

Dear Neighbor,

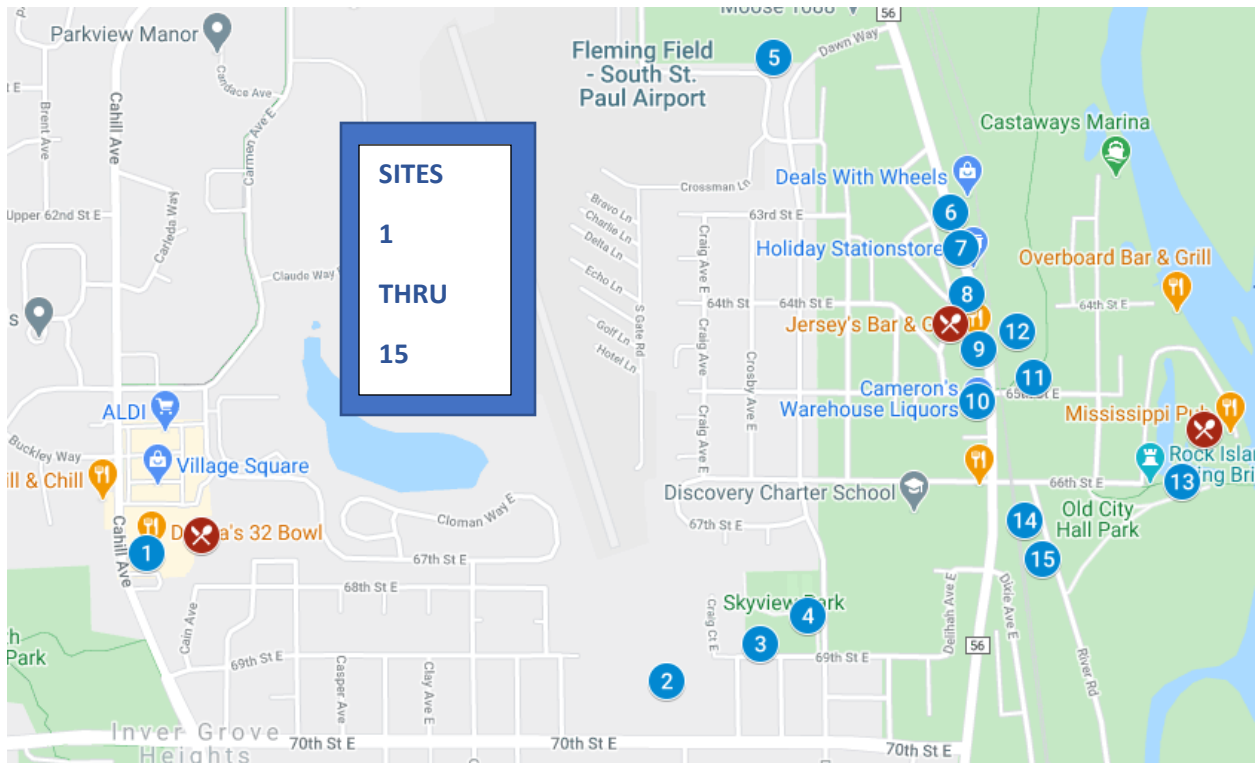
Inver Grove Heights was founded 1965. In honor of the community's 55th anniversary in 2020, I set out to create this virtual tour of the community's 55 most interesting historic places. You will notice that the list has now grown even further... up to 57 sites, with still more being researched. An online version is available at www.bit.ly/55SitesInTheHeights.

I want to thank to all the longtime residents who contributed to the creation of this tour. It contains many sites and stories that pre-date Inver Grove Heights becoming a city. While about half of the structures have disappeared with time, the stories remain, some of which are quite surprising and entertaining.

I now represent Inver Grove Heights, Eagan and Rosemount as a Dakota County Commissioner, and I am gradually working on similar historical maps and virtual tours for Rosemount and Eagan. I hope to have them done in conjunction with upcoming historic occasions in these communities. I welcome questions and comments as well as suggestions for additional historic sites or details that ought to be added. I can be contacted at Joe.Atkins@co.dakota.mn.us or (651) 438-4430. Thank you!

Joe

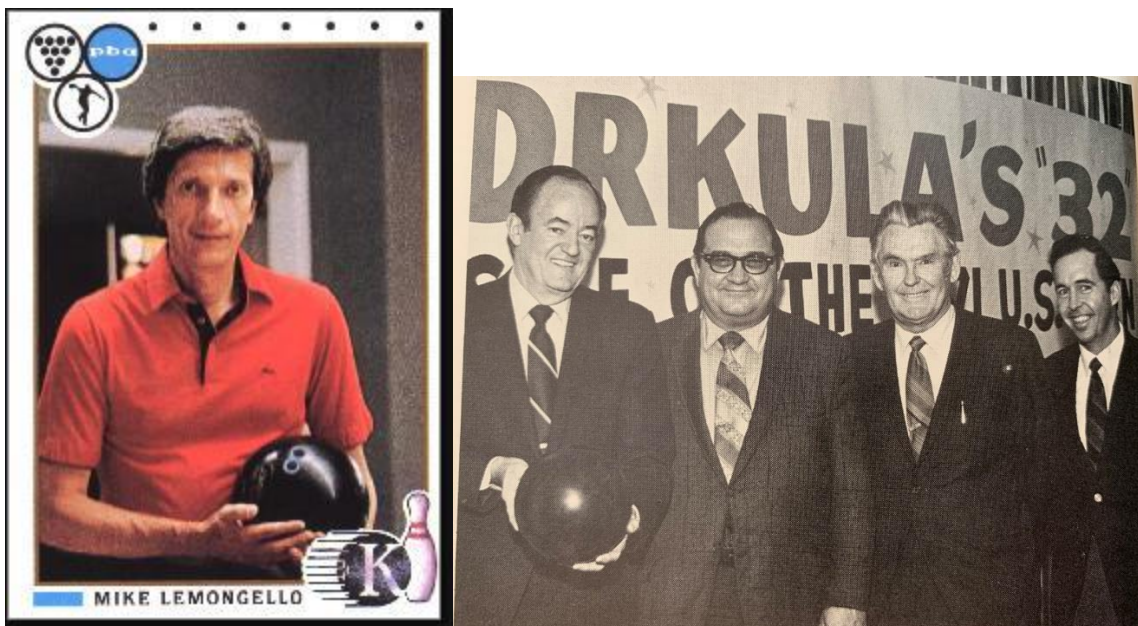
Joe Atkins



1. **Drkula's - 1st U.S Open Site (1971)** - The Professional Bowlers Association has four majors, with the most important being the U.S. Open. The first-ever U.S. Open was held at Drkula's 32 Bowl in Inver Grove Heights from January 3 - 9, 1971. Vice President Hubert Humphrey helped kick off the prestigious event.

Mike Limongello won the nationally televised championship, defeating top-seeded Teata Semiz 194-186 in the final. There were 96 pros and another 96 league players in the field. It was fitting that Limongello won the tournament at Drkula's, since both Limongello and Drkula's owner Joe Drkula had names that many found difficult to spell. In fact, Limongello's name is misspelled on his Kingpins PBA Tour card.

