



Westminster Presbyterian Church

Mini-Pilgrimage
Fall 2020

Sacred Water Mississippi River Valley, Saint Paul, MN

Self-guided Tour: This outdoor mini-pilgrimage will take visitors along the Mississippi River Valley in Saint Paul. The three locations include: Indian Mounds Regional Park at 10 Mounds Boulevard, the Science Museum of Minnesota/District Energy Plaza at 120 West Kellogg Boulevard, and Pike Island (Bdote) at 101 Snelling Lake Road. You are invited to visit one location at a time or all three at once.

Why This Mini-Pilgrimage?

Water has always evoked a sense of the sacred for people around the world—as the source of all life, but also as a substance sometimes connected with death. This mini-pilgrimage visits three spaces that evoke that sense of sacred water in our region.

Let's get started.

Indian Mounds Regional Park (10 Mounds Boulevard, St. Paul)

The land currently named Indian Mounds Regional Park is rich in geological and cultural history, and is a sacred place of burial. It is deeply significant to the Upper Sioux Community, Lower Sioux Community, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Prairie Island Indian Community, Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, and other descendants of those who are buried here.

Indian Mounds is situated on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River on the eastern side of downtown Saint Paul. The landscape preserves the only known remaining burial mounds within the Minneapolis-Saint Paul urban core in a beautiful landscape overlooking a dramatic bend in the Mississippi River. The 111-acre landscape includes a linear group of earthen mounds positioned along the edge of the bluff.

Two mound groups were recorded along the bluff in the late 1800s, totaling at least 50 mounds. The Eastern Mound Group, which contains distinct mounds near the center of the site, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council is in the

process of legally delineating the burial ground as a cemetery. The cemetery will encompass the locations of both the above-ground and below-ground burial features.

The City of Saint Paul is finalizing a Cultural Landscape Study and Messaging Plan for Indian Mounds Park. The document contains detailed background on the significance of Indian Mounds Park and recommendations for honoring those who are buried here. (Read more: [https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Parks%20%26%20Recreation/Indian Mounds_CLS_MP_Final.pdf](https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Parks%20%26%20Recreation/Indian_Mounds_CLS_MP_Final.pdf))

Standing at the overlook, the views both upriver and downriver are spectacular. Looking upriver, you see downtown Saint Paul, three transportation corridors (river, rail, and road), as well as Saint Paul Downtown Airport, and the widened floodplain of the great Mississippi River. Looking downriver, you see that the industrial heritage of the river is still very much alive. Saint Paul's stretch of the Mississippi River is a working river, where barges transport petroleum products, recycled metal, grain, and mineral products from Saint Paul to New Orleans.

One especially unfortunate result of our region's 19th Century industrial heritage occurred in the limestone bluffs downriver from this park. When the railroads built their line along the river, they blocked the entrance to "Carver's Cave," which contained a rare underground lake that once was accessible from the river. Spelunkers today occasionally find ways to see that lake, but we are not recommending it as part of your mini-pilgrimage tour.

Spiritual Reflection

"Water is fluid, soft and yielding. But water will wear away rock, which is rigid and cannot yield. As a rule, whatever is fluid, soft and yielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard. This is another paradox: what is soft is strong." (Lao Tzu)

"Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well." (Proverbs 5:15, NRSV)

Questions for Reflection

Throughout human history, caves and water have both been regarded as sacred. The Indian mounds at this site are close to a limestone cave with an underground lake that was once accessible from the Mississippi River. How might this combination of sacred landscapes have served as a gathering place of unusual spiritual power?

The water that we drink comes from either surface water or "groundwater" (underground). Which is the water source for the place where you live? How does the Indian mounds site suggest the close interconnection of surface water and groundwater?

Minneapolis and Saint Paul are defined by their location on the Mississippi River; it is the reason they were founded, and continues to be an important economic and spiritual "engine." What does the river mean to you?

