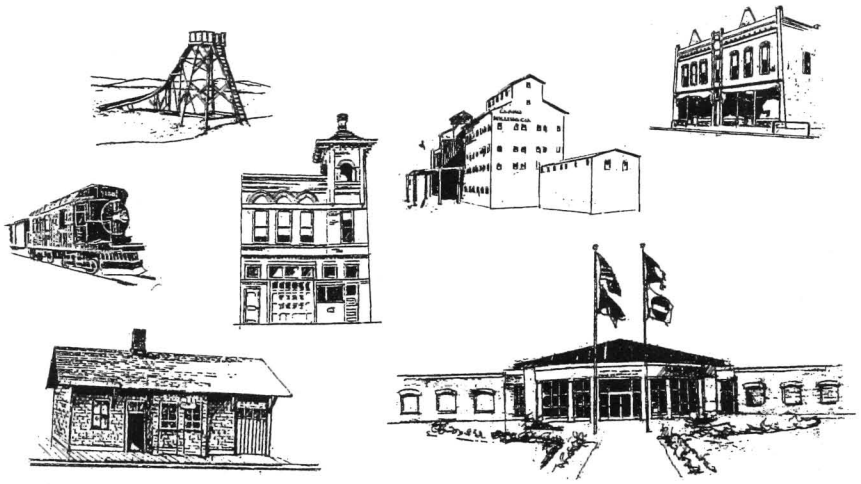


Highlights from

Lakeville history

J. J. Brackett platted the original Lakeville Village in1855 between today's Antlers Park and Dodd Road. He named it for the beautiful sheet of water Prairie Lake, today's Lake Marion. Brackett was a land speculator and operated a wagon stage line between St. Paul and Faribault. Brackett was Lakeville's first settler, followed closely by his employee Griffin Phelps. By 1858 Lakeville boasted two hotels, a blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, gun shop, shoemaker, and saloon.

Lakeville Township

On April 6, 1858, Dakota County commissioners created Lakeville Township as one of the county's original townships. The Township surrounded Lakeville Village and was organized in June 1858 with Samuel Dunn as chairman. By 1860 Township population totaled 598 and its border had stabilized with Scott County. During the Civil War 51 Lakeville men answered the call to colors.

The H&D, Fairfield, and a new Lakeville

In 1869 the Hastings and Dakota Railroad laid rails across the township. Unsuccessful attempts to buy land for a depot in Lakeville Village led the H&D to select a location a half mile east, calling it Fairfield. Wanting rail access, Lakeville businesses moved to Fairfield and Brackett's Lakeville declined. Fairfield requested incorporation as a village from the state in 1878. When the bill passed Fairfield's name was changed to Lakeville.

Entering the 20th Century

By 1900 combined township and village populations neared 1,000. The township's eastern half was rich open farm land, shipping its bounty through Farmington to Hastings and St. Paul. The western half boasted trees, lakes, and rolling hills with an increasing number of summer cottages and visiting fishermen. The Dodd Road, built in 1854 by Captain William Dodd, became Lakeville's major north-south roadway.

The village saw improvements and new businesses - telephone service in 1897, hitching posts and cement sidewalks in 1899, a new village hall and fire station in 1901, and electricity in 1914.

Antlers Amusement Park and Dan Patch Line

In 1910, Antlers Park opened on the shores of Prairie Lake. Thousands of visitors arrived by the gas-electric rail cars of the new "Dan Patch" rail line. Antlers became famous for its recreation and dining facilities. The enterprise was a creation of Col. Marion Savage, William Mason, and George O'Rourke. The "Dan Patch" ran from Minneapolis to Northfield with 10 stops in Dakota County.

Antlers' glamour years were short lived. The park gradually evolved to today's picnic grounds and bathing beach. However, Antlers lives on as a "special moment" of Lakeville heritage. Prairie Lake is now Lake Marion, renamed for Col. Savage.

Two very different 50 years

From 1900 to 1950, Lakeville's population grew slowly from 1,178 to 1,984.

