

get used up rather than saved and placed in museum collections.

The curators of *Furniture in Maryland Life* work to tell a human story broader than that suggested by their largely upper-class artifacts. Some labels describe the makers of the items on display, from nearly unknown carpenters to successful manufacturers. Visitors learn about the role of German immigrants in Baltimore's furniture trade, Enrico Liberti, a 20th-century maker of Colonial Revival furniture whose workbench and tools are in the exhibit, and even the story of an enslaved man who had made a rush-bottomed chair on display. Other labels help visitors understand how historians interpret the past. For instance, one label explains that attributions are usually based on the proximity of a piece to local manufacturers, and that furniture makers are often known to historians only by the advertisements they placed in local newspapers. Many labels include appropriate visual evidence, such as historic advertisements, pictures from furniture design books, and portraits of owners and makers.

Curators attempted to balance the interests of a general audience with those of furniture enthusiasts, and neither group should be disappointed. Visitors interested in the decorative arts will appreciate the large number of beautiful pieces of furniture, as well as the paintings, silverware, and porcelain items used to augment the displays. Those design features that make Maryland furniture distinctive are described on individual labels. The largest panel in the exhibit, titled "What Makes it Maryland?" summarizes and compares the design elements of Maryland-made furniture dating from the 1760s to the 1860s, using pictures of pieces used elsewhere in the exhibit.

The exhibit text attempts to balance the interests of both audiences. For example, a side chair made in the period 1790-1810 is first described stylistically, as an example of distinctive Baltimore design. The label then relates that Peter Francis Corvaux, "a

free Mulato boy 16 years old," may have worked on the chair because he served as an apprentice to the attributed maker.

*Furniture in Maryland* is the most recent incarnation of this exhibit. An earlier installment featured a catalog and book, Gregory R. Weidman's *Furniture in Maryland, 1740-1940*, which unfortunately is out of print. The current exhibit has no catalog at this time. *Furniture in Maryland Life* is a worthy addition to the permanent exhibits of the Maryland Historical Society. Despite the chronological unevenness of the collection, the curators succeeded in creating a beautiful exhibit that should appeal to both the general public and specialists interested in furniture design.

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1. Gregory R. Weidman, *Furniture in Maryland, 1740-1940: The Collection of the Maryland Historical Society* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1984).

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### *Tales of the Territory: Minnesota 1849-1858*

The Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, MN;  
Curator: Brian Horrigan

October 1999-March 2007

When Minnesota became a territory in 1849, military officer and acclaimed artist Captain Seth Eastman painted Minnesota's territorial seal. While Eastman's original design has since been altered, his initial watercolor depicts a white male farmer plowing the earth in the foreground, while in the background, an American Indian male on horseback rides full gallop away from the scene. Such was the romantic view of U.S. expansion and Indian removal held by many of Eastman's contemporaries: The "native" naturally and inevitably gives way to "progress." Of course, the portrayal of Indian removal as a vanishing act neatly glossed

over the reality of Manifest Destiny, the active participation of the Federal Government in its implementation, and the attempts by Native peoples to resist this inevitability. The Minnesota Historical Society's exhibit, *Tales of the Territory: Minnesota 1849-1858*, attempts to revise the historiographical inaccuracies by focusing largely, though not exclusively, on just such themes.

The exhibit space is arranged in a "V" shape with entrances at the outer points. Interactive stations and displays tell the complex story of U.S. expansion on the Upper Mississippi as it was understood by those who were settling or already living in the area at the time. Special attention is paid to the perspectives of the indigenous people who had already called Minnesota home for thousands of years but who, during the territorial decade, were increasingly persuaded to cede greater and greater portions of their homelands to the United States with promises of compensation in kind.

These "promises" are both literally and figuratively the crux of the exhibit: The interpretive station focusing on treaties is at the apex of the exhibit space. This station touches upon many of the treaties and agreements between the Federal Government and the indigenous nations residing in and around the Minnesota Territory before and after the territorial decade. The Treaty of 1851 and the accompanying "Trader's Paper" receives the most attention. The former is an agreement between the United States and the Wahpetunwan and Sisitunwan bands of Dakota ceding land to the United States in exchange for money, annuities, goods, a reservation of land, and lasting peace. The latter is a document that deflected the money and annuities into the hands of traders, "mixed bloods," and missionaries who made claim to it because of credit they had purportedly extended to the Dakota in years past.

Reproductions of the documents are presented in full with commentary provided by scholar Angela Cavender Wilson and Minnesota Historical Society

Indian Advisory Committee member Joe Campbell. The commentary speaks to the Treaty's lasting consequences and tacitly reminds visitors that the Dakota have not vanished from Minnesota (both commentators are Dakota tribal members). Wilson's commentary contemplates the "pain and sense of loss" that the chiefs must have felt in signing the treaty "mixed with the relief of being assured food, goods, money, and a designated home set apart, one that would not be infringed upon by whites."

