LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR MINNESOTA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Both State and Federal laws prohibit unlicensed excavation and artifact collecting on all public lands in Minnesota. It is a felony to willfully disturb a burial site on public or private land. You must have the permission of the landowner to enter private lands.

OVERVIEW OF MINNESOTA ARCHAEOLOGY

Early avocational archaeology in Minnesota focused on the state’s numerous burial mounds. The Theodore H. Lewis surveys of the late 19th century and the Jacob Brower surveys of the early 20th century located and mapped over 8,000 burial mounds. These mounds are described in Newton Winchell’s landmark The Aborigines of Minnesota (1911). Another 4,500 mounds have been mapped in Minnesota over the last century, bringing the total to over 12,500.

The University of Minnesota began professionally training archaeologists in the 1930s. Professionals too originally focused on mound excavation, but this changed by the early 1970s. No burial mounds in Minnesota have been excavated for scientific purposes since 1971. Lloyd Wilford of the University of Minnesota provided the first overviews of the state’s prehistory.

Wilford was succeeded by Elden Johnson who focused his work on the Late Prehistoric wild ricers of the Lake Mille Lacs area. Johnson was also Minnesota’s first State Archaeologist, a position created by state legislation in 1963. Historical archaeology in the mid-20th century originally focused on fur posts and frontier forts, but this expanded to more recent sites such as shipwrecks, farmsteads, and urban areas in the late 20th century.

Archaeology expanded greatly in the early 1970s following the passage of a number of federal environmental protection laws. It has gone from a profession dominated by academic pursuits to a profession dominated by cultural resources management (CRM) concerns. Currently, North American archaeology is taught at the University of Minnesota, Moorhead State University, Minnesota State University – Mankato, St. Cloud State University, and Hamline University.

CULTURE HISTORY OF MINNESOTA

Humans first settled Minnesota as the glaciers began retreating over 12,000 years ago. The first documented peoples in the state are called Paleoindians and are evidenced by large, well-made spear points made of fine stone. The earliest spear points (Clovis, Folsom) have long lengthwise flake scars known as flutes. Later Paleoindian spear points lack these flutes and are more various in form and size. During early Paleoindian times many large mammals including mammoths and mastodons roamed the land. The most famous Paleoindian site in Minnesota is the Browns Valley site dated to about 10,000 years ago.

The Archaic Period follows the Paleoindian, beginning about 8,000 years ago. The Archaic Period environment of Minnesota featured great prairie expansion due to the peak of post-glacial warming and drying. Major droughts became more common drying up shallow lakes. By 6,000 years ago all of Minnesota was covered by prairie except the northeast and the Mississippi River Valley in the southeast. Archaic hunters in the prairie focused on bison and used stone atlatl dart tips that had stems and
notches near the base. In the still-wooded areas in the northeast and southeast, Archaic lifeways featured more diverse economies. The southeast riverine Archaic peoples hunted deer and small mammals, fished, collected mussels and wild seeds, and even had gardens with squash and other cucurbits. In the northeast, the lake dwellers fished, hunted, and gathered wild plants. As the prairie retreated westward late in the Archaic, the more diverse economies followed, although western Minnesota people continued to be focal bison hunters. Archaic innovations include the use of ground stone tools like grooved mauls and axes plus some use of cold-hammered copper.

The Woodland Period begins to replace the Archaic about 2,500 years ago. Woodland innovations initially include pottery and burial mounds with the bow and arrow appearing by A.D. 500. The Woodland environment of Minnesota was very close to that found by Euro-American settlers in early Historic times with the three major vegetation zones – prairie, deciduous woodlands, and the mixed deciduous coniferous forest. The Woodland Period is divided into Early, Middle, and Late in much of the Midwest, although the distinctions become less clear moving west and north so in Minnesota we sometimes use the terms Initial and Terminal Woodland. The use of wild rice intensifies during the Woodland Period in Minnesota.

There are numerous archaeological complexes and phases associated with the Woodland Period in Minnesota. Most of them are named for pottery types found in the state and a few names are borrowed from adjacent states. One of the most famous Woodland complexes in North America is called Hopewell and was originally defined in Illinois and Ohio in association with elaborate mortuary ritual in Middle Woodland mounds. There is very little Hopewell in Minnesota. Another famous Midwestern complex is Effigy Mound named for the bird and animal-shaped mounds concentrated in southern Wisconsin, northeastern Iowa and southeastern Minnesota. Effigy Mound dates after Hopewell. In Minnesota, pottery complexes include Brainerd, Laurel, Blackduck, and St. Croix in northern Minnesota and Fox Lake, Lake Benton, and Sorg in southern Minnesota.

By A.D. 1000, major cultural changes are evident throughout most of Minnesota. This period is often called the Late Prehistoric. While there is some survival of Woodland cultures in the far north associated with Sandy Lake ceramics, new southern groups are affiliated with Mississippian peoples centered at the prehistoric metropolis of Cahokia near present day St. Louis or with Plains Villagers centered on the Missouri River in the Dakotas. The Mississippian groups are found only in southeastern Minnesota, although the closely related Oneota complex spread into southwestern and central Minnesota. Mississippian and Oneota peoples lived in permanent villages, made pottery tempered with clam shells, and were intensive corn gardeners. Plains Village people also lived in permanent villages and grew corn, but they had grit-tempered ceramics and intensively hunted bison. The Plains Village cultures were found only in western Minnesota and are known by names such as Cambria, Great Oasis, and Big Stone. The major Mississippian center is at Red Wing with major Oneota centers on Willow Creek in southwestern Blue Earth County and on Center Creek in southwestern Faribault County. In central Minnesota we see a blend of Woodland and Oneota with a heavy dependence on wild rice gathering. Wild rice is also very important in northern Minnesota.

French fur traders first appear in eastern Minnesota in the late 1600s. This marks the end of the Prehistoric Period and begins the Contact Period. During the Contact Period, many native technologies are replaced with European trade goods including brass kettles replacing pottery, steel knives and axes replacing stone ones, and some use of firearms. Fur trade economies partially replace age-old
subsistence economies. Fur trade posts are established along the major rivers. At the beginning of the period the Dakota or Sioux control almost all of Minnesota with some related Siouan language speakers in the far south (Ioway, Oto) and some Cree in the far north. During the Contact Period, the Ojibwe move into much of northern Minnesota from their ancestral homes on eastern Lake Superior. British fur traders gradually replace the French and after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, American traders gradually take over. With the establishment of Ft. Snelling in 1820, American sovereignty is imposed and, once treaties are signed, loggers followed by Euro-American farmers begin to alter the landscape. The Contact Period ends with the signing of the first major Indian treaties in 1837.

