Travels Toward Cedar Lake: Thoreau’s Last Journey

Historian’s Public Lecture October 15, 1997

BY JIM MCPHERSON

In 1861, one hundred and thirty-seven years ago, the legendary American man of letters, Henry David Thoreau, visited Minnesota and specifically the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, traveling by foot and by cart along the shorelines of many of our lakes: Now called Harriet, Calhoun and Isles. He set out west from St. Anthony Village across the Mississippi River and cut over the prairies towards present-day Cedar Lake.

The writer of such classics as Walden and Civil Disobedience had hoped that a fresh and beautiful environment would help his recovery from tuberculosis. Thoreau did extensive journaling on the flora and fauna. He also commented on the condition of the area’s indigenous peoples.

Thoreau’s fascinating reflections on our area will be discussed Wednesday evening, October 15, by writer and regional historian Deborah Morse-Kahn from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at the Kenwood Recreation Center. A master’s thesis on the subject has now been developed as a book, The Last Journey of Henry David Thoreau.

This educational public lecture is free and open to the public in keeping with the Cedar Lake Park Association’s efforts to enhance visitors’ understanding of and appreciation for the area, CLPA is looking ahead a hundred years in its master plan: looking back more than a century gives us a larger bicentennial picture. We believe that Thoreau shared our views on the need to actively nurture nature and would have approved of our ambitious tree and flower planting, planned to grow long into the next century.

Collaboration Beautifies South Cedar Lake Park

BY LAURIE LUNDY

A happy three-way collaborative effort between Cedar Lake Park Association, the St. David Society of Minnesota and People for Parks will be evident next spring when 1,200 daffodils present sunny faces on the hillside south of Cedar Lake Parkway.

Although it was chilly the last Saturday morning of summer, the sun shone on over 40 volunteers who gathered to plant daffodils. Ferns and trillium on the south Cedar Lake hillside between Depot Street and the Cedar Lake wetland. Because it was chilly, the hot coffee and fresh bagels provided by Martha Richter were a welcome treat.

Martha, who lives near the planting site, opened her garage for treats and seats, serving refreshments. Martha’s daughter, Ruth Hovland, said with a laugh, “I was coerced to come by my mother and my son Ben.”

Another welcome treat was the Pan Celtic folk group, WOAD, playing Welsh music to celebrate the daffodil planting. Group members playing to the delight of the planters were Kendra Lee, Kevin Myers, Dan Proud and Frank Sibley. Unfortunately, Scotty Soule was absent. In addition to English, the five-member group sings in all six Celtic languages. WOAD means war paint and refers to the blue dye that Celtic warriors painted on themselves. {WOAD will be entertaining at the semi-annual Celtic Feast on November 1 at the Seward Cafe, 2129 E. Franklin. Call 332-1011 or 722-6229 for more information.}

Daffodils, you say? Are they native? And, what is this strange collaboration between two park-related entities and the St. David’s Society? What is going on here?

Shortly before the new year started in 1995, Charlotte Amy Gordon and her fiancé John Ambrose Stack were killed in an auto accident in Calgary, Canada. Charlotte’s mother and CLPA board member, Ruth Jones, are sisters and are of Welsh descent. Wales is a small, mountainous country on the western coast of the island of Great Britain. While purple heather blooms year-round in the uplands, yellow daffodils and the white flowers of the hawthorn bush brighten the lowlands.
Thanks to Volunteers

Volunteers Make the Difference! The vision for an urban nature park continues to become a reality through the efforts of many volunteers. VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN. The following volunteers have registered and worked at a variety of tasks since the last newsletter. If you contributed time and are not listed, please call 377-9522 so you may be listed in the next newsletter.

