

FORT SNELLING, DEPT. OF THE DAKOTA,
MEMORIAL CHAPEL
Cloverleaf off West 7th St. (Rt. 5)
St. Paul vicinity) *Minneapolis Vic.*
Hennepin & Dakota Counties
Minnesota

HABS NO. MN-88-I

HABS
MINN,
27-FOSNEL,
4-I-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Addendum To:
Fort Snelling, Department of the Dakota,
Memorial Chapel
Cloverleaf off West 7th Street, Route 5
Minneapolis Vicinity
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-88-I

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MINN
27-FOSNEL,
4I-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

~~REDUCED COPIES OF CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS~~

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM TO
FORT SNELLING, DEPARTMENT OF
THE DAKOTA, MEMORIAL CHAPEL
HABS No. MN-88-1

Location: Cloverleaf off West Seventh St., Route 5
Minneapolis Vicinity, Hennepin County
Minnesota

Present Owner: The State of Minnesota,
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Present Occupants: The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
The Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel Foundation

Present Use: House of Worship and Community Center

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4I-

Statement of Significance: The Fort Snelling chapel was built as a memorial to Minnesota's soldiers. The construction project was funded from donations solicited from agencies and individuals from across the country. It served the permanent garrison of 2,500 men, women and children stationed at the fort, and also the Reserve Officers, the R.O.T.C., and the thousands of boys from all over the Northwest who attended the Civilian Military Training Camps in the summertime.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection: 1926-1928, with dedication on June 10, 1928.

Architect: Hewitt and Brown, Architects, Inc.
1200 Second Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN.
Supervising architect was E.W. Hewitt.

Original and Subsequent Owners: On January 2, 1926, the Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel and Community Center Association was formally incorporated, under provisions of Chapter 58 General Statutes of Minnesota 1913. Its purpose was to; "solicit public subscription of monies for the purpose of erecting a memorial chapel on the U.S. Government Reservation at Fort Snelling Minnesota."¹ In 1963 the Fort Snelling Chapel was turned over to the State of Minnesota. On December 13, 1966, The Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel Foundation was incorporated as a Minnesota non-profit corporation under the provisions of Chapter 317 of the Minnesota Non-Profit Corporation Act. Its purpose; "To promote and encourage public interest, appreciation of Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, in Fort Snelling State Park, Minnesota, as a spiritual center of religious, historical and patriotic activities, to maintain a program of

¹Minnesota, Secretary of State File No. 723. Certificate of Incorporation of the Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel and Community Center Association Inc.

Christian worship of a Protestant inter-denominational character in connection with Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, by means of preaching and teaching the word of God, and administering the sacraments; to engage a chaplain as its pastor and to maintain such activities as are customary to a religious body; to solicit and receive contributions and donations of money and property for the furthering of the aforementioned purposes."² The Chapel Foundation holds regular worship services at the Chapel. The Department of Natural Resources provides overall management of the Chapel.

Builder, Contractors, Suppliers:

General Contractor: Splady & Haagenon, Minneapolis, MN
Mechanical Contractor: Western Plumbing & Htg., Minneapolis
Electrical Contractor: Noble Electric, Minneapolis

Original Plans: The original plans consist of eighteen drawing sheets completed by Hewitt & Brown Inc.. The Plot Plan is dated 9/17/26, the Foundation Plan is dated 9/22/26, and the remaining drawings are dated 10/15/26.

A second set of plans was completed by the Veterans Administration. This three sheet set is dated 2/3/53.

A third set of plans was completed by the State of Minnesota Department of Conservation. This three sheet set is dated 2/27/64.

The original plans are submitted herein as Photographic Exhibits. The other plan revisions are submitted as Field Notes.

Alterations and Additions:

The plans dated 2/3/53 indicate several minor interior wall changes relating to the Coats Room in the basement, and the Vestry space on the first floor.

The plans dated 10/25/63 show the addition of toilet rooms in the basement, and the creation of an apartment and office space on the first floor in what was the Sunday School Assembly space. These plans also show interior finish improvements throughout the Chapel.

Historical Narrative:

In 1819 a regiment of soldiers was ordered into the wilderness to protect the Northwest against invasion of foreign trading and to defend the settlers from marauding bands of Indians. On the promontory at the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers they established

²Dedication Brochure for the Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, from the Fort Snelling Chapel File of the Minnesota Dept. of the American Legion 1967.

