In Defense of the Past, Real or Imagined

By John Radzilowski

Tom Abeles presents a bleak post-modernist view of the past, in his short article, "The Myth of Historic Preservation", which appeared in the last MISF Newsletter (The Forum, vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 1997). With the past merely a series of "roadside attractions", left behind "in a blink on the interstate of human life," both it and the future are, as Abeles notes, "dynamic, and the present is all we have."

Before discussing the dangers of this approach, it is important to correct a point of fact. Early in his article Abeles states, "Because the steam engine needed to stop often for refueling, towns proliferated along miles of track. When the diesel came, the longer hauls eliminated the need for these towns and they died." This is inaccurate. Most railroad towns in rural Minnesota are about 6-7 miles apart and steam engines obviously did not have to stop every six miles to refuel. Towns proliferated because they were collection points for agricultural products. In the age of horse and wagon, railroads calculated that farmers could profitably drive no more than three miles one way with a load of grain and still make it back home.\(^1\) The advent of automobiles and trucks was a major contributing factor to the decline of smaller railroad centers, but many remained viable communities well into the 1950s. Even inland towns never served by a railroad remained viable if they served as an ethnic or religious center.

This shows that the past is not so much dynamic as complex. It tends to accumulate over time. Unfolding events change how we view the past, but do not change the past itself. After 1989 we will never view the Russian Revolution of 1917 in the same way. Nevertheless, the Russian Revolution itself has not changed. A 26,000-foot-high mountain looks different when viewed from a mile away as be assigned meaning as people saw fit. (By this he meant those in power.) This view was restated by Derrida and his allies who no doubt picked it up during their flirtation with fascism in the 1930s and early 1940s. Its applicability to totalitarian government is obvious, and one has to wonder how, for example, a Holocaust survivor might react to a philosophy that holds that the events of the past are potentially malleable, and that important occurrences can be ruled irrelevant according to the whims of current fashion.

Humans are by nature a backward-looking species. This runs counter to American ideology in which people can supposedly make their own personal pasts vanish with the wave of a magic wand. Of course, that never quite works. The past is nothing if not irrepressible.

Abeles often refers to "the present", and one must wonder how long a period of time is "the present." A year? A day? A second? It is no time at all. By the time you have finished reading this word, the moment when you started reading it is already part of the past. The present is nothing more than the line dividing the past that has happened from the past that has yet to happen (which we call the future). Our accumulated store of knowledge, memories, and instincts — the very sinew of the past — is the raw material for our actions, thoughts, and feelings. The past is the only useful time we have. Whether we

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like it or not we are all living in the past.

The past is unmasterable in its complex totality. It would be impossible to reconstruct even a small piece of the past with perfect authenticity. Thus, we create models to help us understand the past. Some models are better than others. Abeles is correct in pointing out the need humans have to create imagined pasts. Yet, imagined pasts are not necessarily devoid of truth or value. Some imagined pasts are created for political or ideological reasons and tend to be more problematic than others. At the end of the day we all have imagined pasts, and viewing U.S. history via Greenfield Village is just as unreal as seeing the U.S. as "but another roadside attraction passed in a blink on the interstate of human life." The only difference between them is the degree of self-consciousness of the creator.

The fact that things change should not blind us to the fact that places and events have real meaning in and of themselves. Furthermore, "preserving" the past is not such a bad idea. Our personal and collective pasts tell us a great deal. Past decisions and events exert a tremendous influence over the living, and understanding them is important if, at the very least, we wish to make good decisions. Places, whether consciously preserved or not, can also have deep meaning. The history of an immigrant parish may instill a strong ancestral memory of the tremendous sacrifices made to create and maintain that parish which provides later generations with a sense of rootedness and pride. It helps tell people who they are. Furthermore, there is an aesthetic value in keeping things. Chartres Cathedral is simply more attractive than Camp Snoopy.

By pretending to tear down the "structures" of history, the Savonarolas of postmodernism do not so much reassign meaning as make the past meaningless and useless. It seems largely a method of self-mystification. Although it is impossible to draw direct object lessons from the past (such as "when invading a nation in southeast Asia, always do X"), all we know is learned from the past.