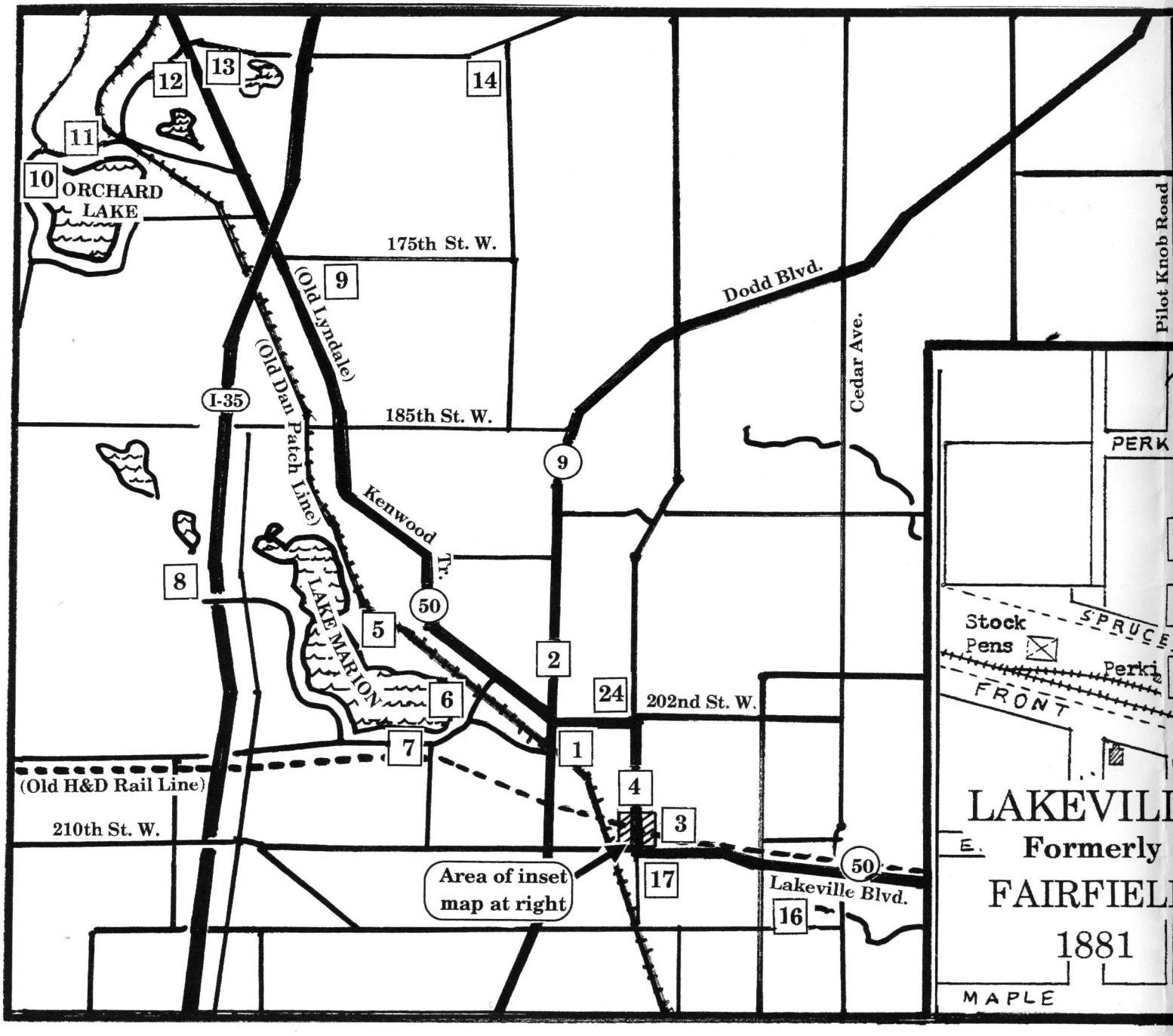
Post World War II suburban growth increased Lakeville population to 3,047 in 1960, 7,556 in 1970, and 20,500 in 1990. Lakeville's population at the turn of the century surpassed 42,000.

To one Lakeville

The "Eight-Year Boundary Battle" starting in 1963 was a struggle to reorganize communities to meet the challenges of suburbia. It involved the Minnesota Municipal Commission, Lakeville Village, Lakeville Township, and seven other local governments. In January 1971 Lakeville Village and Lakeville Township merged as an incorporated village except for ten Township sections which were annexed to the City of Farmington.

On January 1, 1974, Lakeville became a city, geographically the largest city in Dakota County.

Locating Lakeville history on the map . . . .



1 Lakeville's first village site

J.J. Brackett staked the first claim in 1854 between Lake Marion and Dodd Road and platted 250 acres as Lakeville Village. Griffin Phelps joined him later that year and became the first postmaster. Other settlers arrived and businesses formed.

