(Photo 1).

History of Settlement in the Minnesota River Valley

Many generations of Native Americans have called the Minnesota River Valley home – relying on the valley's rich resources for sustenance, shelter and transportation. Archaeological sites have been discovered in Bloomington spanning each of the three main traditions or periods of Native American presence in the valley. Specifically, the Dakota Indians had numerous villages in the Bloomington area all of which were greatly affected by the arrival of white European explorers and settlers.

European exploration of the Upper Mississippi River basin began in 1673 when French explorers Louis Joliet and Jacques Marquette reached the river near what is now Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Over the next 100 years the Mississippi River basin and its tributaries including the Minnesota River were explored by French fur traders as well as other European explorers who were beginning to make their way into the American West. In 1805, the Minnesota River Valley, was officially ceded to the U.S. government via the Louisiana Purchase. As a result, more white settlers were attracted to the region. The U.S. government encouraged this settlement and fortified the area with strategic defenses, including Fort Snelling. With the completion of the Fort in 1825, the Minnesota River became a very important strategic waterway to the West.

Throughout this time period relations between white settlers and Native Americans were contentious and often violent. Through a series of questionable treaties, such as Treaty Traverse des Sioux, the U.S. government took control of almost all of the Native American land in the river valley. This culminated in the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 – a bloody six week war between the U.S. government and several bands of Dakota. The war ended with a mass execution of 38 Dakota men on December 26, 1862, in Mankato, Minnesota and the majority of the Dakota people were exiled from the state.

Meanwhile, white settlers continued to flood into the lower Minnesota River Valley, establishing cities and towns. These settlers also relied on the rich resources of the Valley. Specifically, the river served as an important transportation artery for the settlers. Steamboats were the primary means by which goods were moved between the newly established Minnesota River cities until the expansion of railroads into the area in the 1860's and 70's.

Throughout the 20th century the river transitioned from a transportation corridor into a recreation area enjoyed by the people of the Twin Cities. Prior to a large portion of the valley gaining Federal Refuge status in 1976, the area was utilized for other purposes, including housing duck hunting camps for area hunters. Today, walkers, bikers and birders are the primary users of the Refuge and City owned land in the valley.

(Photo 2).

In 1834 Gideon Pond and his brother Samuel came to Minnesota to teach Christianity to the Dakota. The Ponds received government permission to establish a mission school near Lake Calhoun (current Minneapolis), where Chief Cloud Man's band of Dakota spent their summers. Beginning in 1839, conflicts between the Dakota and Ojibwe prompted Cloud Man to move his village to a spot near the Minnesota River in present day Bloomington. The village was one of several in the area, including the villages of Black Dog (Burnsville) Shakpe (Shakopee), and others. Gideon Pond moved to join them in 1843, establishing the Oak Grove Mission that would operate until 1852. Today, this site is one of three Bloomington properties that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pre-Settlement

Archaeological sites have been discovered in Bloomington spanning each of the three main traditions or periods of Native American presence in the valley: Paleo-Indian, Archaic, and Woodland.

11,000 YEARS BEFORE PRESENT

Paleo-Indian

The Paleo-Indians were nomadic hunter-gathers - constantly on the move for new resources.

Very little evidence of the Paleo-Indians lifestyle exists due to their nomadic lifestyle. However at least one Paleo-Indian site has been documented in Bloomington.

8,000 YEARS BP

Archaic

Archaeological evidence suggests Archaic people made seasonal camps in the Minnesota River Valley.

Archaic people created tools out of stone and copper.
(Photo 4).

Numerous Woodland sites have been discovered in Bloomington including the Mound Springs burial mounds.

3,000 YEARS BP

Woodland

1000 years present time

Many bands of Dakota set up permanent villages in the Minnesota River Valley, including in what would become the cities of Bloomington, Savage, and Burnsville.
(Photo 5).

European Settlement

The Minnesota River Valley in Bloomington has been home to human beings for millennia. Many generations of Native Americans have called the Minnesota River Valley home while European settlement of the Minnesota River Valley began in the late 1600s. Since that time period, the human population in the river valley has continued to grow.

1673 French explorers Louis Joliet and Jacques Marquette reach the upper portion of the Mississippi River. *(Photo 3).*

1805 The Lower Minnesota River is acquired by the U.S. Government as part of the Louisiana Purchase.

1805 U.S. government takes control of 100,000 acres of Dakota land at the intersection of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers via disputed treaty negotiations.

1815 War Department begins building a chain of forts between Lake Michigan and the Missouri River, including Fort Snelling.

1851 Treaty Traverse des Sioux

1858 State of Minnesota is admitted into the Union.

1858 Township of Bloomington is established.

1862 U.S. Dakota War

1852 Gideon Pond establishes Oak Grove Mission near Chief Cloud Man's village. *(Photo 8).*

1849 Bloomington Ferry opens.

1825 Construction of Fort Snelling is completed. *(Photo 9).*

1843 Peter and Louisa Quinn, Bloomington's first white settlers, are sent by the government to teach farming methods to the Dakota Indians living near Fort Snelling.

1839 Chief Cloud Man, a Dakota chief, moves his village to a spot near the Minnesota River in present day Bloomington.

1889 First Bloomington Ferry Bridge is constructed. *(Photo 11).*

1920 Original Cedar Avenue bridge is constructed. *(Photo 10).*

1940 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services is established within the U.S. Department of Interior

1960 City of Bloomington incorporated

1908 Dan Patch Railroad bridge is constructed

1920 Bass Ponds are created

1976 Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is created. *(Photo 7).*

1998 Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Bloomington and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is signed, governing shared responsibilities in the Minnesota River Valley

1979 New Cedar Avenue bridge is constructed

2015 Rehabilitation of Old Cedar Avenue bridge begins.

2017 Planned opening of the Bloomington section of the Minnesota River Valley Trail.

1600 · 1700 · 1800 · 1900 · 2000

References

[1] Steamboat on the Minnesota River. *Photo courtesy of Bloomington Historical Society*.

[2] Gideon Pond House. *Photo courtesy of Bloomington Historical Society*.

[3] Seth Eastman illustration.

[4] Guy Gibbon and Scott F. Anfinson. Minnesota Archaeology: The First 13,000 Years. Figure 8.1.

[5] Fur traders in Canada 1777. *William Faden, http://commonwikimeida.org/wiki/File:Fur_traders_in_canada_1777.jpg,* 1777.

[6] Seth Eastman illustration.

[7] A.N. Author Title. *Name,* 2000.

[8] Gideon Pond. *Photo courtesy of Bloomington Historical Society*.

[9] Fort Snelling. *Photo courtesy of Bloomington Historical Society*.

[10] Old Cedar Avenue bridge. *Photo courtesy of the City of Bloomington*.

[11] Bloomington Ferry. *Photo courtesy of Bloomington Historical Society*.