

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

Key Issues in Historic and Cultural Facilities

- Little Importance Placed on Historic and Cultural Facilities (page 3)

Countywide Goals

- Initiate all necessary means to protect, improve and further the development of all Nobles County Historic and Cultural facilities.

Introduction

Many factors can determine how long a culturally significant building retains its beauty and luster. It takes people with a certain kind of desire to care for these buildings and to value the past that they represent. However, the largest threat facing the cultural resources in Nobles County, as in many other counties, is the lack of continual funding resources to properly maintain them.

In order to properly define the criteria that the County uses in designating a building historical, we rely on a definition that is most commonly accepted as the simplest definition known. This definition states that these resources must be a, “building, site, structure, object, or district evaluated as having significance in prehistory or history” (NRHP Bulletin 16A). This definition comes from the United States Department of the Interior's National Register Bulletin. There are currently a lot of different organizations and norms that have been employed to help assist in the designating of these resources. In other words, this definition should be used when attempting to ascertain exactly what makes a particular building a culturally significant resource. However, the most important term retrieved from the definition being applied here is the word significance.

Issues Summary

The main concern that was realized through the public meeting process regarding historic and cultural facilities was the lack of concern or the overall limited importance of this topic. Very few of the public meetings generated any sort of discussion on the preservation or protection of cultural and historic structures within Nobles County. This established the conclusion that there is a void in overall education regarding these designated structures. Few residents commented on either the strengths or weakness of these facilities, meaning this is an area lacking in overall concern by the general public.

The Early History of Nobles County

Before the area of land that was to become Nobles County actually became Nobles County, it was settled by the Sisseton Native American Indians. This took place many years before Europeans even began to settle in America. Over the years, the land became home to many different Indian tribes. The Native American Settlement kept European settlement at a minimum until 1842. It was at this time that a man named Joseph Nicolas Nicollette came to map out the area. During his encounter with the area, he named the bodies of water in which he came across.

He mapped two lakes and named them Lake Okabena and Lake Ocheyedan. He is also credited in naming the Kanaranzi River. It wasn't until the mid 1800's that the Nobles County area actually began to see new settlements. During this time period, many Native Indian tribes still called the Nobles County area home. In addition to the lack of legal basis for Euro-American settlement, the threat imposed by Native American Indians and their willingness to defend their homelands, limited the amount of new development by any settlers. It wasn't until the Traverse Des Sioux Treaty of 1851, when the Sisseton Sioux ceded the land, did the settlers gain legal right to settle Nobles County.

The northeast area of Nobles County was the first to be developed as a new settlement began in the vicinity of Graham Lake. It wasn't until the mid-1860's that this first permanent development was established. At this time, townships began forming along the Iowa border with Grand Prairie, Little Rock, Ransom, Bigelow and Indian Lake Townships.

The Minnesota territory was organized in 1849 and by 1856, many settlers had come and established new development. However, this time for development came to a halt during 1857. Settlement was discouraged due to conflicts between the Native Americans and settlers. A conflict arose during that year when a band of Sioux Indians killed settlers in Spirit Lake, Iowa. The few whites that were still living in the area after this event decided not to stay.

The area's first mail route began during the Summer of 1867. It ran from Blue Earth through the Graham Lakes settlement and then on to Yankton, South Dakota. This event encouraged development and by the Spring of 1870, the population in Nobles County doubled from 117 to 234. It was at this time in 1870 that the actual County government began. A year later in 1871, the first railroad went through the area. This stretch of railroad began in Mankato, ran through Worthington, and ended up in Le Mars, Iowa.

In 1877-1878, Bishop Ireland of Saint Paul and several priests forwarded the development of the western third of the County using Adrian, the newly established rail port as their center. The area filled with German and Irish Catholics changing both the religious and political balance of the County from Protestant/Republican to Catholic/Democrat.

Meanwhile, in the northeast corner of the County, the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroads were competing for the farm market. This resulted in the establishment of rival towns separated by only a mile and destined to remain small. The railroads played a major role in the establishment of all but two towns in the county. The exceptions are Leota and St. Kilian, both of which were church sites.

