

OPEN ● WORLD LEARNING  
**river**  
spring 2016



writing, photography, and illustrations  
by OWL's eighth grade

*“The Mississippi valley is as reposeful as a dreamland.”*

-MARK TWAIN

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**FOREWORD**

the story behind this year’s river book.

“This book is a testament to my students’ growing relationship with the Mississippi.”

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beginning of the river, beginning of the book.

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# Foreword

Last August, I took my six-year old son Dylan to Itasca State Park. Now that he is old enough to remember our camping trips, I wanted to plant that classic walk across the beginning of the mighty Mississippi in his mind. He walked across the rocks that separate the Mississippi from Lake Itasca, then rolled up his pant legs and walked across the river itself, put on a swimsuit and ran across it, then put his swim goggles on and dunked his head in the water to get a closer look.

I wanted my son to interact in a meaningful way with the Mississippi River. Mission accomplished.

What I want to instill in Dylan, as well as my students, is a strong sense of place connected to the Mississippi. OWL 8th graders began their year by participating in one of two major trips in for the September Fall Retreats. Most went north to retrace Dylan's footsteps in Itasca, while a smaller number remained local and participated in a canoe adventure that included a trip through a lock and dam as well as a journey from Hidden Falls all the way to Harriet Island.

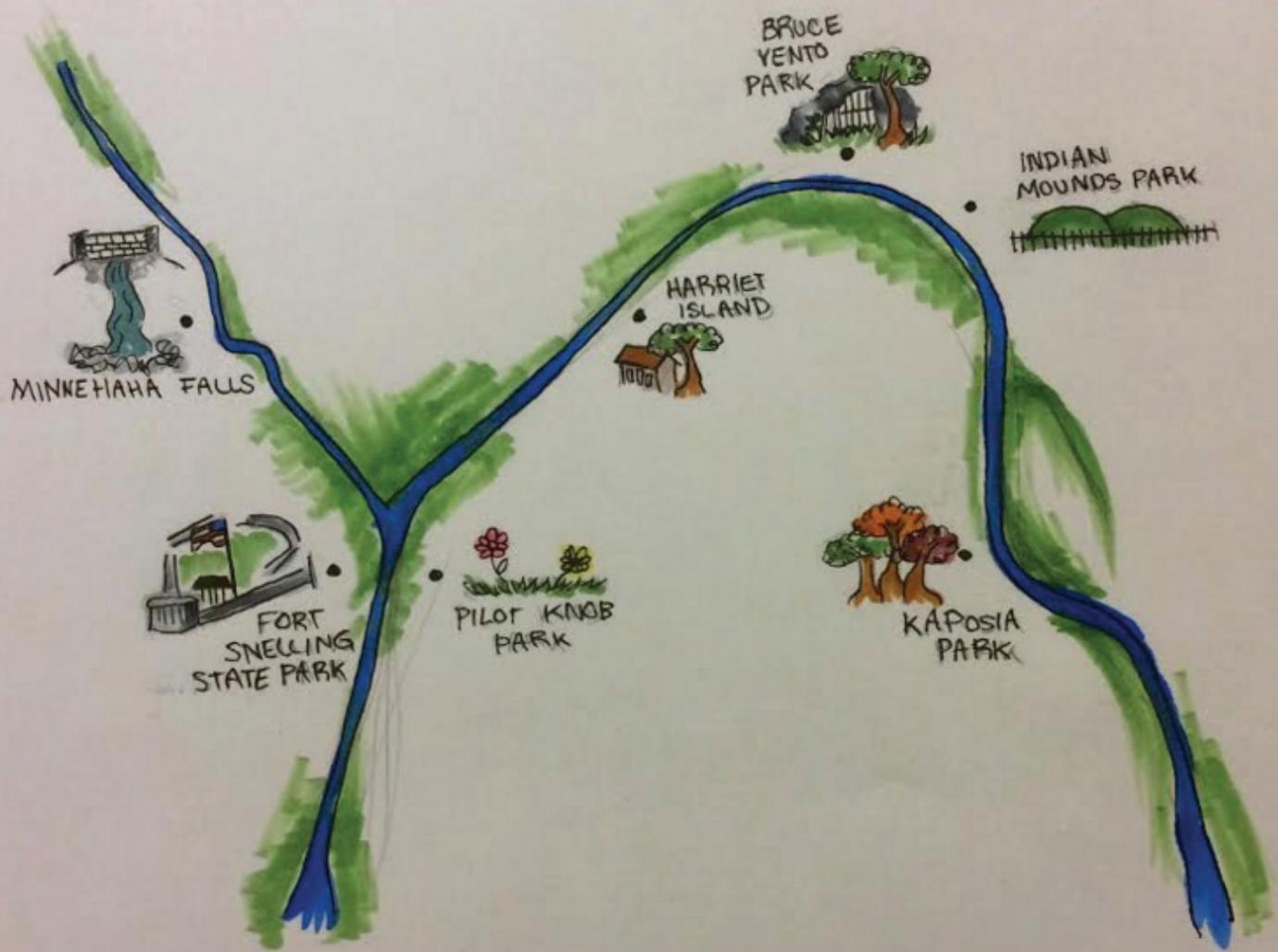
After this powerful introduction to the river, we spent much of the year getting to know our local Mississippi. We focused on eight nearby locations: Minnehaha Falls, Fort Snelling State Park, Pilot Knob, Harriet Island, Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, Indian Mounds Park, and Kaposia. We personally visited each site with guidance from local experts.

In the classroom, we spent time learning more about the history and geography of each site, and invited more experts in to help broaden our knowledge. Meanwhile, in my obsession to see my students internalize the route of the river, I repeatedly handed them a sheet of paper with a simple drawing of the Mississippi as it bends through the Twin Cities, then asked them fill in our eight locations where they belonged along the squiggly line.

We benefitted from the work of many community partners in this examination of the river. The National Parks Service worked with us again this year, lending us their rangers to accompany us on fieldwork, and to come speak in our classrooms. The stories they tell, and the context they provide along the way makes them an invaluable resource. Wilderness Inquiry (WI) was also instrumental in our journey; WI guided both the Itasca and local canoe trip, and I think their organization is particularly good at making the river a fun place to be. Finally, Kate Clayton of Friends of the Mississippi River was another great asset. Kate provided hands-on classroom lessons, and then gave my students the opportunity to give back to the river by facilitating a day of storm drain stenciling on the West Side.

I would also like to thank art teacher Brie-Anna Medin for providing my students with skillful guidance in the art of landscape drawing, and Tim Leone-Getten for all his help in arranging and carrying out fieldwork. Finally, I am indebted to Quinn Christensen, the 8th grader who spent countless hours laying out this book on the large computer at the back of my classroom. Quinn's eye for detail and commitment to aesthetic design have elevated this year's river book to a new level of professionalism. This book is a testament to my students' growing relationship with the Mississippi. The content is organized by location, from Itasca flowing south, and it captures the stories, observations, and knowledge we gained this year. I think the park rangers and the other organizations we worked with all would like to see students interact in a meaningful way with the river so that they can grow into the role of being committed stewards for this amazing and important resource. Time will tell whether or not we have accomplished that goal, but this book indicates that we are off to a promising start.

Leo Bickelhaupt, English Teacher  
Open World Learning Community





# HEADWATERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI

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# ITASCA STATE PARK



*Location summary by Quinn Christensen*

Itasca State Park was founded in 1891, 59 years after Henry Rowe Schoolcraft discovered it in 1832. Several explorers had tried and failed to find the head waters before him, hence the name Itasca - a combination of the latin words veritas, meaning truth, and caput, meaning head. The discovery was viewed to be so prestigious and envied by so many other explorers that, in 1881, another explorer at the time named Willard Glazier even went so far as to plagiarize Schoolcraft's accounts of his Mississippi expedition.

The headwaters are also a lovely place to spend the day. The beginning of the great river is narrow enough that you can cross it by leaping between a spatter of rocks. It's no wonder that it's always crowded with families - children love jumping from stone to stone and pulling the crayfish out from their secret hideaways, and their parents love snapping postcard-worthy pictures of Lake Itasca and their kids positioned awkwardly across the half of a log that stretches across the stream. The headwaters sport another famous landmark - the sign that has been carved into a log which reads: "Here, 1475 feet above the ocean, the mighty Mississippi begins to flow on its winding way 2552 miles to the gulf of Mexico." This tiny smidgen of beauty marks and describes the land of Minnesota in a way that only the Mississippi could: small and mighty, simple and loud.

# HIDDEN SIGNIFICANCE

*Historical fiction piece by Abby Davis*

Early morning, my family awakens. It's another moving day and mother and father panic in a rush. As always, there are many things to pack and my siblings tend to be lazy. I wake up to the beautiful stream that goes for miles and miles. I sit upon a fallen tree that forms a bridge like walkway across the narrow stream that surrounds and unknown lake. We are settled in a nestled area surrounded by tall trees and other thriving Ojibwe families in the same boat as my family and I. The silence in the area is rare, I hear the trickle of the river run off the inclined edge of a rock. I wonder to myself where might this river end, of what becomes of this small stream. I imagine an ending that ends in something truly extraordinary. The silence ends when I hear the loud rather alarming scream from my younger brother Bineshi. I should probably begin the day's work.

"Omaha come beat the rug, it's been heavily impacted with dust."

I pick myself up from the edge of the stream, when my foot has a subtle impact with the water.

As I stand up water drips from the new moccasins mother made for me. My day was not off to a positive start. I run into our tipi. I was holding a freshly sharpened spear given to me by my father as a gift for my mature performance in the family. I dash beyond the tipi when my spear catches on the limb and removes a fur. I ignore it, and grab a stick. I hang the carpet from a limb on a tree, I begin to hit the rug. My siblings frantically run around the grass playing keeper of fire. I have always wondered why my brother and sister do not have to work as hard as me. I always try to remind myself that it is a sign of maturity and growth. That is something my family values most.

My father speaks. "Children, come inside. I hear people approaching!"

When anyone hears that we know going

inside is our best option just for our safety and protection. People pass through this land from time to time, but this particular group of people looked different.