Carolyn Anderson  Phyllis Galarneau  Jim McPherson
Don Anderson  Kevin Gallagher  Doreen Scivcns
Gay Atchison  Kathryn Glossing  Kevin Sheehy
Don Beimborn  Matt Goldman  Michael Shoop
Sue Botte  Ben Howland  Lily Shoppe
Laurel Bradshaw  Ruth Howland  Lara Shoppe
Gail Bronner  Jeff Jasin  Frank Siegcl
Larry Brown  Melissa Javad  Chef Sinve
David Buran  Susu Jeffery  Al Singer
Mike Carlson  Katie Jones  Erik Svensson
Dan Christenson  Lolen Lundy Jones  Paisley Svensson
Gay Cross  Ruth Jones  Tom Tennant
Dan Dailey  Margaret Just  D'Ann Topuluk
Jack Davis  Mary Ann Karne  Natasha Topuluk
Bob Day  Anne Kerr  Neil Trembley
Paul Deal  David Klopp  Carol White
Barb Diamond  Greg Klopp  Sue Verrett
Richard Erickson  Mary Alyce Kronke  Tyler Wiggins
Carolyn Fisher  Andrew Larson  Wes Wiggins
Lory Falk  Rebecca Larson  Brian Willette
Ned Foster  Jane Latourneau  Eleanor Wylie
Fredrik  Kendra Lee  Judith Zachary
John Frey  Laurie Lundy  Martha Richter
Eric Rote

Spinnin’ Wheels Ride the Trail

BY LAURA SCHENCK

The Edina Senior Center Spinnin’ Wheels bicycling group rides every Wednesday morning. Our goal is to try a new trail each week. One of our members mentioned the Cedar Lake Trail, and since none of us had even heard about it, we decided to give it a try.

It was a spectacular day; sunny and warm with a delightful breeze to help us along. The trail was easy to find, thanks to good directions from Laurie at CLPA. The wildflowers planted along the way added a nice touch; the flower enthusiasts among us recognized the black-eyed susans and verbascum. We appreciated the wide paths because we like to ride next to each other to chat.

We were glad to see that the paths were busy with walkers, joggers, skaters, and cyclists. We stopped at the “big rock and bench” to walk into the wooded area and up to the lookout over Cedar Lake. It was a pleasant surprise to get such a nice view. One of our members noted that the beach to our left was, in his youth, a nude bathing beach. He regaled us with a story about “trailing for fish, but not catching anything” as he paddled back and forth in front of the beach in his canoe, hoping for a glimpse [of something other than a fish]. Our little side trip was such a treat that we stopped everyone we passed to tell them about it.

We stopped at the Linden Yard Depot, where I described the origin of the building and talked about the partnership between the various groups that made it happen. It’s reassuring to know that people still care about how things look!

We continued our ride into Minneapolis. As we approached downtown, we did not feel at all intimidated! Making our way to the Farmer’s Market, we stopped for refreshments. As you come off the trail, at the corner of Glenwood and 12th, there’s a bar which apparently serves a very nice hamburger. Our members made a date to come back and see if the burger rumor was indeed true.

Our ride back was a little more difficult, as we had the wind in our faces, but the trail is smooth and even and we enjoyed the extra exertion. As we said goodbye to one another, we all agreed that we felt good—a little exercise, education, and sightseeing all in one day! One of our members said he planned on bringing his wife on the trail that weekend... a sure sign that it was a good ride!
Cedar Lake Park Association gratefully acknowledges recent contributions for memorials, tributes and gifts to loved ones. Since the last Update, the following memorials and gifts were received:

**Cedar Grove**
In memory of friend and neighbor
Jeffrey Van Sant from Elizabeth Oshwald

**Cedar Trees**
To celebrate our 35th Anniversary:
Jack & Vivian Mason
In memory of Don & Lee Methven from Barbara M. DeCosse
In memory of husband David Barr Paulson from Ruth Bradshaw Paulson

**Wild Flowers**
In memory of Raymond Michaelson from Corwin & Doris Peterson
In memory of John Rhines from Marcus, Cynthia, Emily & Anna Diliard
In memory of childhood friend, Ron Waldham from Dick & Laurie Lundy

**Railroad Memorial at Linden Yard Station**
From Paul S. Green

**Other Gifts & Memorials**
To honor the 50th Anniversary of Sally & Gerry Freidel from Dory & R.E. Rose
In memory of mother & grandmother
Dorothy Eder from Ron & Elaine Burto
In memory of wife Lucky Levy from Leonard Levy
To honor the special birthdays of Jim & Nancy Piroman from the Joseph & Nancy Alexander family
In celebration of the 25th anniversary of Collen & Dan Puzak from Nick & Virginia Puzak
To honor the first anniversary of Peg Rose & Keith Kajander from Joyce & Sig Harris
In memory of Rose Schleiff, grandmother of Robert & Stephen Greenberg, from Bud & Dory Rose

