Mankato
Where the rivers meet

In 1852, where the Minnesota and Blue Earth rivers meet, settlers founded the town of Mankato. Its name comes from the Sioux word “mahkato” or “blue earth,” referring to the blue clay lining the Blue Earth River’s banks.

Tragedy marred its history when, in 1862, frustrated Sioux Indians, facing hunger from crop failure and broken promises from the government, attacked several settlements in the Minnesota River Valley. The so-called “Sioux Uprising” lasted only a few weeks, but resulted in the hanging of 38 warriors on Dec. 26, 1862, in Mankato, and resettlement of hundreds of others to distant territories.

Woolen mills, foundries, carriage and wagon shops, flour and lumber mills were early industries. Nearby quarries continue to furnish limestone for road building and animal feeds, and making cement and asphalt roofing.

Today, the community is a manufacturing and trade center for much of Southwestern Minnesota. And more than 48,000 residents of varying ancestry, among them Welsh, German, Swiss, Lebanese, Syrian, Greek, and Vietnamese, call Mankato (and North Mankato) home.

HIGHLIGHTS

Mankato Mini-Session

The Minnesota House of Representatives took an unusual step this year when, for the first time in history, it held an interim mini-session away from the capital city. More than 100 House members and their staff went to Southeastern Minnesota for nearly a week of committee meetings. With headquarters in Mankato, hearings and tours took place from Sept. 8-11 in cities like Amboy, Austin, Good Thunder, Le Center, Mapleton, New Ulm, Waseca, and Windom.

The Region 9 Regional Development Commission, the Association of Minnesota Counties, and the League of Minnesota Cities gave a welcome reception in North Mankato Sept. 8. Here, House Speaker Robert Vanasek (DFL-New Prague) expressed thanks and enthusiasm for the upcoming meetings.

He told the audience, “we think folks out here in rural Minnesota have just as much right to be involved in making legislative policy as folks in the Twin Cities area...and we want to make the legislative process as open and as available to people in the rural part of the state as we do to Minnesota citizens who reside in the seven-county area.”

More than 30 meetings took place throughout the area: on the Mankato State University campus; in high school auditoriums and gymnasiums, and a technical institute cafeteria; in public libraries and a town hall; and in Norman’s Cafe. Representatives attended a mural pre-dedication ceremony, and toured a refuse burning site, sewage treatment facilities, and Farm America. And members were guests of local residents in their homes.

This issue of Mini-Session Report reviews mini-session events in highlights, committee action summaries, and photos.

Nothing herein is admissible as legal proof of legislative intent.
DWI laws

First-time drunk driving offenders should go to jail, a group of Mapleton High School students told a joint meeting of the House Transportation and Judiciary Committees Sept. 10. Over 300 students and other citizens packed the Mapleton-Amboy-Good Thunder gymnasium where visiting lawmakers came to talk about drunk driving laws.

"DWI laws need to be strengthened in all areas," said one Mapleton student. "First-time offenders should receive a mandatory jail sentence, instead of a fine."

Students not only advocate harsher penalties for first-time offenders, but they also say "no" to work or limited licenses for repeat offenders.

Last session, the Legislature expanded limited licenses provisions to include homemakers. "There was some controversy about this legislation," says Rep. Alice Johnson (DFL-Spring Lake Park). "It seemed like it [the law] was opening up limited licenses and softening our laws toward drunk drivers. It was out of these concerns we decided to look into how the limited licenses provisions work."

A representative from the Minnesota Criminal Justice System DWI Task Force says giving homemakers a limited license is not going to substantially increase the risk of harm to the community because they're generally one-time offenders.

"Our focus is on the repeat violator. Tightening up the limited licenses is not going to be effective for this group. Taking away their license plates may stop them from driving," he says.

But Don Nichols, an attorney who has defended people arrested for DWI, says pulling the plates won't keep repeat offenders off the road. Nichols told the crowd that Minnesota's DWI laws are tough enough. He suggests the state make uniform DWI sentences and policies.

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Town meeting

Nearly one hundred people filled Mankato's Fitzgerald Middle School auditorium for a town meeting with legislators Sept. 10. The meeting, part of the three-day Mankato mini-session, gave townspeople the chance to discuss upcoming issues and make their legislative priorities known.

