

1993 Research Project Abstract

For the period ending June 30, 1995

This project was supported by the MN Future Resources Fund.

TITLE: Historical Research and Planning for Traverse des Sioux
PROGRAM MANAGER: Robert A. Clouse
ORGANIZATION: Minnesota Historical Society
LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 93, Ch. 172, Sec. 14, Subd. 10(w)
APPROP. AMOUNT: \$68,000

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

To document and research cultural resources and relevant social issues and to develop a master plan for Traverse des Sioux historic site, Nicollet County.

RESULTS

In addition to data obtained from past studies and literature reviews, the supported archaeological investigations at the Traverse des Sioux site recovered a stone spear point which documents evidence of a 9,000 year old Native American occupation. This site is now known as a rare Minnesota example of an undisturbed site of the Paleo-Indian Period (12,000 - 7,000 years ago). Further evidence was uncovered relating to another Native American occupation about 1,000 years ago. A group of 6 burial mounds belonging to the pre-European contact period were mapped at the site and recommendations were made to assure their protection. The research also documented over 50 early historic period features relating to early missionary activity, the fur trade, commerce, transportation and the development of the early townsite of Traverse des Sioux in the 1850s. In particular, research identified 9 interpretive themes important in telling the history of Minnesota. The site of Traverse des Sioux was also the location of the signing of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux during which the Dakota Indians sold 24 million acres to the United States. A special study undertaken by a Dakota (Sioux) elder has provided us with an Indian perspective on the meaning of this exceptional locale to the indigenous occupants of this area. An evaluation of the changing and redefined historical context surrounding the treaty and the "crossing" of the Minnesota River suggests that Traverse des Sioux is a tangible link to important events in our past that can best be characterized as a Euroamerican "sacred place".

PROJECT RESULTS USE AND DISSEMINATION

Data gathered from the project has been used to increase preservation efforts aimed at protecting the fragile archaeological resources at Traverse des Sioux. The information recovered from the historical study and archaeological investigations will be used to expand the themes and content of interpretive efforts at the site. Research at the site was undertaken in conjunction with courses offered at the University of Minnesota and Gustavus Adolphus College and was used as an instructional setting for training university students in archaeological field methods. Information gathered about the site was presented through formal lectures at the University of Minnesota and through informal discussions at the annual meeting of the Society for Historic Archaeology (SHA) held in Washington, D.C. in January 1995. The SHA is an international organization dedicated to research on and the protection of sites of the historic period. A more detailed presentation of the research results is proposed for an upcoming archaeological conference in Cincinnati, Ohio. An extensive archaeological and historical research report has been made available to the regional archaeological community. A public presentation of the research findings has been proposed for an upcoming meeting of the Nicollet County Historical Society.

July 1, 1995

LCMR Final Workprogram Update Report

I. Project Title: R8-14 Historical Research and Planning for Traverse des Sioux

Program Manager: Robert A. Clouse
Agency Affiliation: Minnesota Historical Society
Address: 345 Kellogg Boulevard West
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A. Legal Citation: M.L. 93, Ch. 172, Sec. 14, Subd. 10(w)

Total Biennial LCMR Budget: \$68,000
Balance: \$0

This appropriation is from the future resources fund to the Minnesota state historical society to research and develop a master plan for Traverse des Sioux, a historic site owned by the Minnesota Historical Society and located in Nicollet County.

B. LMIC Compatible Data Language: Not Applicable

C. Status of Match Requirement: Not Applicable

II. Narrative: The Traverse des Sioux Historic Site is the locus of the signing of the 1851 Treaties of Traverse des Sioux by which the Dakota Indians ceded 24 million acres. This property also contains the remains of numerous other cultural resources relating to American Indians and early Euro-American settlement. The request is for undertaking historical and archaeological research and creating a master plan for the site.

III. Statement of Objectives: Historical and archaeological research will be undertaken to document the resources obtaining at this location. The data obtained from that research will be utilized to develop a master plan for the site and to make interpretive recommendations. The plan and the research will be undertaken in cooperation with the Nicollet County Historical Society and the American Indian community.

IV. Objectives

A. Title of Objective: Document and research cultural resources and social issues relevant to the site.

A.1.Narrative: This phase of the project will review all historic documentation related to the various activities and occupations of the site and perform archaeological research to document the existence and condition of those resources. This information will provide the background to interpret the history of the site and the social issues related to the American Indian relinquishment of their homeland.

A.2. Procedures: A research historian will survey published materials and previous research to determine necessary additional research. Deficiencies and gaps in the archival research will be defined and necessary supplementary work performed. An archaeological survey will determine the location, nature, extent, and condition of sites identified through archival research; and document those sites that are not part of the written record. The research will also work closely with the MHS Indian Advisory Committee and the Indian Affairs Council to address the relevant social issues associated with Traverse des Sioux.