For better or for worse, the sacrifices and agonies of those who came before us (our collective ancestors) have made us who we are. We owe the past a tremendous debt. The only way adequately to discharge this debt is to try to pass on what is best in our culture and history to future generations (our collective children), forging our own link in an unbroken chain of human existence connecting a living past to a living future. We delude ourselves if we believe that we will accomplish this any better than our ancestors did, but we are obligated to try. Historic preservation and pasts, real or imagined, are one way to achieve this end. The alternative, a holocaust of memory inspired by academic fashion, is irresponsible and potentially destructive.

John Radziowski is a Ph.D. candidate in history at Arizona State University, and a freelance writer and editor. He lives in Roseville, Minnesota. For more information see Member News & Notes, page 11.
Editorial

In this, the final MISF newsletter for 1997, I wish to thank the members and friends who have helped me perform my function as Editor. You have made the newsletter not only possible, but interesting—by granting me interviews, responding to my request for news on projects, awards, and research, by keeping me posted on study group activities, by actually writing and now, finally, responding to an article. Only out of such dialogue can a worthwhile newsletter arise.

The idea of organizing newsletters around a single theme or two has not previously been announced in these pages, but now serendipity has rewarded me as though with a prior plan. You may remember from the first 1997 newsletter Rena Neumann Coen's comment that the effect of Minnesota Impressionists' pictorialization was "like the fragmentary and fleeting view of the world that one gets from a bus, a train, or any other rapidly moving conveyance". Lucy Smith, in the same issue, commented that "it seems that the immortality of time... has been replaced by the immortality of space.... Goodbye to past and future."

In the next issue, David Wiggins' article, "Home at River's Edge," spoke of his feeling of "a connection to this special place, because for the moment the enormous time scale of the natural world has been brought home to me." And in the same newsletter Tom Abeles' "The Myth of Historic Preservation" was intended to present a view of time and history contrary to that held by Wiggins. Now, this issue leads with John Radziowski's response to Abeles, complete with the image of a train conductor's watch, underlining the continuing theme of time.

The theme I suggest for The Forum in 1998 is that of independence, as connected to scholarship and other creative endeavors. Although I have been active sporadically in MISF since the early '80s, I am unfamiliar with the specific history of The Forum outlined by outgoing President David Juncker. The idea of a more journal-like newsletter is of great appeal to me, and I would like to know more about why past attempts failed.

Attendance at our programs comes more from interested "outsiders", than from MISF membership. Like Roger Hammer, I am puzzled by this phenomenon, particularly when public response to the quality of our speakers has been so enthusiastic. My experience suggests that there are many potential members who would like to join, and seize the opportunity to showcase their work in progress, but are unsure if the organization's guidelines include them.

Please, use this newsletter to help the MISF Board to change, to make this organization responsive to and a mouthpiece for your concerns and interests. We are living in a time of enormous transformation, and the Internet is not the only locus of debate.

Driving this summer from the Gaspe peninsula, through the great notchches of the White Mountains south into New Hampshire, I passed a sign in northern Maine. Beautifully carved, with elegant black lettering tracing someone's name against a white background, it read: "Wilderness Historian." For months I have been haunted by that simple moniker. Who or what is a wilderness historian? I would love to talk with him or her. I am old enough so that during my postgraduate education the title would have been considered an oxymoron. In those days, "history" was culture, was civilization, was Europe. And "wilderness," as people like Leo Marx and Leslie Fiedler pointed out, was everything else: the frontier, the non-European, the new America, the a-historical. Thus, in that one self-created title, I saw embedded the decades of argument and cultural change we have witnessed in the academy, from the new critics to the post-moderns and beyond.

I wonder if that unknown individual, who hung the sign just south of the great chain of Rangeley Lakes, knew the layers of meaning I found contained in the message. Or was that person simply advertising her/his ability to tell a good story, to communicate to some of us city folk what the north woods can still teach to those who will listen?

— Helen Twombly Watkins

Membership Application

to join the
Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum

Membership benefits include borrowing privileges at the University of Minnesota libraries, if so desired.

