A recent issue of Preservation Matters reported that the fate of the Chisago County Courthouse in Center City was bleak. Demolition was slated for June 15 for the two-story, Italianate structure, one of only two surviving wood-frame courthouses in Minnesota. (Preservation Alliance has been engaged in a lawsuit to protect the other, the Sherburne County Courthouse in Elk River.) Ironically, under previously negotiated development plans, the

Continued page 2, column 2
The Alliance was back in court again in July concerning our continuing legal action against Sherburne County. The county was attempting to dismiss the injunction which prevents demolition of the historic courthouse in Elk River.

The judge ruled that Sherburne County had to abide by an earlier agreement with the Alliance which specified certain conditions surrounding the sale of the property and outlined the circumstances under which demolition could eventually take place. This was clearly a victory for historic preservation.

Yet, eighteen months have passed since our legal action prevented the destruction of this National Register property, and it seemed an appropriate time to decide whether we should reevaluate our position. After careful consideration, it was decided that the Alliance would agree to lift our injunction at the end of 1991. This leaves an additional eighteen months in which to find a developer who would purchase and restore the courthouse building.

Yet, if the building is to be saved, a marketing strategy needs to be developed. It became known during the court proceedings that Sherburne County has not advertised the building for sale since September 1989. This reluctance is very difficult to understand. If the building is not seriously marketed, our 1991 deadline will become a meaningless date.

Another issue is that of local support. According to Ted Loftstrom, the Environmental Assessment Officer at the State Historic Preservation Office, there are three elements in successful preservation efforts. A building must be historically significant, there must be viable alternative uses, and local support must be present. The first two items have been established. Unfortunately, local support to preserve the building has not developed to the level which would be considered ideal.

Now that a deadline has been set, perhaps local support will begin to focus on the building and provide this key link in successful preservation. There isn’t much time left.

Rolf Anderson, President

Chisago continued from page 1 county had committed the old courthouse site for use as a parking lot.

When the County Historical Society, almost without hope of saving the building, appealed to the Chisago County Commissioners in May to salvage significant features of the building, an article in a local newspaper covering the meeting found a sympathetic ear in Janet Bailey of Franconia, who came forth "like the Marines" at the last moment to save the building. As is often the case when dealing with historic structures, there were lots of surprises and lots of obstacles. Bailey and other local preservationists founded the "Save the Court House Committee" (SCC) to deal with the logistical problems of finding a new location for the structure and moving it, since leaving it at its original location was not an option. Because time was of the essence, it seemed impossible to line up a permanent home for the building. The Taylors Falls School Board, however, agreed to rent an acre of land in Shafer to SCC to park the courthouse for a year while a more appropriate home was arranged.

In a letter discussing their challenge, the SCC described the various groups with which they had to coordinate to facilitate the move: Northern States Power, East Central Power, Contel Telephone, Triax Cable TV, Chisago County Courthouse employees, Chisago County Sheriff's Department, Knutson Construction, Semple Movers, Bauer Brothers Construction, and all the residents along the route. They did not, however, anticipate a bout with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency which threatened to delay the process with a statutory 20-day waiting period for inspection of sites where asbestos is to be removed. This problem was finally short-circuited by a vote by the county to declare an "emergency renovation," telescoping the waiting period to five days - which they made retroactive. As a result, an asbestos abatement firm removed the unwanted material on a Saturday morning so that a demolition company could tear down a brick addition to the building, clearing the way for the building's movers to begin the three-week process of preparing the courthouse for its in-the-nick-of-time escape. At the same time as the county voted the "emergency" provision, they also gave SCC 21 days to remove the building from the time the group had access to it, a slight but important reprieve from the rapidly approaching July 1 deadline.

With great fanfare — and huge sighs of relief — the SCC celebrated the building's move July 12-13. A last minute incident, however, threw another glitch into the process. Attorneys for the School Board determined that the district would face liability risks if the
The courthouse rested on their property, so they rescinded their offer for storage. With the courthouse ready to roll down the road, the SCC scrambled to find another temporary resting place for the uprooted building. As luck would have it, a farmer on Highway 20 about five miles from Taylors Falls volunteered a site, so the courthouse now sits near his house in a cornfield awaiting its next move.

Losing no time, the SCC has acquitted a conspicuous site at the head of Taylor’s Falls’ main street where the courthouse will ultimately rest its weary sills. When moved to the site, the building will serve as an anchor for the town’s north entrance complementing that to be provided by the proposed St. Croix Valley Interpretive Center at the town’s south portal. The location was targeted for upgrading by a recent visit of the Governor’s Design Team. Plans for the building’s renovation and reuse include offices, shops, and a restaurant. Although there are certainly more adventures in store before the project is completed, their adeptness in surmounting previous perils presages success for these plucky preservationists.

