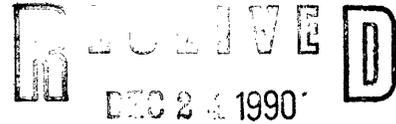


United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Minnesota Military Roads

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Minnesota Military Roads, 1850-1875

C. Geographical Data

State of Minnesota

See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official

Ian R. Stewart

Date

12/11/90

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

Minnesota Historical Society

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date

2/7/91

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MINNESOTA MILITARY ROADS, 1850-1875

SUMMARY

From 1850 to 1861, the Corps of Topographical Engineers oversaw the construction of seven military wagon roads in Minnesota. Significant on a regional level under National Register Criterion A, these roads represent a major phase in the development of Minnesota's transportation infrastructure. The acquisition of federal funds for road construction also became an important issue for the territory's political factions. The roads lost their political significance in 1857, when federal funding came to an end in anticipation of the territory's achieving statehood the next year. The routes continued to be important transportation arteries until the 1870s, when they were supplanted by railroads.

ROADS IN PRE-TERRITORIAL MINNESOTA

Before 1849, Minnesota was part of the Wisconsin Territory, and settlement was limited to the region east of the Mississippi River. Overland travel was confined to a network of fur trading trails running northwestward from St. Paul to the Red River and Canada. Between 1841 and 1848, residents also constructed at least five roads linking such major settlements as St. Paul and Stillwater, in the Mississippi and St. Croix River Valleys. As historian Arthur J. Larsen has observed, all of these overland routes "were, for the most part, ... natural trails; that is, practically the only work done on them was to remove the timber and brush." No attention was given to grading or drainage, and the roads could not support wagon traffic or provide year-round service [1].

Travel and commerce were necessarily limited by the poor condition of the few existing roads. Residents were also distressed by the lack of mail service. In 1848, only one weekly mail route served the entire region. The line ran from St. Paul to Galena, Illinois, passing through Stillwater and Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi. The Postmaster General refused to increase the number of routes, arguing that the expense was too great. One resident lamented: "No mail to Long Meadow, no mail to Crow Wing, no mail to Fort Gaines, no; not even to St. Anthony.... We have no mails up the St. Peters.... The villages of the St. Croix are destitute of mails" [2].

The situation began to brighten in 1849, when Congress formed the Territory of Minnesota. With a population of less than 5000, the territory lacked the resources to undertake road improvements. However,

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its territorial delegate, Henry Hastings Sibley, an influential fur trader from Mendota, used his position to lobby for federal aid. Within a few years, Congress undertook an extensive road building program for the new territory.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF MINNESOTA'S MILITARY ROADS

Sibley first petitioned for federal aid in 1848, while he was in Washington to lobby for the creation of the Minnesota Territory. Though Congress did not have time to consider his road bill, Sibley was confident that his request would eventually be granted. Congress had a long history of funding territorial road construction. From 1833 to 1849, for example, Wisconsin received at least \$64,000 to build and maintain roads [3]. Although such expenditure was justified on the grounds of frontier defense, it was widely recognized that the roads primarily aided territorial settlement and commercial development [4].

Encouraged by the success of other territories, the Minnesota legislature in the summer of 1849 drafted memorials for five military roads. All of the roads were to run to government forts or Indian agencies. Taken together, the projected roads formed a transportation network radiating outward from the St. Paul area to nearly every section of the territory. One road ran from Fort Snelling to the Missouri River, and was to form a major immigration route into the unsettled territory. The second ran up the east bank of the Mississippi to Fort Ripley, and was expected to aid in the development of central Minnesota. The third branched off the Fort Ripley road at the Swan River, and ran to an Indian agency at Long Prairie. The fourth road ran up the west side of the St. Croix Valley to the falls of the St. Louis River, not far from Lake Superior. In addition to the obvious benefit of connecting the interior to navigation on the Great Lakes, this last route provided access to the region's mineral deposits and stands of pine. The fifth road ran down the west bank of the Mississippi to the Iowa line, and was expected to carry mail, trade and immigrants into southeastern Minnesota.

Sibley returned to Congress in the fall to seek appropriations for the routes. In March, 1850, the House Committee on Roads recommended accepting Sibley's bill, stating that the roads would benefit the federal government as well as the territory. It reported:

That same fostering care which has always been extended to the new Territories of the country may, in the opinion of the committee, well be manifested towards Minnesota, in opening and improving

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such thoroughfares as may be necessary for her protection, and useful in advancing her settlements. Such a policy will not only advance the general interest and welfare of the settlers, but will increase the value and sale of the public lands to the benefit of the [federal] government [5].