2 The Dodd Road

Capt. William Dodd cut his road from St. Peter through Lakeville in 1854. It became part of the Big Sioux to Mendota road planned but delayed by the government.

3 Hastings & Dakota Depot

In 1869 the new H&D rail line built a loading platform just east of the original Lakeville, giving birth to the new Village of Fairfield. A depot eventually replaced the platform.

4 Lakeville Village (Fairfield)

Fairfield grew and citizens of the original Lakeville moved their businesses the half mile east to access the H&D railroad. When the state incorporated Fairfield in 1878, the name was changed to Lakeville.

The inset map, above, depicts downtown Lakeville in 1881, three years after the name change from Fairfield. The business district is a good size for a population of only 168. Today Main St. is Holyoke Ave., Walnut St. is Holt Ave., and Front St. is 208th St.

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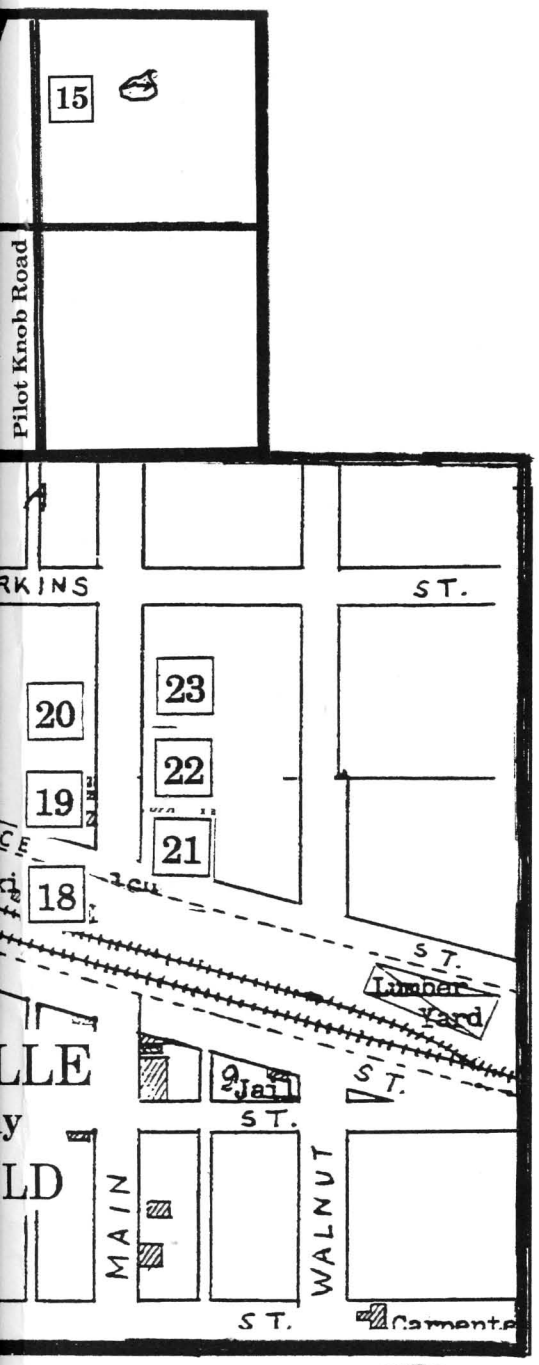
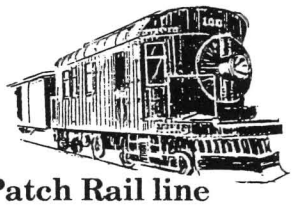
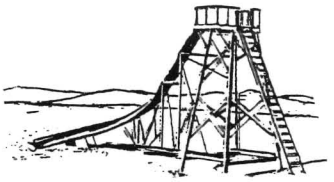




5 Dan Patch Rail line

Completed in 1910, the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester and Dubuque Electric Company train ran from Minneapolis to Northfield. It was nicknamed "Dan Patch" for Marion Savage's famous race horse. After a stop at the Dan Patch stable in Savage it made 10 stops in Dakota County. At Antlers Park the luxury gas-electric rail cars entered on a spur line.