CKR

(Ed. Note: Bill Scott, architect, ace preservationist, and long-time resident of Taylors Falls, brought this story to our attention and provided most of the information — thanks Bill!)

MINNEAPOLIS ARMORY ISSUE MAY BE SETTLED SOON

A September showdown may be in the making for the embattled Minneapolis Armory, a Streamline Moderne building at the edge of downtown Minneapolis. Next month the Armory’s owner, Hennepin County, will act on a joint city-county task force’s final report on alternative site analysis. At an August 2nd Hennepin County Public Hearing on the task force preliminary report, most County Commissioners had little interest in looking at alternative sites presented by the task force for their proposed detention facility; their minds seem set on demolishing the Armory as they have been planning for over a year.

Last Spring, the Minnesota State Legislature set forth two provisos in their funding for the new Hennepin County jail: the County must use the 300 cells presently incorporated in Minneapolis City Hall for ten years, and the County must participate in a good faith effort to work with Minneapolis City staff in looking at viable alternative sites, and complete the study by September 2. The legislative mandate left unclear as to the methodology of the alternative site study, which allowed the County to leverage a bureaucratic number shuffle rather than a comprehensive analysis by a “blue ribbon” interdisciplinary team of urban design experts, jail consultants, public financing specialists, land use consultants and other relevant disciplines.

The joint task force has put considerable study into a County-induced jail option concept of a “mid-rise”...
facility that would be built on a 10 to 20 acre site located somewhat distant from the court facilities in the Government Center. Two sites are being considered for a mid-rise facility — site “A” near the Hennepin County garbage burner, and site “B” located immediately west of the terminus of the uncompleted Third Avenue Distributor, the latter site includes several National Register warehouse structures, one of which houses Ruby’s Cabaret.

Recently, the County said a mid-rise option could be acceptable, as mid-rise construction is cheaper than high-rise structures on a per cell basis and a mid-rise facility spread out on a larger piece of land could allow for greater expansion if future conditions require more jail cells. On the other hand, construction of a high rise facility would result in a “fixed maximum” situation not allowing for future expansion.

The Armory block, approximately 2.5 acres in size, would require the high rise option which could make this site less desirable if the County comes to favor the expandability advantage of the mid-rise option.

Another factor in the mid-rise option is that the once critical tunnel link connecting jail cot to court bench is no longer apparently critical. County staff previously insisted the close proximity was imperative to shorten prisoner transfer time, thus cutting operational expenses. The County now says the City Hall cells can, at least in the short term, be used for detainees immediately ready for court while those with later court dates wouldn’t need to be kept so close to the Government Center.

At the public hearing, the task force stated both the A and B sites for mid-rise facilities are workable for the County.

Architect Catherine Brown of the U of M Center for Urban Design commented that sites A and B were workable for a new jail site but recommended the McGill Building site near the Metrodome (which the County owns) be looked at as well. By attaching adjacent land to the McGill site, a mid-rise facility could be built. Brown contended the advantage of this site would be its closer and more accessible to the Government Center than would sites A and B. In the Design Center’s study of the Armory re-use issue performed several months ago, the McGill site was designated as the best alternate site, meeting all of the County’s site criteria.

When Mayor Don Fraser’s appeared in front of the Commissioners, his long-standing affirmation of keeping the proposed jail off of the Armory site remains steadfast. Fraser offered the rationale that a mid-rise could provide more accurate pre-construction cost estimates, would be completed faster and would allow expandability.

And while previous testimony by public staff confined their remarks to fiscal information, Fraser delineated a strong case for preservation. “We have found considerable public interest in historic preservation; it is strong and people want it,” he said, and added: “We have found when we work with historic preservation, things turn out better.”

Fraser also advocated the Minneapolis Park Board’s proposal to own and operate a renovated Armory as a recreation center and “covered park.” Rebutting comments by County Commissioners that the Park Board doesn’t have the money for the Armory, Fraser said on an overall basis, the Armory would not result in an increased financial outlay. The Park Board has estimated potential savings in rents now paid for various facilities around downtown if operations would be consolidated in the Armory. Also, various stages of renovation could be integrated within conventional Park Board accounting and facilities expansion programs. Fraser also said a combination of public and private fundraising could provide funds to finance renovation.

But in order for the Park Board to utilize the Armory if the County should abandon it, the Minneapolis City Council must approve an Armory plan by the Park Board, as the City would have to purchase the building. Right now the votes are few. Some Council members point to federal funding cutbacks as putting strains on maintaining existing necessary city-assisted programs.