They were pale skinned with strange, expensive clothing. Their wool coats were embroidered with strategic patterns which made them look impressive. At the base of their necks were crests buried beneath the profusion of silk. The men were all dressed alike, and stared at us as they approached. This was an unusual sight but we just went into our normal routine.

We hear them briskly approaching our tipi. My father looks worried, yet intrigued. He exits the tipi to find out what is going on.

"May I ask what you are doing here?"

"My name is Henry Schoolcraft," one of the men says through an interpreter. "I am accompanied by my companions. We were exploring the area and would like to inform you this is a place of significance."

"How so?"

"We believe this to be the headwaters of the Mississippi River."

My father shakes his head in awe, looking slightly confused but reports back to us with the details. We stand by for a moment to watch as the strange men begin to examine the area. Some took out large sheets I wonder why they could not distinguish the significance of this area. I mean from what I see, there are some trees and a lake with a small stream that goes for miles and no one has ever been brave enough to follow it and see where it goes. What could be so significant about this open piece of land? Ever since the group of settlers came, more and more people have been dropping by the land and observing the lake and stream. I come across a man wearing very nice clothing using very sophisticated terminology as well as holding oil and canvas.

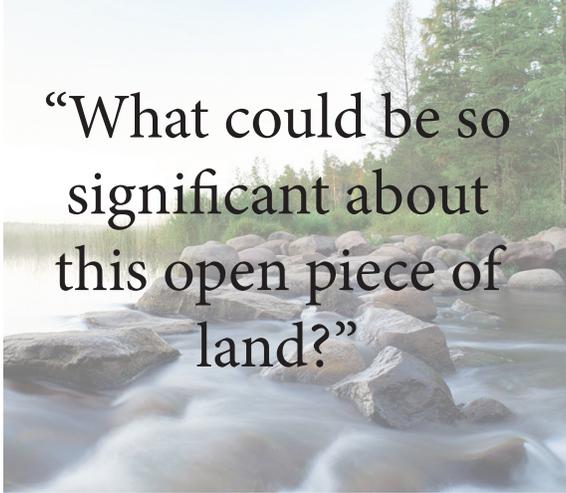
"My name is Jacob V. Brower, I am here

to tell you that this here very stream is the headwaters of the mississippi river.”

The different reactions were overpowering some in shock, some not yet not knowing what to say. Simply a wondrous piece of information.

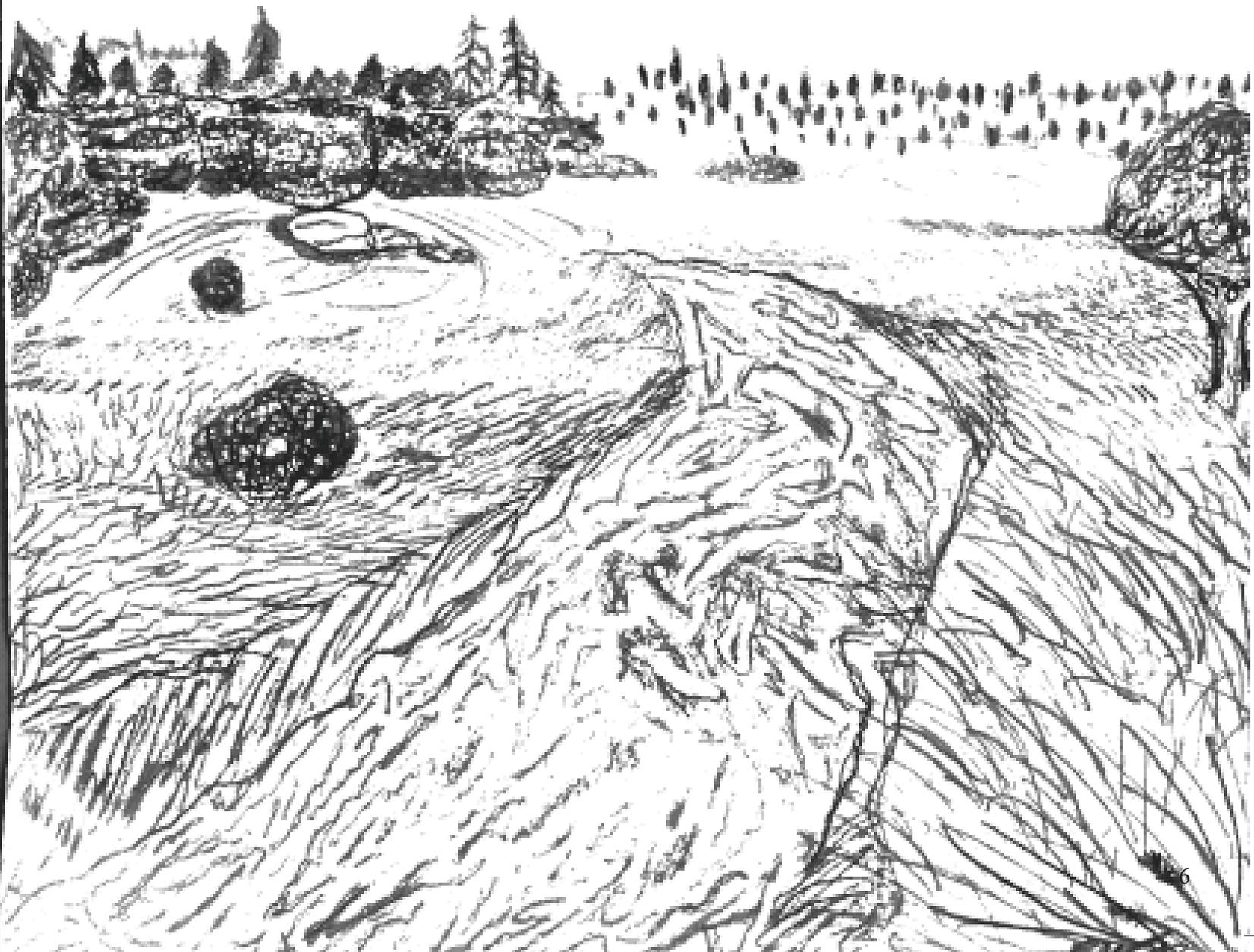
“We sh’all call it Itasca State park, which means “truth and “head”.

We now knew why me must



“What could be so significant about this open piece of land?”

leave. This area was being quickly demanded for logging. Prior to that trees were being wilted down and destroyed. Because of his actions he lead generations of thriving forests and wildlife. My family and I packed up the next day knowing we had been in the presence of the headwaters of the Mississippi.



# Fieldwork Reports

## SETTING UP A TENT

*Personal fieldwork report  
by Frankie Pfoser*

The first thing that we did upon arriving at Itasca State Park, was set up our tents so that we had a place to rest our heads for the night. My tent was near the corner of the field next to the woods. I loved the smell of the fresh air. Setting up a tent sounds pretty easy right? In reality, I had a lot of trouble setting up the tent for my friend. However, after an hour of trying to make it, we figured out that we had some pieces missing and one of the pieces was too long. Luckily, I had my two really great friends Kaelen and Lu to help out. I had slept in a tent before, so it was not a big deal. The experience is hard to explain, but it is basically just sleeping in a smaller place. Some people might have thought it seemed crowded in their tents, but I was asleep before my fellow campers came in, so I am not sure. It did not bother me to sleep on the ground one bit. The first night, it was kind of cold and chilly. Despite this less than desirable weather conditions, I slept through it all. Those who did not sleep as soundly heard owls in the trees and deer rustling through the underbrush.



## THE HEADWATERS

*Personal fieldwork report  
by Jedi Casas*

It was a windy and sunny September day. The sun was warm but the wind made the day much colder. When my group arrived at the headwaters, we tested the water quality. We filled a long cylinder tube with water. We dropped a round object with black and white designs in the tube. The round object was tied to a rope. We pulled on the rope to make the round object come up. We pulled until we could see the object. The water quality was amazingly clean and clear because the round object was on top of the tube and we could still see it. My group inferred that at beginning of the river, the water was clean because there weren't any people throwing trash everywhere.

The Headwaters looked cool. It was really small. It had piles of rocks for people to cross the river. After the water quality test our group crossed the headwaters of the Mississippi. We had to go one by one while our principal took pictures of whoever was crossing the river. When it was my turn to cross I went fast. To my left I could see Lake Itasca and to my right was the beginning of the Mississippi River.

# CLIMBING THE FIRE TOWER

*Personal fieldwork report*  
by Victoria Raysor-Kessel

My favorite part of the Itasca trip was a hike and ended up at the Fire Tower. The hike was very long and tiring. It was about 1-2 miles long in the woods with a bumpy terrain, but it was all worth it! When we got to the fire tower, it looked rickety and old like a bunch of steps with a big metal box on top of it. As you climbed the fire tower steps, it was very wobbly. It was hard not to turn back as it was frightening to be that high up.

We went up to the top of the fire tower. It is one hundred ten feet tall. At the top, you could see the entire Itasca State Park. You could see the line when the tops of the trees and the sky met as the trees faded away. This felt like the perfect time to be in the wilderness. Below, was bright and beautiful. The colors were orange, yellow, and red all shimmering in the sunlight and blue sky. From up there, the sky looked so bright and beautiful.



# ITASCA AT NIGHT

*Personal fieldwork report*  
by Kaelen Lanners

When we arrived we did some activities and set up camp. It was much colder there, especially at night time when we tried to sleep in a tent. The place we camped was just a mowed down field with some trees around it. Every night when we were supposed to be sleeping, me and my tent group would stay up late, be loud, and laugh. This would happen for long periods of time. We had a very fun time. We sat around the campfire at nights before bed, ate s'mores and told stories. Ryland and I tried to do a jump scare while Ed was telling a scary story, but we failed horribly. She told us to hide in the bushes and jump out and scream when she got to the death part of the story. Ryland made it, but my pants got stuck in the bushes we were hiding in. The camping was the best part. Sleeping outside, star tripping, exploring through the trees, looking at the lake, sneaking off into a secret little beach area. Star tripping is a game where you look up at the stars, spin in a circle for a long time, then flash your flashlight in your eyes for a split second. This causes you to fall or "trip." Many of us broke our flashlights on the way down. A group of us would walk through the woods, climb trees and explore. Wolfgang showed me a little beach area behind some forest. It was nothing but a patch of sand. One night I went down there by myself and just looked at the lake for some quiet time. Night time was the most enjoyable time of the entire trip.