Participants asked the panel of House leaders to:
- provide more education funding (some want a voucher system with jail terms and fines for parents of truant children; others suggested removing the cap on funding for early childhood family education programs);
- provide on-site child care;
- extend the postsecondary enrollment option program to private school students;
- revise Headstart limitations so more children can enroll;
- settle on a law prohibiting discrimination against gay men and lesbian women;
- increase state funding for libraries and domestic abuse programs;
- clean up water supplies;
- put more money into programs like Job Skill Partnership Training; and
- improve the state's business climate (according to those who testified, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, and property taxes have slowed down economic development in Minnesota; they urged the Legislature to change the tax structure so that Minnesota businesses are competitive with surrounding states).

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Rural Emergency Medical Services (REMS)

Tough economic times in rural Minnesota communities mean more than low crop prices. Rising insurance rates and health care costs often discourage farmers from seeking needed health care.

Members of the medical community in Southwestern Minnesota have one solution. Doctors and dentists in Kandiyohi, Renville, Swift, Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Redwood, and Lyon counties have volunteered for the Rural Emergency Medical Services (REMS) program.

Dr. Jim Thiede from the Willmar Medical Center described the program to members of the Health and Human Services Division of the Appropriations Committee Sept. 10. According to Thiede, REMS focuses on farmers who meet certain income guidelines. Volunteers from community action agencies visit farm families who may be eligible for the program, offer the program's assistance, and sign up the families if they're willing. If a family qualifies for REMS, they're eligible for one year. Or, if an emergency occurs, a family may be able to get into the program retroactively.

Thiede says REMS, organized in 1985, requires its doctors and dentists (who must also sign into the program) to give a 50 percent discount on their fees. REMS pays the remaining 50 percent up to $500 per family per year. Thiede says this covers most outpatient costs. The program asks drug companies and hospitals to pick up individual costs on a case-by-case basis.

Thiede sees the program as "...a way to provide a degree of free care for farmers who are in trouble." Though they don't have to pay, farmers receive copies of all bills for their health care. If their finances improve, REMS encourages farmers to contribute back to the program.

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KIDS demonstration

Problem: How to offer a variety of advanced or specialized courses to a small number of high school students in remote rural school districts.

Solution: KIDS (Knowledge Interactive Distribution System), a two-way interactive video and audio system that links students at all sites with an instructor, allowing the students to see and hear the instructor as well as one another.
The Future and Technology Committee and Education Finance Division of the Education Committee took part in an on-site demonstration of KIDS Sept. 10. Committee members and staff communicated through two-way interactive TV to sites at Mankato State University, St. Peter, Cleveland, Lake Crystal, Nicollet, and St. Clair.

Three video cameras in each classroom allow the instructor to switch to a view of himself or herself, the students, or a blackboard-type display for written information. Microphones pick up sound and broadcast signals by way of microwave, cable, UHF, or fiber optics.

Teachers Mary Everett and Sue Ehlers say the system's exciting and challenging to them and to the students. And they say discipline's not a problem. Students say they like taking care of themselves rather than having a teacher in the room at all times, and they appreciate the opportunity to get otherwise unavailable courses.

According to Dr. Frank Birming­ham, KIDS project director, over 100 Minnesota school districts are using some form of the KIDS system. Birmingham says the system will increase educational possibilities for the greater community through postsecondary and vocational courses, library programs, community education classes, general interest topic discussions, and other programs.

Tax reform

"Who's really paying the state sales tax at Mankato State University (MSU)?" The answer is not just the state, but also the students, according to the Mankato State Student Association.

At a Sept. 9 Taxes Committee meeting, MSU students asked legislators to eliminate the six percent sales tax on university purchases, arguing it could force tuition and fees to go up.

"The effect of the state taxing itself is much more than a back door cut in Mankato State's appropriation," says Tim Wierzbicki, president of the association. "...we've calculated MSU's total state sales tax liability to be in excess of $600,000 on over $10 million of taxable expenditures."

Taxes Committee members not only heard gripes about sales taxes. Local officials voiced opposition to the Department of Revenue's levy limit appeal process and the new levy limit. And the House Research staff briefed members on new property tax changes.

The changes, some House members say, don't target relief to those who really need it. Others say the changes shift too much aid to Northeastern Minnesota at the expense of the rest of the state.

Rep. Gordon Voss (DFL-Blaine), committee chair, says "The targeting is worse than it was before. If we offer nothing next year other than a homestead credit targeted approach, we will have achieved a lot."

The Taxes Committee will continue to hear testimony on the new tax law at upcoming mini-sessions.

Surrogate mother agreements

Can or should the state regulate surrogate mother agreements? Members of the Adoption and Birth Alternatives Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee's Crime and Family Law Division held the first of several hearings on these questions Sept. 9.