However, not all in the House agreed with the committee's sentiment. Rep. George W. Jones of Tennessee objected to the bill, arguing that the territories should fund their own improvements. Rep. Richard Parker of Virginia also questioned the military necessity of the roads.

Sibley eventually overcame these objections, and on July 18, 1850, the Minnesota Road Act came into effect. The law appropriated \$40,000 to construct four military wagon roads and to survey a fifth. Of this amount, \$15,000 was allotted for a road from Point Douglas, at the mouth of the St. Croix, to the falls of the St. Louis River, near Lake Superior; \$10,000 for a road along the east bank of the Mississippi from Point Douglas to Fort Ripley; \$5,000 for a road from "the mouth of the Swan River, or the most available point between it and the Sauk Rapids, to the Winnebago agency at Long Prairie" [6]; \$5,000 for a road along the west bank of the Mississippi from Mendota to Wabasha; and \$5,000 to survey a route from Mendota to the mouth of the Big Sioux River on the Missouri.

The War Department was in charge of the military roads, and it placed the Corps of Topographical Engineers in direct command of construction. At the outset, the engineers estimated that an additional \$101,170 was needed to complete construction of the roads. Furthermore, they reported that at least \$75,000 would be needed immediately to continue work through June, 1852 [7].

Despite these bleak estimates, Sibley was confident that the initial appropriation would "go far toward opening the country to immigrants" [8]. He anticipated that additional funds would be secured as work proceeded. Unfortunately, Congress struck down Sibley's request for \$75,000 in the 1850/51 session on the grounds that it had granted \$40,000 the previous year. Sibley lowered his request to \$45,000 the next session, but although the House agreed to the amount, the Senate did not reach a vote before adjourning for the summer. Finally, on January 7, 1853, Congress appropriated an additional \$45,000 for the Minnesota military roads.

Sibley did not seek reelection when his term expired at the end of 1853, and he was replaced by Henry Mower Rice. Either because Congress was impressed by the progress of construction or by Rice's persuasiveness, the new delegate was surprisingly successful at gaining additional federal

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support. On July 17, 1854, Rice secured passage of a bill appropriating \$50,000 for road building. The bill also altered the northern terminus of the road up the St. Croix Valley. Rather than ending at the falls, the road was to run to the mouth of the St. Louis River, located in the town of Superior, Wisconsin, on the shore of the Great Lakes. The change linked St. Paul more directly to Lake Superior, and Rice, it was later revealed, also owned land in the town of Superior. In the same year, the War Department apportioned \$25,000 from its budget to begin building the road from Mendota to the Big Sioux River.

Rice continued to lobby for Minnesota military roads, achieving a total of \$106,590 in appropriations during the 1854/55 session of Congress. Part of this amount was earmarked for two new military roads, which were also placed under the charge of the army engineers. One of the roads was to follow an important fur trading trail from Fort Ripley to the Red River; \$10,000 was set aside to improve the existing trail. While aiding commerce, the route had a legitimate military purpose. The northwest territory was completely isolated, and the boundary was under dispute with Canada. The other road was to run from St. Anthony Falls to Fort Ridgely, and was expected to improve travel in the southwestern section of the territory. The road was to be laid out and built by the Minnesota legislature. The federal money, to the amount of \$5,000, was only to be expended to clear timber from the route.

Rice received his last appropriation for military roads in 1857, when Congress earmarked \$38,000 from the army budget to complete the Minnesota roads. Added to the earlier amounts, the last appropriation raised the total federal outlay for the seven military roads to \$304,590. While substantial, this figure represented only a fraction of what Sibley and Rice requested during the territorial period. In part, the delegates' incessant demand for road funds revealed the territory's pressing need for road improvements. However, the requests were also politically motivated. As one historian has observed, "a territorial delegate's...career often depended on securing road appropriations" [9]. The delegate's duty was to wield his influence to secure favors for his territory. Rice and Sibley's success with the federal military road program added to their standing and lent influence to their political factions.

THE START OF MINNESOTA MILITARY ROAD CONSTRUCTION

The Minnesota Road Act of 1850 placed the survey and construction of Minnesota's military roads under the command of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, the branch of the army responsible for civil improvements.

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Although the Corps was a highly capable and professional organization, its work in Minnesota was marked by almost continuous controversy. The project began on the wrong foot when Col. John J. Abert, the Topographical Engineering Chief, could not immediately place an officer in the field. He finally secured John S. Potter, a civilian engineer, who did not arrive in Minnesota until November, 1850.

