



August 2001, Vol. XXIX, No. 6

INSIDE

page 3

Depot museum opens

page 6

State grants-in-aid awarded

page 8

Grant deadlines

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for county and local historical societies and heritage preservation commissions

Upper Midwest Conservation Association photos



Commerce, a 20-inch-by-50-inch painting by Axel Edward Soderberg, has been restored and reinstalled in the Lake County Courthouse.

Restoration project rescues long-forgotten courthouse gems

Paintings depict Lake County heritage

When renovation of the Lake County Courthouse began in 1999, no one knew quite what to do with a large painting titled *Law and Justice* that hung on a wall to be torn down. And for a while, no one seemed to care.

But one staff member persisted. Wilma Clark, clerk for the Lake County Board of Commissioners, persuaded the board to let art conservators from the Upper Midwest Conservation Association (UMCA) take a look at the painting. Her persistence paid off. Months later, with a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society, the painting was restored and hung in the county's new Law Enforcement Center.

Imagine Clark's surprise when, just as that project got underway, the

longtime county auditor asked, "What about the other paintings that used to hang here?"

More sleuthing uncovered the full story. Back in 1905 the county board commissioned the artworks and other decorative painting for the courtrooms and corridors of its new courthouse. In addition to *Law and Justice*, three large paintings were installed in 1906 in the commissioners' boardroom. Titled *Commerce*, *Forestry* and *Mining*, they depicted activities that even today sustain the local economy. All were painted by Axel Edward Soderberg, a Swedish immigrant artist trained in Stockholm and Paris, whose works hung in public buildings throughout the American West.

Restoration project continued on page 2

Outside the fence

by Mary Warner

*Museum Manager, Morrison County
Historical Society*

We're breaking loose. We're outside the fence – thinking outside the fence, that is. And like some errant cow that can't stand the confines of her pen, we refuse to go back in.

Take our museum planning process. Whenever we sit down together for a planning session, staff members compose a list of goals. Then we put the list away. Six months or a year later, we look at the list to see how we've done. Invariably, we discover that most of the goals have been met. Some might say this planning process is unconventional but it works for us.

Recently – after celebrating the 25th anniversary of our Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum and looking ahead to the 65th anniversary of the Morrison County Historical Society – we went through our goal-listing process again. This time we focused on new ways to accomplish our mission of collecting, preserving and interpreting our county history. Thanks to our members and donors, we're doing a fine job of collecting

Outside continued on page 2

Restoration project

continued from page 1

Clark found the paintings in storage, where they had lain forgotten for decades after sustaining water damage from a burst pipe. Spurred by the success of the first restoration project, she applied for another grant from the Society to have the paintings restored.

The Minneapolis-based UMCA again did the restoration work. Each painting was cleaned, then humidified and “relaxed” under blotters and weights

to eliminate puckers. Areas with flaked or missing paint were repaired and the canvases lined with fabric. Finally the paintings, once mounted directly onto the wall, were bonded to boards and framed for rehanging. In May Soderberg’s artworks resumed their rightful place in the courthouse boardroom, itself restored and now climate-controlled to ensure the paintings’ preservation.



Axel Soderberg specialized in wall murals depicting mythological and historical subjects. *Forestry and Mining*, paintings he created for the Lake County Courthouse, illustrate aspects of the county’s history.

“In a small county like ours, there isn’t much extra money for projects like this,” explained Clark, “so we couldn’t have done it without the grant. We matched it with donations from the community and funds from the county.

“When we began this project, there were some people who questioned its value,” she noted. “But now that they can see the completed

work, they’re excited about what we’ve accomplished. Everyone has become more aware of the importance of preserving this piece of Lake County history for the enjoyment of future generations.”

For more information about the project, call Wilma Clark at 218-834-8320 or e-mail wilma.clark@co.lake.mn.us.

Outside *continued from page 1*

Morrison County history. And our curator of collections sees to it that our preservation activities are running smoothly. It’s that third part of our mission – educating the public about their history – where we’re thinking outside the fence.