The Post-Contact Period is characterized by the rapid settlement of Minnesota by Euro-Americans and the loss of sovereignty of the Dakota and Ojibwe. All of southern Minnesota was open to settlement after 1851 and, except for brief pauses caused by the Civil War and the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, rapidly intensifies. The prairie and deciduous woodlands were soon transformed into farm fields and the pine forests were reduced to almost nothing in 50 years. By the 1870s, railroads were being built across Minnesota and the loggers are reaching the far northern forests. Within a generation, Minnesota is no longer the frontier and has booming cities, major industrial areas, and iron ore mines. The Dakota were banished from Minnesota after 1862, but gradually began to filter back into the state establishing small communities along the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. The Ojibwe were restricted to seven reservations in northern Minnesota.

Over 12,000 years of human occupation have left a rich archaeological heritage and many fascinating questions to answer. When did people first arrive? What kind of lives did they live? How did their technologies help them cope with changing environments? Minnesota is especially interesting because it sits at the junction of three major North American biomes – prairie, deciduous forest, and coniferous forest – and it is at the beginning of three major continental drainages – Mississippi/Gulf of Mexico, Red River/ Hudson Bay, and Great Lakes/North Atlantic. Many Indian tribes trace their origins to Minnesota. Many cultures clashed and blended. Minnesota is archaeologically interesting because it is on the edge and in the middle.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN MINNESOTA

There are currently over 17,500 recorded archaeological sites in Minnesota, yet it is estimated that only one percent of the sites in the state have been recorded. These sites vary from finds of single arrowheads to large prehistoric stone tool workshops covering hundred of acres. They include fur posts, logging camps, Lake Superior shipwrecks, and iron mills on the Minneapolis riverfront. Professional archaeologists have excavated only a small number of these sites. Many have been severely damaged by cultivation, highways, urban sprawl, and uncontrolled amateur collecting. Some of the most important sites in the state have been totally destroyed.

The site descriptions that follow provide brief overviews of the places that have played critical roles in the development of Minnesota archaeology and places where the public can better understand Minnesota’s archaeological past. Not all of the places are open to public visitation, but many are and these places provide the basis for understanding the state’s hidden past.
Northwestern Minnesota Sites

1-Lake Bronson State Park – Located in far northwestern Minnesota, the local topography is formed by the glacial lake plain and beach ridges of Lake Agassiz. Lake Bronson was created in 1936 when Two Rivers was dammed, filling a notch in the McCauleyville Beach Ridge. South of the lake on the beach ridge a line of nine burial mounds (21KT1) were built during Middle Woodland times almost 2,000 years ago. The University of Minnesota excavated two of the mounds in 1936. County road reconstruction in the mid-1970s required salvage excavation in a village area north of the mounds. These excavations carried out by Moorhead State University found both Middle Woodland (Laurel) and Late Woodland (Blackduck) occupations apparently associated with seasonal bison hunting. Several mounds are still visible south of County Road 10 and a small pioneer cemetery is located north of the road. There is no archaeological interpretation in the State Park. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

2-Fort St. Charles (21LW6) – This palisaded fur trading post was built in 1732 by a nephew and son of the French explorer Pierre LaVerendrye. It was constructed on an island off the Northwest Angle in Lake of the Woods. In 1736, Jean Baptiste LaVerendrye and 20 companions were attacked by a Dakota raiding party on a small island near the fort. The bodies of the Frenchmen were buried beneath the altar of the church within Fort St. Charles. The fort was abandoned soon after. In 1950, the Knights of Columbus relocated the grave site and rebuilt a replica fort above it, although no professional archaeological excavations preceded the reconstruction. You can visit the reconstruction by taking a boat from the nearby town of Angle Inlet or come across Lake of the Woods from Warroad. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

3-Grand Mound (21KC3) and 4-McKinstry (21KC2) Sites – These two village and mound sites are critical to the understanding of the Woodland Period in northern Minnesota with both sites containing Late Archaic, Laurel, and Blackduck occupations. The Grand Mound site is east of the mouth of the Big Fork River and the McKinstry site is east of the mouth of the Little Fork River. Neither site is currently open to the public, but both can be viewed from the adjacent bridges. Both sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Grand Mound site is also known as the Smith site and the Laurel site. It contains the largest burial mound in Minnesota (117’ x 90’ base; 45’ high) as well as four other smaller mounds. The mounds were dug into numerous times by amateurs in the late 19th and early 20th century. The University of Minnesota did the only professional excavations of the mounds in 1933 and 1956. The University also tested the village area in 1970. The Minnesota Historical Society built an interpretive center on the site in 1977, but it closed in 2003. The two mounds of the McKinstry site were also damaged by relic hunters in the late 19th century. The University of Minnesota excavated both mounds in 1939 and 1970. The 1970 excavations also tested the McKinstry habitation area. The replacement of the Highway 11 bridge in 1994 required additional excavations at the McKinstry site.

5-Itasca State Park – The most famous site in the park is the Itasca Bison site (21CE1) discovered during bridge construction in the Nicollet Creek valley in 1937. The University of Minnesota conducted excavations at the site in 1937 and returned to do additional work in 1963, 1964, and 1965. C. Thomas Shay’s published report (1971) is widely recognized as an excellent example of a multi-disciplinary study in environmental archaeology. The site was located in a peat bog and contained the remains of at least 16 bison associated with small side-notched dart points. Radiocarbon dates suggest the site is 7,000 to 8,000 years old, at the very beginning of the Archaic Period. The Itasca area would have been prairie at
the time, while it is currently pine forest. The site is interpreted with an overlook panel. The Itasca Bison site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970. Additional outdoor panels can be found at several Woodland age sites within the park including the Itasca Mounds (21CE16) and Chambers Creek (21CE3) sites. There are also archaeological exhibits in the Brower Visitor’s Center.

6-Canning Site (21NR9) – Excavated by Moorhead State University in 1980, the Canning site is a multi-component prehistoric site on the east side of the Red River near Hendrum. The Late Prehistoric upper component has been extensively disturbed by cultivation, but a deep Archaic component (ca. 1 meter) contained stone tools and many broken bison bones. The Archaic component dates between 3,000 – 4,000 years ago and is interpreted to be a winter bison processing camp. The Canning site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. It is located on private property and there is no on-site interpretation.

