

P2 / THE PARK'S WATERS

Both visible and hidden.

P3 / PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Annual Depot lighting; missing former trustee Paul Linnee.

P7 / 1860 SURVEY

See the first composite mapping of the Park.

P8 / DISPATCH LOOKBACK

Explosive recollections from 1948.



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PARK HISTORY TODAY

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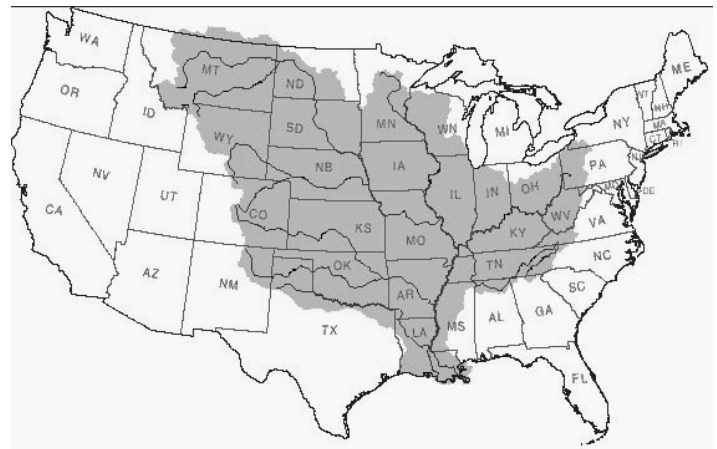
EDITOR'S NOTE:

We salute St. Louis Park Fire Chief Steve Koering, interviewed for our Summer 2022 issue, for being named 2023 Fire Officer of the Year at the MSFCA annual conference. From the City's website:

A summary of the multiple letters of recommendation received by the MSFCA awards committee stated, "Chief Koering represents what it means to be a servant leader. He selflessly and tirelessly gives of himself to better the St. Louis Park Fire Department, the citizens of St. Louis Park and the Fire Service in general. His passions are firefighter safety, public safety, community health, race equity and community risk reduction. He is a visionary and has the intelligence and determination to see those visions become reality."



We also congratulate Bunny's, a Park institution, on its 90th birthday. Based on the always-crowded parking lot, we expect there will be many more. Perhaps Chief Koering will be asked to issue a permit for a cake with 90 candles.



In the beginning, rain fell on the ground and went where the gravity of Mother Earth told it to go, regardless of artificial political subdivision, accruing in swamps, creeks, rivers, and lakes for the benefit of all. In our 2019 book, *Places in the Park; A Physical History of St. Louis Park, MN*, we noted:

The Dakota and other native people had their own concept of "ownership" of the lands and waters just west of Bde Maka Ska, formerly known as Lake Calhoun. Over two hundred years earlier, Massasoit, leader of the Wampanoag when the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, put it this way: "What is this you call property? It cannot be the earth, for the land is our mother, nourishing all her children, beasts, birds, fish and all men. The woods, the streams, everything on it belongs to everybody and is for the use of all. How can one man say it belongs only to him?"

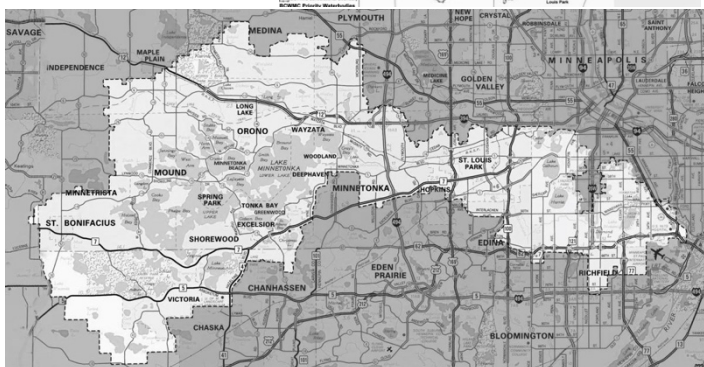
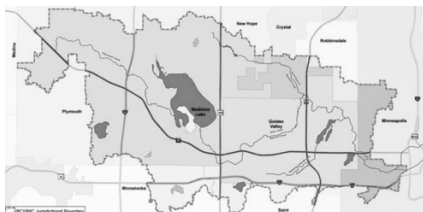
MANAGING THE WATERS, VISIBLE AND HIDDEN; MEASURING THE LANDS

The Mississippi River watershed drains almost half the country. It was the internet and the interstate highway system that served native populations. Every Minnesota schoolkid is told about the raindrop that falls in Lake Itasca and ends up in New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico.