A.3.Budget:

- a. Amount Budgeted: ~~\$58,000~~ \$59,500
- b. Balance: \$0

A.4.Timeline:

7/93 1/94 6/94 1/95 6/95

Historical research

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Archaeological research

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A.5. Status: During the first six months of the project, five meetings were held to obtain input from the American Indian community, the Nicollet County Historical Society, and interested individuals. The public meetings identified issues and interests that are important to the local and indigenous communities. In particular, they were interested in documenting the changing relationships between people and the land at this particular place. A position description was developed for hiring a historian/archaeologist to undertake research for one year. A proposal was developed for a research study to obtain a cross cultural perspective about the meaning of Traverse des Sioux. This latter study will be undertaken by American Indian researchers. A comprehensive bibliography was developed to help provide direction for the researchers, who will begin their work in January.

Discussions were begun with the University of Minnesota and Gustavus Adolphus College about organizing an archaeological field school to be conducted at Traverse des Sioux. The use of an archaeological field school will greatly expand the amount of work that can be accomplished with the existing financial resources and provide training to another generation of students.

During the second six months, meetings were held with American Indian representatives and the Nicollet County Historical Society to determine the process by which a consultant for the cross-cultural perspective study would be selected. A Request for Proposals was written using the information gathered during these meetings. Advertisements were published in American Indian newspapers and the RFP was sent to regional representatives of the American Indian community and the MHS Indian Advisory Committee. A few persons expressed interest in the project; and one of these, Paul Little, Cultural Director of the Devil's Lake Band, was selected.

The historian/archaeologist for the project was hired and began work March 1. The research design for the archaeological field work was written. All purchasing for the field school was completed.

Because of scheduling conflicts, the archaeological field school was moved up to take place during the spring. The course was offered by the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus. Sixteen students from various fields of study participated. The course was taught by the Program Manager and assisted by the historian/archaeologist. Excavations were directed at evaluating a cellar depression associated with the 1843 Riggs mission complex and a portion of the pre-contact American Indian habitation site. Cellar walls and approximately 200 artifacts were documented.

The third six-month reporting period saw the completion of the archaeological testing phase. The excavations documented significant details about the construction of one of the Riggs 1943 mission buildings, including sandstone foundation walls and a brick floor in the cellar. Thousands of mid-nineteenth-century artifacts were recovered from the excavations, some demonstrating the presence of an early cottage industry in metal-working. Early-nineteenth-century artifacts were also recorded in the vicinity of the probable location of Louis Provencalle's fur trading post. The unexpectedly large amount of artifacts that was recovered required a reduction in the planned number of excavation units so that analysis could be completed within the allotted time.

A detailed map depicting the topography and cultural features was completed, encompassing 90 percent of the MHS property. The survey documented over 50 archaeological features, including the entire townsite and the treaty-signing area, and noted impacts occurring to those features. The mapping process also recorded a pre-European contact American Indian cemetery consisting of six mounds within the townsite. The data gained from the excavations and the maps will help to form the basis for long-term management recommendations for the site.

The final six-month period resulted in the completion of analysis of the over 10,000 artifacts recovered from the formal excavations and shovel testing operations. Ms. Elizabeth Knutson Steiner, historian/archaeologist, completed an extensive report on the archaeological and historical research at Traverse des Sioux. The extensive research identified 9 major interpretive themes relevant to the history of the site ranging from a 9,000 year old Indian occupation to the human ecology of the area to the townsite development of 150 years ago. Documentation was assembled which establishes "Treaty Rock" and "The Crossing" in a contemporary interpretive context that is different from the facts of the historic past. Implementation of management recommendations relating to vegetative management at the site and restrictions on conflicting land use will greatly enhance preservation efforts at the site.

The final report from the Native American consultant, Mr. Paul Little, who undertook the cross-cultural perspective study was received. The focus of the report was on information that has been maintained through tradition and oral history. The information will be extremely valuable for use in interpreting the history of the indigenous people of the region.

A.6. Benefits: Review of previous work will obviate the necessity of repetitious research. The archival work will help direct the archaeological field operations. The archaeological research will document the specific site locations necessary to undertake planning for the site use and interpretation.

B. Title of Objective: Master Planning

B.1. Narrative: This phase would develop a master plan for the site utilizing the information generated by

the earlier research phases. The master plan will be developed in coordination and cooperation with the Nicollet County Historical Society, which is planning to construct a new museum/headquarters adjacent to the MHS site. The master plan will contain interpretive site recommendations.

