ing that Minnesota has acquired for public benefit only the homes of its first two governors — Henry H. Sibley and Alexander Ramsey. In a poll of scholars in 1964, Ramsey ranked third and Sibley seventh among Minnesota’s governors. The home of Floyd B. Olson, who ranked first, remains in private hands in Minneapolis, and the home of John S. Pillsbury, who finished second, was razed virtually without opposition several years ago on the fringes of the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota.

After a presentation by the director on July 26, the MHS executive committee approved a number of criteria to govern the future acquisition of historic sites and structures by the society:

(1) To be considered for acquisition, a site or building must possess, beyond question, historical associations of lasting significance to the state or nation. Although the application of this benchmark is unavoidably somewhat subjective, this is the criterion to which the society should give greatest weight in determining future site acquisitions.

(2) The site should represent one of the fifteen major themes (already enumerated) that is not presently interpreted by the society’s historic sites program, or it should add a significant dimension to the interpretation of an existing theme.

(3) The site must possess integrity. Tangible evidence of factors that gave a site its importance must remain. If a structure, it must be on its original location and must retain large portions of its original character, including authentic atmosphere. If a historic site has been removed from its original physical setting, that circumstance should disqualify it from further consideration.

(4) If a site meets all of the above criteria, it should not be acquired until the society has carefully determined that the financial resources are available to ensure its ongoing maintenance and operation.

In considering future sites for acquisition, the society should consider all of the above criteria together before adding to its real estate holdings.

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**MHS collections**

**Interpreting Historic Sites**

Nancy Eubank

**FIFTEEN HISTORIC SITES** — the physical reminders of much of Minnesota’s past — are now open to the public under the direction of the Minnesota Historical Society’s field services, historic sites, and archaeology division. Two other sites — the Minnesota Historical Society Building and the State Capitol in St. Paul — are administered by other MHS divisions, and several other sites are now being developed. Each year some 400,000 persons visit the sites, which are scattered throughout the state.

Much of the work concerned with historic sites goes into restoring, sometimes even rebuilding, structures which have changed drastically since they played their historic roles. An authentic appearance helps create the historical context within which the men and women who made history at a particular time and place can be better understood.

Once a site is rebuilt or restored, however, its historic significance must be explained in interesting and appealing ways to those who visit it. Traditionally, guided tours, markers, brochures, and souvenir booklets have been used to tell the story at historic sites and other tourist attractions. A more recent innovation is “living history” interpretation featuring staff members performing the tasks and playing the roles of soldiers, fur traders, craftsmen, farmers, and housewives of earlier times. The society uses all of these methods of interpretation at one or more of its sites.

Another relatively new concept in site explanation is the interpretive center, sometimes called the visitors'
center. Originally, most of such centers were merely shelters for the site staff—"contact stations" where admissions were collected and brochures distributed before visitors proceeded on a tour, walk, or drive through a scenic or historic area. Today the concept is much broader, and new interpretive centers resemble traditional museums more than they do the visitors' centers of a few years earlier.

Although unwieldy, the term "interpretive center" does convey something of the difference between this type of modern facility and the traditional museum. Most museums are built around collections—holdings of fine art, prehistoric or historic artifacts, or natural history specimens. The "story" of a museum is the story of the items displayed and the people who made or used them. The society's Mille Lacs Indian Museum continues to be called a museum because, although it is located in an area of prehistoric and historic Indian habitation, its emphasis is on displaying the outstanding collection of Chippewa (Ojibway) and Dakota (Sioux) Indian artifacts collected by Mr. and Mrs. Harry D. Ayer and presented to the society in 1959. One small section of the museum explains the history of these two tribes in the Mille Lacs Lake area, but most of the exhibits are similar to those found in natural history museums displaying artifacts and explaining the life styles of native American peoples.

The "story" in an interpretive center is not the collection of artifacts but rather the story of the site or region and the associated people and events. The "artifact" is the site itself; the interpretive center serves as an introduction to a "place where history happened." A guided or walking tour of the site takes on added meaning for visitors if they stop at the center first for information they need to appreciate and understand what they are seeing.

SINCE 1970 the Minnesota Historical Society has completed major interpretive centers at the Lower Sioux Agency near Morton, the Charles A. Lindbergh House at Little Falls, and Fort Ridgely near Fairfax. Three smaller exhibit areas have been created at the Jeffers Petroglyphs, Connor's Fur Post near Pine City, and the Alexander Ramsey Carriage House in St. Paul.

All three major centers contain large galleries for permanent displays, audio-visual rooms, and lobby, rest, and sales areas. The exteriors range from the restored stone commissary building at Fort Ridgely to the modern lines of the hyperbolic paraboloid roof of the Lindbergh center. Each building is planned not only to fit the natural surroundings of the area but also to suggest something about the site itself whenever possible. The Lindbergh center roof suggests the ribs and fabric of an early airplane wing, and the small interpretive shelter at the Jeffers Petroglyphs is reminiscent of an Indian lodge. We recognize the absurdity of "building a
THE ENTRANCE to the exhibit at the Lower Sioux Interpretive Center features a photographic montage of Indian people and panels explaining the effects of fur traders, missionaries, treaty-makers, and settlers upon the Dakota people from 1750-1862.

EXHIBITS at the Lower Sioux Center continue the Dakota story past 1862, explaining the western wars and reservation life in the last half of the nineteenth century.

FORT RIDGELY exhibits are organized around key years and events in the fort's history.

CHESTER KOZLAK, chief artist at the society, uses an airbrush to touch up a photographic mural at the Lower Sioux Agency.

