CULTURAL RESOURCES INVESTIGATION
ALONG THE VERMILLION RIVER AT
HASTINGS, MINNESOTA

St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers
Purchase Order No. DACW37-77M-0070

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Curator of Archaeology
The Science Museum of Minnesota
30 East 10th Street
St. Paul, Minnesota
January 7, 1977
The Science Museum of Minnesota conducted a three-day cultural resources field investigation of a proposed floodway channel along the Vermillion River at Hastings, Minnesota. The objective was to locate and define any existing prehistoric and/or historic sites or representative cultural materials, within the construction right-of-way. The lack of evidence for cultural resources, as represented by the lack of recoverable artifacts in test units and surface collecting, leads to a conclusion of non-adverse impact by the proposed floodway construction.
In agreement with the St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers, The Science Museum of Minnesota conducted a three-day cultural resources field investigation of a proposed floodway channel site along the Vermillion River at Hastings, Minnesota. In addition to this, two days were spent on a literature search of the area, and the preparation of this report. The objective of the investigation was to locate and define any existing prehistoric and/or historic sites or representative cultural materials, within the construction right-of-way, and to recommend appropriate future action based on the results of the investigation.

The field survey and testing program consisted of placing five formal test excavation units (1 m x 1 m or 39.4 in. x 39.4 in.) within the floodplain, informally shovel testing along the riverbank, and conducting a surface survey of the floodplain right-of-way.

The surface survey, on foot, was made under good soil visibility conditions; rye had been planted in approximate 30 cm (12 in.) rows and was only 10-20 cm (4-8 in.) high at the time of the survey. According to standard surface collecting procedures, the surface survey was conducted in 10 m (approximate 40 foot) intervals, running the length of the floodplain. Results of the surface survey were negative in that no cultural materials were recovered.

Informal shovel testing along the south side of the Vermillion River was done in approximate 50 meter (roughly 200 foot) intervals. Again, no cultural materials were evident.
Formal test units 1 through 4 (see enclosed Map) were sterile; no cultural materials were recovered. These units were excavated by 10 cm (4 in.) levels, with dirt screened through a ¼ in mesh screen. Soils were apparently floodplain till, containing intermittent layers of gravel deposits. Test units 1 and 2 were extended to a depth of 150 cm (approximately 60 in). Units 3 and 4 were excavated to 100 cm (39.4 in). Soil probes extended from the floors of these units indicated floodplain soils extending more than two meters below ground surfaces.

Test unit 5 was placed within what appears to be an historic structure foundation. Cut limestone blocks, placed in approximate 50 foot x 20 foot long dimensions, comprise the foundations. Historic artifacts were recovered from this test unit, between 0 - 25 cm (0 - 10 in), and consisted of historic glazed ceramic sherds and fragments of broken glass. This material as well as all field notes and photographs, is accessioned at SMM under Accession No. A76:11.

Local informants are under the opinion that these foundations represent the site of the Black Forest Hotel, which was supposedly in operation during the early days of the Peavey Mill (located one half mile down the Vermillion River from the foundation site). An attempt was made to confirm the existence of this hotel by several methods. The local historian for Hastings, Hazel Jacobson, was contracted for possible pertinent information including photographs, literature references, and names of other local informants. She checked the early maps of the
area, one drawn in 1856, the other in 1867, with negative results. She also searched for photographs of the site location, and though there is one of the general area, no positive identification of the Black Forest Hotel could be made.

Records at the Dakota County Historical Museum were checked for dates that could pinpoint the time period of existence for the Hotel. This too, was unsuccessful. Microfilm records at the Minnesota Historical Society, showing original plats for Dakota County for the years 1896, 1914 and 1928, were also checked. Landowners for the site were identified, but no records for their occupations (as are sometimes found), were included.

In conclusion, the course followed was to submit a site survey form to the Archaeology Division of the Minnesota Historical Society identifying the foundation remains as the site of the Black Forest Hotel, by general consensus only, with no supporting documentation. The least they can do will be to file the information as is, attaching no significance beyond the fact of the probable existence of an early historic hotel at the probable location as recorded. Maximum action on their part (MHS) would be to locate unquestionable evidence determining the existence of the hotel, and to attach significance as a historic site. Due to the nature of the remains and the apparent lack of recoverable documentation, this would be unlikely.