According to a House Research memorandum, no state yet has tried to regulate surrogate parenting, but several states have proposed legislation to either endorse such agreements or prohibit them.

Chair Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) says she wants the subcommittee to discuss two areas before considering specific legislation: What are the constitutional issues that relate to surrogate mother agreements? And should Minnesota enforce surrogate contracts as a matter of public policy?

A House Research analyst presented background information on the constitutional issues. Public testimony came from Evelyn Van Allen, Mina­polis, who suggests legislators consider the ethics of surrogate parenting, and recommends minimal regulation at this time. Neala Schleuning, Mankato, recommends prohibiting any fee payments, and supports waiting until after the child's birth to finalize any agreement between the surrogate mother and adoptive parents.

Liquor regulation

An advisory bill that would allow small-town grocers to sell liquor got the attention of the Regulated Industries Committee Sept. 9.

The proposed bill, which Rep. Marcel Frederick (IR-Mankato) sponsors, would allow small communities (those with fewer than 1,000 residents) to issue off-sale liquor licenses to general merchandise stores.

"Small communities are just about drying up and blowing away. People have to drive 20-30 miles to get a loaf of bread, milk, and even gas. If we can get another profit center in a store...we'd be doing a great service to small communities of this state," Frederick says.

Frederick's proposal would affect about 543 Minnesota cities. Supporters say if it becomes law it would give equal opportunity to small cities.

Opponents, however, say, "If this legislation passes...cities will want general liquor availability."

Others in the liquor industry say municipal liquor stores may take a loss if the state allows general merchandise stores to sell liquor.

The committee will hear more testimony on the liquor-in-stores advisory bill during the October mini-session in St. Paul.


Good Thunder's mural

Painting a 72-foot high grain elevator isn’t a job for just anyone.
Legislators and staff got a chance to preview the work of St. Paul artist Ta-Coumba Aiken Sept. 9. Aiken, a self-described amateur historian, is working to transform a grain elevator in Good Thunder from an unobtrusive gray to a brightly colored panorama depicting the Southern Minnesota town’s history. Good Thunder, a Winnebago Indian Chief, from whom the town gets its name, looks out from the elevator’s tallest point.
The town of Good Thunder bustled with activity in the 1940s. Area residents brought their business to grocery stores, taverns, hardware stores, a lumberyard and a drug store. Only one grocery store and one hardware store remain today; the drugstore and lumberyard are long gone.
The town’s five-member rural development corporation commissioned Aiken to create the mural. Town planners hope the mural will draw artists and crafts people to the area.

Future mini-sessions:
Oct. 14-16 St. Paul
Nov. 16-18 Alexandria
Jan. 13-15, 1988 (place to be determined)
COMMITTEE ACTION

AGRICULTURE
Friday, Sept. 11
Joint meeting with Ag., Transportation & Semi-State Div./Approps.
• Toured Farm America and the University of Minnesota (U of M-Waseca) Southern Experiment Station.

APPROPRIATIONS
Ag., Transportation & Semi-State Div./Approps
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Heard testimony from the Humanities Commission on the Chautauqua Program and the Bicentennial Constitution Commission.
• Heard report on State Arts Board activities.

Thursday, Sept. 10
Joint meeting with Transportation Committee.
• Limited licenses HA15 (Johnson, A., DFL-Spring Lake Park)—heard.
• Heard public testimony on the effectiveness of Minnesota's DWI laws, and on highway funding and needs. (See Highlight)

Friday, Sept. 11
Joint meeting with Agriculture Committee.
• Toured Farm America and the U of M-Waseca Southern Experiment Station.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Heard public testimony on economic development programs in and around the Mankato/North Mankato area.

EDUCATION
Thursday, Sept. 10
• Heard testimony from school officials on cooperative efforts among Southwestern Minnesota school districts.

Education Finance Div./Educ.
Thursday, Sept. 10
• Heard profiles of Le Center, Le Sueur, and Mankato school districts.

Joint meeting with Future & Technology Committee.
• Heard about and took part in on-site demonstration of KIDS (Knowledge Interactive Distribution System) interactive TV project at MSU, Lake Crystal, Cleveland, Nicollet, St. Peter, and St. Clair. (See Highlight)

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES
Thursday, Sept. 10
• Heard an overview of groundwater problems, focusing on those related to agricultural practices; testimony from state departments and agencies, environmental organizations, and other concerned organizations and citizens.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS & INSURANCE
Thursday, Sept. 10
• Heard House Research Department update on no-fault automobile insurance.
• No-fault claims—dollar limit removal HF971 (Rukavina, DFL-Virginia)—heard.
• Auto underinsurance liability—definition HF1021 (Carruthers, DFL-Brooklyn Center)—heard.

