

Cedar Lake Park

UPDATE

Spring/Summer 1999

Partners in Progress Edition

Volume 11, No. 2

2001: A Bridge Odyssey

BY NEIL G.C. TREMBLEY,
CLPA SECRETARY

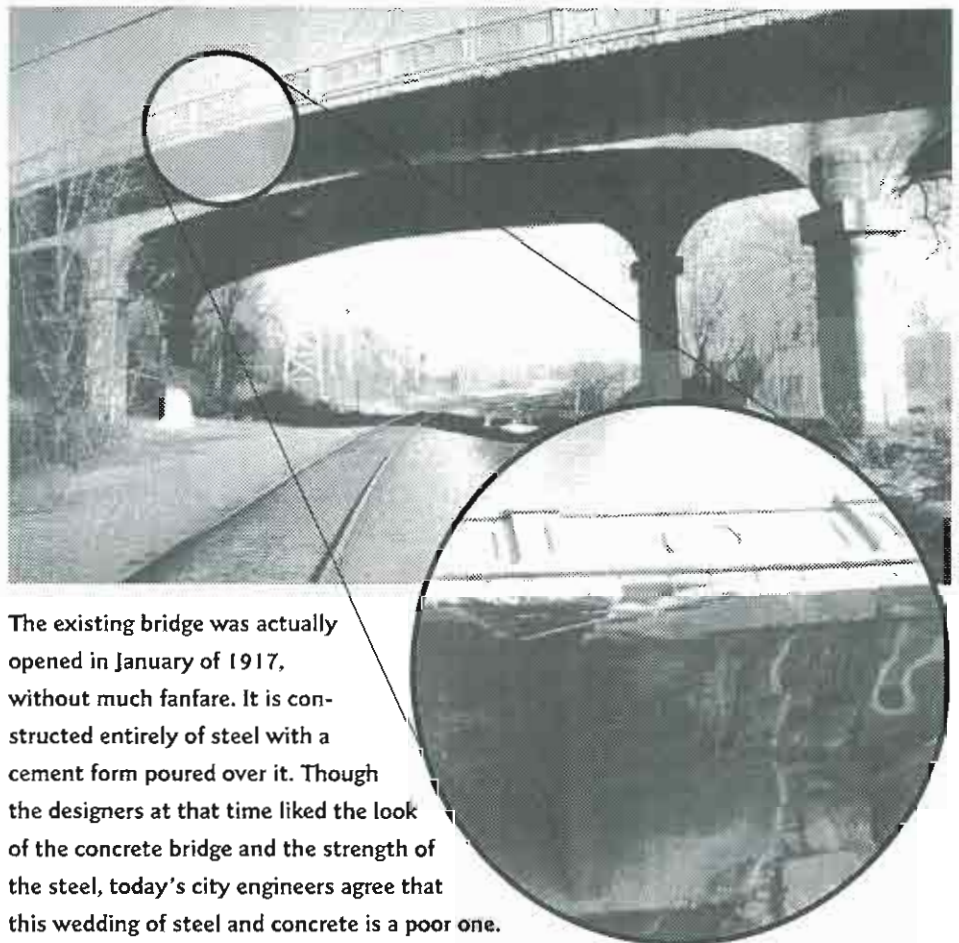
On April 15, 2001, the city of Minneapolis tentatively plans to close and demolish the 83-year old Cedar Lake Parkway Bridge over the Cedar Lake Trail. In its place a new redesigned bridge will arise for the 21st century. Major changes will consist of flattening the arc of the present structure and realigning the access south of the bridge.

The bridge site and the road that goes over it have a history almost as old as the city itself. Cedar Lake Road was the first "highway" to wind its way west out of Minneapolis around 1860. The road—predating the rail system in Minnesota—carried settlers, mail and trade goods out to the shores of Lake Minnetonka.

At that time there was a ridge running north and south, forming a barrier between Brownie and Cedar lakes. The road ran across the top of the ridge. The first railroad coming west out of the city (in 1867) detoured around this barrier (and the marshes on either side) and swung around the south end of Cedar Lake. Fifteen years later, one of the giants of Minnesota history took over the struggling railroad and changed the dynamics of the Cedar Lake area.

James J. Hill saw that by skirting across the north end of Cedar Lake he could cut the distance and time it took to get his passengers to the new Mecca of North America in the 1870-80s: the fabulous hotels on Lake Minnetonka. Hill blasted through the ridge and spread the earth to the east and west to form a causeway they called "the Minnetonka Cut-off." In 1883 the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway (the precursor to the Great Northern) built a bridge across the new gap in the Bryn Mawr hills.

