MIN**The**OTA

2016: Issue 3 Summer

# **Alliance Monitor**

# Peers Helping Peers Since 1991



Photo by Dean Vikan

Keynote speaker Clyde Doepner, curator for the Minnesota Twins. shows off a misspelled jersey.

### Conference draws record crowd

2017 event set for Chase on the Lake in Walker

The Minnesota Alliance for Local History Museum (MALHM) drew a record attendance for its 2016 Annual Conference, held in April in Willmar.

With 94 attendees, the conference broke the previous high mark of 78 in 2015.

MALHM plans to build on its success by creating an even better conference in 2017 at Chase on the Lake in Walker, MN.

For the first time, MALHM has

recruited a Program Committee to brainstorm ideas for sessions, speakers and format for the twoday conference, set for Wednesday, April 26 and Thursday, April 27. Members represent different regions and various aspects of the history work (education, house museum, archival/curatorial, etc.)

"We received some really valuable feedback on the evaluation forms and conference survey," said Jill Wohnoutka, MALHM **CONFERENCE to Page 7** 

# Teams taking action to make LSA dreams a reality

For the past two years, Minnesota historians have spent countless hours in meetings around the state to create a vision for the future.

Now, the history community is ready to bring those goals to life. Action teams have formed to carry out goals of that planning document, the Legacy Strategic Agenda (LSA).

"I'm excited about getting to this point where we have actual projects proposed that will help the entire history community," said MALHM President Dustin Heckman (Goodhue County Historical Society), who has served on the LSA Collaborative since its



MALHM President Dustin Heckman (head of table) chairs the LSA Collaborative, which is composed of historians throughout the state, including (left to right) Daardi Sizemore (Minnesota State University, Mankato), Mary Warner (Morrison County Historical Society), Mai Vang (Hmong Museum/Minnesota Museum of Art) and Cassy Keyport (Red Lake Nation College). See story for full roster.

LSA to Page 9

#### **MAHLM Board of Directors**

minnesotahistorymuseums.org

#### **President**

Dustin Heckman Goodhue County Historical Society

#### **Vice President**

Sara Hanson White Bear Lake Area Historical Society

#### Treasurer

Jill Wohnoutka Kandiyohi County Historical Society

#### **Secretary**

Alyssa Auten Nicollet County Historical Society

#### **Board Members**

Milissa Brooks-Ojibway Glensheen

Mike Brubaker Sherburne County Historical Society

Tamara Edevold Clearwater County Historical Society Minnesota's Historic Northwest

Ann Grandy
Pope County Historical Society

Janet Timmerman
Murray County Historical Society

#### **Mutual Assistance Coordinator**

Nicole Elzenga Renville County Historical Society

#### Staff

Marci Matson, Coordinator 612-500-7460 PO Box 23554 Richfield, MN 55423 marci@minnesotahistorymuseums.org

#### **Financial Office**

Jill Wohnoutka, MALHM Treasurer Kandiyohi County Historical Society 610 NE Hwy. 71 Willmar, MN 56201

# Your opinion matters: surveys shape what we do



By Marci Matson Coordinator

"Not interested," I told a caller who wanted me to answer a survey about the

upcoming national election. Dinner was on the table, I harbored suspicions about how my information was going to be used, and I could think of a dozen other things I'd rather be doing with my time.

I hung up while the interviewer was still talking.

So, with that story in mind, I seem like the last person who should urge you to take surveys. Do what you want with election polling, but I do hope you take a few moments to answer our occasional questionnaires.

Why should you? First, we use the information to serve you.

As you look through the newsletter, you will notice that your opinion has shaped our programming. Because survey respondents said they wanted more networking opportunities, we planned two "MALHM Mingle" events. (See Page 3). In addition, your 2016 conference evaluations and survey answers are shaping how we plan the 2017 conference (See Page 1).

Second, we keep your information private. We don't share your contact information or data with anyone.

Third, we know you have dozen (s) of other things to do with your time. And with that in mind, we keep our surveys short, with just a few key points, and don't bombard you with mailings. We ap-

preciate that we're asking for your limited amount of time, but in return we aim to create new services that will make your life easier.

So please take a few minutes to weigh in with your opinion. Your voice matters.

