Fort Snelling Upper Post Interpretive Plan

Prepared for
Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board
and the Fort Snelling Upper Post Review Team

Prepared by
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November 2006

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary Recommendations iii

Introduction to the Site 1

Mission 1

Significance and History of Fort Snelling and the Upper Post 1

Fort Snelling State Park Map 4

Interpretation Overview 5

Themes of the Fort—Particularly Related to the Upper Post 5

Major Contexts 5

Minor Contexts 5

Visitors Profile and Expansion Plan 6

Priorities of Use 8

Desired Visitor Experiences 8

Additional Issues Affection Site Interpretation 9

Access to the Post 9

Signage 9

Site Condition 10

Spatial Organization/Land Patterns 10

Landscape Elements 11

Circulation and Parking 11

Furnishings and Objects 12

Lighting and Safety 12

Noise 12

Existing Resources 12

The Lower Post—Historic Fort Snelling 12

The Upper Post 13

Upper Post Area and Building Number Map 13

Upper Post Building Inventory 14

Additional Buildings to be Interpreted 17

Other Areas Affecting Interpretation 17

Upper Post Interpretive Map 18

Interpretation 19
Kiosks 19
Kiosk Description 19
Entrance Points 20
Specific Nodes and Kiosk Contexts 20
Building Plaques and Numbers 23
Interpretive Paths 23
Displays within Buildings 23
Peripheral Information 24
Website 24
Printed Guides 25
Podcasts 25
Letters Sent with Field Confirmations 25
Relationship to Historic Fort 26
Special Tours and Events 26
Guided Tours 27
Re-enactments 27
Staffed Events 27
Cooperating Organizations 27
Library and Collections 27

Other Issues Affections Interpretation 28
Governance of Site 28
Sequencing of Projects 28

Bibliography and Sources 30

Fort Snelling Upper Post Interpretive Plan
Executive Summary

This plan proposes a methodology to link the Upper Post's major historic themes with spaces that remain, including the landscape, the buildings, and the athletic facilities. These major themes can be conveyed to the visitor in a variety of ways and levels of intensity. The history of the Upper Post may be illustrated through casual interface with the environs, or through more directed study of the information presented through the interpretive elements proposed in this plan. In any case, the intent would be to make a visit to the Upper Post an educational adventure for all as well as an recreational experience for some.

It is important to note that this is a planning document and by its nature is meant to serve as a guide for interpretation. At the same time it is not meant to be carved in stone, for the Upper Post's interpretation will expand as the scholarship develops, additional research is undertaken, and interpretive techniques change.

The following are the major recommendations proposed for the Upper Post.

1. That the Upper Post site is stabilized (buildings appropriately mothballed, grounds maintained, trash removed) as a crucial first step to its access.

2. That the access to the site is improved, through cohesive signage and identifiable traffic patterns.

3. That the plan be implemented with the following main elements:

    - Kiosks: Four-sided interpretive node centers, focusing on specific contexts. These will be the major focus of the interpretation.

    - Walking Trail: Connecting the kiosks and guiding people through the site on a self-initiated or guided tour.

    - Building Plaques and Numbers: Specific, building-interpreted elements that provide information on the building and a sequencing order.

    - Displays Within Buildings: Specialized displays that vary based on the participation of the building owner, the use of the property, and the history of the building.

    - Peripheral Information: A website, printed guides, podcasts, and other written information to be distributed. This also includes a branding of the site for a cohesive visual image.

    - Special Tours and Events: Periodic participatory events such as tours, re-enactments, lectures, educational activities, etc.

4. That this Interpretive Plan be implemented as soon as possible, but with regards to the abilities of the partners involved, the users and potential users of the site, and the sequencing and staffing of the area. The Plan should also incorporate relationships with related organizations, such as Fort Snelling State Park and the MHS Site.

Introduction to the Site

Mission

The mission of the Fort Snelling Upper Post Interpretive Plan is to provide a way to experience and understand the broad continuum of the site's history, from pre-fort settlement to the closure of the fort in 1946.

Currently, the MHS historic site interprets the fort during the 1820s frontier period, with some extension to Civil War use. Nearby Fort Snelling State Park chooses the confluence of rivers, cultures, and people as its interpretive focus.

The interpretation of the Upper Post will concentrate on the following main influences:

- the Department of Dakota
- the frontier fort
- the "Country Club of the Military"
- use of the fort during WWI and WWII
- administrative functions of the fort
- military personnel life
- the design of the fort in relation to its purpose, users, and physical location

The interpretive plan first addresses the potential visitors to the site, both current and prospective. It then considers additional issues that affect the site interpretation, particularly in relation to these users, ranging from access to lighting to landscaping. Finally, it summarizes the current existing resources.

The actual interpretation of the site will be achieved through a number of methods:

- a set of inter-relating kiosks
- an easily accessible trail connecting these kiosks
- specific building-related resources, such as plaques and interior displays
- peripheral information, ranging from printed guides to a web presence to podcasts
- special events including tours, re-enactments, and open houses

The main challenges to the interpretation of the Upper Post relate to its uncertain future and governance. These issues include the sequencing of projects, staffing of the site, continued maintenance of interpretive structures, and availability of access to the various areas.

This interpretive plan is designed to take advantage of the current situation of and resources available to the Upper Post, while designing a flexible method to capitalize on future opportunities. It should particularly be used in conjunction with the Design Guidelines for the site in order to best develop the fort for the next chapter of its history.

Significance and History of Fort Snelling and the Upper Post

The Upper Post at Fort Snelling possesses historical significance as an intact and cohesive grouping of buildings directly associated with the growth and development of the military post at Fort Snelling—the fort beyond the walls. As the military post at Fort Snelling was given more responsibilities, it expanded outward along the upper bluff. Serving a succession of needs, the Upper Post reflected the changing roles of the military and the nation it served, both in times of peace and in war.

In 1805, Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike recommended the establishment of a fort near St. Anthony's Falls to protect trade and maintain peace along the northwestern frontier. The same year, on behalf of the United States, Lieutenant Pike negotiated a treaty with the local Dakota (Sioux) Indians for tracts of land within their territory upon which to construct a U.S. military post. Pike asked for two land grants, and acquired two, nine-mile square allotments arranged around the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peter's (Minnesota) Rivers. An expedition was sent into the upper Mississippi region in 1817 to review the land purchased by Pike. It was not until 1819 that a small contingent of U.S. soldiers, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth, were sent to the area to build a fort. Colonel Josiah Snelling became the new commanding officer in 1820. It was Snelling who selected the site for the fort and decided on the design and the materials. An Indian Agency building was located near the post as well. The fort was originally named Fort St. Anthony, but was subsequently changed to Fort Snelling in honor of its instrumental commanding officer.

The fort's original mission of safeguarding trade and security gradually lost importance as the "frontier" moved ever further west, especially after Minnesota became a territory in 1849. The fort and surrounding military reservation were sold to Franklin Steele for $90,000 under dubious circumstances in 1858. Shortly thereafter the American Civil War broke out, and Fort Snelling was reoccupied by the military and declared the location of the draft rendezvous and training facility for volunteers. The U.S.-Dakota Conflict that also arose placed additional duties in the care of the military post. A number of wooden structures were built along the Minnesota River bluffs towards the southwest to house functions necessary to fulfill its new duties, including barracks, officers quarters, kitchens and mess halls, a blacksmith's shop, a carpenter's shop, numerous stables, and other facilities. None of these remain standing today.

There is little evidence of growth in the garrison immediately after the end of the Civil War, with the exception of the construction of a new hospital in 1874, located where the north end of the Mendota Bridge now rests. Four years later, the Department of the Dakota headquarters were moved from Saint Paul to Fort Snelling, initiating a new period of growth. Following the geographic pattern established during and after the Civil War, new construction spread out in the contiguous areas available along the upper bluff. The early development of the Officers' Row (Buildings #154, #156, #158, and #160) on Taylor Avenue, the headquarters building (Building #67) built in 1879, the 1880 ordnance depot (Building #22, outside the study area), and new barracks completed in 1885 (Buildings #101-#103), are all related to the post's enhanced administrative role. The Upper Post area of the military post became the new focus of activity, while the original stone Fort Snelling was relegated to the status of ordnance depot. The growth at the military post slowed when the Department of the Dakota headquarters returned to Saint Paul in 1886, but between 1878 and the early 1890s more than 30 buildings had been added to the military post.

The placement of the new Officers' Row and barracks buildings reinforced the rank and social distinctions found in military life. The physical separation between officers and enlisted personnel was further demarcated by the construction of a road, sidewalks, landscaping, and a greater 'set-back' for the Officers' Quarters. By the mid-1880s, a structured streetscape had emerged in the Upper Post.