Regular
__ $10.00 – $39.00 sliding scale (under/unemployed)
__ $40.00 (regularly employed)

Household
__ $15.00 – $49.00 sliding scale (under/unemployed)
__ $50.00 (regularly employed)

Sustaining
__ $75.00 or more

Donor
__ $100.00 or more

Benefactor
__ $150.00 or more

All contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law.

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City _____________________________
State ______ Zip _______________
Telephone (home) ________________
(work) ________________

Clip this and mail it to:
Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum
P.O. Box 80235
Minneapolis, MN 55408-8235
(612) 670-1859

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President's Message

SUPPORT OF INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS: AN EIGHT-YEAR JOURNEY

As a long-time member of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum I have been privileged to serve on the Board of Directors for eight years. As I leave the Presidency and board duties (our by-laws wisely limit continuous board participation to eight years), I find this a good time to reflect on our voyage together.

Lucy Brusic and I joined the MISF Board of Directors at roughly the same time. We both wished to help maintain a strong newsletter, to support programs providing timely information and mental stimulation, and to institute an active fiscal agency service that would enable members to obtain outside grants. We both felt that the future of MISF was tied as much to grants, computers, and well-researched and reported information, as it had been to accessing area libraries and private collections.

The Boards under Susan Margot Smith and David Wiggins helped me to gain an appreciation for perseverance. Change, no matter how necessary, always takes time. This newsletter was established as a major organ of the MISF, thanks mainly to the efforts of Lucy Brusic. Attempts at designing a new concept — an MISF "Journal" — failed, but I am happy to report that under the care of Editor Helen Watkins the newsletter has been revitalized.

The Board of Directors, first under Bob Thimmesch, and then under Ross Corson, succeeded in defining a practical fiscal agency policy, while enlarging the study groups, initiating the "Works-in-Progress" project, and broadening the lecture series. Speaker/panel discussions were reinstated, and we began to use more public locations in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

When, mid-term, Ross Corson faced an imminent move East, I was asked to pick up the reins. We focused our efforts on a working board, meeting monthly, on strengthening the successful works-in-progress program, on announcing our fiscal agency status and support services, and on building membership.

Officers' and Board Committees' duties were reviewed, clarified, and developed further so as to complete more efficiently the annual work of the Forum. Curt Hillstrom created the first computerized member data base and mailing list, which facilitated bulk mailings and made member interests more readily available to the Board. John Bessler organized lectures and works-in-progress programs of interest to members and to the community at large.

In 1997 the usefulness to the scholarly community of the MISF fiscal agency, with its requirement of works-in-progress presentations, became increasingly obvious. Not only was member interest aroused; we also began to get referrals from metro area granting institutions. Within a very short time, the first two grants under our fiscal agency were successfully submitted and initiated. Treasurer Lucy Brusic and I formed a separate financial accounting system, and divided the advisory function between us. For the future, we are considering the creation of an independent Advisory Committee, reporting to the Board of Directors, which would take us to a new level as we seek to increase our fiscal agency from two to between six and eight contracts per year.

Roger Hammer, as Publicity Chair, began to develop a more comprehensive MISF publicity program than we had seen in years. Roger has completed a demographic questionnaire which will soon be sent to all members. The Board also located a lecture site at the Uptown Walker Library that has proved useful in attracting non-members to our programs. The challenge will be to translate the increased publicity and public awareness of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum into a larger membership.

We must keep our newsletter and programming as strong as possible. The continued emphasis on fiscal agency services and the Works-in-Progress series can position us well for a future in which more grant work is performed by independent scholars. The increase nationally in grants to independent scholars over the last few years, with many recipients from our region, is striking. This may be the time to review again the possibility of membership in NCIS (the National Coalition of Independent Scholars), so as to let us connect more readily with other people of like (or unlike) minds. Several of our members are already involved, attending regional and national NCIS conferences.

I am excited by the opportunities facing us. I know that Lucy Brusic and I are interested in supporting the new Board of Directors by continuing to work with grant recipients utilizing the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum as their fiscal agent. It will be interesting to see how well we as an organization can continue to adapt and grow.

— David F. Juncker
Communications Report

Funny things happen when you offer to become more active in an organization – and it takes you up on it! As a new Board member this year, I handle communications and, as part of that job, the mailings to members, prospective members and the media.