Drkula's is one of the oldest family-owned businesses in Inver Grove. Opened in 1962, it is now owned and operated by the founder's grandson, Tim Drkula and his wife, Heather.



2. **Fleming Field - First Step to the Moon (1957)** - While Neil Armstrong's first step on the moon occurred in 1969, historians say the first step to sending Americans into space actually took place along 70th Street in Inver Grove in 1957.

On June 2, 1957, Captain Joe Kittinger stepped aboard "Manhigh I," the first of three US Air Force high-altitude balloon missions. Launched from Fleming Field at 6:23am near the Inver Grove/South St. Paul border, Capt. Kittinger reached a record-setting 96,784 feet before a life-threatening cabin pressure problem forced his descent.

By all accounts, it was a harrowing flight. In addition to the cabin regulator issue, the onboard oxygen levels had rapidly depleted during the six-hour flight and radio problems

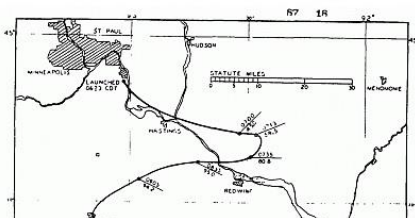
meant Captain Kittinger could only communicate with ground control by Morse code. The Project Manhigh missions tested equipment such as space capsules, space suits, telemetry and communication systems. Most of all, Manhigh first tested the ability of human beings to function in the harsh extremes of high altitude, where the blue sky ends, and space begins.

In spite of the life-threatening issues faced by Captain Kittinger during the Manhigh I flight, he was sorely disappointed with orders from the ground control center to descend. His response became famous. In Morse code, he tapped out "Come up and get me." After the flight Capt. Kittinger was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. In doing so, he joined another pilot who had also done training flights at Fleming Field 15 years earlier in 1942... George H.W. Bush.

One of the youngest naval aviators of World War II and President from 1988 to 1992, Bush possesses the most impressive record of America's pilot-presidents. Not quite 19 upon receiving his wings, he flew TBM Avenger torpedo bombers from the carrier USS San Jacinto in 1944. For his 58 combat missions, Lieutenant Bush was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals.



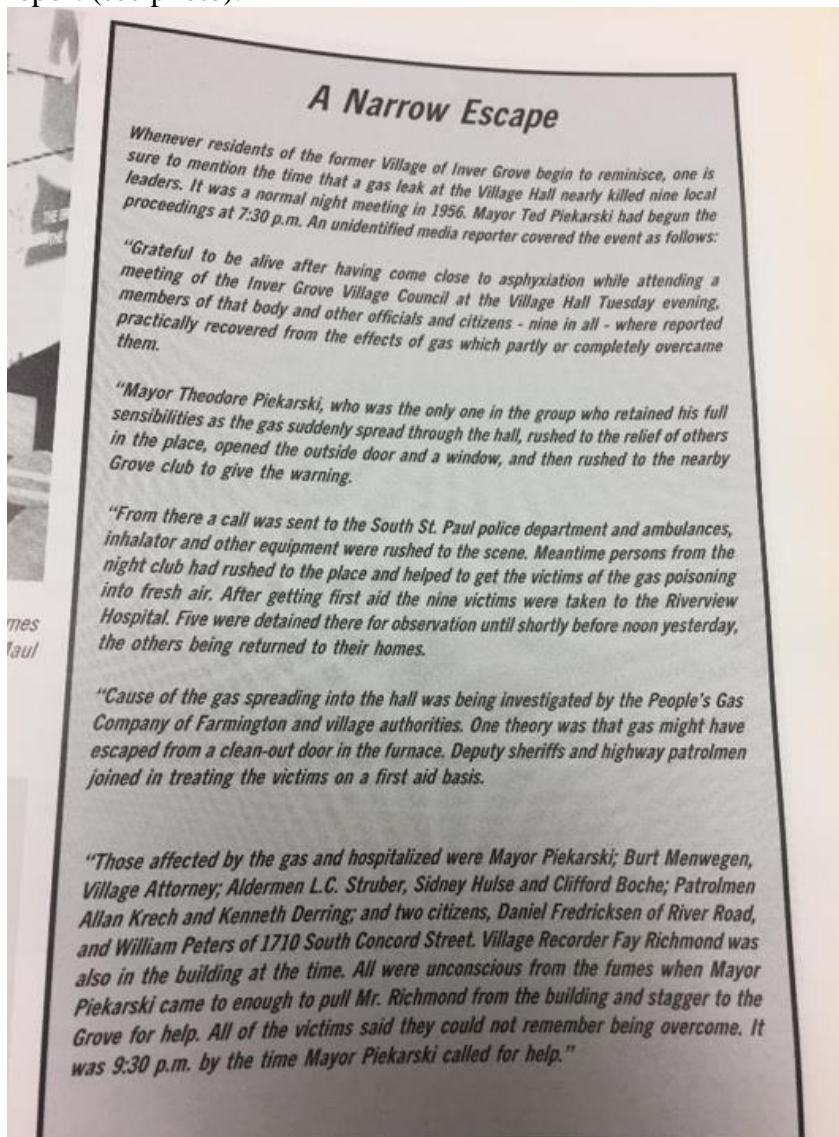
Details of the balloon flight and scientific outcome



Launch site: **Fleming Field Airport, South St. Paul, Minnesota, US**
Balloon launched by: Winzen Inc. / HAFB
Balloon manufacturer/size/composition: Zero Pressure Balloon Winzen - 2,000,000 cuft - (2 mils)
Balloon serial number: 172.6-200-V-33
Flight identification number: WRI 755
Campaign: MANHIGH
Payload weight: 1012 lbs
Overall weight: 2166 lbs

3. **Piekarski Field - Hometown Hero (1950's)** - Ted Piekarski did it all for Inver Grove, serving as mayor for 12 years, in addition to being Justice of the Peace, a City Council Member, and Planning Commissioner. He was also instrumental in starting the Inver Grove Heights Fire Department.

During one council meeting in 1956, Mayor Piekarski noticed council members dozing off during the meeting in the Old Village Hall. Though groggy himself, Mayor Piekarski realized the building was filling with gas, jumped into action, and saved several lives by dragging unconscious attendees outside to safety. The incident was described in a media report (see photo).



4. **Corrine Erstad Disappearance (1992)** - On the evening of June 1, 1992, five-year-old Corrine Erstad walked out the front door of her home next to Skyview Park to go play. She was never seen again.

DNA evidence from Corinne's sundress, as well as a shower curtain, and numerous items seized from her alleged killer's storage locker in West St. Paul led to murder charges, in spite of no body ever being found. It was among the first times DNA evidence would be used in a Minnesota murder trial. However, the law did not allow the jury to hear how statistically damning the match between the child's blood and defendant's fluids were, and the defendant was acquitted. The state courts changed this law shortly afterwards.

