

## Section VI

# Cultural Resources Stewardship Plan

### Overview

The extensive cultural history of the river corridor and lake is one of the most unique characteristics of Spring Lake Park Reserve. The area encompassed by the park is particularly rich in archaeological sites. This section of the master plan considers the cultural history and resources. The purpose of this assessment is three fold:

- ▶ To identify archaeological and historic sites within the park;
- ▶ Identify potential interpretive themes and suggest ways that these themes and stories could be incorporated into the master plan;
- ▶ Provide information on the historic preservation legislation that may affect future work in the park.

### Preserving the Cultural Sense of Place

Saving a public past is a political as well as a historical and cultural process. Decisions about what to remember and protect are informed by historical scholarship as well as the possibilities of historic preservation, museum and educational programs, environmental protection, and public art. Yet all of these approaches to conserving the past operate in partial and sometimes contradictory ways. The traces of time embedded in the landscape offer opportunities for reconnecting fragments of the American story.

Identity is intimately tied to memory: both our personal memories (where we have come from and where we have lived), and the collective or social memories interconnected with the histories of our families, neighbors, and fellow workers. Social memory relies on story telling. Memory is naturally place-oriented. A memory connects spontaneously with a place. Places trigger memories for insiders who have shared a common past, and at the same time places often can represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in knowing about them in the present.

Incorporating that sense of place into the design is critical if the full power and meaning of the place is to be maintained or enhanced. People make attachments to places – we come to know places through using all of our senses. This is precisely what makes places powerful sources of memory.

## Background Research

The ideas and information for the interpretive themes and public history programs for the Spring Lake Park Reserve came from a variety of sources. These included:

- ▶ Previously conducted archaeological excavations
- ▶ Primary sources, such as newspaper articles and photographs
- ▶ Secondary sources, such as local histories
- ▶ Background research at the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office
- ▶ Government Land Office (GLO) surveyors' records were obtained and reviewed in concurrence with Trygg's *Composite Map of United States Land Surveyors' Original Plats and Field Notes*, which depicts the lands of Minnesota as recorded during the 1850s, to identify potential post-contact archaeological resources that might be located within the study area.

Three archaeological investigations involving survey have been conducted within Spring Lake Park. One of these investigations was a systematic survey conducted in 1993 for a proposed group camp and archery trail area. The second survey occurred during archaeological investigations conducted by high school students from the Area Learning Center in Apple Valley under the supervision of Scott Meyer in 1996. A formal report of this survey has not been completed, nor are maps available that depict the extent of the survey, thus the methods of survey, the exact locations surveyed, and the survey results are not known. The most well known archaeological investigations to occur at Spring Lake Park were the Spring Lake Archaeology Program salvage excavations conducted by Science Museum of Minnesota archaeologists in the 1950s.

## The People of Spring Lake Park Reserve

The history of Spring Lake Park Reserve is a story of both continuity and change. It illustrates how two constants in the landscape, Spring Lake and the Mississippi River, have drawn people to the area over thousands of years. It also illustrates how a human presence in Spring Lake Park altered the natural landscape, and how the features of this landscape, in turn, affected that human presence. Between these storylines are the details of the daily lives of the individuals who chose to call Spring Lake Park home. These details are spelled out in the narratives, buildings, and objects that residents of the park have left behind over time. Today, Spring Lake and the Mississippi River continue to draw visitors to the park. There, the natural and cultural landscapes combine to provide a historical vision of the waters and their relationship to the people of Spring Lake Park.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the general locations of known archaeological sites documented by the State Historic Preservation Office and the Science Museum of Minnesota. In addition to the more formal archaeological investigations, a local resident, Ken Klink, has studied the park's cultural history and gathered a significant archaeological collection (some of which is currently with the Science Museum of Minnesota.). Figure 6.2 illustrates some of Mr. Klink's findings, which need to be confirmed through formal study.

To protect sensitive archaeological resources,  
maps depicting their locations within Spring Lake Park are not included in the online version of the master plan.

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The difference between the sites identified in figures 6.1 and 6.2 underscores the notion that although much is known about the cultural history of the park, there is much yet to learn. In spite of the knowledge gap, what is known about the cultural history of the area is instructive in making sound development decisions and protection strategies at the master plan level – fully recognizing that additional study will be necessary to understand exactly how individual sites are best interpreted.

## Cultural Themes

The cultural history of the Spring Lake area goes back over 8000 years or more. Several themes capture the major historical periods:

- ▶ The Waters Provide – The Native Americans of Spring Lake Park Reserve
- ▶ The Lake Rises – The White Settlers of Spring Lake Park Reserve
- ▶ The River Rises – The Last Residents of Spring Lake Park Reserve

The following considers each of these themes as a means to articulate the cultural values that are offered by the park. The place names identified in text relate to figure 6.1.

