Cedar Lake Park Association takes part in ‘Make a Difference Day’

By Maria Olson

On October 24th Cedar Lake Park Association participated in its first “Make a Difference Day.” This event was coordinated by the St. Paul Volunteer Center. They provided the youth, and we provided the projects.

Students and adult leaders from Highland Junior High School’s Fresh Force after-school program came out to Cedar Lake to remove exotic species. Volunteer Coordinator Maria Olson and CLPA President Keith Prussing met the group with hand tools and a short history of the area.

Newsletter editor Jim McPherson was on hand to document the event with our new video camera. Keith Prussing gave a safety presentation on working with hand tools. The group worked for four hours in the Cedar Grove area and took a hike to the mound to get a view of the lake. Lots of buckthorn and honeysuckle were removed with loppers and piled for later disposal. Stop by to check out our work.

This first-time event was a great success. Combining our work and the work of all those who helped out around the metro area, we truly did make a difference.

If you have a church group, school group, garden club or boy/girl scout group who would like to participate in a community service project, please contact the volunteer coordinator at our voice mail box, 377-9522.

Projects can be arranged for days, evenings or weekends. Large groups will need to provide the appropriate adult supervision. Get out, get involved and enjoy the spirit of service.

Volunteers from St. Paul’s Highland Junior High School made a difference October 21st in our Cedar Grove. For four hours they removed buckthorn and honeysuckle.

Second planting of wildflowers in the park

By Neil Trembley

Building on our original plot of land planted last spring, five hundred additional native species of wildflowers were planted in the prairie in late September. The area planted was in the middle of the prairie, just west of where the first planting occurred.

There are new signs posted there. The plants will take three to four years to mature. They are rugged wildflowers that thrive on marginal land. They will be unaffected by the recent burnings in the prairie and may actually be helped by it.

A dozen volunteers spent about two hours dipping the plants in Terrasorb (a compound the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board uses to help conserve moisture content), as well as digging and planting. It was a joyful experience for all. Ruth Jones, one of CLPA’s most tireless and energetic volunteers, even persuaded a passing runner to lend a hand with the digging.

This project is in keeping with the Cedar Lake Park Association’s philosophy to “Nurture Nature.” We plan to plant another one thousand to two thousand wildflowers in the middle of May, 1999. If you wish to help, please call 377-9522 and leave a message.
Building bridges, facing challenges

BY KEITH PRUSSING, CLPA PRESIDENT

Recently, I have had the opportunity to review historical materials related to the efforts of the last ten years to save, build, and perpetuate Cedar Lake Park and Trail. I am doing this because we have received telephone calls from individuals and communities seeking advice and information on how we have done what we have.

Also, we have heard comments from groups who are more familiar with our efforts declaring, “We will do it like Save Cedar Lake Park did.” In order to better understand how we have done what we have, I dug into old files, looked at the time-line chronology contained in the Concept Master Plan and reviewed the minutes of the citizen advisory committees that resulted in the Statement of Philosophy and the Design principles.

I talked with a number of people who have participated at various stages along the way. I am amazed at the process that developed as a result of the vision of a few. Due to the efforts of men and women of goodwill, in both the private and public sectors, a long series of fortuitous occurrences filled needs almost as soon as they appeared.

With the overriding desire to create an inclusive, participatory and consensual process, the efforts to save and develop the park and trail are succeeding. Nurture Nature has proven to be a powerful seed that has grown into a process in which we can take pride.

Today, however, this process faces significant challenges. With the imminent departure of the present MPRB superintendent, changes in key MPRB staff, continuing and severe MPRB funding shortages, the resignation of important CLPA board members and the ignorance, real or imagined, of large segments of the general population of the work that has gone on at Cedar Lake and the vision that it embodies, I believe that the process itself is in danger.

Unless CLPPs, as the primary carrier of the vision, is able to maintain the strength and commitment to make ourselves heard, and to continually remind citizens and public officials that such a visionary process does indeed exist, has worked very well in the past, and is worth perpetuating, it is likely that activities in the park could return to more customary ways of doing things, and the vision could be lost.

I invite each of you to look inside and reflect on the achievements of the past, the challenges of the present and the possibilities for the future. Then ask yourself this question, “Do I believe in the vision for Cedar Lake Park, and if so, what can I do to help?”

Happy New Year!
BY KEITH PRUSING

November brought the sound of earth-moving machinery to the Kenilworth Trail corridor on the east side of the lake. The trail cut begins 15 feet from the center line of the railroad tracks, and in some areas will have a fence to further safe use of the trail.

In the area of the lagoon, where the trail and tracks are in close proximity, special design features will help ensure safety. The trails will be graded, and the subsurface laid. The bituminous surface will be finished in the spring.

