

**The following is excerpted from the Minnesota Historical Society's 2002 grant application. The archive has graciously allowed the NFPF to make it available online as an example for new grant applicants.**

**The Great Perham Jewel Robbery** by Bernard Kemper

A pharmacist and member of a local Cinema Club in northwestern Minnesota, Bernard Kemper made this eleven-minute silent 16mm film in 1926 or 1927, soon after 16mm cameras were available for purchase. According to people in the community, all the folks on camera are citizens of Perham and the scenes are shot in the town.

This amateur film cleverly incorporates a robbery story with a payback story between husband and wife. The setting is a child's birthday party at a large home. The woman of the house wants to impress her friends with her large string of pearls even though her husband warns her that a robber, Mike McLuke, has been stealing jewels in broad daylight. She makes fun of his caution, and he resolves to teach her a lesson by dressing up as a robber and taking the necklace. In the middle of his fake robbery, they bump a baby buggy and a chase ensues to rescue it. Some great chase footage is shot from the back of an open car. Meanwhile, the real robber accosts the wife who was left behind. The baby is caught by a traffic policeman, and the group returns home where the husband saves the wife in the nick of time, both swearing, "never again." The viewer of this film can see that Kemper carefully thought out his plot to involve as many townspeople as possible. Including children and pets, there must be over forty "actors" in this film. Children at play are featured in the first part of the film in cameo appearances perhaps made for the pleasure of their parents. Bernard's four sons are also in the film.

While it is of great regional interest, the film also stands for an era in amateur film history when neophytes took up the new 16mm format and patterned their work after classic films, such as the *Great Train Robbery* and comedies based on husband/wife arguments. Viewers of today will be highly entertained and reminded of the inventiveness of early amateurs.

The Minnesota Historical Society acquired this film in 1986 from Bernard Kemper's granddaughter, Jackie Lindberg. She signed a donor agreement giving us permission to use the original film in any way we see fit. There is only one print and she gave that to us. A VHS copy has been made for public viewing in the Library, and the original is stored in our archival storage area where the environment is maintained at 63 degrees F and 37% RH.

We are requesting that the laboratory prepare and duplicate this film. According to the lab technician, the film needs a day's work for repair of splices and torn perforations before copying. Then it can be wet-gate printed onto a 16mm dupe negative from which a 16mm black and white answer print will be made. In addition, a BetaSP video master will be made so that we can make additional public reference copies. The Minnesota Historical Society will make a VHS copy for the library of the East Otter Tail County History Museum in Perham, Minnesota. The laboratory cost estimate is attached.

Once the new print is made, the Minnesota Historical Society can screen the new print in its 300-seat auditorium. We host about ten film screenings per year in recent years and these are very popular with the public. The videotape copy is available in our Library six days per week and is cataloged on PALS, our on-line catalog.

The Minnesota Historical Society was created by the first Territorial Legislature of Minnesota to preserve and present Minnesota history. From this beginning in 1849, the Society has worked to foster an appreciation of the state's history and the contributions of the region's earliest inhabitants, as well as those who came later. Believing that history can help present day communities shape their own identities, the Society collects and cares for materials that document human life in Minnesota, provides opportunities for the public to experience the collection's holdings at exhibitions, in the classroom, and via outreach activities. It also supports and conducts research related to Minnesota history and publishes books from its research.

The Society's Library houses 500,000 books, 250,000 photos, 165,000 artifacts, and over 3000 film and video titles. The Society's over 700 employees are recognized as leaders in historic preservation and interpretation. The institution's web site is at [www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org). A brief description of the moving image collection can be found at: <http://www.mnhs.org/library/collections/movingimages/movingimages.html>. Our tax exempt number is \_\_\_\_\_.

The Project Director is Bonnie Wilson, Curator, Sound and Visual Collections, who has developed and managed the Society's film collection as librarian and archivist for thirty years. She is an active member of AMIA and has successfully completed three previous preservation projects with the NFPF.