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
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.

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.

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

B 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.

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

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

E 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.

F 1874 Salem Evangelical Church on Upper 55th at Schmidt Lake.
Now a Methodist national shrine. A favorite setting for artists.

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

H 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.

I 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.

J 1883 site of Old Emanuel 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.

K 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.


The City of Inver Grove Heights
Municipal Center

Prepared by W. G. Wolston and the Dakota County Historical Society
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