The shoe factory in the shape of a shoe, but we believe our architects have been successful in designing or remodeling buildings that work to enhance the total experience of the visitor to the historic site.

The most important part of an interpretive center is, of course, the story it tells. Extensive research goes into the planning of that story and selecting appropriate ways to tell it before the first designs are drawn or words written. At most centers we do not limit our story to just the events connected with the site itself. The MHS exhibit at Lower Sioux covers the major developments in Minnesota's Dakota Indian history from about 1750 to well after 1900; the Lindbergh story begins with August Lindbergh's service in the Swedish Riksdag (1847-55) and ends with the death of Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr., in 1974. At Fort Ridgely major emphasis is placed on the fourteen active years of the post's history (1853-67), but later developments such as the homesteading of fort lands, state park activities, and archaeological explorations are also discussed.

Audio-visual productions at all the major centers feature preprogrammed slides accompanied by taped commentary with music and sound effects. The program at Lower Sioux uses two projectors and a control unit which can produce three different dissolve speeds for a fluid, movie-type effect. Several exhibits in the centers also are enhanced with tape and/or slide presentations — period dance music in a party setting at Fort Ridgely, appropriate quotations about the Dakota War at Lower Sioux, and slides with taped readings by Charles A. Lindbergh at the Lindbergh center. Plans call for continued experiments with audio-visual systems and possible utilization of multiscreen presentations at future centers. If the present craze for "disaster" films continues, perhaps we can someday come up with a shipwreck "spectacular" at Split Rock Lighthouse overlooking Lake Superior.

Once the highlights of a site story are introduced through an audio-visual program, static exhibits can be used to explain interesting details and to display materials that deserve leisurely study. Artifacts recovered through archaeological digs, historic objects or reproductions, drawings, paintings, photographs, maps, murals, cartoons, scale and life-sized models, newspapers, and documents are selected to produce lively and colorful exhibits that add new dimensions to the story.

The future for interpretive centers in Minnesota seems bright. Several regional centers are in the planning stages, and a new center has recently been opened by the Sinclair Lewis Foundation in Sauk Centre. The Minnesota Historical Society is presently developing a center at the site of the Grand Mound on the Rainy River near International Falls which will explain some aspects of Indian prehistory in northern Minnesota. Eventually, active centers at nearly all MHS-operated major sites will be used for special society programs and community
meetings as well as historical attractions for school children and travelers throughout Minnesota.

Color photographs and descriptions of seventeen historic sites administered by the Minnesota Historical Society are included in a free folder recently published by the society. The small guide is headlined “Welcome to Minnesota’s Past.” For copies as well as for information about MHS membership, site hours, reservations, admission fees, or the like, write the Minnesota Historical Society Historic Sites Division, Building 25, Fort Snelling, St. Paul 55111.

ONE OF SEVERAL panels illustrating the Dakota war is installed at Lower Sioux by MHS staff members Frank Lang and Henry Gordon.

BOOK REVIEWS


This book is a preliminary report to inform readers of the status of the thirteen-year Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project, pending the completion of study of the artifacts recovered. Voices is a committee effort to describe both the evolution and state of the art of underwater archaeological investigations of the fur trade in one region — largely the lakes and streams along the Minnesota-Ontario border and on into Manitoba. The resulting heterogeneity of presentation appropriately reflects the evolution of this young discipline in the area between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg.

The historical introduction by Messrs. Wheeler and Birk and the artifact description by Messrs. Woolworth and Birk are serious and scholarly. In between these, chapters by Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Kenyon describe the beginnings of projects from 1960 through 1973 in the direct, almost breathless format of National Geographic. Old portage trails and canoe routes are retraced so accurately that damage to equipment and injuries to personnel are recapitulated at old “accident sites.” Early finds are followed up by divers working under the direction of archaeologists. Later, the work is done by professional archaeologists with technical training in diving. It is interesting to note also the transition from simple, through experimental, to sophisticated, expensive equipment.

Some prehistoric material was retrieved, but only coincidentally. The Indians also had canoe accidents in the course of trade. Their canoes were smaller and their cargoes different from those of the whites, of course. Fur trade artifacts found in the Quetico-Superior project include canoe parts, beads, weapons, nested kettles, tin plates, raps and files, ice chisels, and many items with very legible makers’ marks. The book's photographs are good, and some graphic presentation is made, including identification of makers’ marks as closely as presently possible.

Retrieval of artifacts is only the beginning of our responsibilities. Preservative treatment and analysis are equally important. The book's analysis, if incomplete, is well begun. There is no mention of artifact preservation, however. I hope this will be covered in any final report.

A comparison of these collections with those of the steamboat “Bertrand,” which sank in the Missouri River near De Soto Landing, Nebraska Territory, April 1, 1865, would be valuable. Both collections are from fresh water environments, and both are relatively free from eclecticism of survival. The canoe loads were lost in their entirety, except for large, floating objects that were salvageable. Aside from deck cargo, only the payroll chest and flasks of mercury were salvaged from the “Bertrand.” Otherwise, deliberate culling was largely absent in both cases. A wide range of perishable and non-perishable materials of the nineteenth century is included. Much experimentation and rejection accompanied the development of the procedures used in the preservation of the “Bertrand” cargo, and these have not been reported on yet, either. Such a comparison should be a challenge to any committee.

Reviewed by Jackson W. Moore, Jr., a specialist in historic sites archaeology for the National Parks Service.


Between 1960 and 1972 the number of cookbooks issued annually by American publishers leaped from 49 to 385. Add to that fact the obvious increased interest in “good” eating and a return to natural foods on the part of large segments of the