The first bridge (see the Wallef photograph on page 4) was a wooden one. It stood (as far as we can tell) until 1916 when the present bridge was built.



The existing bridge was actually opened in January of 1917, without much fanfare. It is constructed entirely of steel with a cement form poured over it. Though the designers at that time liked the look of the concrete bridge and the strength of the steel, today's city engineers agree that this wedding of steel and concrete is a poor one.

As the steel contracts and expands due to changes in temperature, it creates constant cracking of the cement around it, allowing water and salt to seep in. The result is the disastrous dislodging of chunks of cement. In addition, the arc of the bridge and the Y-shaped alignment on the south side of the bridge have led to hazardous conditions for motorists as well as pedestrians and bicyclists.

Continued on page 3



Wondering What You Think...

BY KEITH PRUSSING, CLPA PRESIDENT

It is rich and beautiful in the park this time of year. The birds are returning, migrating from the south, either to nest for the season, or briefly linger before continuing further north. The frost comes up out of the ground, first creating a muddy layer of wet earth tones, and then drying as the sub-surface thaws.

Along the trail the prairie begins to come alive. insects flying about, new leaves and shoots slowly appearing, drinking up the ever-stronger sunlight. The lake thaws, and slowly begins to warm. And the people are more and more evident throughout, those who have been in the park during the winter, as well as visitors who, like the sap rising in the trees, feel the awakening spring and feel the need to come out into the natural world. It is a wonderful time of the year!

Why do people come to the park, where do we go, when do we come, what are we looking and listening for, how do we get here? CLPA would like to know, and for this reason we have included in this newsletter an informational piece that we'd like you to consider and return with your comments. It contains an inventory of our thinking about the park, and speaks both to what has been accomplished, as well as possibilities for the future. Please review this material, give your own priorities for the park, and tell us something about your experience of the park. Then, mail it back, and we will use the thinking and feeling expressed to help guide our future endeavors.

Cedar Lake Park contains so many different niches offering solitude, social encounters, recreation, and experiences of the natural world throughout the year. Our goal is to enhance, stabilize, preserve, and transform the park in ways that when people come to the park and learn about the process that has been underway over the years, they are able to appreciate and feel a part of a very special place.

Full of experience, this park is for all of us: the people, plants, and animals, honoring the past, celebrating the present and dreaming the future. Decades down the trail, we hope that visitors to the park will say, "They really seemed to know what they were doing." Happy Spring!



BY STEVE DURRANT, TREASURER

Cedar Lake Park Association gratefully acknowledges recent contributions for memorials, gifts and tributes to loved ones.

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Thank you to our many volunteers. Your work is much appreciated!

BY KEITH PRUSSING

In the Kenilworth corridor 2-4 trains have been passing through every day since the fall. So far, their presence seems to be uneventful in the park; in fact, the sound of their passage has been a favorable thing for some people. Others, however, disagree. The railroad use of this corridor continues to be viewed as temporary, with a 2-6 year horizon, and is dependent on events in St Louis Park.

Hennepin County has paved a trail from the west along the railroad corridor directly south of Highway 7. Last fall they stopped in the vicinity of Highway 100, and likely will complete the section east to the junction of the Kenilworth and Midtown Greenway trails this year. In addition, Mayor Dorfman of St Louis Park reports that her city now has the bonding authority and the plan to build trails that will link with the Cedar Lake Trail at Highway 100 and run west through St. Louis Park, providing a link to the county trails in the west, as well as a thruway across town. These two developments are important events in the ongoing creation of the regional trail network.

A preliminary map has been released by MPRB which contains 16 potential off-leash dog areas situated throughout the city. Site 7a is located in Cedar Lake Park in the restored prairie between the CLT and the spirals of the cedar grove. The next step is public meetings in the neighborhoods near each proposed location. Our position has long been that such a thing is not appropriate for the conservancy area of the park, and that more peripheral areas, such as the Hennepin County land north of 21st street, should be considered if such facilities are created.

Work on the Kenilworth trail will be completed this spring. Look for a re-engineering of the CLP railroad crossing to facilitate the junction with this new trail. It is conservatively estimated that there will be 1000 users/day. At present, there is little money for landscaping for this trail.

CLT- On to the River-faces one last hurdle. There is a right-of-way issue concerning the back edge of a downtown parking area. Commissioner Mason has been working diligently on this matter, and is confident of a successful resolution.



Photograph by Michael Shoop

The Bassett's Creek Trail continues to anticipate a 1999 construction schedule, and work will resume on the Midtown Greenway corridor from I-35 west, including multiple access ramps for the below grade areas, as the weather warms. All in all, 1999 promises the manifestation of the connecting vision that so many have worked so hard to bring forth.