While our membership numbers almost one hundred, for the past year or so there have been only a handful of persons at the Work-in-Progress presentations. This seems a shame, considering all the work and expense that go into them. What is happening? Are people too busy? Is it the program content? Is our membership apathetic?

People who come to public lectures of MISF now are quite often either Board members, friends of the speaker or from the general public — not MISF members. I started asking myself, who are our members? I noticed from our mailing list that, while we identify ourselves as Minnesota scholars, most of our membership lives in Minneapolis or St. Paul! Distance is not a problem, so what is?

To respond to these questions, I have prepared a one-page questionnaire with an easy, no-cost return format, to learn more about you, your families and your background. I am hoping this will give us insight into programs and events for next year that might be of more interest to you. Our president, Dave Juncker, is looking over now and will mail it to you shortly. (If you are not an MISF member and would like to fill one out, contact me. I will get one to you as a person interested in our programs and progress.)

To make our programs have more punch, a speaker-presentation outline has been prepared so that speakers will know, in advance, what we expect of them in the way of presentation: visuals, topic definition, bells, whistles, herald trumpets, tympani and drum rolls, etc.

For 1998, I would like to see us consider having a couple of programs outstate — in Duluth, St. Cloud, Rochester — where there must be some scholars as well as in here. Why don’t we make our organization truly representative of Minnesota? Maybe we could have a weekend event, with a speaker, tour and social. What about a summer picnic and volleyball? I would like to get to know some of you, my peers, and I would like you to know me. I have written five books on American minorities and I have some new ventures I would like to discuss with you, but I can’t if you don’t come to meetings or if they are not of interest to you.

MISF has offered high quality programs, presented by creative and talented “scholars.” Is the problem of attendance one of name recognition? For example, would you come to hear Bill Moyers? Who would draw you out? A famous, fee-charging presenter, or a local person with whom you might sit and talk over coffee?

Please call me or write and tell me what you think. Let’s triple our participation at programs in 1998!

— Roger Hammer
3900 Glenwood Avenue
Golden Valley, Minnesota
55422-5302
(612) 374-2120

Board Notes

Faced with a slowly decreasing constituency, the MISF Board has spent the last two meetings discussing membership and marketing strategies. The following ideas have been suggested as devices for recruitment:

• circulating flyers about membership;
• creating a questionnaire that will result in a demographic profile;
• creating an interest inventory to distribute to members.
• having a social event.

Two suggested questionnaires were unveiled at the October board meeting: one would result in a clearer picture of the MISF membership in the aggregate; the other would enable us to identify potential volunteers and eventually produce a booklet listing the specific interests of members by name.

The Board felt that we should postpone the general questionnaire, but proceed with a modified form of the interest questionnaire, which could be combined with the volunteer questionnaire currently sent to new and renewing members.

In other business, Roger Hammer has created three reference sheets which will help with preparation for public meetings; these information sheets will be available to all presenters and hosts.

The Board approved the nomination of Rhoda Gilman, Robert Thimmesh, and David Wiggins as a committee to nominate MISF officers and other Board members in time for the annual meeting on December 6, 1997.

— Lucy Brusic
Secretary-Treasurer
MISF LECTURE ON STOCKWELL OF MINNEAPOLIS


Mr. Everts began his research in Minnesota in 1984, assisted, as he acknowledged at the start, by staff of the Historical Society of Minnesota, of William Mitchell College of Law, and by members of MISF, several of whom were in the audience. Some of the same people assisted him in finding, and displaying as visual aids, papers, pictures and posters from the Stockwell era, all of which greatly enhanced the topicality of his presentation.

Sylvanus Albert Stockwell was born in 1857, following his parents' move, in 1854, from Sutton, Massachusetts, to the newly opened territory S.W. of the Mississippi, later to be known as "Minneapolis."

Stockwell was first elected to the Minnesota Legislature in 1890, and was thence re-elected every term through 1938, until his death in 1940.

The book, in tracing the career of one man's tireless efforts to pursue his vision of the good society, encapsulates the history of liberal, progressive, and radical movements in Midwest politics from the late 1900s through the first third of the 20th century.