ADDENDUM TO
FORT SNELLING, DEPARTMENT OF
THE DAKOTA, MEMORIAL CHAPEL
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a military post. This post received the name of "Fort Snelling." The early years were hard and full of suffering. As many as 40 soldiers, one third of the troops, died while striving to endure the rigors of the first winter. For over half a century officers and enlisted men of the army remained on duty at this lonely outpost of our pioneer civilization.

Primarily, it was a religious enthusiasm which gave this territory to the nation. Devoted missionaries of the Catholic Church, Marquette, Allouez, Hennepin, and others left the imprint of their early presence, naming rivers, lakes, and islands for their patron saints. Through this developing era, when the Northwest was opening itself up to agriculture, industry, fur trading, and a constant flow of new settlers, Fort Snelling stood as a bulwark of defense to protect the scattered farmers, fur-trading posts, and infant industries of this largely unknown territory.

During all these years this fine old military post had never had an adequate and suitable place for divine worship; even as its population grew to over 1500 enlisted men, 75 officers, and more than 500 civilians, including the wives and children of the officers and non-commissioned officers.

Very early in the history of the post, Mrs. Snelling, wife of Colonel Josiah Snelling who commanded the fort from 1819 to 1824, and in whose honor it was named, together with Mrs. Nathan Clark, another officer's wife, organized the first Sunday School in the land of the Dakotas of which Minnesota was a part. The first revival of evangelical religion on the soil of Minnesota, likewise, was at Fort Snelling in the year 1834, under the Commanding Officer Major Gustavus Loomis. Major Loomis, who had been a Presbyterian Elder in his home church, conducted religious services at the fort and a considerable number of the soldiers of his command embraced Christianity. At about this same time a group of representatives of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.) arrived at Fort Snelling for work among the Indians. The following year, on June 11, 1835, they organized "The First Presbyterian Church at Saint Peters." This was the first church to be founded in the Northwest, and was organized at Fort Snelling, and named after the near-by river, Saint Peters, now the Minnesota River. Among the first elders of this first church was Henry H. Sibley, then in charge of a fur trading station across the river at Mendota and who was destined to become the first governor of the state of Minnesota.

For many years the only building available for religious services was an abandoned schoolhouse, a small frame structure located near the Post Guard House. A second place of worship was then outfitted in the Enlisted Men's Service Club. This building was comfortable but inadequate for worship. It was a difficult thing to change the furnishings of a room for divine worship on Sunday morning where there had been a dancing party the evening before. During the week the building was used for many purposes, from a kindergarten school, movie hall, to dances and variety shows. The vestments were subject to the casual inspection of the curious; the altar furnishings were without adequate protection.

The question of, "Why doesn't the Army build an adequate place of worship?" surfaced many times over the years. The only answer was that although the Army constituency provided chaplains to each post to administer to the people, no government program was in place to provide funding for places of worship. The reason for this was that the needs for housing and

other basic services at posts always exceeded available funds. Even so, many times over the years commanding officers made attempts to correspond with higher military authorities in an effort to at least obtain partial funding. On March 23rd, 1923, a communication was forwarded to the Adjutant General of the Army from the Commanding Officer, Fort Snelling, requesting authority to construct a Post Chapel at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, "without expense to the government."³ The Commanding Officer knew that if the project would be a reality, funding and donations would have to come from the private sector. On July 20th, 1923, this communication was approved by the Quartermaster General; and on September 17th, 1923, the Adjutant General of the Army gave his approval as follows: "Approved with the proviso that the building so constructed shall be Pan-Sectarian in character, and donations thereto not limited to any particular sect or society."⁴ Before this authority had been obtained, both the Commanding Officer and the Chaplain on duty at Fort Snelling had received orders for change of station. In the meantime, the officers, enlisted men, women, and children had begun an ambitious effort at raising funds for their cherished dream.

Captain Frank C. Rideout, Chaplain of the Third U.S. Regiment, was the originator of the Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel project. By the end of the year 1925 he had garnered the support of both the American Legion and the National Guard by way of contributions of their respective members. On December 15, 1925, the Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel and Community Center Association was formed and formally incorporated under Minnesota statutes. Its purpose was to be the controlling entity for contributions. Advertisements and notices were printed in newspapers and other publications throughout the state. The Governor of Minnesota at this time, Theodore Christianson became a major proponent of the project, being named honorary chairman of the Association. A January 19th edition of the Red Wing Eagle describes the Governor as leading the campaign to raise \$100,000 for the chapel. At the same time, and in the same article Captain Rideout is quoted as saying, "Everybody seems willing to help us, especially so because it is for a religious purpose." By January 28, 1926 Captain Rideout indicated in a press release that the chapel would also function as a community center. In an article written for the Minnesota Veteran on February 7, 1926, Captain Rideout claimed that \$26,500 had been raised.

