

13225 Thomas Drive
Little Falls, Minnesota 56345
September 26, 2016

The National Medal for Museum and Library Service
Office of the Director
Institute of Museum and Library Services
955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000
Washington, DC 20024-2135

Dear Members of the Museum and Library Services Board:

I am writing in support of the nomination of the Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Museum at Little Falls, Minnesota for the 2017 National Medal for Museum and Library Service Award.

The Morrison County Historical Society was formed eighty years ago in Little Falls, Minnesota. In the forty years that I have been associated with its work, the crowning achievement of the organization has been the design, construction and operation of the Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum. Initial funds were donated to the Society in honor of the late Charles A. Weyerhaeuser by members of his family. In 1975 the Society moved from a musty basement into its new building. With a highly qualified and dedicated staff, the Society and Museum are among the most respected in the state of Minnesota.

The Museum is located on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, a short distance from Charles A. Lindbergh's boyhood home and Museum, and adjacent to Lindbergh State Park. It is near the site of the 1805 winter fort built by explorer Zebulon Pike who searched for the source of the Mississippi River. The Museum was designed by a Minneapolis, Minnesota architect, Foster Dunwiddie, who took great care in incorporating the area's early history into the building's structure, as well as blending it with the natural environment of the Mississippi River. Native prairie plantings, a gazebo overlooking the river, a landscaped courtyard and fountain provide an outdoor area for learning and summer programs for children and adults. The gable roofed Museum reflects the early buildings of Morrison County, with wooden shingles, small window panes on double-hung windows, working shutters, and muted board siding. Slate floors reflect the rock formations underlying the waterfalls on the river.

Inside the building, two main exhibit rooms house permanent and rotating displays. A third area contains thousands of artifacts for individual research, keeping the exhibit areas from becoming overwhelmed by artifacts. Another room with a large fireplace made from locally made used brick provides space for meetings, luncheons and classes. The extra wide hallways along the courtyard are lined with windows and serve as display areas, as well as crowd dispersal and outdoor viewing. Researchers can do their own research in the Museum's library, or hire Museum staff.

Emphasis on education and historic preservation have been the ongoing forces of the Society. It has protected not only artifacts housed in the Museum, but has lead efforts to save, restore, and protect historic sites on the river, as well as buildings in historic downtown districts.

Two individuals, Jan and Art Warner, have been the guiding force in the Morrison County Historical Society over the last forty years and were strategic leaders in the location, creation and success of the Weyerhaeuser Museum. Their leadership was invaluable during the design stage of the building, when knowledge and integrity were critical to gain the initial private funding. In 2016 they were awarded Lifetime Achievement Awards by the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums.

The Museum continues to grow today under competent and friendly leadership that focuses on the history of the area. Among the special services offered by the Museum are family files of area residents which contain obituaries, newspaper articles, pedigree charts, census records and other documents. The Museum staff conducts school tours and maintains a website with photos of artifacts and activities. In addition, they write and publish an informative quarterly newsletter. The current Director, Mary Warner, has written several books on Morrison County history. The Museum staff strives to offer interesting programs and guest speakers. In September of this year, the Society's guest program featured the winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize for Chemistry, Dr. Brian Kobilka, born and raised in Morrison County.

Thank you for your consideration of this outstanding nominee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ren Holland". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first name "Ren" being more prominent than the last name "Holland".

Ren Holland