

FINAL REPORT

1999 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2001

Title: Using National Register Properties to Interpret Minnesota History
Project Manager: John F. Lauber
Organization: Minnesota Historical Society
Address: 345 Kellogg Blvd. W.
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906
Web Site Address: <http://nrhp.mnhs.org>
Fund: Future Resources Fund
Legal Citation: ML 1999, Chap. 231, Sec. 16, Subd. 5 (a).

Appropriation Amount: \$ 90,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

This project created an engaging addition to the Minnesota Historical Society's Web site. Using National Register properties to interpret four themes in Minnesota history, a total of 80 properties are featured. A searchable database provides the interactive framework, allowing users to access information in a variety of ways and to search by location, keyword or create a custom search.

The project grew out of a long-held commitment to make information about Minnesota's historic properties widely accessible. For more than 30 years, the State Historic Preservation Office has been working to identify, evaluate, designate and protect the state's historic resources. This work has yielded a wealth of information and has put more than 1,500 properties on the National Register of Historic Places.

A steering committee worked with teams of consultants to develop several approaches to exploring Minnesota's historic properties and identified themes for each. The site features the following themes:

- *A Minnesota Sampler* provides a tour of the state's architectural resources.
- *The Iron Range Region* explores Minnesota's industrial heritage.
- *Getaways through the Years* revisits the places where Minnesotans have spent their leisure time. *Minnesota from the Railroad* examines how the Great Northern helped shape Minnesota's countryside.

Each theme includes a historical overview, illustrated descriptions of properties, location maps, bibliography and links to related sites.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

The site went live during the summer. It's been widely promoted through a postcard mailing as well as on the MHS Web site and in a variety of newsletters. Users are invited to submit feedback, although it's too early to draw any conclusions from information gathered. The initial response has been positive.

More themes and properties will be added over time. A searchable database of all 1,500 Register properties will be added this fall. It is expected that greater understanding will lead to greater appreciation for and stewardship of Minnesota's significant cultural resources.

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Date of Report: July 1, 2001
LCMR Final Work Program Report
Date of Workprogram Approval: June 16, 1999
Project Completion Date: June 30, 2001

LCMR Work Program Update Report

1. Project Title: Using National Register Properties to Interpret Minnesota History

Project Manager: John F. Lauber
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Telephone Number: (651) 296-5434 **E-Mail:** john.lauber@mnhs.org
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Web Page Address: <http://nrhp.mnhs.org>

Total Biennial Project Budget:

\$ LCMR:	\$ 90,000	\$ Match:	N/A
- \$ LCMR Amount		- \$ Match Amount	
Spent:	88,654.75	Spent:	N/A
= LCMR Balance:	\$ 1,345.25	Match Balance:	N/A

A. Legal Citation: ML 1999, [Chap. 231], Sec. [16], Subd. 5 (a).

Appropriation Language: Using National Register Properties to Interpret Minnesota History \$90,000 is from the future resources fund to the Minnesota Historical Society to create interactive, mini-documentaries in Internet format using the National Register properties to interpret selected themes in Minnesota history.

B. Status of Match Requirement: Not applicable.

II and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

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IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: Historic Theme Selection

\$ LCMR Budget:	\$ 5,000	Match:	N/A
Balance:	\$ 0	Match Balance:	N/A
Completion Date:	December 1999		

During the initial phase of the project, a project steering committee was assembled, comprised of nine professional staff members from the SHPO, a senior member of the MHS research staff, a cultural resource specialist from MnDOT, and an American Studies professor from St. Cloud State University, representing the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota. Drawing upon an established framework of historic themes already developed by the SHPO, as well as existing documentation contained in SHPO's National Register files, the steering committee reviewed the major events and patterns in Minnesota history that have helped to shape our state's built environment. During this phase, the team retained The 106 Group to work with the project steering committee to discuss themes and begin identifying specific National Register properties relating to each one. After conducting a review of documentation contained in the SHPO's National Register files and a baseline literature search, the consultant prepared resource lists arranged by theme, sub-theme and property type; as well as a preliminary bibliography for each theme. These were compiled in a report to assist the steering committee in finalizing the themes to be fully developed for the project.

Result 2: Research and Writing

\$ LCMR Budget:	\$ 42,500	Match:	N/A
Balance:	\$ 0	Match Balance:	N/A
Completion Date:	October 2000		

During the second phase of the project the steering committee retained the services of BRW, a Minneapolis based consulting firm with extensive historic preservation experience. The historians refined the list of themes developed in phase 1, identified and gathered primary and secondary source material, and documented each property with photos, maps or drawings as necessary. They prepared narrative scripts detailing the history and significance of each theme, compiled bibliographies, and selected images and other illustrative material such as maps and video clips to include.

Four themes were finally developed. Each takes a different approach to using the information. While the different approaches (listed in parentheses) are relatively invisible to users accessing the information about individual properties, they provided an important framework for the steering committee in making choices during the project development and will continue to serve an important function as more themes are developed.

- *A Minnesota Sampler* (Property by Property approach): This theme offers selections of National Register properties that represent the best of Minnesota's architecture. Efforts were made to achieve a balance by geographic region and building type, as well as to offer a combination of high style and vernacular buildings.
- *The Iron Range Region* (Regional Connections approach): This theme draws from a rich assortment of resources to illustrate the story of the state's iron range.
- *Getaways through the Years* (Minnesota History approach): This theme examines recreation and leisure time entertainment over time. While it includes parks and cabins, it also includes such getaways as movie theatres, small town opera houses, and other places central to social life in Minnesota communities.
- *Minnesota from the Railroad* (Reading the Landscape approach): This theme follows the Great Northern Railroad corridor and connects the railroad with the development of agriculture in the state.