Northeastern Minnesota Sites

7-Fowl Lake Site (21CK1) – This site was first described by a private artifact collector in 1965. It is on a small island in South Fowl Lake on the U.S. – Canadian Border in northern Cook County. The site has never been professionally excavated and it has been severely damaged by lake-edge erosion. The site has yielded numerous copper artifacts as well as prehistoric ceramics and stone tools. Based on artifact types, there appear to be Late Paleoindian, Archaic, and Woodland (Laurel) occupations. It is one of the type sites for the Old Copper Complex in Minnesota. The Fowl Lake site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. It is located on private property and there is no on-site interpretation.

8-Grand Portage National Monument – The 8.5 mile portage between the Pigeon River and Lake Superior was established by prehistoric Indians and then used by the Ojibwe and French fur traders in the late 1600s. In the late 1700s, British fur traders built a series of important fur posts on both ends of the Grand Portage. A major stockaded post was built on Grand Portage Bay on Lake Superior and this post became known as the Grand Portage post, while the principal interior portage post was known as Ft. Charlotte. The British abandoned Grand Portage by 1804, although the adjacent Ojibwe village remained. In 1936 and 1937, the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) conducted archaeological excavations at the site of the main post (21CK6) and then supervised the reconstruction of a stockade and grand hall on the original site. New MHS archaeological excavations at the site continued throughout the 1960s. In the early 1970s, underwater archaeology was done in the Pigeon River at the west end of the portage (21CK7). On July 19, 1969 lightning hit the reconstructed great hall and it burned to the ground. Many archaeological artifacts and Ojibwe materials were lost in the fire. Reconstruction of the great hall began in 1971 and a canoe warehouse was also constructed. In 2007, a new interpretive center opened at Grand Portage that highlights Ojibwe culture and the fur trade.

9-Hegman Lake Pictographs (21SL413) – Located at the north end of North Hegman Lake in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, these rock paintings are unusual for being located above the water higher than a person in a canoe can reach. The artist must have painted them by scaling the cliff face. There is a main group of figures with several less distinct drawings nearby. The main group includes a person with outstretched arms, a small animal, a moose, and three canoes with people in them. The moose is used as the symbol of the Office of the Minnesota State Archaeologist and has also been adopted as the symbol for the National Forest Service Passport in Time program. They are painted in red pigment. There is no on-site interpretation.
10-McCarthy Beach State Park – Proposed park developments in the early 1990s, led to an archaeological survey that discovered several sites in the development areas. Extensive testing at a proposed parking lot revealed 10,000 years of human history in only two feet of soil. Paleoindian, Archaic, and Woodland occupations yielded stone tools, copper artifacts, ceramic sherds, and the bones of elk and bison. The visitor’s center has interpretive panels explaining the local archaeology and geology.

11-Reservoir Lakes Prehistoric District – During the 1920s, a series of hydropower dams were built on the Cloquet, Whiteface, and Beaver Rivers north of Duluth. These dams created or expanded several large lakes. As the newly created shorelines eroded, numerous prehistoric artifacts were exposed and several local artifact hunters built large collections. The University of Winnipeg excavated one of the sites (21SL15) near the Fish Lake Dam in 1969. Hundreds of other sites have been documented by archaeological shoreline surveys beginning in 1990 associated with federal relicensing of the hydropower facilities. These sites are particularly rich in Late Paleoindian and Archaic materials, although all prehistoric periods are represented. Most of the sites are on private land and they are not interpreted.

12-Hesper Shipwreck – On May 3, 1905, a violent spring storm sunk the wooden freighter Hesper just south of what is now the town of Silver Bay. The well-preserved remains of the ship lie in shallow waters adjacent to the Silver Bay breakwater. Divers can access the wreck by going to the Silver Bay Marina and entering the water on the north side of the breakwater. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

13-Madeira Shipwreck – One of the most violent storms ever to strike the North Shore occurred on November 28, 1905. The storm sunk 20 vessels. Madeira was a schooner-barge being towed by another vessel. Cut loose during the storm with 10 men on board, Madeira was dashed upon Gold Cliff just north of what is now Split Rock Lighthouse. A heroic effort by one of the crewman saved nine of the men. The wreck of the Madeira lies below Gold Cliff in depths varying from a few feet to 120 feet. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. This site is one of the most popular scuba diving sites in Minnesota. Just south of the wreck site is Split Rock Lighthouse that was built as a result of the 1905 storm. The Lighthouse has a visitor’s center run by the Minnesota Historical Society that contains some shipwreck and other local historical interpretation.

14-Samuel Ely Shipwreck – The Samuel Ely was a single deck, three-masted schooner built in 1869. In late October of 1896, the Ely was being used as a barge towed by the steamer Hesper. A violent storm parted the tow cable and Ely was driven against the Two Harbors breakwater. The shallow water wreck was well known to early sport divers in Lake Superior. Army Corps of Engineers breakwater improvements in the early 1990s required a careful survey of the wreck’s condition and led to its listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. The Great Lakes Shipwreck Preservation Society has been involved in several projects to help preserve the wreck. Divers can access the wreck by boat.

15-USS Essex Shipwreck – Designed by Donald McKay, one of the most famous American naval architects, the USS Essex started its career in 1874. The vessel was built during the turbulent U.S. Navy transition from sail to steam. Essex served on oceans worldwide and was ultimately transferred to the Minnesota Naval Reserve in Duluth to serve as a training vessel. After it’s useful life ended in 1931, Essex was towed off Park Point in Duluth and burned. The lower part of the vessel remains buried in the sand
near the end of Park Point, where it is occasionally exposed by storms. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

16-Jay Cooke State Park – Located just south of Duluth on Highway 210, the lands for this state park were donated to the state in 1915, but the park was not developed until 1933 with the help of the CCC. One of the most impressive sets of rapids in Minnesota lies in the heart of the park on the St. Louis River. These rapids forced early traders to portage for about four miles north of the river. It was known as the Grand Portage of the St. Louis. The portage is marked with route signs and some interpretive panels. The Grand Portage of the St. Louis was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Headwaters Lakes and East Central Minnesota Sites

17-Williams Narrows Site (21IC23) – This site is located on the narrows between Cut Foot Sioux Lake and Little Cut Foot Sioux Lake just north of Lake Winnibigoshish in Itasca County. It was first recorded by Lloyd Wilford of the University of Minnesota in 1954, but was not professionally tested until 1976 during a Corps of Engineers shoreline survey. Small test units on both side of the narrows, as well as artifacts in the south side landowner’s collection demonstrated that site had been almost continuously occupied for perhaps 12,000 years. The site has yielded fluted and unfluted Paleoindian points, copper artifacts, and a variety of Woodland Period ceramics. There is no on-site interpretation.