# HISTORY OF ITASCA

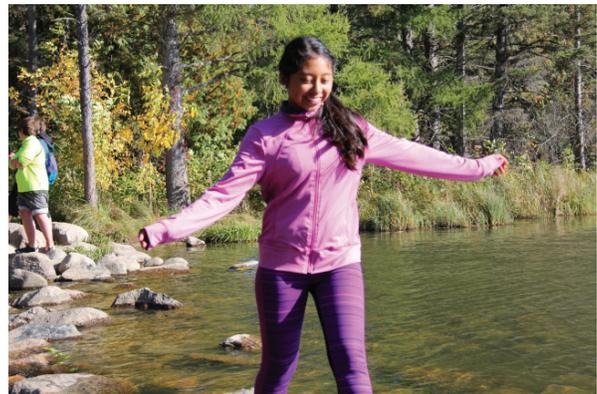
*Feature story*  
*by Micah Gundale*

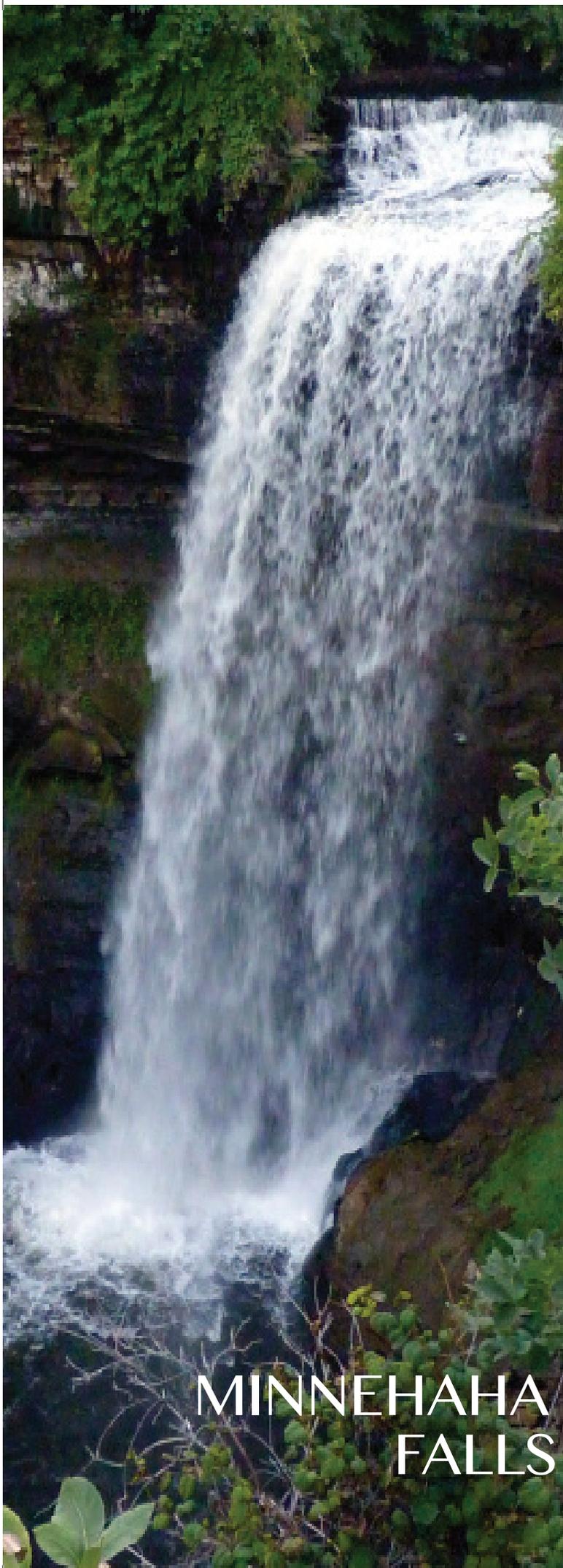
**THE OLD GROWTH PINE FORESTS** you find at Itasca State Park are almost as famous as the Mississippi headwaters. The Itasca area is now one of the only remaining places in Minnesota that has preserved these ancient trees from deforestation.

**IN 1832, EXPLORER HENRY ROWE SCHOOLCRAFT** was brought to the beginning of the Mississippi by an Anishinaabe guide. With help from an educated missionary they created the name 'Itasca,' a combination of the Latin translations for "truth" and "head". In the late 19th century, Jacob V. Brower, a historian, anthropologist, and land surveyor arrived at the headwaters in search of ending the dispute on where the actual location of the beginning of the Mississippi was. But also quite frightened by the frequent logging in the area he became determined to protect the pines for future generations. With much effort from Brower, the remaining trees surrounding lake Itasca had been protected and the area would later be remembered as Minnesota's first state park.

**TODAY, MANY PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD** come to marvel at the birthplace of the Mississippi and to hop the rocks that connect each river bank, or to simply enjoy Lake Itasca and the various wildlife that surround it. Itasca has 32,000 acres of wilderness it also has more than 400 campsites, two visitor centers located on the north and south ends of the headwaters and 50 miles of trails, as well as a hostel and lodge. Meg Krueger, an education manager at Wilderness Inquiry, says "Itasca State Park offers tourists and locals a chance to see the humble beginning of a waterway that gives life to more than half the states in the U.S. You can walk across the Mississippi River in Itasca State Park - try doing that in St. Louis!"

**ITASCA IS A GREAT PLACE FOR ADVENTURE.** I will always remember being able to walk across the Mississippi with Lake Itasca on my left shoulder and the Mississippi over my right. Itasca is made up of many fun activities like an early morning canoe ride or a relaxing swim in Lake Itasca. When I spent the night up there I was able to learn and experience cool things about nature by myself.





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# MINNEHAHA FALLS





owned the place and went right up to a guy in a fire uniform and thumped him on the back.

"Hey, Frank," he said loudly, as if greeting an old friend. Frank turned and crossed his arms.

"Hi Joel," he responded, clearly annoyed.

"Hey friend!" Joel said, kind of slowly.

Frank stared at him disapprovingly. "What do you want?"

"Heysowekindaneedtoopenallthefirehydrants-sothefallslookniceinaphotothisafternoonisthatcool-

## "The president is coming!"

withyouokayye-ahitscoolthanks-somuchFrank-seeya." Joel

turned and began to walk away as fast as he could. They made it about halfway to the door before...

"Woah!" Frank said. "Hold it right there!"

Joel winced and turned back around slowly, his shoulders up to his ears.

"You want to what?"

"They want to open all the fire hydrants to make the falls look nice when the president comes," Buddy answered, his voice full of contempt.

"You're crazy!" Frank laughed. He turned back to his firetruck.

Joel, Steve and George glared at Buddy and rolled their eyes.

"Thanks a lot, Buddy," Joel said.

"Yeah, thanks a lot."

"Great job, Buddy."

The four of them stood in a line, all looking at Frank. Joel and Steve were annoyed; George appeared thoughtful; Buddy seemed merely weary.

"Look, Frank," George said. "The president is coming, and -"

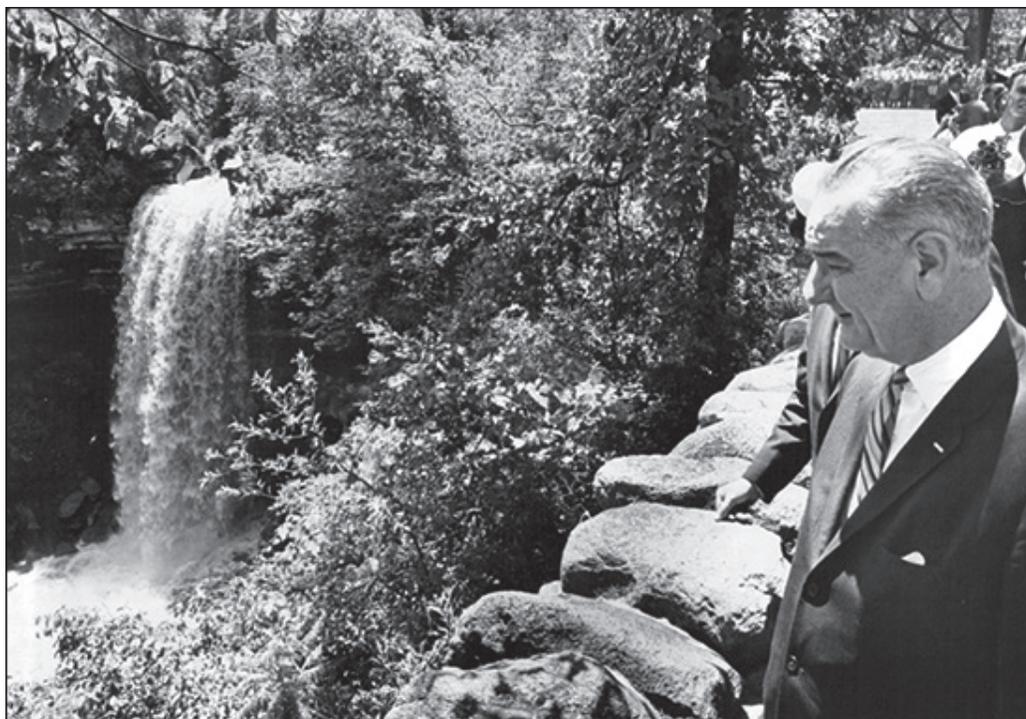
"I don't care."

"- he's going to take a photo at the falls. Now, if the falls look nice, it makes Minnesota look nice. We'll get more tourists, and tourists start fires, and that means you get to put out more fires."