## The Waters Provide – The Native Americans

For thousands of years, numerous Native American cultures inhabited modern-day Spring Lake Park Reserve. Spring Lake and the river provided these peoples with food, drinking water, water for cooking and bathing, medicinal plants, recreation, and places of beauty. Based on differences in artifact styles, technology, and lifeways, archaeologists have classified the Native American cultures of Spring Lake Park into the following time periods:

- ▶ The Archaic Stage (ca. 6000 – 1000 B.C.)
- ▶ The Ceramic/Mound Stage (ca. 1000 B.C. – A.D. 1100)
- ▶ The Late Prehistoric Stage (ca. A.D. 900 – 1650)
- ▶ Contact with New Settlers (ca. 1650 – 1900)

## The Archaic Stage (ca. 6000 – 1000 B.C.)

The Archaic Stage is the period of the 5000 years after big mammals had become extinct and before Native Americans in the Midwest began making pottery, from about 8000 to 3000 years ago. Elsewhere in the world during this period, the Mesopotamians developed systems of irrigation, the Great Pyramid in Egypt was built, and Athens was founded. At this time, Native American peoples relied primarily on hunting, fishing, and gathering plants for food, and they would move their camps to where plants and animals were available. Exactly how Spring Lake Park looked to its earliest residents cannot be known for sure. Spring Lake is spring fed, and empties into the Mississippi River at the southeastern end of the lake. Water levels may have been higher, so that Spring Lake was actually a lake, or they may have been lower as in the mid nineteenth century, when Spring Lake was more of a marsh. Regardless of appearances, it seems likely that the earliest people in Spring Lake Park saw the Mississippi River and Spring Lake as an invitation to partake of all of life's necessities, including food, water, recreation, and beauty. Evidence of these peoples was found in two, possibly three, archaeological sites in Spring Lake Park.

**Lee Mill Cave Site:**

- ▶ Located in a rock shelter 75 feet above the Mississippi River within a limestone bluff at the eastern end of Spring Lake.
- ▶ Carved out by water seeping down from the top of the bluff and eroding the limestone to make a shelter with smooth floors.
- ▶ Excavation of a fire pit within the lower layers of the cave floor illustrates the exploitation of the river and lake for food, as it contained over 900 fish bones.
- ▶ Four stone flakes chipped off a larger rock for a tool or weapon were found with these fish.

**Ranelius Site:**

- ▶ Dated to between 8000 and 3000 years ago
- ▶ Not much is known about this site, but the early layers held the remains of storage pits and fire pits, one of which contained burned acorns.

**Bud Josephs Site:**

- ▶ Dated to between 6000 and 1000 B.C.
- ▶ Located on the Spring Lake shoreline.
- ▶ Artifacts recovered from this site include 33 stone flakes, with more of the site remaining to be discovered.

The use of nets by the occupants of the Lee Mill Cave Site to catch fish points to a summer occupation of Spring Lake Park. The presence of acorns at the Ranelius Site indicates that people were also present in the park during the fall. During these times, the lake and especially the river would have provided not only consumables, but also places to bathe and to take refuge from the heat.

These features of the area would continue to attract Native Americans to what is today Spring Lake Park during the next 2000 years, when the next Native American cultures appeared in the area.

## **The Ceramic/Mound Stage (ca. 1000 B.C. – A.D. 1100)**

As its name implies, the Ceramic/Mound Stage corresponds to the time when Native Americans in the Midwest began making pottery and building earthen mounds, between 3000 and 900 years ago. This period corresponds to the time when the Maya settled the Yucatan peninsula, Homer wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey, and construction began on both the Roman Colosseum and the Great Wall of China. The earlier manifestations of this stage within Spring Lake Park appear to relate to the Havana Hopewell culture, an early mound-building culture of Illinois. This relationship suggests that the earlier Ceramic/Mound Stage residents of Spring Lake Park were there sometime between 200 B.C. and A.D. 300. Up until this time, it is likely that the Native American occupants of the park continued to adhere to essentially Archaic lifeways. Thereafter, the manufacture of pottery, domestication of plants, and construction of burial mounds within a pattern of sedentary village life became typical in the area, though adoption of these elements would not necessarily be immediate or concurrent.

*“The Sorg Pot” as reconstructed by the Science Museum of Minnesota from fragments recovered from the Spring Lake area. Source: Science Museum of Minnesota.*



Later manifestations of the Ceramic/Mound Stage at Spring Lake Park seem to indicate that people were moving away from Hopewell culture. These people would have been present in the park between circa A.D. 300 until A.D. 1100. Evidence of peoples in Spring Lake Park during both the earlier and the later periods of the Ceramic/Mound Stage was found at four archaeological sites.