A movement towards the consolidation of many small forts into fewer and larger military posts began in the late nineteenth century, especially following the Spanish American War in 1898. As the United States became a world power, it was felt necessary to assemble greater numbers of soldiers in one place so that they could train together in larger formations. The military post at Fort Snelling reflected this change of reasoning by another period of rapid growth. A new hospital (Building #55) was constructed in 1898, along with a gymnasium (Building #53), in 1903. The latter is one of only two red brick buildings remaining on Taylor Avenue. Additional barracks for cavalry (Buildings #17 and #18)(outside the study area) and artillery (now gone), and a number of support facilities for housing animals (Buildings #30 and #209), artillery gun sheds (Buildings #202 and #207)(outside the study area),

and artillery work shops (Buildings #205 and #206)(outside the study area) were constructed during this period as well. Altogether 18 structures remain from the turn of the century expansion.

The Fort Snelling military post was used to train National Guard and regular army soldiers in 1916 in preparation for the war in Europe, although it wasn't until the spring of 1917 that the United States entered the war against Germany and her allies. At Fort Snelling, over 150 structures were constructed—dedicated to housing, mess and training— including extensive trench warfare training grounds. None of these facilities or structures survive today. The military post specialized in officer training, eventually graduating 2,500 junior officers. Late in 1918 most of the site was designated as US General Hospital Twenty-nine to treat convalescent wounded.

The artillery drill fields of the late nineteenth century were converted to other uses in the 1920s. By 1927, the area was used as a recreation field with a polo field, a polo practice field, a running track, and baseball diamonds. In 1928 an officers club (Building #395)(outside the study area) was constructed overlooking the Minnesota River. In addition, the base had a game preserve. A 9-hole golf course was also added, although the date of construction is unknown. Due to the construction of Trunk Highway 5 in the late 1950s and later airport expansion, the majority of the old course was destroyed. The current nine-hole course does not share any of the "holes" from the earlier golf course. By 1938 softball diamonds, pool and hockey arena, tennis courts, and lighting for the athletic field were added. Fort Snelling became known as "The Country Club of the Army."

The Great Depression in 1929 almost led to the closure of Fort Snelling for a second time. During the early 1930s Fort Snelling became the location of a Supply Company of the Minnesota District CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps), changing to a Headquarters Company in 1934. Along with the WPA (Work Progress Administration), the CCC presence at the military post led to lasting modification to the grounds and buildings throughout the fort, such as re-roofing, construction of garages, pouring cement floors in existing buildings, lining drainage ditches with stonework to reduce erosion, and even raising the surface level of the drill fields about one foot, using only wheelbarrows of dirt. The total cost of these modifications amounted to $500,000. Building #222 (outside the study area) was constructed in 1935 as a commissary warehouse for the CCC unit at Fort Snelling.

Another conflict with Germany, and Japan, was seen as likely by the late 1930s. A barracks for the medical detachment (Building #54) was constructed in 1939. The following year the Selective Service Act led to the opening of a Recruiting and Induction Station and a Reception Center. After the entry of the United States in WWII in December, 1941, the military post at Fort Snelling swelled in size to over 300 buildings. Most of these structures no longer survive. Over 600,000 soldiers were processed here during the Second World War. Specialized units such as military police, railroad, and a Military Intelligence Service Language School received training at the military post as well.

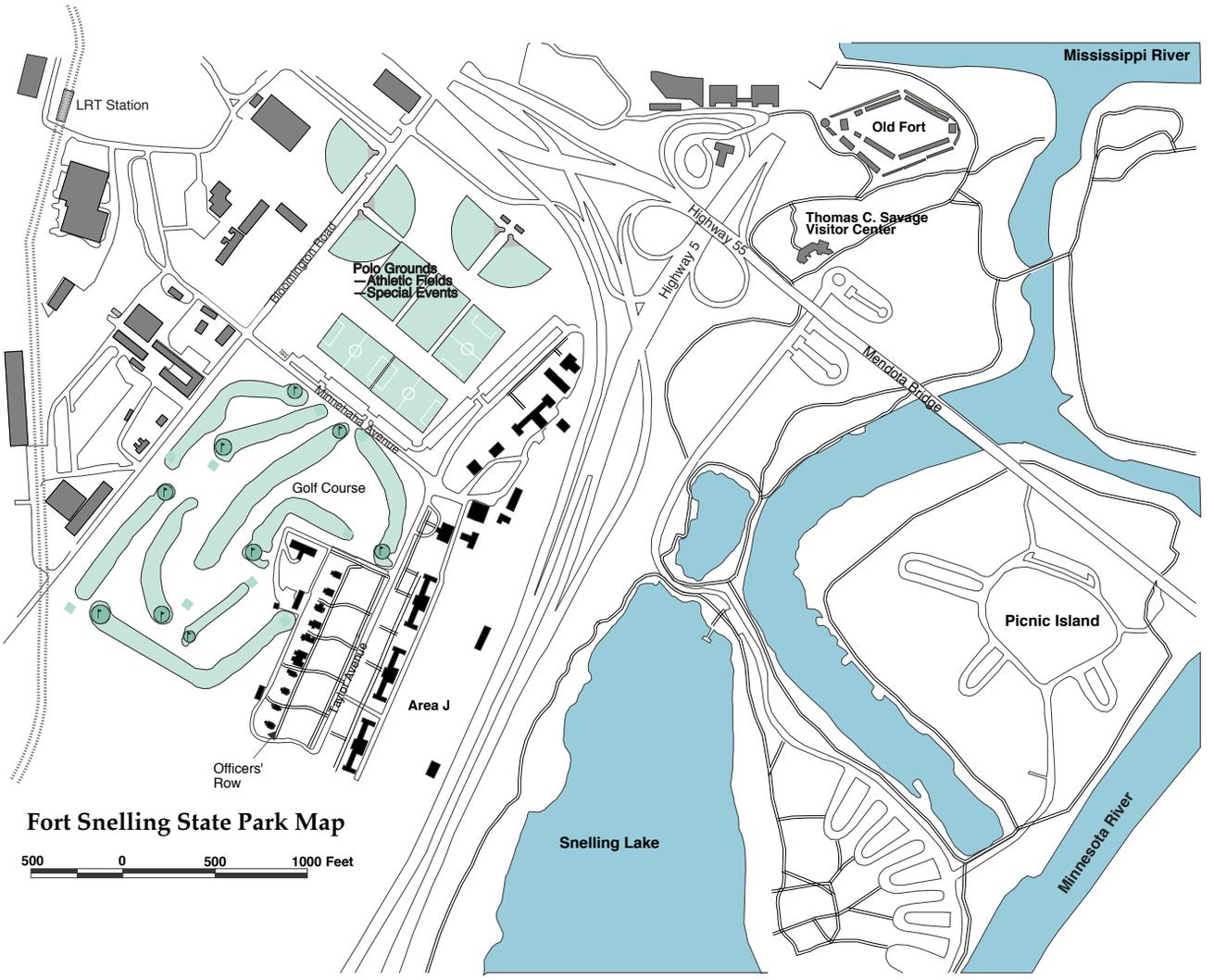
The active role of Fort Snelling as a military post ended in October, 1946, when the federal government closed the base and turned it over to the Veterans Administration.

The area gradually was passed to various agencies of the state of Minnesota, beginning in 1961 with the establishment of Fort Snelling State Park. And although the Upper Post was part of Fort Snelling's National Landmark status of 1960, in 1966 the Upper Post was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1971 the U.S. Department of the Interior conveyed 141 acres of surplus Federal property known as the Upper Post area to the DNR exclusively for public park and recreational purposes in perpetuity. The quitclaim deed included restrictions that require the property to be developed and used according to the Program of Utilization submitted by the MnDNR as part of its application to acquire the property. The MnDNR incorporated the Upper Post area into Fort Snelling State Park.

Proposals to develop the Upper Post without disturbing its historic value began in the 1970s, although various issues have caused these plans to be postponed. The 1971 Utilization Plan was amended in 1979 to allow for a concession for the golf course and proposed rehabilitation of Officers' Row and Area J. In 1992 the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board became the concessionaire for the golf course and polo grounds.

Although Fort Snelling and the Upper Post had been decommissioned 45 years earlier, in 1991 authority for continued military uses in Area J were extended for 4 years, then, in 1995 for an additional 3 years. The Department of the Army vacated Area J in 1997, setting the stage for the Fort Snelling Upper Bluff Reuse Study, design guidelines for the Upper Post, design guidelines for the Parade Ground and adjacent areas, and for this interpretive plan.



Interpretation Overview

Themes of Fort Snelling — Particularly Related to the Upper Post

The period of influence for Fort Snelling is exceptionally broad. The area was first scouted in 1805 by Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike. The fort was constructed in 1820, and remained active until 1946. Although it saw no real battles, it was a critical site for the expansion of the frontier, for Native American relations, and for military administration. With over 125 years of active existence, it is one of the longest-serving military installations in the country.

