

Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks
1621 Beechwood Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116 651- 698-4543
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Embrace Open Space

A year-long grass roots public service campaign aimed at protecting vital open space in the Twin Cities region launches this month after nearly two years of planning by an alliance of nonprofits, government agencies, academic centers and the McKnight foundation.

“All the opinion polls show how important Minnesotans believe open spaces are to our enjoyment of life, said Rip Rapson, McKnight’s president. “But at the same time, data shows how much land we’re losing to development. Although this region is growing very rapidly, there are sensible ways to accommodate growth and keep our most valuable natural assets. The loss of irreplaceable forests, wetlands, vistas, and farmland will continue until we Minnesotans get personally involved in land use decisions that are being made every day in our neighborhoods and cities. If we cherish these special places, we have to speak up to save them. A few voices advocating protection at a city council meeting can make all the difference between protecting a threatened open space or building another strip mall.”

The campaign website WWW.EMBRACEOPENSOURCE.ORG will provide citizens with a wealth of information about open space issues including sites which are endangered. Visitors will be able to nominate favorite open spaces that they feel need protection. The Friends will have a page on our website about the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAPP) which will link to the Embrace Open Space Site.

Samuel H. Morgan Trail Dedication

A ceremony honoring the late naturalist and trail enthusiast, Samuel H. Morgan will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, September 20, 2002, near the entryway to Crosby Regional Park near the intersection of Shepard Road and Crosby Road*. As part of the ceremony, a 5.1 mile stretch of pedestrian and bicycle pathway extending along Shepard Road from Highway 5 to Chestnut Street will be named the Samuel H. Morgan Regional Trail.

Morgan was a long-time Saint Paul resident who dedicated himself to the acquisition and official designation of park land and trails throughout

Remembering Otis Godfrey

Prairie Gen or When is a gift really not a gift?

Minnesota. He was instrumental in acquiring land for Afton State Park, enlarging O'Brien State Park and establishing a system of regional parks in the Metropolitan Area. Within Saint Paul, he was one of the founders of the Friends, he played a key role in developing the Gateway Trail and incorporating the 'no net loss' for park land policy into the City Charter.

Morgan pioneered the idea of raising donations from private sources to use as a down payment on property to be acquired and converted into park land at a later date with state and federal funding. He witnessed lost opportunities because governmental organizations simply could not move quickly enough to secure land which became available on the market. To implement his ideas, he helped establish both the Minnesota Parks Foundation and the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota.

The ceremony is sponsored by the Friends of the Parks and Trails of Saint Paul and Ramsey County, the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota and the Saint Paul Division of Parks and Recreation. Refreshments will be provided. Parking is available along Crosby Road. Members of the Friends are strongly encouraged to attend and celebrate the trail re-naming and to pay tribute to one of our founding directors and true leaders.

* A flier with specific directions will be mailed in advance of the event.

Otis Godfrey, one of the Friend's most colorful and vocal board members, died July 19 at the age of 78. He had been in failing health for some time. Godfrey joined the board during our early years and was an eager supporter, whether it was helping out at the tree sale or clarifying issues at board meetings. He was a consummate 'salesman' of the Friend's trees. He and his friends in the Keller Men's Golf Club contributed numerous flowering crab trees to be planted at Keller Golf Course. Rumor has it, it was hard to tell 'Otie' "NO" if he decided to sell an idea. Keller and the Friends benefitted from his enthusiasm.

The Friends were not his only civic interest. He volunteered his time and energy to the Red Cross, The United Way, the March of Dimes, the Martin Luther King Center and the Ramsey County Cancer Society.

The Friends will plant a memorial grove of trees in Godfrey's honor at Linwood Park. If you would like to contribute to the grove, you may send a contribution of any size to the Friends, 1621 Beechwood, St. Paul, MN 55116. Each tree cost \$50.00.

If you have driven along Shepard Road you have no doubt noticed the old Island Station Power Plant. The abandoned building with it broken windows stands like a reminder of a distant past. Sadly, it is also contains a hidden hazard. It is located in the flood way and the lower levels of the building are feet deep in water. It is a superfund site and the total amount of contamination is unknown. Now there is a proposal for the site which appears

Plans move forward

equally likely to make the situation worse as to make it better. Prairie Gen Corporation is applying for permits to construct a 49 Megawatt electrical generating plant adjacent to the abandoned building. The plant will be used to supply electricity during peak demand times. They have offered to donate the portion of the property not needed for the new generating plant to the city for use as a park. That 'gift' includes the contaminated, abandoned building. No one really knows how much it will cost to clean up the site, nor who would pay for it. Simply leaving what is possibly a hugely contaminated site in the flood way doesn't make a lot of sense but the City is not eager to take on an unknown risk.