Stockwell was an important member of the Minnesota Farmer Labor Party from its founding in 1920. He was a firm believer in Henry George's Single Tax theory, a strong advocate of women's suffrage, an active opponent of racial discrimination in employment and housing, a supporter of public ownership of utilities, an abolitionist regarding capital punishment, and an early protector of Minnesota's natural resources, an environmentalist and enemy of lake and river pollution. He was also an ardent pacifist before and during World War I, even in the face of virulent harassment by "super patriots."

As with all our other programs this year, the attendance at this informative and engaging presentation was approximately 22.

Bill Everts was born in Boston, educated at Harvard (College and Law School), and, besides practicing law, has taught at Kimball Union Academy in New Hampshire, San Francisco Law School and Hampton Institute in Virginia. He is now retired and lives in Mill Valley, California, where he is contemplating his next book.

STUDY: CULTURE & RURAL SCHOOLS

On Saturday, November 8, at the Walker Public Library, music educator and musicologist Gloria Morris-Grothe fulfilled the requirements of a Minnesota Humanities Commission grant by presenting publicly the results of her research over the last year. MISF was the fiscal agent for her grant. The title of her finished project is "Songs, Heroes, Legends: The Cultural Side of Rural Public School Education in Cokato, MN, 1910-1935."

In her presentation Gloria Morris-Grothe emphasized the parallels between the societal concerns surrounding public education in the first third of the century and those overwhelming us now. She also emphasized the dramatic differences in the way American society addressed and is now addressing those concerns.

Central to her research was the relationship between parents and students, community values, and school responsibilities. Through oral history interviews, Morris-Grothe elicited testimony on the ways in which individual students achieved their goals and developed character traits that prepared them successfully for adulthood. She also studied Minnesota statutes, dating back to 1852, that outlined school responsibilities, in order to determine the public view of the role of educators in a child's life. Additional source materials focused on educational philosophy, teaching methods, and questions about the English language as a model for all students, including recent non-English-speaking immigrants.

The over-all message of Morris-Grothe's presentation was that during the first third of the 20th century (which included the Depression), small town public education put a strong emphasis
AN ARTIST SPEAKS:  
"ROMANCING THE STONES"

on values and character-building. Morris-Grothe said that the "melting pot" image was, to a large degree, a myth, later imposed by the backward glance of historical ideologues. Instead, immigrant families held on to as many aspects of their cultural heritage as they could, as a way of preserving a sense of family, while dealing with the empirical realities of social assimilation. The public school system was democratic in its vision of making self-culture available to every individual. Emphasis was on developing habits of civility, which included virtue and morality, ennobling "character," on erasing discord between the "haves" and "have-nots," on teaching skills in personal relationships, which would aid in future employment and family stability, and on patriotism and knowledge of the Constitution. The decision was made to limit language instruction and use to English, even if this produced conflict within immigrant homes.

The State of Minnesota established "normal schools" to train teachers. The curriculum of these schools was very demanding. School boards did not interfere with the way teachers taught; the atmosphere of the school room was determined by each individual teacher.

Morris-Grothe summed up what she thought were the important differences between public education in small towns like Cokato, MN, between 1910 and 1935, and school experiences today. She emphasized the feeling of "family," and the sense of equality within the student body, which teachers at the start of the century, influenced strongly by the idealized vision of educational reformer Horace Mann, were able to create. Also, although teachers were under-paid and over-worked, they felt more than compensated by the adoration they received from their students, and by the gratification of feeling they were an important part of each child's individual development.

On Saturday, October 18, at the Walker Public Library, Ritva Luukkanen, an internationally acclaimed Finnish poet and stone mosaic artist, with the assistance of translator Arni Nelson spoke about her life’s work. The presentation coincided with the opening of a show of her mosaic pieces at Augsburg College through November 26, when the exhibit will move to the Finnish Embassy in Washington D.C. The U.S. tour of Luukkanen’s art is being sponsored by the Finnish government and the Finlandia Foundation.