Because of this rich history, Fort Snelling has a larger-than-average amount of related historic contexts. In order to interpret the site in relationship to these contexts, this plan has divided them into major and minor contexts. They are as follows:

Major Contexts

- Design of the Fort
  - Relationship of the fort to the area geography and topography
  - Design of the fort with regards to the Military Site Model – 3 divisions (cavalry, artillery, infantry) and their functions and hierarchy
- Administration and Security Role of the Fort
- Department of Dakota
- Native American Relations
- WWI
- WWII
- Open Space at the Fort
  - Drill Fields
  - Parade Grounds
  - Polo Fields and Equestrian Activities
- "The Country Club of the Army"
  - Athletics and Sports and the Fort
- WPA and CCC Construction

Minor Contexts

- Frontier Life and Settlement
- Environmental Features at the Fort and Nearby
  - Camp Coldwater
  - Morgan's Mound
  - Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers
  - Viewshed and Vistas
- Ties with the Twin Cities
  - Citizens to the Fort for Displays, Re-Enactments, etc.
  - Soldiers to Town for Social Activities
  - Connections Between the Two
- Private Use of the Fort
- Support Functions of the Fort
  - Trade and Retail
  - Education
  - Religion
  - Private Citizens
- Specialized Training Units Unusual to Fort Snelling
  - Military Intelligence Language School

Winter Training
Norwegian Unit
Military Police
Military Railway

- Military Life – Officers versus Enlisted Men
- Citizen Soldiers
- Buffalo Soldiers
- Cantonment/Turkey Farm and Other Lost Resources

The interpretive plan for the Upper Post focuses mainly on these themes, particularly in regards to the Kiosks and the outreach/peripheral components. They should also guide individual or collaborative interpretive efforts, whether for specific areas or larger focuses.

Visitor Profile and Expansion Plan

This plan has identified the following six groups of primary users—or potential users—of the Upper Post site.

They are listed from most likely to least likely crossover, with current numbers of users indicated. In some cases, the areas with a less-obvious crossover have the highest number of users. This would indicate that, although the most related users may be the easiest or most obvious targets to plan programming for, the more tangential users might well provide the largest payback in terms of site popularity.

1. ***Users of the Renovated Upper Post Buildings***

   Number unknown.

   Although these users are likely to be the most interested in the site and the buildings' history, they are also the most nebulous audience. These users would not be present for the next several years, until the buildings were renovated, and their interest would vary as much as the adaptive use of the spaces would.

   Nevertheless, they are an extremely important group to consider in future planning.

2. ***Visitors to the Historic Fort (MHS site)***

   Currently 75,000 visitors a year — anticipated to grow to 150,000 annually with the expansion and renovation currently planned.

   These are the people most likely to have an interest in the Upper Post. For many of these people — ranging from school groups to individual visitors to preservation professionals — the Upper Post might simply be seen as an extension of their visit to and interest in the MHS site. At the very least they would be likely to drive through the site, were such a possibility made quick and easy to accomplish. Many would likely be interested in a more intensive visit, ranging from a self-guided walking tour to a guided buildings tour.

3. ***Users of MPRB Nieman Fields***

   There are currently over fifty groups using the Nieman fields for leagues, tournaments, single games, team tryouts, combines, clinics and camps. This averages 400 players/spectators a day, or 40,000+ users annually based on one hundred viable play dates.

The history of the site is not the primary focus of these users. However, they are an attractive audience for several reasons:

- They are likely to have some free time while at the site (waiting for the game, etc.) that they are looking to fill.
- They already have a sense of ownership of the area.
- They already know how to get to the site, where to park, and how to combat other access issues that may dissuade a more casual user.
- They are repeat visitors who come frequently to the area.
- They are often new to the history of the site, and likely to be enthusiastic and approach history in a different manner.

Because these people are already major users of the site, and because there is such potential for their experience to be enhanced, this group should be a major audience for the interpretive efforts of the site. The plan should acknowledge the specific needs of these users by being both easy to access for "drop in" use, and innovative in its discussion of the historical importance of the Fort, so as to engage those without a base of historic understanding of the site.

4. ***Users of MPRB Golf Course***

There are currently between 21,000-23,000 users annually of the golf course.

Similar to the ball and soccer field users, the golfers are perhaps less interested in the history of the site—although the history of the course, in relationship to the development of the Fort, can be demonstrated more directly. The club house also offers opportunities for visual displays on the site history.

In any case, the golfers should be a strong focus for the interpretive plan, for the same reason as the field users above.

5. ***Users of Fort Snelling State Park***

The park currently hosts 600,000 users annually in activities ranging from environmental education to hiking, picnicking to boating, jogging to swimming.

This is a group that already uses parks recreationally, and is familiar with the general location and the name "Fort Snelling." However, it is very difficult to get between the sites easily, and the two sites certainly do not seem as geographically contiguous as they actually are. This could be a good group to court in particular for the self-guided walking elements of the Upper Post, and who might in particular be interested in its recreational history.

The largest obstacle in the crossover of these users will be easy access.

6. ***Light Rail Riders***

The Hiawatha Line reports that approximately 1,300 people per day board at the Fort Snelling station.

In terms of interest and inherent use of the space, this is the least likely group of users. However, since so many people use the light rail — the total boardership at the stop is currently at 475,000 people and growing — this is a group that must be incorporated into the long-term interpretation of the site.

These riders are also, at least, familiar with the name "Fort Snelling" and the basic geographical location.

The most major problem is that the light rail site is about half a mile from the Upper Post, and there is no easy way to get between the two area (as well as, right now, no compelling reason to do so).

There would need to be major outreach to these users in order to convince them to use the site; examples include flyers mailed to monthly passholders and an exhibit and information at the stop. Access would also need to be easier — at least a clearer path between, and maybe a shuttle bus of some kind on other inter-site transportation, at least in the beginning.

Though these users would be initially hard to reach out to, their sheer volume makes them an important group. They also might be likely to make good use of the area, perhaps walking through the site to unwind after work, etc.

Priorities of Use

Sequencing of the plan would benefit from considering the users of the site. In doing so it should consider the following priorities:

Groups to target by interest:

1. Building Users
2. Historic Fort Visitors
3. Golfers
4. Nieman Field Users
5. State Park visitors
6. Light Rail Riders

Groups to target by volume:

1. State Park visitors
2. Light Rail Riders
3. Historic Fort Visitors
4. Nieman Field Users
5. Golfers
6. Building users

Groups to target by current use:

1. Historic Fort Visitors
2. Golfers
3. Nieman Field Users
4. State Park visitors
5. Light Rail Riders
6. Building Users

Desired Visitor Experiences

As Kevin Lynch states in his groundbreaking *What Time Is This Place?*, "a desirable image is one that celebrates and enlarges the present while making connections with the past and future." A successful interpretive plan provides a uniquely individual connection between a place and person, a vibrant association that cannot be replicated in any other manner.

As discussed in the visitor profiles above, each group will have different:

- reasons for coming to the site
- intensity of use
- duration of use
- repeat attendance
- perceptions of the area
- sense of ownership
- interest in the history
- involvement with other users

A successful interpretive plan will have many levels of involvement, from the casual to the highly-engaged, in order to meet the needs of a diverse audience. These activities will also be sequenced, in order to build upon each other. Part Three of this report goes into more detail as to this planning.

Additional Issues Affecting Site Interpretation

There are many additional factors that will need to be addressed to make a visit to the Upper Post an appealing adventure. Some of these issues are obvious, while other are more elusive. An effective interpretation of the site will require major improvements to its infrastructure, the architecture, and the landscape elements.

Access to the Post

When Highways 5 and 55 were built through and under the fort site, little concern appears to have been given to ease of accessibility to or from the Upper Post. Today, with increased usage of the grounds, there appears little can be done to improve the traffic flow from the highway systems. Appropriate and uniform signage may be the only area where improvements can be made.

Pedestrian and bicycle access between the old fort and the Upper Post can be provided via Tower Avenue onto Bloomington Road. Presently this corridor is visually dedicated to the automobile.

While the light rail transit planners have located a LRT stop only 1000 feet from good post access, the winding streets and seas of surface parking lots make the connection nearly incomprehensible. The transit stop appears to only provide a good service for workers in the immediate area and a convenient park-and-ride for commuters into the commercial nodes of Minneapolis.

Highway 5, running along the eastern bluff of the Upper Post, cuts off easily accessible pedestrian and/or bicycle access between the upper bluff area and the lower Fort Snelling State Park. Pedestrian access between the park below and the Upper Post would be made though existing routes between the park and the old fort site.

Signage

Anyone visiting the site is met with a barrage of signs which is confusing, repetitive, and in some cases outright misleading. There appears to be no coordination or consideration given is the design or placement of many of the informational signs that greet the visitor. In providing effective signage, the plan must balance the desire for a visually appealing landscape with the necessity to maintain the public's safety and to effectively direct traffic flow. As a rule, public signage should be clear and use conventional shapes, colors, and reflectivity. Public signage falls into three categories: traffic signs, limit signs, and directional/informational signs.

1. ***Traffic Signs***
   Traffic signs are the most critical to the Upper Post. They ensure a smooth and orderly flow of traffic and minimize the possibility of accidents. They must conform to the *Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MMUTCD) from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. While considerably limited, there is some latitude in the design of these signs. Determining minimum requirements and reducing redundancy is necessary to making access to the Upper Post more attractive.