18-White Oak Point Site (21IC1) – Located on a prominent peninsula on the Mississippi River south of Deer River, this site has important prehistoric and historic Indian occupations. Like Williams Narrows, it has been almost continuously occupied for over 10,000 years, but it also had a British fur post, a large Ojibwe village, and burial mounds. Two of the six mounds were excavated by the University of Minnesota in 1940. Wilford returned to the site in 1954 for excavations in the village area. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. The site is privately owned. There is no on-site interpretation.

19-Savanna Portage State Park – Located in northeastern Aitkin County, Savanna Portage State Park features a major portage trail that linked the St. Louis River drainage with the Mississippi River drainage. Several sites along the portage (21AK53) were tested by archaeologists from the University of Minnesota in the early 1980s. The portage was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. There are interpretive panels in the visitor’s center and along the portage trail.

20-Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge – In 1897, Jacob Brower mapped a number of large mound groups in what is now Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge in central Aitkin County. Brower also noted village sites and wild rice harvesting areas. Rice Lake has long been a traditional Ojibwe ricing area and it has a thousand year pre-Ojibwe ricing history as well. The wildlife refuge was established in 1935. Visit the refuge in September to observe a traditional wild rice harvest. One of the most intact mound groups in Minnesota is along the road west of the visitor’s center (21AK57). No major archaeological excavations have been conducted in the refuge. There is limited archaeological interpretation in the visitor’s center.

21-Malmo Site (21AK1) – In 1899, Jacob Brower mapped a large mound group at the northeast end of Lake Mille Lacs near the town of Malmo. Brower excavated three of 128 mounds and David Bushnell of the Smithsonian Institution excavated two mounds in 1900. In 1936, the University of Minnesota excavated 13 mounds threatened by road construction. The University returned to the site in 1962 to
map the 64 remaining mounds and to excavate some trenches between the mounds. The site is the type site for Middle Woodland Malmo ceramics. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. The site is on private property and there is no interpretation.

22-Gull Lake Dam Recreation Area – In 1912, the United States government built a dam at the outlet of Gull Lake 10 miles west of Brainerd. Proposed campground construction in the vicinity of the dam in the late 1960s led to excavations by the University of Minnesota. The Gull Lake Dam site (21CA37) contained 12–15 burial mounds built over a prehistoric village site. Seven mounds were excavated by the University in 1969-1970. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. In 1974, the University of Minnesota returned to the area to excavate the nearby Langer village site (21CA58). These sites have multi-component Woodland occupations and are the type sites for Brainerd ceramics. There is some archaeological interpretation in the Gull Lake Dam Recreation Area visitor’s center.

23-Crow Wing State Park – Located south of Brainerd and north of Little Falls, Crow Wing State Park is at the junction of the Mississippi and Crow Wing Rivers. Due to the strategic location, it was a major fur trading area and on the Woods Section of the Red River Trail. Archaeological remains feature historic building depressions associated with the Crow Wing townsite (21CW15) including the house location of William Warren, the noted Ojibwe historian. There is also a Red River Trail segment. The Beaulieu House from the old townsite is a major attraction. Interpretive panels are scattered throughout the park. The park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

24-Mille Lacs Kathio State Park – This park on the southwest shore of Lake Mille Lacs became a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1964 and is the only exclusively archaeological NHL in Minnesota. The park contains numerous archaeological sites that were first explored by the University of Minnesota in the 1960s in conjunction with park development. The Petaga Point site (21ML11) has yielded numerous copper tools and is one of the type sites for the Archaic Old Copper Complex in Minnesota as well as the type site for several Woodland Period ceramic types. The Cooper Mound and Village site (21ML9/16) has demonstrated clear early French contact with Dakota people in the mid- to late 17th century. The Wilford site (21ML12) featured a late prehistoric house very similar to the Dakota bark lodges depicted by mid-19th century artists in southern Minnesota. Wild ricing was important at almost all of the sites. While the Lake Mille Lacs area was the original center of Dakota peoples, the Ojibwe forcibly took over the region in the mid-1700s. The state park has some of the most extensive public archaeological interpretation in Minnesota. Also visit the nearby Mille Lacs trading post and museum jointly run by the Minnesota Historical Society and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

25-Fort Ripley – In 1848, the U.S. Army built Fort Ripley (21MO127) on the west side of the Mississippi River seven miles below the mouth of the Crow Wing River. The purpose was to establish a frontier presence for the government and to oversee the relocation of Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Indians who were being placed between the Dakota and the Ojibwe in an attempt to reduce inter-tribal conflict. A fire destroyed several buildings in 1877 and the fort was abandoned in 1878. In 1929, the Minnesota National Guard selected the location to become their principal training facility, named Camp Ripley. Archaeological surveys of Camp Ripley have not only documented the remains of Fort Ripley, but have found over 200 sites ranging from prehistoric campsites to historic farmsteads. One especially important site is the Stanchfield Lumber Camp (21MO137) that was occupied in 1847 and one of the first logging camps west of the Mississippi River in Minnesota. Camp Ripley has a museum that is open to the public during the warm season and features exhibits on frontier forts, American wars, and small arms. Fort
Ripley was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and the Stanchfield Lumber Camp site was listed in 1999.

**26-21MO20 Fur Post Site** – In 1972, Minnesota Historical Society archaeologist Douglas Birk mapped a number of features resembling collapsed fireplaces on the west bank of the Mississippi River north of Little Falls. The site was given the official state site number of 21MO20. In 1978, Birk examined some historic ceramics from the site and realized it probably was a mid-18th century French fur post, perhaps the post known as Fort Duquesne. In 1982, the Institute for Minnesota Archaeology began a decade-long investigation under Birk's direction exploring three buildings and related features. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. The site is now part of Charles A. Lindbergh State Park. The site area is not open to the public and there is no on-site interpretation.