#### **The Sorg Site:**

- ▶ Located at the eastern end of Spring Lake as a gently sloping outwash plain fanning out at the base of an elevated limestone bluff.
- ▶ People who lived at the Sorg Site sometime between 200 B.C. and A.D. 300 left behind the remains of two hearths, clusters of limestone rocks, and many artifacts – indicating that the people either camped or set up a permanent settlement at this location.
- ▶ One of the hearths was formed of irregular limestone cobbles, was covered with charcoal and burned earth, and contained burned pieces of pottery. The second hearth consisted of a concentration of charcoal.
- ▶ Five clusters of limestone cobbles were also found in relation to the earlier occupation, but these were not burned. Unburned pieces of pottery were associated with three of these clusters.
- ▶ A partial pottery vessel, broken in place, was found with four natural beach cobbles.
- ▶ Possible postmolds, places where wooden posts once stood in the ground, were encountered, indicating that some type of structure may have been present.
- ▶ Artifacts dating to this period include bone tool fragments, one of which was from a harpoon; arrow points; scrapers; knives; modified cobbles and stone pieces from the manufacture of stone tools; and pieces of thick pottery. This pottery is buff to reddish brown in color.
- ▶ People who lived at the Sorg Site in the period between A.D. 300 and 1100 left behind similar types of remains, including a hearth and several artifacts.

#### **The Lee Mill Cave Site:**

- ▶ In the layers of the Lee Mill Cave Site that date between 2200 and 1700 years ago, one fire pit was found. It contained powdery red burned limestone, ash, and charcoal along with pieces of pottery.
- ▶ The pottery found in the fire pit was the only pottery from the early part of the Ceramic/Mound Stage at Lee Mill Cave. Though thicker, it is similar in general makeup and decorative technique to the pottery found at the Sorg Site from this period.
- ▶ Notched and stemmed arrow points from the earlier period were also found at the Lee Mill Cave Site.
- ▶ Raccoon, beaver, muskrat, mollusk, fish, and turtle remains indicate a continued reliance on aquatic animals and the predators of aquatic animals. The use of all of these animal resources continued into the later part of the Ceramic/Mound Stage, between 1700 and 900 years ago.
- ▶ It appears that toward the end of the Ceramic/Mound Stage, either the group residing at Spring Lake Park began to make a new kind of pottery, or two groups of people were living in the area.
- ▶ Stone tools found within the layers containing both types of pottery include a knife, triangular arrow points, stemmed arrow points, scrapers, and a grinding stone.
- ▶ Archaeologists also discovered a small crevice in the cave wall that contained split butternut shells, stone flakes, and a piece of pottery – possibly artifacts washed in from an as-yet undiscovered part of the cave.

**Bremer Village Site and Bremer Mounds:**

- ▶ Bremer Mounds and Bremer Village are located approximately one-quarter mile apart on river terraces along the southeastern edge of Spring Lake.
- ▶ The Bremer Village Site, like the Sorg and Lee Mill Cave Sites, displayed evidence of two occupations during the Ceramic/Mound Stage, an earlier one, dating to between 200 B.C. and A.D. 300, and a later one, dating to between A.D. 300 and 1100.
- ▶ Remains of the earlier occupation include thick pottery made of clay mixed with coarsely crushed rock and decorated by wrapping cords around a paddle that was then pressed upon the soft clay or by pressing grass into the soft clay; side-notched arrow points; ridged and ovoid-shaped knives; scrapers; and ground sandstone pendants.
- ▶ Remains of the later occupation include thinner pottery of clay mixed with finely crushed rock and also decorated with a cord-wrapped paddle; small triangular arrow points; ridged and pear-shaped knives; scrapers; graters; drills; and a hammerstone, a stone used as a hammer to make other stone tools. Most of the animal remains recovered from the site were from this occupation and consisted of just a few bird bones and deer teeth.
- ▶ Three features at the Bremer Village Site included two hearths and a series of twelve blackened circular areas that held charred wood. Archaeologists believed these circular areas to be postmolds.
- ▶ The Bremer Mounds, of which there were two, were excavated during the 1950s. Mound 1 was found to contain scattered small bone fragments in addition to burials of various types and cremations. Only five pieces of pottery were found within this mound, none of which appeared to be associated with a particular burial. These were made from clay mixed with finely crushed rock and had been decorated using a cord-wrapped paddle. Also found within the mound were four small triangular arrow points and a possible bone bead. Mound 2 also contained scattered small bone fragments, but it did not hold any burials. Its only other contents were a pile of clamshells.
- ▶ The Bremer Village Site and the Bremer Mounds were close in distance, and the pottery and triangular points used by the later Ceramic/Mound-Stage inhabitants of Spring Lake Park were similar to those found in Mound 1. Archaeologists concluded that the mounds and the village site were related and had been used sometime between 1700 and 900 years ago.