6 Antlers Amusement Park

Opening in 1910, Antlers was the vision of Col. Marion Savage, William Mason, and George O'Rourke. The famous midwest amusement park boasted a huge dance pavillion, bathing beach, diving tower, high sliding chute, tennis courts, aerial swing, and a nine hole golf course. The park had an electric light show before Lakeville had electricity. In 1912 on summer weekends the Dan Patch made 19 stops a day at Antlers Park.

7 Weichselbaum's Resort

John Weichselbaum, or "Waxy," homesteaded on the south side of Prairie Lake in 1857. He added to his house until it had 14 rooms. John and his wife were congenial people. Good food and good fishing filled their rooms with paying guests. Even the H&D railroad stopped at Waxy's. Resort operations ceased in the 1940s.

8 Ritter Farm Park

Purchased from the Ritter Family in 1972, the 340-acre city park was once a working dairy farm with chickens, pigs, and crops. A wellhouse still stands. Today walking trails wind through wooded areas and an old apple orchard.

9 Argonne Farms

In 1922 30 severely disabled World War I veterans arrived at Argonne Farms, a veterans self sufficiency project to raise poultry and berries. Each received a four-acre plot, bungalow, and chicken coop at favorable prices and interest rates. However, the land was poor and the homes lacked electricity, plumbing, and insulation. The project failed.

10 Oberhoffer House

The Orchard Lake house was built in the early 1900s for Emil Oberhoffer, Minneapolis Symphony conductor. Often when Oberhoffer composed and practiced in his tower music room neighbors would gather outside to listen.

The Oberhoffer house was later owned by the parents of renowned golfer Patty Berg. Her many golf trophies were displayed in the tower room. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

11 Sea Girt Inn Resort

LeRoy Scott, his mother, and sister, Ida Kirk, a former vaudevillian, built the Sea Girt in 1923. The resort drew large crowds for dances until it burned to the ground in 1986 during remodeling.

12 Huddleston Store

Christina Huddleston's Store spanned a half century in the Orchard Lake area. Opened in 1923 along a sand and gravel Lyndale Ave. (Co. Rd. 5), the store supplied the lake community's needs for staples and candy, and served as a community gathering place.

13 Streefland Station

Across Lyndale Ave. from the Huddleston store, Cliff Streefland, Christina's brother, sold regular gas for 12 to 15 cents per gallon in the early 1930s. The Streefland family also operated the nearby Slickaway Valley Stock Farm.

14 The Green School

When the Crystal Lake District 102 formed in 1879 the Green family donated property for the school built in 1880. L. Coulter was the first teacher. The school was demolished in 1927.

15 The Highland Cemetery

In 1867 Thomas Hyland donated seven acres of "high land" for a church and cemetery on Pilot Knob a half mile south of Dodd Road. St. Joseph's Catholic Church and cemetery were built in 1868. In 1881 a wind storm destroyed the church.

16 Airlake Industrial Park

Created in 1967 in southeast Lakeville, Airlake now includes more than 80 businesses and over 4,000 employees.

17 The Old Brick School

The community built a brick school in 1906 for elementary through high school students. It was razed in the late 1980s.

18 The Claro Mill

In 1891, the Village offered $1,500 to anyone who would restore and operate a closed Perkins-Balch mill. Claro took the offer and operated the mill until 1926.

19 The Lenihan Building

The Lenihan Grocery and Mercantile building, which still stands, was built in the late 1800s. A creamery operated in the basement, and the upper floor held a large meeting room.

20 Original Village Hall

In October 1900 voters approved $3,500 in bonds for a combination village hall, town hall, and lock-up (jail). The tower bell called firefighters to fire muster until 1964 and is at today's Fire Dept. headquarters. The building still stands.

21 The Lakeville Bank

Lakeville's first bank was built in 1900. The building still stands at the northeast corner of 208th and Holyoke.

22 Enggren's Market

In 1916, Bert Enggren purchased a grocery store at this site, adding a meat market and luxury items such as fresh vegetables and fruit, and bakery bread and cookies. The store has been continuously operated by the Enggren family.

23 Shen Hall

Built in the 1890s, the lower floor housed retail businesses. The upper floor hall hosted dances, socials, high school graduations, and early movies. The hall was demolished in 1978.

24 Lakeville Municipal Campus

The City Hall, Fire Department Headquarters, Police Station, and Dakota County Heritage Library form today's municipal campus located at the intersection of Holyoke Ave. and 202nd St.

Prepared by the Lakeville Area Historical Society in cooperation with the Dakota County Historical Society

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