"Well..." said Frank, turning around to look at George. "I do love putting out fires," he thought for a moment. "Okay," he said. "It's a deal."

George high fived Steve and Joel. Buddy sighed. Frank laughed.

It was a lovely day.



# Fieldwork Reports

## MEMORABLE

*Personal fieldwork report  
by Promise Moua*

It was a beautiful day even though it was October. It is usually cold and windy during the month of October. My classmates and I went to the Minnehaha Falls and the first thing I saw was a sculpture. The sculpture grab my attention and I was drawn into how they carve it into a native man carrying woman. I believe that the sculpture was put here to represent love and how Native Americans helped each other. The sculpture has been there since the early twentieth century and is known as Hiawatha and Minnehaha. There was a beautiful stream flowing by the sculpture. As my class and I were walking and following the ranger, I looked at the stream and it seems like the water from the stream ended. When we walked towards the bridge near the end of the stream I saw the waterfall. It was clear and beautiful.

We went down the stairs to see a better view of the Minnehaha Falls. I was amazed by the sight I saw, a fifty-three foot tall waterfall. My classmates and I were crossing over the bridge to the other side of the waterfall. There was a pathway that followed the stream into the woods and we walked on the pathway. I took four pictures of the waterfall before we left and went to the woods. The sunlight made the woods look colorful, especially when the leaves were falling with their unique autumn colors. As we were following the path, the stream from the Minnehaha Falls lead to the Mississippi River. The River's water was not as clear as the Minnehaha creek. We left after we saw the Mississippi River and said goodbye to the view. I'll never forget this trip.



## WALKING TO THE RIVER

*Personal fieldwork report by Sharnay  
Hunter Muhammed*

It was a hot sunny day. The feeling of a breeze crept past my face as us students began to evacuate off the bus. The sight I came upon was very beautiful. The trees were covered with pretty leaves dangling from them and the air smelled very nice. The grass was very green. Birds were singing and the sun was beaming against the water making it shimmer like diamonds and pearls. The sight was very awesome. Me, Monique, and Reyna began to walk along the path to get to the river as a park ranger began to show us around and talk about the sites we got to see. We saw the river that was flowing toward the falls. It had statues in the water. We took pictures and laughed together as we gossiped about things. We walked across the bridge to watch the waterfall. We took more selfies and posted them on snapchat then the group wanted to hike around in the woods. We climbed along the big old branch that had fallen and we went to the other side of the river to hang upon the graffiti benches. When we were done we washed our hands to go eat and play. Me, Reyna, Monique and gabby ate lunch together and we played and screamed at the bugs.

# CONFESSIONS OF A TRESPASSER

*Personal fieldwork report*  
by Jay Xiong

We were gonna go back to the school in a bit so we had to get on the buses. I hopped over the stone wall because I saw a path leading down somewhere. I decided to walk down the path, and I didn't see any signs that said Do Not Cross, so I went on. I didn't really know where it led so I just kept going. Soon after about 50 yards I was behind the waterfall. I realized that I wasn't supposed to be there, but it was so cool that I just stayed for a bit. It was so refreshing because of all the dripping water from the stone walls. It was pretty loud but and I could sort of see through the crystal clear water, but it was blurry. It was very beautiful to look at and I turned around and saw that there were rocks and water dripping down. Then while I was back there I looked back and saw Jaydon. He was shouting my name to get back over there so I did. I almost tripped when coming back. Once I got back to the stairs I heard that Tom and Leo were looking for me. I felt kinda scared because I thought I was going to get in trouble.

# THE FORD DAM

*Personal fieldwork report*  
by Jaydon Gilkes

There were stairs that lead downward towards the quickly flowing falls, so you could go down and get closer to the bottom. There area is considered to be a little bit of a forest and we followed the stream Mississippi River. After hiking down to the dirt path to the river, we saw a lot of things. We could see what I at first thought was Saint Anthony Park, but it seemed like that was too far down the river to see from there. Really, it was the Ford Dam. They kind of look the same. You could also see the Ford Bridge that connects St. Paul and Minneapolis crossing the river. While there, we threw rocks at each other and tried to run across the Minnehaha Creek when the teachers and other adults were not looking. The boys also did a bit of trail running.

# SEEING THE SCULPTURES

*Personal fieldwork report by Chutima Xiong*

The sun shimmered bright unlike the day before. When I walked out of the bus, I had my clipboard in my arms. You could hear the loud hushed rushing of the creek and the waterfall, the trees swaying in the small breeze and the birds chirping in the air. The teacher led us over to the Hiawatha and Minnehaha statue. The small creek separated us from the statue, and a fence stood between the creek and us. The statue showed a man carrying a woman, who is looking down at the ground while the man is looking at her. We then went on the other side of the creek and saw some statues and sculptures. One of the sculptures was a Dakota man. His hair covered part of his face and had no eyes, like a mask that you can look through. Ranger Dave talked about the history of these sculptures.

There were steep stairs and on each side of the falls. We went down the stairs to look at the falls. We then walked on the trail along the Minnehaha creek to the Mississippi River, where we had free time. Some students were throwing rocks. The rocks flew high in the sky and came down hard. Other students either just sat down and looked at the view or walked around exploring the area. The water from the Minnehaha creek looked so clear compared to the cloudy Mississippi River, maybe because it was more shallow than the river. I scooped up some water in my hand, the water was cold but not too cold. After about 15 minutes, we walked back up to the falls, where we rested from the long walk.

“...the loud hushed rushing of the creek...”



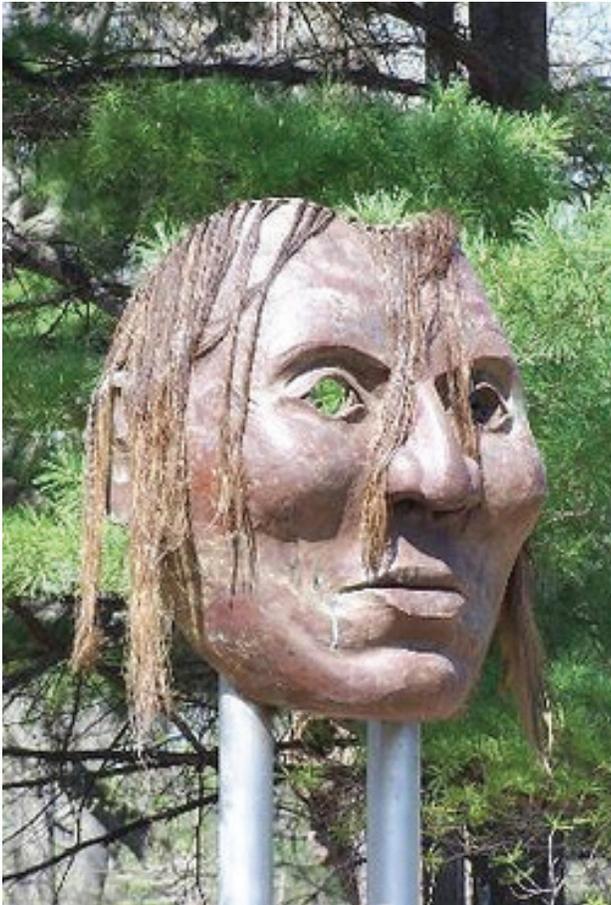
# THE SCULPTURES OF MINNEHAHA FALLS

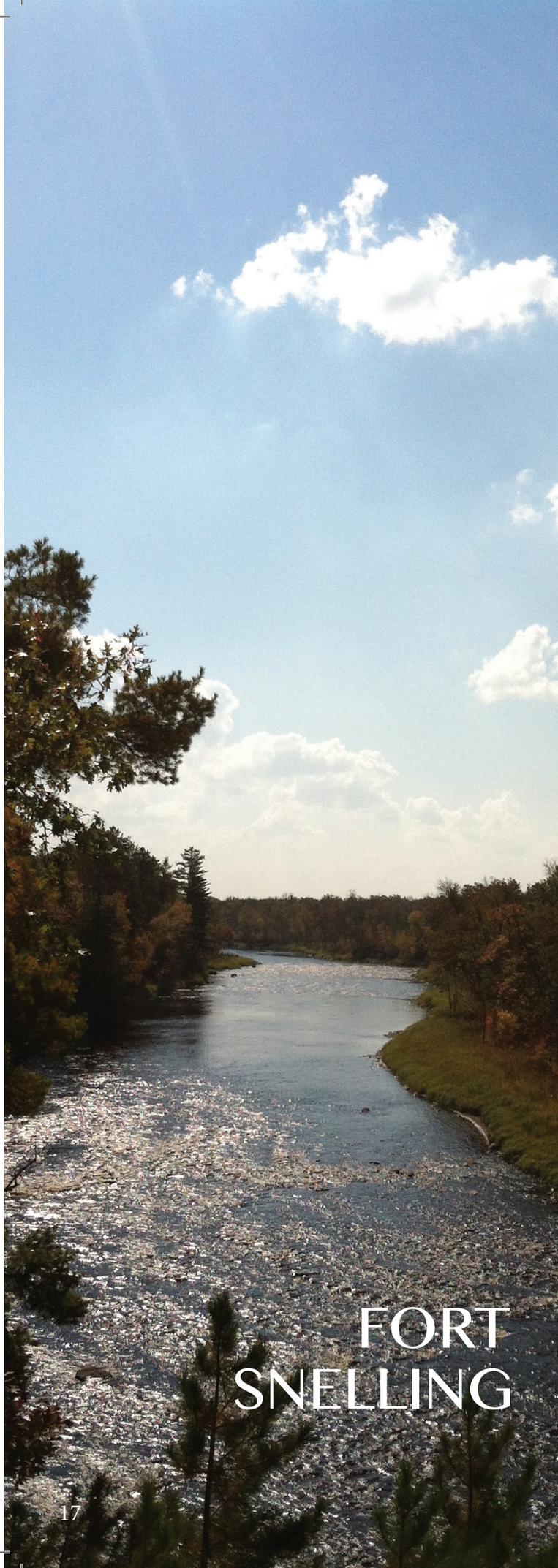
*Feature story  
by Lauren Mitchell*

ASIDE FROM THE OBVIOUS STAR of Minnehaha Falls, the waterfall, this park contains some other interesting pieces of history. These pieces of history happen to be in the form of sculptures.