During this campaign for funds, the architects of the state had instituted a competition among themselves for plans for a chapel which would meet the needs of the garrison. Twenty-two of the leading architects of the state of Minnesota participated in the competition. The plans were carefully studied by a jury which, in making its ultimate decision, took the four following points into consideration: (1) efficiency of plan; (2) probability of economical construction; (3) adaptability to site; and (4) expression of the special character imposed by local conditions and historic background. James H. Forsythe, Associate Professor of Architecture, University of Minnesota, was appointed by the Fort Snelling Chapel Building Committee as its professional advisor, and prepared the program for the competition. The jury consisted of the Commanding Officer of the Post, the Post Chaplain, and a practicing architect from outside the state of Minnesota. The architect commissioned for the work was E.W.Hewitt of Hewitt

³Chapel files, Fort Snelling History Center, St. Paul, MN

⁴Chapel Files, Fort Snelling History Center, St. Paul, MN

& Brown Inc.. In the January 24, 1926 issue of the St. Paul Daily News, Hewitt was quoted; "Historical association of the site for the Chapel not only will determine the treatment of the interior of the building, but furnish the dominant motive that will be used in the exterior as well." Clearly it was Mr. Hewitt's intent to emphasize the function of the Chapel as primarily memorial. In the same article, Mr. Hewitt goes on to say; "no effort should be spared to make the Fort Snelling Chapel serve a like purpose of crystallizing the historical associations that cluster about the site."

As the design of the building progressed through the summer of 1926, the amount of contributions grew so that by the time of groundbreaking on September 5, 1926, approximately \$50,000 had been committed to the work. Soldiers of the garrison made excavations and laid the concrete footings for the Chapel. On June 28, 1927, the Board of Directors voted to start building operations and instructed the Building Committee to proceed with the erection of a usable building, "omitting such items as are not immediately necessary and keeping within the amount of money actually on hand."⁵ By Sunday, August 21, 1927, work had sufficiently progressed for the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone. Several thousand people attended the ceremony, which included the placing of a copper box receptacle containing a history of the chapel project, a history of the Fort, and various pertinent articles of information on military organizations, members of the garrison, and current events of the time. As work progressed through the fall and winter months of 1927-1928, additional funds and memorial gifts became available, so that there was scarcely no interruption in construction and the building could be completed in a satisfactory manner which it now appears. As documented in the Chapel dedication brochure the total cost, counting donated building materials and soldier labor was approximately \$100,000. Memorial gifts, which were stained glass, exterior decorations, and interior built in furnishings, were not included in this cost. The dedication ceremony was held on Sunday, June 10, 1928.

The Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel continued to serve the garrison and its dependents until the cessation of active service in the mid-forties. In 1963 the Chapel was turned over to the State of Minnesota. In 1966, on December 13th, The Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel Foundation was incorporated as a Minnesota non-profit corporation under the provisions of Chapter 317 of the Minnesota Non-Profit Corporation Act. Its purpose, as stated in the corporate minutes; "To promote and encourage public interest, appreciation of Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, in Fort Snelling State Park, Minnesota, as a spiritual center of religious, historical and patriotic activities, to maintain a program of Christian Worship of a Protestant inter-denominational character in connection with Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, by means of preaching and teaching the word of God, and administering the sacraments; to engage a chaplain as its pastor and to maintain such activities as are customary to a religious body; to solicit and receive contributions and donations of money and property for the furthering of the aforementioned purposes." Since 1967, this foundation has been using the Chapel at Fort Snelling on a regular basis.

⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting, June 28, 1927. Fort Snelling Chapel Building Committee

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A Architectural Character: The Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel is eclectic in style, borrowing elements from the early english parish church in its plan layout and asymmetric tower placement; early gothic in its rubble stone exterior with flared "buttress" pilasters and smooth stone trim bands; and Renaissance in its arched window and door openings and the rose window details. This design is consistent with the non-denominational nature of its function; it encompasses many design styles as well as religious denominations.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 81'-0" by 112'-0". The building consists of a basement, first floor, and partial second floor. The finish materials are native Minnesota rubble limestone in a blend of blue/gray & buff colors, and smooth cut Indiana bedford limestone.