Rail traffic arrived in the wee hours of an Autumn morning and since then there has been regular train movement through the corridor. The latest promise for the duration of this traffic is two to six years. Both of these developments are bringing great interest in activity in what has been a relatively lightly used area.

Moreover, this area was submitted to MPRB as one of several possibilities for off lease dog parks by a citizens’ advisory group studying dog issues.

The corridor is owned by Hennepin County, and we are committed to seeing that land stays in the public domain as part of greater Cedar Lake Park. Finally, there is little money in the trail budget for landscaping. So private monies are required if any plantings of trees, shrubs and grasses are to occur.

The prairie areas along the Cedar Lake Trail were burned this fall by MPRB. Encompassing the grasslands between Highway 100 and the Parade Stadium area, these third-year prairies are coming along nicely, and fire is part of the natural process that maintains prairie vitality. Due to the late arrival of a hard freeze to kill the green material to allow for combustion, the burning was delayed until late November.

Native prairie plants are fire tolerant, while alien exotic plants are usually not. Next year should see increased and more varied flowering activity as the prairie continues to establish itself — with a little help from its friends.

The new shortgrass prairie planted along Upton Avenue South, as part of the Big Woods project, was quite spectacular during the summer months with a profusion of flowers, predominantly yellow black-eyed susans. MPRB and the planting contractor will do further work on this prairie to remove exotics, largely dandelion and plantain, that survived the conversion process. A meandering tuft trail is well established through the landscape, with a superb overlook of the lake. Further, neighbors have expressed interest in contributing funds for prairie plants to enhance and hasten the establishment of this shortgrass area.

Many questions and some complaints have been voiced concerning the storm-damaged trees that continue to block the northern shoreline trail. Aside from the large backlog of work that Forestry has been struggling with in this year of storms, CLPA believes that this debris provides an opportunity to design a better lakeshore corridor.

Working with MPRB staff, we intend to remove storm debris in a way that will align the lakeshore trail. We plan to recycle the larger logs for landscape timber, chip the smaller material for use as mulch and trail surface and leave the rest to create habitat and control bicycle traffic. Tentatively, this work will be done in the late winter or spring.

Two significant events will arrive with the new millennium that promise to have enormous impact on the park and trail.

First, in 2000, ISTEA money from the federal government will be available to replace the Cedar Lake Parkway bridge over the trail/railroad corridor. This project could involve an entirely new bridge alignment, better access to the Cedar Lake Trail and making the parkway more non-motor friendly.

Next, as part of the ongoing Chain of Lakes development process, monies are likely to become available for Cedar Lake in 2,001. The recent improvements that have been done at Lakes Harriet and Calhoun were funded this way through the Metropolitan Council, and study is presently taking place at Lake of the Isles. Cedar Lake is next in line. This can either be an opportunity to implement the vision for the park that has been developed over the past decade, or it can involve a new planning process that will require vigilance to ensure that the wild and natural qualities of the park are preserved.

Final bids are out for the lakeshore restoration project for the west side of the lake. Located by the fishing pier on the middle point, this project is funded with an LCMA grant. Look for work to begin in the spring.

Big Woods II has been approved for funding by the Legislature. This grant, funded with LCMA monies and administered by the DNR, is $10,000— with a minimum $10,000 private match. In partnership with MPRB, we are utilizing volunteers and professionals to continue restoring diverse native landscapes, as in Big Woods I, located near 21st and Upton Avenue South. The Heart of the Park area at the north-east lakeshore is the location, planning is underway, and work will begin in the spring.

Both the Bassett Creek Trail and the Midtown Greenway are on hold at least until spring 1999. Railroad issues are largely responsible. There are two bridge designs under discussion for the connection of Bassett’s with the Cedar Lake Trail. Spanning the Burlington

G. F. Warner and Cedar Lake’s first mansion

BY NEIL TREMBLEY

Minneapolis was founded not on flour, but on timber. A decade before the flour boom of the 1870s made Minneapolis famous as the "Flour City," the banks of the Mississippi were teaming with timber mills. The last great virgin forests east of the Rockies were in Northern Minnesota. In the 1850s and 60s, these stands of pine began to fall under the woodsmen’s ax. The trees were floated down river to St. Anthony, where the falls provided the energy needed to run the sawmills. Out came the timber needed to build the river cities of the Mississippi and the wood-starved towns of the west.

As Minneapolis grew, the need for furniture and the fineries of civilization grew with it, beckoning young men and women to come from the east in search of a better life. One of the men who came would become the first magistrate to build a villa on Cedar Lake. His name was George Freeman Warner.

George Warner was born in upstate New York in 1827. The youngest of five children, his parents were of German stock, as so many of our Minnesota ancestors were. His grandfather had fought in the Revolutionary war. Warner’s family settled in the Mohawk Valley. When young George was 16, he set off to Albany to make his fortune. He apprenticed at cabinet making and piano building. Soon George was off again.