2. ***Limit Signs***
   Limit signs, such as parking limits, handicap, and no parking zones, although not as critical to safety, still need to be visually pleasing. These signs also have more latitude in their design. They should be uniform in style. They should be prominently displayed and large enough to be easily read, but should not overpower their surroundings. Using professionally designed signs and posts and placement, the public signage can enhance the overall appearance of the landscape.

Confusing signage at the major entry points of the Upper Post site

3. ***Directional/Informational Signs***
   Informational signs include historic district directions and announcements, public parking, and other directional information to guide people to key areas in the park. These signs have little regulation and, therefore, the most latitude in design. They still need to be professionally designed, clear, and uniform with other signage. The design of these signs should be tied to the branding of the site, discussed later in the plan.

Directional/informational signage should reflect the following principles and recommendations.

- Less is more. Using the least required signage will help keep the appearance from being cluttered or overpowering. Researching the minimum requirements and potential waivers is imperative for controlling the proliferation of public signage.
- All public signage within the Upper Post and the fort area should be uniform and of high quality design and construction.
- Signage can be effectively placed on existing decorative light posts and on well designed sign posts.
- Signage should be color coordinated with a limited palette of colors complementary with the adjacent buildings. Turn-of-the-century colors tended to be muted and earth-tone based.
- Uniform signage should be developed to identify all public parking lots. Signs should be large enough and prominently displayed, but not overpower the surroundings. Using an easily identifiable logo helps the motorist find their way to the lots.
- One entity should assume responsibility for all signage.

Site Condition

As this plan was conceived, there was considerable discussion regarding the maintenance and future management of the site. All parties have agreed that a crucial first step towards effective utilization of the Upper Post is the stabilization of the site, including appropriate "moth-balling" of the buildings and maintenance of the grounds. Design guidelines and re-use studies already completed, as well as this Interpretive Plan, can effectively guide the future development of the Upper Post.

Spatial Organization/Land Patterns

The landscape features that most dramatically define the Upper Post site are:

- the Minnesota River bluff to the east
- the open expanse of the golf course and the Polo Grounds to the west and north

- the placement of the Post Headquarters at the southeast end of the parade grounds once defined by Bloomington Road, Minnehaha Avenue, Taylor Avenue and Leavenworth Avenue
- the linear corridor of buildings lining Taylor Avenue
- the Lawns defined by the barracks of Area J and the houses of Officers' Row
- the rhythmic patterns of building placement along the corridor

These major landscape elements must be retained and preserved in any proposed effective interpretation of the site.

Landscape Elements

The Upper Bluff campus and grounds sit on a primarily flat table of land over the Minnesota and Mississippi River valleys. The relatively flat and open qualities of the landscape add to its dramatic vistas.

The grounds of the Upper Post include a number of historic elements that give meaning to the historic landscape. These elements include the campus' special organization, topography, original vegetation, circulation system, structures, exterior furnishings, and historic objects. These character-defining elements must be retained and preserved in any proposed rehabilitation of the grounds.

New uses may require some modification to the Upper Post landscape, however, they should be designed to cause minimal change to the grounds' distinctive materials, features and spatial relationships. New landscape features such as loading docks and surface parking lots should be sensitively designed to have low impact on the historic landscape.

The original Upper Bluff displayed formal landscaping that was primarily limited to boulevard tress along the major avenues and tree dusters between Taylor Avenue and the residences of Officers' Row. There was little shrub plantings around the building foundations. Some of the original oak grove remained after the early Area J growth. Little of the original planting plan is evident on the Upper Post. The boulevard trees that once lined Taylor Avenue have mostly been removed. A few elm trees remain along what was the Leavenworth Avenue right-of-way, but is now part of the golf course. Mature oak trees can still be seen along the north end of Taylor.

For proper interpretation, any new tree plantings along Taylor Avenue should be of one species (similar to elm trees in shape) and be formally placed to reflect the original planting plan of the corridor. New planting on the site should reflect the planting patterns during the sites construction period (early 20th century) and be based upon photographic and physical documentation. The yards between the barracks building and Taylor Avenue should remain free of any vegetation. Any screening of incompatible uses such as surface parking should be done with compatible low shrub plantings and only behind the buildings that line Taylor Avenue.

Circulation and Parking

The Upper Post retains much of its original vehicular circulation system. Bloomington Road borders the site to the northeast while Taylor Avenue, closer to the bluff, forms a spine flanked by most of the site's historic structures. Minnehaha and Leavenworth Avenues connected the roughly parallel Bloomington Road and Taylor Avenue. These four streets defined the edges of the Parade Grounds. (The westerly portion of Leavenworth has subsequently been removed for golf course use.) Running parallel to Taylor Avenue are Sibley Avenue to the bluff side and Pike Avenue to the west in front of the Officers' Row structures. Bloomington Road, Minnehaha Avenue, Taylor Avenue, Pike Avenue and what remains of Leavenworth Avenue should be preserved and interpreted.

A portion of the Minnehaha Avenue appears to have had a recent name change to Colville Avenue. An accepted name should be determined and standardized for mapping and directional purposes.

Furnishings and Objects

The original site development of the Upper Bluff displayed very few pedestrian amenities. Sidewalks and cast-iron poled street lamps lined portions of the Taylor Avenue corridor, but photographs shows little additional street or grounds furnishings. A row of lantern lights on aggregate poles sparsely line the east side of Taylor Avenue.

In interpreting the site any new pedestrian furnishings should be based upon early photographic documentation of the site. All new furnishings should be compatible with the Upper Posts period of construction.

From photographic documentation it appears that the Upper Bluff grounds had few significant objects. The most notable remaining objects are: two memorial bronze plaques affixed to the front facade of the Post Headquarters, a siren and tower at the intersection of Minnehaha and Taylor Avenues, and the flagpole pad across Taylor Avenue from the Post Headquarters building. Early photographs show a two-tier/two shaft flagpole flanked by stationery canons. The original flagpole has been replace in place with a shorter, single-shaft flagpole.

The clock tower, though a part of the Administration Building (#67), should also be regarded as a significant feature in Area J.

Early photographs indicate that an ornate metal fence defined the Post Headquarters front lot along Taylor Avenue. If any fencing is needed to define the changing uses on the Upper Post, the design should based upon the historic reference. No original objects should be removed or relocated on the site unless absolutely necessary. All new objects should be compatible with the Upper Bluffs period of construction. Period heavy artillery might sparingly be added to give the Post more visual interest and the visitor a better sense of the park's military heritage. Any artifacts placed on the site should be contemporary with the Upper Post's period of significance and site appropriate.

Lighting and Safety

While interpretation of the site should include appropriate lantern light fixtures, visitor safety issues will require ample and safe evening lighting levels. Historic lighting levels may not be adequate for planned use of the site and an expansion of the street lighting will be necessary. A study should determine the lighting levels and equipment appropriate for the post's planned use while respecting the original fabric.

Noise

The Upper Post is located next to the metro area's noisiest use. The southern boundary of the Upper Post lies within 750 feet of the north main parallel runway at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport. Projected increases in total operations have indicated that current noise impact areas are likely to remain as prominent problem areas. However, if any of the buildings themselves are used for interpretation, any rehabilitation will surely factor in appropriate noise abatement procedures.

Existing Resources

The Lower Post – Historic Fort Snelling

The Minnesota Historical Society maintains the Lower Post (Historic Fort Snelling) as one of its statewide historic sites. The site is currently presented as the fort was in the 1820s, with costumed guides interpreting the buildings and a number of programs and educational events. The vast majority of the programs use the 1820s period as their base, but there is some expansion into other areas of the fort's military history, especially the Civil War and WWII.

