

**Stony Brook University  
The Graduate School**

**Doctoral Defense Announcement**

**Abstract**

**Minneapolis: Urban-environmental Change in the Upper Mississippi, 1824-1924**

**By**

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This dissertation investigates urbanization of the Upper Mississippi between 1824-1924 using an urban-environmental approach. Here urban refers to the concentration of humans and technology while environment refers to the supporting planetary materials as well as the space of the urban. Urban-environmental history narrates the simultaneity of nature's transformation with the building of cities. Beginning with the colonization of the Upper Mississippi, this project shows that Minneapolis was founded upon American civilization's mental and physical transformation of the earth into a support mechanism.

Urbanization of the Upper Mississippi began with its survey as a source of raw material and aesthetic stimulus and accelerates through the process of making it host to a city, Minneapolis. Indians, flora, and fauna started as fertility markers and became emotive markers increasingly, but not completely, linked to the act of consumption. The circulation of aesthetic narrative develops a specific comprehension of nature based in an ideology of Indian recession, supported by the real tales of Indian Maiden suicide. Though participants hoped to harmonize industry and tourism, hydropower development nearly destroyed St. Anthony Falls. Its reconstruction (1869-1872) was also a period of intense theological debate. Recovery from the reconstruction occurred through the discovery of a new milling process, the primary reason for developing the hydropower of the cataract, and through the implementation of park building as a means of city planning.

Subsequently, the manufacture of a capitalist city through picturesque design organization and funded by a vibrant milling center did not realize a bourgeois utopia. Instead, a lingering dissatisfaction results from the experience of actively shaping nature as well as the limits associated with the democratization of owning private land. Finally, the themes of this urban-environmental history yield an improvement in butter. Through the tale of Land O'Lakes, the urban environmental story of Minneapolis shows that the creation of American civilization, the building of American cities, the tapping of natural resources, the gendering of space, and the racialization of America occur synchronously.

**Date:** Friday, May 4, 2007

**Time:** 11:00 am

**Place:** SBS Bldg., Room N-318

**Program:** History

**Dissertation Advisor:** Chris Sellers