

# A FORT SNELLING CALENDAR

- 1803** President Thomas Jefferson purchased the vast Louisiana Territory from France.
- 1805** Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike selected the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peter's (Minnesota) rivers as a likely location for the country's most northwestern military post.
- 1812–1815** United States warred with England over mercantile rights on the seas and expansionist rights in the interior.
- 1817** Major Stephen H. Long, topographical engineer, approved the site chosen by Pike, declaring it essential for controlling access into the north country.
- 1818** Secretary of War John C. Calhoun announced plans for building a string of forts—including one on the St. Peter's River—to defend the Northwest against British aggression and to secure fur trade profits for the United States.
- 1819** Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth and the Fifth Regiment ascended the Mississippi River to the St. Peter's junction where they constructed a temporary camp in which the men spent an illness-ridden winter.
- 1820–1827** Thirty-eight-year-old Colonel Josiah Snelling replaced Leavenworth as commander of the expedition, laying the cornerstone for a post called Fort St. Anthony after the nearest named landmark, St. Anthony Falls.
- 1820–1839** Lawrence Taliaferro arrived at the outpost, beginning an honorable career as Indian agent to the Sioux and Chippewa. He served under six presidents.
- 1823** First Minnesota school with a regular teacher conducted at the fort by John Marsh for 10 area children. Count Giacomo C. Beltrami, Italian gentleman searching for the source of the Mississippi, arrived at the fort on the first steamboat to navigate upriver, the "Virginia."
- 1824** Major General Winfield Scott inspected the completed limestone post, recommending that it be renamed "Fort Snelling" in honor of its resourceful commandant.
- 1828** Southern-born Zachary Taylor, destined to become thirtieth president of the United States, commanded the post but found the country "miserable and uninteresting."
- 1832** Massive smallpox vaccination by post physician prevented spread of the dread disease to entire Indian population.  
Henry R. Schoolcraft arrived at the fort, announcing his discovery of the true source of the Mississippi which he named Lake Itasca.
- 1834** Missionaries Gideon and Samuel W. Pond, aided by Taliaferro and Major John Bliss, fort commandant, established relations with the Indians, for whom the brothers devised a Sioux alphabet and compiled a Sioux dictionary.  
Henry H. Sibley arrived at Mendota as agent of the American Fur Company, beginning a long career of involvement in Minnesota affairs, including service as first territorial representative and first governor of the new state.
- 1835** First Protestant church in Minnesota was organized at the fort with a congregation of 21.  
George Catlin, famed painter of North American Indians, visited the fort, suggesting the possibility of "Fashionable Tours" from the East into Minnesota.

DETAIL of *Fort Snelling*, painted in 1844 by J. C. Wild.

- Geologists George W. Featherstonhaugh and William W. Mather paused at the fort before advancing up the "Minnay Sotor" River in search of the legendary copper deposits of the Blue Earth region.
- 1836** French cartographer Joseph N. Nicollet set up a base camp at the fort. The First Regiment aided him in his work on the acclaimed hydrographic map of the Mississippi-Missouri region.  
As a slave to the post's physician, Dred Scott began his residency on free soil. This later figured in the Supreme Court decision which aggravated the national controversy over slavery.
- 1837** Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, widow of the distinguished statesman who lost his life in a duel with Aaron Burr, visited the fort on a "Fashionable Tour" and was honored with a tea.  
A treaty signed with the Chippewa at Fort Snelling officially opened the first Minnesota land to settlement.
- 1838** Chippewa Chief Hole-in-the-Day's group, attacked by a Sioux party while visiting the fort, took refuge inside the post while commander Major Joseph Plympton persuaded Sioux leaders to surrender the attackers for punishment.
- 1840** Major Plympton leveled the cabins of the squatters who resisted moving off the government-owned land surrounding the post, thereby forcing them to form the new community downriver that became St. Paul.
- 1841** Captain Seth Eastman, nationally famous painter of Indians and frontier scenes who was breveted brigadier general for his Civil War service, began the first of his four stints as commandant of Fort Snelling.
- 1848** Fort Snelling troops assisted in the second forced migration from Iowa to Minnesota of the Winnebago Indians, original inhabitants of the rich Wisconsin lead deposit region.
- 1849** Minnesota Territory was formed, and many of the fort's administrative duties were transferred to the capital city of St. Paul. Alexander Ramsey was appointed governor by President Zachary Taylor.  
Fort Ripley completed on the Mississippi River, assuming Fort Snelling's role as the most northwesterly army post on the frontier.
- 1850** Simon Bolivar Buckner, Confederate general who surrendered Fort Donelson to General Grant in 1862, served at the fort as lieutenant.
- 1851** Treaties signed with the Sioux opened much of southern Minnesota to settlement, sparking the first substantial immigration into the Minnesota Territory.
- 1853** Thomas W. Sherman, West Point graduate who later led an amphibious attack on Port Royal, South Carolina, and was breveted brigadier general, began five years of intermittent service as post commander.
- 1856** Edward R. S. Canby served as commandant at the fort, going on to assist Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, to command federal troops in New York City after the draft riots of 1863, and to capture Mobile in 1865.
- 1857** Former fort sutler Franklin Steele clandestinely purchased Fort Snelling for \$90,000, hoping to develop the old military reservation as the "City of Fort Snelling."
- 1858** Minnesota became a state.  
The last troops marched out of the old fort which was then operated as a sheep farm by Steele until 1861.
- 1861** Civil War broke out, and Governor Ramsey designated Fort Snelling as the official rendezvous point for the First Minnesota Infantry Regiment, the first volunteers offered up in defense of the Union.  
Fort Snelling expanded five times in size by addition of barracks and storehouses outside the old walls which allowed it to serve as an induction-discharge and training center for Minnesota soldiers until the last troops were mustered out in 1866.
- 1862** General Henry H. Sibley led fort soldiers up the Minnesota River Valley where they quickly quelled the unorganized Sioux who participated in the desperate and short-lived Sioux Uprising.
- 1862-1863** Uncondemned Sioux men, women, and children were imprisoned in a stockade on the river bottom below the fort before they were removed by military guard to a barren Dakota reservation.
- 1866** Major General William T. Sherman, noted Civil War leader, inspected the post and recommended that it be retained for defense of the frontier.
- 1871** Fort Snelling was formally transferred from Steele back to the government.
- 1881-1886** The Department of Dakota, administering forts scattered throughout Dakota and Montana territories, moved its headquarters to Fort Snelling.
- 1895** General E. C. Mason, marking the 75th anniversary of the old fort, proposed a limited restoration of the rapidly decaying buildings.
- 1898** Fort soldiers were dispatched to Leech Lake where their presence discouraged a rebellion among the Pillager Chippewa Indians.  
Troops ordered to Cuba and the Philippines during the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection were mustered at the fort.
- 1917-1918** World War I troops inducted and trained at the fort.
- 1941-1945** Fort served as an induction-discharge and training center for troops throughout World War II.
- 1946** Fort Snelling retired permanently as a military post and transferred to the Veterans' Administration.
- 1956** Minnesota highway department decision to construct a freeway through the old fort grounds was challenged and a compromise tunnel solution accepted.
- 1958** Archaeological exploration of the original site deemed that restoration was feasible, despite considerable damage to the old foundations by water mains and railroad tracks.
- 1960** Fort Snelling declared a national historic landmark.
- 1961** Minnesota legislature established Fort Snelling State Park, creating a 2,500-acre public recreation area around the fort site.
- 1965** Funds for complete restoration and reconstruction authorized by the state legislature.
- 1966** Restoration and reconstruction began.
- 1970** Nearly half the original structures completed.

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