The Public Land Survey System (PLSS) arrived in Minnesota Territory after treaties with native communities transferred the land and the waters around 1852, gridding it all off and dividing it irrespective of the will or wishes of the water. The first surveys of St. Louis Park were filed in 1855, and the lands began to sell. Watershed districts are the closest thing we have to the holistic native worldview. There are 45 of them in Minnesota, established as governmental entities beginning in 1955. These days, hidden storm sewers do much of the work to keep up with the destruction of the land's ability to manage the waters.

ĤAĤA WAKPADAN

We were recently invited to participate in a Hennepin History Museum-sponsored “watershed” event – on the renaming of Bassett Creek, from the watershed immediately north of the Park. Check it out at the HHM website in the HHM blog, describing the Ĥaĥa Wakpadan / Bassett Creek Oral History Project that came out of the Valley Community Presbyterian Church land acknowledgement, and which discusses Dakota, Anishinaabe, Ho-Chunk, and other Indigenous perspectives on the land.



The Minnehaha Creek watershed includes the Lake Minnetonka headwaters and tributary lands; the Bassett Creek District nestles along its northern edge, straddling the Golden Valley city limits.

St. Louis Park falls mostly within the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. While Joel Bassett’s name was connected to the watershed just north, St. Louis Park’s main riverine element – Minnehaha Creek – ostensibly had a Dakota name early on.

When the very first surveys of the land were filed in 1855, the creek was named Brown’s Creek for Joseph R. Brown, a seventeen-year-old army enlistee who allegedly walked from the Fort to Lake Minnetonka with the son of Josiah Snelling, following the watercourse around 1822.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*, went to print the same year as the first surveys of the Park were filed in 1855, and became wildly popular across the land – think “Hamilton!” popular. By 1860, plat maps of the region had incorporated the Minnehaha moniker. Longfellow, who had never been to Minnesota, put the Creek, the Falls, and the entire State on the map, setting his scenes on Dakota and Ojibwe lands.

He based his story line on traditional Haudenosaunee and Iroquois tales, many incorrectly recorded by others. Despite that his native histories were mostly products of his own imagination, the quasi-Dakota name of the Creek has stuck for 165 years, as myths tend to do.

“**HIAWATHA.**”—Longfellow’s new “*Song of Hiawatha*” is attracting the attention of the press in all quarters. Some of the critics are condemning it very severely, and others contend that it possesses great merit.—Among those who commend it are the *National Intelligencer* and the *New York Commercial*. The last named journal thinks there is not in the whole range of poetical literature a more graphic picture of Winter and Famine than the one contained in the poem, and adds: “In our humble judgment, had Mr. Longfellow written nothing but ‘*The Song of Hiawatha*,’ it would have been enough in itself to have established his reputation as a poet.”

THE HIAWATHA MANIA.—Professor Longfellow hit on the riches of all veins of gold when he wrote the ‘*Song of Hiawatha*.’ The rarity of the measure, the novelty of the subject, the beauties of the poetry, the fearful difficulties of the Indian names, and the remarkable facility of imitation set the whole nation talking about it. There never was anything so easy to parody, and a good parody is known to be much more valuable to an author than a good puff. A poem that can stand the test of ridicule can safely risk the test of sober criticism, and a poem that can create controversy is sure to have a great sale. It is stated that over thirty thousand copies of the ‘*Song of Hiawatha*’ have been already sold and this is quite up to the sale of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* during a like period of time. The profits of such a sale must console the author for all that he has suffered from the pens of parodists and critics. He can afford to be accused of plagiarism when he counts his gains by thousands of dollars.

Hiawatha was making news as early as 1855 in the pages of St. Paul’s “*Weekly Minnesotian*,” left, and “*Weekly Times*,” right. The bronze statue, below, was created by Norwegian immigrant Jacob Fjelde as a plaster sculpture for the Minnesota pavilion at the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893. From 1902 until 1912, Minnesota schoolchildren contributed their pennies to get it cast in bronze and installed in its current location.