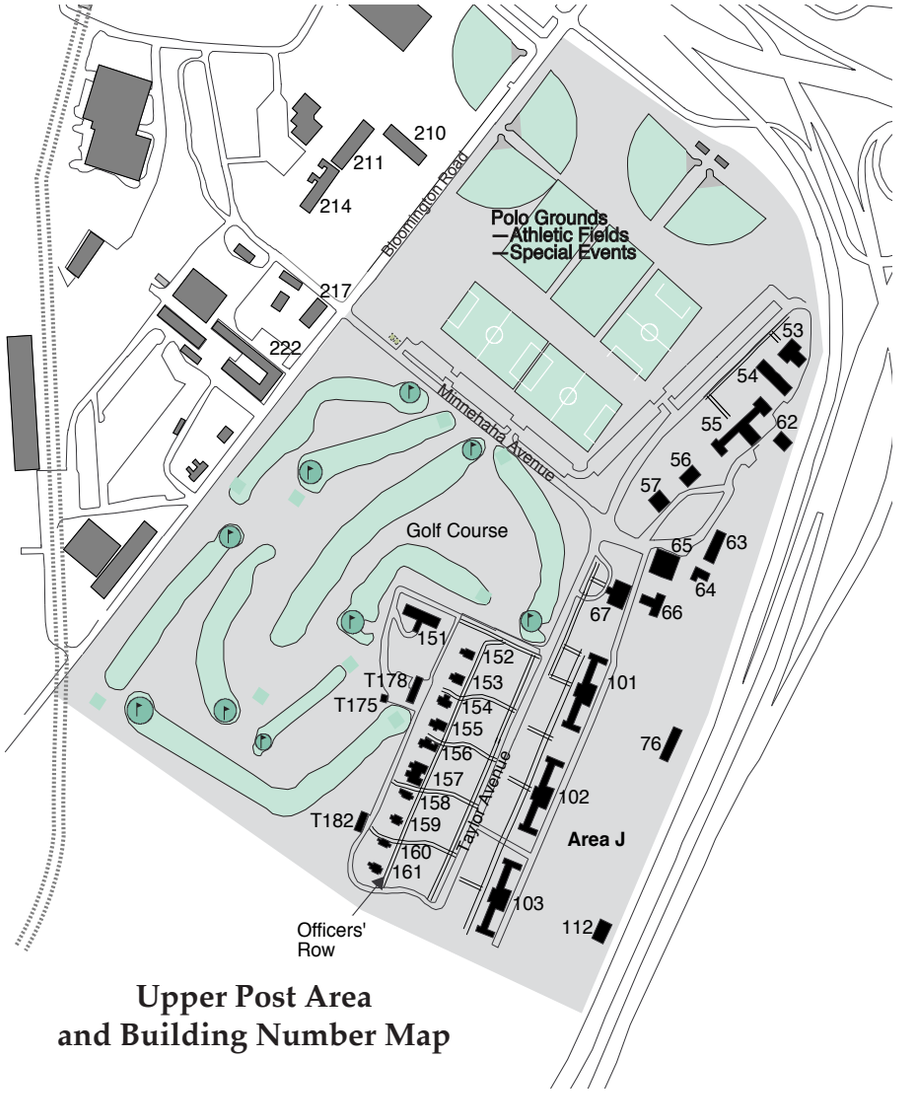
There are eighteen buildings included in the historic site, arranged in a diamond-shaped fortification:

1. Round Tower
2. North Battery
3. Half Moon Battery
4. South Battery
5. Shops
6. Gatehouse
7. Guardhouse
8. Powder Magazine
9. Well
10. Sutler
11. Stone Barracks
12. Wood Barracks
13. Commanding Officers' Quarters
14. Commissary
15. Officers' Latrines
16. Hospital
17. Schoolhouse
18. Gun Shed

There is also a modern interpretive center, the adjacent chapel (maintained separately by Fort Snelling State Park), additional barracks and stables (currently closed), a picnic area, and the grave of the horse "Whiskey." The MHS interprets this site exceedingly well, and interpretation efforts should be correlated.

The Upper Post

The Upper Post is a surprisingly large area that visually demonstrates the expansion, in size and in use, of Fort Snelling. Within the site, there is a great diversity in terms of building use, building material, and integrity. The area also includes important historic landscapes, such as the roads and infrastructure, the former polo grounds (now MPRB fields), the former parade grounds (now the golf course), and the bluff itself.



Upper Post Area and Building Number Map

Upper Post Buildings

Bldg.	Original Use
#53	Gymnasium
#54	Medical Detachment Barracks
#55	Post Hospital
#56	Hospital Steward's Quarters
#57	Band Barracks
#62	Dead House (Morgue)
#63	Quartermaster's Shops
#64	Fire Station House
#65	Post Guard House (Prison)
#66	Telephone Exchange
#67	Post Headquarters
#76	Civilian Employees' Quarters
#101	Barracks
#102	Barracks
#103	Barracks
#112	Post Bakery
#151	Bachelor Officers' Quarters
#152	Officers' Quarters
#153	Officers' Quarters
#154	Officers' Quarters
#155	Officers' Quarters
#156	Officers' Quarters
#157	Officers' Quarters
#158	Officers' Quarters
#159	Officers' Quarters
#160	Officers' Quarters
#161	Officers' Quarters
#175	Club House

Upper Post Building Inventory

Gymnasium: Building #53
Date of Construction: 1903
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Medical Detachment Barracks: Building #54
Date of Construction: 1939
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Post Hospital: Building #55
Date of Construction: 1898
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Hospital Steward's Quarters: Building #56
Date of Construction: 1900
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Band Barracks: Building #57
Date of Construction: 1903
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Dead House: Building #62
Date of Construction: 1904
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Quartermaster Shops: Building #63
Date of Construction: 1879-80
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle
To be demolished

Fire Station House: Building #64
Date of Construction: 1903
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Post Guard House: Building #65
Date of Construction: 1891
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: cortright tile

Telephone Exchange: Building #66
Date of Construction: 1927
Foundation: cement Walls: brick Roof: asphalt shingle

Administration Building: Building #67
Date of Construction: 1879-80
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: tin

Civilian Employees' Quarters: Building #76
Date of Construction: 1879-80
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Barracks: Building #101
Date of Construction: 1885
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: cortright tile

Barracks: Building #10
Date of Construction: 1885
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: cortright tile

Barracks: Building #103
Date of Construction: 1885
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: cortright tile

Post Bakery: Building #112
Date of Construction: 1891
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Bachelor Officers' Quarters: Building #151
Date of Construction: 1904
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Officer's Quarters: Building #152
Date of Construction: 1879-80
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Officer's Quarters: Building #153
Date of Construction: 1892
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Officer's Quarters: Building #154
Date of Construction: 1879-80
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Officer's Quarters: Building #155
Date of Construction: 1892
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Officer's Quarters: Building #156
Date of Construction: 1879-80
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Officer's Quarters, Double Set: Building #157
Date of Construction: 1905
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: slate

Field Officer's Quarters: Building #158
Date of Construction: 1879-80
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Officer's Quarters: Building #159
Date of Construction: 1892
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Officer's Quarters: Building #160
Date of Construction: 1879-80
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Officer's Quarters: Building #161
Date of Construction: 1892
Foundation: stone Walls: brick Roof: shingle

Golf Course Clubhouse: Building #175
Date of Construction: 1940

Additional Buildings to be Interpreted

Buildings: Drill Hall (201), Shop (210), Stables (211, 214), Storehouse (222). These building are located west of Bloomington Road outside of the Upper Post study area.

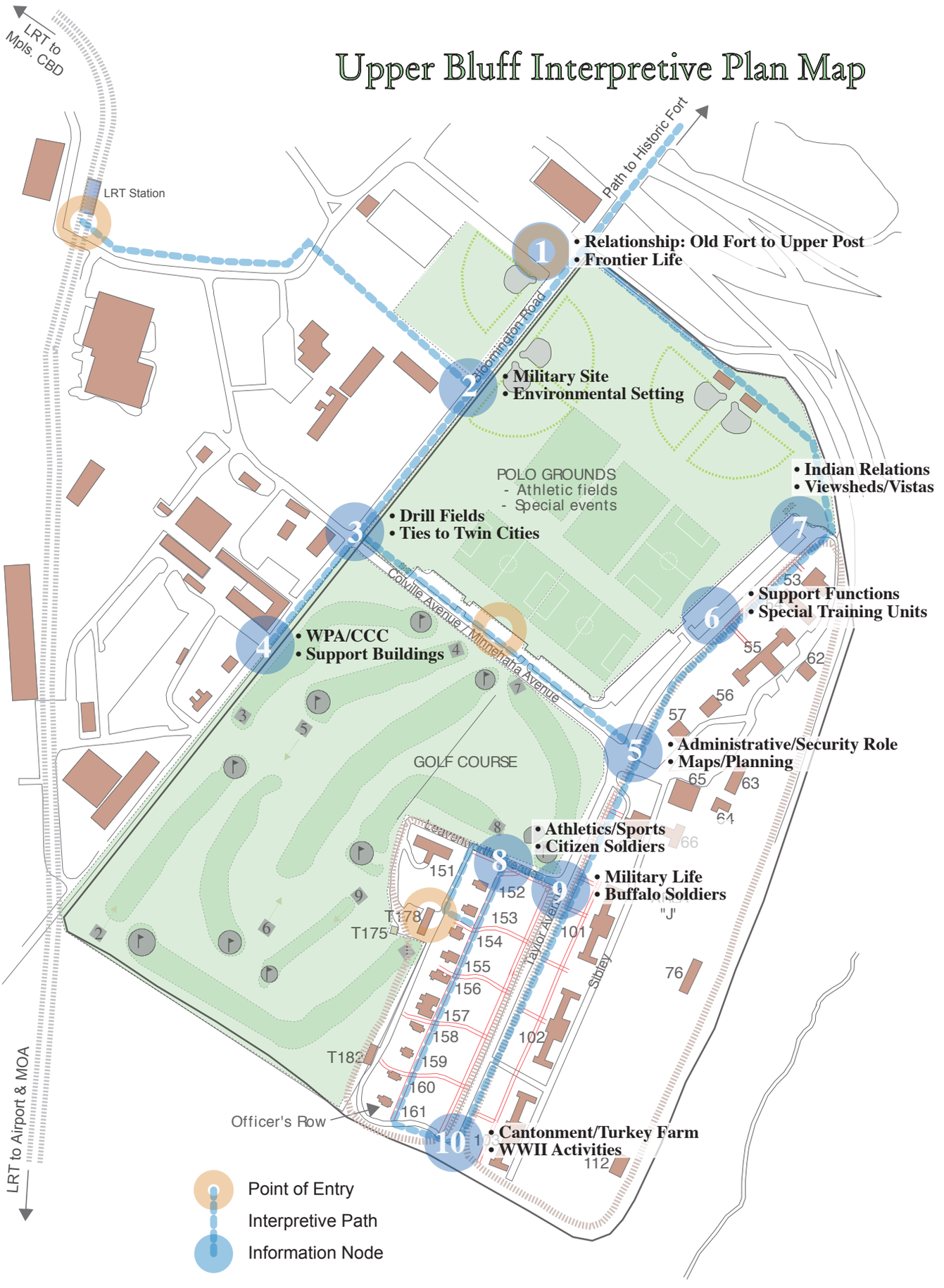
Other Areas Affecting Interpretation

There are a number of nearby associated resources that affect the Upper Post. Although not all contribute to the historic impact of the site, they do certainly affect its access and interpretation.