While surveys are important, they're not the only method of communication. We listen to feedback in meetings, such as those for the LSA (see Page 1), as well discussions on social media. The #HistoryHashtag project (see Page 4) came out of Facebook posts by local history peers, and MALHM offered to promote the idea.

And then there's the old-fashioned direct one-on-one conversation. I'm happy to hear your ideas—just call or email. My contact info is in the left column.

#### Be a peer who helps peers

Live up to our motto of "peers helping peers" and contribute to our online resource library. We're looking for policies, procedures, templates, manuals, and anything else that would help your colleagues.

Thanks to David Grabitske and Todd Mahon with Minnesota Historical Society Outreach Services for providing many of their highly-requested documents, and a shout-out to Mary Warner, Executive Director with Morrison County Historical Society, for adding several others.

The online library is a benefit of membership. We'll send out information on how to access the site in an upcoming email.

# **Networking Events**



How did these communities get to host the new Smithsonian traveling exhibit, "Water/Ways"? Find out about the program and other traveling exhibit options — and connect with your colleagues — at "MALHM Mingle" nights at Nicollet County Historical Society (St. Peter) and Becker County Historical Society (Detroit Lakes).

# **MALHM offers members new networking opportunities**

In our February 2016 survey, MALHM members' top vote for new benefits was "additional workshops and networking opportunities throughout the state."

You asked; we answered with two networking events and more in the planning stages.

#### "MALHM Mingle"

If you've ever wondered about how to host a traveling exhibit, learn from your colleagues involved in the new Smithsonian traveling exhibit "Water/Ways" and its companion Minnesota exhibit "We Are Water."

MALHM has set two "MALHM Mingle" dates: **Sept. 21** at Nicollet County Historical Society in St. Peter and **an April date TBD** at Becker County Historical Society in Detroit Lakes. The Sept. 21 event will begin at 6 p.m. with a tour of the exhibit, followed by an informal discussion while enjoying appetizers and a cash bar.

Each museum exhibit offers a personalized take on water history in their communities, but the presentation portion is identical. "We wanted to offer a central location for the north half of the state and one for the south half," said MALHM President Dustin Heckman.

In addition to the <u>Smithsonian</u> program, participants will discuss their experiences with other options, including the <u>Minnesota Historical Society's traveling exhibits program</u>. Head of MNHS's "Exhibits to Go" program, Lori Friedlander will talk about current offerings as well as seek ideas from attendees.

"I'm actively looking for feedback for how we can improve the usability of the exhibits, and some ideas we have for future content," she said.

After the informal presenta-

tion, attendees will have time to connect with colleagues on other topics.

#### **RSVP for Sept. 21 event**

Admission is free for members and \$5 for non-members. Doors open at 6 p.m. A cash bar and light appetizers will follow at 6:30 p.m., with an informal presentation at 7 p.m.

RSVP to MALHM Coordinator Marci Matson by email or at 612 -500-7460 by Sept. 16.



Create your own "MALHM Mingle" event and we'll help promote it. Morrison County Historical Society staff arranged a July field trip with Minnesota Twins curator Clyde Doepner and invited colleagues to join in them in the behind the scenes tour, which included the visitor dugout shown here.

# Use hashtags to promote Minnesota's local history work

Minnesota history organizations are working together to bring attention to their collections and their work. Their tool: the humble <a href="https://hashtag.">hashtag</a>.

#### #mnstatefairhistory

Cedar Imboden Phillips, Executive Director of Hennepin History Museum, asked her colleagues via Facebook if they wanted to join her in tagging their social media posts about the Minnesota State Fair. "I think if we can get enough organizations to actively participate then we can get some traction and maybe some publicity," she wrote.

Several other organizations enthusiastically agreed to use #mnstatefairhistory on their social media posts on that topic, beginning on the first day of the fair, Thursday, Aug. 25.

Anyone can join in and post throughout the fair's run with stories, historic photos or photos of their State Fair artifacts.

"If you can only post one time, focus on Aug. 25 so that we can have a critical mass and call attention to the great history collections

StearnsHistoryMuseum





Glensheen mansion in Duluth used the #housemuseum hashtag on its Instagram posts and other social media.

throughout the state," said MALHM Coordinator Marci Matson.

#### #electioncollectionMN

Another hashtag event will focus on Minnesota stories related to past national elections.