There are several things happening in the Upton Woods area at 21st and Upton. The KIAA NRP funds to enhance the gateway area are being spent this spring. Look for a well and pump, new gates, a new street light, benches and bike racks. In addition to boulevard plantings of native plants, MPRB will be revisiting the new short grass prairie to eliminate dandelions, plantain, and other exotics, and reseed with native plants. Finally, there is a fund growing from the neighbors to buy and plant native prairie plants, which will add more variety and accelerate the development of this area. Please feel free to contribute.

There will be extensive planting on Cedar Point on the west side of the lake. Last year saw this area devastated by straight-line winds, and the subsequent cleanup left the point quite open. Forestry personnel discovered quite a few native trees and shrubs hidden amongst the buckthorn. With time, this will be a far richer landscape than before this unplanned clearing.

Included in the design plans for the replacement of the parkway bridge is access to the CLT from Cedar Lake Parkway. This entrance area was recognized as necessary and desirable in the original design of the trail, and was tabled to await the rebuilding of the bridge, which is scheduled for 2001. Nothing will be done at Ewing Ave. at this time. Improvements in this area will possibly be included in the Chain of Lakes funding from the Metropolitan Council.

Maintenance staff at Jones-Harrison have been clearing buckthorn from their property, which is located south of the Cedar Meadows wetland. MPRB will remove exotics from adjacent park land, thereby largely completing the area all the way to Cedar Lake Ave. This land includes the St. David's daffodil plantings along Cedar Lake Parkway. Last spring CLPA participated in planting of woodland materials, and there will be continued plantings to transform the understory of this often steeply sloping area. As of yet, there have been no occupants of the osprey tower. Perhaps this is the year!

The ongoing milfoil studies will continue throughout the ice-free seasons. Perhaps some of the milfoil-eating weevils will have survived the winter. Milfoil, like buckthorn, is an exotic plant that will never be eradicated, only contained, and studies like these are showing promising results in their preliminary phases. The emergent, native shoreline communities that will be planted near the fishing pier on the west side of the lake will help these control efforts, as the weevils need a leafy shoreline to over winter. Funding for these plantings was obtained by MPRB in an LCMR grant.

Brownie Lake is a unique area for several reasons. It is cut off from its natural connection with Wirth Park by I-394 to the north, and has only an under the BN railroad water link with Cedar Lake to the south. Brownie never experiences a seasonal mixing

A Bridge Odyssey continued from page 1

of its waters, due to the deep bowl in which it sits, where the Dayton Hudson building blocks the westerly winds. Also, when the tunnel to Cedar and the channel from Cedar to Isles were built, Brownie's water level dropped as much as six feet.

This lack of mixing means that there is a fluctuating depth, below which is without oxygen, with little life. At present, there is a dirt trail that circles the lake, which is steep and wooded on the east side, in prairie restoration the north, and has beautiful native tamaracks along with other mature trees to the west.

Present uses include fishing, canoeing, hiking, sledding, picnicking, mountain biking and various nature activities. CLPA recognized long ago the desirability of including Brownie Lake in the vision for Cedar Lake Park. Some in the surrounding Bryn Mawr neighborhood would like to see Brownie be "more like the other lakes," with a paved trail around it and other improvements. We will continue to listen.

CLPA will be presenting a number of public talks this year about the park and trail and the restoration of native landscapes through a public-private process. Also, there will walking tours throughout the park to show what is being accomplished. Finally, there are walks of special interest, such as birds and wildlife, or edible and medicinal plants.

There is no topographic map of the high mound on the northern lake shore, due to the thick canopy of mature trees that cover it. Typically, these types of maps are done with data obtained by aerial observation. The folks at Dunwoody Institute who aided in the layout of the double spirals of the Cedar Grove once again agreed to help, and we will soon have a detailed map of this unique land form and its wonderful view, which will allow design possibilities to be considered. CLPA has a dedicated, growing fund to support something special for this area, consistent with the design principles of the park.



Pictured here, circa 1900, this first bridge was a wooden one. It stood (as far as we can tell) until 1916 when the present bridge was built. To the left we see Cedar Lake Road. Looking west, note the lake on both sides of the track.

The present bridge is owned by the Burlington Northern Railroad. The street and bike trail that pass over the bridge are part of the Minneapolis Board of Parks and Recreation's Grand Round, and of course Cedar Lake Park and Trail go underneath it. The major player in the building of the new bridge is the City of Minneapolis Public Works. The city's bridge division has already drawn up tentative plans for the building of a new bridge. The city has planned an informational meeting for citizens sometime in April of this year.