2. Foundations: Poured concrete, with clay tile interior walls at basement level.

3. Walls: Above grade walls consist of rubble stone limestone, 2 inch thick clay tile on the interior, with white plaster interior finish. Projected, flared pilasters flank both sides of the Chapel, providing the image of buttresses.

4. Structural System: Concrete beams with clay tile infill, and concrete topping form the floor systems. The roof structure is heavy timber trusses, purlins and joists, wood decking and asphalt shingle roofing.

5. Openings, Doorways, and Windows: Doorways and Doors: Doorways are framed in smooth cut bedford stone. Exterior doors are solid wood rail and stile construction. The main entry is a pair of arched top doors, and others are single arched top doors. Two of the exterior doors have clear leaded glass vision panels.

Both sides of the chapel mass have paired, arched windows trimmed in smooth cut bedford limestone. These windows include stained glass. The main facade includes a dramatic rose window, 8'-0" in diameter. The leaded, stained glass is trimmed with sculpted bedford limestone. Another circular, leaded glass window, only 3'-0" in diameter is located above the balcony. Other windows are typically paired, arched top, with a gothic style combination of smooth cut and rubble stone trim.

6. Tower and Rotunda: The west entry rotunda is a semi-circular stair tower and secondary entrance. It has a copper roof fit into the abutting gable of the main Chapel mass. The rotunda contains a circular stair to the balcony above and fellowship hall in the basement. The tower element on the east elevation served as the second entry to the Chapel when it was first used, before the reorientation of the surrounding streets rendered it difficult to get to. The tower is 20'-0" in diameter, and was used as a classroom on the second level, and

as toilet space and circulation in the basement level. The top of the tower is trimmed with smooth cut bedford limestone, curved to the radius. Four pair of arched top louvers finish the detailing of this element.

7. Adornments: The exterior of the Chapel has several symbolic adornments. The tower has a 10'-0" tall carving of a winged angel holding a sword. Its meaning is a symbol of peace; the reversed sword is meant as a symbol of mourning, or veneration for those who have given their lives in the service of the country. The coat of arms over the main entry pair of doors symbolizes the national character of the Chapel, that it is attached to the military branch of the government. The crossed tomahawks are a reminder of the menacing dangers of the frontier and the protection offered by the Post. Several adornments and finish materials were omitted from construction due to insufficient funds at the time. The most noteworthy are the bedford stone cannon carvings that were to flank the main entry, the carved stone eagle pier caps of the main Chapel mass, and the carved wood panels at the main entry doors. The roofing was planned as slate tiles, but they were omitted on favor of asphalt shingles.

C. Detailed Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: The original floor plans are attached as photographic records. There are two revised partial plan sets that are included as Field Notes.

2. First Floor: The entry vestibule contains the stairway up to the Chapel, and a secondary stair down to the basement. Floor finishes are green slate tiles. Railings are wrought iron. Wall finishes are white plaster. The ceiling is vaulted, white plaster, and beamed in dark stained wood.

The Chapel floor aisles are carpeted, and floors under pews are vinyl asbestos tile. Walls are white plaster. The roof structure is vaulted, white plaster, with four main wood trusses, and wood purlins and joists, all in dark stained wood. The interior side of the vestibule wall has a half timber treatment. The front edge of the balcony has a half timber treatment similar to the vestibule wall. Each side of the Chapel is decorated with four flags. They are the flag of the U.S. and several military organizations.

The choir space is carpeted, and has raised areas for the altar, choir, and organ. Walls are white plaster. The ceiling is vaulted, white plaster, and beamed with dark stained wood. The altar is finished with carved, paneled wood. The communion rail is wood, along with the lectern and pulpit.

The tower vestibule has a slate floor finish, with white plaster walls and ceiling. The stairs leading up to the Chapel are wood, with wrought iron railings. The stairway to the basement is wood, with a wrought iron railing. The ceiling in this space is domed, with white plaster finish.

The west entry rotunda has slate floor tile and stairs, with wrought iron railings. Walls and ceiling are white plaster. The men's and women's robing rooms, stair hall, and vestry all have carpeted floors, and white plaster walls and ceilings.

