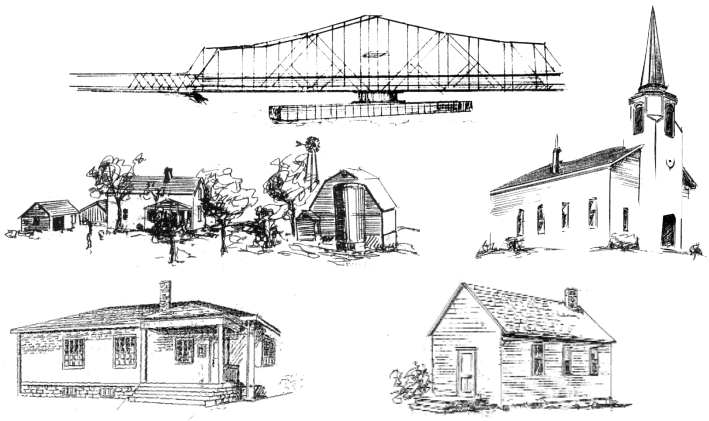


A brief history of
Inver Grove Heights
from Township and Village to City
with a map of historic sites

On March 9, 1965 Inver Grove Township and Inver Grove Village citizens voted 1,380 to 331 to merge as the Village of Inver Grove Heights. In 1974 "City" replaced "Village" to comply with a new state statute for incorporated municipalities.

Inver Grove with its richly diverse 116-year heritage and equally diverse and beautiful landscape officially became the City of Inver Grove Heights.

The setting for settlement

When Dakota County opened to settlement in 1853 land in the future Inver Grove was quickly claimed. In fact some claims were made in 1852. John Greer is considered the first settler along the river and John McGroarty first in the southwest.

From 1853 to 1858 settlers improved their homesteads as representatives helped organize the county.

New Englanders chose to settle along the Mississippi River, Irish and French selected the open spaces of Rich Valley in the south and west, and the Germans settlers chose the hills, ravines, and woods of the northwest along today's Babcock Trail which they called the German Road for 100 years.

Organization of Inver Grove Township

On April 17, 1858 Dakota County established its first 17 townships. Each township was invited to organize. On May 11 farmers met at Josiah Burwell's home on Rich Valley Road and organized Inver Grove township. Burwell, George Bohrer, and Patrick McKenny were elected town supervisors. John McGroarty had proposed the name "Inver." It's unclear who proposed "Grove."

The next 100 years, 1860 to 1960

Inver Grove Township's 1860 population was 536. Town meetings were held in Josiah Burwell's home until a town hall was built in 1878 on Barnes Ave.

Without a central commercial area the three communities were growing apart. Rich Valley farmers looked to Hastings and Rosemount. German Road farmers travelled north to St. Paul. The river people focused on fishing, steamboat servicing, and developing a commercial center.

Early maps suggest an even greater division with locations named Glentoro, Centralia, Marcott, Merrimac, Pine Bend, Rich Valley, and Inver Grove Village. Most were developer names except for the latter.

The Village of Inver Grove

Inver Grove Village appeared on maps as early as 1886 at 65th and Concord. It became a rail hub for South St. Paul's Stockyards. Its rail/wagon bridge spanning the Mississippi made it a major Twin City rail center. Inver Grove village incorporated in 1909.

Organizing "because of" and "for" suburbia

By 1960 suburban sprawl following World War II had reached Inver Grove Township. Its population tripled from 1,752 in 1950 to 5,753 in 1960.

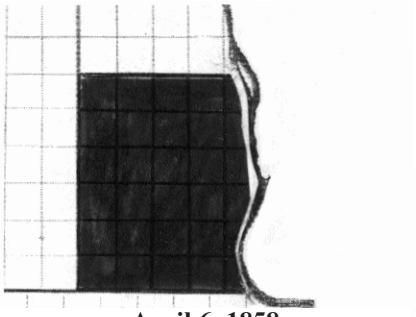
In 1958 the Sunfish Lake area incorporated as a village to maintain its community objectives.

Suburban home developers were demanding public services townships weren't prepared to provide. Recognizing the problem the state required townships to incorporate upon reaching a population of 2,000. Options for the township were annexation in part or all by South St. Paul or the Village of Inver Grove, or Inver Grove Township incorporating. The township chose to incorporate and the old Village of Inver Grove joined in creating Inver Grove Heights.