(Continued on page 8)
Legislators watch St. Paul artist Ta-Coumba Aiken, on the scaffolding, put the finishing touches on his grain elevator mural depicting Good Thunder’s history.

The Environment and Natural Resources Committee toured NSP’s refuse burning facility in Mankato.

House members and staff view work under progress on a mural in Good Thunder. Left to right: Lee Lambert, educational programs coordinator; Rep. Gene Pelowski (DFL-Winona); Paul Cerkvenik, legislative assistant to the speaker; Speaker Rep. Robert Vanasek (DFL-New Prague); Mayor John Christenson, Good Thunder; Rep. Alan Welle (DFL-Willmar).

Taxes Committee members hear MSU students talk about who’s really paying the state sales taxes.

Rep. Phil Riveness (DFL-Bloomington) and Rep. Stephen Dille (IR-Dassel) confer at an Economic Development and Housing Committee meeting.

Future and Technology Committee members and the Education Division of Appropriations conduct a hearing from six locations using two-way interactive TV.

Local and Urban Affairs Committee members tour the Vernon Center Fire Hall.

Dr. James Knapp, Detroit Lakes, chair of the Rural Health Task Force, told the Health and Human Services Division of Appropriations that rural Minnesotans’ access to health care is in jeopardy.
FUTURE & TECHNOLOGY
Thursday, Sept. 10
Joint meeting with Education Finance Div./Educ.
• Heard about and took part in on-site demonstration of KIDS (Knowledge Interactive Distribution System) interactive TV project at Mankato State University, Lake Crystal, Cleveland, Nicollet, St. Peter, and St. Clair. (See Highlight)

GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Heard background presentation on international investments.
• Northern Ireland—investment limitations HF453 (O’Connor, DFL-St. Paul)—heard.

HIGHER EDUCATION
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Board of Minnesota Colleges—establishment HF1100 (Larsen, DFL-Ramsey)—heard.

Friday, Sept. 11
Joint meeting with Education Div./Approps.
• Toured MSU campus focusing on the need to expand academic facilities.
• Heard testimony from State University officials and students on enrollment trends, facilities, student costs, financial aid, science and technology, applied research and economic development, teacher education, and professional recruiting and retention.

JUDICIARY
Adoption & Birth Alternatives Subc./Crime & Family Law Div./Judic.
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Heard House Research Department overview and public testimony on issues relating to proposed regulation of surrogate mother agreements. (See Highlight)

Child Abuse/Child Protection Subc./Judic.
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Heard testimony from child protection professionals, including representatives of Nicollet and Brown counties, and the city of Mankato.

Status Offenders Subc./Judic.
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Heard testimony on Minnesota’s current laws governing juvenile status offenders.

Sentencing Guidelines Subc./Judic.
Friday, Sept. 11
• Heard testimony on possible legislation governing prosecutorial charging practices, and on the possibility of establishing guidelines governing the use of conditions of probation.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS
Thursday, Sept. 10
• Reviewed and discussed the 1987 Unemployment Insurance Law.

LOCAL & URBAN AFFAIRS
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Fire protection districts—established HF205 (Carlson, D., IR-Sandstone)—heard.
• Heard public testimony on creating special fire protection districts.

Thursday, Sept. 10
• Toured volunteer fire halls in Vernon Center and Amboy.
• Heard public testimony on volunteer fire departments.

REGULATED INDUSTRIES
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Liquor regulation study HA38 (Frederick, IR-Mankato)—heard.
• Heard testimony on whether general merchandise stores should be allowed to sell intoxicating liquor at off-sale. (See Highlight)

TAXES
Wednesday, Sept. 9
• Heard House Research Department overview on property tax changes for 1988-89.
• Heard public testimony on tax changes enacted in 1987. (See Highlight)

TRANSPORTATION
Thursday, Sept. 10
Joint meeting with Ag., Transportation & Semi-State Div./Approps.
• Limited licenses HA15 (Johnson, A., DFL-Spring Lake Park)—heard.
• Heard public testimony on the effectiveness of Minnesota’s DWI laws, and on highway funding and needs. (See Highlight)

SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
Friday, Sept. 11
• Heard overview of housing programs and programs for the homeless and battered women in Mankato area.
• Discussed how and what the state could do to assist area programs.
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*All rooms are in the State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155
Revised July 6, 1987
For the 14th consecutive year, the Minnesota House of Representatives went to the State Fair. At the information exhibit in the Education Building, fairgoers could visit with House members and staff, get answers to questions about state government, and pick up materials about the Legislature and the legislative process.