The east entry hall, and original Sunday school assembly rooms have been completely remodeled and do not appear as in the original plans. The remodeling included vinyl tile flooring in the entry hall and the finishing of the Sunday school assembly room to an apartment and office space, as shown in the 1963 plans.

3. Basement: The main space is the assembly room. Finishes here are a carpeted floor, white plaster walls, and a suspended ceiling with acoustic lay-in tile. There is a stage platform at the front of this space with adjoining storage and dressing rooms.

The kitchen has vinyl tile flooring and white plaster walls and ceiling. Cabinetry has wood fronts; worksurfaces are plastic laminate.

The hall has carpeted floors, white plaster walls and a beamed ceiling, with plaster finish. Other support spaces, along with the library, are essentially unfinished. The library is no longer functional.

The chaplains office has been remodeled into a toilet room in the 1963 remodeling. At this same time the existing tower toilet room was also enlarged.

4. Second Floor: The east side of the second floor is accessed from a wooden open stairway, with a wooden handrail. The space consists of a stair hall open to the first floor, and a classroom in the tower mass. Both rooms have wood floors and white plaster walls and ceilings. The remaining tower levels are accessed from this space via a ladder.

The west side of the second floor is accessed from a wooden stair with wrought iron railing, into a small vestibule leading to the balcony or the organ room. The balcony has a seven tier wood floor with bench seating. Walls are white plaster, and the ceiling is vaulted, with a white plaster finish. The organ room is used for storage.

5. Windows and Doors: Windows are trimmed in wood. Jambs are flared to the interior to provide a sense of larger openings. Jambs are plaster, sills are wood. Doors leading into the Chapel from surrounding spaces are arched top. Doors are wood with paneled sections. Other doors are the traditional square top, also with paneled sections. Door hardware is typically black iron. All doors have traditional knobs, with the exception of the entry doors which have hand grip sets.

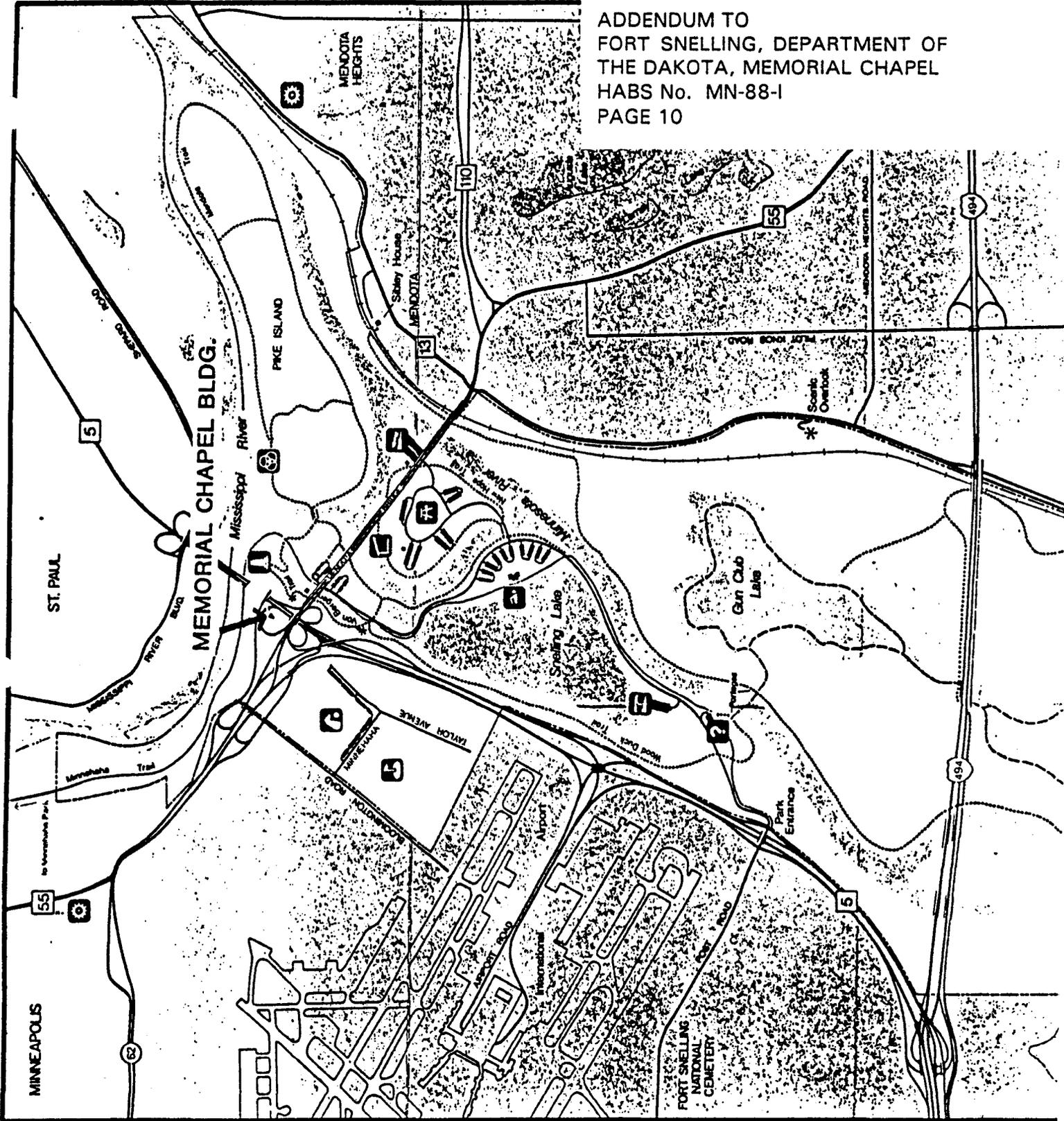
6. Details: The Chapel furnishings were for the most part donated as memorials, from many different sources. A listing of items and donors is attached to this report as part of the Field Notes. One noteworthy detail is the series of stained glass windows in the vestry. They depict the history of Fort Snelling and its leaders, through to the creation of the Chapel.