Inver Grove Heights History Site Map

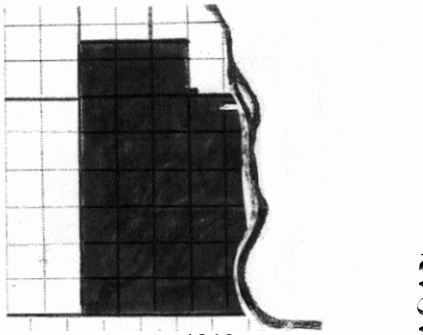
on following page

From Township to today's City boundary



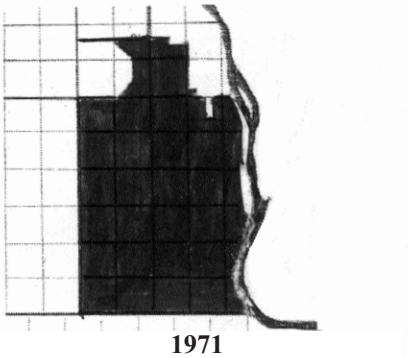
April 6, 1858
Original township included 30 sections along the river.

In April 1858 the county added 12 sections from Nininger but gave them to Rosemount in 1871.



1910
February 1898 Minnesota added 5-1/2 sections from South St. Paul.

August 1909 The Village of Inver Grove incorporated occupying the area from 61st to 66th streets and from the river to today's airport.



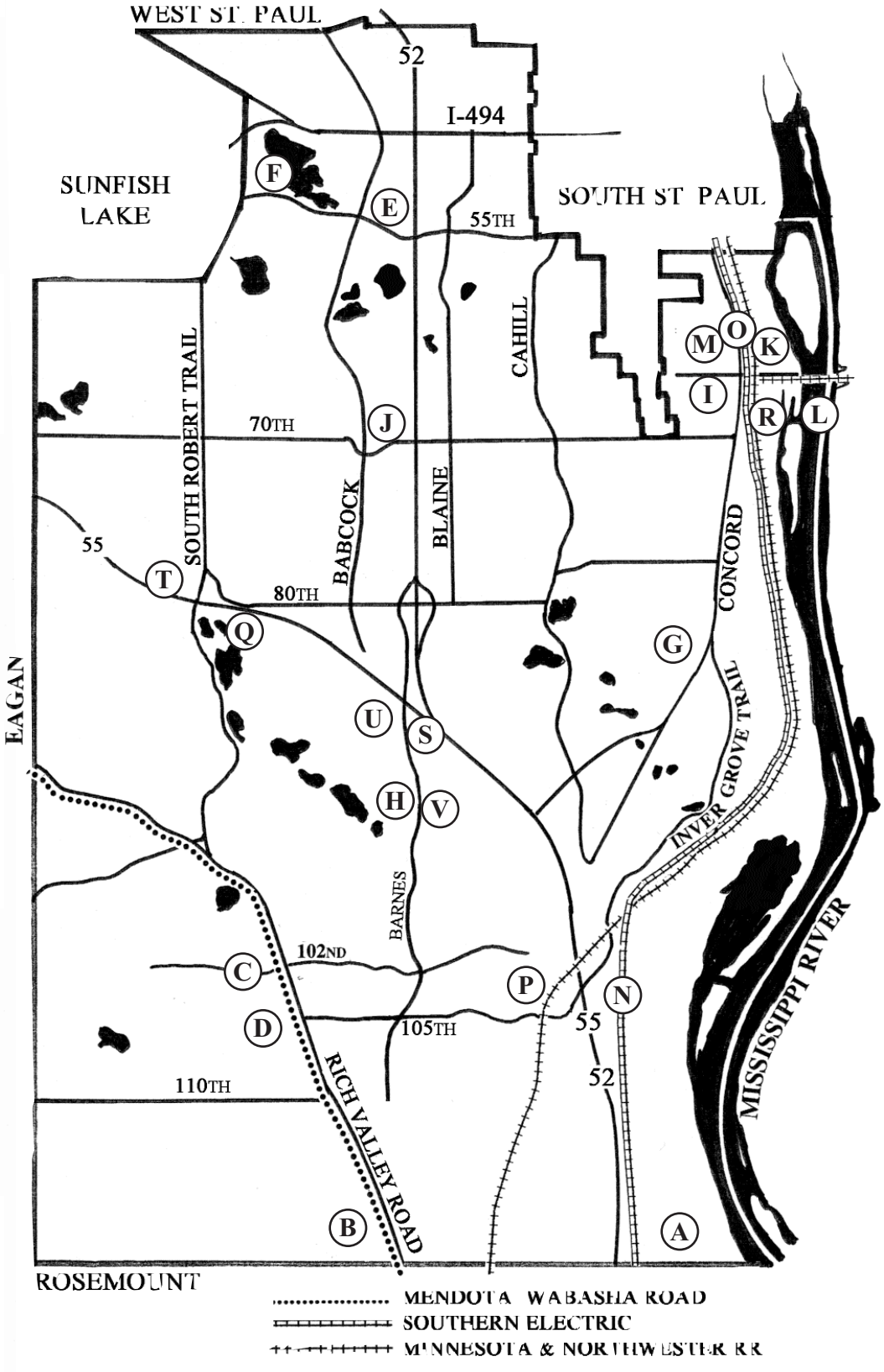
1971
June 1958 Two Sunfish Lake sections incorporated as Sunfish Lake.