Abert instructed Potter to survey the Mendota-Wabasha Road first, believing it was the only reconnaissance which could be finished before winter. However, the route ran entirely through Indian land, and Minnesotans loudly questioned the decision to begin work on a road of little benefit to the territory's white settlers. Instead, they believed that the road to the St. Louis River deserved immediate attention as it passed through the most populated portion of the territory and would be of direct value to lumbering interests. Abert sent new instructions to Potter after Sibley notified him of the controversy.

Alarmed that so little had been accomplished in the first season, the Minnesota legislature and governor requested Abert to send another engineer to hasten road construction. Abert responded by dispatching Capt. James Hervey Simpson to organize another survey team and take general command of all road building in Minnesota. Simpson arrived in May 1851, and immediately directed Potter to survey the St. Louis River Road while he organized parties to survey the remaining routes. By the end of the year, all the roads had been surveyed except the Mendota-Big Sioux, which Simpson estimated would require an additional \$5,000.

The cost of the completed surveys amounted to \$12,089, leaving a balance of only \$27,911 from the initial appropriation. Simpson considered this amount too small even to begin construction, having estimated that the total cost of the four roads would be at least \$162,082. In his report for 1851, Simpson urged Congress to grant Sibley's request for additional appropriations. Simpson stressed that the roads were of vital interest to the territory and the federal government. In particular, he singled out the roads to the St. Louis River, Fort Ripley, and Long Prairie as deserving the most immediate attention. Simpson wrote:

In regard to the importance of putting these roads under contract at the earliest possible moment, there cannot be the slightest question, at least in respect to three of them, to wit: the Point Douglass [sic] and Fort Gaines [later renamed Fort Ripley] road, the Point Douglass and Saint Louis river road, and the Mississippi and Long Prairie road. The Mendota and Wabasha road, and the Mendota and Big Sioux river road, both running through country

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the Indian title to which is not yet definitely extinguished, do not so pressingly require of the Government their immediate construction. The other three roads, however, are now of the utmost consequence, and should be made available at the earliest possible moment. The Point Douglass and Fort Gaines road, through a portion of the territory to which emigrants are flocking in great numbers, is the great highway by which the Government supplies reach the Indians in the Winnebago territory....It is also the road by which the Government supplies are transported to the troops at Fort Gaines....The Mississippi and Long Prairie road is the branch road...by which Government supplies are conveyed to the Winnebago agency at Long Prairie. The Point Douglass and Saint Louis river road is of the utmost consequence in the accommodation it will afford to the lumbering interests high upon the Saint Croix....[10]

Unfortunately, Congress did not appropriate additional funds in either 1851 or 1852. In November 1852, Abert notified Simpson that the road-building program would end before any real construction had begun. He wrote Simpson that "as the estimates of further progress on these roads have not met the approbation of Congress, now twice submitted to its consideration, work on these roads will be closed, as soon as existing small appropriations are exhausted" [11].

Simpson and Abert were not alone in their frustration over the lack of real progress. Critical that construction had not proceeded on a large scale, territorial residents levelled charges of waste against the army engineers. As early as June, 1851, the St. Anthony Express questioned the value of surveys if there were no actual building. That spring, a grand jury for the third judicial district also had investigated the army's road-building program and denounced it as a fraud and a "humbug."

Congress finally made an additional appropriation in January, 1853. By the end of that year under the stimulus of additional funds, the Mendota-Big Sioux Road had been surveyed and civilian contractors had initiated work on all of the other roads according to Simpson's specifications. Simpson's goal was to create roads which could support year-round wagon traffic. He summarized his views on road construction in 1855, when he wrote in his report:

The cardinal idea upon which all appropriations for common roads in Territories have been made by Congress, and, as it seems to me, the correct one, is only to grant those which will be sufficient to open and construct the great thoroughfares sufficiently to

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answer the wants of the people until they erect themselves into a State, or, at any rate, until they are populous enough to make and foster their roads themselves. In order to this [sic], only such a character of roads is necessary as will economically answer the object in view....And now the question arises, what character of road will answer the object in view? My experience suggests to me the following as fulfilling the conditions:

1. Roads in dense woods should be opened--that is, the trees felled for a width of at least 66 feet...so as to let in the sun and wind, and also to prevent fallen trees from obstructing the road....Where the trees are sparse and low in height, a width of 33 feet, or 2 rods, will suffice.
2. The centre-strip or road-bed should be at least 25 feet and need not be over 33 feet in width, and within this strip the trees and brush should be thoroughly grubbed....The knolls or small hillocks should also be levelled off on this centre-strip, and the small holes filled up.
3. The hills should never...have a grade exceeding 10 in 100, and, if at all possible,...should always be reduced to 8 in 100.
4. Whenever the bottom is soft and spongy, the road to be logged or corduroyed, and the logs thoroughly covered with suitable gravel or earth.
5. Wherever there is corduroying or embankment, the road-bed to be 18 feet wide on top. Alongside hills it should be 20 feet, the road dishing towards the bank.
6. ...The [drainage] ditches...to be 4 feet wide at top, 3 at bottom, and 2 1/2 deep [12].