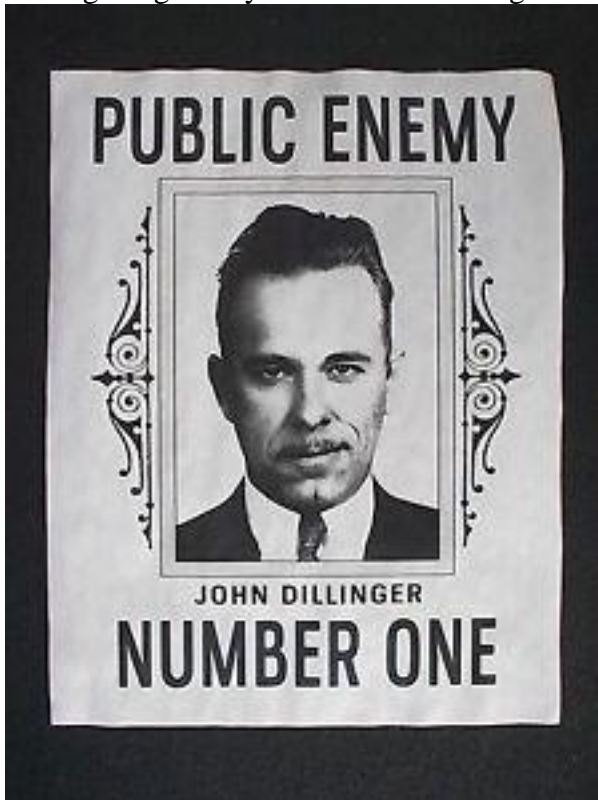


5. **Union Cemetery (1867)** - Union Cemetery, established in 1867, is the resting place for many of the area's earliest settlers and notable residents, as well as the victim of Minnesota's first bridge collapse.

Robert Moser of Inver Grove Heights was killed on April 24, 1990 while doing construction work on the Lake Street-Marshall Avenue Bridge that connects St. Paul and Minneapolis over the Mississippi River. Mr. Moser is joined by Percival Barton, Inver Grove's first physician, who served as a Civil War surgeon and is a cousin of Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross. Timothy Boche, for whom Simley High School's field was named, and Ben Wiplinger, founder of Wipaire, are also buried here. Wiplinger's unique grave marker alone is worth a trip to this hallowed spot.

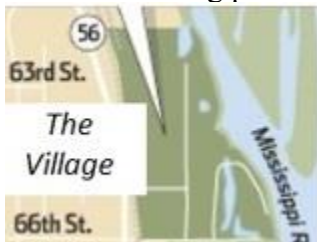


6. **Gangster John Dillinger's Escape Route (1934)** - On April 23, 1934, gangster John Dillinger and two members of his gang of bank robbers engaged in a running gun battle with Dakota County Sheriff's deputies and local police. Dillinger's escape route included the Rock Island Swing Bridge and the streets of Inver Grove's Old Village neighborhood, where he managed to elude his pursuers. Approximately 50 shots were exchanged, leaving the getaway driver of the Dillinger vehicle mortally wounded.



7. **The Old Village** - Officially incorporated as the Village of Inver Grove, this one-square mile area occupies the area from 61st to 66th Street and from the river to today's Fleming Field Airport.

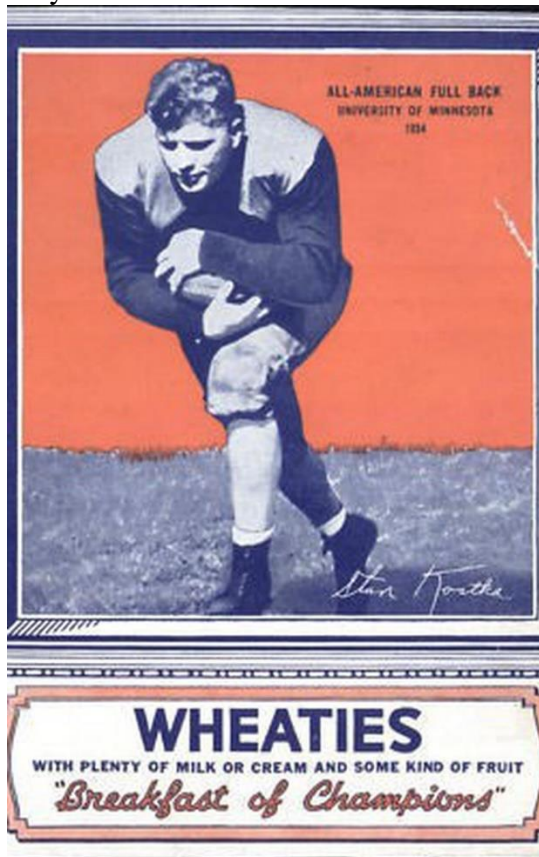
Today, the Old Village neighborhood is home to several popular local restaurants, Dakota County's busy Mississippi River Greenway connecting St. Paul to Hastings, and Inver Grove's first dog park.



8. **The NFL Draft Started Here (1935)** - Inver Grove's Stan Kostka starred as a running back for the University of Minnesota in the early 1930's, leading the Gophers to an undefeated season and national championship in 1934. Every NFL team wanted to sign him. Since there was no draft back then, savvy Stan did the smart thing – he held out for the highest offer. A bidding war ensued, and on August 25, 1935, Stan Kostka inked the largest contract in league history, signing with the Brooklyn, New York team for a record \$5,000. As a response to the bidding war for Stan Kostka, the NFL instituted the draft in 1936.

Stan Kostka grew up along Concord in Inver Grove. His dad worked at the railyards east of Concord. In addition to causing the NFL draft, the Inver Grove native was also one of the first athletes ever featured on a Wheaties box.

What did 22-year-old Stan do during his nine-month holdout? He ran for Mayor, of course, nearly becoming the youngest mayor in the community's history. However, Inver Grove voters were not quite ready for a 20-something mayor in 1934, and Stan went on to the NFL instead. It was not until six decades later that Inver Grove Heights voters elected a mayor in his 20's. Joe Atkins was elected in 1992 at the age of 27, serving as Mayor until 2002.



9. **Duke's Restaurant (now Jersey's) (1906)** - Constructed in 1906 as Piekarski's butcher shop, the building soon became Duke's, offering good food 24 hours a day as well as hotel rooms, mostly for rail workers. It is now Jersey's Bar & Grill.
10. **Inver Grove's Oldest Business (1913)** - The oldest privately-owned business in Inver Grove is Cameron's, a 4th-generation operation that began as a general store over 100 years ago but has also run a grocery, restaurant, post office and liquor store.
11. **Inver Grove Railroad Depot (1886)** - Formerly the biggest boxcar clearing yard in Minnesota, a century's worth of heavy railroad use left behind 55 acres of heavily contaminated soil. Cleanup efforts set the stage for what is turning into an attractive amenity, with the Rock Island Swing Bridge overlook, miles of trails connecting to the Mississippi River Trail, picnic shelters, and the newest addition – a 10-acre dog park.
12. **St. Paul Southern Electric Railroad (1914)** - One of Minnesota's earliest electric passenger train actually ran through Inver Grove, connecting Hastings to St. Paul. Passengers on the St. Paul Southern could then take a connection all the way to Lake Minnetonka.