Significantly, the reserved homeland promised to the Dakota in Article 3 of the Treaty of 1851 was "stricken out" before the U.S. Government ratified the treaty, but after the Dakota had signed it. Frustrated with the broken promises of the United States and struggling with the desperate conditions of his people, Kaposia chief, Taoyeteduta (Little Crow) articulated his anger and disappointment to Washington in 1858, saying—

*...we signed the treaties...and we were promised a great many things—now it appears the wind blows it all off. Now what have we? We have neither the land where our fathers' bones are bleached, nor have we anything. What shall we do?*

These words of Taoyeteduta are given voice in a multimedia presentation, "The Pillar of Fire: Treaties and the Territory," that takes place in the People's Theatre—a small stage within the exhibit. The 10-minute audio-visual presentation features images projected on a screen, an atmospheric set, and dramatized excerpts "from speeches, books, newspaper accounts and letters from the period 1849-1861." Here, Dakota and English translations of Taoyeteduta and other Dakota leaders, as well as quotes from territorial notables such as Alexander Ramsey (the first territorial governor) are heard. Eastman's seal appears on the screen to illustrate the sentiment evoked by James Goodhue, the territory's first newspaper printer: "the red savage is vanishing and in their place a thousand farms and wavering wheat fields." The presentation effectively

demonstrates the extreme contrast between the worldviews of the treaty signers and the supporters. Of note is the creative use of a theatrical set featuring a Dakota tepee and a U.S. military A-frame canvas tent on either side of the projection screen. The sounds of crackling fires provide verisimilitude, and the dwellings alternately glow to signify the "camp" to which the speakers belong.

But it is not only the leaders who are given voice in *Tales of the Territory*. Indeed, throughout the exhibit, curator Brian Horrigan worked to include the voices of everyday Minnesotans. James Goodhue makes an appearance as an animated hologram next to the original press he used to print *The Minnesota Pioneer* in 1849. Interactive "travel stories" share the perspectives of a heterogeneous group of immigrants ranging from African American Emily Goodridge Grey to Irishwoman Mary Jane Hill Anderson. Most notably, mid-century Dakota child Maza Okiye Win—portrayed by Win's great, great, great granddaughter, Autumn Wilson—appears as a projection in a replica Dakota tepee. In her endearing presentation, Wilson draws on oral traditions as she laments the changes in her nation's culture. Overall, the use of "stories" in this exhibit offers preservationists a model for conceptualizing the many ways social history can be told. In *Tales*, the oral tradition, no less than the material object, is valued as worthy of collection, preservation, and innovative presentation.

This exhibit is one of several featured at the Minnesota History Center in downtown St. Paul. Overlooking the State Capitol, the Center is the hub of the Minnesota Historical Society, whose founding coincides with the designation of the Minnesota Territory in 1849. The Society's mission is to cultivate "among people an awareness of Minnesota history so they may draw strength and perspective from the past and find purpose for the future." In exploring "Minnesota 1849-1858" as a place of conflict and compromise rather than as a territory characterized by inevitable "progress"

towards statehood, *Tales of the Territory* accomplishes the Society's broader mission, and its 1999 opening managed to mark the Sesquicentennial anniversaries of both the Territory and Society without unquestioningly celebrating them.

For all of its strengths, *Tales of the Territory* left this reviewer in the dark several times. The exhibit is dimly lit to protect the artifacts on display, and the motion-sensor lighting helping to illuminate the exhibit seemed slow to respond (and sometimes did not). Reproductions of the "Trader's Paper" and the Treaty of 1851 were difficult to read. Despite these drawbacks, this Sesquicentennial exhibit is both visually and intellectually engaging, and should be of interest to anyone seeking a model for presenting multiple and conflicting perspectives on a delicate topic. *Tales of the Territory: Minnesota 1849-1858* manages to capture the optimism of Minnesota's territorial settlers and the efforts of American Indians to preserve their culture equally well. Overall, by including multiple perspectives, and in working to correct historiographical deficiencies, this otherwise dimly lit exhibit is exceptionally illuminating.

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#### WEBSITES AND MULTIMEDIA

*Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas' Cultural Heritage*

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net>

Maintained by the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory, University of Texas at Austin; accessed May 23, 2005; July 16, 2005; September 9, 2005.

The stated purpose of the *Texas Beyond History* website is "to interpret and share the results of archeological and historical research on the cultural heritage of Texas with the citizens of Texas and the world."<sup>1</sup> The Texas Archaeological Research

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



# CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship

Volume 3 Number 1 Winter 2006



*CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship*  
Winter 2006  
ISSN 1068-4999

CRM = cultural resource management

*CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* is published twice each year by the National Park Service to address the history and development of and trends and emerging issues in cultural resource management in the United States and abroad. Its purpose is to broaden the intellectual foundation of the management of cultural resources.

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*CRM Journal* is produced under a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

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