Due to Simpson's high standards and the rough terrain, road construction necessarily proceeded slowly. Territorial residents frequently delayed work by petitioning Simpson to alter the route of the roads or by denying him a right-of-way. On two roads, legislative problems also suspended work for several seasons. The road to the Red River was supposed to follow a fur trading trail, but Simpson did not believe it was the best route. Constructon did not proceed until 1857, when the wording of the law was changed to allow a better route to be surveyed. The Fort Ridgely Road was also delayed until 1857, as the Minnesota legislature did not lay out the road until that time.

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It appears, however, that the most significant impediment to road building was Congress' practice each session of only appropriating a fraction of the total needed to complete construction. Because the army engineers could only let contracts for the amounts appropriated, work proceeded on a season-by-season, piecemeal basis.

Despite these constraints, by 1855 Simpson had made significant progress. He had essentially completed the roads to Fort Ripley and Long Prairie, in addition to nearly half of the 180-mile road to the St. Louis River. In that year he also reported that the road from Mendota to Wabasha was passable over its entire length.

Unfortunately, many people chose to focus more on the rate, rather than the steadiness, of Simpson's progress. The newspapers repeatedly published letters criticizing Simpson for how slowly work was proceeding. To make matters worse for Simpson, the flames of this public discontent were frequently fanned by Minnesota's territorial delegate, Henry M. Rice. Given the public's genuine anxiety that road building was not proceeding rapidly enough, Rice undoubtedly found it politically expedient to throw the blame entirely on Simpson. Rice was also a political rival of the former territorial delegate, Henry H. Sibley, and Simpson was a well-known Sibley supporter. Consequently, most of the letters criticising Simpson appeared in newspapers controlled by Rice's faction, and Rice frequently requested Abert to replace Simpson with another officer.

The rivalry between the men came to a head in 1855, when Rice took credit for the road building program as part of his reelection campaign. The opposition promptly challenged this assertion, claiming that Sibley deserved primary credit for road appropriations. Tired of Rice's attacks, Simpson entered the campaign with several letters to the Daily Minnesota Pioneer, crediting Sibley and attacking Rice's accomplishments. The road issue helped to polarize the territory during the campaign, but eventually Rice won reelection. The delegate may have achieved another victory the next year, when the War Department transferred Simpson from his post and replaced him with another officer [13].

DECLINE OF MINNESOTA'S MILITARY ROADS

The military road program in Minnesota began to decline when Simpson left in May, 1856. Capt. George Thom, Simpson's replacement, remained in Minnesota only until 1858, when he in turn was replaced by Capt. Howard Stansbury. Congress did not place any new roads under the care of these engineers, and made only one other appropriation to continue work on the

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roads begun by Simpson. In essence, Simpson had established the general outline and condition of Minnesota's military roads, and few additions or improvements were made after he left the territory.

Two of the only changes to the road system Simpson founded were made in 1857, when legislative obstacles were finally overcome and work began on the roads to Fort Ridgely and the Red River. By the end of 1858, Thom had finished work on the Fort Ridgely Road, and had completed the roads to Fort Ripley and to Wabasha--already largely complete under Simpson. When Stansbury took command in the fall, only the roads to Superior, the Red River and the Big Sioux required his attention [14].

Unfortunately, Stansbury could do little to improve these roads, for by 1858 all of the appropriations had been exhausted. The original appropriation of \$10,000 for the Red River Road served to build only 29 miles of the 138-mile route. Stansbury estimated that \$32,782 was needed to finish the job. At least \$62,475 was needed for the 280-mile Mendota-Big Sioux Road, of which only 96 miles had been built. The situation was somewhat better on the road to Superior, which had been under construction the longest. By 1858, only 60 miles of the 180-mile road required further work, at an estimated cost of \$50,000 [15].

Despite the fact that work could not proceed, Congress did not appropriate any more funds after 1857. In 1858, Minnesota was admitted as a state, and it was widely believed that it could afford to maintain and build its own roads. Stansbury spent his time preparing estimates and disposing of property accumulated by the engineers during their years in Minnesota. Finally, in 1861, Stansbury closed the road office and the federal road-building program officially ended.