**27-Pike’s Fort Site (21MO21)** – As Lewis and Clarke explored the western reaches of the Louisiana Purchase in the early 18th century, Zebulon Pike explored the northern reaches. Pike and a crew of 20 soldiers ascended the Mississippi River on a keelboat in 1805. Ice forced him to stop and build a wintering post south of what is now Little Falls. The site was flooded by the construction of the Blanchard Dam in 1922. In 1984, the Blanchard Reservoir was lowered for dam repairs and archaeologist Douglas Birk relocated the site of Pike’s Fort. Birk and his team from the Institute for Minnesota Archaeology (IMA) excavated a small portion of the site. A small marker on the west side of the river denotes the site. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

**28-Bradbury Brook Site (21ML42)** – Archaeological survey associated with the reconstruction of Highway 169 south of Lake Mille Lacs in 1989 located an extensive stone tool workshop south of Bradbury Brook. There were intensive salvage excavations by the Minnesota Historical Society at the site in 1990. Over 125,000 artifacts were recovered including a Late Paleoindian Alberta spear point. Most of the artifacts are chipping debris made of a siltstone obtained from the adjacent creek bed. A radiocarbon date and an early projectile point demonstrated that site was about 10,000 years old. Much of the site was destroyed by the highway construction and today the highway passes directly over the 1990 excavation area. Most of the remaining site is in private ownership and is not interpreted.

**29-Northwest Company Fur Post (21PN11)** – In late 1804, John Sayer built a trading post on the Snake River west of what is now the town of Pine City. The post was built with a wooden palisade and one large interior building. Sayer and his men spent the winter there trading for furs with nearby Ojibwe. He left the post in late April, 1805 and never returned, but did write a diary about his experiences. Archaeologists from the Minnesota Historical Society excavated the site in the 1960s and the post was reconstructed in the 1970s using the archaeological findings and Sayer’s diary. The Minnesota Historical Society runs the reconstructed post and nearby interpretive center. There is a well-marked exit on Interstate 35 leading to the site. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

**30-Marine Mill Site (21WA85)** – Located on the St. Croix River in Marine on St. Croix, the Marine Sawmill was the first commercial sawmill in Minnesota. At the southern limit of the white pine forest, Marine cut its first lumber in August of 1839. Initially driven by waterpower, the sawmill later converted to steam. The mill operated until 1895 and had an associated steamboat levee. The equipment was moved and the frame buildings torn down, but the impressive stone foundations remain. The Minnesota Historical Society maintains a trail with interpretive signage at the site. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.
31-Anderson – Howard Lake Sites – Road construction and drought-related wind erosion in the early 1930s exposed the multi-component remains of the Anderson site (21AN7) on Rice Creek south of Howard Lake in Anoka County. The remains included Folsom spear points dating to 10,000 years ago and pottery resembling Middle Woodland types from Illinois. The University of Minnesota excavated the site in 1930 and 1934. In 1950, the University excavated one of the mounds at the nearby Howard Lake site (21AN1) at the east end of the lake. This site too yielded Middle Woodland pottery that is now known as the Howard Lake type. These sites are not open to the public and are not interpreted.

West Central Minnesota Sites

32-Minnesota Woman Site (21OT3) – Uncovered by construction on Highway 59 in 1931 just north of Pelican Rapids, this site was first known as the Minnesota Man site. The workmen removed the skeleton along with an elk antler tool and a marine shell pendant. The skeletal remains and artifacts were sent to Albert Jenks, an anthropologist at the University of Minnesota. In 1933 the University investigated the site and recovered additional human bones. Jenks considered the skeleton to be of Paleoindian age and the find received widespread national publicity (Jenks 1936). Recent radiocarbon dating has shown that the site dates to the early Archaic Period and is about 8,500 years old. The skeleton is that of a young woman. The site is marked with a plaque in an adjacent highway rest area.

33-Old Wadena Historic District (21WD19) – The area of Old Wadena is a rich historic district containing prehistoric Indian sites, fur posts, and the ghost town of Old Wadena. It is 15 miles east of the current city of Wadena. During its peak in the late 1850s, “old” Wadena had more than 100 inhabitants. The Woods segment of the Red River Trail ran through the town. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. It is currently a county park and has some on-site interpretation.

34-Orwell Site (21OT7) – This site was first mapped by Theodore Lewis in 1891 and consisted of an earthen enclosure with four mounds inside and a group of eight mounds adjacent to the south. It is on the south side of the Otter Tail River west of Fergus Falls. The University of Minnesota excavated the site in 1963 and 1965, but no site report was written. The site was assumed to be a Late Prehistoric fortified village, but the University excavations found very little village debris and features suggested the site may have been primarily ceremonial. Two radiocarbon dates indicate a Middle to early Late Woodland age. The site is in private ownership and there is no on-site interpretation. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

35-Lake Carlos State Park – Located north of Alexandria, archaeological excavations (University of Minnesota) began in 1963 in conjunction with park development. More recent park developments have led to excavations conducted by Minnesota Historical Society archaeologists for the Department of Natural Resources. The main site (21DL2) near the visitor’s center is a habitation containing Paleoindian, Archaic, multi-component Woodland, and Late Prehistoric horizons. Interpretive panels inside and outside the visitor’s center discuss the archaeology.

36-Browns Valley Site (21TR5) – In 1933, a local artifact collector, William Jensen, found five lanceolate projectile points in Browns Valley associated with a human skeleton eroding from a gravel pit wall. The University investigated the site in 1934 and recovered additional skeletal fragments as well as one more projectile point. Recent radiocarbon dates on the bone confirmed the materials were just over 10,000 years old. The site was destroyed by gravel operations and there is no on-site interpretation. The site is interpreted on a roadside marker along Highway 28 on the east edge of Browns Valley.
37-Lake Koronis Site (21ME2) – Located southeast of Paynesville on the south side of Lake Koronis, the site consists of a prehistoric village and large group of burial mounds. The burial mounds were mapped by Theodore Lewis in 1886. Extensive collections of artifacts from the site were donated to the Paynesville Historical Society and the Stearns County Heritage Center. The artifacts include stone tools and ceramics evidencing multi-component prehistoric occupations, especially during the Woodland Period. Road construction, agriculture, and lakeshore development have destroyed much of the village site. The Archaeological Conservancy purchased portions of the mound site in 2001. The entire site is in private ownership and has no on-site interpretation.