Car 52 was one of four interurbans built by the Niles Car Company of Niles, Ohio, at a cost of \$8,490 and delivered to the Southern in 1914. The cars were all wood construction with a wood under-frame—unusual in that steel cars were coming into general use. Car 52 was 51 feet long and weighed 29 tons. It could accommodate 54 passengers—moving them along at a top speed of 55 miles per hour. This photo was taken in the Inver Grove yard sometime before 1920. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

13. **Rock Island Swing Bridge (1894)** - Constructed in 1894-95, the 125-year-old Rock Island Swing Bridge is perhaps most famous – or should we say infamous – for serving as an escape route for gangster John Dillinger during a running gun battle with Dakota County deputies as he fled across the river to St. Paul Park.

The South St. Paul Beltline Railroad constructed the historic double-decker swing bridge, which carried trains and wagons (and vehicles later) the 1,661 feet across the Mississippi. When it was built, it was the longest of its kind on the Mississippi and among the longest in the world.

When the Rock Island Swing Bridge closed to traffic in 1999, after being deemed unsafe, it was the only remaining toll bridge in Minnesota.

Eventually, on November 24, 2008, a 200-foot portion of eastern span collapsed into the river and the entirety of the bridge was scheduled for demolition, leading to it being named one of the state's 10 Most Endangered Historic Places by the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota.

Local leaders and a Simley High School history class led an effort to save the bridge. On May 16, 2009, a mere three days before a wrecking ball was set to take down the western portion of the bridge, a last-minute legislative reprieve in the form of a moratorium was signed by Gov. Pawlenty.

After numerous fundraisers and other efforts, the remaining sections were turned into a recreational pier and the land around the bridge into a park, for roughly the same amount it would have cost to demolish the bridge. Today the site offers great views of the Mississippi and is a popular spot for wedding and prom photos, walkers, cyclists and history buffs.

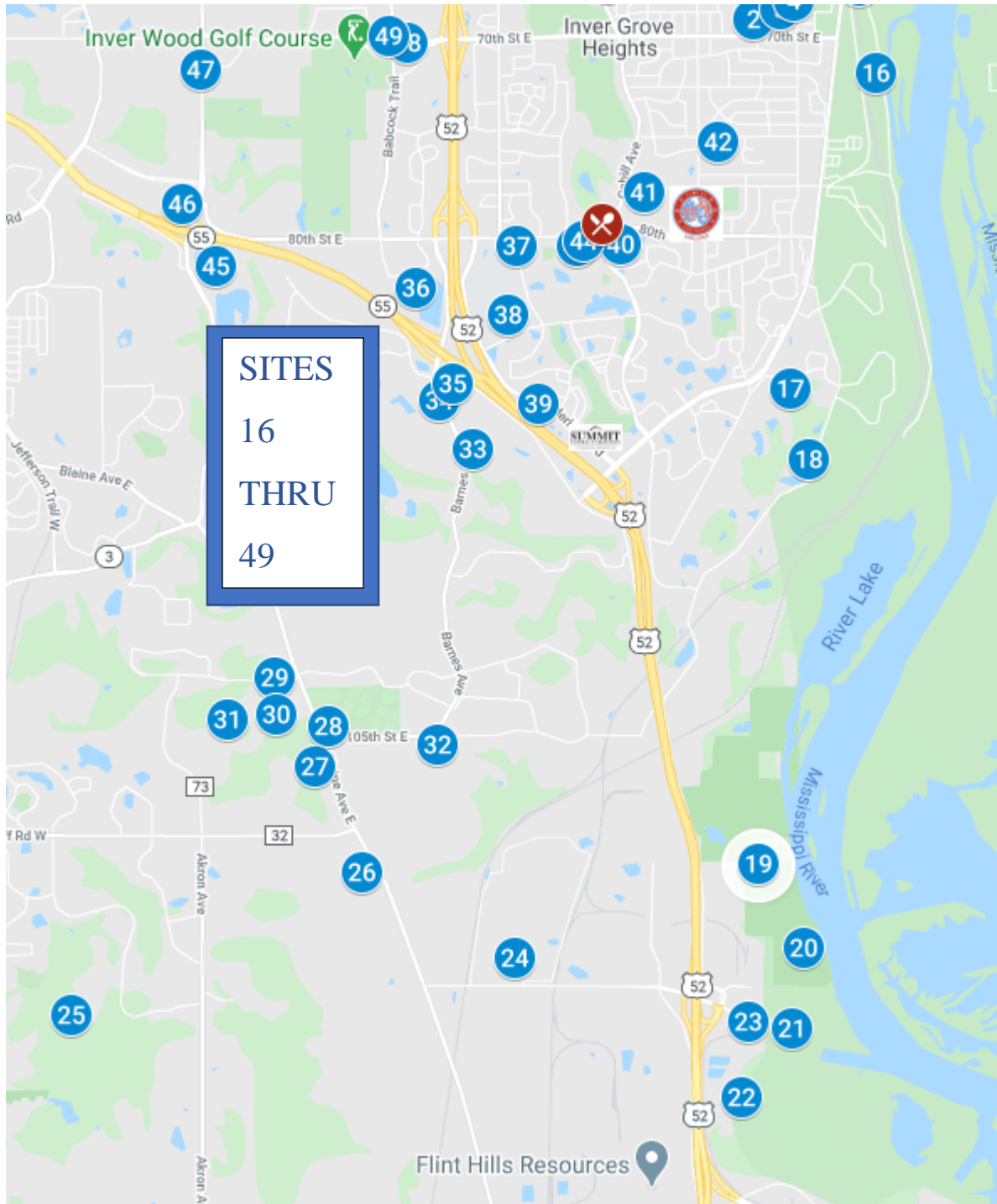


14. **First Public School in Dakota County (1854)** - Only three schools existed in the Minnesota Territory as of 1851, enrolling a total of 250 children, and none were in Dakota County. In 1854, local settlers took bold action, creating Dakota County's first public school at Doane Trail (now River Road) and 67th Street. It burnt to the ground in 1872. The \$200 in insurance proceeds paid for a new school five blocks south. In 1882, it was replaced on the same site with a brick building constructed by the railroad. Unfortunately, the school site was situated between two hazardous railroad tracks and in 1913 the school was condemned. It took until September 1918, when the conclusion of World War I appeared imminent, that cash-strapped Inver Grove voters authorized \$5,000 to build a new Inver Grove school up the 66th Street hill.



15. **Inver Grove Village Hall** - The old village hall still stands on River Road south of 66th Street. It was built by the WPA with bricks from the old village school. This is the location where Mayor Ted Piekarski saved several lives when the village hall filled with carbon monoxide during a council meeting in 1956.





16. **IGH vs. The Railroad (1977)** - For decades, Inver Grove had a handshake deal with the Chicago Great Western Railroad: the city's fire department put out grass fires caused by the railroad along the tracks near Concord, then billed the railroad, and the railroad paid. Until 1977. This is when the railroad refused to pay its grass fire bill.