These include:

- Fort Snelling State Park
- the GSA Building and associated active military facilities
- the Fort Snelling stop of the Hiawatha Light Rail
- the airport
- Camp Coldwater
- Morgan's Mound
- the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers
- Fort Snelling National Cemetery
- Pilot Knob
- the historic resources of Mendota

All of these areas are discussed at greater length within the report, but should be kept in mind both as opportunities and challenges.


Upper Bluff Interpretive Plan Map
LRT to Mpls. CBD
LRT Station
Path to Historic Fort
1
• Relationship: Old Fort to Upper Post
• Frontier Life
Bloomington Road
2
• Military Site
• Environmental Setting
POLO GROUNDS
- Athletic fields
- Special events
• Indian Relations
• Viewsheds/Vistas
3
• Drill Fields
• Ties to Twin Cities
7
Colville Avenue / Minnehaha Avenue
6
• Support Functions
• Special Training Units
4
• WPA/CCC
• Support Buildings
5
• Administrative/Security Role
• Maps/Planning
GOLF COURSE
Leavenworth
8
• Athletics/Sports
• Citizen Soldiers
9
• Military Life
• Buffalo Soldiers
Taylor Avenue
Sibley
"J"
Officer's Row
10
• Cantonment/Turkey Farm
• WWII Activities
LRT to Airport & MOA
Point of Entry
Interpretive Path
Information Node

Interpretation

Kiosks

Kiosk Description

The Associates recommend 4-sided kiosks as interpretive node centers for a number of reasons:

- Kiosks are relatively weather-safe and easy to maintain, in comparison to other information points, such as waysides.
- Interviews with other site managers, such as at the Presidio, report that visitors seem to prefer kiosks to other methods of information dissemination, such as waysides and plaques. Visitors seem to like the sense of shelter offered by a kiosk, and see them as more contemporary. In sites that have multiple kinds of information sites (again, such as the Presidio), visitors are more likely to visit kiosks.
- Kiosks are already in use at other Minneapolis Parks and Recreation sites, such as the Grand Rounds. This adds a level of continuity and familiarity.
- Kiosks can be designed to complement the current architectural features of the Fort.
- Kiosks offer maximum space for displaying information, as well as great flexibility.

Upon review of the amount of information to be interpreted, The Associates recommend a 4-sided kiosk at each main node, divided as follows:

S1 Main theme of this node. This will most likely be tied to its location and purpose.

S2 Secondary theme of the node. This would be more specialized information on a specific secondary theme, such as the MILS.

S3 Standardized information on the Upper Post. This side would be the same for each node, and give a general summary of the importance and history of the Upper Post. The Associates also recommend that this side of the kiosk includes an area for posting information on upcoming special events, such as upcoming tours, special events at the Historic Fort, etc.

S4 A standardized map that includes a detailed "zoom" of that specific node.

Each side should include:

- Text describing the theme, including primary source materials (excepts from letters, journals, etc) as appropriate.
- Visuals, especially historic photos, of which the Fort and MHS has a wealth of possibilities.

The kiosks should be able to be interpreted as stand-alone sites and as a sequenced experience. As such, there should be some sense of passage between them (such as key words for each node, a map on each kiosk that indicates the other kiosks, etc.). The consensus of the Associates and the committee is that an overt system of sequencing, such as numbering, is probably not necessary in this instance.

The kiosks would ideally be connected by some sort of walking path, so that the entire site could be interpreted via a self-guided walking tour. They could also be accessed by vehicles that could safely park nearby and then walk up to the kiosk.

The Associates have also identified several "Entrance Sites" to the Upper Post. These points would be marked with signage that was mainly directional, perhaps a two-sided sign that provided some history off the site and a map that indicated the kiosks and other interpretive features.

Entrance Points

A. At the Historic Fort, between the fort and the overpass.
This would direct the user toward the Upper Post.

B. On Bloomington Road, at the "entrance" to the Upper Post.
This sign should be easily understood by vehicular traffic, since it would guide users in cars to the site. It might replace some of the plethora of signage currently in use on this road.

C. At the Light Rail site
This would guide users from the light rail stop to the site. Ideally it would direct them down a well-marked path and/or road to the Fort.

Specific Nodes and Kiosk Contexts

1. Site at Bloomington Road at "Entrance" to Upper Post (in the parking lot of the Armory, so that users might safely park there).
   S1 Relationship of Old Fort to Upper Post
   Expansion of the fort
   General layout and context of the site
   Important Buildings: Armory (#201)
   S2 Frontier Life
   Description of the importance of the fort in the development of the frontier. Changes that happened to the fort as the frontier moved farther westward. American imperialism and colonialism.
   S3/4 Standardized

2. Site in the first block of Bloomington Road (Where the potential path from the Light Rail comes in, middle of the athletic fields)
   S1 Military Site Model:
   - site an integral part of the overall military structure
   - military installations and the military itself react/adapt in a patterned way to the specific conditions of the place or time.
   - definition of enemy and their tactics and weaponry effects site placement, defensive design, and types of construction material used.
   Fort Snelling is irregular on the exterior to fit geography, but internally reflects regular organization of the hierarchical structure. Other influences are lack of skilled labor force for construction and maintenance and lack of availability of cultural and other activities nearby.
   Division of cavalry, infantry, artillery.
   S2 Environmental Setting of the fort
   Before the fort – Morgan's Mound (these are features near the site that had an effect upon it)
   Camp Coldwater
   Descriptions of the environmental setting from early sources
   S3/4 Standardized

3. Site at Bloomington Road and Minnehaha Ave (at the turn for the fields, center bisecting road — n.b. the name of this road should be changed back to Minnehaha Avenue as part of the process)
   S1 Drill Fields – use, landscaping and description (esp. important to use photos here)
   Converted to polo fields – description

Equestrian activities at Fort Snelling – polo, fox hunts
Whiskey the Horse

S2 Ties with the Twin Cities
The fort's relationship to the cities.
Games and competitions.
Military re-enactments
Access to the fort area (streetcar line, though this is not the site of the streetcar)
Partnerships with Twin Cities social organizations

S3/4 Standardized

4. Site at far end of Bloomington Road (across from golf course). This is technically just outside of the study area, but the Associates feel it marks an important set of resources.

S1 WPA/CCC
Discussion of the importance of the WPA and CCC in development of the fort. Changes over time in infrastructure.
Important Buildings: Building #222
Associated sheds and buildings

S2 Support buildings, especially for cavalry. Importance of quartermaster, rail lines, etc. Brigade use of post. Use of post as urban garrison.
Also: Private Use of Fort. 1858 sale to Franklin Steele (former sutler) for private agricultural use.

S3 Standardized

5. Site at Administration Building (Building #67). Located on Taylor at Minnehaha intersection.

S1 Administrative and Security role of fort. Department of Dakota's role throughout. Importance of fort as control center, rather than active combat, which is what led to its long history of use. Description of some of the administrative functions.
Visual: view of drill fields from administration building, gives a sense of the lost resources of fort.
Important Buildings: Administration Building (#67)
Telephone Exchange (#66)
Post Guard House (Prison) (#65)
Fire Station House (#64)
Quartermaster Shops (#63) – not available, due to dilapidation

S2 Maps and Planning. Discussion of various maps and visual histories and the development of the fort.

S3/4 Standardized

6. Site in the middle of Taylor Road (by fields).

S1 Support functions of the fort.
Descriptions of various functions of the fort and the kinds of buildings it needed. Starts with the fort as being the main community (i.e., not located near an established settlement), then continues through specialized functions of fort and buildings for those functions.
Important Buildings: Hospital (#55)
Medical Detachment Barracks (#54)
Gymnasium (#53)
Dead House (#62)
Hospital Steward's Quarters (#56)
Band Barracks (#57)

S2 Special training units unusual to Fort Snelling. MILS and its history. Winter training. Norwegian unit. Military police. Military railway.