In fact, we’re leaping outside the fence with our new plan for producing history publications. Our first title was *Little Falls on the Big River*, a local history curriculum for elementary school students. [See the *Preservation Planner*, Spring 2001

issue.] Now we’re launching a series of booklets on a variety of topics that together will paint a full picture of our county’s past. The first will be a reprint of Nathan Richardson’s 1876 history of Morrison County, which ran as a newspaper serial in 1880 but never appeared in book form. It’s one of the earliest accounts of our local history.

To assist us in our literary endeavors, an endowment has been created with a donation in memory of Carl A. Weyerhaeuser. Income from

this Literary Fund will be used to produce the history books.

So now you know what we’re thinking. But don’t be surprised if you hear, down the road, that we’ve tackled some new challenge. You never know when we may bolt again in another unexpected direction, like that stealth cow escaping her pen.

A longer version of this article appeared in the Winter 2001 issue of the Morrison County Historical Society newsletter. Edited with permission.

Home at last

Beltrami County society opens new depot museum

In April, after years of planning, the Beltrami County Historical Society moved from its longtime quarters on the county fairgrounds to its new home in Bemidji's Great Northern Depot. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the restored 1913 depot now will be known as the Beltrami County History Center.

The center's inaugural exhibit, "Pathways through History," tells the story of Beltrami County's rich heritage, from its geography and exploration to its logging industry and the legendary Paul Bunyan. Featured is the society's John G. Morrison Jr. Indian Collection of beaded moccasins and other clothing, tools and ceremonial items, largely from the Red Lake Band of Ojibwe.

"So many people donated time and money to make this a reality," said BCHS director Wanda Hoyum. "Our



Beltrami County Historical Society



Bemidji's historic Great Northern Depot, pictured above before its renovation, is now home to the Beltrami County Historical Society. The former waiting rooms (left) house three galleries of exhibits featuring a video history of the community, a scale-model railroad and the society's collection of Indian artifacts.

membership has grown, tourist traffic is up, and for the first time we're generating income from admissions and our new gift shop. As James J. Hill noted when he visited the depot in 1913, we have great community spirit

here. I invite everyone to come and see for themselves." For a preview of the BCHS and its collections, check out the society's new web site, www.paulbunyan.net/users/depot/index.html.

Play ball!

Vintage Saint Croix team defends championship

The showdown is set for Aug. 18. That's when the Saint Croix Base Ball Club takes to the field in Rochester to defend its title as Minnesota Vintage Base Ball Champions. Be on hand as Skinny, Stretch, Deano and Devil Dog step up to the plate to face their opponents. Will it be the Twin Cities' Quicksteps? Rochester's Roosters? Winona's Lumber Barons?

You may not recognize the names or the rules of the game. But if tempers flare, you can count on the umpires to impose a hefty fine – 25 cents for each infraction.

Sure to please both sports fans and history buffs, this educational program of the Washington County Historical Society brings back to life the area's 1860s ball club. A member of the nationwide Vintage Base Ball Association, the Saint Croix club plays by the 1860 "New York rules," which allow the umpire to consult the fans, or "cranks," when making a call. For current club news and a schedule of games, see the team's web site at <http://wchsmn.org/stcroixbbc>.



Photo by D. C. Rambow

Members of the present-day Saint Croix Base Ball Club, dressed in their period costumes, pose for an ambrotype photograph, a five-second exposure taken with a mid-19th-century camera.

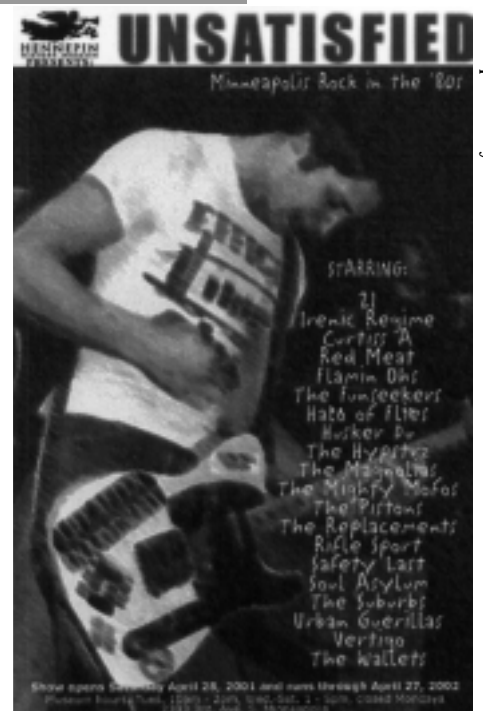
Exhibits focus on recent history

It's not about immigrants and early settlers this summer at three historical societies that looked to the more recent past for exhibit ideas.