The artifacts and features discovered at each of the Ceramic/Mound-Stage archaeological sites in Spring Lake Park demonstrate more permanent settlements within the area. Though fish bone was not found to the extent that it was in the Archaic occupation the Lee Mill Cave Site, its presence, along with that of raccoon, muskrat, beaver, mollusks, and turtle at Lee Mill Cave and of a harpoon fragment at the Sorg Site point to the continued use of the food resources provided by aquatic animals and their predators, supplemented to some extent by the hunting of deer in the surrounding woodlands. These patterns of settlement and of obtaining food would persist into the Late Prehistoric Stage.

## The Late Prehistoric Stage (ca. A.D. 900 – 1650)

The Late Prehistoric Stage refers to the period between 1100 and 450 years ago when Native Americans made advances in the cultivation of plants for food and in tool use and manufacture, and when larger permanent settlements were typical. During this period, the Chinese Empire fragmented in the period of the Five Dynasties, Botticelli and Michelangelo painted their masterpieces, and Columbus came to the Americas. Archaeologists know more about this stage than earlier stages and, therefore, have identified several Native American cultures in various areas of Minnesota. During the Late Prehistoric Stage, peoples of the Oneota culture occupied Spring Lake Park sometime between 1000 and 450 years ago. This culture was widespread throughout Wisconsin, northwestern Indiana, Illinois, western Iowa, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Missouri, and its people are known for producing elaborately decorated globular pots made of clay mixed with crushed shell; for horticulture, especially the cultivation of corn; and for a reliance on both aquatic food resources and bison. The lifestyles of Oneota peoples were heavily influenced by cultures to the south during the earlier part of their existence. Evidence of these peoples was discovered at two, possibly three, sites in Spring Lake Park.

### Lee Mill Cave Site:

- ▶ As noted above, Oneota pottery, made with crushed shell, was found in the same archaeological layers that produced Ceramic/Mound-Stage pottery, made with crushed rock. The presence of these pottery types in the same layers led archaeologists to conclude that these layers represented a transitional period in the technology of making pottery.
- ▶ In addition to the stone artifacts found in these layers and noted above, a partial corncob was recovered from the site. The size and form of the kernel follicles on this cob indicated that the corn had been grown during the Late Prehistoric Stage and had not been brought into the cave during modern times. In addition to aquatic resources, the layers containing evidence of Oneota peoples at this site also produced woodchuck and rabbit bones.

### Ranelius Site:

- ▶ Little is known about the Oneota occupation at the Ranelius Site. In the 1950s, however, Johnson noted the following regarding the Oneota occupation of this site: *“The second important discovery was a series of very low mounds of earth placed in a spiral formation. This spiral was approximately 50 feet wide at its greatest diameter. The exact purpose of this spiral mound and its age are still not certain. We are quite sure that it is prehistoric and may represent a religious form of some sort. Pottery and stone tools found associated with the spiral are from the late prehistoric period and were used by a corn-raising, farming people.”*

### Hamm Site:

- ▶ Little is known about the Hamm Site, except that testing there resulted in the recovery of 56 stone flakes, one of which had been used as a tool, and ten pieces of pottery made from clay mixed with crushed shell.

## Contact with New Settlers (A.D. 1650 – 1900)

It is not known when Native American groups ceased to have permanent, or even temporary, settlements, within modern-day Spring Lake Park, but historical documents have not identified such settlements since those identified archaeologically. It appears, however, that the resources of Spring Lake and the Mississippi River continued to be used by Native Americans well into the nineteenth century and possibly the twentieth century. During the 1830s, Dakota tribes established villages at nearby Grey Cloud Island and Pine Bend. In 1915, local historian John H.

Case noted:

*“The situation of [Pine Bend] village was a fine one for the Indians. The marshes and heavy timber on the bottomlands around Spring Lake and Belanger Island, east of them, in what is now Nininger Township, were full of small game, such as geese, ducks, muskrats, and mink; and on the high land were found the prairie chicken, foxes, partridges and quail, and pigeons by the thousands that sometimes nested and roosted in the heavy timber on Belanger Island. The timber consisted of soft maple, cottonwood, elm, hackberry, and ash, most of which was still standing in 1856 when I came to Nininger”.*

*“...Spring Lake, southeast of this village a short distance, was alive with large fish, among which were catfish, buffalo, pike, and pickerel; also sunfish and other small kinds.”*

In a 1930 interview, Minnie Lee, a former resident of Nininger, mentioned that Native Americans lived in the general area surrounding Spring Lake as late as the 1890s, stating that they used to have ceremonies on Boulanger Island and that they took her “canoe riding”. By this time, however, the power of the Mississippi River had long since transported new settlers to Spring Lake, and its beauty lured them into staying, with the assistance of one Ignatius Donnelly.