Much of City Council reluctance is based on Councilmember Steve Cramer’s financial analysis. However, much of his information is now out of date and was based on discounting Mayor Fraser’s plans for private-public fundraising. It is also apparent that much of his data came from County sources.

Give the Hennepin County Commissioners’ projected indifference to the joint task force’s analysis of the mid-rise sites, it may be easy to predict that the final County Board resolution a month from now will be to affirm their choice for the Armory site. During the public hearing not one Commissioner asked inquiring questions to ascertain alternative site advantages. Instead, their remarks criticized these sites and backed their Armory site choice. They seemed to pretend some
Preservation Alliance 1990 Annual Meeting & Awards

Historic Courthouse
Minnesota’s Matriarch

Sunday October 28, 1990

Washington County historic Courthouse
3rd and Pine Street (South Hall)
Stillwater, Minnesota

10:30-11:30 Registration and Social hour
Self-guided tour of Historic Courthouse & Jail
(Minnesota’s oldest standing courthouse)

11:30 Buffet Brunch in restored courtroom, second floor

12:30 Annual Meeting
Preservation Awards

2:00 Optional
Guided tour of Historic Courthouse & Jail
Guided walking tour of South Hill
Browsing & shopping in Stillwater’s Commercial Historic District and antique shops

Cost per person—$10.00
Reservations should be returned by October 21

For overnight accommodations information of Stillwater area Bed & Breakfasts or motels, call the Chamber of Commerce (612) 439-7700.

Return this with check ($10/person) payable to the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota by October 21st to:
Preservation Alliance of Minnesota
PO Box 10485
Minneapolis, MN 55458

Name(s) ____________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________
City __________________________ State ____________ Zip _____
patience at having to sit through a Legislature-mandated process that they thought was, at best, a waste of their time.

All of this points out the difficult job Minneapolis preservationists face to develop support for saving the Armory. Interested persons should write a postcard to Councilmembers and County Commissioners, and write letters to the editor of the StarTribune. Please!

RR

SAINT PAUL'S FAUST THEATER
BAD HISTORY CHASING
GOOD HISTORY?

Certain older buildings often connect us with fond memories that work for preservation's favor. But then there are those occasions when a significant building gets tied to a run of bad history that makes those people who have momentarily lived with it anxious to clear away their memories by clearing away the building.

Such was the case two years ago with Minneapolis' once-magnificent Central High School, razed after a dozen years of abandonment and vandalism made it a sore symbol of a neighborhood tired of decay around its feet.

Today, there is the Faust Theater at Dale Street and University Avenue in Saint Paul, recently known as a purveyor of pornography that became a magnetic attraction for neighborhood blight. Despite the Faust's early years as a handsome Tudor Revival neighborhood theater that thrived on family entertainment, its last period of history occurred before the City of Saint Paul bought the building from the porno business owners. As a result, the now-empty building's demolition is currently being urged by a coalition of neighborhood groups who want to see a new development for the site that would erase the notorious history of the Faust's recent past.

The Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission is asking the community to take a closer look at the Faust's significance, promoting all parties to consider preservation as one of the options for future development. According the HPC nomination information, the Faust is not eligible for the National Register or Local Designation, and is instead placed in the general category of potential neighborhood significance. The Commission's role in the Faust issue is that of advice and consent in their review of the city sponsored development where non-designated properties have some degree of historic consideration.

The building next to the Faust was built in 1914 by the Anheuser Busch Brewing Company as a "store and building" according to the building permit, and it may have been used as a bar, a common practice in that era.

Faust Theater at the intersection of Dale and University in Saint Paul.
PRESERVATION MATTERS

for breweries to promote their product by owning and operating their own saloons. In 1921, Anheuser Busch sponsored storefront alterations which reportedly rendered forth its now renown Tudor Revival character, intended to resemble half-timbered commercial buildings and houses of medieval England.

In 1934, architects Leibenberg and Kaplan, known for Art Deco theater design, redesigned the theater’s interior, expanded the exterior building shell to accommodate a 1,000 seat auditorium, adjacent street-level store space, and office space in a second floor portion of the complex. Artesian well air-conditioning, a 1930’s theater technological innovation, was added. The theater’s interior was executed in English Tudor style, featuring auditorium sidewalls of applied plaster on metal lathe resembling castle parapet walls, with a light trough between the exterior structural walls and the plaster parapet walls that provided indirect lighting, another 1930’s theater and restaurant design innovation. At present, the interior has been drastically altered. The Tudor Revival exists only on the building’s exterior. The HPC description statement call the Faust’s facade “an eyecatcher.”

Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development staff is currently examining demolition cost estimates although no demolition procedure is scheduled. A past offering to sell the Faust for renovation found no takers.