Science Museum of Minnesota/District Energy Plaza (120 West Kellogg Boulevard, St. Paul)

For starters, you are standing in a national park! This is the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, which stretches along 72 miles of the river from Anoka to Hastings.

The view of the Mississippi River valley from this spot illustrates the evolution of land use along the river since Saint Paul was founded, and the City's commitment to connecting people to the river. Saint Paul began at this location, because it was the last accessible place at the navigable headwaters of the Mississippi. Downtown grew up between two breaks in the river bluffs, one at Lower Landing, just below Lowertown, and the other at Upper Landing, just slightly upriver from the plaza. Since the mid-1860s, the river and its banks have been used for transportation, industry, housing, and recreation. The transportation infrastructure is still in use: from this point, you see roads, bike and pedestrian trails, railroads, an airport, and river barges. The Mississippi River in Saint Paul is a working river, with tons of petroleum products, recycled metal, and grain moving through its barge terminals every day. The rail lines here are still active, as is Shepard Road (now paired with the Sam Morgan Regional Trail for bikes and pedestrians). With the exception of District Energy, industry has been largely removed from the downtown stretch of the river, replaced with housing and parks. District Energy, supplying both heat and cooling to downtown Saint Paul, was expanded in 2000 to become a co-generational facility using natural gas and waste wood. Over time, Harriet Island, Raspberry Island, Upper Landing Park, Chestnut Plaza, and the Sam Morgan Regional Trail have brought public recreational uses to the river's edge. Housing has returned to the Upper Landing (just upriver) and the West Side Flats (across the river, between the Wabasha and Robert Street bridges).

There are three key sites to tell you about from this viewpoint:

Upper Landing: along the river's edge, just upriver. This is the historic site of Little Italy, a residential neighborhood that sat for decades in the late 19th and early 20th centuries until regular flooding required the removal of all housing. Then, the site was used for industrial purposes for nearly 20 years (at one point, containing a 100'-tall pile of crushed cars awaiting salvage). Finally, in the 1980s, the City of Saint Paul began to acquire land along this stretch of river to remove the industry (including grain elevators), remediate the soil, move Shepard Road away from the river's edge, and build the Upper Landing Urban Village, today home to nearly 2,000 residents. City House is visible poking up in this neighborhood; it is what remains of the first Farmers Equity Co-op in the country. While Upper Landing does not sit behind a flood wall, the habitable levels of all of the buildings are above the floodplain; underground parking sits under every building. Directly below the plaza is Upper Landing Park, joined to Upper Landing Urban Village with Chestnut Plaza. The Sam Morgan Regional Trail continues along the urban village, ensuring public access to the river.

Science Museum of Minnesota: The siting and design of the Science Museum at this location was pivotal in the City's commitment to turn Saint Paul's face, rather than its back (which it had done for so many years) to the river. Initially planned to be built on the West Side (across the river from downtown), Mayor Norm Coleman fought hard to keep the Science Museum of Minnesota in downtown. Once the site was secured, Mayor

Coleman, his staff in the Department of Planning & Economic Development, and the Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation worked to design a building that met not only the needs of the Science Museum's patrons but also the general public. Connecting from the upper bluff to the river's edge has always been a challenge in downtown Saint Paul, and continues to this day. The exterior public stairway you see was built to provide that vertical connection. The building has an interior stairway and elevator that also allow for public access without entering the Museum.

River Balcony: You are standing in what will someday be a part of the Saint Paul River Balcony. It is planned to be a 1.5-mile pedestrian pathway from the RiverCentre ramp to Union Depot, running along the bluff. Where possible, it will be built on the river side of new development, like along the Ramsey County site (adjacent to the Wabasha Street Bridge) and any new development that happens above the RiverCentre ramp, and will literally be a "balcony" looking out over the river valley. In other places, like along District Energy and the Science Museum of Minnesota, it will be incorporated into existing sidewalks. There is already a portion of the River Balcony route in Kellogg Mall Park. In addition to being a horizontal connection from one end of downtown to the other, the Balcony will contain vertical connections from the upper downtown bluff to the river's edge. The River Balcony will be designed for walking, public art, outdoor seating and dining, and other public uses. Funds are currently being raised by the Great River Passage Conservancy to begin schematic design.