## The Lake Rises – The White Settlers

When the first white settlers came to Spring Lake Park in the mid nineteenth century, they found it equally as inviting as the first Native American settlers to the area and for many of the same reasons. To the list of food, water, beauty, and recreation, however, they would add financial opportunity. In an age when lumber and grain were the economic footholds of the state, a location along the Mississippi River was prime. Its power could be harnessed in mills to process these goods, or it could carry steamboats that would transport both raw and finished products.

As people began to use the river in these ways, they affected the surrounding landscape. Once the first sawmill was built in the area, the water level in the eastern half of Spring Lake rose, supporting wild rice, even more fish, and other animals. The splendor of the lake made it popular for residents and visitors alike, and soon the city of Nininger was platted near its shores along the bank of the Mississippi. In the end, however, it was not enough to hold people to the area. Though sawmills and other businesses thrived in the area for a few years, people worried about the future of Nininger’s economy and its ability to compete with other cities along the river. They would soon move to places that held more promise, such as Hastings, leaving only traces of a city that might have been.

## Early Arrivals (1847 – 1856)

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When Louis Belanger arrived at Spring Lake in the late 1840s, the level of the water was relatively low, creating a marsh, and the lake contained at least one island. Belanger established a log cabin on this island from which he sold wood to steamboats traveling along the river. He also claimed 160 acres of land near the western shore of the lake on higher ground, where he lived on those occasions when the water level rose. He stayed in one of these locations until the early 1850s, when he hung himself after being jailed for a fur-trading deal gone bad.

In 1852, the brothers Henry and Peter Caleff moved into the Spring Lake Park area to establish a trading post and a shingle factory, and they were benefitted by the river's ability to bring them customers and raw materials. Their father, Jedidiah, and their sister, Sarah, met up with them in the same year. The brothers would build a one-saw, steam sawmill in 1855, and they also sowed wheat on their claims. The Caleff family was joined with the Truax family, of whom Daniel B. Truax had officially and legally purchased Belanger's high-ground claim, in 1853, when Daniel's cousin, Elizabeth, married Peter Caleff.

Daniel B. Truax came to the Spring Lake area with his wife, Lany (Countryman), in 1854. His cousin, Daniel W. Truax, along with John Blakely, both of whom settled near Spring Lake and the Mississippi River in 1853, built the first sawmill in the area, a water-powered sawmill known as Spring Lake Mill, during the fall of 1854 and the spring of 1855. Blakely, like the Caleffs, raised wheat. The foundation of his original homestead, built in 1853, could be seen in Spring Lake Park until circa 1990, when it was filled in by the Parks Department. After the construction of Spring Lake Mill, the water level in Spring Lake rose, and the lake would never again be as shallow as it was previously.

Others who would claim land in today's Spring Lake Park during the first half of the 1850s included Samuel Truax; the Poor family, who assisted the Caleffs in the shingle factory; the Bassetts, who farmed; and the Stones, who were the first to claim Boulanger Island since Belanger's death. The Stones also claimed much of the land in the eastern portion of Section 13 of T115N, R18W, and they ran the first threshing machine in the area.

While all of these individuals realized the economic potential of this area, their vision for it was not as grandiose as that of Ignatius Donnelly. In 1856, Donnelly, along with John Nininger, purchased the claims of John Bassett, Peter Caleff, and Jesse Stone in Sections 13 and 18 of T115N, R18W, in order to establish the city of Nininger.

## Boomtown (1856 – 1858)

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In the mid nineteenth century, as the United States was attempting to expand its boundaries farther and farther to the west, the establishment and promotion by investors of new towns proliferated. The survival of such a town generally relied on its promise of becoming a major economic center, based on its location along a real or predicted transportation corridor, such as a steamboat route or, later, a railroad line. Ignatius Donnelly used both types of corridors in combination with the attraction of the area's natural resources to promote Nininger.

In a pamphlet written in 1856 to draw people to the new city, Donnelly wrote:

*“Dakota County is one greatly favored by nature. It lies to the south of St. Paul. The country is beautifully rolling, and interspersed with timber, lakes and streams “....[Nininger] is situated upon the western bank of the river Mississippi. Topographically it is a most beautiful site. The country descends towards the Mississippi in four most beautiful plateaus, or benches, all of easy ascent, and opening out upon the river with a front of bluffs gradually declining towards “the landing.” ....Geographically it is almost the centre of Minnesota; on the side of the great Father of Waters, whose highway sweeping past offers it a communication even with the Gulf of Mexico; the natural outlet of one of the finest sections of the Territory, and commanding by a few short railroads every rich point in that Territory, it cannot but rise to eminence.”*

Additional promotional materials, such as a poster circulated in the eastern U.S., touted the ease with which the Mississippi could bring new settlers to Nininger, thereby demonstrating its excellent commercial location. Donnelly’s promotional tactics were instantly successful, and the Mississippi brought over 500 citizens to the burgeoning city and required an expansion of its boundaries through March of 1858.