In addition to the above searches, site files maintained by the State Archaeologist and the Minnesota Historical Society showed no prehistoric
or historic sites at or immediately adjacent to the proposed floodway development site.

This lack of evidence for cultural resources, as represented by the lack of recoverable artifacts in test units and surface collecting, leads to a conclusion of non-adverse impact by the proposed floodplain construction/alteration, on possible cultural resources. The only consideration to be made is that there conceivably may be deeply buried prehistoric materials under what is today the floodplain, due to naturally changing river channels, in turn caused by frequent flooding and erosional soils build up. The presence of gravel deposits at various levels within the floodplain silt deposits may be indicative of former channel banks or bottoms. It is recommended that any extensive excavation (over 1.5 m deep) be field checked for evidence of prehistoric activity. If such evidence is found, further investigation for cultural resource determination will be necessary.
APPENDIX A

Minnesota Historical Society
Site Survey Form
**Minnesota Historical Society**

*SURVEY FORM*

**COUNTY:** Dakota  
**COMMUNITY:** Hastings

**Place Name:** HISTORIC Black Forest Hotel  
and/or **COMMON**

**Place Address:** Southwest portion of junction of Highways 61 and 47, Hastings, Minnesota.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>__ Site __ District __ Building __ Structure __ Object __ Figure __ Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership Status</td>
<td><strong>X</strong> Private __ Public __ Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>__ In process __ <strong>X</strong> Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>__ Occupied __ <strong>X</strong> Unoccupied __ Work in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>__ <strong>X</strong> Yes, restricted __ Yes, unrestricted __ No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present Use:**

- Agricultural  
- Commercial  
- Education  
- Government  
- Industrial  
- Military  
- Museum  
- Park  
- Private residence  
- Religious  
- Scientific  
- Transportation  
- **X** Other - Ruins

**Owner of property:**

- Name: Star Realty Company  
- Address: 407 Vermilion  
- City/Township: Hastings, Minnesota

**DESCRIPTION--Overall Condition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>__ Excellent __</th>
<th>__ Deteriorated __</th>
<th>__ Unaltered __</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__ Good __</td>
<td><strong>X</strong> Ruins __</td>
<td>__ Altered __</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__ Fair __</td>
<td>__ Unexposed __</td>
<td><strong>X</strong> Original site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTEGRITY:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>__ Moved/Date __</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Remarks:**
PLACE NAME: HISTORIC
Black Forest Hotel

DESCRIPTION--SITE SURROUNDINGS.

Open land
Woodland
Scattered buildings

Densely built up
Commercial
Industrial

Residential
X Other

Remarks: Site is adjacent to developed commercial properties and open land.

DESCRIPTION--ENVIRONMENT.

Urban isolated
Urban/compatible group
Rural/compatible group

Urban/hostile group
Rural isolated
Rural/hostile group

X Other

Remarks:

DESCRIPTION--RELATED BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES.

Carriage house
Quarters
Barn
Stable
Privy

Fences
Cistern
Original/formal gardens
Statuary

Shop
Garage
Shed
Gazebo
Cemetery
Greenhouse

Other: Vermillion River

SIGNIFICANCE

Date:

Factual/Estimated

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Theme(s): Unknown

Significance: Site may have significance in relationship to the history of the Peavey Mill, located one half mile downstream from the site.

Level of Significance: X Local

State

Federal

Major bibliographical references: NONE

Geographical Data:

Acreage of the site:

Surveyor/Date/Comments: G. J. Hudak 12/22/76
Minnesota Historical Society
SURVEY FORM

COUNTY: Dakota
COMMUNITY: Hastings

Place Name: HISTORIC
and/or COMMON

Black Forest Hotel

Place Address: Southwest portion of junction of Highways 61 and 47, Hastings, Minnesota.

Photo #: A76:11:1
View/Direction: Looking South
END

12-86

DTTC