THE CHIEF LITTLE CROW MASK is located just south overhead the waterfall. The sculpture portrays a mask, set on pillars, looking serious. Viewers can see the sky through Little Crow or Taoyeteduta's eyes. The chief was killed the year following the 1862 Dakota Conflict, where he led the Mde-wakanton Dakota people. The Minnehaha area is considered sacred to Native Americans. The sculpture was made by Ed Archie Noisecat and was later donated to the park.

HIAWATHA AND MINNEHAHA is placed in the creek leading into the waterfall. This sculpture depicts the characters from the poem 'The song of Hiawatha' by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The sculpture possesses the inscription "Over wide and rushing rivers he bore the maiden." It was made by Jacob Fjelde, and was on display at The Chicago World Fair in 1893. The sculpture was purchased with pennies that school children had donated in Minnesota. This was an effort organized by Mrs. L.P. Hunt of Mankato and was dedicated in 1912.





# FORT SNELLING

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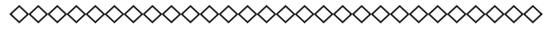
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# FORT SNELLING



Over a hundred years before the Europeans immigrated to the area, the Dakota tribe lived in villages along the Bdote, where the Mississippi River and the Minnesota River come together. This is otherwise known as the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi River, which is the site of Fort Snelling State Park. The Mde-wakan-ton-wan tribe believed that this area was the origin and the center of the earth.



Europeans came to explore in the 1600's. In the 1820's, they built Fort Snelling. It allowed the settlers to control trade, exploration, and settlement on the water. After the Dakota War of 1862, over 1600 Dakota men, women, and children were put into internment camps at the fort. They were kept there through the winter of 1862–1863, and then were sent to Nebraska. About 300 Dakota died on the journey from starvation, disease, and exposure.

Fort Snelling State Park, established in 1962, is now one of Minnesota's most popular state parks. It is located close to mile 845. The forest area below the bluffs are all part of the state park. The area includes Pike Island and 3,711 acres of land. Its forests are full of wildlife, including white tale deer, wild turkeys, and coyotes, fox and woodchucks.



# MIKA AND THE RIVER

*Historical fiction piece by Sam Osborne*

The sky reflects our moods, gray and tired. Small pellets of rain come down from the sky, each drop stinging against our skin. My name is Mika. In my language, it means “clever raccoon.” Papa told me when I was very little, that my name is Mika because he wanted me to be a thinker, not a fighter. This thought stays in the back of my mind, never leaving as we continue to walk. Papa was a thinker too, and he never deserved his punishment. He never hurt anyone unless he had to.

As we trudge forward, clumped together into a sea of people, a large stone structure comes into sight. I huddle closer to mama. It looks like a place of imprisonment. We continue forward slowly, stopping occasionally if one of the elders slips in the mud or trips over a hidden rock. We make sure everyone stays together, and stays safe. We have to wait for uncle to catch up.

When we passed through some of the cities, the people threw rocks at us, and shouted terrible names.

“All we can do is stay together.”

Many of us were badly hurt and some were even killed. Now all we can do is stay together. It’s difficult because the soldiers insist on splitting us into groups. They think we’ll have strength in numbers. We are herded like cattle. I think that’s all we are to them.

As we get closer, our destination becomes clearer. Six soldiers holding rifles are waiting for us. They seem impatient. When we are only a little ways away from them, I see their grip tighten on the guns.

Their faces harden as we approach, a determined hatred settling in the soldiers’ eyes.

The first night we sleep in an unfamiliar stone prison. The walls and floor are like ice, and we must huddle together as a mass of limbs to keep warm. I lay awake among the sea of people, watching a crack in the floor. My mind will not let me sleep. One question races through my mind continuously.

“Why?” The question echoes hauntingly through my thoughts. “Why would they do this to us? We had no part in the battles. We are not savages as they have

named us.” A lump begins to form in my throat. I wish papa were here. Tears begin to form in my eyes, and I try to keep my breathing steady. Blinking does not stop them, and soon they are streaming down my cheeks.

Mama begins to stir, and I hurriedly wipe my eyes. She sees me, and immediately crawls over and puts her arm around me. She holds me close and whispers for me to calm down.

“Shhh, my little raccoon,” she says softly. “What’s the matter?” I take a deep breath.

“I miss papa,” I whisper. Hearing it out loud makes everything seem so much more real. He won’t be back. He won’t ever tell me stories while I fall asleep at night. I will never hear his voice again. I start crying silently again. Mama is quiet for a little while before she responds.

“I miss him too. We still have each other though. I am grateful for that.” She keeps holding me until my breath begins to slow and deepen. My eyelids grow heavy. “We still have each other.” These words repeat themselves over and over until I finally drift off into an uneasy sleep.

The next day they continue to herd us as if we were animals. The soldiers lead us down to a wall of wooden spears. We are shoved through a gate into a barren enclosure filled with poorly made tipis. This is to be our new home.

Our tipi is almost crumpled to the ground. We make our way inside and try to fix the mess of cowhide and sticks. Uncle sets up the branches while mama and I drape the hide around them. Around us other families do the same, making do with what they have.

It’s been several months now. The sounds of the camp are hellish. The moans of the sick mingle with the cries of the injured and hungry. Uncle and I sit in our tipi most of the time. There isn’t much else to do. Every time he coughs, no matter how small it is, I can’t help but feel dread in the pit of my stomach.

Mama has taken to helping heal the sick. She says it’s her duty to help prevent any more death. I think she’s thinking about papa when she says this. I kick

out into the brisk spring air. The ground is cold and hard beneath my calloused feet. Without hesitation my legs carry me to a spot I've visited many times over the past weeks.

I go to the edge of the wooden wall, behind a barrier of tipis and I crouch down to peer at a small gap between the logs. I can see some rocks by the river, and the greenery beyond. The river twists and winds like a glass snake slithering through the forest. I can't help but to gasp at the view.

A stick behind me snaps, and I twist around as fast as lightning. A boy, a little smaller than I am is staring at me, his eyes wide. His face is dirty, but his eyes seem bright and full of wonder. I try give my most welcoming smile. The boy stands up straighter, and then returns the smile.

"My name is Wapasha. Who are you?" His voice is high, like a wolf's howl. I continue to smile, trying not to show my nervousness. It's been so long since I've tried to make a friend.

"I am Mika." I say as though I am uncertain of it. His smile grows wider.

"Hello Mika. What are you doing?" He cranes his neck to see what is behind me. I look to the small gap, and back to Wapasha, who is still staring curiously.

"I..." I begin. What do I say? What if he tells someone? What if the soldiers hear? Then another thought enters my head, one that I've tried to keep at bay nearly every time I visit my secret corner.

What does it matter if anyone finds out? It wouldn't matter anyway. It's not as though they can take any more away from us. "I've found a gap in the wall. I'm watching the river." Wapasha's eyes light up.

"May I see?" He asks excitedly. I nod and he rushes over to the gap.

He has to stand on his toes to see through the gap. His mouth hangs open. It must have been moths since he's seen anything outside the wall. I smile again, but it smile feels less forced.

I tell him about the things I've seen through the

gap, like the deer drinking from the river or the bear that seemed to be looking back at me. I haven't talked so much in months. The sun begins to sink below the wall by the time I am finished. Wapasha is a very good listener. He tells me that he has to go pack to his tipi, and asks if we can meet here tomorrow. When I say yes, he smiles again and runs excitedly back through the tipis. I start to go back to my tipi as well, and things just seem the tiniest bit better. I've made a friend.

"The river twists and winds like a glass snake slithering through the forest. I can't help but gasp at the view."



Illustrated by Daleangelo Gervers

# GRIEF OF MY PEOPLE

*Historical fiction piece by Atquetzali Quiroz*

My name is Hanwi or the night sun in the English language. I remember the day I entered the Fort Snelling camp. The sky was a dull gray with no clouds in sight. Harsh winds blew that made your body feel weak and vulnerable. The only color was the orange, yellow and red leaves scattered on the ground fading into brown. I was nine years old and only four months before, my little brother had died from the long journey that took to get to the camp. The only one who completed the journey in my family along with me was my Ina, mother. We were not the only ones who had lost a loved one. Many of the families who were forced to take the journey had lost someone as well. So many of them who had made it to the camp, sighed in relief.

I, however, stood staring at the wooden fence that had seemed to go on and on as if there was no end. A soft wind stung my face and everything in my body gave out. I collapsed not from the cold wind but from exhaustion. My feet were throbbing and swollen in the moccasins that I wore. I felt fingers run through my long, thick dark brown hair. As the hand reached the tips of my hair, it came around and squeezed my hand as a sign of reassurance. I smile knowing that it is my Ina. She comes around to face me and gives me a small smile. I stared up at the wooden gate in front of us with soldiers guarding either side of it. The soldiers seemed to have no emotion. Their faces were stiff.

As the gate slowly opened I began to see teepees and families huddled up together in blankets. The soft wind that had stung my face now became harsher and harder as if shifting to the emotions of the people in the camp. I take one more step towards the gate that is now fully opened and as if there was a shield between the gate and the camp, my feet froze. Still standing there, everyone that was behind and beside me. All entered the gate with their belongings. Many looked lost with confusion in their eyes. But eventually made it to their assigned teepees with the guidance of stone faced soldiers. My feet still felt heavy sinking into the ground.

“Hey Kid! MOVE!” One of the soldiers moved from their place, came and pushed me past the gate. I stumbled and fell. My Ina had already put our belongings into one of the teepees and came outside to help me up. We exchanged a couple of words and she fled off to finish unpacking. I stayed outside wishing there was the warm sun hitting my face but instead harsh winds made my cheeks cold.

“Hanwi is that you?” A very familiar voice interrupted me. I spun around to see that it was my friend, Magháju which means rain. Her hair swayed to the direction of where the wind blew. She wore moccasins very similar to mine. She gave me a warm smile and a hug. We slowly began to walk, weaving around the teepees, being mindful of each step making sure not to step on anyone’s belongings.