Local organizations will play off of an existing hashtag #electioncollection (see Stearns History Museum post at left) with an addition of MN to identify state stories.

Begin using the hashtag on Tuesday, Oct. 4 and continue through the Nov. 8 election.

#### #mnschoolhistory

Traditionally, most Minnesota schools start the day after Labor Day and the last day of the State Fair. Post back to school photos or interesting facts or items from your school collection on Tuesday, Sept. 6 with the #mnschoolhistory hashtag. The timeless hashtag can be used throughout the year as well for school topics.

#### #housemuseum #housemuseumMN

Dan Hartman, director of Glensheen Mansion in Duluth, began using #housemuseum hashtag after attending a national conference of house museum staff. He urges other state house museums to come on board to drive traffic and fans to your sites.

#### A calendar of hashtags

Although many hashtags develop organically — and quickly — in response to trending news stories, the Facebook group decided that a topic calendar would help history organizations, especially smaller all-volunteer ones, participate.

"It does take some time to research your collections, possibly take photos or scan items," Matson said, "but we hope the investment will pay off for our field."

If you plan to participate, please <u>email Matson</u> to get your organization included in press releases promoting the hashtag events and get the hashtag list.

# Northern Bedrock Historic Preservation Corps: teaching youth skills while preserving local history

Not just anyone knows how to restore a bronze statue, clean century-old tombstones, glaze windows in a historic home or repair a log cabin.

Under the guidance of experienced craftsmen, young people ages 18-25 with Northern Bedrock Historic Preservation Corps are learning a disappearing skills set while working on historic preservation projects throughout Minnesota.

"We're always looking for and finding the technical specialists that know how to do this work and hope to pass their knowledge on to our young people," said Rolf Hagberg, Northern Bedrock executive director, in a recent interview with the *Duluth News*-



Corps member Katie Nyborg works with plaster and lath specialist, Curtis Bellows, to prepare the plaster compound used to finish the sanctuary of the St. Peter's Church in Duluth.



Photos by Northern Bedrock.

Edward Harthorn, of Northern Bedrock Corps, applies wax to the bronze pediment at the Soldiers & Sailors Monument in Duluth's Historic District.

Tribune.

His work crew had just finished restoring Soldiers & Sailors

Monument, a Civil War memorial in Duluth, under the tutelage of a conservation firm.

Curtis Bellows, a Duluth craftsman who has been in the plaster and painting business for 40-plus years, then trained the crew how to plaster at a St. Peter's Church, a historic church with severe water damage.

Earlier this summer,
Northern Bedrock repaired and cleaned historic tombstones at
Hillside Cemetery in
Carlton, after a one-day
training session to learn
the proper technique as

established by the Secre-

tary of the Interior's Standards.

Last summer, they tackled cleanup on Stillwater's Boutwell House, which made headlines when a previous owner demolished part of the 1870 building. The Washington County Historical Society came to its rescue by purchasing the building with the intent to restore it and place it on the National Register of Historic Places. Before raising funds for a complete restoration, WCHS needed help cleaning up debris and saving the original pieces for future use.

WCHS Executive Director Brent Peterson said Northern Bedrock was an invaluable partner because they were trained on how to identify what was trash and what had potential for preservation.

"The preservation corps is training the next generation of preservationists," he said in an interview NORTHERN BEDROCK to Page 6

#### **NORTHERN BEDROCK from Page 5**

with the *Stillwater Gazette*. "And it is wonderful to have them train and learn their craft on such a significant structure as the Boutwell house. They have helped us in many different ways to bring this project forward, and we look forward to possibly working with them in the future."

If the program sounds familiar, it should. The five-year-old nonprofit is modeled after the Depression era Civilian Conservation Corps. Like their forerunners, the Northern Bedrock crew camps on site or nearby and learns skills while working on public projects.

Like the CCC, the group aims to create jobs for youth and provide training not only in historic preservation work, but general work habits and job skills. "I think that one of the brilliant components of this is that it is a jobs program," said Duluth Mayor Emily Larson, "In addition to preserving our history and telling our story, it's creating opportunity."

As a jobs program, Northern Bedrock qualifies for funding from foundations and grants outside of the history community. As a partner with the Minnesota Historical Society, it also qualifies to work on Legacy-funded projects.