7. Lighting: The Chapel and adjoining support spaces are lighted with incandescent light sources. Decorative cylindrical pendant fixtures create the atmosphere in the Chapel. Supplementing these are spotlights mounted on the trusses. Daylighting also plays an important part of the worship experience, especially through the stained glass. Fluorescent lighting has been added in the basement assembly room, kitchen, and hall spaces.

D. Site Description:

1. Location: When the Chapel was built, there were thoroughfares running along the east and south sides of the structure. Over the years this changed to the present approach layout. The structure is now approached from the northwest, over a bridge crossing a freeway entry ramp. This offers a first glimpse of the Chapel through the trees. This entry drive leads to a curved, drive through parking lot, well shielded with trees and low foliage. The parking lot is a cul-de-sac design; there is no other outlet.

2. Building approach: From the parking lot the building is entered either at the main entry on the south, or the west entry. The tower entry on the east has been greatly minimized by the change in drive approach, and today is rarely used. The building is well screened from the neighboring freeways by tall shrubbery and trees. The main entry has several monuments in close proximity, and a flagpole, which strengthen it as the focal point of the site.



LEGEND

- Great River Road National Route
- TRAILS**
- Hiking
- Bicycle/Hiking
- Canoe Route



FACILITIES

- Information
- Historic Fort Snelling (Under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Historical Society)
- Picnic Area
- Beach
- Boat Landing
- Canoe Landing
- Interpretive Center
- Parking
- Shelter
- Polo Grounds
- Golf Course
- Overlooks

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PART III Bibliography

A. Books and Reports

Hansen, Marcus L. Old Fort Snelling.
Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1958.

Pierson, William H. Jr. American Buildings and their Architects: The Colonial & Neo
Classical Styles. Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1970.

Pothorn, Herbert. Architectural Styles.
Viking Press, 1970.

Roak, Harold H. A Report: Fort Snelling Historical State Park.
Division of Parks and Recreation, MN-Dept. of Conservation, 1969.

B. Other Sources

File of historical documents (letters, publications, pamphlets) located at the library at
the Fort Snelling History Center, Fort Snelling Park, Minneapolis, MN.

PART IV PROJECT INFORMATION

This HABS documentation was prepared at the request of the Minnesota Department
of Natural Resources, Engineering Office, in preparation for the construction of an
elevator addition to the Historic Memorial Chapel. The purpose of the elevator addition
is to enable persons with handicaps to more easily access the sanctuary and lower
level spaces. The elevator addition will be located on the east side of the building, at
the connection of the entry vestibule with the main chapel building. Photograph MN-
88-I-2 shows the exterior view of the addition location; photograph MN-88-I-12 shows
the corresponding interior view.

This documentation was completed in October, 1993, by:

Victor B. Perlbachs, Vice President,
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124 North First Street
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Photography was done by:

Steven Bergerson Photography
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