Much of the funding for the new bridge is through the Federal Government's State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). This funding is coming through the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDot). As required by federal law, MnDot has to make a determination if the bridge or the area is historically significant. The State Historical Preservation Office (SHIPO) has made a preliminary determination that it may well be. So MnDot will need to have a consultant review the pertinent information and

advise MnDot concerning this issue. As of yet, this writer has been unable to determine if this has been done.

After the city rebuilds the bridge, they will be the owners of it. The tentative plan is to demolish and rebuild the bridge during the 2001 construction season. However, city planners say it's possible that the bridge crossing may be closed for up to a year. When the bridge reopens, the arc or "hump" of the bridge will be significantly flattened, increasing sight lines.

While the northern access will remain the same, the southern access will be significantly altered. The familiar Y-shaped figure of the converging roads will be realigned to a T-shape. The long end of the T will be the Cedar Lake Parkway, while the cross line of the T will be Ewing Ave. leading north unto the bridge. City planners envision that the combination of these two alterations will significantly increase the sight lines and safety of this dangerous crossing.

—NEIL G.C. TREMBLEY

Big Woods II Begins

Work has begun on the latest native landscape restoration project, Big Woods II. Funded by a matching grant through the Conservation Partners program and administered by the DNR, this grant was awarded to CLPA as part of the habitat restoration component of LCMR, the state lottery environmental trust fund. MPRB continues to work in partnership with us in our park-building efforts to continue to recreate and restore native vegetation in the park.

The project includes buckthorn and other exotic plant removal, as well as the planting of wet forest, maple basswood forest, oak woodland, and savannah prairie areas. In addition, the lakeshore trail on the north end of the lake east of the mound will be restored, realigned where necessary, and laid with six inches of wood chips. The many fallen trees, the aftermath of a violent spring storm last year, will largely be left in place to provide habitat.

Only an 8-foot corridor will be established, and the timber will be used to reduce erosion, control bicycle traffic, and line the trail. This trail work continues to follow the design model of an inner pedestrian lakeshore trail that undulates around the lake, with nodes such as the sunset bench situated on the trail.

Beginning in late March, crews of young people, part of a program run by the Tree Trust with funding from Hennepin County Employment Assistance, have been in the park working hard on Saturday mornings.

Additional work is being done by volunteers, Boy Scouts and other youth groups and MPRB forestry and operations personnel. Forestry will be doing buckthorn removal and control throughout the Heart of the Park area in late May-June, with planting to follow later in the summer and fall.

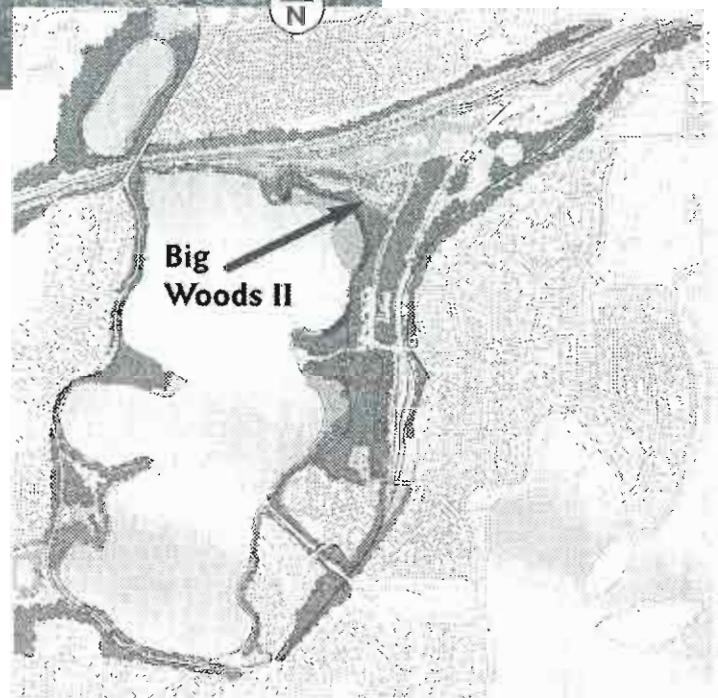
As the landscape is in transformation, it may be startling at first to see the exotics removed or the lakeshore trees cut; but be reassured that hundreds of trees, shrubs, and non-woody plants will be quickly replanted in these areas. Along with the native material that is already present, there will soon be a much richer and diverse environment in the northeast quadrant, providing more diverse food sources and habitat for wildlife, as well as a richer aesthetic experience of the natural world of Cedar Lake Park.