Letters were sent to the railroad. Calls were made. But to no avail. The railroad refused to pay.

Finally, the mayor back then – Gene Atkins – told the city attorney he would call the railroad’s attorney himself. The railroad’s lawyer promptly told Mayor Atkins to “Go [screw] yourself.”

Not to be denied, Atkins waited a few days for a fully-loaded CGW train to stop in IGH, then directed the Fire Chief to park fire rigs across the tracks on each side of the stopped train, preventing the train’s movement.

When word got back to the railroad, their lawyer called the IGH City Attorney, who was instructed to tell the railroad lawyer to call Mayor Atkins directly. When the call came, Atkins promptly told the railroad lawyer to “Go [screw] yourself.”

The grass fire bill was paid two days later. There were no further issues with the railroad. This is one of Joe Atkins' favorite stories about his dad, Gene. While holding rail cars hostage is most certainly some sort of federal crime, the statute of limitations had long since passed by the time Gene passed away in 2012.



17. **Pig Farm Makes National News (2001)** - In 2001, Marley Danner wanted to build 31 homes on 16 acres he owned between Concord and Inver Grove Trail. Unfortunately for Mr. Danner, the land was zoned agricultural and required City approval of a re-zoning. When neighbors objected to the residential proposal as being too dense with no buffer separating it from their larger-acreage homes next door, the City indicated a willingness to approve up to 29 home sites, not the 31 home sites being sought by Mr. Danner. Dissatisfied, the colorful and indefatigable Mr. Danner opted to use the parcel for its allowed agriculture purposes, even erecting a sign that showed the outline of a grinning pig.

The sign read:

Houses or Pigs.

Your Choice was Pigs.

Pigs Coming Soon!

The pig farm attracted national attention and throngs of families and fans. It was one of then-Mayor Joe Atkins' favorite all-time city attractions and called attention to the community's rural roots. But, alas, all things must come to an end. After a summer spent raising pigs, during which time Mr. Danner's nose was broken while feeding a particularly ornery swine, the residential development gained approval for 29 home sites.



18. **The House of Eight Gables (1876)** - Located at 9091 Inver Grove Trail, "The House of Eight Gables" has the most romantic name of all the buildings in Dakota County on the National Register of Historic Places and is Inver Grove's only structure on the National Register. It is also known as the Reuben Freeman House.

Story has it that after spending a long winter in 1875 reading Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The House of Seven Gables*, German-born farmer Reuben Freeman decided to go Hawthorne one better and build this gem-of-a-house with eight gables. Since money and building materials were scarce, Freeman used rock gathered from his fields. With mortar of lime from kilns on Grey Cloud Island, he started construction that spring. Work went

fast because he and his son were experienced builders; only a few years before, they had constructed a huge barn.

As a National Register site the house is significant for its unique vernacular construction of coursed fieldstone. The stones are of various sizes and colors, and for decorative effect bottle glass replaces the stone around the second-story gable windows.



19. **The Pine Bend Bluffs (1999)** - The Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area encompasses the top 1% of oak forest, oak savanna, black ash swamp and rare sand-gravel prairie plant communities remaining in Minnesota. It also offers some of the best views of the Mississippi along the river's 2,348-mile length.

Public and private partners - including the City of Inver Grove Heights, Dakota County, the State of Minnesota and Flint Hills resources - have worked together over the past two decades to protect the Pine Bend Bluffs.

As a crucial part of the Mississippi River flyway, the Pine Bend Bluffs are an annual migration corridor for millions of songbirds and 40 percent of North America's waterfowl and shorebirds. The area was identified as a site of high biological significance by the DNR County Biological Survey in 1999. Ecologists consider the area to be one of the largest and most diverse native ecosystems left in the metro area.



20. **First White Settlers (1849-1853)** - The first known settler in our area was William A. Bissell who visited Chief Waukan-ojan-jan's village in 1849 or 1850. In 1851 the Chief allowed Bissell to put up a small log shack under and near the bluff, about a quarter mile northwest of their village. Bissell moved his family down from Red Rock with a span of horses and sled, on the ice late in the fall of 1851, and occupied this shack.

In 1852 Bissell built a hewed log house, covering it with shingles split mostly from oak logs; and the same year he raised some potatoes, corn, and garden items. Also in 1852, John McGroarty and his brother, along with Edward Meloy, Dennis Fee, Jerry McCarthy and Fred Rohrick settled in the western part of town, near present-day Rich Valley Park and 102nd Street. Further north, near where Salem Green Apartments and Salem Hills Elementary School are now located, several German settlers laid claim to the land, including William Korfhage, Carl Bester, and John Schrader, among others.

Additional settlers flocked to the community in the mid-1850's.



21. **Chief Waukan-ojan-jan's Village (1838)** - The first known residents of Inver Grove lived from 1838 to 1852 along the Mississippi River in what white settlers called Pine Bend, a wooded bluff in the southeast corner of today's Inver Grove Heights. Chief Waukan-ojan-jan (a/k/a Chief Medicine Bottle) welcomed white settlers, including William A. Bissell, allowing and assisting the Bissell family in building a home near the Chief's village.

In 1852, Chief Waukan-ojan-jan and his band moved 120 miles west to near Morton, Minnesota. According to historic accounts, "He was accidentally killed near his lodge or house in this village before the 1862 Conflict. Outside of his house he had a scaffold

erected for drying corn, and hanging from the rafters was an iron chain with a sharp hook on the lower end. Some of his family were cleaning or cutting up a wild duck, and he was feeding his chickens, when one of them ran off with a piece of the duck. The chief ran to catch it but stumbled, and in falling the sharp hook caught him in the mouth, penetrating his brain. He expired in a few minutes from hemorrhage.”

Nearly a century later, in 1940, a roadside monument honoring Chief Waukan-ojan-jan was erected by a WPA crew at the location of his village in Inver Grove.



22. **U.S. Supreme Court Connection (1857)** - Patrick and Mary Ann Butler lived in a cabin southeast Inver Grove for a period of time in the late 1850's, before moving to Sciota Township near Northfield. Their son, Pierce Butler, would eventually become the first Minnesotan ever appointed to the United States Supreme Court.



23. **Pine Bend Monument (1939)** - The Pine Bend Monument has significance for three reasons. First, it calls attention to the St. Paul Southern, one of Minnesota's earliest efforts at electric rail. The St. Paul Southern carried passengers all the way from Hastings through Inver Grove to St. Paul, and eventually Lake Minnetonka, from 1914-1928. Next, the monument holds significance as an outstanding example of the work done by WPA crews during the Depression era; its historical value has been considered eligible for the National Register. Finally, the area is home to the first known residents of Inver Grove, Chief Waukan-ojan-jan and his band who lived in the area from 1838-1852, for whom additional natural elements are in the works.

The monument is a short walk/ride from the Pine Bend trailhead on 111th Street in Inver Grove Heights.