*—Beth Oshwald*

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**Other Contributions Received Since the Last Update are Gratefully Acknowledged**

Carl & Lynn Beihl
Lois & Jonathan Bishop
David Borchart
John & Pat Bulgerin
Sharon Bunnell
June & Paul Burd
Dorothy Burgstahler
Malcolm & Jean Clark
James Curran
Dan Dailey
Evan Ellison
Harvey & Sheri Ettinger
John Francis
James Chestny
William Gibrath
Doug & Gretchen Gildner
Bob Glancy
George & Evelyn Gosko

Mrs Thelma Grubryn
Charles Hall
Stephen B. Huey
Sarah Hustad
Clifford & Thelma Johnson
Bill & Suzanne Joyce Arnold & Shirley Kaplan
Beth Kelley
Ruth Kincaid
Rhonda Sue Kuehl
Dorothy Lijja
Jack Lynch
Peggy Lynch
James McKenna
Chet & Miriam Meyers
Mr. & Mrs. N.L. Newhall

Open Door Foundation
Rita Ormaza
Robert & Paula Pendleton
Polly Penney
John & Stella Perentesis
Ed & Peggy Plumer
Dr. & Mrs. R. Premer
Elizabeth Schutt
Richard & Libby Siegel
Joan Solomon
Gerard & Kathleen Sovell
D'Ann Topolok
David Wahlstedt
Walter & Elaine Walker
Mark Wernick & Nancy Entwistle
Brian & Linda Willette
Medora Woods

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**Three Unusual Sightings**

May birding trips led by Don Beimborn and Peter Neubeck in Cedar Lake Park produced several unusual sightings, according to our "Blue Bird Lady," Mary McGee. In addition to Caspian Terns and Black Crowned Night Herons, Mary reported seeing a Whip-poor-will. She said,

"I have never seen a Whip-poor-will in Cedar Lake Park before, but this one flew in and landed about 25 feet from our group and sat there for a long time. It was quite a thrill."

A tax-deductible contribution of $300 will provide for the purchase, planting and nurturing of red cedar trees to remember or honor loved ones. $150 will provide for wild flowers. Individual gifts at these levels will be listed on a marker and the recipient or family will receive a certificate. All gifts will be acknowledged with a handsome card. A portion of all gifts will be used to further the work of Cedar Lake Park Association. Send your tax-deductible gift to CLPA, 1101 Cedar View Drive, Minneapolis, MN 55405.
Projects in the Park

BY KEITH PRUSING

Mid-summer water quality numbers continue a promising trend. Cedar Lake had a trophic index of 43, with Lakes Harriet and Calhoun both at 47. This index places completely clear water at 0, and green soup at 100.

Planned enhancements for the 21st Street and Upton area are being finalized. In a cooperative effort, Kenwood Isles Neighborhood Revitalization Project, the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, Minneapolis Department of Public Works and the Cedar Lake Park Association are coordinating design elements for the Kenilworth Trail crossing: the 21st Street/Upton Gateways and the Upton Woods area. Plans include a water well, kiosk, improved lighting, more permanent restroom facilities, a possible security phone, signs, extensive landscaping in native plants and a new gate, among others.

Areas of the prairie along Cedar Lake Trail were mowed this summer to remove the alien flowering yellow sweet clover before it went to seed. This was done according to standard prairie restoration protocol. Emotionally, it seemed harsh, but the prairie should be beautiful in the future.

The southeast shore area between the channel and Cedar Lake Parkway was surveyed, establishing the boundaries of the public land along the lakeshore. Last year’s Chain of Lakes Framework Committee advanced the notion of a developed trail through this area, linking Cedar Lake Parkway with Lake of the Isles. This is inconsistent with the master plan vision. Restoration of the national shoreline with natural materials and the possibility of a minimal trail would be more in keeping with the design criteria listed in the Statement of Philosophy as developed by the large, multi-interest Cedar Lake Park and Trail Citizens Advisory Committee in 1993. Wild and natural is the overarching vision for Cedar Lake Park.