While statehood was the major cause of the military-road program's decline, another factor appears to have been the territorial delegate's decision to pursue road building through the Department of the Interior rather than the War Department. Although Rice continued to petition for some military appropriations, from 1855 to 1857 he also sought appropriations for roads to be built under the direction of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In 1855 and 1856, Congress granted three of these requests. Two of the roads were relatively short, and intended for use by the Indians in northern Minnesota. The third, however, was a major emigrant road leading from Fort Ridgely to the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains in California.

Rice's desire to shift road building to the Department of the Interior was largely a matter of practicality. He was on friendly terms with the

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Indian Commissioner, while his relations with the Topographical Engineers were growing increasingly strained. The shift was also an astute political move with national implications. William H. Goetzmann, an historian who has made an extensive study of federal road building and exploration in the Trans-Mississippi West, has observed that beginning in the mid-1850s nearly all of the Western territories abandoned the long-established practice of seeking road improvements through the War Department. These territories found it increasingly unwieldy to justify appropriations on military grounds. There also was a general consensus that the Topographical Engineers were insensitive to local interests. Goetzmann writes:

The effect of the shift of Western confidence from the Topographical Corps to the Interior Department...[was] to throw the entire roadbuilding administration into a civilian agency where requests would not have to be made under the constricting guise of petitions for national defense....It...opened the way to decentralized control of the road construction by territorial Indian agents and temporary civilian appointees....Decentralized control meant, of course, a greater degree of control by the political oligarchies out in the territories....[16]

With the departure of the army engineers, the military roads in Minnesota came under the jurisdiction of the various local townships. Unfortunately, the townships lacked adequate resources to maintain the roads, and the condition of the routes began to deteriorate. By the late 1860s, the public whole-heartedly embraced the cause of railroad promotion to replace the poorly maintained roads. In 1870, the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad opened between Duluth and St. Paul, capturing the traffic formerly carried by the Point Douglas-Superior Road. In 1871, the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad reached the Red River and supplanted the Fort Ripley and Red River roads. By the end of the decade, roads which had once been major thoroughfares for travel and trade had become mere feeder lines, carrying local traffic to the nearest railroad. Arthur J. Larsen has observed:

During the frontier era in Minnesota's history...wagon roads were the sole means by which the communication of a large part of the state was carried on, and widespread interest was displayed in developing a system of main thoroughfares....But, with the coming of the railroads, the attitude...changed perceptibly.... Thereafter, the wagon roads were transferred to a position of secondary importance in the communication system. They were looked upon simply as a means for getting to the railroads, and, for the most part, they were of local interest only [17].

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Despite its eventual demise, the federal military road program was tremendously important in facilitating settlement and commerce during the territorial period and early years of statehood. Initiated at a time when there were no improved roads, the program provided a servicable overland transportation system, while the influx of federal funds played an important role in shaping the territory's politics.

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END NOTES

1. Information on the history of transportation in Minnesota and on the construction of military roads, unless otherwise noted, is drawn from Arthur J. Larsen, "The Development of the Minnesota Road System," (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1966); quote is from P. 37.
2. Larsen, Development of the Minnesota Road System, P. 169.
3. National Highway Users Conference, Military Roads (Washington, D.C.: National Press Building, 1935), Pp. 8-10.
4. For a summary of the history of federal military road construction, see W. Turrentine Jackson, Wagon Roads West (University of California Press, 1952).
5. "Report of the House Committee on Roads and Canals," 13 March 1850, in House Committee Reports 172, 31 Congress, 1 Session (Serial 583); quoted in Larsen, Development of the Minnesota Road System, P. 49.
6. Quoted in Larsen, Development of the Minnesota Road System, P. 51.
7. John J. Abert, "Report of the Colonel of the Corps of Topographical Engineers," 14 November 1850, Senate Executive Document 1, Part 2, 31 Congress, 2 Session (Serial 587), P. 392; Jackson, Wagon Roads, P. 52.
8. Larsen, Development of the Minnesota Road System, P. 52.
9. William H. Goetzmann, Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), P. 348.
10. James Hervey Simpson to John J. Abert, 15 September 1851, in House Executive Document 12, 32 Congress, 1 Session (Serial 637), P. 10.
11. Quoted in Jackson, Wagon Roads, P. 56.
12. James Hervey Simpson, "Annual Report of Operations on the General Government Roads in the Territory of Minnesota," 20 September 1855, in Senate Executive Document 1, Part 2, 34 Congress, 1 Session (Serial 811), Pp. 483-485.
13. In addition to Larsen, several other sources shed light on the history of military road construction in Minnesota and the political rivalry between James H. Simpson and Henry M. Rice. See: Jackson, Wagon Roads, Pp.