Several water management projects have affected the Park along its borders over the past few decades. One of the earlier efforts lies just east of France Avenue around 26th Street.

CEDAR MEADOWS WETLAND

The Cedar Meadows Wetland was completed in 1995 and treats stormwater from the Park running toward Cedar Lake in Minneapolis. The western pond lies inside the Park’s city boundary, the east marsh area in Minneapolis. (Similar ponds at southwest Bde Maka Ska were completed in 1999.)



>> continued on page 4>>

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

In December we were able to celebrate our historic Milwaukee Road Depot building with our 9th annual holiday lighting ceremony. Check out our Facebook page or the Dec 14th edition of the Sun Sailor for a picture from that evening. Thanks to all who came out on a beautiful evening for hot chocolate and holiday spirit!

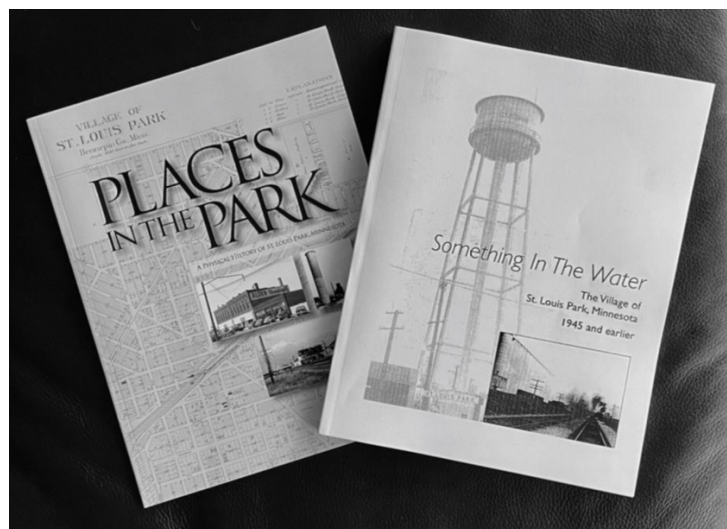
Sadly, also in December, former Board member, Paul Linnee passed away. Paul was a great leader while serving on our Board from 2014 to 2017, most notably for organizing and managing our large 2017 Capital Campaign Fundraiser featuring Tom Friedman. Paul and I joined the Board together in 2014, and soon after he invited me for a slice of pie and coffee at a local diner. He mostly wanted to offer support and understand how he could help me, but he also gave me advice I still leverage today. Paul was a friend to many and we will miss him greatly.

In 2024, you will hear a lot from us about ways to get more involved in the Society. We are looking for new volunteers and Board members to bring some new energy and leadership. You will see notices on Facebook, Emails, and occasionally the Sun Sailor. We are holding an Open House on Saturday January 20th from 1-4pm at our office space on Dakota Avenue. If you want to learn about ways volunteers and board members contribute or if you haven't been in our office in a while – we hope you will stop in.

Again, if you would like to learn more about what serving on the Board means or about other ways you might get involved, please reach out!

With Park Pride,

Ted



CONNECT WITH US

Visit: 3546 Dakota Ave. So., Suite C
St. Louis Park
Saturdays, 1-4 pm,
Or, by appointment

Phone: 612.465.9288
Email: slphistory@gmail.com
Online: <https://slphistory.org>

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Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park historical Society collects, preserves, and shares the history of St. Louis Park. The *ReEcho: Park History Today*, is an official publication of the Society.

EDITOR

WILLIAM BEYER

WRITERS

TED EKKERS

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

JEANNE ANDERSEN

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>> continued from page 2>>



From Josh Biber's 10/01/22 article, "Reminiscing on Cedar Lake," at the Minnesota Historian website:

