

THE HISTORY OF THE SLEEPY EYE DEPOT MUSEUM

The Winona & St. Peter Railroad first reached Sleepy Eye in 1872. A plat map for the Village of Sleepy Eye Lake was filed on September 18, 1887. The first depot burned down in January 1887. A second depot was built by June 1887 and was used as a freight depot for many years. It still stands a block east of the Depot Museum. The present depot was built in 1902 of red-faced brick and stone trimming. It consisted of a baggage room, men's waiting room, family waiting room, and the east end lunch room. For 87 years the Chicago-North Western Railroad had passenger rail service at Sleepy Eye. The streamliner "Dakota 400" made its last stop in Sleepy Eye on October 25, 1959. After that, the depot served as a freight office.

In the early 1980's the C and NW Railroad offered to sell the depot and Sleepy Eye Depot Preservation Inc. was formed to purchase and renovate the depot. A fund drive was started and in 1984 the depot was purchased. Since that time many changes have taken place. The building was re-roofed and the bricks were tuck pointed and cleaned. Inside, the woodwork was finished and insulation was inserted behind the wall panels. The floors were sanded and sealed, a new electrical system and gas furnace were installed and the bathroom area renovated. All the windows were replaced with new energy efficient ones. A handicapped accessible ramp and landscaping enhanced the building.

On July 3, 1990 the Sleepy Eye Area Historical Society received the keys to the depot and opened a museum, which displays many artifacts from the Sleepy Eye area. On the grounds right next to the museum stands a tall granite obelisk, marking the gravesite of the Dakota Chief, Ish Tak Ha Ba (Sleepy Eye). In 1992, the depot was named to the National Register of Historical Places.

The Depot Museum is open May through December from 2:00PM-5:00PM, or by appointment. Guided tours are available and admission is free.