University Avenue in Saint Paul is a lively and widely irregular linear array of commercial buildings defying cohesion, but every once in a while offering landmarks that lend a sense of progression as you travel along. University Avenue’s most poignant landmark, the Montgomery Wards tower, faces imminent demolition. If the Faust goes, the gateway to Frogtown will be less distinct and University Avenue’s architectural grammar will become more of a run-on sentence.

Area residents should realize preservation often has a way of painting away bad reminders of a building or area’s past, sometimes at the risk of allowing nostalgia to be an amnesia of the real of the past. The Faust’s revival should be what erases bad memories, not its demise.

RR

IN THE NEWS

Readers of The Old-House Journal (May-June 1990) were treated to a “Remuddling” feature from Minnesota submitted by Tom Harvey, well-remembered former SHPO architectural surveyor. “Bank-Rupt” offered before-and-after photographs of the First National Bank of Middle River, a once-handsome Renaissance Revival inspired brick bank recently “remuddled” beyond recognition.

RCB

NATIONAL PRESERVATION CONFERENCE IN CHARLESTON, OCTOBER 17-21

“Keeping America’s Heritage Alive!” is the theme of the 44th National Preservation Conference, sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It will be held in Charleston, S.C., October 17-21, 1990.

More than 2,000 volunteers and professionals from all segments of the preservation community are expected to attend. The conference will include over 35 educational sessions covering topics such as preserving our cultural resources, disaster preparedness and recovery, stewardship of historic properties and preserving the landscape. Laboratory tours accompanying the sessions will give attendees a chance to see historic preservation at work in Charleston. There will also be an exposition featuring 70 exhibits of products, services, skills and crafts for restoring, renovating, and maintaining old and historic buildings and sites.

For further information contact the National Trust, 1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036. (202)673-4141.

PASS US ON!

Robert M. Frame, editor of the Society of Industrial Archeology Newsletter, recently received a query from James L. Meyer, an engineer who designs parking facilities. Meyer is interested in exchanging information on the history of structures built for automobile parking, so Bob sent him our recent issue which featured a cover story on interesting parking facilities in Minneapolis.

CKR
SHPO UPDATES

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has requested proposals for a variety of cultural resource surveys and planning studies. Subjects include brick farmsteads in Chaska, University of Minnesota campuses, early portages, and county tuberculosis sanitariums. Deadline for proposals was August 7. SHPO anticipates funding about half of the studies.

The Stillwater Bridge controversy continues. The National Park Service (NPS) review of the impact of the project made no reference to the project’s impact on cultural resources. It was produced by the Omaha office of the NPS, an office presumably more concerned about Smokey the Bear than about Italianate storefronts. To non-preservationists and preservationists alike, dealing with the National Park Service can be confusing. SHPO is trying to force Section 106 review now rather than waiting until later in the process, as the Minnesota Department of Transportation has planned. Section 106 review attempts to minimize the effect of any federally funded project on cultural resources, and it is administered locally by the Denver office of the NPS.

Odds look good for continued funding for the study of shipwrecks in Lake Superior. The SHPO’s proposal for funds from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) for the 1992-93 biennium has survived the latest round of cuts and appears headed for legislative approval. The goals are to catalog known shipwrecks and to determine criteria for National Register eligibility. The SHPO is attempting to comply with mandates of the federal Abandoned Shipwrecks Act which was passed a few years ago, but for which guidelines have yet to be produced.

The consulting team preparing a feasibility study for the Veblen Farmstead near Nerstrand visited the site August 6-8, and their report will be forthcoming. Preservation Matters will review the report when available.

Preservation Alliance of Minnesota Membership Application

The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota is a membership organization. Your contributions make our work possible. And they are tax deductible. Join today! Fill out the coupon and mail it with your contribution to:

Preservation Alliance of Minnesota
P.O. Box 10485
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55458

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In addition to my membership, I am enclosing an additional gift of $__________ to help the PA.
Where Is It?

Minnesota properties listed on the National Register, with photographs supplied by the Minnesota Historical Society

It's no wonder that we really fooled you the month before last. The photo showed a church in Fairmont, not Heron Lake as we had indicated.

This month, however, we know we've got it right. Many visitors to Wabasha have noticed the Lorenz Ginthner House, a two-story brick Italianate structure on a prominent corner near downtown. Built in 1884, the National Register nomination describes the house, with its profusion of bracketry and cornice detail, excellent masonry craftsmanship, and painstakingly restored porches, as “one of the most complete packages of High Victorian period design in outstate Minnesota.” The house's builder was a successful tailor and merchant.

Perhaps this photo should be labelled "WARE is it"... Drop us a line with your guess!