

# CONNOR'S FUR POST

OWNED AND OPERATED  
BY THE  
MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Connor's Fur Post, located on the southeast bank of the Snake River, is accessible from the Pine City exit of Interstate 35. Proceed west on Pine County Road 7 for about 1½ miles. Watch for an identification sign marking the road into the site from the north side of Pine County Road 7.

**Hours:**

May to October  
 10 A.M.-6 P.M. daily. Closed Mondays.  
 October  
 1 P.M.-6 P.M. weekends only.

**Admission:**

Adults \$1.00  
 Students .25  
 Children accompanied by adults  
 admitted free of charge.



**SITES ADMINISTERED  
 BY THE  
 MINNESOTA HISTORICAL  
 SOCIETY**

**FORT SNELLING**

Off Minnesota #5 and #55, Twin Cities

**LIVINGSTON-GRIGGS HOUSE**

(Open year around)  
 432 Summit Avenue, St. Paul

**ALEXANDER RAMSEY HOUSE**

(Open year around)  
 Exchange and Walnut Streets, St. Paul

**FORT RIDGELY**

Off Minnesota #4 south of Fairfax

**UPPER SIOUX AGENCY**

Off Minnesota #67 south of Granite Falls

**LINDBERGH HOUSE**

In Lindbergh State Park near Little Falls

**MINNEHAHA DEPOT**

Across from Minnehaha Park, Minneapolis

**PETROGLYPHS**

Off U.S. #71 or Minnesota #30 near Jeffers

**KATHIO-MILLE LACS INDIAN MUSEUM**

On U.S. #169 near Vineland

**FOLSOM HOUSE**

On Government Road in Taylors Falls

**OLIVER H. KELLEY FARM**

Off U.S. #169, 10, and 52, south of Elk River

**SOLOMON G. COMSTOCK HOUSE**

At Fifth Avenue South and Eighth Street, Moorhead

*Sites now under development:*

**LOWER SIOUX INDIAN AGENCY**

**INTERPRETIVE CENTER**

Off county #2 east of Redwood Falls

**LINDBERGH INTERPRETIVE CENTER**

Adjacent to the Lindbergh House

For further information, or to make reservations for group tours, write or call the Minnesota Historical Society, Fort Snelling Branch, Building 25, Fort Snelling, St. Paul, 55111 (tel. 612-726-1171).



## THE FUR TRADE IN THE NORTHWEST

For almost two hundred years after 1650, the fur trader was a key figure in the northwest region around the Great Lakes. In search of valuable beaver pelts to sell to European hatters, the adventurous traders were among the first whites to explore the uncharted inland areas. They encountered Indians eager to trade the abundant beaver, muskrat and mink furs for metal tools, jewelry, kettles and guns.

Although at one time several nations (Spain, France, England and the Netherlands, for example) competed for control of the fur trade, after 1763 the British dominated the trade in the northwest. For many decades powerful outfits like the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company traded for pelts by building temporary wintering posts in the backwoods. Here local Indians could easily obtain goods on credit and pay off these debts with furs trapped throughout the winter.

One North West Company employee, Thomas Connor, came to the Snake River area in 1804 to build a wintering post for trade with the nearby Chippewa Indians. Promising his voyageur crew a dram of potent "high wine" in the morning and evening for each "great Days Work," Connor was able to move into the six-room log building, complete with four fireplaces, a little more than a month later. Encircling the post was a log stockade for protection against enemies and the climate.

Although Connor's post was frequented mostly by native trappers with furs for trade, Indian women also visited to barter items like maple sugar, wild rice (for which the area was famous), and gum, a pine pitch substance used to seal birch bark canoes. In return, Connor supplied them with manufactured goods —

for example, tobacco, hatchets, cloth, blankets, and beads for embroidery.

By 1816, the United States government prohibited foreigners from trading, and John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company monopolized the Minnesota trade until the 1830's. Like many other traders, Tom Connor affiliated with Astor's company in order to remain in the trading business. Setting up a new post on the south shore of Pokegama Lake, Connor traded in this area for many years. He married a Chippewa woman and by 1840 headed a household of ten persons. Travelers found the old trader a congenial host because "he always had good fires to camp by in the winter, and set an excellent table, and could entertain his guests with interesting reminiscences of his sojourn in the valley of the St. Croix." In 1847 Connor lived in a "... rude portable house ... built of bark" and when questioned about his secluded life, he replied that he "liked the quiet of the wilderness." He lived out his later years along Lake Superior, giving his name to Conner's Point in West Superior, Wisconsin.



## THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CONNOR'S FUR POST



The existence of a North West Company wintering post along the Snake River was known from Connor's company diary, preserved in the Public Archives of Canada. Until 1963, however, its exact location was a mystery. In that year, Joseph Neubauer, an amateur archaeologist living near the site, discovered evidence that a building once stood there. Neubauer notified Minnesota Historical Society archaeologists, who suspected that he might have found Connor's long lost post.

The first of four summers of archaeological excavations began in 1964. The digging revealed the outlines of the building, which had been destroyed by fire, and numerous articles once traded at the post. A short distance from

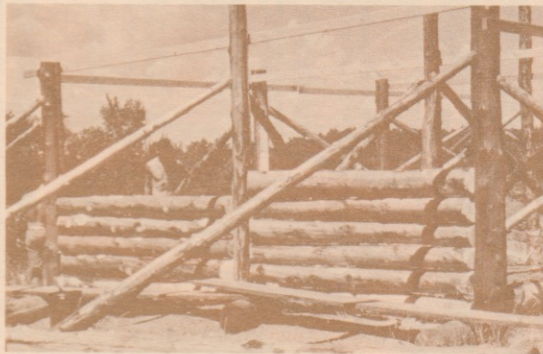


The site of Connor's post, uncovered and cleared, on the south bank of the Snake River.

the building, a row of pole remains marked the location of a log stockade. Techniques of building without nails, found through library research, made possible the reconstruction of the post. Work began in 1968, after the Minnesota legislature appropriated funds for the project.

First, materials had to be prepared. The bark from 1,600 tamarack and poplar poles

was removed, and the poles were dipped in a solution to kill insects and prevent rotting. Corner posts, with two grooves cut from top to bottom in each, were set up. Logs were then notched to fit the grooves, lifted to the top of the corners, and slipped down into the grooves, one above the other, until the walls were high enough. The walls were chinked with clay-colored cement to provide durability and an authentic appearance. Fireplaces, a floor, and a roof of handsplit cedar shingles completed the basic structure, which was surrounded by a stockade of vertically placed logs buried three feet in the ground. Furnishings typical of this trading period provide a picture of the daily activities and life style of these early Minnesota businessmen.



An early stage in putting up the walls of the building.

Forming the stockade by placing logs upright, side by side, in a deep trench, which is then filled.