B.2. Procedures: A master plan for the site will be created after the research phase has been completed. Architects and designers will be engaged to accomplish this work. The planning will be done in cooperation and coordination with the Nicollet County Historical Society and the MHS Indian Advisory Committee.

B.3. Budget:

- a. Amount Budgeted: ~~\$9,000~~ \$7,500
- b. Balance: ~~\$9,000~~ \$0

B.4. Timeline:

	7/93	1/94	6/94	1/95	6/95
Develop master plan				xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx	

B.5. Status: The architectural firm of MacDonald and Mack of Minneapolis was hired to produce a master planning document for the Traverse des Sioux Historic Site. The planning model and the format for the master plan was adapted from the DNR planning process to comply with ORA guidelines. The draft document was presented at a public meeting in St. Peter at the Nicollet County Historical Society's Treaty Site History Center.

The master plan recommends that a series of management procedures be implemented to protect and preserve the fragile archaeological resources of the site. The plan also provides recommendations for improved accessibility to the site and interpretive mechanisms to provide valuable visitor learning experiences commensurate with the historical significance of the site.

B.6. Benefits: The development of the master plan is necessary to make the research and interpretive recommendations operational.

V. Evaluation: The products of this project can be evaluated by 1) the completion of research reports and review by qualified historians; 2) the completion of a report on the archaeological survey and testing and review by qualified archaeologists; and 3) completion of a master plan including interpretive recommendations that can be reviewed by an Indian Advisory Committee, the Nicollet County Historical Society and other professionals in the field.

VI. Context:

A. The current documents were prepared by the DNR in the 1970's and primarily addressed existing natural resources and recreational uses that could be developed in what was then an element of a state park. The existing plan is wholly inadequate for interpreting the history of the site. Initial archival research was undertaken in the late 1970's by the Minnesota Historical Society yielding a tantalizing wealth of as yet untapped information about the area. Some limited archaeological investigations were also conducted by the MHS in the early 1980's that partially documented a number of archaeological resources including a pre-European-contact American Indian occupation and the 19th century Euro-

American community of Traverse des Sioux. The research conducted to date indicates that much additional information is yet to be researched in order to develop a comprehensive interpretation of the site. It is imperative that the archaeological documentation be undertaken to assure that any use and interpretive plan does not disturb these irreplaceable and nonrenewable resources.

B. The historical research will document as fully as possible the relevant historical themes and issues as well as cultural resources present at the site. The archaeological survey and testing will document the nature, extent, and condition of the historic resources in the ground so that they may be utilized in the planning and interpretive documents. Coordination and cooperative efforts with the American Indian community and local organizations such as the Nicollet County Historical Society will provide a cross-cultural perspective and regional balance to a site of state-wide significance.

C. The Minnesota Historical Society's Historic Sites program serves over a million visitors biennially at its historic sites throughout the state. It is the primary means through which the general public learns about the history of the state, particularly at locations that have historic significance. These locations are also major attractions to the travelling public. During the previous biennium the Minnesota Historical Society developed heritage trails at the Lower Sioux Agency and a heritage seeds program at the Oliver Kelley Farm. Future need should focus on documenting environmental conditions and user impact at historic sites to assure their preservation far into the future.

VII. Qualifications:

1. Program Manager

- a. Robert Clouse
Head, Archaeology Department
Historic Sites and Field Programs
Minnesota Historical Society

Mr. Clouse has been at the Minnesota Historical Society for 16 years and head of the Archaeology Department for 12 years. Mr. Clouse directed the Ft. Snelling archaeological and historical research program for 12 years. He has undertaken and directed historical and archaeological research projects on Historic Euro-American and pre-European American Indian heritage sites statewide. Mr. Clouse is completing his Ph.D. in Anthropology/ Archaeology at the University of Illinois.

- b. Minnesota Historical Society, Archaeology/Anthropology

2. Cooperators/Other Investigators

- a. Thomas Ellig, Southern District Manager, Historic Sites Department

Mr. Ellig will assist Mr. Clouse in the coordination of local groups and in research and planning. Mr. Ellig has been at the Minnesota Historical Society for 20 years. He has served as an interpreter, archaeological assistant, site manager, and regional district manager in the Historic Sites Department. Mr. Ellig is currently completing work on a Masters Degree in Museum Studies at Cooperstown.

- b. Minnesota Historical Society, Historic Sites Management and Planning

VIII. Reporting Requirements: Semiannual status reports will be submitted not later than Jan. 1, 1994; July 1, 1994; Jan. 1, 1995; and a final status report by June 30, 1995.