24. **Pine Bend Landfill (1971)** - The 255-acre Pine Bend Sanitary Landfill is a story of redemption. As the largest open landfill in Minnesota, operating since 1971, the landfill reached its nadir when the EPA placed the site on the Superfund program's National Priorities List (NPL) in 1986. This was a result of investigations that identified several

shortcomings, including groundwater contamination at the site and in several private wells. This contamination resulted from leachate migrating from the landfill. Starting in the early 1990's, the City pressed the landfill's owners to engage in a massive cleanup and remediation effort. This included connecting all area residents to the public water supply and permanently sealing and abandoning private wells, as well as installation of a low permeability cover, a landfill gas collection system and a surface water and leachate collection system. As a result of these actions, the EPA removed the site from the NPL in 1998.



25. **“Pinkville,” Home of the Biggest Scam in Inver Grove History (2001)** - The biggest real estate scam in Dakota County history occurred in Inver Grove Heights five decades ago.

Starting in about 1970, sophisticated con men carried out an elaborate scam, using fraudulent means to record a plat for 177 parcels in southwest Inver Grove Heights, each ¼-acre in size. The scammers then sold each parcel for \$5,000 each to buyers from across the Twin Cities who were hoping to build in the brand new suburb.

There was just one problem: the parcels had no access, no utilities, no roads, and no city approvals. No development occurred, and no homes were built.

By the late 1990's, a group of investors who nicknamed themselves the "Pinkville 3" had cheaply acquired from property owners a few dozen of the parcels, then demanded that City officials allow the parcels to be developed.

There was still just one problem: the parcels had no access, no utilities, no roads, and no city approvals.

The "Pinkville 3" sued the City. They lost.

The "Pinkville 3" then sought to pressure city officials into allowing development, by placing threatening signs on the property. The threats did not work.

Today, the 177 parcels remain just as they were 50 years ago, platted but with no access, no utilities, no roads, and no city approvals. It is like a ghost town of a neighborhood that never was.



26. **Minnesota's First Road (1850)** - Now known as Rich Valley Boulevard, the Mendota – Wabasha Road was the first surveyed road in Minnesota’s history when it was laid out by John S. Potter in 1850. Stretching from Mendota to Hastings, it was one of five federal military roads in Minnesota authorized and paid for by Congress. The term “military” was applied loosely, as the road was primarily used for commercial purposes and mail. Territorial leaders at the time gained Congressional support and funding by arguing that military roads were necessary to protect whites from warring tribes, even though native Americans in Minnesota were quite peaceful.



27. **St. Patrick’s Church and Cemetery (1854)** - Father Ravoux conducted the first Catholic Mass in the McGrath home in 1854. It was not until 1867 that St. Patrick’s constructed an early log church and cemetery at Rich Valley Boulevard and 105th Street. A frame church on the site burnt down in 1919. Later, in 1961, the congregation would relocate the church to its current site, nearer to the growing community’s population center.



1919



2019

28. **District 9 Schoolhouse** - St. Patrick's Parish first opened one of Minnesota's earliest schools near here in 1856. When the school burned down in 1871, a new one was built nearby and eventually replaced by this WPA-built schoolhouse in 1936 on land donated by Ted Christian. This holds a special for Joe Atkins, since Ted was Joe's great uncle. This schoolhouse served children of the area until the 1950's when District 9 joined the Rosemount school district.



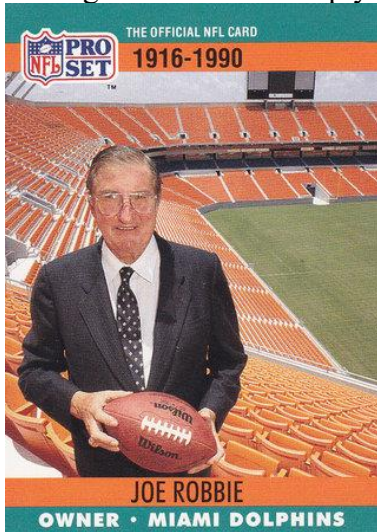
29. **Where “Inver” was Born (1858)** - On April 17, 1858, Dakota County established its first 17 townships. Each township was invited to organize. A few weeks later, on May 11th, farmers met at Josiah Burwell’s home on the west side of Rich Valley Road at 102nd Street and organized Inver Grove township. Burwell, George Bohrer, and Patrick McKenny were elected town supervisors. John McGroarty had proposed the name “Inver” as a nod to a place from which many of the Irish came. It is unclear who proposed “Grove.” Inver Grove’s population by 1860 had grown to 536.
30. **The Miami Dolphins Help IGH Become a City (1965)** - Most folks do not realize that if it had it not been for pro football, and specifically the Miami Dolphins, six Dakota County cities might not exist today.

In the early 1960s, a vast expanse of Dakota County, including Eagan, Rosemount, Apple Valley, Lakeville, Inver Grove and Burnsville, was expected to be made into a 180-square-mile "megacity," dwarfing St. Paul and Minneapolis. Powerful St. Paul attorney Joe Robbie chaired the Metropolitan Municipal Commission back then, which at the time heavily influenced creation of cities. Robbie's goal was to create Minnesota's largest city here in central Dakota County, and he was in the right position to do it.

However, Robbie became intrigued with another dream: owning a professional football team. With help from singer Danny Thomas, Robbie raised the \$7.5 million needed to buy a franchise and moved to south Florida to establish the Miami Dolphins.

With Robbie no longer in the way, and considerable effort by local citizens and elected

officials, six Dakota County cities were incorporated soon after he departed. On March 9, 1965, Inver Grove Township and Inver Grove Village citizens voted 1,380 to 331 to merge and become a municipality – the Village of Inver Grove Heights. “City” replaced “Village” in 1974 to comply with a new state statute.



31. **Inver Hills Ski Hill (1970's)** - 50 years ago the Inver Hills Ski Hill operated at 102nd and Rich Valley Boulevard in Inver Grove Heights.

Located just east of the Eagan border in southwest IGH, the ski hill was run by the McGroarty family. Skiers could see the Minneapolis skyline from the top. Skiing took place here into the mid-70's and resumed for a few years in the early 1980's.



32. **Rex Speedway (1949)** - Starting in 1949, Inver Grove was home to one of Minnesota's most popular racetracks.

The Rex was a high-banked, 1/2-mile dirt track that held stock car and hot rod races, along with an occasional "wreck race," a/k/a a demolition derby.

Unfortunately, fatal crashes three years in a row prompted the Dakota County Sheriff to shut down the speedway in 1954.

Historian John Wycoff notes that the Rex Speedway holds the distinction of being the only track in America where a fan got killed while sitting on a toilet. This occurred when a stock car careened into the infield, striking a restroom.

Despite the closure of the track, some drivers continued to go down and race illegally until one night a driver hit a refrigerator that was left abandoned on the track. This caused the track's permanent closure.

Occasionally found among the thousands of fans at Inver Grove's Rex Speedway were notorious gangsters hiding out in St. Paul. Aerial photos still allow one to see where Rex Speedway once stood near 105th and Barnes Avenues.