Alternating between an impassioned prose account of her life as an artist, readings of her poetry, and a slide show of selected mosaics (assisted by MISF member Jill Waterhouse), Ritva Luukkanen outlined the major themes in her work. First, she said that "to be born an artist is a fate." Second, laws different from those of ordinary life govern the creative process, for they must deal with chaos and dreams, not with intellect or rationality. A creative person is always alone and existence — not the act of creation — is at the center of the artist’s universe. "Creativity dreams in the open seas, where neither longitude nor latitude marking can be seen." In contrast, most people give in to what seems a genetic self-restricting trait: "humanity’s impulse to limit, measure, define, master and generalize."

The truly creative person does not run from loneliness, but embeds herself in it, from which experience arises the "courage" to "penetrate through everything, to sense the future and confront the past." The boundary line between oneself and one’s environment then disappears.

Our culture imposes a taboo, a kind of "virginity," on those areas of experience most people are afraid to "touch." But the creative person is not restrained

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Ritva Luukkanen, at left, chats with audience members after speaking at the Walker Library.
by this darkness within; instead, she is compelled by her very character to make shadows and light of her own. “Creativity offers no alternatives. It continues straight on to defeat or illumination.”

Creativity is not bound by material things, not even by the body of the artist. In the world of the imagination we are society’s “outsiders,” but also free citizens of a new disembodied realm:

The land sleeps, weary,
tired out by its tormentors.
I was awake and saw it.
I wish it a longer sleep,
even if it never wakes up
— it is beautiful when it’s sleeping.

Creative people experience competition, the desire to be superior to others. But this motive is to a truly creative spirit what the cuckoo bird is to the true bird’s nest. The cuckoo may attempt to deposit its foreign egg, but the nest shall not be invaded: “That nest is the nest of the wind on the edge of a cloud and thus its young are saved and are flashing like northern lights in the sky.”

Creativity has analogues to sexual awakening and fulfillment, especially in its quality of being always new, always unpredictable, the reverse of learned knowledge. We cannot experience either the past or the future; “however, everything is a repetition of the past in new words.” “The preceding generations and all they have accumulated are a rich resource;” however, that resource can be garnered only through submission to love. “A lack of love is a black opening into the unknown.”

There is another edge of the field.
This is where the bumblebee buzzes.
The hay has been cut,
the earth’s being turned,

my heart is being plowed
into this place - into here - into me.
The wild seed was not lost,
and did not bring forth a harvest.
On the edge
there blooms a wild violet.

Ritva Luukkanen molds her mosaics the way she crafts her poems, looking always for just the right stone, with just the right color and reflection when juxtaposed with its neighboring elements. Beginning in 1975, she has collected rocks all over Finland. “You can find every color of the spectrum... With a hammer, I pound each piece of rock into suitable sizes, shapes, and colors... My hammer strikes stone crystals, millions of years old, into the light of day, and my poems spring to life with words that were already in use at the beginning of time.”

— Helen Twombly Watkins
Grants Available for 1998

THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Minnesota Historical Society offers grants "to support original research and writing leading to interpretive works on the history of Minnesota." Especially encouraged are projects that add a multicultural dimension to the area's history and that cover subjects not well represented in the published record, including agriculture, urban history, workers and work, historic preservation, and sports. Projects most favored are ones eligible for publication either by the Minnesota Historical Society Press, or as articles in Minnesota History, the Society's quarterly journal.

Application may be made to these grant programs:

- **Mini-grants** are awarded for up to $500 to cover research expenses.
- **Visiting Scholar Grants** of up to $1,000 may be awarded to published scholars to do research in the Society's collections;
- **Article Grants** are awarded for research expenses — up to $1,500 — related to submission of a manuscript to Minnesota History;
- **Major Grants** support research expenses incurred in completing a large-scale project like a book. These may be as much as $5,000.

Application deadlines are January 2, April 1, and September 2. Awards are announced by March 1, June 1, and November 1. For an application form and Research Grants Program information and guidelines, write to Deborah L. Miller, Research Dept., Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102; send e-mail to debbie.miller@mnh.org, or call Florence Regan at (612) 297-2221.

Applications for Mini-grants may be submitted at any time. The grant program is funded on a fiscal-year basis.