If you are interested in working with Northern Bedrock on a project, contact Operations Manager Alice Yonke at alice@northernbedrockcorps.org. Projects can take months to arrange; interested parties are encouraged to contact Northern Bedrock as soon as possible.

# New officers elected, Edevold and Brooks-Ojibway join MALHM Board

Two new board members were elected to MALHM's Board of Directors at its annual meeting held in conjunction with the April 2016 Conference in Willmar.

Tamara Edevold, Executive Director of the Clearwater County Historical Society, and Milissa Brooks-Ojibway, Collections Manager with Glensheen mansion in Duluth, joined the MALHM Board, composed of members from Minnesota's local history community.

In addition, three other board members were voted in for another term in office: Alyssa Auten, Executive Director of the Nicollet County Historical Society (2nd term); Dustin Heckman, Executive Director of the Goodhue County Historical Society (3rd term); and Sara Markoe Hanson, Executive Director of the White Bear Lake Area Historical Society, (2nd term).

Board members can serve a maximum of three two-year terms. Board President **Dean Vikan** (Fosston Historical Society) and Vice President **Hayes Scriven** (Northfield Historical Society) retired off the Board — but not without recognition from their peers.

Vikan was presented with a "Road Warrior" award in gratitude for the estimated 10,000-plus miles he drove to meetings and MALHM events during his tenure.

Scriven, known for his colorful

language, was given a decorated "swear jar." His staff promised to enforce fines to fund NHS projects.

The two officer vacancies were filled by Heckman as President and Hanson as Vice President. Wohnoutka and Auten will continue in their roles of Treasurer and Secretary respectively.

Rounding out the board are **Mike Brubaker** (Sherburne County Historical Society), Janet **Timmerman** (Murray County Historical Society), and **Ann Grandy** (Pope County Historical Society).



"Road Warrior" Dean Vikan drove 10,000 miles to MALHM meetings during his six-year tenure. The Fosston resident also drives extensively for his many other volunteer commitments

# Want to host a MALHM Conference? Future sites sought

What do these communities have in common: Shakopee, Winona, Duluth, Willmar and Walker?

All have hosted MALHM Conferences.

MALHM is looking for other Minnesota towns to add to that list as it seeks sites for future conferences. The 2018 site needs to be reviewed and selected by early 2017 so that it can be announced at the 2017 Conference in April.

As an organization representing history groups throughout the state, MALHM tries to move the site to different regions every year. Typically, MALHM Board Members have offered their museum or nearby venue as a host and has served as the liaison to local businesses.

MALHM wants to offer the hosting option to other history groups in the state, through a formal bid process.

"When we had fewer than 50 people at a conference, we didn't need a host committee," said MALHM President Dustin Heckman. "But if we get 100 to 150 or



Photo by Marci Matson

The site of the 2017 MALHM Conference, Chase on the Lake resort in Walker, offers views of Leech Lake from its hotel rooms.

more attendees, we need local connections to hotels, restaurants and the local chamber or Convention and Visitors Bureau."

The main investment of hosting organizations is time. The payoff: providing an economic impact on their community and publicity for their museum or other venues.

Having a history group with local connections is key to planning evening mixers or events like walking tours, said Jill Wohnoutka, MALHM Board Member and Conference Chair. Her organization, the Kandiyohi County Historical Society hosted the 2016 evening mixer and opened its historic buildings to attendees.

To receive a bid RFP when completed, contact Coordinator Marci Matson at 612-500-7460 or by email.

#### **CONFERENCE** from Page 1

Treasurer and Conference Chair. "That information will help guide us as we plan."

In addition to posting a Call for Proposals for sessions, the committee will actively search for speakers that can fill the training needs identified by the survey respondents.

Committee members include Missy Hermes (education, Ottertail County Historical Society), Steve Penick (archivist, Stearns County History Museum), Dan Hartman (manager, Glensheen), Cathy Osterman (curator, Northfield Historical Society), Holly Johnson (manager, Hormel Historic Home), Tamara Edevold (MALHM board member/ Clearwater County Historical Society), as well as Wohnoutka and MALHM Coordinator Marci Matson.

The Committee will meet in August; look for session Call for Proposals this fall.