- In the 1980s, Minneapolis rocked. Site of a thriving independent music scene, the city was fertile ground for a group of musicians creating a rich and diverse body of work outside the mainstream. Visitors to a new exhibit, "Unsatisfied," at the Hennepin History Museum will learn how bands such as Hüsker Dü, the Funseekers and the Replacements nurtured one another as they redefined notions of musical success. For exhibit hours call 612-870-1329 or see www.hhmuseum.org.
- With future generations in mind, the Moose Lake Area Historical Society called on local citizens to help

document community life in the new millennium. Photographs in more than a dozen categories, from everyday scenes to local landmarks to community events, have been solicited for the exhibit "Life in Small Town, USA." As they are submitted throughout the year, photos will be added to the exhibit. For details on this history-in-the-making project, call 218-389-6090 or 218-372-4282.

- To put this summer's stormy weather in perspective, visit "When Weather Goes Bad," an exhibit at the Clay County Museum in Moorhead's Hjemkomst Center. From a 1957 tornado to the record snows and floods of 1997, the exhibit looks at weather extremes that too often seem to be the norm in the Red River Valley. Featured in the exhibit



Hennepin History Museum

This exhibit on music in the 1980s at the Hennepin History Museum is drawing a "30-something" crowd.

is a local WDAY-TV documentary of the 1957 tornado, playing on a 1952 Motorola television set. For more information call 218-299-5520.

For the tourist trade

Eveleth, Brown County projects promote heritage tourism



In Eveleth this summer, tourists and residents alike can be seen with brochures in hand as they set out on self-guided walking tours of the city's historic houses and immigrant halls. Initiated by the Heritage Committee of Eveleth's Chamber of

Commerce, the brochure project is part of the city's historic preservation

and interpretation program, designed to increase awareness of Eveleth's historic resources.

It seems to be working. The Heritage Committee has garnered recognition in the city's comprehensive plan as a vital partner in Eveleth's future development.

Featured on the tour are a dozen historic properties, from the stylish homes of "captains," or supervisors, of the mining companies to meeting halls where Finnish, Italian, Swedish and Slovenian miners socialized. For a copy of the brochure, "Captain's Homes and Immigrant Halls," call the Eveleth Chamber of Commerce, 218-744-1940.

Also with tourists in mind, the Brown County Historical Society has prepared a list of 98 historic buildings, monuments and markers representing every city and town in the county. Wildlife areas and camping grounds are listed as well. Eventually, the "Tour Brown County" material will be available on the society's new web site, <http://BrownCountyHistoryMNUSA.org>, with links to other travel and tourism sites in the county. For more information call BCHS director Bob Burgess at 507-233-2616 or e-mail bchs@newulmtel.net.

Student interns tackle research topics large and small

Historical societies across Minnesota have students to thank for taking on research that augments staff projects. The information they generate will add immeasurably to knowledge of society collections and county histories. The students benefit, too, as they gain on-the-job experience in the work of the state's historical organizations.

This summer the Carlton County Historical Society welcomes intern Joe Malkovich, a Cloquet native and history major at Gustavus Adolphus College. He will work on collecting and compiling information, photos and oral histories on the county's rural schools. The material will eventually find its way into an exhibit on rural education in Carlton County. Part of the Partners Internship Program funded by the Otto Bremer Foundation, Malkovich's internship was made possible by a grant from the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs. For details call Carlton County society director Marlene Wisuri, 218-879-1938.