...up until the twentieth century, Cedar Lake's boundaries were considerably different from the shoreline of today. This is because during the 1800s, the water level within Cedar Lake was nearly twelve feet higher than that of today. The land surrounding Cedar Lake was rather marshy and considered largely impassable...the water level dropped nearly seven feet due to prolonged droughts as well as extensive ice harvesting in the wintertime that exhumed over 100,000 tons of ice annually during the last decade of the 1800s through the first decade of the 1900s... in 1913, the water level dropped another five feet when the Cedar Lake Canal was constructed to connect Lake of the Isles to Cedar Lake. Brownie Lake to the northwest of Cedar Lake experienced a similar lowering of its water levels when a culvert was constructed to link the two lakes. With the introduction of this new connection in 1917, Brownie Lake's water level subsequently dropped ten feet. During the next few years between 1911 through 1914, the Park Board dredged nearly 400,000 cubic yards of soil from the bottom of Cedar Lake to deepen the lake. During this dredging project, the Park Board packed the dredged soil along the shoreline of the lake to firm its banks. With the new firmer shoreline, the Minneapolis Park Board used this as a calculated opportunity to extend a parkway and trail system along the southern and western shores of Cedar Lake. Prior to human interference with Cedar Lake's water levels, the lake's boundaries once looked remarkably different to that of today. To the lake's southwest, a bay once extended all the way to France Avenue. This bay is long gone, but a hint of this bay remains in the form of the Cedar Meadows Wetland which serves as a drainage basin and roosting place for many species of birds.

MORNINGSIDE FLOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

At the southeast corner of the Park, the Great Swamp stretched from Minnehaha Creek to the southwest corner of Bde Maka Ska. A massive engineering project aims to keep water out of Edina basements along 42nd Street, and those of us who live nearby get a lovely new park out of it, tax-free. From the City of Edina website:

The Morningside Neighborhood has several low and landlocked areas prone to flooding. Climate change has already increased the risk of flooding and will continue to do so. This project helps the community be more resilient to flooding. Ponds, pipes and a surface swale will be used to safely move and store floodwaters. An expanded pipe and swale will provide overflow from the Lynn/Kipling inundation area and the Grimes Avenue low point, and an expanded and reconfigured pipe network and minor grade changes will move water away from homes. Weber Pond and the Lynn/Kipling Pond will

be expanded and lowered. About six acres of trees will be removed in Weber Woods to accommodate the larger ponds. The flood infrastructure project also includes:

- Natural resources restoration in upland areas.
- Nature trails and bridge crossings at two locations at Weber Park.
- Improved pedestrian access to the park with ADA-compliant trails in Weber Park.
- Rebuilt sports fields in impacted areas with new turf and irrigation systems.



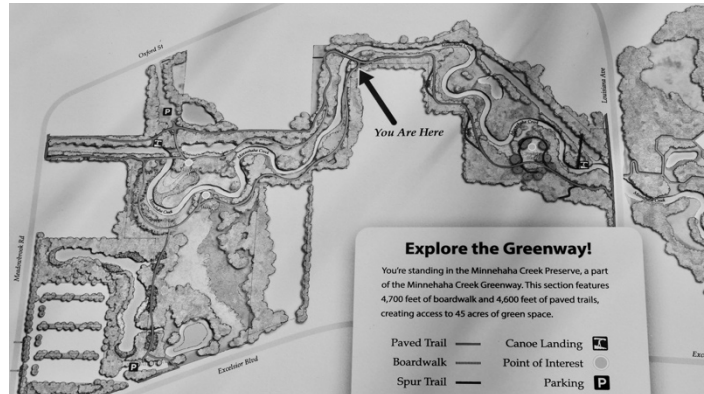
The expanded retention pond north of 42nd Street along France Avenue is crossed by two bridges and abuts Minikhada Vista Park just north. The scope of water management seriousness is suggested by the 72-inch in diameter corrugated plastic pipes buried below grade feeding the pond.



MINNEHAHA CREEK PRESERVE, METHODIST RE-MEANDER, AND COTTAGEVILLE PARK (HOPKINS)

Where “the Great Swamp” intersects Minnehaha Creek, wetland improvements have likewise been underway for many years. Cottageville Park is under construction, but the Methodist and Preserve projects are completed and successful. They include:

- 83 acres of wetland improvements,
- 6,300 feet of new stream channel and stream bank restorations,
- 1.9 miles of new trails and boardwalks,

