisciplinary archaeological studies at the University of Minnesota, Mather holds a master’s degree in environmental archaeology from Sheffield University in England. Founder of his own archaeological research company, he served as consulting archaeologist for the Mille Lacs Tribal Historic Preservation Office. Mather’s research interests include zooarchaeology – the archaeology of animal bones.

Nina M. Archabal (right), Minnesota’s state historic preservation officer, signs the Stillwater Bridge memorandum of agreement with Cheryl Martin, cultural resources specialist for the Federal Highway Administration.

• May 7 was closing night for “Hamlet,” the final production at the Guthrie Theater building designed by Ralph Rapson. The theater company moved to its new home overlooking the Mississippi River in June. Despite local efforts to save the Rapson building, the Walker Art Center, which owns the site, plans to demolish the building this summer.

Preservationists at the Minnesota SHPO and elsewhere are hopeful that designation of the Fort Snelling Upper Post as endangered will bring renewed energy and commitment to efforts to secure a future for this imperiled National Historic Landmark. As those efforts continue to unfold, we will keep you informed of our progress.

– Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Red Wing to host preservation conference

The 27th Annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference will be held Sept. 27-29 at the St. James Hotel in Red Wing. Among activities planned:

- Keynote address by Charles Birnbaum, coordinator of the National Park Service’s Historic Landscapes Initiative.
- Presentations by staff of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency on Main Street commercial buildings, and by Randy Wilson of Community Design Solutions on design as an agent for community change.
- Reception at the E. S. Hoyt House (1913), designed by Prairie School architects Purcell and Elmslie.
- Tours of Red Wing’s downtown commercial buildings, archaeological sites, the State Training School, Tower View, Old Frontenac and more.

In addition, the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota will present its annual preservation awards at the Sheldon Theatre.

Registration materials will be mailed soon. They are also available online at www.mnhs.org/presconf. For more information call the State Historic Preservation Office, 651-296-5434.