The city of Nininger, during its heyday, was nearly self-sufficient, having within the boundaries of Nininger Township at least two sawmills (Truax’s Mill and Eagle Steam Sawmill) two gristmills (Spring Lake Mill [converted from a sawmill] and Eaton’s Grist Mill), a sash and blind factory, a lime kiln, a wheelwright shop, a brickmaker, a painter/wallpaper hanger, a livery stable, a doctor, two real estate offices, three hotels (Western House, Handyside House, Clinton House), two dry goods stores, a grocery store, a meat market, a stove store, a newspaper (*Emigrant Aid Journal*), a post office, a public hall (Tremont Hall), a saloon, a public well, three cemeteries (Rose Hill in Nininger proper, Oakwood and Spring Lake just outside of the city limits), a stage line, and several schools. In addition, its citizens formed a literary society (the Nininger Lyceum), a chapter of the International Order of Good Templars, a baseball team, and church congregations, though a church building was not constructed during the boom years.

Despite, however, Nininger’s businesses, institutions, and prime location, the City of Nininger, like many boomtowns of the day, could not survive. The decline of the city can be attributed to a number of factors, including the inability to secure Donnelly’s promised Nininger and St. Peter Railroad or a proposed ferryboat line that would have connected Nininger with both sides of the Mississippi; the financial Panic of 1857; the inability to attract mail delivery, despite the presence of a post office; and the refusal of steamboat captains to stop at Nininger. Many families moved not only themselves, but also their houses to nearby Hastings. Ultimately, the City of Nininger could not weather its financial reversal. By 1865, the Minnesota State population census schedules list figures only for Nininger Township, indicating that the City of Nininger was no longer recognized as such.

## Ghost Town (1858 – 1928)

Though the City of Nininger was considered a ghost town as early as 1860, vestiges of its former self remained after that date. The Western House hotel, for example, was operated until 1868, and the post office, when it could get mail, operated until 1889.

Over the years between 1858 and 1928, other enterprises would continue or come to exist in Nininger Township, including a beer cellar and store, a line of the St. Paul Southern Electric Railway Company, and the Jeremy Sawmill, constructed in the former location of Truax's Mill. Agriculture, however, a practice older than the township, was the most prosperous economic venture and supported the townspeople during these seven decades. Spring Lake Mill was still functioning to process the grains produced.

After agriculture, probably the second most successful enterprise in Nininger Township following the decline of the city was the ownership of rock quarries. Rock from quarries was used for a variety of purposes, but the real demand came with the need to construct wing dams along the Mississippi River. Wing dams, closely spaced and enormous piles of limestone and brush, were used to limit the flow of water down the river to the main channel in areas where the river was wide and the water, otherwise, moved too slowly. Their task was complemented by dredging done by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Unfortunately, these types of dams did not solve the problem of shifting sandbars in the Mississippi that frequently made portions of the river too shallow to be navigated. If commerce was to continue along the Upper Mississippi, a solution was needed. This solution came from the Corps of Engineers, and it would forever change the face of Spring Lake Park.

## The River Rises – The Last Residents

While the power of the Mississippi River had been able to draw people and commerce to the greater region surrounding Spring Lake Park, it was not always enough to transport people past the area. Shifting sandbars that resulted in shallow waters frequently made navigation impossible north of Hastings and, in at least one instance, prevented navigation north of Red Wing. The inability to continue on to the Twin Cities inconvenienced passengers and slowed the shipment of cargo, both of which had to be taken off of riverboats and transferred to land-bound forms of transportation, usually trains.

Without river transportation, the railroad companies would have a monopoly on the shipment of commercial and agricultural goods in the Midwest. Congress, recognizing that a monopoly could result in restrictions on such shipments and that these restrictions could make the United States less competitive in the world economy, authorized the Corps of Engineers to construct a system of locks and dams along the Mississippi River between St. Louis and Minneapolis. Lock and Dam No. 2 at Hastings was authorized in 1927 and its construction caused large areas of the Spring Lake area floodplain to become submerged, displacing existing land uses and altering the natural landscape.

While many changes came to the area surrounding Spring Lake Park, many people who still had land above water within Spring Lake Park chose to stay. Their stories are the history of Spring Lake Park during the four decades before the park was established, but they are also intertwined with the stories of the earlier settlers who were their ancestors. Chapters of these stories are told today in the historical resources that remain at Spring Lake Park.