Southwestern Minnesota Sites

38-Lac Qui Parle State Park and Historic Site – Located on a broadening of the Minnesota River that now is controlled by a dam, two important historic sites lie on the north side of the lake. Joseph Renville established a fur post (21CP24) there in 1826 and later invited Christian missionaries to build a church nearby. After Renville’s death in 1846, the fur post and mission were abandoned. The Minnesota Historical Society excavated the fur post site in 1940 and in 1968. Recent flooding has extensively damaged the site. An interpretive panel above the site can be found on County Road 32. The Lac Qui Parle Mission site (21CP28) features a reconstruction of the church and several interpretive panels that are maintained by the Minnesota Historical Society. Both sites were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

39-Joseph R. Brown House Historic Wayside (21RN15) – In early 1862, Joseph R. Brown, a well known trader and Indian agent, built a cut-granite house in the Minnesota River Valley south of the present-day town of Sacred Heart. In August 1862, the house was burned by a Dakota raiding party during the U.S. – Dakota War. Although the stone walls remained standing, the house was never rebuilt. The land was purchased in 1937 for a state wayside. In 1938, archaeological investigations were carried out in conjunction with the WPA work. The Minnesota Historical Society carried out additional archaeological investigations in 1968. The impressive ruins have been partially reconstructed and there is an on-site interpretive panel. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

40-Upper Sioux Agency State Park – Located southeast of Granite Falls, this state park was established in 1963 to preserve the site of the Upper Sioux Agency. Two U.S. government Indian agencies were located in western Minnesota in 1854 soon after the ratification of the Dakota treaty of 1851. Two reservations were delimited on the upper Minnesota River and were called Upper Sioux and Lower Sioux. The Upper Sioux Reservation was for bands of the Wahpeton and Sisseton and consisted of a strip of land 10 miles wide on either side of the Minnesota River from Lake Traverse to the Yellow Medicine River. Both agencies were attacked and destroyed by Dakota raiding parties in 1862 during the U.S. – Dakota War. The Minnesota Historical Society conducted archaeological excavations at the Upper Sioux Agency site (21YM25) in 1968, 1969, and 1971. The site is open to public and interpreted with panels and markers. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

41-Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site (21RW11) – This agency was established in 1854 and destroyed in the U.S. - Dakota War in 1862. The original Lower Sioux Reservation was for the Mdewakaton and Wahpekute bands of the Dakota and consisted of a strip of land 10 miles wide on either side of the Minnesota River from the Yellow Medicine River to Little Rock Creek near Fort Ridgley. The ruins of the Lower Sioux Agency stone warehouse were restored by a local farmer in 1881. The site was acquired by
the Minnesota Historical Society in 1967 and an interpretive center was built in the 1970s. Archaeological excavations were done by the Society in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The site is now run in cooperation with the Lower Sioux Dakota. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

**42-Fort Ridgely (21NL8)** – Ft. Ridgely was built in the early 1850s. The Fort played an important role in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 when Dakota Indians unsuccessfully attacked it. In 1911 the site was designated a state park. The first archaeological excavations were carried out in 1936 in association with WPA activities. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970. The Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) did additional exploratory excavations in 1972. In 2006-07, proposed reconstruction of the golf course led to intensive archaeological investigations. These investigation not only found extensive evidence for the US- Dakota War battle and several building locations not previously known, but also found prehistoric components. The site is interpreted with scattered outdoor panels and in the visitor’s center. Extensive ruins of some of the fort’s buildings are visible. Minnesota DNR, MHS, and the Nicollet County Historical Society jointly run the site.

**43-Lake Hanska County Park** – Located in Brown County 17 miles southwest of New Ulm, Lake Hanska County Park contains a prehistoric Indian village and burial mounds and the remains of Fort Hanska dating to 1863. The prehistoric site is known as the Synsteby site (21BW1). In the early 1950s, the University of Minnesota excavated two mounds and tested the village site. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. There is some interpretation of Fort Hanska and the prehistoric site within the park.

**44-Traverse des Sioux Historic Site (21NL5)** – Just north of St. Peter is an ancient portage connecting the lower Minnesota River with the upper Minnesota River, bypassing the basal “v” of the Minnesota River at Mankato. British posts and then American fur posts were established at the east end of the portage and a small Euro-American and Dakota community grew up around the posts. A treaty was signed at the site in 1851 where the Dakota ceded their lands in Minnesota west of the Mississippi River. Once the area was open to Euro-American settlement, the town of Traverse des Sioux boomed and soon contained about 70 buildings. However, St. Peter was made the county seat in 1856 and within a decade Traverse des Sioux was largely abandoned. A self-guided tour of the site winds through cellar depressions and interpretive panels that discuss the site’s history and Dakota culture. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. You can also visit the adjacent Nicollet County Treaty Site History Center.

**45-Cambria Site (21BL2)** – One of the earliest sites professionally excavated in Minnesota, the Cambria site is east of the small town of Cambria on a high terrace above the Minnesota River. William Nickerson excavated the site for the Minnesota Historical Society in 1913 and 1916. The University of Minnesota dug at the site in 1938 and 1941. Cambria appears to be principally a Plains Village site, although there are also Oneota, Woodland, and Mississippian influences. It was occupied for perhaps 50 years sometime between A.D. 1000 – 1200. The site is the type site for Cambria ceramics and the Cambria Phase, which is largely limited to the river valley near the type site. The site is in private ownership and not open to the public.

**46-Willow Creek Prehistoric District** – This concentration of Blue Earth Oneota sites is located in southwestern Blue Earth County near the confluence of Willow Creek and the Blue Earth River. While no intensive professional excavations have been done in the district, the Science Museum of Minnesota
conducted an extensive survey of the area in 1980 mapping perhaps 70 sites. Most of the sites are on private land and there is no on-site interpretation.

47-Center Creek Prehistoric District – This was the first known concentration of Oneota sites in southwestern Minnesota. It is located near the confluence of Center Creek and the Blue Earth River in southwestern Faribault County. The University of Minnesota excavated the adjacent Humphrey (21FA1) and Vosburg (21FA2) sites in 1938, 1947, and 1979. These sites are the type sites for the Blue Earth Phase and Blue Earth ceramics. The sites represent perhaps 50 villages and special-use sites concentrated within several square miles and occupied perhaps 1000 to 500 years ago. Most of the sites are in private ownership and are not open to the public. The Winnebago Area Museum in the nearby town of Winnebago has many artifacts from the sites on display. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

48-Fox Lake Site (21MR2) – Located on an island in Fox Lake near the town of Sherburn, the Fox Lake site was excavated by the University of Minnesota in 1935, 1941, 1981, and 1982. The site is principally of Woodland age, although there are also Archaic and Oneota artifacts. It is the type site for the Initial Woodland Fox Lake Phase and Fox Lake ceramics. The Fox Lake phase is dated between 200 B.C and A.D. 700. A private wildlife management association owns the site and it is not open to public visitation. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