S3/4 Standardized

7. Site at north end of Taylor Road (by fields).

S1 Indian Relations. The relationship of Native Americans to the fort, including camping on the site, trading, and internment. Trade and commerce. 1837 Treaty. Some reference to Department of Dakota, though that is handled more at the administrative node. Discussion of archeological resources. Need to bring in a tribal consultation for this. Reference the exhibit at Fort Snelling State Park.

S2 Viewshed and vistas. Pilot Knob view. Confluence of Upper Post to Lower Post. Modern connection between historic site and state park.

S3/4 Standardized

8. Site at Golf Course clubhouse.

S1 "Country Club of the Army"

Importance of sports as part of military training.

An Army of Athletes

Team sports became an important part of training

Each soldier participated in at least one

All had to demonstrate swimming proficiency

Polo, hunting, horse proficiency key

Winter: Hockey, Ski Jumping, Cross-Country Skiing, Snow Shoeing, Curling, Skating, Tobogganing

Summer: Football, Baseball, Softball, Basketball, Volleyball, Track and Field, Rugby, Soccer, Lacrosse, Trap Ball

Sports ties to Twin Cities (polo matches, etc.).

Moving of the golf course

S2 Citizen Soldiers

Importance of Fort Snelling as local base. Army reserve, ROTC, citizen's military training camps. Local base for draft. Relationship to Twin Cities (see site #3).

Important Buildings: Clubhouse (#175)

S3/4 Standardized

9. Site on Taylor Avenue at Leavenworth (Officers' Row to one side, barracks to the other).

S1 Military Life

Officer's Life versus enlisted life. Distinction between ranks. Various duties. Excerpts from diaries, etc.

Important Buildings: Officers' Row (#152-161)

Include information about construction costs, building methods, etc. Barracks (#101-103, 112)

S2 Buffalo Soldiers. Role of African-Americans at Fort Snelling.

S3/4 Standardized

10. Site at south end of Taylor (by airport fence). Some discussion of moving this farther up the road, due to airport security — should discuss with MAC.

S1 Cantonment/Turkey Farm

Discussion of temporary buildings there and lost resources. Wartime construction techniques. Draft process at Fort Snelling.

S2 WWII

Fort activities during the war. Closing of fort after war.

S3/4 Standardized

Building Plaques and Numbers

As noted above, there are only two extant plaques located on the Administration Building #67. These plaques commemorate 19th Century military officers. Building identification signage was minimal with their identification painted on the building near the entrances. A more standardized identification system will be necessary for proper identification to be keyed with the site map located at each informational kiosk. Such numbers should not call undue attention, but still be easy to see and read from the pedestrian pathways.

Interpretive Paths

Starting at the points of entry, the visitor should have a clear and directed path to follow throughout the site. The paths should be clearly defined with the mapping at the sequential kiosk system, and should give the pedestrian a variety of loops to follow in which each node of the path is anchored by an information kiosk. The loops should help the visitor define a path for exploration and ultimately bring them back to the starting point. Distances for each route should be provided at the key nodes.

Interest and context may be added along with experience loops with the introduction of large scale military artifacts. Whatever the artifact (cannon, tank, artillery gun, etc.), it should relate to its location along the path and that linkage should be clearly defined in signage near the artifact or at the adjacent kiosk.

Displays within Buildings

Most of the historic interpretation of the Upper Post relates to the exterior landscape — the facades of the buildings, the polo fields, the space/use relationship, etc. But users will have an undeniably strong curiosity about the interiors of the buildings. A complete interpretation cannot be made without addressing, to some extent, the areas inside the structures.

In other sites, such access has been achieved in a number of ways. For instance, at the Presidio in San Francisco, various interiors are interpreted as appropriate to the specific building and use. Methods include:

- Using a building to display artifacts and allow visitors to walk through on their own or in tours (similar to the way that the Lower Post of Fort Snelling is currently interpreted).
- Incorporating history into the current use of the building. For example, the Post Office at the Presidio incorporates an extensive display of enlarged copies of historic stamps that depict the bay area. Such an exhibit gives even a casual visitor a sense of the continuum of use of the site.
- Limited displays. Many buildings have semi-public lobby spaces, that visitors can enter and get a sense of the interior. Sometimes this includes artifacts, display cases, or temporary exhibits about the history of the area.
- Holding open houses as renovation is completed on specific properties, but before they are rented or sold.
- Holding annual house tours of some of the occupied residences at the site (similar to a neighborhood house tour).
- Exterior interpretation using photographs and blueprints.

Currently, none of the interiors of the historic Upper Post buildings are open. However, as active re-use is considered for the area, this development should include interior accessibility.

Taking a page from other successes at similar sites, this plan recommends the following:

- That, as buildings are renovated, they are opened, at least briefly, to the public for touring. These tours could gain a lot of publicity for the site, bring in new users, and build excitement for future renovations.
- That, once a critical mass of properties are renovated, that they are opened periodically to the public. For instance, an annual house tour of the Officers' Row homes would be extremely popular, and could be tied into the periodic reunions of the families who had lived in those homes.
- That other buildings, as renovated, are encouraged to have their entrance lobbies as semi-public spaces, open to visitors. Displays and artifacts could be set up in these sites to better interpret the historical functions of the building.
- That historic displays (similar to the one in the Presidio post office) be established wherever possible. The golf course club house presents one opportunity for such a display. Although the building is non-contributory to the historic site, it could have a historic function. Presumably a fair number of the 21,000-23,000 golfers who use the course at least pass through the club house. A display on the role of the course in relation to the recreational and athletic history of the Upper Post would be very appropriate here. Similar efforts could be undertaken in the two small buildings to the edge of the polo fields, should those indeed be converted into concessions stands.

These interior displays would be relatively easy to establish as part of the development of the Upper Post buildings, are very site-specific and thus provide less of a management challenge, and have a great potential to convert an entry-level user into active involvement with the property. Thus, they are an integral, if less immediately obvious, element to an interpretive plan for the Upper Post.

Peripheral Information

The Upper Post could benefit from a number of peripheral interpretive devices. These methods have many advantages: they are often cheap to produce, (short of the website) are easy to maintain and distribute, and can be accomplished on a small scale by a single group or organization (a particular advantage due to the number of parties responsible for the site and their changeability).

However, care should be taken to ensure that all of these entities have a similar style and look, to ensure continuity and similar standards. To achieve this, the participating partners should collaborate on a branding process for the Upper Post, resulting in a common "brand" including logo, fonts, color choices and images. This brand could also be used for area signage (see ***Additional Issues Affecting Site Interpretation***)

After the Upper Post has achieved a standard image treatment, it should investigate the following peripheral interpretive methods:

1. Website

Today, many users' first stop for information is a website. The site should create a website that potential users could easily access for information on the site. To this end, the site names FortSnellingUpperPost.org and .com and UpperPost.org and .com are all available. With strong meta-tagging, these could easily be found online and provide a wealth of information to potential users. With continued and timely updates, this website could be a particularly valuable resource.

Potential elements of an informative website could include:
- an introductory page to the site
- a historical overview of the Post

- an inventory of historic resources
- full versions or executive summaries of this report, the Design Guidelines, and the Reuse Study for the site
- updates on the progress of the interpretive features for the site
- guides (see below)
- podcasts (see below)
- links to partnering organizations, such as the Historic Fort, Fort Snelling State Park, the Minneapolis Parks and recreation Board (including information on the fields and golf courses, the Hiawatha Line, and the military

2. Printed Guides

Printed guides to the site would provide more detailed information on the history of the Upper Post and about specific buildings. These guides would provide an excellent resource for users who want a more detailed, self-guided tour of the area, or who return multiple times.

Stephen Osman has produced a booklet detailing a self-guided walking and driving tour addressing the role of the Upper Post during World War II. This guide is a good look at that particular period, and is available for sale in the MHS gift shop at the historic fort.

Other guides could focus on specific periods or influences on the fort — the Department of Dakota, military athletics, etc. — or could be broader looks at the site that address many periods and influences. It may be expedient to divide these guides into walking guides, which address a smaller area, and walking/driving tours, which encompass the entire site (and perhaps nearby resources such as Camp Coldwater).

These guides could be available for sale, much as the current WWII guide is, or downloadable free from the website. In order to provide the broadest access to the site, this plan recommends the latter, even if these free versions were abbreviated versions of a larger publication that is for sale.

3. Podcasts

Podcasts have become a part of everyday life, at least for the desirable 20-40 year-old leisure demographic. Historical sites have proven to be especially adaptable to this phenomenon, as downloadable walking tours of several large cities, such as Boston and Chicago, prove.

Podcasts are an especially viable option for the Upper Post as two sets of the targeted users — sports enthusiasts and commuters — are especially likely to use an iPod or similar device. Free, downloadable podcasts (see "Website" above) could be an easy and attractive way for them to gain more information on the site, and to become entry level users. Since the podcasts are easy to change and update, they would be especially valuable while the site is in flux.

Although there might be an initial hurdle in commissioning and providing the podcasts, and although they are new technology, this plan recommends that these accessible and innovative tools might be especially effective for the Upper Post site.