33. **First Town Hall (1878)** - Located at German Road (now Barnes Avenue) and 91st Street, the structure served as the town hall from 1878 until 1936 when a new town hall was constructed.
34. **The Last One-Room Schoolhouse (1960)** - When the District 73 school on Barnes closed its doors in 1960 it was the last one-room school in Dakota County. The building was converted to a single-family home at 8855 Barnes Avenue until being acquired by MnDOT.



35. **Inver Grove Township Hall (1936)** - Constructed by the WPA with school bricks, the site on Barnes Avenue at Highway 55 is where the decision was made on March 13, 1962 to incorporate Inver Grove Height as a municipality.

Incorporating was a decision imposed by the State on townships upon reaching 2,000 residents. Inver Grove's population in 1960 was 5,753 following rapid growth after the end of World War II.

In 1962, Inver Grove Township had three choices: 1) Be annexed in whole or part by South St. Paul, 2) Be annexed by the Village of Inver Grove; or, 3) Incorporate the township.

Three years later, the Village and Township combined to form Inver Grove Heights on March 9, 1965.



36. **Inver Grove Heights Becomes a City (1974)** - While the municipality of Inver Grove Heights came into existence in 1965, it was not a city until 1974, when state law called for all villages to become cities.

37. **Inver Glen Library (1998)** - The only library in the system that is a product of a partnership between a city, school district, college and county, the groundbreaking for the award-winning Inver Glen Library took place on November 10, 1998. The grand opening occurred on March 11, 2000.



38. **Inver Hills Community College (1970)** - Founded in 1970 under the guidance of its first president, W.A. "Art" Gessner, the 90-acre campus consists of nine buildings and offers more than two dozen associate degree programs and career-related degrees.

A little-known fact is that on Saturday, December 3, 1988, in St. George, Utah, Inver Hills competed for a national championship in football.

Regarded as the National Championship for junior colleges, the Dixie Rotary Bowl pitted Inver Hills Community College against perennial powerhouse Dixie State. While Dixie State prevailed, each player and staff member did receive a tour of Mt. Zion National Park and a Rotary Bowl watch.



39. **B-52 Crash Site (1958)** - On September 16, 1958, the crew of a B-52 was on a cross-country training flight from Maine to the west coast when their plane crashed into the Kahl farm just south of where Inver Hills College is today.

The crash and explosion created a crater the size of a football field on the farm of August Kahl and his family. Located along what is now Broderick Boulevard, the impact could be felt across our community. Windows broke in homes as far away as Sunfish Lake and the fireball was seen in West St. Paul and Hastings.

Since the training flight was classified a secret by the military in 1958, it took many years for federal government to acknowledge the crash happened, in spite of the fact that it had been covered widely on local TV and in newspapers.

A memorial at the crash site has been dedicated to the seven crewmen who perished.



40. **Timothy Boche Drowning in Simley Pond (1966)** - The drowning in 1966 of three-sport athlete and Student Council President Tim Boche shook the newly-minted municipality of Inver Grove Heights and its high school.

Tim was also in NHS and drama, and he worked hard to promote Simley. Following his death, his classmates spent months raising funds to construct a memorial to honor Tim on

the football field. The monument was unveiled following the 1966-67 athletic banquet, and the 1967 Simley Yearbook observed, "The crowd of athletes, parents, coaches, and families adjourned to the athletic field, to observe the solemn unveiling of the Boche Memorial. The ceremony signified the naming of the field as the 'Boche Memorial Field'." It was hoped that the Boche Memorial "will be here a long time," according to the Yearbook.

Originally located about 15 feet northeast of the north end zone, just inside the track, the Boche Monument was hard to see, let alone read, by those attending games. When the stadium was reconstructed a few years ago, the monument was stored while school officials considered a better location. This better location next to the entrance to the field was recently found, and the memorial is now back up.



41. **The Ghosts of the Meadows (1975)** - Starting in 1975 and as recently as 2013, there have repeated ghostly sightings at Rolling Meadows townhomes at 78th and Cahill, including the sound of a loud horse riding by on 78th but unable to be seen in 1975, a ghost in multiple rooms of a single townhome witnessed by two people in 1985, a ghost of a decomposing woman in the mid 1980's who witnesses called the "garbage lady," and a man who vanished before a witness's eyes while walking in a rainstorm on June 21, 2013.



42. **Little Green Store** - The Heights Superette a/k/a as the "Little Green Store" was an Inver Grove landmark that drew generations of local kids and families.



43. **Simley High School (1961)** - Did you know the longest-serving school superintendent in South St. Paul history was named Mr. Simley?

Irvin T. Simley served as South St. Paul's superintendent from 1926-1957. Mr. Simley then went on to guide creation of the high school that bears his name in Inver Grove Heights.

Opening its doors in 1961, the first graduating class at Simley High School had just 19 students.



I.T. Simley, 1887-1967

44. **“The Walkout” (1987)** - Word spread like wildfire through Simley High School’s hallways in the spring of 1987: The School Board was about to vote on changing the school’s name. The leading candidate for a name change was Hubert Humphrey High, in honor of the late U.S. Senator and Vice President from Minnesota. The team’s name, it was said, would be the “Humpers.”

While the rumors had zero basis in fact, and the School Board was not even contemplating a name change, the furor led to the first walkout in Simley High School history and demonstrated the pride students took in their high school.

More than three decades passed before the school's second student walkout on March 14, 2018, regarding the need for a solution to national gun violence.

45. **Rosenberger's Night Club (1933)** - From 1933 through World War II, Rosenberger's Night Club at 8136 East Adelbert hosted dancing to the music of famous bands, including Whoopee John and many others. The structure is still standing but has been converted into a private home.



46. **The Music Corner of Inver Grove (1937 – 1984)** - Schlieff's Little City (1937)- A 1937 creation of Luella and Cleadis Schlieff, "Schlieff's Little City" dance hall attracted national acts like Frank Yankovic until 1974 at the northwest corner of Highway 55 and South Robert. It would later operate as Brooks Ballroom (1975-78), the Fever Disco (1978), with acts like the Village People, Thumper's (1979) and eventually Peabody's, which had the first mechanical bull outside of Texas and continued the tradition of attracting national acts, including Herman's Hermits in 1979.

Peabody's burnt to the ground under mysterious circumstances in an early morning blast on February 14, 1984.

Herb Pilhofer, co-founder of Sound 80 in 1969, took up residence in the same area more

recently. Pilhofer and Sound 80 are credited with the first commercially released digital audio, working with the likes of Bob Dylan, Cat Stevens and Prince.



47. **Gangsters Steal a Getaway Car (1934)** - After eluding police in a high-speed chase from Hastings to Inver Grove Village on April 23, 1934, gangster John Dillinger and his cohorts stole a larger, speedier 1934 Ford V8 Deluxe from the Francis family of South St. Paul at this location in Inver Grove Township. Roy and Sybil Francis had been out for a drive with their infant son, Robert, at the time.

By all accounts, the kidnapped Francis family was treated well by the gangsters. When little Robert Francis started tugging at Dillinger's gun, worrying his mother, Dillinger tried to ease Sybil's fears, saying, "Don't worry lady, we like kids." The outlaws also bought the family a soda pop when they stopped to fill up the car for gas, before dropping Roy, Sybil and Robert off unharmed in Mendota.



