

WE ARE A STATE RULED BY law, and certain documents are fundamental to our governance. These include the Minnesota State Constitution and the laws enacted by the state legislature. Recently, the secretary of state's office transferred to the State Archives of the Minnesota Historical Society the official session laws of the legislature, dating from 1858 (the first year of statehood) through 2010. They are contained in more than 500 bound volumes—about 221 cubic feet—now preserved in 252 boxes in the Minnesota History Center.

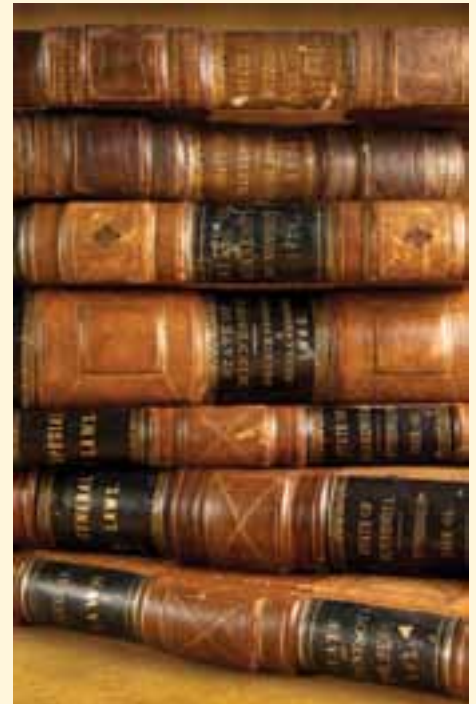
Since statehood, the secretary of state's office has faithfully and carefully preserved these important documents. High-quality paper was used to record the laws, and they were bound in volumes for safekeeping. These records were meant to last, and they are in excellent condition thanks to the stewardship of the secretary of state's office over more than 150 years.

From 1858 to 1907 the session laws were meticulously handwritten; thereafter and up to the present, they have been typewritten. Each law carries original signatures of the speaker and chief clerk of the House of Representatives, the president and secretary of the Senate, the governor, and the secretary of state.

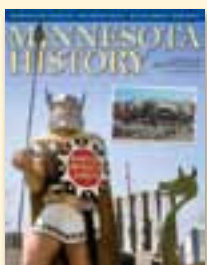
Session laws include all of the acts the legislature passes each year; the laws for each session are usually bound in separate volumes. Eventually, all of the session laws are printed and widely distributed. Laws of a permanent nature are subsequently incorporated in the *Minnesota Statutes*, also known as coded laws. These affect the community at large and apply equally to everyone. For example, statutes concerning the state's criminal code are found in Chapter 609 of the *Minnesota Statutes*. The *Laws of Minnesota* are uncoded laws, including state government appropriations, proposed constitutional amendments, local laws, and temporary laws. An example, pictured at right, is the 1858 law authorizing the City of Hastings to convey real estate for county purposes.

As required by law, both the *Statutes* and the *Laws* are published and are also available at www.revisor.mn.gov/pubs. The original session laws now join the Minnesota State Constitution in the State Archives, assuring citizens that these fundamental documents ensuring our form of government and protecting our civil rights will be preserved and accessible in perpetuity.

—Charles Rodgers,
government records specialist



Leather-bound volumes and an example from 1858 (ERIC MORTENSON/MHS)



About the Cover

A job for the Vikings: Facing bankruptcy and scathing reviews in 1964, Minnesota's exhibit at the New York World's Fair clearly needed pizzazz to survive the next season. Enter the Kensington Runestone and the 28-foot fiberglass Viking now known as Big Ole. In the end, the fair's impact on the runestone story was far greater than the runestone's effect on the fair exhibit. For more on the twentieth-century history of the world's best-known runestone, see the article beginning on page 4. Viking photo copyright Bill Cotter, www.worldsfairphotos.com; postcard in MHS collections.



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