The Concept Master Plan was formally submitted to the park board on July 16. It was well received and will serve, we hope, as the model for the enhancement and development of Cedar Lake Park as an urban nature park. It is a colorful, beautiful document filled with information about the Park...past, present and future. The plan is stored electronically, so that it may be tailored for specific audiences as a planning and fund raising vehicle. Call 377-9522 if you’d like to see it, and thanks to everyone who has worked over the years to finish it. Special thanks to the Writers Group.

The Cedar Grove is thriving, and there will be more planting this fall. Further, the broader design of this “heart of the park” area is continuing. Please call 377-9522 for more information and/or volunteer opportunities.

Mountain Bike and BMX activity in the park on the southeast side of Cedar Lake is markedly less this year as a result of work done last fall. The aim of a joint effort by CLPA and the park board is the creation of an inner lakeshore corridor closed to bicycles, while allowing for bike activity temporarily, further from the lake, out to the county land. The park board has convened an internal task force to find a place in the park system for this legitimate recreational activity. Part of Cedar Lake Park is one of the possibilities under consideration. Accordingly the master plan, would allow a temporary mountain biking facility in this area. Please call Al Singer at the park board, 370-4900, with your opinions.

The park board is also considering the development of free-running dog areas somewhere within the park system other than Cedar Lake Park. If dogs are allowed free reign, we will never have a nature park filled with habitat opportunities for wildlife. It’s that simple. Nevertheless, it would be nice if dog owners would respect other park users, and the park itself, by keeping their dog on a leash and picking up it’s feces.

Birding programs were a great success. Look for more nature programs, including birding, wildlife, edible and medicinal plants, geology, lake ecology and other topics. These programs will draw on the expertise of volunteers, as well as park board staff.

Big Woods planting and development is well underway. The new prairie area is taking nicely, and the lakeshore trail has been re-routed in a more environmentally friendly manner. Much planting has occurred, and this fall promises to be a busy time. Every Saturday, starting at 9 a.m., many volunteer opportunities are available such as planting, watering, mulching, buckthorn removal and trail work.

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Save Cedar Lake Park Update • Fall 1997 • 4

Amazon Girls in Cedar Lake Park

Ed. Note: While volunteers prepared the last newsletter for mailing, Lily Shopteau, who came with her mother Luca to “lick and stick,” was telling the group about her delightful birding experience in Cedar Lake Park. As a result, Sally Heide, who led the group of young birders, reported on their adventure in the park:

Last May, an excited group of eight-year-olds from the Lake of the Isles neighborhoods, the Amazon Girls, took a bird watching walk through Cedar Lake Park. The girls were rewarded with sightings of Baltimore orioles and their nests, cardinals, red-winged blackbirds, downy woodpeckers, gold finches, a black-and-white warbler (and a bunny).”

Sally finished her report by saying, “We finished our walk with s’mores around the fire at the fire ring. It was wonderful to expose these children to the beauty of nature in our city’s own backyard.” Another mother, Celia Davis, helped lead the expedition of 3rd grade birders: Beth Davis, Carrie Feldman, Katie Helde, Tierra Finkney-Moses, Sten Prussing, Lily Shopteau, Jocelyn Yale, Zizi Bodene Yost.

Congratulations, Donna!

This summer, in cooperation with the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, the Volksmarching group The Meandering Minnesotans sponsored Donna Seine’s 25th Anniversary Volksmarch at Wirth Park. Donna, a CLPA member, has initiated and organized two past Volksmarches to benefit Cedar Lake Park. Thanks, Donna!
Daffodils
continued from page 1

in the spring.
The great national pride of the Welsh people has helped them keep alive their own language, literature and traditions. Singing and daffodils are part of the heritage kept alive by the St. David’s Society. In addition to being very active in the Cedar Lake Park association, Ruth is very active in the St. David’s Society of Minnesota. Are you getting the picture?

In early spring of 1995, Ruth contributed a major gift for wild flowers to reflect Charlotte’s life and work. Since then, the St. David’s Society made several contributions for daffodils to be planted outside the Cedar Lake Park conservancy since daffodils are not a Minnesota native species.

As a result, people for Parks became involved and Mary Lerman, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Plant Specialist and Al Singer, MPRB Naturalist, were consulted about planting plans.