From January to June the Cottonwood County Historical Society hosted Windom Area High School



Students watched as Carlton School burned in 1914. To prepare for a future exhibit, the Carlton County Historical Society is gathering photographs and oral histories on rural education in the county.

student Mike Olson. As part of their social studies curriculum, seniors study career opportunities and fulfill a service learning requirement by working at a profession of their choosing. Olson chose the historical society, where he spent his time doing research for an exhibit

commemorating the Cottonwood County society's 100th anniversary. The exhibit will debut at the county fair this month. For more information call Cottonwood County society director Linda Fransen, 507-831-1134.

Last year students from Concordia College in Moorhead arrived at the Clay County Historical Society ready to dig in. They had come from the college's Scandinavian studies class to study, in depth, artifacts in the society's collection. One class member, an exchange student from Norway, chose *tines* – round or oval wooden boxes used to store household items. His research culminated in a small exhibit at the Hjemkomst Center, where a copy of his report is on file in the county society's archives.

St. Louis County society adds sixth affiliate

The St. Louis County Historical Society welcomes its sixth affiliate, Sisu Heritage Inc., of Embarrass. A collaboration between the township and a private, nonprofit organization, Sisu Heritage has gained national and international recognition for its efforts to preserve the region's National Register properties crafted by Finnish immigrants. To introduce the public to

these 1900-era historic resources, volunteers conduct driving and walking tours of the sites. For information write Paul Knutti, P. O. Box 127, Embarrass, MN 55732.

Sisu Heritage joins SLCHS affiliates the Minnesota Museum of Mining in Chisholm and local historical societies in Ely-Winton, Tower-Soudan, Hibbing and the Virginia area.

State grants-in-aid awarded

Twenty-four applicants received more than \$96,000 in state grants-in-aid during the Minnesota Historical Society's fiscal year 2001 winter grants cycle. Grants were awarded in the categories of historic properties, artifact collections, interpretive programs, museum environments, microfilm copies and technology. In addition, two communities received federal Heritage Preservation Fund (HPF) monies for historic structures reports.

- **Blue Earth County:** Blue Earth County Historical Society, \$1,700, reorganization of hat collection.
- **Clay County:** City of Moorhead, \$2,500, Red River Valley exhibit planning.
- **Clay County:** Clay County Historical Society, \$708, microfilm purchase.
- **Crow Wing County:** Lake Hubert Conservation Association, \$6,000, restoration of Minnesota and International Railroad Freight House and Shelter Shed.
- **Douglas County:** Douglas County

Historical Society, \$3,000, microfilm reader/printer.

- **Fillmore County:** Fillmore County Historical Society, \$1,566, microfilm acquisition.
- **Freeborn County:** Freeborn County Historical Society, \$7,500, fire/burglar alarm system replacement.
- **Hennepin County:** American Swedish Institute, \$3,500, microfilm reader/printer.
- **Kandiyohi County:** Kandiyohi County Historical Society, \$7,500, HVAC upgrade for archives.
- **Meeker County:** Ness Church Preservation Foundation, \$5,830, restoration of church interior.
- **Morrison County:** Morrison County Historical Society, \$3,196, newspaper microfilm project.
- **Olmsted County:** Olmsted County Historical Society, \$7,500 (HPF), historic structures report, George Stoppel Farmstead.
- **Otter Tail County:** City of Perham, \$2,580 (HPF), historic structures report, Episcopal Church of the Redeemer.

- **Pine County:** Audubon Center of the North Woods, \$6,000, lodge roof restoration, Arnold Schwyzer Summer House and Farmstead.
- **Pipestone County:** Historic Pipestone Inc., \$6,000, restoration, Brown Hospital, Pipestone Commercial Historic District.
- **Pipestone County:** Pipestone County Historical Society, \$2,809, oral history project on World War II veterans.
- **Redwood County:** Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum and Tourist Center, \$1,945, collections documentation system upgrade.
- **Renville County:** Renville County Historical Society, \$1,803, artifact collections storage.
- **Renville County:** Sacred Heart Area Historical Society, \$2,186, PastPerfect collections catalog.
- **Sibley County:** Sibley County Historical Society, \$7,500, repointing, August F. Poehler House.
- **Steele County:** Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum, \$6,530, documentary on Minnesota State Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children.
- **Stevens County:** Stevens County Genealogical Society, \$1,740, county newspaper microfilms.
- **Swift County:** Swift County Historical Society, \$675, Swift County records collecting project.
- **Washington County:** Washington County Historical Society, \$6,604, artifact storage.
- **Watonwan County:** St. James Opera House Restoration Project Inc., \$5,830, restoration, opera house entrance façade.
- **Winona County:** Winona County Historical Society, \$3,500, digital microfilm reader/printer.