The Cedar Grove, containing at present almost 70 memorial cedar trees planted along two spiral arms, is contained within the project area. Exotics clearing will further bring out the design, create easier access and visibility, and move further toward the final design. Plantings throughout the grove and Heart of the Park will shape the landscape to the benefit of people and wildlife. Finally

our partnership with Dunwoody Institute allows the spiral arms to be laid further out onto the landscape.

The Big Woods II project will be completed by the end of 1999. Along with the Big Woods I area that is located north of the Hidden Beach trail past the end of Upton Avenue South, this project represents the continuation of a gradual landscape transformation vision whereby native habitats are restored throughout the park. Further, the lakeshore trail work which has occurred has covered about 60 to 70 percent of the route along the east and north sides of the lake, resulting in a drier, sinuous, and quieter trail experience.

All are invited to participate by contributing volunteer time, money, or native plant materials that may be unwanted in your home landscape. This project represents yet another collaborative effort between the community and the public sector at the local, county, and state levels. It is an opportunity to engage people throughout the city in approaching the natural world, and provides an ongoing model of possibilities for the future. Thank you to all who contributed to our efforts in bringing forth the vision for the nature park at Cedar Lake. This enduring legacy is something about which all of us Partners in Progress can be proud.



Cedar Lake Park Conservancy Area.



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INSIDE

On the Horizon 2
Special Gifts 2
Projects 3-4
Big Woods II 5

Cedar Lake Park Update is published seasonally by the Cedar Lake Park Association (CLPA).

CLPA's mission is to create and nurture the nature park at Cedar Lake and the connecting trails and greenways.

Since 1989, CLPA has built a membership of over 3,000 households, developed a successful partnership with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and other city, county, regional and state agencies, and raised money for acquisition and development.

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Be Our Partners in Progress!

CALENDAR

CLPA Steering Committee

Second Monday monthly, 7:00–9:00 p.m.
 Kenwood Recreation Center.

Birding Identification Field Trip

Friday, May 14, 7:30 a.m., led by Peter Neubeck. Call to participate: Dorene Scriven at 922-4586 or Mary McGee at 377-0630.

Wildflowers Planting

Saturday, May 22. Call to help, 377-9522.

National Trails Day

Saturday, June 5. Celebrate the Cedar Lake and Kenilworth Trails.

Big Woods II

Plantings May–June and Sept.–Oct., with progress throughout 1999. Call to volunteer.

Summer Solstice

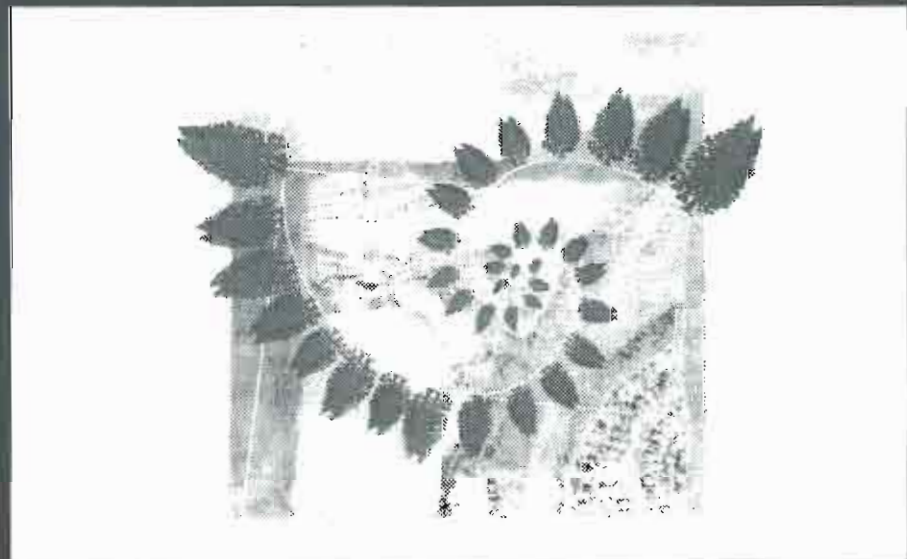
Monday, June 21, 10:49 p.m.

Fall Equinox

Thursday, Sept. 23, 2:52 a.m.

Your support is important—

Send your tax-deductible contribution TODAY to Cedar Lake Park Association
 2000 Aldrich Avenue Minneapolis, MN 55405.



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.

This dramatic spiral of the Cedar Grove in Cedar Lake Park was contributed by CLPA friend and commercial artist Jim Johnson. Done in blue, green and black, this artwork will be available on our newest T-shirts by calling (612) 377-9522.