Selecting properties and writing and editing the material to be presented on the Web site were very time-consuming and required a much higher level of SHPO staff time than anticipated. In addition, as photographs were selected, it became evident that a better selection of recent photos would be needed. A photographer was hired under contract to make the necessary field visits and re-photograph over half of the properties.

Result 3: Website Development

\$ LCMR Budget:	\$ 35,000	Match:	N/A
Balance:	\$ 0	Match Balance:	N/A
Completion Date:	April 2001		

Using the material compiled during the second phase of the project, the steering committee guided the design and production of four thematic webpages that were integrated into the Minnesota Historical Society website. The firm of Semblage (Minneapolis, MN) completed the Web Development phase of the project. The BRW contract from phase 2 was extended to ensure a smooth transition to this phase as well as consistency in editing.

Once the design for the site had been agreed upon and the decision made to use a searchable database format, it became clear that more staff time was needed to guide this phase of the work to completion. The participation of the MHS IT staff became critical to ensuring a successful project. In addition a full-time SHPO staff project assistant was assigned to follow the project through to completion; nearly five months of one staff member's time was dedicated to the project.

It also became clear during Web development that there was insufficient time and budget to use GIS-based maps and to integrate video and sound clips into the design; the complexities of the copyright issues involved and the highly variable quality of the clips themselves further made this unworkable under the circumstances.

The site developed is rich in content, visually compelling, highly interactive, and includes engaging search functionality. Each theme also includes a listing of source materials that may be tapped for further research and links that can connect users to related Internet sites. The completed new site was tested for several weeks prior to being added to the Minnesota Historical Society's existing website.

Result 4: Marketing and Distribution

\$ LCMR Budget:	\$ 7,500	Match:	N/A
Balance:	\$ 1,345.25	Match Balance:	N/A
Completion Date:	June 2001		

A postcard was designed and printed as a direct-mail piece to introduce the new site to a wide audience, including libraries and schools statewide. It has been featured in several newsletters and at workshops around the state. The costs for this phase of the work were less than anticipated and account for the modest budget balance remaining. The State Historic Preservation Office will continue to publicize the new site to a general audience by working with other state agencies and non-profit organizations.

V. DISSEMINATION: Information regarding this project is being made available on the Society's web page. During project development, feedback was solicited from users testing the site, and the site also invites users to submit feedback. The project is being promoted through Society and partner organizations' newsletters and at department hosted workshops and conferences.

VI. CONTEXT:

A. Significance:

For more than 30 years, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been responsible for identifying, recording, designating and protecting Minnesota's most important historic cultural resources. During that time, SHPO has gathered information about more than 50,000 properties that appear to possess historic significance. Approximately 1500 of those properties, representing more than 6,000 individual buildings, districts, structures, objects and sites located throughout Minnesota, have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places—the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation.

While SHPO has been extremely successful at identifying Minnesota's most significant historic cultural resources, finding ways to protect them has often proven more challenging. The vast majority of the state's National Register properties remain in private ownership. They are regularly exposed to the ravages of Minnesota's weather, and they are often threatened by changes in the economic climates of their host communities. SHPO administers a series of state and federal regulations and incentive programs designed to preserve these places. The best way to protect them, however is to foster a strong sense of stewardship among the people who own them and the communities in which they are located. That task can be accomplished by helping the citizens of Minnesota to understand and appreciate where our National Register properties came from and why they are important. The resources themselves are already out there as features of the state's built environment. Unfortunately, the information that explains where they came from and why they are important is largely contained in the 150 file drawers at the State Historic Preservation Office. The goal of this project is to package that information in an engaging, stimulating format, and to cost effectively distribute it to a statewide audience, using the Internet.

B. Time: The project was completed within the biennium.

C. Budget Context: The National Register program is now thirty years old; the information gathered in Minnesota over the life of the program by the State Historic Preservation Office has been supported primarily by Federal Historic Preservation Funds through the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Budget:

Personnel	N/A
Equipment	\$ 5,000 (computer technology enhancements and digital peripherals)
Acquisition	N/A
Development	N/A
Other:	
Photos and illustrations	\$ 7,500
In-state Travel Expenses	\$ 1,500
Printing	\$ 3,500
Mailing Costs	\$ 1,500
Professional Services	\$ 71,000 (see detailed breakdown on Attachment A)

VII. COOPERATION:

The project involved ongoing participation from a team of professional staff members from the Society's State Historic Preservation Office:

Scott Anfinson, National Register Archaeologist
 Britta Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
 Tom Cinadr, Survey and Information Management Coordinator
 Dennis Gimmestad, Government Programs and Compliance Officer
 Rebecca Johnson, SHPO Project Assistant
 Sarah Jordan-Beimers, Review and Compliance Associate
 Michael Koop, Historic Preservation Program Specialist
 Susan Roth, National Register Historian

A representative of the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, also served on the project steering committee.

LCMR project dollars were not used to cover any regular staff salary costs. The participation of all these individuals demonstrates in-kind commitment to the project. The value of the dedicated SHPO staff project assistant, whose salary was funded with federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) dollars, is approximately \$11,000.

VIII. LOCATION: Statewide

IX. Reporting Requirements: Periodic workprogram progress reports will be submitted not later than December 31, 1999, June 30, 2000 and December 31, 2000. A final workprogram report and associated products will be submitted by June 30, 2001, or by the completion date as set in the appropriation.

X. Research Projects: Not applicable.