1965 South St. Paul acquired Fleming Field acreage.

1965 The Village of Inver Grove Heights incorporated.

1967 Inver Grove Heights acquired small acreage from West St. Paul.

1971 Change from the "Village" to the "City" of Inver Grove Heights.

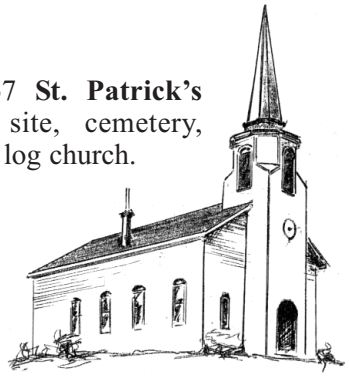


Ⓐ **Chief Medicine Bottle's village** formed in 1836; a marker is on highway 52. Area became the Pine Bend townsite and post office.

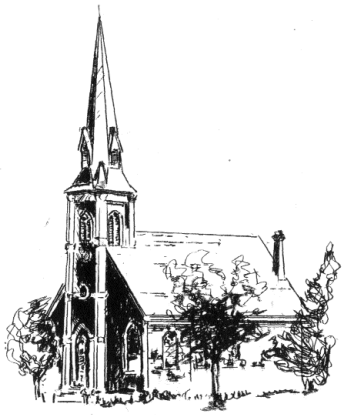
Ⓑ **Mendota - Wabasha Road** This is one of five federal military roads in Minnesota. John S. Potter laid it out in 1850. The Rich Valley Road bed follows the military road.

Ⓒ **Josiah Burwell's home**, site of 1858 Inver Grove Township organization, Rich Valley at 102nd.

Ⓓ 1867 **St. Patrick's Church** site, cemetery, and early log church.



In 1854 Father Ravoux held first mass in McGrath home. Frame church burned in 1919. A church built in 1961 preceded dramatic church built in 2002, 3535 E. 72nd.

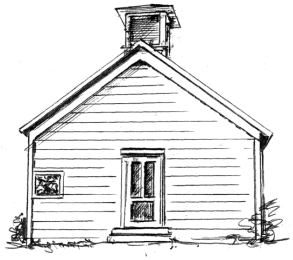


Ⓔ **Salem United Methodist Church** organized in 1854 in a log church. This brick church was built in 1868 with the steeple added in 1884. Additions have retained the historic brick structure, 5590 Babcock.

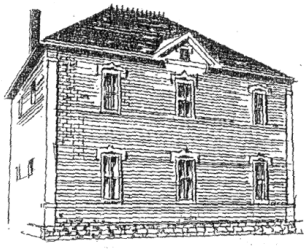
Ⓕ 1874 **Salem Evangelical Church** on Upper 55th at Schmidt Lake.

Now a Methodist national shrine. A favorite setting for artists.

Ⓖ 1876 **Reuben Freeman "House of eight gables"**on Inver Grove Trail. Built to better the "House of seven gables." A National Register site.

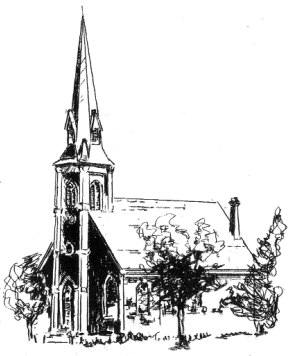


Ⓗ **Inver Grove 1878 Town Hall** "Town House" site, German Road (Barnes Ave.) and 91st St. Property donated by Patrick Brennan, Sr. Served until 1936 when new town hall was built.