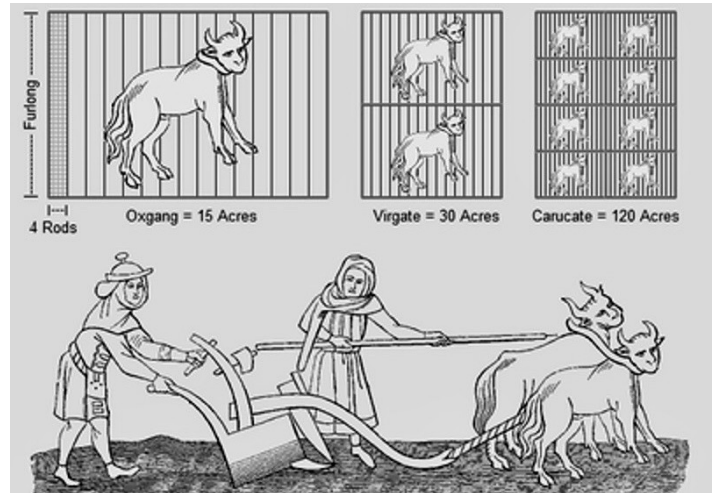


THE SURVEYS: MEASURING THE LAND

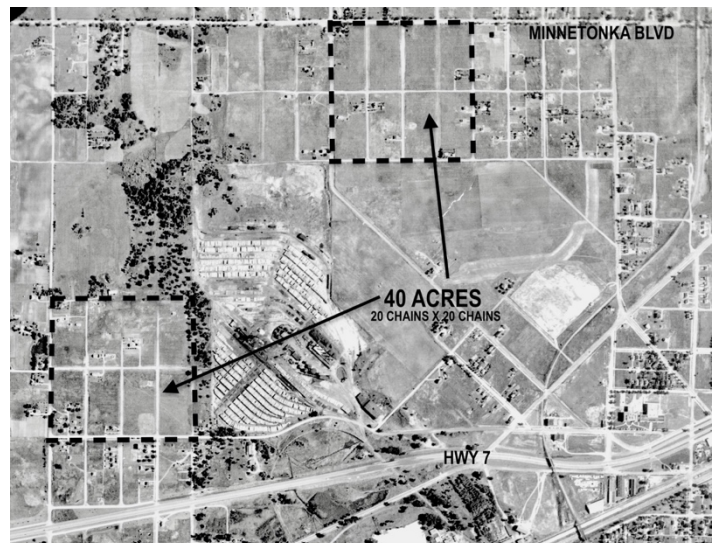
The land was measured out in farming units. Traditionally an acre was the area of land that could be plowed by one man using a team of 8 oxen in one day. From Wikipedia:

The rod, perch, or pole (sometimes also lug) is a surveyor's tool...defined as 16+1/2 feet, equal to exactly 1/320 of a mile or 5+1/2 yards (a quarter of a surveyor's chain)...The rod is useful as a unit of length because integer multiples of it can form one acre of square measure (area). The 'perfect acre' is a rectangular area of 43,560 square feet, bounded by sides 660 feet (a furlong) long and 66 feet (a chain) wide...An acre is therefore 160 square rods or 10 square chains...an acre has no prescribed shape; any area of 43,560 square feet is an acre.

The Park was aimed at farmers; the land was perfect for small, subsistence farms, 80-100 acres, later for truck farms, vegetable farms, and dairy farms to feed an expanding metropolis.



Above, a surveyor's chain, sixty-six feet long. Below, in areas that T.B. Walker did not disrupt with his diagonal Lake Street layout, the original grid records 40-acre plots in 8-block squares.



Thomas B. Walker steamed into St. Paul in 1862, found his way to Minneapolis, signed on as a rookie surveyor to measure the lands so they could be sold. Walker made his fortune in lumber over the next quarter-century, then turned his sights to real estate development and organizing the Minneapolis business community along Methodist, teetotaling, and strong anti-labor lines.

>> continued on page 6 >>

We consulted *Compendium of History and Biography of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, Minnesota, 1914*, published by Henry Taylor & Co., Chicago, to get Walker's origin story in his own words. From Chapter XVII, "Thos. B. Walker's Reminiscences, Historical Sketches, and Notes on Lumber Manufacturing at St. Anthony's Falls," he recounts those early days:

...While I was finding out from Mr. Robinson these wonderful facts concerning this part of the Northwest, I learned of a government surveying party going on the frontier, within two or three months, to survey a large area of public lands. Having also learned that there was a fine line of boats running past McGregor to St. Paul, within two hours of the time I began to talk with Mr. Robinson I was very comfortably located on the largest of the Diamond Joe line of steamers, bound for St. Paul...

