

A Short History of Ownership and Usage Guidelines for the Fort Snelling National Historic Landmark

Land in the Fort Snelling area was transferred from the U.S. government to the state of Minnesota in three different transactions. The land transfers were conditioned on the state managing the land in certain ways, primarily with respect to protection of historic resources and interpretation of the site for the public. These guidelines were formalized in documents labeled Program for Protection and Utilization (PPU) for the Fort Snelling National Historic Landmark. These early documents, described below, are available for public review at the National Park Service office in St. Paul. An outcome of the current process will be development of a new PPU for the Fort Snelling National Historic Landmark. This PPU will replace similar predecessor documents that are now outdated.

On October 27, 1961, the United States conveyed to the state of Minnesota the round tower, the chapel, and much of the land below the bluff that makes up what is now commonly described as Fort Snelling State Park.

In connection with that land transfer is a document titled "Proposed Development and Utilization of a 'Fort Snelling Historic State Park.'" The document references an attached state park development plan titled "Significant Values and Objectives for a Fort Snelling Historical State Park" dated August 1, 1961. Related to this transaction is a National Park Service report dated September 15, 1961 and titled "Report on Application by Minnesota Department of Conservation for Acquisition of Surplus Federal Properties for Historic Monument Purposes."

The second parcel conveyed to the state of Minnesota consisted of the remainder of the historic fort property atop the bluff that lies north of Highway 55. This transaction occurred October 1, 1969, but is closely related to documents dating back to 1966. The state first applied for this land on November 25, 1966 "for use for historic monument purposes." That application included a "Program of Utilization" identifying the state's intended uses for the land. Related to how the state planned to manage the land was the "Fort Snelling State Historical Park Agreement" between the Minnesota Department of Conservation and the Minnesota Historical Society dated August 14, 1968. Also related is Chapter 956, Laws of Minnesota, 1969, which transfers custodial control of the historic fort to the Minnesota Historical Society and makes MHS the "state agency" in charge of the site. That was signed into law June 4, 1969.

In the 1969 conveyance, the Veterans Administration reserved the right to continue to use some buildings on the property. The Veterans Administration vacated the buildings and turned them over to MHS in 1991. The 1969 deed was also amended in 1999 to allow MHS to lease the property to a third party.

The third transaction involved what is often described as the "Upper Post" and included the land west of Highway 5, south of Highway 55 and north of the

airport. This property contains a number of buildings that have been vacant for many years. This land was conveyed to the state of Minnesota on August 1, 1971.