While the Prairie Gen proposal remains under discussion, planning is continuing along the Riverview Corridor which encompasses the Island Station site. Housing for the industrial site and goals for the area near the Mississippi are being discussed in neighborhood meetings. The plan developed through the community process calls for a 50 slip marina and a number of soccer fields. The City feels the marina and the soccer fields are money generating facilities which could make a modest contribution to help pay for the cleanup of the site. There has been no support and some objection to the electric generating facility expressed at the neighborhood meetings. Since the site is zoned for industrial use, the city may have little leverage to prevent further power generation along the river.

The Friends have evaluated the proposals and have adopted the follow position:

- T**he area should be cleaned of contamination;
- I**t should be zoned for Open Space;
- T**he use of the land should be appropriate to a floodway/floodplain.

Friends fund tree inventory

737 trees donated through the Friend's tree program have been planted in public places in Saint Paul since 1996. During that time there have been both good and poor growing seasons and trees on public lands often fall victim to vandalism. With a goal to improve the urban forest, it is important to evaluate the health of these young tress and then determine what steps need to be taken to improve the survival rate and long term health of the trees.

The Friends donated \$5,000 to the St. Paul Division of Forestry to fund summer interns to locate and map all 737 trees located in 45 parks, parkways and public places using a Global Positioning System (GPS). The health of each tree was rated. Now that the information is in the system it will be possible to analyze the conditions where trees fail or thrive. This information will be used to provide needed care and to better select tree sizes and types. The interns will also inventory boulevard trees, a more massive project.

Over the years the Friends have expressed great concern about the damage done to public trees with lawn mowers and weed whips. The tree inventory will enable us to determine the extent of the problem and experiment with solutions. Much of the tree damage from lawn mowers is the result of the city

Fountain Cave

“They passed through the entrance into a large winding hall about 150 feet long. The sharp drop in temperature came as a shock on this hot summer day. At the far end of the room they crawled through a narrow passage that opened into a most beautiful circular room about fifty feet in diameter, where their candles must have cast flickering phantoms on the walls.” *St. Paul Underground: What Happened to Fountain Cave - the Real Birthplace of St. Paul?* Greg Brick, Ramsey County History. Volume 29: Issue 4, p 4-15. 1995 .

using larger equipment in recent years and it is more difficult to control. Weed whip damage is usually the result of workers attempting to do too good a job of trimming every last blade of grass next to the trunk of the tree in high profile areas such as Summit Avenue. Home owners damage boulevard trees with lawn care equipment, often unaware that injuries are an avenue for diseases to enter the tree. When trees are routinely weed whipped or bumped by mowing equipment their health and growth rate are affected. Comparing trees which have been weed whipped with other trees, the injured trees are often much smaller than trees which have not sustained this damage. The inventory will help quantify the problem and measure the success of corrective approaches.

Fountain cave is a naturally formed cave, carved from the soft sandstone of the Mississippi River bluffs by a cool creek, was found on what is currently the ADM industrial site near Randolph Avenue and Shepard Road. The cave began it’s modern life as the site of Pierre “Pig’s Eye” Parrant’s cabin and brewery. As the years passed, the capital city grew and Fountain Cave became a regional tourist attraction. It was hailed as “one of the greatest curiosities and wonders of the West” and people traveled from across the region during the summers to explore its hallways and caverns. Lamps could be rented and guided tours could be had from entrepreneurs around the cave entrance. Ice cream and a dip in the cave’s cool waters impressed the beauty and luxury of Saint Paul on its visitors.

While the cave attracted such attention, the nearby city grew. The people and businesses of Saint Paul eventually built over the wetlands from which the creek flowed. With no running water to flush away debris, the cave entrance slowly shrank over time. Finally, in the 1960’s the construction of Shepard Road sealed the entrance forever.* Today, a historic marker points to the site of the old cave. While the entrance is closed, the bowels of the cave remain today, hidden beneath our daily lives. *Brenden Moriarty, PED Intern, 2002.*

**Editors unsolicited opinion: Forever is a long, long time. Let us hope that one day the glory of Fountain Cave is restored.*

**The Friends of Parks & Trails
in Saint Paul & Ramsey County
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**CHANGE SERVICE
REQUESTED**