4. Letters Sent with Field Confirmations

This is perhaps the easiest and most direct peripheral interpretive device, and is one that the MPRB could adopt quickly and effectively.

The coordinating partners should create a simple one page description or brochure about the Upper Post and its interpretive features. A copy of this pamphlet should go out with all correspondence that confirms field reservations (or a .pdf if these reservations are accomplished on-line).

This would introduce the site to the recreational users, people who are definitely going to make use of the facilities. This information may pique their interest and entice them to explore the fort's resources, rather than simply driving up, staying for the game or match, and driving directly away. Such a simple introduction may convert a casual user into a dedicated supporter.

5. Relationship to Other Resources

Two nearby sites — the historic fort and Fort Snelling State Park — have a particular likelihood of cross-over users. These users should be encouraged to expand their use of the area to include the Upper Post area.

Both the historic site and the state park have visitor centers that could serve to briefly introduce their users to the Upper Post, through displays, presentations, brochures, etc. Visitors should be encouraged to "make a day of it" and see all of the nearby related sites. In this way, users who already have a similar interest are encouraged to expand their horizons.

The Upper Post should also take advantage of other local, regional, and national affiliations. Examples of such relationships could include information included in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Visitor Center located at the Science Museum of Minnesota, a display at the Twin Cities Airport sponsored by the Metropolitan Airport Commission, information distributed by Minnesota Tourism Offices, and perhaps a web presence on the National Parks Service website.

Special Tours and Events

Since there are currently no plans to staff the Upper Post or interpret it actively (for example, to the scale of nearby MHS Fort Snelling), regularly scheduled tours and events are perhaps beyond the scope of the initial interpretive capacity for the site.

However, at least some periodic events should be incorporated into the interpretation of the site, for the following reasons:

1. Such events have an excellent capacity for converting the entry-level user, with some knowledge of the site, to a repeat enthusiast.
2. Such events deepen the experience in a way that cannot be duplicated by a more passive interpretation.
3. Such events generate press and attention from newspapers, magazines, and other collateral sources.
4. Such events build collaboration between groups, involving more people and deepening the resource pool.
5. Such events demonstrate visible activity on the site, so that even those not directly involved associate it with vibrancy and popularity.
6. Such events heighten the diversity of the interpretation.
7. Such events allow for interpreting various issues — for example, minor themes to the site — that there simply may not be room for in a more comprehensive view.

With these benefits in mind, this plan recommends the following special tours and events:

1. Guided Tours

The Upper Post should conduct guided walking tours to complement the self-guided tours, viewing the exteriors of the buildings. These tours should be fairly brief in nature, and could be scheduled around other events — for example, if there are 7:00 games at the fields, there could be a 20-minute tour led at 6:30. Longer walking tours, such as those of Summit Avenue on summer weekends, are also possible.

The site should also host interior tours, as soon as the buildings are stabilized and it is safe to do so. Taking a page from the Presidio, there could be tours as soon as a building's renovation is complete but before it is occupied, generating excitement for future projects. There could even be "hard-hat tours" during construction. Finally, once buildings are complete and occupied tours could demonstrate this use, such as annual house tours on Officers' Row.

2. Re-Enactments

During the first half of the twentieth century, Fort Snelling was especially popular for both its athletics (such as fox hunts) and its battle re-enactments. Such activities could be replicated, in a similar manner, today. For example, there could be battle re-enactments, demonstrations of athletic activities, historic baseball leagues, even shows based on the popular antics of Whiskey the Horse. These are larger-scale activities that would need more coordination but also bring more users to the site.

3. Staffed Events

The site should investigate other staffed events, such as a lecture series, speeches before games, or even staff on duty on occasional weekends that stand at buildings and discuss them as people walk past.

4. Cooperating Organizations

Fort Snelling already has a number of associated organizations, ranging from the Friends of Fort Snelling to the former families of Officers' Row to the Civil War Roundtable, who meets on the site. These relationships should be deepened, both to increase usage and add to the expertise base of the site.

5. Library and Collections

The library at Fort Snelling is very good, and contains a number of unique resources relating to the site, including maps, photographs, and surveys. The library is available through the MHS offices at the Interpretive Center for the historic fort. This library could be very useful to users for the site, though much heavier usage in its current state would likely be damaging to the resources. The site as a whole should investigate a more accessible library system.

In the meantime, there are many outstanding visual resources in the collection. Elements could be compiled into temporary exhibits, perhaps viewed at the historic fort site, in nearby occupied buildings such as the golf course clubhouse, or even visible at the windows of the to-be-restored buildings. These exhibits would be very effective in providing more information without being overwhelming.

All of these cases will require some staffing for the site.

Other Issues Affecting Interpretation

Governance of Site

The major issues threatening the future of the Upper Post at this time are:

- its patchwork of ownership
- the uncertainty of its future use

To some extent, the plethora of property interest in Fort Snelling is not a new situation. At its very foundation, it is an area of many jurisdictions — Native American, early frontier, military — many branches thereof, and private commercial.

However, the current interests are exceptionally varied, as demonstrated by the interpretive plan task force. These entities include:

- the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (lead)
- the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board
- the Minnesota Historical Society
- the National Park Service
- the Metropolitan Airport Commission
- the City of Saint Paul
- the City of Minneapolis
- Ramsey County
- Hennepin County
- the National Trust
- Native American interests

The situation is more complicated because these interests are not always defined. One element of the site might have multiple interested parties — for example, the houses on Officers' Row are currently owned by the DNR, but their yards used for storage by the MPRB.

The Upper Post has been well studied, and there are a number of documents that could guide the future development of the site. These include:

- this interpretive plan
- the re-use study for the site
- design guidelines for Area J
- a historical analysis of the site completed by Hess-Roise Consulting
- the myriad documents available through the MHS library

Sequence of Projects

This sequence would have to be incorporated into the redevelopment of the site. The plan should be realized through the following steps:

Phase 0:

Stabilization of the site

Phase 1:

Establishment of kiosks
Branding and logo

Phase 2:

Website
Brochures and collateral created
Initial correlation with current resources and cooperating agencies:
- Some expansion of MHS programming to the site
- Letters sent with MPRB field confirmation
- Etc.

Phase 3:

Walking Trails
Printed and downloadable guides

Phase 4:

Building plaques and numbers
Guided tours
Podcasts

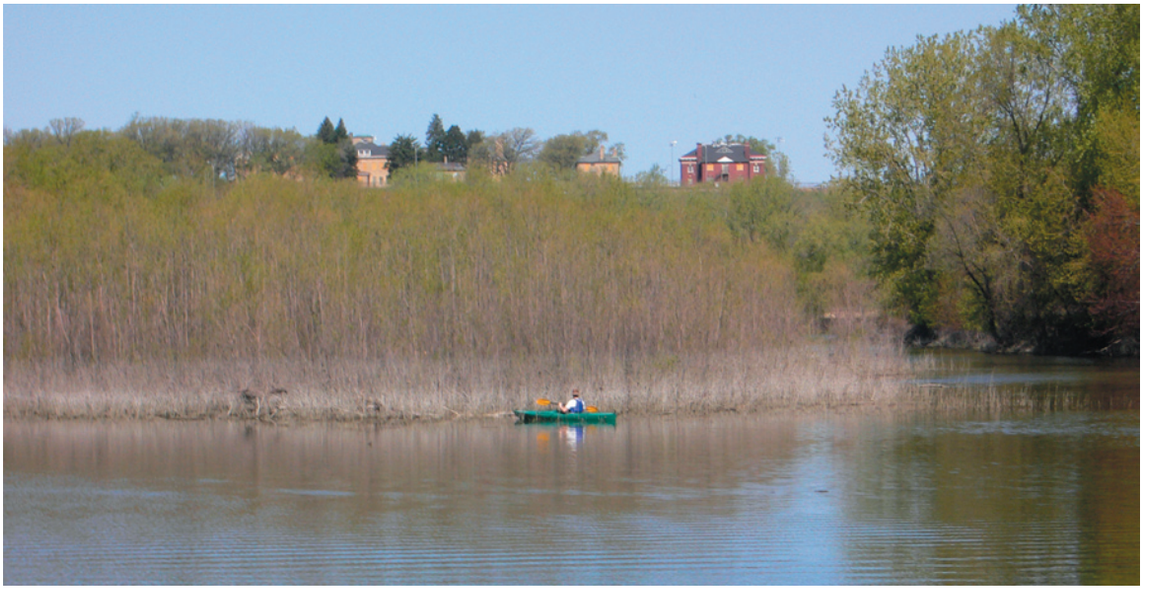
Phase 5:

Interior tours
Displays within buildings

Phase 6:

Staffed events
Re-enactments

Maintenance of the site and the interpretive plan elements (repairs to the kiosks, website updates, etc.) will need to be ongoing. Staffed events, such as tours, re-enactments, etc. can begin as human resources are available. Currently, with the limited resources of the associated partners, staffing is at a premium, but expanded staffing of the site will be required as the plan is implemented.



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