Over the next 10 years George migrated from Buffalo to Chicago. Then in the 1850s, he set up a sawmill in Fairbault, Minnesota. In 1857, when his mill burned down, he decided to move one more time to the town springing up on the banks of the Mississippi by the great falls, where there was plenty of timber to be found.

George did a little bit of everything. First listed as a stone-cutter, he soon became a furniture dealer, upholsterer and undertaker. (It seems many furniture makers—with ample access to timber—double as undertakers). Over the next decade George’s business prospered.

In 1869, George took one of the great gambles of his life. He bought a piece of property on Cedar Lake Park Update • Winter 1999 • 3
Northern railroad tracks between Bryn Mawr Meadows and the CLT, this highly visible bridge can either be ordinary and functional, with already available funds, or follow the second design, which is more of a work of art.

This more aesthetically spectacular design requires $258,000, which at present has not been found. The CLT Phase II Completion to the river has been delayed as well, due to planning for the reconstruction of the Washington Avenue Bridge downtown, and design concerns at the new housing developments by the river, upstream from the Hennepin Avenue Bridge. We are hopeful for Spring, 1999.

Permit-only parking has been implemented on Upton Avenue South, north of 21st Street. Four to six parking spots are now unavailable to the public generally. For the immediate neighbors, the park design principles and the continued encouragement of park arrival by non-motorized means, this is a positive step. Further steps are necessary to solve parking issues in the area to mitigate Kenwood neighborhood impact.

The Eveng Avenue South entrance to Cedar Lake Trail, the Burnham Woods area, Kenilworth Avenue by the Lagoon and the Kenwood Parkway entrance to the CLT also have parking issues. Further, the pay lots on the western lakeshore have displaced parking into the adjacent neighborhoods.

We have recently made presentations to KJRAA and CIDNA neighborhood organizations, updating them on our activities and plans for the future. We are in various stages of discussion with institutions along the trail corridor, such as Target and the Jewish Community Center west of Brownie Lake, and Dunwoody and MinneSosa near I-35E.

A constant comment this year has been about the pleasure of experiencing the greatly improved water quality of Cedar Lake. It only promises to get better. Although Milfoil continues to be a significant problem, a multi-year study has been underway. Last year saw the controlled release of a weevil that may "munch it for lunch" — hopefully, with no negative consequences. Since the shoreline of Cedar Lake is largely natural, it will provide the leafy debris that these insects need to overwinter.

So far, the new Osprey tower near Cedar Meadows has been unoccupied, although there have been numerous Osprey and Eagle sightings at the park this past year. 1999 may see the installation of a second of these 65-foot treepoles elsewhere in the park.

We continue to receive an increasing number of reports describing conflicts between park and trail users and off-leash dogs, some resulting in injuries, all resulting in hard feelings. MPRB and the Minneapolis City Council are reviewing the recommendations of the citizens advisory committee regarding the creation of off-leash dog areas throughout the city. Hopefully, these areas will help address usage issues throughout the park.

Important planning processes are underway to consider the Bassett’s Creek valley, through which the CLT runs on its way to the river. With the possibility of the relocation of the Guthrie Theatre, Dunwoody Institute’s desire to expand, development proposals for the City of Minneapolis Public Works yards and impound lots, and the potential parkway running north from Lindon Avenue, along Girard Avenue North, through the town removed Summer-Olson housing projects — coupled with the fact that the CLT passes through the midst of all of this — we are continuing to take an active role in this ongoing process.

Throughout all this, CLPA is ably represented, and our voice is being heard!

Undeterred, George erected this “stately mansion ... in the midst of ample grounds and surrounded by groves of native trees”.

The original building burned down soon after it was built.

George’s family included three boys, Nathaniel, George W. and James. In their later years, George and wife Mary often spent the winter in New Orleans, not far from where she grew up. Late in his life George, always the visionary, became a large investor in the burgeoning Mesabi - Diamond Iron Mining Company. He died in 1903 and is buried in Lakewood cemetery.

The house had a more interesting history. It was taken over and used as a brothel in the early 1900s. (This story has been told in a previous article.) Today, only the stone wall and entrance to Park Lane attest to what was Cedar Lake’s first mansion.
Dunwoody students and faculty help lay out Cedar Grove

BY DAVID ZENK, ET AL.

Located near the northeast shore of Cedar Lake, the Cedar Grove can be approached by the multi-purpose trail that begins at the north end of Upton Avenue South, near West 21st Street. It can be found by traveling east on the gravel path that leaves the Cedar Lake Trail in the area of the mound.

The double spirals of the grove give form to a larger landscape unit, the Heart of the Park. This area is bounded by the woods along the eastern rail corridor to the east, the prairie and Trail area to the north and the lake to the southwest.

