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- United States warred with England over mercantile rights on the seas and expansionist rights in the interior.

1815 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- 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- 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.

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."

1829 Massive smallpox vaccination by post physician prevented spread of the dread disease to entire Indian population.

1832 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.

1834 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.
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. His work created the acclaimed hydrographic map of the Mississippi-Missouri region.

As a slave to the post’s physician, Dred Scott began his residency on tree soil. This later figured in the Supreme Court decision which nullified 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, began 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 of 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 northerly 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 Fort 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 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.

1865 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 short-lived Sioux Uprising.

1866-1871 - 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.

1871 Fort Snelling was formally transferred from Steele back to the government.

1871-1886 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.

1918-1945 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 2,560-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.

Marilyn Ziebarth

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