House members at the fair

Doug W. Carlson  
IR-Sandstone  
Karen Clark  
DFL-Minneapolis  
Norman DeBlieck  
DFL-Milroy  
Terry Dempsey  
IR-New Ulm  
Stephen Dille  
IR-Dassel  
John Dorn  
DFL-Mankato  
Marcel Frederick  
IR-Mankato  
Dean Harline  
IR-Owatonna  
Bob Haukoos  
IR-Albert Lea  
Virgil Johnson  
IR-Caledonia  
Rick Krueger  
DFL-Staples  
Ernest Larsen  
DFL-Ramsey  
Harold Lasley  
DFL-Cambridge  
K. J. McDonald  
IR-Watertown  
Harriet McPherson  
IR-Stilwater  
Connie Morrison  
IR-Burnsville  
Chair Nelson  
DFL-Barrett  
Sally Olsen  
IR-St. Louis Park  
Edgar Olson  
DFL-Fosston  
Katy Olson  
DFL-Sherburn  
Tom Osthoff  
DFL-St. Paul  
Dennis D. Ozment  
IR-Rosemount  
Sandra Pappas  
DFL-St. Paul  
Gene Pelowski  
DFL-Winona  
Jerome Peterson  
DFL-Princeton  
Leonard Price  
DFL-Woodbury  
Ann Rest  
DFL-New Hope  
Don Richter  
IR-Wadena  
Peter Rodosovich  
DFL-Faribault  
John Rose  
IR-Roseville  
Tom Rukavina  
DFL-Virginia  
Gary Schafer  
IR-Gibbon  
Arthur Seberg  
IR-Eagan  
Wayne Simonneau  
DFL-Fridley  
Eileen Tompkins  
IR-Apple Valley  
Sylvestor Uphus  
IR-Sauk Centre  
Don Valente  
IR-Little Canada  
Robert Vanasek  
DFL-New Prague  
Kathleen Vellenga  
DFL-St. Paul  
Gordon Yoss  
DFL-Biaise  
Jean Wagenius  
DFL-Minneapolis  
Bob Waltman  
IR-Elgin  
Alan Welle  
DFL-Willmar  
Ted Winter  
DFL-Fulda  
Ann Wynia  
DFL-St. Paul

“Gopher Tales,” a video program, gave fairgoers a taste of Minnesota’s past.
## MINNESOTA STATE FAIR OPINION POLL 1987

The Minnesota House of Representatives information exhibit gave more than 3,000 visitors a chance to vote on seven current issues using a push-button voting device from a legislator’s desk. Here are the Unofficial Opinion Poll results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 ...requiring motor vehicle owners to get new license plates every six years.</td>
<td>36% (1,082)</td>
<td>64% (1,961)</td>
<td>3,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ...setting a curfew for teenage workers.</td>
<td>60% (1,813)</td>
<td>40% (1,220)</td>
<td>3,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ...allowing parents to set up IRA-like accounts to pay for their children’s college education.</td>
<td>84% (2,575)</td>
<td>16% (475)</td>
<td>3,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 ...requiring multiple DWI offenders to give up their drivers’ licenses and their license plates until they regain their driving rights.</td>
<td>89% (2,682)</td>
<td>11% (346)</td>
<td>3,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 ...allowing MN bars to stay open past 1 a.m.</td>
<td>36% (1,100)</td>
<td>64% (1,927)</td>
<td>3,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 ...requiring marriage applicants to be tested for AIDS.</td>
<td>63% (1,921)</td>
<td>37% (1,108)</td>
<td>3,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 ...requiring all unleaded gasoline sold in MN for use in motor vehicles to contain ethanol.</td>
<td>31% (950)</td>
<td>69% (2,073)</td>
<td>3,023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Large maps allowed fair visitors to pinpoint their legislative districts.

Fairgoers tested their knowledge of Minnesota history and government on the four-part, computerized, “Government I.Q. Quiz.”

In Minnesota’s state fish the walleye or sunfish? Youngsters made nine such choices when they played the “Minnesota State Symbols Game.”
Area residents invited legislators to their homes during the Mankato Mini-Session. Rep. Richard Jefferson (DFL-Mpls), center, dines with, left to right, Mary Beth Nygaard, Sam, Ben, and Tony Kunkel. Molly, foreground, is the family dog.