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49-70; Wilbur Sheridan Warrick, "James Hervey Simpson, Military Wagon Road Engineer in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1849-1867," (Masters Thesis, University of Chicago, 1949), Pp. 24-73.

14. For an assessment of the work performed by these officers, see George Thom to John J. Abert, 5 September 1857, in Senate Executive Document 11, 35 Congress 1 Session (Serial 920), Pp. 348-355; Howard Stansbury to John J. Abert, 15 October 1858, in Senate Executive Document 1, Part 3, 35 Congress 2 Session (Serial 976), Pp. 1193-1200 (hereafter referred to as Stansbury Report, 1858).

15. Stansbury Report, 1858.

16. Goetzmann, Army Exploration, P. 345.

17. Larsen, Development of the Minnesota Road System, P. 175.

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ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

I. Name of Property Type: Military Road Fragment

II. Description

From 1850 to 1861, the Corps of Topographical Engineers oversaw work on seven military wagon roads in Minnesota. The roads ran between the following points: Point Douglas to Superior, Wisconsin; Point Douglas to Fort Ripley; the mouth of the Swan River on the Mississippi to Long Prairie; Mendota to the mouth of the Big Sioux River (actually only completed to Mankato); Mendota to Wabasha; St. Anthony Falls to Fort Ridgely; and Fort Ripley to the Red River. With the exception of the Fort Ridgely Road, for which the engineers only let contracts to clear timber, all of the roads were built to the same specifications. In the course of normal use, however, many alterations have been made to the roads. They have been resurfaced, widened, and occasionally realigned and abandoned. Drainage ditches have been filled and re-excavated. Culverts and bridges have been washed away and replaced. Nevertheless, it is felt that a road retains its historic identity so long as it conforms to its original route. As a result, many sections of military road continue to exist.

Depending on their alterations, military road fragments can assume many different appearances. Based on a survey of three military roads, the following are the most common:

-modern public road: road fragment is still in current use, although substantially changed. The road bed has generally been resurfaced, either with gravel or paving, and other historic engineering features such as drainage ditches, culverts and bridges are usually no longer visible.

-limited use, passable roadway: the road fragment is still used on a limited basis--usually as a foot path or farm access road--and receives little or no maintenance. Evidence of such historic engineering features as corduroying, drainage ditches and culverts is no longer visible. However, major features, such as cuts and fillslopes, are often still evident.

-abandoned, impassable roadway: fragment is no longer used or maintained. It is usually heavily overgrown. Occasionally, major engineering features such as cuts, berms and fillslopes are still visible. More often, however, the site is distinguishable only as a slight depression or crown.

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Generally speaking, any road feature or assemblage of features associated with the route of one of the military roads constitutes a military road fragment. However, highway bridges, whether abandoned or in use, do not constitute a military road fragment. A separate historic context has been developed for Minnesota highway bridges, and the property types defined in that study should be used.

III. Significance

Significant on a regional level under National Register Criterion A, the military roads built by the Corps of Topographical Engineers represent a major phase in the development of Minnesota's transportation infrastructure. The federally funded road program also became an important issue in territorial politics. The roads' political significance ended in 1857, when federal funding ceased in anticipation of Minnesota's achieving statehood the next year. The roads continued to be important transportation arteries until the 1870s, when they were replaced by railroads. The military road fragments, many still in use to this day, represent the only tangible link to these historically significant routes.

IV. Registration Requirements

Background Considerations

Based on a survey of three Minnesota military roads undertaken in November and December of 1988, and June 1989, there appear to be several dozen sites, representing hundreds of miles of road, which can be identified as military road fragments. Of course, mere identification does not mean that a site should be nominated to the National Register. Nomination must hinge upon the integrity of the road fragment. Before listing registration criteria, however, it will be valuable first to discuss past road nominations to understand the complexity involved in assessing a road fragment.

In the past, most roads have been nominated to the National Register on the basis of their engineering features or aesthetic qualities. The primary consideration in judging the integrity of these roadways has therefore been their degree of physical preservation and alteration. This approach, however, is not applicable to Minnesota military roads, which have been so extensively altered that none appears to conform to its original construction specifications. Not only would a rigid standard of physical condition bar all sites from consideration, but it would be

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inappropriate; the military roads were significant for their role in developing the territory, not for their beauty or design.