The Olmsted County Historical Society will use its grant-funded historic structures report to guide restoration of the 1860s George Stoppel Farmstead near Rochester.

In search of murals

Researcher asks for help in locating new and historic artworks

Murals across Minnesota. That's the research topic of Thomas O'Sullivan, former curator of the Minnesota Historical Society's art collection.

For years during his travels around the state, O'Sullivan collected photographs, documents and other information about mural paintings in Minnesota's post offices, schools, courthouses and city halls. Now a research grant from the Minnesota Historical Society Publications and Research department will enable him to continue his search. He invites *Interpreter* readers to share with him information on murals past and present, surviving or lost. He is particularly interested in documenting murals in the archival collections of historical organizations.

"Many of the state's better-known examples were created under the WPA in the 1930s and 1940s," said O'Sullivan. "The 1970s marked a resurgence of mural art when the nation celebrated its bicentennial. Since then, many Minnesota communities have observed



Minnesota Historical Society

Artist Andre Boratko painted murals for this community building in Milaca in 1938 under the auspices of the Federal Art Project.

anniversaries with outdoor murals on Main Street businesses, grain elevators and other highly visible locations. I hope to track them all down."

If you have information about murals in your collection or your

community, contact O'Sullivan by mail at 967 Nevada Ave. W., St. Paul MN 55117, or by e-mail at osull@mindspring.com.

Workshop helps museums respond to disasters

The first 48 hours after disaster strikes are critical. That's when key decisions must be made about health and safety, disaster response and materials recovery. To help museums prepare for catastrophe, the Upper Midwest Conservation Association (UMCA) and the Minnesota Historical Society's Conservation Department have developed a two-day workshop, "Disaster Response: The Critical First 48 Hours."

Scheduled for Aug. 23-24 at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, the workshop follows a curriculum devised by the Foundation for the American Institute of Conservation. Sessions cover all aspects of disaster response, from assembling a disaster response team and establishing a cache of emergency equipment to documenting recovery efforts and addressing psychological effects of the disaster.

Participation is limited to 20 people. The registration fee of \$200 for the two-day workshop includes lunches and materials. For more information or to register, call Melinda Markell, UMCA Field Services Coordinator, at 612-870-3128, fax 612-870-3118, or e-mail UMCA@aol.com. This program is made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Historic Preservation Conference promises to draw a crowd

There's still time to sign up for the 22nd Annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference, to be held Sept. 20-21 in the historic resort community of Glenwood. Sponsored by the State Historic Preservation Office, the event will be hosted by the City of Glenwood and the Pope County Historical Society.

Local tours, a banquet and an evening of jazz at the historic Lakeside Ballroom top two days of lectures and working sessions on the themes of Minnesota's historic community schools and the state's tourism and recreation industries.

If you're a historian, architect, planner, public official, property



Minnesota Historical Society

Conference participants will tour the State Fish Hatchery (pictured here in 1953) and other local sites.

owner, school facilities manager or citizen advocate, you won't want to miss it. So take a moment to send in your reservation. Phone 651-296-5434 or see the Minnesota Historical Society's web site at www.mnhs.org/events/index.html.

Grant deadlines

Fall cycle: State grants-in-aid, capital grants

Aug. 3: Pre-application due.

Sept. 7: Grant application due.

Oct. 11: Grants Review Committee meets.

Winter cycle: State grants-in-aid, Certified Local Government grants

Jan. 18, 2002: Pre-application due.

Feb. 22: Grant application due.

April 4: Grants Review Committee meets.

Application forms and the State Grants-in-Aid Manual are available online at www.mnhs.org/about/grants/stgrants.html. For more information about the Society's grants programs, contact grants assistant David Grabitske by phone at 651-297-4416 or e-mail at david.grabitske@mnhs.org.

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