Dillinger & Van Meter



Hamilton

48. **Emanuel Lutheran Church (1854)** - On German Road (aka Babcock Trail) at today's 70th Street, local Lutherans began conducting services and church school in 1854 in German. They built the church in 1883, with the current structure being built in 1960.



1883 vs. Now

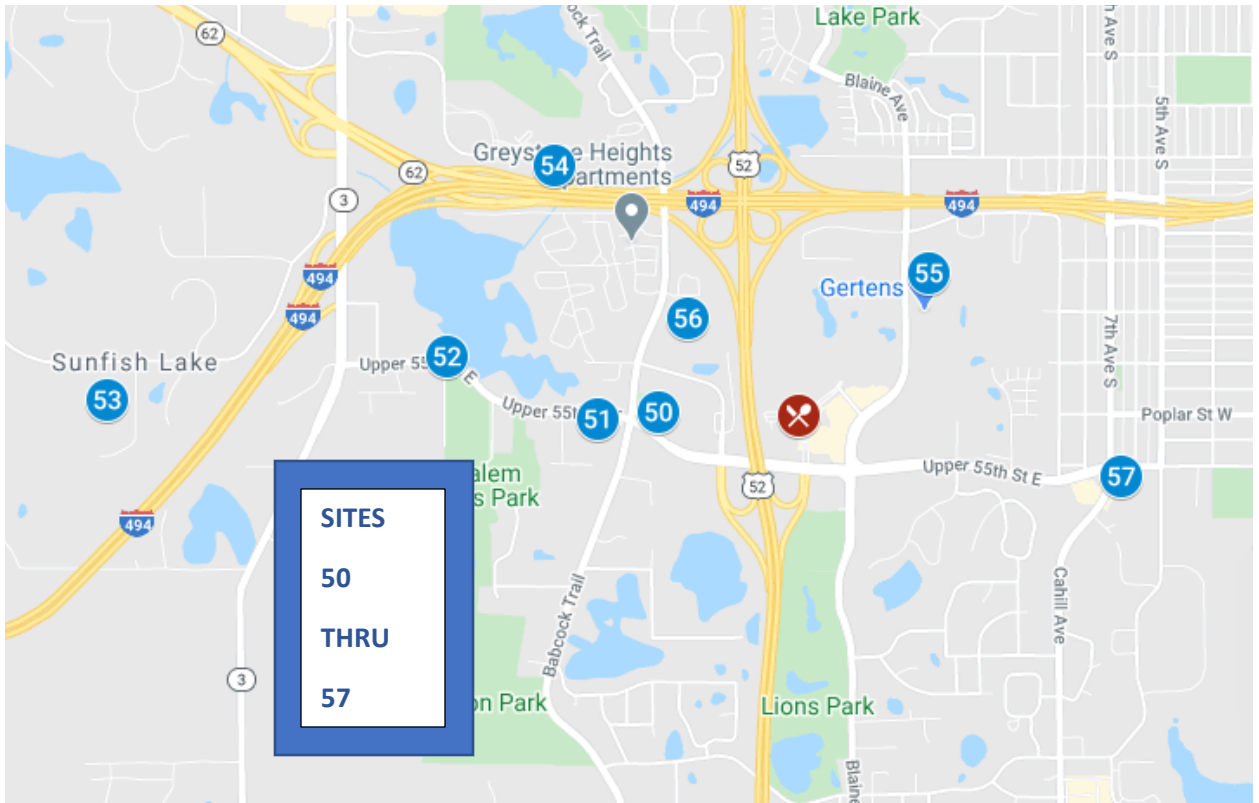


49. **Campbell's Country House (1954 – 1967)** - A 100-year-old home on Babcock Trail in Inver Grove Heights was once a popular south metro restaurant.

Ken and Doris Campbell owned and operated Campbell's Country House from 1954-1967 at the corner of 70th and Babcock. Nowadays, the century-old home is about 300 feet north of the intersection, as a result of Babcock being moved to the south four decades ago.

In addition to running Campbell's Country House restaurant in the 50's and 60's, Ken Campbell was a chef in area restaurants. He passed away in 2006. Doris, a faithful member of Emanuel Lutheran Church over 70 years, passed away in 2014. Doris raised chickens and produce for the Farmer's Market and was known for her baking, raspberries, dill pickles, violets and kindness.





50. **Salem United Methodist Church (1854)** - Originally organized in a log church in 1854, the brick church at 55th and Babcock (formerly called German Road) was constructed in 1868 and the steeple was added in 1884.



51. **Two-room Schoolhouse (1865)** - Dating back to the end of the Civil War, this two-room schoolhouse at 1880 Upper 55th Street remained in use well into the 1900's, when it was converted to a single-family home.



52. **The Little White Church's Big Place in Minnesota History (1874)** - Now a Methodist national shrine, the "Little White Church" on 55th Street (formerly known as Salem Church Road) was Minnesota's first evangelical church.



53. **"Catch and Release" of Sunfish Lake (1958)** - In February 1898, five-and-a-half sections of property that were part of South St. Paul were added to northern Inver Grove Township. It remained this way for over 60 years, until June 1958, when two sections broke away and incorporated as Sunfish Lake.
54. **How Inver Grove Nearly Became Nissan, Minnesota (1995)** - When an aggressive marketing director for a new auto dealership near 494 and Robert heard the City was

looking into the much-needed repainting of a nearby water tower, he made state and national news by offering to pay for the paint job... if the auto dealer's name could be on the water tower. News of the offer went viral. Then the auto dealership's owner found out it costs over \$500,000 to repaint a water tower. And that's the last anyone ever heard from them.



55. **See Ya' All, South St. Paul (1898)** - In February 1898 the State of Minnesota added 5½ sections – or 3,520 acres – of South St. Paul to Inver Grove Township. Located on the north end of Inver Grove, this area was essentially all the land north of 55th Street, including what is today Sunfish Lake. The area would eventually become home to some of Inver Grove's biggest businesses and largest taxpayers, like CHS (#92 on the Forbes 500 list), Gerten's, multiple auto dealers, and residential neighborhoods like Groveland Park.

56. **CHS Comes to IGH (1980)** - In April 1980, Cenex (now CHS) broke ground on its new \$1.9 million headquarters in Inver Grove. Today, the cooperative is a Fortune 100 company.



57. **History-Making McDonald's Owner (1970)** - The most prolific McDonald's owner in Minnesota history was Inver Grove native Jay Chadima. At his peak, he owned 21 individual McDonald's, including both stores in IGH. Nowadays, McDonald's franchisees are only able to own a single restaurant. But Chadima got an early start, working at Minnesota's very first McDonald's in St. Louis Park in 1958, opening his first McDonald's in 1961, and opening his first Inver Grove McDonald's in 1970.

Jay was instrumental in creating the Ronald McDonald House and was the first to install donation boxes for the charity in store drive-throughs.

Interestingly, Chadima's brother-in-law was McDonald's founder, Ray Kroc.