“I miss home. I can tell it’s going to be very different here. No more playing around. No more laughter. Everyone is tired from the journey. I am tired from the journey. My Ina said it would be better once we got here. I guess not,” I said to Magháju as tears streamed down my face.

“I know. I’ve been here for four days already. These soldiers yell and push us for no reason. We are not allowed to go to the river, unless we have permission to collect water. All day we are confined. The wooden gates are the only thing we see.” Magháju looks up and stares at the wooden gates as if trying to see past them. She looks back at me and tries to give me a smile. “Well I have to go help my sister cook. I’ll see you around.”

I feel guilty that I was relieved when we arrived here. Looking around and seeing the sadness and anger of everyone here hurts. Although our journey was long and painful, I would have gone through that once more, then being here and feeling the grief of my people.

# Fieldwork Reports



## LEARNING ABOUT THE DAKOTA

*Personal fieldwork report  
by Henry Bowring McDonough*

The bus is evacuated slowly as we gather in Fort Snelling State Park, clipboards and pencils equipped. Immediately, one by one, we are enveloped by big, colorful trees. We congregate by a Native memorial, and listen as the Park Ranger begins. He tells us about the rich history of the park, like the relocation of the Dakota to this area, and the creation of the memorial. We take notes. Some of us soon collect under a tall, tall bridge, where we are taught about water quality. The bridge we were under was a behemoth. I wonder how long it took to build. The river, too, was thin but mighty where we were, the dark, cold water preparing for a freeze. If I could have climbed the bridge, to see what I could see, I would have. It looked new, but had its share of graffiti. We walked back to the main building and we took a small break in order to use the restroom, get some water, or relax in a nice, heated space with some cool Minnesotan fish in an aquarium. We were heading to lunch after this, so I was especially eager to gallop back to the bus as soon as I was done and thawed out.

## WATER & WOOD

*Personal fieldwork report by Lyndon Wright*

Our class was on our way to Fort Snelling state park. The bus we were on was warm. But that ended when we were told that we had arrived at our destination. When we got off the bus the weather wasn't as warm as the bus was. Most of the buildings were made of bricks and in good condition considering they were built over 100 years ago. It is hard to believe that the Dakota people lived on the site we were visiting. We walked around the park to the places we were going to learn about. We walked down to the river's edge the water was brown and there were rocks, dirt, and sand. I could see a bridge in the distance and it was white and had two support beams towering out of the water. The water was calm with small ripples. It was quiet and was relaxing. But it makes sense that a tribe would live where Fort Snelling is because it's near water and wood. We went to the Dakota Memorial then we went down to the edge of the Mississippi River and Edrick talked about water quality. Then we learned that Fort Snelling was an internment camp.



*Illustrated by Jude DeRango*



*Illustrated by Clarice Timm*

## A VISIT TO FORT SNELLING

*Personal fieldwork report  
by Carlos Santiago*

As the morning got warmer, we still wore our sweaters it was a around 11 when we had lunch. We stopped at a tall monument outside of Fort Snelling. It was a pillar with a writing on it. I held onto the railing as I looked down. I must have been at least 30 feet up. I peeked down to see the woods and trees. I stepped away. I was somewhat frightened of being pushed over, especially being with my set of friends. I saw the shimmering reflection of the sun hitting the Mississippi River and looking over the Fort Snelling State Park. The trees below were all tangled together as if they were earbuds in a pocket. All that you could see was a slim river and green humongous trees surrounding the river and the rich blue sky coming through the left side as if it were a background found on Google.

**“If someone were to fly, this would be the perfect spot.”** As we stood up top high on the railing I thought if someone were to fly this would be the perfect spot. We all then started to chuck rocks at the river to see who could reach it first. There was also a power line down below that was amongst the trees and about a football field away from the river. After eating lunch me and a couple friends explored a bit and found some wild turkeys in the tall but dry grass. The grass was the color of khaki pants and the turkeys were about 2 ½ feet tall and looked like a bouncy ball that would be used for exercise. As we approached the turkeys they stared at us and all ran.

# THE HISTORY OF FORT SNELLING

*Feature story*  
*by Grace Bellamy*

LOOMING ABOVE FORT SNELLING STATE PARK is one of the first permanent structures in the Twin Cities. Standing above the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, its light brick has seen many things.

FORT SNELLING WAS REOPENED IN 1861 FOR CIVILIAN TRAINING after the state of Minnesota volunteered to fight in the civil war. Minnesota was the first to offer soldiers for the war, despite being about three years old, when governor Alexander Ramsey offered 1,000 volunteer soldiers. In total, the number of Minnesotan soldiers reached almost 25,000. Fort Snelling was used as a point of rendezvous for all these soldiers.

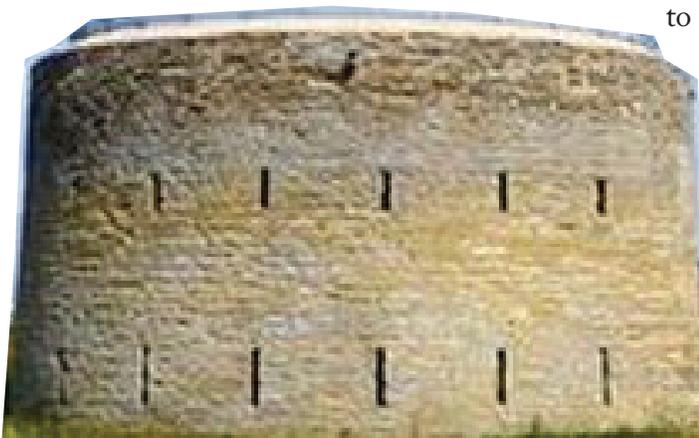
THE U.S. DAKOTA WAR TOOK PLACE IN THE LATE SUMMER AND EARLY FALL OF 1862. Many Dakota people were frustrated with the inconsistent fulfillment of the treaties that they had agreed to sign. The treaties had given them a set amount of space and money. Their money wasn't given to them, forcing them to make deals with fur traders and settlers to get food, bringing them further into debt. Suffering from hunger, some Dakota then attacked white settlers, starting the Dakota War. The white troops were organized under Colonel Henry Sibley at Fort Snelling. The US eventually won, and convicted 303 Dakota men to death. The number was eventually decreased to 38. The remainder of the Dakota population were forced into an internment camp below Fort Snelling for a winter, and then relocated to a reservation.



THE CONFLUENCE OF THE MISSISSIPPI AND MINNESOTA RIVERS HAS LONG BEEN A SACRED PLACE. It was believed to be the center of the earth and all origin by nearby Dakota people. This sacred place turned out to be the location for the internment camp. Currently there is a memorial remembering those who died there and the suffering that took place. "Minnesota would not have become a state in the way it did, or arguably as fast as it did, without Fort Snelling. It's location at the confluence of the rivers, was both strategic for the era of river highways, and symbolic of American domination of the Upper Mississippi," said ranger Dave Wiggins.

ONCE THE U.S. JOINED THE FIGHTING IN WWI, Fort Snelling immediately became a training center for new recruits, as well as a home to a veterans hospital. The Minnesota 151st infantry served in France for the majority of the war. After the war, it became a place for veterans to come and enjoy recreational activities such as polo. The relaxation quickly ended when the US joined WWII in December of 1941. Fort Snelling was visited by 300,000 men and women as an induction point, then they were sent off

to other places to complete their training. Fort Snelling was also home to the special division of the 99th infantry battalion separate, trained to fight on skis and snowshoes. It was also used for second generation Japanese-Americans to learn Chinese, Japanese and Korean for work as interpreters, and interrogation officers. The war ended in 1945, and Fort Snelling was decommissioned one year later.



RANGER DAVE, who worked with our class this fall, is intimately familiar with the fort's recent and more distant past. He started working at fort Snelling when he was 15. "Since the drummer boy uniform was the first replica uniform to arrive, I have the honor of being the first person in costume with the program," wrote Dave in an email. He worked there from high school to college, and then as a historian for Fort Snelling. He and his wife got married at the chapel at the fort, where they met.

TODAY, FORT SNELLING IS A HISTORICAL LANDMARK. Those who visit experience a living history museum. They can walk through Fort Snelling, and interact with costumed staff to learn more about that time in history. "[Fort Snelling] should be treated as a place to learn this complex, tragic, and sometimes ironic history and also respected as a sacred site and site of conscience," said Dave.

## POEMS FROM FORT SNELLING, 1862

*Poetry by Maddie Jacoby*

I could no longer tell if it was my own feet I was tripping over or someone else's. But I was too exhausted to care, as long as I was still moving.

I thought that if I could keep on walking, eventually the memories and dreams of my land would wear away off the bottoms of my feet, forgotten with the dirt path behind me.

It's hard to find motivation to move forward when you don't know if you'll be walking off a cliff or stepping into a meadow.

Waves of bodies threw me forward, backwards, and under. I was drowning, my lungs were too weak to hold the energy in the air.

Others stepped on me, each one pushing me deeper into the earth until I became part of it.

There was a burning fire in my chest the black smoke was dancing across my eyes. I feel through the ground as the smoke swallowed me.

...

I wake up  
My skull was filled with sap that made all thoughts move slow and sluggish.  
When I was able to grasp something it would be

coated with layers of maple to keep me from the base of the idea.

I'd let it go, and it would leave my mind sticky and tired from all the effort of thinking. So I decided not to think. I laid here and pretended I was home.

The cold numbs me  
The dark blinds me  
So why do I lay here in this false comfort feeling truly human for the first time?

...

The air was filled with emptiness  
The feeling thick as fog

I've begun to forget what it means to live  
I have not gotten a breath of clean air  
The smell a reminder that we are living on the unmarked graves of the ones we love  
We had realized that there was nothing we could do but distract ourselves from what we knew

Why are they so blind? They didn't only take our land, they took our past, they took our future.

“...eventually  
the memories  
and dreams of  
my land would  
wear away off  
the bottoms of  
my feet...”