To date, 66 native red cedar trees have been planted along the arms of the spirals, each honoring and/or remembering individuals with a special connection to the park. The grove was consecrated in October, 1996, at a well-attended ceremony. Blessings were offered, waters from various lakes and rivers were poured into ceremonial holes, and then six trees were planted.

Green ribbons and other tokens were tied to the trees to allow each individual present a moment of connection. (Now, move forward to Spring 1998.) At the annual retreat, we made the commitment to plant the remaining trees, some 60 in all, by fall 1998.

We had already established the center and had laid out the beginnings of the spiral arms, but we now realized that we would need professional help to move the lines hundreds of feet out into the park. Therefore, we decided to see if we could enlist the students and faculty of Dunwoody Institute to look at the land and lay out the locations of future trees.

David Zenk, instructor in their Civil Technology and Land Surveying course, agreed to coordinate the project, assisted by students Mark Haselius, Ryan Hansen, Jeff Fink and Jason Oberg. They used a GIS receiver/data collector set loaned to them by GPS Applications, Inc. of Plymouth, Minn., to locate the center region of the spiral. The GPS receiver, made by Satloc Corp. of Scottsdale, Ariz., is capable of real-time sub-meter accuracy. The GPS receiver was connected to a data collector equipped with software supplied by Field Worker Products Limited of Toronto, Ontario. This particular combination GPS receiver and data collection software had proven easy to use and reliable in prior projects.

The GPS crew collected data on the existing location and center region of the spiral, including the original six trees, in order to place real world coordinates on the project. The coordinate system chosen was the Universal Transverse Mercator projection (UTM) since many maps and other data are available in UTM format and the format can be readily converted to geographic coordinates or other coordinate systems if desired.

The UTM coordinates from the GPS crew were imported into AutoCad, a computer-aided drafting program using point import utility. The points were used as a starting basis for the layout of the spiral arms. Each spiral arm was laid out on AutoCad according to the design of the project architect.

The coordinate calculations were extended well out from the center of the spirals to facilitate future expansion of the project to encompass the entire city in the event that funding were available.

The last step was to return to the park with the GPS receiver and the coordinate point list to lay out the location of each point. The real-time sub-meter accuracy of the GPS receiver proved entirely adequate for the project.

The students and faculty of Dunwoody Institute learned more about GPS, spiral geometry, computer-aided drafting and the integration of technology with landscape architecture and art forms. The relationship with the project will enable future students to learn similar lessons.

Looking back, along the bluebird trail:

1998 was not a happy year

BY MARY MCGEE

Out of six nest boxes along the Cedar Lake Trail, only two housed bluebirds this year. Four young birds were banded and fledged from one nest box. A second nest with five bluebird eggs was lost when their nest box was vandalized. That adult bluebird pair did not nest. The family from the first box was often seen near the memorial rock and bench.

Unfortunately, in two episodes vandals damaged four nest boxes. Also, there was a great deal of competition from house sparrows. However, tree swallows were able to hold their own and produced two broods successfully, as well as one more brood at Brownie Lake. Any suggestions to combat future vandalism will be appreciated.

This year bluebirds returned to the nest boxes on the lawns at the Dayton-Hudson (formerly Prudential) building but lost broods to sparrow predation. This is the tenth year bluebirds have been present along Cedar Lake Trail, and we expect their return again in 1999.

Northern nesting birds of all species passed through on their fall migration, including songbirds, waterfowl and raptors. Hopefully, some osprey may take note of the osprey tower at Cedar Meadows awaiting its first customers next spring.

This year all normal timetables for weather and bird movements have been advanced. Cedar Lake Park is a marvelous place to go birding, as well as hiking, biking, wildflowering and plain enjoying — any time of year!
Building Bridges...

CALENDAR

**CLPA Annual Meeting**
Wednesday, January 27, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Kenwood Recreation Center. Come elect board members and hear what CLPA has accomplished in 1998.

**CLPA Steering Committee**
Second Monday of each month, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Kenwood Recreation Center. You're always invited to participate.

**Annual Retreat**
February 20, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Kenwood Recreation Center. Board seeks creative ideas and solutions.

**Earth Day Cleanup**
Saturday, April 24. A great time to join friends and neighbors in a good cause.

**Wildflowers Planting**
May 22. Call to help plant, 377-9522.

**National Trails Day**
Saturday, June 5. Celebrate the Cedar Lake and Kenilworth trails.

**Big Woods II**
Throughout 1999.

**OUR VISION**
Our vision for Cedar Lake Park is to restore the lands and waters and create a new community with nature through which we can transform ourselves, our city and our society.

**OUR GOAL**
Our goal for Cedar Lake Park is to bring people and nature together in harmonious community... a goal symbolized by the spiral.