#### **Conference feedback**

"What a fantastic conference! As someone who is new to the local history field, I loved networking with other local history professionals and the MNHS staff. I plan to come back next year and bring some of my staff with me!"- Kate Sauers

"I returned from the conference with an abundance of ideas that our local museums can put to use right away. Well done, MALHM!" ~Lorna Hunter, Christie House Museum

## **Collections Management**

## Local history groups mulling collections database options

For years, PastPerfect Museum Software has been the standard collections database for small museums, but some Minnesota history groups are mulling other options.

While PastPerfect still has its strong supporters, others are looking for features like a cloudbased system that PastPerfect has promised for more than two years, but hasn't delivered.

Since March 2014, a task force of collections managers has investigated several other platforms. The good news: "there are many different Collection Management Software solutions available. They all have pros and cons, but would be usable," said Ann Grandy (Pope County Historical Society), MALHM board member who chaired the committee.

The bad news: there is "no solid leader with everything we'd like to see," she said.

# -: collectionspace

#### CollectionsSpace

CollectionSpace seemed to rise to the top of the options explored, in part because of its relationship with the web-hosting company Lyrasis.

Designed for Museum of the Moving Image, the program did not completely meet all the needs of a typical history museum collection. With a Legacy grant, Grandy worked with the company to create a "Local History Museum" extension to the software.

CollectionsSpace gave a presentation at the 2015 MALHM Confernce in Duluth to seek more input from PastPerfect users, then held a webinar in July 2015 to demonstrate the Local History extension. Whether or not anyone in Minnesota ever uses it, the local history extension will benefit small museums around the country. (See demo site.)

In November 2015, when the task force began testing the software, it found out that Lyrasis was no longer willing to host the database, without a huge price tag.

Each local history museum could find its own host, but the task force wanted a cloud storage solution that allowed some data sharing between users. (Think searching for a name or event throughout several collections. Neighboring museums with overlapping families/stories can quickly see what is available in other collections.)

#### CollectiveAccess

CollectiveAccess has in the meantime emerged as a very strong solution, according to Joe Hoover, Digital Technology Outreach Specialist with the Minnesota Historical Society.

Unlike CollectionsSpace, the software is already set up for history museums. In addition to being adopted by the Association of Nova Scotia Museums for their members, it has also been adopted by the Connecticut League of History Organizations and the Museum Association of Saskatchewan. All the organizations use iWeb as their hosting service.

Minnesota history groups could explore using a common hosting service (iWeb or a Minnesotabased company) so they could share information between users.

#### **PastPerfect**

Until anothoption clear solution, many PastPer-



fect customers are staying put.

For one, data migration to another software platform would be, in a word, painful. Given the learning curve and time invested in data entry, it's difficult to contemplate another system.

Still, PastPerfect has enough issues to make Minnesota's local history community consider other options. The biggest complaint: because PastPerfect does not work with Wi-Fi, users can't carry around a laptop in their building to do inventory or enter data from another location.

The old sharing function, "scatter-gather," was lost in the PastPerfect 5.0 upgrade, with cloud-based computing promised in the 6.0 version. Some, like Grandy, have stayed with 4.0 while they wait and see what's

(Note: museums with 4.0 will have to buy 5.0 to make the jump to 6.0.)

#### What's next?

MNHS and the task force continue to explore options and are proposing a structured Legacy grant for data migration, whatever the next platform may be.

This is a broad overview of the work done to date; for more details or to provide ideas, please contact: Grandy at popecountymuseum@gmail.com or Hoover at joe.hoover@mnhs.org.

#### LSA from Page 1

inception. "Those big picture ideals will now have real-world impact."

Three action teams have submitted projects in the areas of history education, community narratives and MNHS grant infrastructure and transparency. If approved, work will begin this fall. (Look for specifics on the project teams in the Fall issue of *The Alliance Monitor*.)

"The hope is that these teams will create models that will work for others in the field," Heckman said, "Rather than every small history organization re-inventing the wheel, we can benefit by learning from each other."

#### MALHM's role

MALHM has provided a voice for Minnesota's more than 500 local history organizations in the LSA planning process, but now it will take a stronger leadership role. In June, the MALHM Board of Directors approved entering into a partnership with MNHS to coordinate the project.