# PILOT KNOB

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# PILOT KNOB

Pilot Knob was and still is a monumental spot for the Native American people. When their land was being colonized a treaty was signed on that very bluff that gave the European settlers most of their land in exchange for food and essentials. The U.S. Government did not follow through on their promise. This place was not only where they signed the treaty but the land was sacred. It Was a burial site for the native Americans. Pilot Knob is located right off of interstate 55 across the river from fort Snelling (around mile marker 845-846). Oheyawahi is a name that the Native Americans called the hill, it means a hill much visited.

“Nowadays it is one of the least visited state parks on the river,” said Ranger Dave Wiggins. But in my opinion it should be the most visited site because of its historical importance. The view is so beautiful it’s a perfect place for a artwork you can see all of the things on the bluffs of the river but not actually the river itself. Examples of what you can see range from Fort Snelling to Downtown St. Paul and even Minneapolis. This place on the Mississippi shows the life of not only the city but the river. There is a ring of large stones in the park arranged in a circle. they are slabs that you can sit on, and each has a word in the Dakota language.



*Location summary by Connor Scott*

# TREATY

*Historical fiction piece by Ed Diatta*

“Signing here will confirm your agreement to live with your people on a reservation, where you will be accommodated with 1,410,000 dollars from the U.S Government. Which will be paid in small portions annually over the next 50 years, commencing on the first day of July. In exchange, you will relinquish your rights to the land you own in Minnesota and Iowa to us. Understood?” the White Man finished, handing me the plume.

I had no idea what he was saying to me. I only understood small pieces of English. All I got from his nonsense was “people” and “dollars”. I Knew one thing, my people were hungry. The food our rich land used to supply was destroyed by the white man. Their buildings and roads have pushed deer and rabbit out of their habitat and rolled over our crop for harvest. So to get what we need for the winter, we bargained with traders. We bargained what we could, livestock, baskets and other things were given to them in exchange for food, But traders want paper. Paper called dollars, which we do not have.

It was dollars that ran the world now. Dollars to pay for food, for clothes.

Dollars. My people needed those.

I turned to the husband of my daughter and father of my grandson, a kind trader we’ve always done business with, Daniel. I take his hand and put it on the long piece of paper meant for me to sign.

I asked him for help.

I asked him if this was the right thing for my people.

He took his hand away. “Just sign, Hotah. Feed your people.”

I was very unsure of what I was agreeing to. All I knew was that Oheyawahi, something the White Man renamed “Pilot Knob” would not be ours anymore. Originally, this signing was to be in the Warehouse, very close to Oheyawahi, but I wanted it signed here. I wanted both me, and my tribe to realize what we were signing away. Our ancestors rested in this hill. It was a sacred place.

Would they treat it as such? The White Man had done us wrong before.

But my people were hungry and owed so much paper. And Daniel was a good man, from a Dakota mother, he was always trustworthy.

I looked down the hill on which we sat. Wheat and honeysuckle covered the plains beside the river beds. Hahawakpa sparkled under the sunlight and a cool breeze combed through the long grass and made it wave just like the river. Though my land looked lonely without the animals, the river kept it good company. Far in the distance I saw the white man’s building. A big stone fort, that looked more like a prison. There, the river looked angry. Their boats created waves that made the river roar and crash against the hill that held up the fort.

And then there were my people. My once happy tribe now reeked of sorrow. They needed what the white man could supply.

With Daniel’s hand on my shoulder, I signed my name on the paper, like he had taught how to do just months ago. The White Man cheered and patted my back. I thanked The White Man.

Now, years later, on the reservation with minimal food and not a dime of the money we were promised, I am angry. I look onto the land that was once ours and weep. They do not respect it, do not care for it. I know now they did not deserve my thanks.

I know now why the river was angry.

“I wanted both me and my tribe to realize what we were signing away.”

# CALEB'S TRAP

*Historical fiction piece by Daleangelo Gervers*

Caleb hopped over uncovered roots and stones along the beaten path near the fort. He was going to his shed to gather some supplies in order to make some trades with the Dakota. Yesterday some

**“Traders were encouraged to make unfavorable trades that would help bring the Dakota into debt.”**

traders brought 2 canoes full up to the fort. The lead trader needed some furs so he sent supplies out to the middlemen like Caleb. The shipment included things like, new guns called Colt Revolvers,

which allow people to fire without loading gunpowder. The voyagers also brought new jackets, medicines and tools including sewing machines, which Caleb hoped to get for his wife. Caleb caught a ride across and down the river with the voyageurs. When they reached shore he walked for some time before arriving at the hill steamboat captains called Pilots Knob. It was a sacred place to the Dakota. He set up his stand in the middle of an open area on a hill with many dips in the side of the hill. He liked these setups because he felt he had to enjoy the weather while it lasted, because soon a big white blanket would fall and then would be the cold season. Not as much trading happened after that blanket.

Soon after a slow day of trading, government soldiers told everyone to close up shop and head to the tent at the top of the hill. The “Dakota were preparing to sign the papers to give their land in exchange for supplies, money, and food.

When Caleb reached the ceremonial tent he hung back a bit. Then the signing started, and

the elders of the Dakota approached. They walked in a line to the documents. The government officials showed the Dakota where to sign. Some of the Dakota appeared confused, others seemed sad. Caleb couldn't help but feel bad because of the role fur traders like him had played in this whole process. Traders were encouraged to make unfavorable trades that would help bring the Dakota into debt. Caleb had helped put the Dakota into debt in order to help keep his own family sustained. He felt conflicted and uneasy.

Caleb wondered how he could he explain how he felt. Part of his job had been to trick people that have never had an economy with money or ownership in their lives, and cheat them out of money and land that they rightfully owned, even though they did not believe in ownership of land. Traders cheated them out of money by giving them goods to make their life easier and get them dependent on these supplies till they asked for more and eventually went into debt. Once the debts became large, they perhaps felt they had little choice but to sell their land.

It all struck Caleb as a horrible, ingenious trap, and he wondered if he was the only trader who felt torn. Caleb would be paid a lot of money after the signing, but sadly the Dakota would remain in debt afterwards.

But Caleb knew he needed money for his own family. If he did well enough, his little girl might not have to work all day for a couple of coins.”

The Dakota elders might not have understood how important their signatures were. The officials showing them where to sign were not trying very hard to inform them. Caleb began to feel sick.

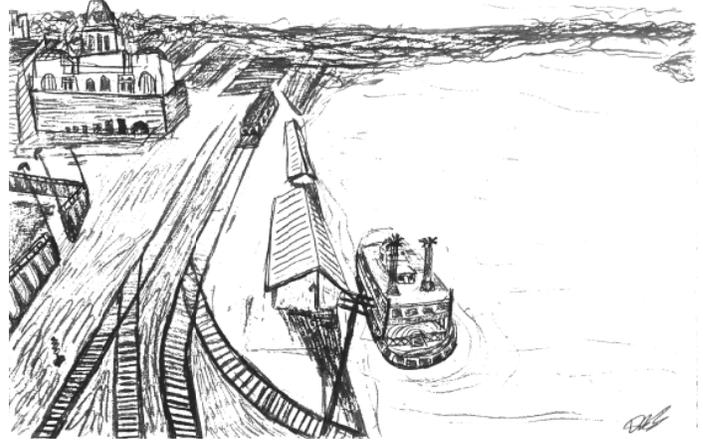
Once the signing was over everyone began to head home. Caleb wanted to tell the Dakota elders what really had just happened, but they looked like they don't want to talk to any more white men today.

# Fieldwork Reports

## THE TRAIL

*Personal fieldwork report  
by Pao Yang*

It was late October when my 8th grade classes went to Pilot Knob. It was cold and windy but sunny so it was a mixture of coldness and warmth. When we got off the bus and I saw a long dusty road trail going down to where pilot knob was located. Walking down the trail was fun because the trees were so tall and my friend was making funny jokes. We finally got there and there was a ranger who I've met when I were doing the local trip fieldwork. He talked a bit about the location, one thing I remember he said was that the Dakota who lived there called it Oheyawahi, which means "Place Much Visited" and he took us for a tour around the area. The view was so amazing from where we were standing. We could see the tall buildings all the way in Minneapolis and highway 55. There were lots of plants, grass and weeds. The Mississippi and Minnesota rivers run just below Pilot Knob. You could see where the rivers are supposed to be, but you couldn't actually see them.



## THE VIEW

*Personal fieldwork report  
by Monique Sims*

When we first got to Pilot Knob I thought we were going to a graveyard because we pulled up next to it. When we got off the bus we had to walk down the hill. You can kind of see the highway and Gabby was playing around and laughing a lot. When we start getting closer to the bottom of the hill we could see downtown Minneapolis, the highway, and the bridge and we started picking up sticks and playing around with them. We started taking pictures of the view of Minneapolis and Gabby was playing around a lot when I was taking the pictures.

Then we walked down a path over to the rocks that are big and square and you can sit on them with the Dakota words on it and Ranger Dave started talking about them. He was telling us what the words mean and telling us about how the Dakota people worshipped this place.





# THE HISTORY OF PILOT KNOB

*Feature story*  
*by Atquetzali Quiroz*

**PILOT KNOB IS A ROLLING PRAIRIE** overlooking the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers. Located on a hill with a view of Minneapolis and Fort Snelling, it is a great example of how Minnesota looked in the past. If not for the efforts of people in the local community, the site could have been the site of a housing development.

**PILOT KNOB, ALSO KNOWN AS OHEYAWAHI,** is a very sacred and significant place for the Dakota people. It was a place for ceremonies and a burial ground. In 1851 Alexander Ramsey, who was a Territorial Governor from Minnesota, proposed a treaty. The treaty meant that 35 million acres of Dakota land were now going to be owned by the United States. At first many chiefs said no but in August, 1851 due to pressure from the government the Chiefs signed, including Little Crow. Dakota elders moved the signing from a warehouse in Mendota up to Oheyawahi so their people would have a better understanding of what they were signing away.