...After arranging to go on the government surveyors with the chief surveyor, George B. Wright, before mentioned, in about two months (it was then June), I returned to Michigan and completed the sale of some grind-stones and then came back, landing in Minneapolis again about the 16th of August [1862]. On the 20th of August, I started with the surveying party of sixteen men for the northern part of the state, or the pine regions above Crow Wing, which was then the last town on the Mississippi above Minneapolis. We did not reach our destination on account of the outbreak of the Sioux Indians, which took place while we were traveling from St. Cloud to Fort Ripley...

...The trip was abandoned, and we returned to Minneapolis. I remained there until winter, and then, upon my solicitation, Mr. Geo B. Wright, the government surveyor, took a small party of us to survey some of the townships. As all the work was located in the timber, the corners were to be established by means of bearing trees, and work could be done satisfactorily in winter; whereas, on the prairies, where mounds were to be built for corners, it was utterly impracticable to do the work. In getting Mr. Wright to go into the woods, I had arranged with Mr. W.S. Chapman to secure Indian land scrip with which to locate pine timber which I would hunt up in the surveying of the government land. This Sioux scrip was locatable on unsurveyed or surveyed lands before they were offered for general entry, and had been issued to the Sioux half-breeds, pursuant to the treaties of 1851.

...We started on the 12th of December with ox teams...and landed at Crow Wing about the 20th, when the thermometer was 24 degrees below zero. We surveyed about two months and then the ugly attitude of the Chippewa Indians made it seem prudent for us to leave and we came out, having completed the surveys of two townships and some work in another. While I was in the woods, Mr. W.S. Chapman, who was to join me in starting the timber deal, was induced to go to California, where the timber lands - he had heard - were much more valuable than in Minnesota...

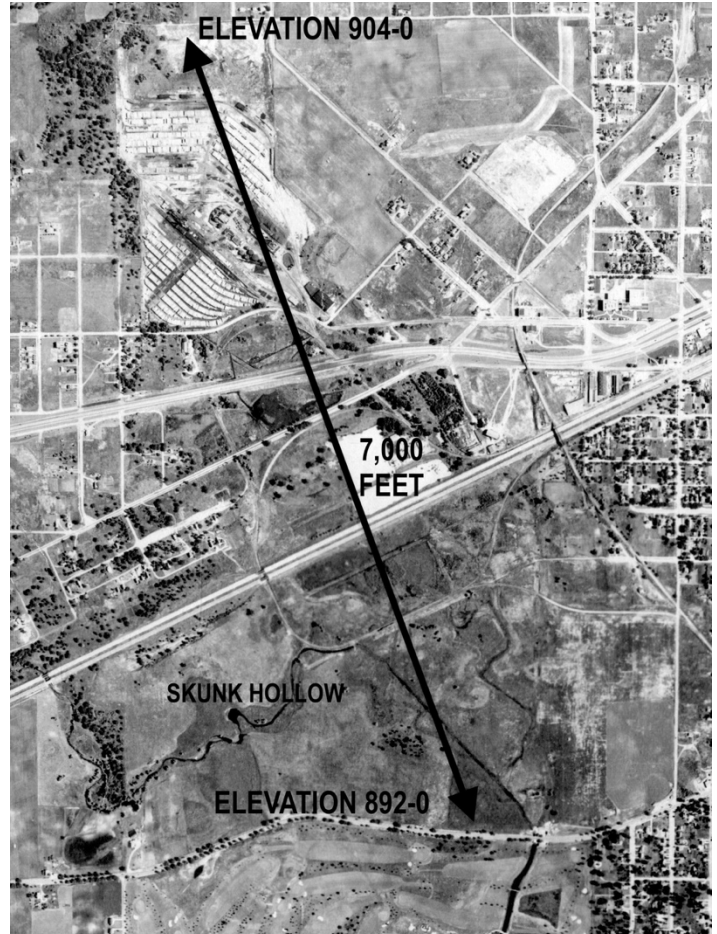
So, young Tom waded into the pine forests armed with Sioux scrip and measured the northland while taking special note of the riches that grew on it. As a rookie, he was probably a chainman, dragging 66-foot steel chains from point to point across the forests.