### Construction of Lock and Dam No. 2 (1928-1930)

Using rock quarried from Nininger and concrete, a crew of 300 men spent close to two years constructing Lock and Dam No. 2. In the months prior to completion, the *Hastings Gazette* wrote that the dam would flood approximately 10,000 acres of land between St. Paul and Hastings. The flood would form an enormous artificial lake in the lowlands above Hastings right in the area of Spring Lake, and according to the *Gazette*, many felt it would become “the greatest inland harbor and industrial center in the world.”

Less entranced by these lofty visions were the 700 individuals who lost access to lands they owned in the floodplain. These people were forced to either allow the U.S. Government to buy the flowage rights to their property or face condemnation proceedings. Spring Lake Mill was among the casualties of the project, having been sold by then-owner Minnie Lee and then demolished. Soon, the land would be unrecognizable to even those who had lived and worked upon it for decades. Nearly all of the trees and brush were removed from the area, with the exception of two notable cottonwood trees on Boulanger Island, both approximating 29 feet in circumference and 150 feet in height. The remaining changes to the landscape as the dam was closed for the first time are well described by Nininger historian Leslie Guelcher:

*“First, on the islands and shore land, the barren scarred acres of tree stumps were evident; then as the huge gates of the dam were shut for the first time, the slow steady rise of the river began. It took several days for the river to attain its new level, and in the process it swallowed up Boulanger Island and Freeborn Island except for the few ridges of land and trees that remained. Spring Lake is now a generous bend in the river...”*

*“...Once the Hastings Lock and Dam No. 2 was built, the character of the land around Nininger and Spring Lake changed. The marsh vegetation disappeared and the plentiful game fish were replaced by rough fish. Much of the wildlife habitat was lost and therefore some species left the area”.*

While many changes came to the area surrounding Spring Lake Park, many people who still had all or portions of their land above water within Spring Lake Park remained.

### After the Flood (1930-1973)

For those who lived in Spring Lake Park after Lock and Dam No. 2 went into operation, changes to daily life were less drastic over the next forty or so years. Farming continued to be the mainstay of the economy, though as of the 1940s, it shifted from a focus on grain to one on dairying. For many years, though farms were individually owned, farming in the area involved shared effort and equipment, and in 1945, shared labor saw the addition of German prisoners of war. The 4H and the Homemakers, a women’s group dedicated to sharing information on homemaking activities and skills, of Nininger Township remained active, though both groups would eventually split into two chapters.

In 1942, Bud Josephs became one of a long line of people to take advantage of the beauty that Spring Lake and the Mississippi River offered. He opened Bud’s Hunting and Fishing Resort on the south end of Spring Lake, and this brought many recreation seekers to the Spring Lake area during this period. During the 1950s, rock quarrying returned to Spring Lake Park when Dave and Bud Crandall began operations along the bluffs of the Mississippi and sold limestone to companies for various projects. In addition, archaeological excavations occurred at the many sites of Spring Lake Park, some of which likely had been lost under the river or lake or were in danger of being eroded away by these waters.

Though changes did occur at this time, continuity existed in the families who lived in Spring Lake Park. People with names such as Bremer, Josephs, Lee, Schaar, and Sorg lived and worked in the area for many decades, some since as early as the 1880s, and some could trace family ties to the area even further back in time. Though their stories may not seem unique, they are special because they not only paint a picture of nearly 100 years of Spring Lake Park history, they also show how the growth and change of Dakota County and Minnesota over time affected a specific population in a particular place. Memories of many of these families can be found today in various forms as one looks out over Spring Lake Park.

## Cultural Resources Stewardship Plan

Spring Lake Park continues to attract people with the beauty and recreational opportunities that its landscape has always provided. As part of the master plan, visitors to the park will be able to engage in a variety of outdoor activities that allow them to experience the splendor of the park — including the history of the Mississippi River, Spring Lake, and their relationship to the peoples who lived in this park for over 8,000 years. The following discussion addresses how the cultural resources factor into the master plan and will be protected and integrated into the development plan.

### Protection Strategy

The protection strategy for the park centers around two key principles. The first principle is that protection of cultural sites is a fundamental aspect of the master plan and that every reasonable effort will be made to protect the site’s cultural history.

The second principle is that the cultural history of the site will be exhibited to the degree possible as part of the interpretive program for the park. Depending upon the circumstances, this may range from a general interpretive statement included in the park's literature to specifically identifying a site as part of an interpretive trail and observation point. The determination as to how sites are interpreted will be based on accepted archaeological protocol as defined by the State Historic Preservation Office, Office of State Archaeologist, and Dakota County.