Recently, two states have developed guidelines for assessing and nominating historic roads. In Arizona, the SHPO has prepared a Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Historic US Route 66." According to the registration requirements, all sites are eligible which satisfy the following criteria: it must have been part of the historic highway during its period of significance (1926-1944); it must evoke a general feeling of the route's historic character and setting--and in particular, the "segments...should be of sufficient length to preserve the feeling and setting of a continuous road"; and it must "retain the essential features that identify it as a highway," such as culverts, bridges, road bed, and berms.

In Wyoming, the SHPO has developed general guidelines for judging all historic roads and trails. Integrity is largely based on a site's degree of physical and environmental preservation. This, of course, is comparable to Arizona's requirement that Route 66 sites "retain the essential" physical features of the highway's original construction, as well as its general feel and setting. Unlike Arizona, however, which is nominating all sections of Route 66 which satisfy the registration criteria, Wyoming will only select those sites which best represent the resource given its current condition. As the Wyoming SHPO states in its guidelines: "it is the policy of the SHPO in Wyoming to preserve the best known representative examples of significant historic trails....When segments of a documented trail...exist in varying states of preservation or integrity, those portions of the trail exhibiting the least impairment of physical and environmental condition will be considered as contributing segments to the eligibility of that historic trail...."

Neither of the approaches developed by these states is entirely applicable to Minnesota military roads. Both Arizona and Wyoming rely heavily on physical condition to judge a road's integrity. A high degree of alteration removes the site from consideration. However, several concepts can be used to establish criteria suitable for use in Minnesota. First, only those sites which best represent the resource should be nominated. Second, road fragments are eligible only if they were part of the historic route. Finally, sites must be of sufficient length to evoke a sense of historic feeling or setting.

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Registration Criteria

According to National Register guidelines, integrity is based on a combination of factors: location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association. By definition, all military road fragments must possess a high degree of locational integrity. Unfortunately, none of these fragments also seems to possess integrity of design, materials or workmanship. Determination of eligibility must therefore rest upon feeling, setting and association.

Based on a survey of a significant number of Minnesota sites, the following criteria have been established to identify road segments which are most characteristic of the historic roads:

- 1) Route. It must be possible to demonstrate that the road fragment closely conforms to the original route of one of the military roads.
- 2) Physical appearance:
 - a) road fragment should be unpaved
 - b) fragment must be relatively clear and passable, measuring approximately 18-33 feet in width
- 3) Sense of function or destination. The road fragment should be long enough to evoke a sense of destination. As a general rule of thumb, an observer standing at one end of a fragment should not be able to see the other end.
- 4) Setting. The road fragment should be in a setting characteristic of the original road. In general, sites should be in a secluded, rural area with no modern intrusions such as recent roads or buildings.
- 5) Other associational qualities. The road fragment may possess some other quality which serves to associate it with the historic road. One consideration may be if the road fragment is called "Old Government Road", "Military Road", or some other name indicative of its historic origin.

According to these criteria, all paved roads are considered ineligible for nomination. This seems to be a legitimate choice, for paving is entirely incompatible with the original appearance of the roadways. Abandoned roads, which are overgrown and impassible, have been excluded because they also fail to give the impression of an improved roadway, and

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because enough roads in passable condition still exist. By the same token, width limits have been imposed to exclude roads which have degenerated into mere footpaths. These widths reflect the historic dimensions of the roads, which, in most instances, are compatible with modern, two-lane dirt highways.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency

- Local government
 University
 Other

Specify repository: _____

I. Form Prepared By

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IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

Administration

Sponsored by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the Minnesota Historical Society, this study of the military roads in Minnesota was initiated by means of a contract between the Minnesota Historical Society and the firm of Jeffrey A. Hess, Historical Consultants. Susan Roth of SHPO served as the project director, and Jeffrey A. Hess, historical consultant, served as the principal investigator. Research, field survey, and report preparation were completed by Demian Hess, research historian for the firm, who holds a B.A. in American Civilization from Brown University.

Selection of Field Survey Sample

The various military roads run for hundreds of miles throughout Minnesota. Budgetary and time constraints made it impossible to inspect all of the road system. The goal was therefore to inspect a sufficiently large portion of the road system to formulate typological data for the preparation of the Multiple Property Documentation form, and to select a limited number of sites for National Register designation. This task was facilitated by the work performed by historian Grover Singley in the late 1960s. Singley researched the locations, and performed field surveys, of the five military roads designated by the Minnesota Road Act of 1850. His findings were published by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1974, in a monograph entitled: Tracing Minnesota's Old Government Roads. This monograph served as a basic reference to locate the five original military roads.