THE GREAT SWAMP

With the fortune he had amassed as a rookie surveyor buying land with Indian Scrip beginning in 1862, and subsequently in the lumber business, Thomas B. Walker decreed in 1890 that the Park was to be home for Minneapolis' Industrial Suburb. He built half-a-dozen factories in the Great Swamp's northern

reaches and set in motion a century of groundwater pollution that will take another century, or longer, to finally resolve.

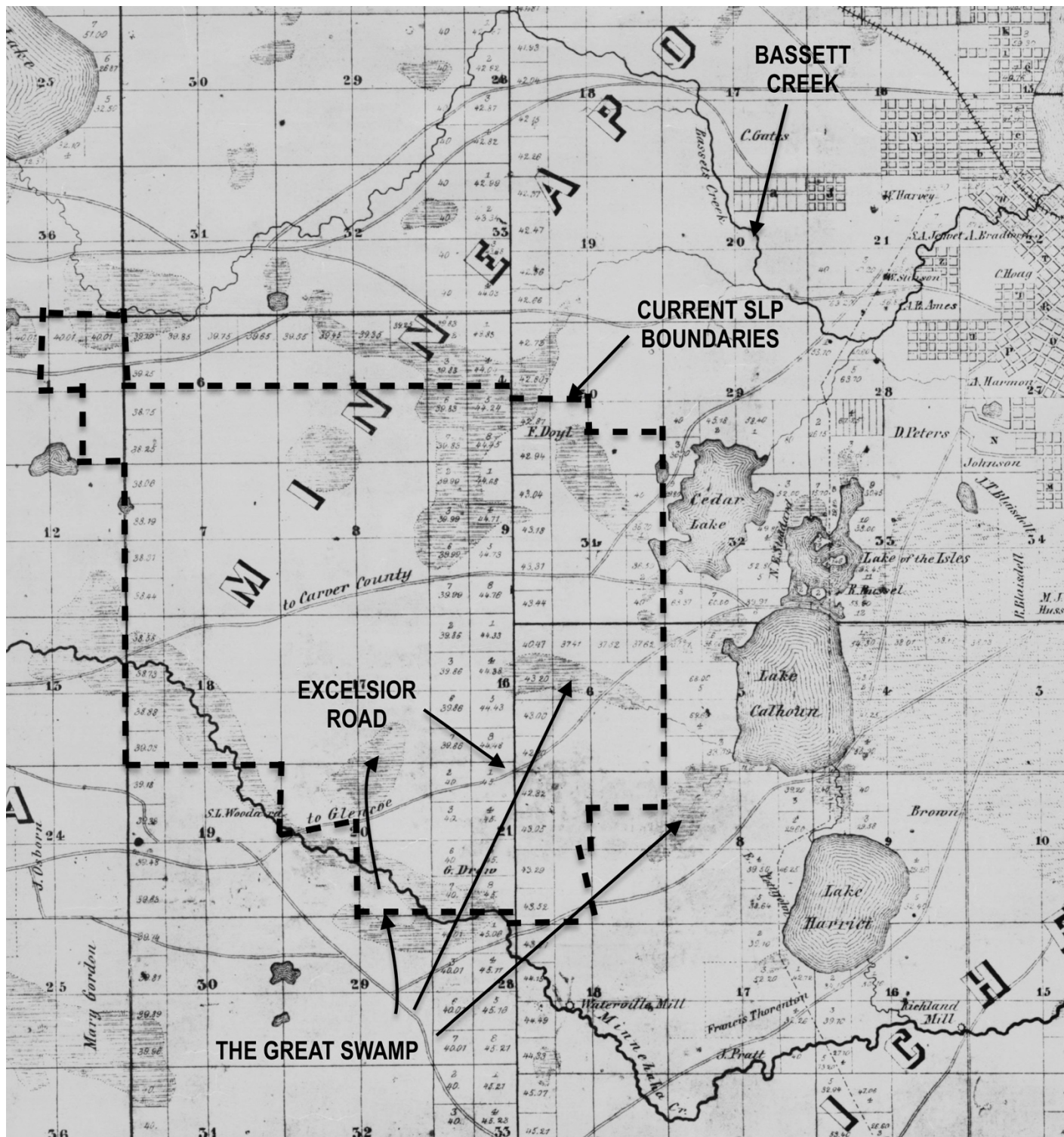
This mile-and-a-half long, flat-bottomed basin collected sugar beet waste, coal tar byproducts, lead, and perhaps dozens of unknown toxins over the past 125 years, allowing plenty of time for them to be absorbed into the invisible groundwater system below.