With respect to archaeological surveying of the park, there are two options for approaching a systematic identification of sites within the park. The first is to complete a full **Phase I archaeological survey** of the entire park. This involves an archaeologist gathering background data on what's already known, completing a systematic pedestrian survey of the entire park (including shovel testing as necessary), analysis of previous and new findings, recommendations on site boundaries, etc. Although the preferred method, the limitation of this approach is the cost, which could be substantial for a park of this size.

The second option addresses archaeological issues as they arise during implementation of the development plan. Under this scenario, Dakota County Parks will determine where they want to design and build trails, new campgrounds, overlooks and other improvements that will cause ground disturbance. At that point, an archaeologist will complete the same survey as described above, but only for areas of potential impact.

If there are potential impacts to a site, a **Phase II archaeological survey** of the historical significance of the site would be completed in order to determine if the site is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A Phase II study will also provide better information on the site's age, function etc. that can be used for interpretive planning.

Of the two options, the first is preferred since it would provide a more complete picture of the park that can be used to direct development and the interpretive program. If funding is limited, the second option would be an acceptable approach to protect the cultural assets of the park.

Whether option one or two is selected, the general protocol for archaeological investigation, protection, and interpretation includes:

- ▶ Providing the State Historic Preservation Office, Office of State Archaeologist, and related agencies a copy of the Spring Lake Park Reserve Master Plan.
- ▶ Notifying the State Historic Preservation Office, Office of State Archaeologist, and related agencies prior to implementing aspects of the plan that may impact known sites or areas that exhibit conditions that may be of archaeological significance.
- ▶ Undertake a Phase I study of the subject area to determine the extent to which archaeological sites may be impacted by development plans.
- ▶ Prepare statement highlighting findings and further actions required to protect any sites, if any.
- ▶ Undertake Phase II study as needed to define extent of significant sites.

- ▶ Prepare statement defining findings and recommendations, which should include specific recommendations on the type of:
  - S Protection that is warranted – which could include complete protection with no field identification of a site; protected site that is exhibited to the public; recorded site that should be left undisturbed; and recorded site that can be disturbed (such as building a trail over the top of it).
  - S Interpretation that would be best suited to educate the public about the site (refer to Section VIII – Cultural and Ecological Interpretive Program for additional information).
- ▶ Monitor plan implementation.

For consistency, the general protocol listed above should be tailored to the current standards as defined by the State Historic Preservation Office and related agencies. There are specific procedures to be followed that would apply to this situation.

Given the cultural significance of the site, there is also an option to nominate the park as an archaeological district on the National Register of Historic Places. This option will be given additional consideration as the master plan is implemented and more is known about the cultural sites that are found within the park.

Although most of the sites require additional investigation to determine the current condition and the best protection strategy, protection of burial grounds can be more clearly stated: **Avoid any disturbance of burial grounds within the park.** This includes excavation, disruption due to development, or direct exhibition of a specific site (versus interpretive information that speaks to their existence but does not identify any locations). The exact location of burial grounds should be clearly defined as part of implementing any aspect of the master plan in a given area that is known to have or exhibits conditions favorable to burial mounds. Should burial grounds be identified where development is proposed, the development plan will require adjustments to avoid disruption.

## Cultural Resources Integration with Development Plan and Interpretive Programming

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As previously stated, protection of the park’s cultural preservation is a key aspect of the overall vision for Spring Lake Park Reserve. To achieve this, development within the park was significantly influenced by the location of known archaeological sites, as previously illustrated in figures 6.1 and 6.1. As defined in Section IX – Development Plan, great attention has been given to integrating cultural interpretation into all aspects of the development plan where there is an opportunity to do so. This includes the cultural trail, observation points, and the cultural center on Schaar’s Bluff.

As defined in *Section VIII – Cultural and Ecological Interpretive Program*, interpretive programming is also greatly influenced by the cultural resources. This ranges from the concept of a “walk through time” and exhibits in the culture center to general educational programming. From what is known about the site to date, there is enough information to make general interpretive statements and stories about the history of the area – even though the condition and boundaries of most sites is yet unknown.

For interpretation and development related to cultural resources, the following statements apply:

- ▶ Overall themes and stories have been identified and can be told as part of the interpretive program.
- ▶ The specific boundaries and current condition of sites remains unknown and requires more research.
- ▶ There are almost certainly more sites in the park that have not yet been identified. For design and construction planning purposes, these need to be identified and avoided.
- ▶ The information gathered from a systematic survey will contribute to further interpretive theme development.
- ▶ Burial mounds should be interpreted in the park without specifically identifying a surviving mound or mound group, unless it can be protected from potential looting.
- ▶ A complete interpretive plan should be developed once a systematic archaeological survey has been completed in the park and design plans are further developed. This will develop themes and stories specifically in relation to known sites and proposed trails and overlook areas.