THE MINNESOTA HUMANITIES COMMISSION

The Minnesota Humanities Commission provides mini-grants of up to $300 and small grants from $300 to $1,000, in support of humanities projects such as speaker programs. It also provides funding up to $2,000 for large-scale humanities projects like public conferences. Minority organizations, or organizations proposing multi-site projects serving hard-to-reach audiences may apply for grants of up to $3,000. Media grants are available for projects in radio, film, video, or any combination.

More relevant to "independent scholars" are the **Works in Progress Scholar Grants**. These provide individual scholars up to $2,500 in support of research and writing that will reach a public audience. Grants are competitive (10 awards will be made in June of 1998), and applicants must apply through a fiscal agent like MISF. Works in Progress grants are suitable for support of research expenses, research travel, or costs of publication.

Applicants must submit two writing samples, one intended for a scholarly audience and one intended for a general audience.

Draft applications are due on April 3, 1998, final applications are due on May 1, and the ten awards will be announced on June 5.

Please contact Jane Cunningham at the Minnesota Humanities Commission (612-774-0105, ext. 109) or Mark Gleason (ext. 103) to talk about a prospective project.

THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

Last year the McKnight Foundation awarded 61 grants to "artists" in ceramics, dance choreography, music composition, photography, playwriting, theatre arts, visual arts, creative prose and poetry. Fellowships ranged in size from $3,500 to $25,000. Although the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum is not yet administering grants as a fiscal agent for the McKnight Foundation, we encourage all interested MISF members to contact either Sylvia Paine, McKnight Communications Officer, or Neal Cuthbert, Program Officer for the Arts, at (612) 333-4220.
MISF Study Groups

FAMILY VALUES

The purpose of this group is to look at family values from many perspectives: how they are interpreted differently by different people, how those differences affect us all, and where they might lead us.

Meetings are held at the home of coordinator Lucy Smith: 1747 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul. Call Lucy at 698-9671 for information on dates and times.

SCIENCE & HUMANITIES

The Science & Humanities study group meets about every three weeks (date chosen in advance by consensus) at 7:30 p.m. at the home of coordinator Ginny Hansen, 2408 Girard Avenue South, in Minneapolis. Her phone numbers are: (W) 377-5960 and (H) 374-5505.

As is obvious from its title, the focus of the group is inter-disciplinary, with the general theme that of creativity in both science and the arts. Most exciting to the group's members is the diversity of expertise they have discovered, not just within the group but even within each participant.

The next meeting will be November 25. For that night and for the next 4-6 meetings, discussion will take as its jumping-off point Arthur Miller's 1996 book The Insights of Genius. You need not be current with the book, or even have it; just come to a meeting to see how you like it (after you call Ginny for date and time).

PHILOSOPHY

The Philosophy group meets every third (sometimes fourth) Monday at 7:00 p.m. at the Chicago Deli, 48th and Chicago in Minneapolis. The next meeting will be on December 1.

After discussing the book Luck by Nicholas Rescher, we moved on to Melville's The Confidence Man and its theme of humanity's tendency to barter away its soul in return for self-interested reward. Staying with Melville's fascination with the ambiguities in conventional definitions of good and evil, we next read William Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell." This was followed by 1989: The Lost World of the Fair, written in 1995 by David Gelernter, the Yale computer scientist who in 1993 lost most of his hand to the Unabomber. A strange book, and full of ambiguities, The Lost World combines the fascination with technology that permeated the New York World's Fair, on the eve of World War II, seeming to be the answer to everyone's dreams, with a truly "retro" longing for the moral simplicity of an earlier time, before the West became spiritually bankrupt.

On December 1 we will finish discussing Richard Dawkins' The Selfish Gene. At the meeting following December 1, we will discuss the antithesis of Dawkins' "selfishness" theory: in other words, the possibility that evolution occurs on a level more complex than that of the single gene and involves group interaction. We will be reading xeroxed copies of articles by Elliott Sober of the University of Wisconsin and David Sloan Wilson of SUNY/Binghamton.