Field Survey

Based on Singley's work, the military roads were plotted on current Minnesota Department of Transportation county highway maps. In most cases, the military roads were either still in use or overlain by current highways. In some instances, Singley was able to identify abandoned stretches of military road. These sites were also plotted on the county highway maps. In November and December of 1988, and June 1989, an attempt was made to drive over the routes where they were still in use, and to inspect all known abandoned fragments. All of the road fragments surveyed were documented by means of 35mm black-and-white photographs, 35mm color slides, and field notes.

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Due to time constraints, only three military roads were inspected in their entirety. These were: the Point Douglas-Superior road (original length: 181 miles); the Mendota-Wabasha road (original length: 76 miles); and the Mendota-Big Sioux River road (original completed length: approximately 100 miles). The survey examined 357 out of 559 miles of road built by the Topographical Engineers, and thus covered a representative sample of all the military roads in the state (this total figure does not include the 95-mile Mendota-Fort Ridgely road, for which the Topographical Engineers only let contracts to clear timber).

Preparation of Survey Forms

After the field survey, the identified sections of military road were recorded for SHPO on appropriate inventory forms. A separate form was prepared for each continuous section of road of consistent physical appearance which appeared to be located on a military route. A total of 42 road fragments were thus identified.

Additional Research

In order to assess the integrity of each road fragment and to write an historic context for the road system as a whole, it was necessary to develop a general historical understanding of the growth of Minnesota's highway system, the development of the federal road building program itself, and basic information on the Corps of Topographical Engineers. Fortunately, several excellent studies had already been written on these subjects. For general information on Minnesota as well as specific facts on the military road program, the best source is Arthur J. Larsen's The Development of the Minnesota Road System (MHS, 1966). Other important sources include: W. Turrentine Jackson, Wagon Roads West: A Study of Federal Road Surveys and Construction in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1846-1869 (University of California Press, 1952); and Willam H. Goetzmann, Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959). The annual reports of the Corps of Topographical Engineers from 1850-1861 were also examined to gain specific information on each road.

In order to develop registration criteria, an attempt was made to determine what work had been done in other states to assess the integrity of historic roads. Toward this end, consultations were held with the staffs of the National Register, the Wyoming SHPO, the Arizona SHPO, and the Utah SHPO.

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Development of Registration Criteria

The field survey revealed that the physical integrity of all the road fragments was very low. Nevertheless, given the great historical significance of the roads, it was felt that portions of the road system deserved to be nominated to the National Register. Based on conversations with the staffs of the National Register and the SHPOs of several states, the research team decided that registration criteria should be developed which would allow a limited number of sites to be nominated. The object was to select only those sites which, given the current site conditions, best represented the resource in terms of feeling and association.

According to the criteria developed, route became a primary consideration in judging the integrity of a road fragment. The road fragment had to closely conform to the original route of the road, otherwise, it was felt, the designation of the site as part of the military road system would be largely meaningless--particularly considering the extent to which the roads have been altered overtime.

The next most important criteria were that the road fragment be passable, unpaved, and of approximately the same dimensions as the original roadway. The object was to select sites which would evoke a sense of the old, narrow, dirt military roads. Pavement, it was felt, would detract from this feeling; in addition, the survey had revealed that there were substantially fewer unpaved road fragments than there were paved fragments. The criteria were also designed to exclude deteriorated, barely visible road fragments. It was felt that these also failed to convey a strong feeling of the original roadway. Furthermore, it was felt that an attempt had to be made to exclude sites which had become primarily archaeological in nature. If physical condition were not a factor, then any area through which a road had once passed was conceivably eligible for nomination.

Drawing upon the work done by the Arizona and Wyoming SHPOs, it was also decided that a road fragment should be of sufficient length to evoke a sense of travel or destination. Once again, the object was to ensure that road sites would be able to evoke a sense of the historic route. Furthermore, the criterion was intended to avoid the proliferation of hundreds of "mini" sites--that is, those sections of the old road which were still in use, either having been incorporated into modern roads, drive ways or farm tracks, but which were no more than a few feet in length.

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Site Selection

County atlases and other maps were used to determine the route-integrity of each road fragment. Map documentation was not available for road fragments in some areas, and these sites could not be assessed. After excluding all sites which did not conform to route, and which were paved or deteriorated, seven road fragments were determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register. One fragment had been part of the Mendota-Wabasha road; two had been part of the Mendota-Big Sioux River road; and four were once part of the Point Douglas-Superior road. Under this study, individual nominations have been prepared for 2 of these sites. It is hoped that these nominations will serve as a model, and that eventually all eligible sites will be included in the National Register.

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