Mr. Larsen:

I have been a member of the Round Tower Committee since its beginning, and was consulted by General Hodges and Captain Ashton some months before its formation relative to the whole problem of the restoration and future of the Round Tower. So I suppose I am now in a better position than any one else except Captain Ashton to give the facts as they have developed and to state what the original purpose was.

The money for the furnishing of the Round Tower was collected from individuals and no penny of it was secured either from the United States Government or from the United States Army. A complete distinction must therefore be made between the restoration of the Round Tower and the furnishing of it. No provision was ever made for the custody of articles placed in the Round Tower as exhibits and containers of exhibits. I was asked to give careful thought to a program for this part of the project just before General Hodges left the fort. It had been the general's idea that I should write a short history of Fort Snelling in popular form, which should be published as a little booklet to be sold at the Round Tower; and that the proceeds, along with those from the sale of post cards and similar things, should be turned over to the maintenance fund. This maintenance fund was to take care of the salary of a retired non-commissioned officer, who should act as custodian and guardian of the articles on exhibit in the Round Tower.

I think that General Hodges had not gone farther than this in his plans and had not completely visualized the problem of
final ownership or custody of exhibits and furnishings in the Round Tower. That problem has arisen in recent weeks and must be faced and settled before anyone is going to place articles in the Round Tower. Unless individuals are assured that someone is ultimately responsible, they will not give valuable items. An example of that has arisen in the past week when a descendant of Colonel Josiah Snelling, Miss Marion Snelling Hall, refused to place her family portraits in the Round Tower, until she had received assurance by contract that the Minnesota Historical Society would step in and take possession of the portraits under certain conditions.

Both Colonel Ristine and Captain Ashton desire very keenly that some arrangement shall be made with the Minnesota Historical Society whereby the furniture and furnishings of the Round Tower will be taken over by the Minnesota Historical Society for safe keeping whenever in the judgment of the Executive Committee of the Minnesota Historical Society the Round Tower is not the proper place for exhibits and containers of exhibits. It is also their wish that the Executive Committee of the Minnesota Historical Society shall be willing to accept the proviso which they propose to require hereafter in all acceptances of donations -- the intervention of the Executive Committee of the Minnesota Historical Society whenever in its judgment conditions are not suitable for historical exhibits in the Round Tower.

My own feeling is that the Executive Committee can accept these responsibilities both legally and morally. It is very likely that Fort Snelling will cease to be a center of the United
States army as in the past. Everything points in that direction. If the fort is given over to some other branch of the army, to hospital service, to the training of pilots, or to some other field of activity, it may very well happen, that the Round Tower will not receive adequate supervision as an historic museum. I myself doubt that many things will be turned over to the Round Tower just because of the growing uncertainty of the status of the fort. Therefore, the problem for the Executive Committee of the Minnesota Historical Society will not be great, but I think it may be well to assume that responsibility for its moral effect.

Grace Lee Nute
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