After much research, planning and coordination by Mary, the hillside site south of Cedar Lake Parkway was selected this spring. Over summer the buckthorn had to be removed and the ground cover burned in preparation for the fall planting of native ferns and trillium and the traditional Welsh daffodils.

On planting day, Mary brought tools and the 1,200 daffodil bulbs donated by the St. David’s Society of Minnesota. Three bulb varieties will provide blooms during the daffodil blooming season: 400 ice follies bulbs for early blooms, 400 Carlton bulbs for mid-season blooms and 400 Barrett-Browning bulbs for late-season blooms. People for Parks President Anne Kerr brought a lot of enthusiasm as did the volunteers from Cedar Lake Park Association, St. David’s Society and the neighborhood. Vivian Mason and George Puzak, two park board commissioners from the neighborhood were seen digging in the dirt. Vivian was impressed by the number of people who came some distance to help with the planting. She explained, “I planted next to a father and son [Wes Wiggins and his 7-year old son] from Columbia Heights and others who took something about park beautification back to their communities. George said that he wanted to share the experience with his two-year old son, “I want to learn how to get his hands dirty and plant flowers with other people. It is a great way to celebrate and build community.” David Klopp reinforced that sentiment, “Caring for our parks starts with dirty hands and sweat!” On the other hand, one of the reasons Susu Jeffrey came to plant bulbs was, “as a tribute to Princess Diana and the Wales connection.” The other reason she stated, “I came to plant daffodils not land mines.”

Other Welsh descendants participated in the planting such as St. David’s Society Board members Tom Parson and Laurel Bradshaw, and Rebecca Larson, who brought her son Andrew. Andrew is one of Ruth’s students. She said, “Andy was a very helpful member of the digging team.”

An untimely truck breakdown prevented the wild flower supplier from delivering the ferns and trillium. Consequently they will be planted in the spring among the trees on the same hillside. All who participated in the daffodil planting enjoyed it so much they said they will be back to help with the wild flowers in the spring.

If you would like to help with the spring planting, call Ruth at 926-1377 to get your name on the list.

Members of the Welsh musical group WOAD joined some of the daffodil-planting volunteers, led by Ruth Jones, second from right.

Bulbs by the bag and boxful were planted by volunteers, including Natasha Topuluk (center photo), who came and helped her aunt D’Ann.
Long-term funding plan in the works for Cedar Lake

A capital program is in development to identify projects in the park and create funding mechanisms. Plans include developing protocols to create a project list with funding requirements; an annual drive; the creation of an endowment (a pool of private money) to support the park into the future; targeting and matching specific donors to projects; enlisting bordering businesses and neighborhoods to support the park with money, volunteers, goods and services; ways to reach everyday users to enlist their support; special fund-raising events such as the Thoreau project; and selling specific park-related goods and services.

Please consider CLPA in your year-end gift-giving.
Send your tax-deductible contribution TODAY in the enclosed envelope to:
1101 Cedar View Drive
Minneapolis, MN 55405.

This is not an exhaustive list and several realities are recognized. First, the nature park will not be created without significant private money and other support; and second, a large part of the success of CLPA in partnership with the Park Board is due to the association's ability to raise money and volunteers. If we want the Vision to be implemented, it is largely up to all of us.

Last-minute Trail Updates

Bassett's Creek: A spokesman for the BNSF Railroad has indicated that it does not want an at-grade trail crossing. Others are concerned about the expense of a bridge or a tunnel. Nevertheless negotiations are moving forward, and a design acceptable to the high majority of residents in the area is expected by spring.

Cedar Lake: Trail engineers are working with the new developers of the building site at the end of the trail near the Mississippi River. A new trail alignment is expected to be finalized in 1998.

Kenilworth: As we go to press the Minnesota Department of Transportation is reviewing the final plans. According to Rhonda Rae, Minneapolis Public Works, "You can expect to ride the trail connection between the Cedar Lake Trail and the Midtown Greenway next summer."

Newsletter Volunteers Needed

As we welcome a new editor for the next issue, we would love to have other volunteers join in Call 377-9522 to apply.

Many, many thanks to all the volunteers who have helped over the years.—Laurie