49-Jeffers Petroglyphs (21CO3) – Located in northeastern Cottonwood County, the Jeffers site has one of the most impressive displays of aboriginal rock art in the world. Over 2,000 glyphs were pecked into an exposed shelf of hard Sioux Quartzite in the heart of the southwestern Minnesota tall grass prairie. The glyphs depict animals, people, weapons, and symbols. The earliest carving may have been made perhaps 8,000 years ago and the most recent by protohistoric Dakota. The site is run by the Minnesota Historical Society and open to visitors during the warm season. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

50-Mountain Lake Site (21CO1) – This site is located on a wooded hilltop that was once an island in a now-drained lake in southeastern Cottonwood County. The University of Minnesota excavated at the site in 1957 followed by Science Museum of Minnesota excavations in 1976. Originally known for its Woodland and Oneota components, the Mountain Lake site is also the type site for a Late Archaic Phase in southwestern Minnesota. It is located within a county park and can be visited by the public, but there is little on-site interpretation. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

51-Pipestone National Monument (21PP2) – This very important site is sacred to many Indian tribes and was well known to early Euro-American travelers through southwestern Minnesota. Archaeological evidence suggests that Siouan speakers known as the Oneota first intensively used the site for quarrying catlinite—a soft, red stone—about 1,000 years ago. Oneota peoples used it to make pipes and decorative plaques. The quarry has been continuously used for 1,000 years to obtain pipestone. The Yankton Sioux sold the quarry to the United States government in 1928. Pipestone National Monument was established in 1937 to protect and interpret the site. It is located just north of the City of Pipestone.

52-Great Oasis Site (21MU2) – The University of Minnesota excavated this site in 1941, 1950, and 1955. A combined University of Minnesota—University of Nebraska field school excavated there in 1971. The site is located in western Murray County on a former island in what was once one of the largest lake complexes in southwestern Minnesota; the lakes were drained in 1911. It is the type site for the Plains
Village-related Great Oasis Phase that is now known to be concentrated in northwestern Iowa and southeastern South Dakota. Great Oasis dates between A.D. 900 – 1200. There was also a fur post on the island during the early American period. The site is in private ownership and not open to public visitation.

53-Pedersen Site (21LN2) – Located on an island in Lake Benton near the town of Lake Benton, the Pedersen site was first excavated by the University of Minnesota in 1956. The Science Museum of Minnesota excavated there in 1973 and 1974. The site has a full suite of prehistoric complexes including Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, Plains Village, and Oneota, but the major occupation appears to Initial (Fox Lake) and Terminal (Lake Benton) Woodland. It is the type site for the Lake Benton Phase, which dates between A.D. 700 – 1000. It is in private ownership and not open to public visitation.

Southeastern Minnesota Sites

54-Spring Lake Prehistoric District – Spring Lake is an inter-valley lake in the Mississippi River just west of Hastings. Important archaeological sites have been explored along the south edge of the lake and on Grey Cloud Island. The St. Paul Science Museum (now the Science Museum of Minnesota) excavated the Sorg (21DK1) and Lee Mill Cave (21DK2) sites on the south shore in the mid-1950s. These sites revealed Woodland and Oneota occupations and are the type sites for Middle Woodland Sorg ceramics. Grey Cloud Island is the location of several prehistoric mound groups and village sites as well as historic Dakota villages and a mid-19th century ghost town. The mounds were tested by the University of Minnesota in 1947. The Schilling village site was tested by the Science Museum of Minnesota in the late 1950s and yielded Early Woodland ceramics. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The sites on Grey Cloud Island are on private land and have no on-site interpretation. The south shore sites are within or adjacent to Spring Lake Regional Park, which has some archaeological interpretation in the visitor’s center.

55-Little Rapids Site (21SC27) – Known to the Dakota as Inyan Cetake Otonwe (village of the rapids), the site includes a Contact Period Wahpeton Dakota village, an early 19th century trading post, and a prehistoric mound group. The site was excavated by the University of Minnesota for several field seasons in the early 1980s, which focused on the Dakota village. These excavations were accompanied by ethnographic fieldwork among the descendants of the people who had occupied the village. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999. The site is part of the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area. It is open to the public, but has no on-site interpretation.

56-Red Wing Prehistoric District – The area around the mouth of the Cannon River at Red Wing contains one of the densest concentrations of prehistoric mounds and habitation sites in Minnesota. About a thousand years ago, the Red Wing area was the home of people linked to the great ceremonial center at Cahokia near present day St. Louis. The Red Wing people lived in large palisaded villages, made beautifully decorated shell-tempered ceramics, and were intensive maize farmers. The first major professional excavations were by the University of Minnesota in 1947 at the Silvernale site (21GD3), now the location of Red Wing’s industrial park. In the mid-20th century, the University undertook additional excavations at the Bryan site (21GD4) just upstream from Silvernale and at the Bartron Site (21GD2) on Prairie Island. The Institute for Minnesota Archaeology (IMA) conducted numerous excavations and surveys at Red Wing during the 1980s. Minnesota State University – Mankato is the most recent institution to take an interest in the Red Wing area. Many of the Red Wing sites have been destroyed or severely damaged by agriculture and urbanization. There is some archaeological
interpretation along the Cannon Valley Trail and at the Goodhue County Historical Society museum in Red Wing. Most of the sites are in private ownership.

57-King Coulee Site (21WA56) – Archaeological surveys of highway construction in the late 1980s located several deeply buried sites in Wabasha County south of Lake City. The Minnesota Historical Society excavated the King Coulee site in 1987. A trench was excavated to a depth of six feet, revealing Oneota, multi-component Woodland, and Archaic horizons. The deep burial and water saturation also preserved animal bones and seeds, including Archaic squash seeds radiocarbon dated to 2,500 years ago, the earliest evidence of horticulture in Minnesota. The King Coulee site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The site is in public and private ownership and has no on-site interpretation.

58-Rochester Clovis Area – Finds of fluted Clovis spear points represent the earliest known human occupation of Minnesota. Clovis points are found throughout most of the United States and the complex is dated between 13,500 to 12,900 years ago. Only about 10 Clovis points have been found in Minnesota, all by surface collections. One of the concentrations of Clovis in Minnesota is just east of Rochester. Two sites several miles apart have each yielded multiple Clovis artifacts. The materials from one of the sites are in the collections of the Olmstead County Historical Society. Both known sites are in private ownership and have no on-site interpretation.