The Board did not take on its expanded role lightly. It met outside of its regular quarterly meeting schedule to decide whether the LSA fit in with its own organi-

#### **LSA Coordinating Team**

The LSA Coordinating Team, composed of MALHM and MNHS leaders, will oversee the work of the action teams. In addition to **Dustin Heckman** as Chair and Ben Leonard (MNHS) as Vice Chair, MALHM Board Member **Mike Brubaker** (Sherburne County Historical Society) serves on that group. Other members are:

Pat Emerson (MNHS Archaeology)

Susan Garwood (Rice County Historical Society)

David Grabitske (MNHS Outreach Services)

Richard M. Josey (MNHS Programs, Historic Sites and Museums Division)

Cassy Keyport (Red Lake Nation College)

Jan Louwagie (Southwest Minnesota Historical Center)

Michael Lansing (Augsburg College)

Steve Penick (Stearns History Museum)

Chris Schuelke (Otter Tail County Historical Society)

Daardi Sizemore (Minnesota State University, Mankato)

Iyekiyapiwin Darlene St. Clair (St. Cloud State University)

Sherry Stirling (retired historian)

Mai Vang (Minnesota Museum of American Art/Hmong Museum)

Mary Warner (Morrison County Historical Society)

zational mission and if so, whether MALHM had the resources to take on another project.

The Board decided that the action teams would clearly help MALHM achieve its mission of "peers helping peers" and nurture the state's small to medium-sized historical societies and specialized history groups. With Heritage Partnership Program funding, MALHM had the resources to hire Pat Koppa, who had been consulting with the LSA Collaborative, as coordinator.

Heckman will serve as Chair and Ben Leonard (MNHS) as Vice Chair on the LSA Collaborative Committee. The roles will switch after two years.

#### What's in it for you?

With pressing deadlines and big projects in their own communities, some organizations have expressed confusion as to what the LSA will mean for them, Heckman said, but he sees that changing with as they see the specific goals of the actions teams.

"We'll publicize the work of the action teams through the media and at MALHM's Annual Conference,," he said. "We're hoping people will connect to those projects that mean something to their own work and build partnerships."

#### **Ideas? Questions?**

We'd love to hear from you! The best way to reach the LSA Collaborative with questions or great ideas is to <a href="mailto:em

"The hope is that these (action) teams will create models that will work for others in the field. Rather than every small history organization re-inventing the wheel, we can benefit by learning from each other."

~Dustin Heckman, Chair LSA Collaborative



# JOIN US! MALHM MINGLE

Sept. 21, 6 p.m. • Nicollet County Historical Society, St. Peter

**April date TBA. • Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes** 

See the Smithsonian exhibit WATER/WAYS

**Enjoy light appetizers and a cash bar.** 

Chat with colleagues on how to host a traveling exhibit.



## Join us!

#### Join MALHM, the voice of Minnesota's local history community since 1991.

#### **Benefits include:**

- Quarterly newsletter and regular email news updates
- Access to members only resources on new website, www.minnesotahistorymuseums.org
- Discounts on networking events and Annual Conference
- Advocacy for the local history field on state boards and legislation
- Mutual aid during natural disasters.
- Peer-to-peer support and networking.

Members are listed on the new MALHM website. Please email your logo and/or a photo of your main building to marci@minnesotahistorymuseums.org. Include your public contact information below.	
Your organization:	
Physical Address:	City, State, Zip
Mailing Address:	City, State, Zip
Phone: Public Contact Email:	
Website (or Facebook) link:	
Contact person:	Title
Email:	Phone:
Please list other organization members who want to receive MALHM notices and discounts:	
1. Name:	Email:
2. Name:	Email:
3. Name:	Email:
4. Name:	Email:
5. Name:	Email:
Membership dues: ☐ \$25 for organizations with paid staff ☐ \$5 for all-volunteer groups	

Make check payable to MALHM and mail to:

Jill Wohnoutka, Kandiyohi County Historical Society, 610 NE Hwy. 71, Willmar, MN 56201.

Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums Kandiyohi County Historical Society 610 NE Hwy. 71 Willmar, MN 56201



The purpose of the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums shall be to nurture and encourage an appreciation of the local history of the state of Minnesota by providing the structure to foster collaborative local history projects, communicate curatorial and educational information, and encourage professionalism among local and specialized historical organizations in Minnesota.