Over the approximately 7,000 linear feet between the northern extent of the Republic Creosote plant at 32nd Street, to where Minnehaha Creek crosses Excelsior Boulevard, the surface of the land drops at total of 12 feet, making it slightly flatter than the allowable deviation of 0.02 inches in 100 inches for a professional billiard table specified by the World Pool Association. The Japs-Olson Company building sits atop the original course of Minnehaha Creek, at the spot of the Globe Mill pond, the Park's first industry in 1874.



>> continued on page 7 >



By 1860, the original surveys of the Park had been stitched together but still contained significant inaccuracies. Excelsior/Glencoe Road, Territorial Road No. 3 from 1849, crosses France Avenue much further south than shown here, and the extent of wetlands is more than mapped. "The Great Swamp," as recognized by the Park's earliest settlers, extended from the southwest corner of the lake formerly known as Calhoun, along 42nd Street, connecting to the Minnehaha Creek wetland complex, with a long, flat-bottomed extension north to the site of T.B. Walker's railroad roundabout, the seed planted for his industrial suburb. It also probably included the Bass Lake area, north of Excelsior Road and extending to today's Skippy Field just south of City Hall. The Creek name has already changed due to Longfellow's popular poem.



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PARK HISTORY TODAY

An official publication of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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DISPATCH LOOKBACK

The *St. Louis Park Dispatch* started publication in 1941 and eventually evolved into the *Suburban Sun* newspapers. Over the years, it occasionally handled explosive issues, some still relevant today. Herewith, two blasts from 75 years past, on June 11 and October 29, 1948.

That's No Ammunition Dump

St. Louis Park might have had a great big "blow out" at its dump grounds near Lilac Lanes.

One live hand grenade, a small bomb, over 1,000 rounds of 1918 army rifle ammunition, several dozen rounds of captured German ammunition, three machine gun clips and an odd assortment of various caliber bullets were left at the dump in an old wash tub.

Luckily, the dump keeper spotted the discarded explosives and notified the police. Park policeman Dan Whalen hauled the stuff to the police station, called Minneapolis police, and with a sigh of relief, turned the ammunition over to them.

According to the dump keeper, the collection came from Minneapolis, where it had been found during a house cleaning. A tattered copy of the old Minneapolis Journal, dated Wednesday, April 30, 1930, was used as packing.

All of the explosives, including the grenade, the bomb and the bullets, were in good condition. A dump fire might have exploded the pile of ammunition, causing injury to passersby.

Or some boys picking through the trash might have found the grenade and playfully—or innocently—pulled the pin. And some mothers might have found their sons missing or badly injured.

For Anti-Semitic Outbreak The Remedy's Negative

There are crackpots in every village and town, all over the world.

Let newspapers, radio and television dramatize a craze for eating goldfish and someone will pop up, somewhere, gulping wriggling creatures in public.

Remember the marathon dances of a generation ago? The panty raids on a hundred college campuses? The flagpole sitters and human flies who cluttered every front page for months?

There's a particular quirk in human nature that demands attention. The small boy often misbehaves simply because he wants to be noticed (a source of much juvenile delinquency.) Grownups act under the same impulse. And sometimes the resulting behavior leads to amazing consequences.

The recent wave of anti-Semitism that's broken out all over the world, we think, traces to

this source. It's shaken a lot of people who remember, all too grimly, the start of just such an outbreak a generation ago and the consequences. For the Jewish people, victims of generations of oppression, it carries chilling potentials. For West Germany it's an embarrassing and ridiculous situation.

Yet this very concern is the reason for the daubing of swastikas on synagogues, the anti-Jewish painting on the walls, the smashing of windows and doors in isolated and widely spread cities.

The remedy is all negative. Don't try to pass laws and resolutions. Don't call out the police to make an example of some stupid exhibitionist. Don't publish any more news stories or broadcast any more excited reports. Do nothing . . . absolutely nothing. And within days the crackpots will be back gulping goldfish.