59-La Moille Rockshelter Site (21WN1) – Construction on Highway 61 near the small town of La Moille in Winona County in 1939 hit a rockshelter containing artifacts. The University of Minnesota excavated the site prior to its destruction by the road work. The site contained Woodland and Archaic horizons, but the most important find was an almost complete Early Woodland pottery vessel. The vessel was conoidal in shape, had very thick walls, the exterior surface was cordmarked, and a row of fingernail impression decorated the rim. La Moille became the type site for La Moille Thick pottery, the earliest known ceramics in southern Minnesota. The site was completely destroyed by the roadwork and there is no on-site interpretation.

60-Yucatan Prehistoric District – The Late Prehistoric – Early Historic Oneota complex in southeastern Minnesota is know as the Orr Phase. Orr peoples are probably the ancestors of today’s Ioway Indians. One of the areas of Orr Phase concentration is in the valleys of western Houston County near the small town of Yucatan. The University of Minnesota excavated two sites near Yucatan in the mid-20th century. The Hogback site (21HU1) was an Oneota burial hit by road construction. The Farley site (21HU2) was an Oneota village located on a terrace above a small tributary to the Root River. Near these sites on a high hill overlooking the valleys is the Yucatan Fort site (21HU19), a small enclosure tested and mapped by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1979. The Yucatan Fort was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. The sites are in private ownership and there is no on-site interpretation.

61-Grand Meadow Quarry Site (21MW8) – Southeastern Minnesota has an exposed sedimentary bedrock geology that contains numerous chert cobbles suitable for making stone tools. Geological forces have occasionally eroded and concentrated these cobbles. One such location is just north of Grand Meadow known as the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry. The quarry was used for thousands of years to obtain a grey chert that was widely used throughout southern Minnesota. During Paleoindian times, the chert cobbles were probably laying on the surface, but soil deposition gradually covered them and people had to dig pits to find the chert. The site today has several concentrations of these pits readily visible on aerial photographs. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The
Archaeological Conservancy purchased the eastern part of the site in 1992. The site is privately owned and there is no interpretation.

**62-Myre Big Island State Park** – At the eastern edge of the Prairie Lake Region, Myre Big Island State Park preserves a remnant of natural woods and a number of important archaeological sites. The park is located east of Albert Lea, just off Interstate 35. While no intensive archaeological excavations have been done in the park, the visitor’s center has a large assemblage of artifacts donated by a prominent local collector. Some of the artifacts are on display in the center along with interpretation.

**Minneapolis – St. Paul Metro Area Sites**

**63-Mill Ruins and First Bridge Parks** – Euro-American settlers were first drawn to Minneapolis because of the water-power potential of St. Anthony Falls on the Mississippi River. Urbanization and industrialization were rapid and Minneapolis was soon one of the world leaders in lumber and flour production as well as a great city. The surviving industrial and commercial buildings around St. Anthony Falls were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. The Pillsbury A Mill became a National Historic Landmark in 1966 followed by the Washburn A Mill in 1983. Archaeological work on the central Minneapolis riverfront began in the early 1980s in conjunction with development of West River Parkway along the western riverfront. The replacement of the Hennepin Avenue Bridge in the late 1980s and the construction of the new Federal Reserve Bank in the mid-1990s also required extensive archaeology. At Mill Ruins Park you can see the exposed remains of some of the first flour mills to be built on the west side of St. Anthony Falls. The nearby Mill City Museum run by the Minnesota Historical Society tells the story of Minneapolis milling. At First Bridge Park, you can see the exposed remains of the first two Hennepin Avenue suspension bridges. The 1854 bridge was the first bridge ever built across the Mississippi River throughout its entire length from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. There are also scattered interpretive panels along trails on both sides of the river throughout the central Minneapolis riverfront.

**64-Mounds Park (21RA10)** – One of the best views of the Mississippi River Valley in the Twin Cities can be found at Mounds Park in St. Paul. The park also contains one of the most accessible and impressive views of prehistoric burial mounds in Minnesota. The mound group originally contained 18 mounds when first mapped in 1862 and now contains six mounds. Although all of the mounds have been excavated to some extent, none have been excavated by professional archaeologists. The best-described excavations were those of Theodore Lewis in 1882-83 which revealed rock lined tombs and burial ceremonialism similar to the Hopewell Complex of the eastern Midwest. The park was purchased by the City of St. Paul in 1893. The park has limited interpretation of the mounds. Below Mounds Park are Carver’s Cave that is visible but not enterable in the Vento Nature Area and the Dakota village of Kaposia, which has been largely destroyed by urban development.

**65-Fort Snelling and Mendota Historic Districts** – In 1819, a troop of soldiers led by Colonel Henry Leavenworth established the first permanent Euro-American settlement in Minnesota on land ceded by the Dakota to Zebulon Pike in 1805. Leavenworth began building a fort at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, an area known to the Dakota as mendota (the junction of rivers). In 1820, Leavenworth was replaced with Colonel Josiah Snelling who finished the stone fort that today bears his name. Across the Minnesota River from Fort Snelling, a small group of traders led by Henry Sibley and Jean Faribault established a community known as St. Peters, later known as Mendota. By the early 20th century, only the round tower, the hexagonal battery, the officer’s quarters, and the commandant’s
house remained. When highway construction threatened the remains of old Fort Snelling in the early 1950s, the Minnesota Historical Society made a successful plea to save the site and began a 20-year reconstruction program to restore the fort to its 1820s look. The restoration was preceded with intensive archaeological excavations and the excavations continued for 40 years. On the Mendota side of the river, the historic buildings were gradually abandoned after the Civil War. In 1910, the Daughters of the American Revolution purchased the dilapidated Sibley House complex and began restoration. Today the complex includes the Sibley House and the Faribault House. Archaeological excavations were carried out for the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) in small areas of the Sibley complex in the 1980s and 1990s. MHS took over operation of the Sibley Historic Site in 2003. The Fort Snelling Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966, although it had been designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960. The Mendota District was listed in 1970. Both the Sibley House Complex and Old Fort Snelling are open to the public and contain some archaeological interpretation. The numerous late 19th century buildings in the area known as the “new fort” or Upper Bluff have fallen into disrepair, but efforts are being made to restore and re-use them.

Written By: Scott Anfinson, Minnesota State Archaeologist, March, 2009