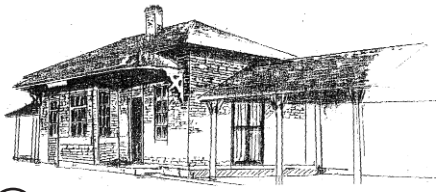


Ⓘ 1882 site of **Dist. 7 School** and meeting place, built with bricks by railroad. Earlier location of Dakota County's first public school in 1854. Doane and 67th.

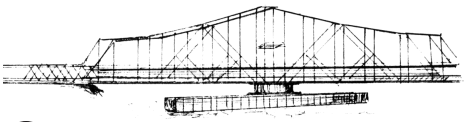
Ⓙ 1883 site of **Old Emanual Lutheran Church** after a 1854 log chapel; services and church school were in German.



Today's church and educational center were built in 1960. 70th and Babcock.

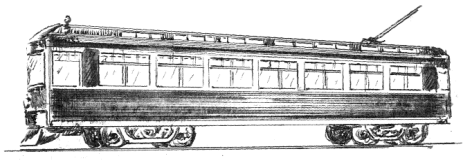


Ⓚ 1886 **Inver Grove Village railroad depot.** The nearby Rock Island boxcar clearing yard was largest in the Twin Cities. Rock Island was a major area employer.



Ⓛ **Railroad Swing Bridge**, 1894, rail and wagon Mississippi River crossing for over a century. Built by South St. Paul Beltline railroad for stockyards. Acquired by the Rock Island in 1915. Sold to the Roman Co. in 1981 who operated it as a toll bridge until closing in 1999.

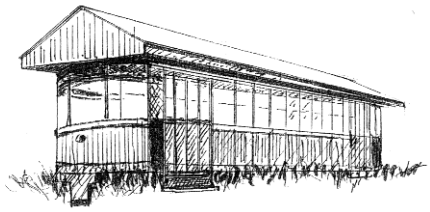
Ⓜ **Duke's restaurant,** 1906, on Concord. Originally Piekarski's butcher shop. Building became Duke's offering good food and hotel rooms mostly for railroaders. Meals served 24 hours a day. Now Jersey's Bar.



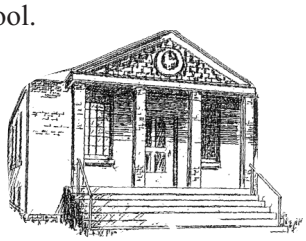
N **St. Paul and Southern Electric** rail line built in 1914 provided commuter service from St. Paul to Hastings with six stops. Equipment included four passenger cars. Car maintenance shops were located in Inver Grove Village.

O 1913 **Cameron's store**, 65th and Concord. Originally 1880s site of Bushnell Market and Weier and Miller 1895 grocery. Cameron's was a grocery and restaurant. The business has remained in family, now a liquor store.

P 1933 site of **Rosenberger's** night club on East Adelbert to World War II. A basement wood floor hosted dancing to the music of Whoopee John and others.



Q 1920 **Streetcar Church** on Eric Walgren farm at 105th St. and Inver Grove Trail, served as neighborhood Sunday School.



R The 1934 **Inver Grove Village Hall** still stands on River Road south of 66th St. in former village square. Built by WPA with bricks from the old village school.

S 1936 **Inver Grove Township Town Hall** site on Barnes at Highway 55 also built by the WPA with school bricks. Site of March 13, 1962 decision to incorporate the township leading to Village of Inver Grove Heights.

T **Schlief's Little City** a 1937 creation of Luella and Cleadis Schlief. The country dance hall opened in 1937 on Highway 55 and South Robert. Schlief's was a favorite entertainment place for annual volunteer firemen dances until 1974 closing. Formerly a farm implement business.

U Site of 1958 **B-52D USAF** bomber crash on Kahl farm during Cold War practice run from 30,000 feet. Marker on Broderick near West Loop Court.

V When the **District 73 School** on Barnes closed its doors in 1960 it was the last one room school in Dakota County. The building is now a single family home on Barnes Avenue.

Turning a new page in the history of The City of Inver Grove Heights

Today's Inver Grove Heights enjoys its diversity of landscape and development. The city center along 80th St. hosts our City Hall, Community Center, Simley High School, Inver Glen Library, and Inver Hills Community College. Throughout the city are park and recreational areas, and you can still find a dirt or gravel road and nature spaces.

W **The City of Inver Grove Heights Municipal Center**

Prepared by W. G. Wolston and the Dakota County Historical Society
in cooperation with the City of Inver Grove Heights

10-0503