**IN 2002, A MENDOTA HEIGHTS DEVELOPER** proposed to build more than 150 townhomes on the 25 acres of land that is now Pilot Knob. Over the years many people fought to keep it a historical sight and to try and keep it natural. Today it is a great place to experience local wildlife like it was 100 years ago, while taking in the view of skyscrapers in downtown Minneapolis. Pilot Knob has rolling hills covered in Prairie grass, and tall trees by the river. It is a special place for a variety of people.

**THIS SPOT HAS SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR MINNESOTA HISTORY.** Thanks to the efforts of committed people, It will continue to be a great park for many years to come. It has seen treaties and the threat of development, and it will see much more.

# HARRIET ISLAND



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# HARRIET ISLAND

Around 1920, Harriet Island, located at mile 840 on the Mississippi, was well known across the city as a swimming area and gathering place. After a while people started swim classes there and the lots of people flocked there on sunny days. The Island itself was named after a school teacher pioneer named Harriet Bishop. In 1900 a man by the name Dr. Justus Ohage gave the Island to the city to be used as a recreational site. Over time it gained many new attractions like Saint Paul's first zoo and an outdoor gymnasium.

Today, the park is used for boat tours of the river and fairs and festivities such as the Irish Fest and many more. Harriet Island is one of the most popular parks in not just Saint Paul but the whole Twin Cities. The pavilion there has been used for many gatherings, including an OWL party there every fall. From the island you have a spectacular view of downtown Saint Paul. On the island there is, a pavilion, steps leading down to the river, a playground, big open fields, and a dock for the riverboat cruises.



# SWIM LESSON

*Historical fiction piece by Jude DeRango*

## Harriet Island 1935

The river was not what it used to be. It oozed along, an infestation of sewage and litter. Bottles, cigarettes, and scraps of newspapers floated along the top. It was sore to the eyes, and assaulting to the nose. Joyce was the only other person as far as the eye could see. The shores of Harriet Island looked disturbingly vacant. The grass of the once charming island was yellow, and unkempt. The sky a mass of thick grey clouds that looked ready to downpour at any moment. Joyce's hair whipped against her face with every putrid gust of wind. She wrapped her jacket tighter around her. There would obviously be no swim lessons today.

## Harriet Island 1922

The green hills of the beautiful island made it seem like a place of fairytales. A landscape akin to those Joyce read about in her books. The river was a glistening ribbon. The water so pristine she swore she spotted a pink mermaid that blew her a kiss. The ground felt alive. She was convinced below her feet dwelled a fuzzy, hibernating creature. The sun hung overhead, turning her pale shoulders red with every moment she spent basking in it. The boats that cluttered the waters were un-

**“The river was a glistening ribbon. The water so pristine...”**

like a pirates. No mystical figure heads or billowing sails. They carried freight, and the ornate ones, people. But the young girl pretended they were the marauders of her stories nonetheless. She sat amidst the grass, staring up at the branched canopy where there was surely a nest of pixies. She didn't give a thought to passersby on the trails around her. Her utopia was disrupted by a tall dark haired lady named Ms. Foss.

“It's time to join us for the swim lesson Joyce!” She twittered. She seemed giddy with the idea of a swim lesson.

Joyce was not.

“C'mon!” Caroline screeched, splashing the

cool water up at Joyce, who sat nervously at the riverbank.

“I haven't swam before,” she said, eyeing the water cautiously. She wrapped her arms around her knobby knee hugging them close.

“Neither have I,” Caroline teased. “Aww, c'mon, please. It ain't even that deep!”

“Caroline, what's all your fuss about?” called Ms. Foss in her singsong voice, “I told you not to pick on Joyce. Some young ladies learn slower than others.”

“Yeah, and some are scaredy-cats, and never even get in the water,” she said, scrunching up her face and sticking out her tongue. Joyce clenched her fist. She promptly stood up and marched into the water. With one swift shove, Caroline found herself toppling backwards.

“Hey! What was that for?!” She spluttered as she surfaced pulling strands of her dark wet hair away from her face. Caroline's ruffled suit was a size too big and hung off her small frame. Joyce laughed, and Caroline laughed along. All was forgiven and forgotten.

It was usually that way with Joyce and Caroline. They went from bickering to laughing with ease. Joyce could still remember when they first met. Caroline had approached her first.

“I'm Caroline,” the girl said, sticking out her small hand. Joyce took it tentatively. She kept her feet planted firmly in the hot sand. The girl could have thrown her up into the air with a grip like that. “I like your hair,” Caroline said. She reached out boldly and took a short curled strand in her fingers. “I wish my hair curled like that.”

“I'm Joyce.” She replied. “I like your swimsuit.” Caroline smiled.

“Do you want to be my friend?” She asked abruptly. Joyce nodded. So the two girls were, as nine year old girls often are, fast friends.

“Girls!” Ms. Foss called. Caroline and Joyce splashed over to her through the water. Ms. Foss stood in front of the group, the water crashing gently around her waist, deeper out than anyone else dare venture. “The first thing we're going to learn today is kicking.” She said. Whispers laced with delight broke

out across the group of young girls. Joyce twisted her hair around her finger, a worried habit. "Everyone get into groups of two," she instructed once the girls had quieted down. Caroline snatched Joyce's hand. "One partner will support the other with their hand on their back, while the other floats. Keep your chest full of air!" She called as they began.

"Do you want to go first?" Joyce said.

"Why, are ya scared?" Caroline taunted.

"No!" Joyce muttered, "I was only being polite." Caroline shrugged and laid back on the water. Joyce pressed her hand on Caroline's back as she began to kick vigorously. The water soared up with each clumsy kick.

"Hey!" Joyce protested as it hit her. Caroline grinned. There was a gap between her teeth.

"Your turn." She said, sitting up. Joyce lay back. The water lapped up around her face and tickled her ears. She felt Caroline's small hand on her back, keeping her afloat. She began to kick. She sat up a few moments later, smiling proudly. Her hair dripped water down the back of her neck. But when she sat up, she did not see Caroline. She looked around in a panic.

"Aaaaah!" She screeched, and stumbled back when a hand clasped around her ankle. Caroline burst up in front of her, laughing.

"I don't see why that's so funny." Joyce scolded. Her arms crossed.

"Your face! You should've seen your face!" Car-

oline gasped.

Joyce wriggled her toes as they sunk into the mud. She rubbed her weary eyes, and squinted into the orange sun of the late afternoon. She could feel her soggy swimsuit hanging heavily. It was sticky and uncomfortable, but in that moment Joyce was happy. A tired, floaty feeling of enjoyment.

"Smile!" The cameraman exclaimed. Joyce spread a toothy grin across her face as the camera flashed.

### Harriet Island 1935

Everything seemed grey now. Perhaps it was the cloudy weather, but Joyce's summer paradise had been tarnished. She wondered how it had gotten to this state. Why people had been so careless. Joyce looked down at the colorless photo. She



stood to the side, her nose crinkled up, her mouth in a wide smile. A crease ran through the old picture from being folded so many times. Caroline and Joyce 1922, was scrawled sloppily on the back. Joyce turned to go. The sky was trickling now. Joyce decided she best get out of the open before a storm began. She stopped to look back one more time before the river was out of sight. Could it be as beautiful as she remembered? Just then, a gust of wind snatched the picture from her hands. It went tumbling through the air. She tried to reach out and grab it as it whirled within her reach, but the breeze took it back, throwing it over the edge of the walkway. She watched helplessly as the photograph sank down into the murky water.

## VISITING HARRIET ISLAND

*Personal fieldwork report by Lu Vang*

We got clipboards, got on the bus, and rode towards Harriet Island. When we got there we prepared for chilly weather. It wasn't so bad, but there could have been less wind. I had a coat that smelled very bad because I just threw it in the closet dirty for an entire year. It was funny watching everyone flip out over it. We split into two different groups, my group talked with park ranger. The ranger talked about the the origin of the park. The park was named after Harriet Bishop and used to belong to Dr. Justus Ohage. He bought the park on his own and then donated it to the city in the 1900s. But he wanted them to keep it as a park. After we got done talking with the park ranger we went with Leo to talk about the bridges and river. We wrote down facts and observations about the park, and what we saw. The trip was overall fun and I learned a bundle of new things.

**"We talked  
about the origin  
of the park."**



## ABOUT THAT “ISLAND..”

*Feature story*

*by Audrey Dahlmeier*

HARRIET “ISLAND” has gone through a lot since its glory days as an actual island. Many people don’t realize the history behind this place, and how it became one of the most important landmarks in Saint Paul.

WHEN PEOPLE HEAR THE WORD ISLAND, they obviously assume that there is an actual island. That is not case for Harriet Island today. In 1950 the island’s back channel was filled, connecting it to the shore. In the early 20th century the park had a lot of activities including a zoo (which moved to Como in 1930), public baths, and exercise grounds. However the amazing park would soon be ignored as sewage made its way into the river. They tried many ideas to fix the park, but the only thing that seemed to work was the Clarence W. Wigington Pavilion, which made the park more appealing. The pavilion was made in 1941-1942 by the Works Progress Administration. They used the Mankato-Kasota stone for construction, which they had saved from the 1889-1933 Saint Paul City Hall Ramsey Courthouse.

NOWADAYS, THE PARK HAS MANY LUXURIES, such as bike trails, a big open field, a stage, and a breathtaking view of the Mississippi River. On top of all that they have ferry boats that host proms and weddings, plus the pavilion which has been used for similar events.

YOU WOULDN’T NECESSARILY consider Harriet Island to be a place to go see nature, but National Park Ranger Brian Goodspeed spotted a river otter there. “Several years ago a river otter took up residence under the fishing pier at Harriet Island,” he wrote in an email. “That spring, somebody was fishing from the pier, and hooked a carp. As the angler was reeling in the carp, an otter dashed out from underneath the pier, and grabbed the carp. The angler continued to reel in line, with the otter still clinging to the carp. Eventually, the river otter figured out that he was being hauled in with the fish, and decided to let go. Perhaps the most exciting carp ever landed on Harriet Island.”