In 1861, 35 people made up 11 total families in Nobles County. Just 19 years later in 1880, the population was 4,435. Over the years, the population continued to grow at a steady pace and in 1895 there were 11,905 residents. This number doubled by 1970 when the census reported 22,959 residents. By 1990, however, that number had fallen to 20,098 and is estimated to have fallen to 19,920 in 1999.

Historic and Cultural Facility Strengths

It was mentioned in several discussions that the area does have attractive communities. This is to imply that there is an overall pride in the area and that for residents, keeping their communities nice looking and well-organized is a priority. To some degree, this credits the existing historic or culturally important facilities as being in good repair.

Historic and Cultural Facility Weaknesses

There were some who noted they feel there is a lack of public community facilities for historical society purposes. This may be a building block for establishing a need for more programs, funding, designation, and overall recognition of these important facilities.

Future

The County should begin to further promote the benefits and aesthetics of these important resources. There could be a higher priority in the designation and overall benefits of preserving the sustainability of historic structures that the County has. Due to a limited number of structures, preserving them and providing an adequate amount of community centers should be of high priority for the County.

Historic Resources

Any distinct area or region is almost always made up of structures that are conducive to the natural environment and activities that took place there. For example, Minnesota itself has many distinct land features and attributes. The state is full of an abundance of excellent farmland, many full and beautiful forests in the northern portion of the state, beautiful shores along many lakes, numerous prairies, and the Mississippi Bluffs. All of these different features have had an effect, one way or another, on the types of facilities and different buildings that have been built in the area.

Explicit reminders as to the cultural history of a place are seen through the structures that are standing in an area. Uses such as grain elevators, mills, mines and taller buildings are all examples of this visual history and cultural identity of each individual place. In addition, cultural history is linked to natural history as preserving the few remnant prairies is significant for cultural and historic preservation.

The National Register of Historic Places (Minnesota Checklist), distributed by the Minnesota Historical Society, defines how a structure is able to obtain the title of an Historic Place this way: “Properties are listed on the National Register because of their association with significant persons and events, because of their architectural or engineering significance, or because they contain important information about our history or prehistory.”

The following is a listing of properties located in Nobles County that have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- ***Adrian State Bank.*** Main Street and 2nd Avenue, Adrian
- ***Church of Saint Kilian*** (Catholic). Approx. 3 mi. NW of Wilmont Township
- ***Church of Saint Adrian*** (Catholic). Main and Church Street, Adrian
- ***Citizens' National Bank.*** 326 10th Street, Worthington
- ***Hotel Thompson.*** 300-310 10th Street, Worthington
- ***Kilbride Clinic.*** 701 11th Street, Worthington
- ***Siemer Silo and Barn.*** County Highway 19, Grand Prairie Township
- ***Sioux City and Saint Paul Section House.*** Spencer and 1st Street, Dundee
- ***Slade Hotel.*** 2nd Avenue and Main Street, Adrian

Cultural and Historic Points of Interest

Nobles County provides its own view into the past with these following attractions.

- ***Nobles County Pioneer Village*** features restored buildings that illustrate the early pioneer experience. Antiques and other memorabilia are also displayed.
- ***Adrian Springs*** which was first used as a stagecoach stop.
- ***Sunrise Prairie County Park*** is a pioneer cemetery and several acres of high quality prairie land.
- ***Prairie Expo*** focuses on the cultural, natural and commercial history of Southwest Minnesota. The cultural history exhibit titled Zuya: “The Gathering”, tells the story of how the prairie was settled. The natural history exhibit titled “Painted Prairie” looks at the land and how it was formed and the commercial history exhibit titled “Beyond the Plow” focuses on the importance of agriculture as the primary industry. In addition, a travel center features six interactive exhibit kiosks to encompass the six tourism regions of Southwest Minnesota. These include Open Skies, Railroad Country, On the Banks of Plum Creek, Wetlands, Native Lands, and Little Europe. Each of these exhibits help visitors find out more about the region.

Festivals and Events

There is no shortage of events and exciting festivals to attend throughout the year in Nobles County. Listed below are special events held throughout the year.