For more information call coordinator Curt Hillstrom at 823-5132.
RHODA GILMAN

Former MISF board member Rhoda Gilman has resumed work on a long-postponed biography of Minnesota fur trader, Indian fighter, and first state governor Henry H. Sibley. One product of her research has been a paper presented at the 37th annual meeting of the Western History Association, held in St. Paul October 15-18. In it she discusses a treaty negotiated with the Dakota Indians just ten years before the infamous treaty of 1851, which set the stage for the Dakota War of 1862 and continuing conflict on the northern plains. The earlier treaty, rejected by Congress, would have set aside southern Minnesota as an Indian territory and potentially an all-Indian state. The paper is scheduled for future publication in The Journal of the West.

Marilyn J. Chiat's new book, America's Religious Architecture: Sacred Places For Every Community (New York: John Wiley & Sons), has just been published. With more than 280,000 churches, synagogues, and mosques, the United States is the most church-laden nation in the world. Chiat's book has been called "the first comprehensive historical survey of America's religious architecture," and contains 300 photographs of the 500 places of worship covered in the text. A book-signing was held on Thursday, October 23, in Butler Square, co-sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Minnesota Humanities Commission.

JOHN RADZILOWSKI

In the fall of 1996 John Radzilowski coauthored with Dr. Joseph Amato and four others a work titled To Call It Home: The New Immigrants of Southwestern Minnesota (Marshall: Crossings Press). In June 1997 two more of his books were published. The first was Prairie Town: A History of Marshall, Minnesota, 1873-1997 (Marshall: Lyon County Historical Society), the first attempt to write a serious history of one of the regional centers that have become increasingly important in the rural Midwest. The second book was Follow Me: The Memoirs of a Polish Priest, by Msgr. Stanislaw Grabowski (Roseville: White Rose). Radzilowski edited this autobiography of a Catholic priest who spent almost six years in Nazi concentration camps, mostly in Dachau. In January 1997, Radzilowski won the Joseph Swastek Award for the best article of 1995 in the journal Polish American Studies for his piece "The Other Side of Chicago: The Poles of Arizona." He recently wrote several articles for the forthcoming Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing (London: Fitzroy Dearborn); and coauthored, with Thaddeus C. Radzilowski, an article on East-European Americans for Our Multicultural Heritage (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood), the forthcoming successor to the Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups.

JIM REILLY

Jim Reilly has been researching music by the Irish composer Thomas Moore that has been set in other European languages. This has resulted in an index of pieces broader than previously existing indexes. On Saturday, March 14, 1998, Jim will present a program of settings of Moore's music made by Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Emil Sjögren, and Halldan Kjerulf. Also included will be settings by Thomas Moore himself of traditional Irish folk tunes, for which Moore also wrote the texts.

DAVID S. WIGGINS

"Home at River's Edge," the lead article in the Summer 1997 issue of The Forum (Vol. 9, No. 2), by David S. Wiggins, has been reprinted in the newsletter of the Friends of the Mississippi River. David also reports that following the fire last year in the ruins of the historic Washburn A Mill, the plans for a new Riverfront Interpretation Center at that site have escalated in scope. New construction will create a 30,000 sq. ft. facility within the now stabilized ruin, with 12,000 sq. ft. of exhibit and classroom space. These exhibits are now planned to go far beyond the milling history of the area, although that and the recent fire will be included. The substantive focus of the new interpretation center will be the environment and history of the whole region as it has responded to the economic development of the upper midwest.

JOHN BESSLER

John Bessler's new book, Death in the Dark: Midnight Executions in America, has just been published by Northeastern University Press. Program Coordinator of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum, Bessler is an attorney who lives in Minneapolis.
MINNESOTA INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS' FORUM

ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1997, 10:15AM
WALKER PUBLIC LIBRARY, 2880 HENNEPIN AVENUE, MINNEAPOLIS

"TEN THOUSAND YEARS' OCCUPATION AT THE SIBLEY HOUSE"

A presentation by Dr. Robert A. Clouse, Archeologist at the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Historical Society, followed by a question and answer session.

ANNUAL MISF BUSINESS MEETING

- Treasurer's Report, including a comparison of 1997 with 1996 in terms of MISF financial accounting before the end of the fiscal years.
- Board Report, including the presentation by the MISF Nominating Committee of a slate of names for Board members and Officers for 1998, including specific job descriptions.
- Membership vote on Bylaw change regarding the date of the MISF Annual Meeting.
- Membership vote on the Nominating Committee's slate of Board members and Officers.