



# MANY STORIES—STILL UNTOLD

## A New Vision for Minnesota's Historic Fort Snelling



**On September 10, 1820,** soldiers laid the cornerstone for what today is Minnesota's best-known historic site—Historic Fort Snelling. To commemorate the fort's bicentennial in 2020, the Minnesota Historical Society is embarking on a major initiative to reintroduce this dramatic area to Minnesotans and history lovers worldwide.

For centuries, Historic Fort Snelling and the surrounding area have evoked both pride and pain for people of many backgrounds. It is also a place of great beauty, located at the confluence of the mighty Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. Yet, today the area is underutilized. Its buildings are aging and unused. Many enlightening stories of the site's history are not well known, and the area itself is difficult to reach and navigate by foot, bicycle or car.

With the support of citizens like you and the State of Minnesota, a new vision for Historic Fort Snelling is possible—a new way of drawing Minnesotans and people worldwide to this unique, compelling site.

### **What is the vision for Historic Fort Snelling?**

Our vision is that visitors of all ages and backgrounds will come together in a park-like public commons overlooking the Mississippi. Historic buildings will be rehabilitated to serve the public with visitor amenities and exhibits. People will gather to share experiences and reflect upon the site's many stories—stories of American history told nowhere else—placing Minnesota on the map for history and park lovers worldwide.



## What is the vision? (continued)

- Historic buildings will be rehabilitated to bring the public a new visitor center and exhibits.
- Wayfinding for the entire area will be enhanced for pedestrians and vehicles, linking destinations like Minnehaha Falls, Coldwater Spring, Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, and Fort Snelling State Park.
- Visitors will gather to commemorate the fort's mosaic of stories in a park-like setting that builds upon the beautiful bluff-top vista and includes places for private reflection and public programming and events.
- The many peoples connected with this site will share their powerful stories and experiences, illustrating universal historical themes: conflict and the struggle for power, human rights, the yearning for freedom.
  - **The Dakota.** To many Dakota people, the confluence is homeland, the birthplace of the world. Later, the fort was site of an internment camp for some 1,600 Dakota following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.
  - **Westward expansion.** The fort represents a site of U.S. expansion into Dakota and Ojibwe homelands. Here soldiers mustered throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries to engage in national and global conflicts.
  - **Slavery.** Dred and Harriet Scott were among the enslaved people who used their residence at Fort Snelling to champion freedom.
  - **Trade.** The rivers created a watery highway for trade that played a major part in the site's history since prehistoric times, through the fur trade era, to today.
  - **Military intelligence.** During World War II, Japanese Americans, many of whom had recently been forcibly relocated to internment camps, trained at Fort Snelling to gather intelligence that helped end the war.

## Time is of the essence.

Phase I creates a foundation for the fort's bicentennial. Future phases complete the vision as more and more visitors engage with the site. Together, private and public investments will allow Minnesota to bring a new Historic Fort Snelling to the world, positioning this National Historic Landmark for its third century.

### PHASE I—BY 2020

MNHS is requesting \$34 million from the State of Minnesota and \$12 million in private funding to:

- Rehabilitate historic cavalry barracks (Building 18) and ordnance building (Building 22) to create new visitor center
- Demolish current visitor center and landscape vacated space
- Enhance wayfinding
- Create a park-like plaza for reflection and commemoration
- Create new exhibits and other amenities inside the visitor center

### FUTURE PHASES

Historic Fort Snelling's future phases will include:

- Enhanced wayfinding and landscaping, creating paths and river views
- Completion of public green spaces
- Rehabilitation of Building 30 (mule barn)
- Renovation of Building 17 (cavalry barracks), potentially with other external partners

## How can I help create a new Historic Fort Snelling?

- Contact your Minnesota legislators [mnhs.org/hfs2020](https://mnhs.org/hfs2020)
- Email [development@mnhs.org](mailto:development@mnhs.org) or call 1-651-259-3094 to talk with us about making a donation.



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