Spiritual Reflection

"Water is the driving force of all nature." (Leonardo da Vinci)

"I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other."
(Zechariah 14:8, NRSV)

Questions for Reflection

This plaza overlooks the two northernmost places on the Mississippi River where there was ready access to the upland bluffs by river travelers (Lower Landing and Upper Landing). How might such places of transition convey a sense of spiritual power as well as economic advantage?

On one side of this plaza is a science museum, and on the other side a power plant with a major concentration of applied technology. How does each one pursue goals of sustainability and resilience that can help restore our community's relationship with nature? What is the role of the many park spaces in and along the river?

Pike Island (Bdote) (101 Snelling Lake Road, St. Paul)

“One of the great natural facts: is that the mouth of the Minnesota River lies immediately over the center of the earth and under the center of the heavens.” (The Dakota Friend, a newspaper printed by missionaries Samuel and Gideon Pond, 1851.)

Bdote is a Dakota word that generally means “where two waters come together.” The bdote where Ĥaĥáwakpa (Mississippi River) and the Mnísota Wakpá (Minnesota River) come together is central to Dakota spirituality and history, and is one of the most powerfully historic places in the Twin Cities. To the Mdewakanton Dakota, it has deep historic and spiritual meaning. For some, it was their place of origin, their Garden of Eden. To early Americans, it became a center of trade and military authority.

Pike Island (Dakota name Wita Tanka), is an island at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. The island is now part of Fort Snelling State Park. It is a portion of the 100,000 acres of land purchased from the Mdewakanton Sioux Indians by Zebulon Pike in September 1805. Pike’s Purchase was later to become Fort Snelling. The U.S. government wanted to build a fort to protect American interests in the fur trade in the region, and Pike negotiated the treaty.

In 1819, Colonel Henry Leavenworth invited Jean-Baptiste Faribault, a French Canadian, and his family to settle on Pike Island near the new fort to help promote the fur trade. An 1820 treaty gave ownership of Pike Island to Elizabeth Pelagie Ferribault, a Dakota Indian and wife of Jean-Baptiste Faribault.

During the Dakota War of 1862, more than 1600 Dakota women, children, and old men were held in an internment camp on Pike Island under the cannons of Fort Snelling. Winter living conditions were harsh, with little food and no shelter, and cholera struck the camp, killing more than 300. In May 1863, the survivors were forced aboard steamboats and relocated to Crow Creek in the southeastern Dakota Territory, a place stricken by drought at the time.

As you cross the bridge there is a trail that branches off to the right, which heads to the Minnesota River side of the island... straight ahead and to the left is the trail to the Mississippi River side. To get to Pike Island, you can enter through Ft. Snelling State Park where you can use your state park sticker or pay a fee... or you can park at Historic Fort Snelling with no charge and walk to the adjoining state park.

Spiritual Reflection

“When the river meets the ocean, the memories of the river meet the memories of the ocean. Those two different worlds have many stories to tell each other.” (Mehmet Murat ildan)

“On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea.” (Zechariah 14:8, NRSV)

Questions for Reflection

Jewish and Christian scriptures exhibit a fascination with the idea of rivers that can unite eastern and western seas. Minnesota is privileged to host North America’s readiest connection

between southern and northern seas (the Gulf of Mexico and Hudson's Bay - via the Mississippi River, the Minnesota River, and the Red River of the North). How might Pike Island and the bluff where Fort Snelling is located function as sacred places in light of this fact?

The Zechariah text suggests that a place uniting the waters of the seas should be a place of "living water" and justice. Yet for the Dakota people Pike Island is a place of great historic trauma, as the site of mass internments after the US-Dakota War of 1862. Can you sense such trauma at this site? What might be done to heal the wounds from the trauma?