- ***Adrian Farm and Home Days.*** This is held the fourth week in June in Adrian and it consists of a carnival, parade, and health and safety fairs.
- ***Dairy Days.*** This event is held during the second week in June in Ellsworth and it consists of a banquet with entertainment, the crowning of Nobles County Dairy Princess and Little Miss Ellsworth, a carnival, a parade, a street dance and a horse show.

- ***Fourth of July Celebration.*** This is held on the 4th of July in Leota. This event consists of parades, fireworks, fun entertainment, children's games, picnics and ball games.
- ***Old Fashioned Fourth of July at Pioneer Village.*** This is held on the 4th of July in the Nobles County Fairgrounds. It consists of melodrama, hymn singing, heritage demonstrations, band concert, concessions and music.
- ***International Festival.*** This event is held during the week of the 4th of July at the Worthington Jr. High School. This event consists of multi-cultural celebrations of sports, entertainment, and food.
- ***Old Home Days.*** This event is held in Lismore during the 1st weekend in August. It includes a great deal of family fun with a parade, picnic in the park and a magician for the kids.
- ***Regatta Wind Surfing.*** This event is held during the 2nd week in June on Lake Okabena in Worthington.
- ***Art in the Courtyard.*** This event is held on the first Saturday in August on the Nobles County Courthouse lawn. It consists of artists, craftsman, refreshments and more.
- ***Nobles County Fair.*** This is held in Mid-August at the Nobles County Fair Grounds. It consists of grandstand events, exhibits, a carnival, a demolition derby and Nobles County Night.
- ***Days of '78.*** Held in Rushmore in July during the first weekend after the 4th. This event includes a parade, theatrical performance and numerous festivities.
- ***Corn off the Cob.*** This is held in late September and is an annual production of a homespun mix of nostalgia, humor and music.
- ***King Turkey Days.*** This event consists of a grand parade, a pancake breakfast, famous speakers, the Great Gobbler Gallop Turkey Race, polka and country western dances and vendors. This event is held on the second Saturday after Labor Day in Worthington.
- ***Dundee Nothing Days.*** Held the last weekend in July and is a great time to be had by all who attend.
- ***Fun Days.*** Held in the City of Brewster during August. A lot of family fun for everyone.
- ***Celebrate Chautauqua.*** This event is held the second Saturday after Labor Day at Chautauqua Park on Lake Okabena. It consists of a kiddie parade, food, entertainment and arts and crafts.
- ***Christmas at Pioneer Village.*** This is held on the first Thursday and Friday in December. It is an old-fashioned holiday celebration made up of singing groups, an orchestra, wagon rides, hot apple cider and cookies with Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus.
- ***New Year's Eve at Memorial Auditorium.*** This is held on December 31st and includes topnotch family entertainment.
- ***Sun and Fun Days.*** This event is held in Round Lake during the second Saturday in June. Games in the park consist of a water balloon launch, dart throw, face painting and others. Also, a fireman's street dance is held Saturday night.

GOAL 1: Initiate all necessary means to protect, improve and further the development of all Nobles County Historic and Cultural facilities.

(related goals/objectives: Industrial and Economic Development 1)

Objectives: Prioritize and refurbish facilities in bad repair, work to preserve all existing facilities in suitable shape and look for all possibilities of expansion.

Policies

1. Identify all possible funding sources for the preservation of Historic and Culturally important facilities.
2. Ensure that best efforts are employed in order to obtain genuine materials when attempting rehabilitation and restoration projects.
3. Encourage all efforts made by the Nobles County Historic Society, and all those wishing to aid in the development of historically significant buildings, in order to preserve historic values and promote ethnic heritage.
4. Continue educating the public on the significance of public sites and the importance of preservation of these buildings as non-renewable resources.

Strategies

1. Identify all possible sources for historic funding improvement and establishment practices.
2. Ensure the zoning ordinance protects appropriate resources and land use.
3. Work with Prairie Expo, Pioneer Village and any other high profile tourist centers within the County as a means to educate citizens and tourists as to the locations of relevant cultural and historic sites within the County.