

THEMATIC STUDY OF HERITAGE RESOURCES IN THE CITY OF EDINA ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared by Robert C. Vogel, Preservation Planning Consultant, at the direction of the City of Edina for the Heritage Preservation Board (HPB), pursuant to Section 801 of the City Code and Chapter 6 of the Edina Comprehensive Plan (2008), which direct the HPB to undertake studies to identify significant heritage preservation resources. The report presents the results of a thematic study of heritage resources in the city associated with women. The project was financed in part by a Certified Local Government grant (Federal Project No. 27-10-021930.008) administered by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Project Objectives

The thematic study had three major planning objectives:

- 1) Refine, modify, elaborate on and revise as necessary local historic contexts previously delineated to better reflect the heritage of Edina women;
- 2) Identify specific heritage resources and types of heritage resources that reflect the contributions of individual women and groups of women to the important broad patterns of Edina history; and
- 3) Develop general and specific recommendations for implementing the results of the study.

Research Design and Methods

Research methods were conventional and focused on archival research in primary and secondary source materials to document important events and patterns of events that reflect the contributions of women to Edina history. Local historic contexts (previously established as part of the city's comprehensive preservation plan) provided the basic thematic, geographical, and chronological underpinnings for the study. The following city-wide (Tier 1 level) historic contexts served as the organizational framework:

- The Native American Landscape, 10,000 BC to AD 1851
- The Agricultural Landscape, 1851 to 1959
- The Suburban Landscape, 1887 to 1974

Historical research and survey work already done was incorporated into the study, which was oriented toward the identification of general trends and patterns related to women's history, rather than documenting the accomplishments of individual women. Existing information, including local history narratives and the inventory of heritage preservation resources already identified, was first assembled, reviewed, and evaluated

for reliability. Additional data was obtained from over eighty primary and secondary sources, including books, articles, unpublished survey reports, duplicated material, maps, census records, photographs, directories, inventory files, municipal records, and electronic databases. Research in newspapers and periodicals and other very large archival data sets was limited due to time and funding constraints; no oral history research was attempted. The information generated by the literature review and archival research was synthesized in narrative form with reference to the important broad patterns and trends in Edina prehistory and history. Generally, the revised historic context writing focused on the definition of women's history themes that may give significance to local historic buildings, sites, structures, and districts, with the goal of providing a broad historical, archaeological, architectural, and cultural overview of Edina women's history. Research also sought to identify the types of heritage preservation resources that may be associated with women's history themes and to determine how these resources are likely to be distributed within the city limits.

All research was conducted in accordance with the applicable Secretary of the Interior's standards for historic preservation planning and the guidelines issued by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office for architecture/history projects.

Native American Women

Native American people lived in and utilized the natural resources from what is now Edina for many thousands of years prior to the appearance of Europeans. It is assumed that women made up at least fifty percent of the native population and their role in the life of local communities can be reasonably inferred from the archaeological record as well as from oral traditions. The plainest evidence that Native Americans lived in the Twin Cities area in prehistoric times comes from several hundred mounds, midden deposits, and isolated artifact findspots which have been investigated by archaeologists since the nineteenth century. The archaeological record shows that Native Americans probably first appeared in the region about 12,000 years ago and inhabited the area continuously through several successive cultural traditions. The Twin Cities area had much to offer native people, including abundant wildlife and other critical natural resources. Unfortunately, no prehistoric archaeological sites have yet been recorded within the city limits of Edina: the nearest excavated prehistoric sites are located along the Minnesota River in Eden Prairie and Bloomington.

The lack of Edina archaeological sites notwithstanding, it is possible to extrapolate about the potential for archaeological resources associated with prehistoric Native American women in Edina. The lands bordering Minnehaha Creek and Nine Mile Creek would have been attractive to native people from prehistoric times until the reservation era. The range of potential archaeological sites would include seasonal and temporary camps, special activity areas, resource procurement and processing sites, caches, burials, and ceremonial areas.

Rural Women

The first permanent Euro-American settlement in what is now Edina was made in 1853 and by the time Minnesota attained statehood in 1858 a trickle of pioneers had moved in and established the first family farms and agriculture-related enterprises. Agricultural expansion and rural population growth was steady from the 1860s through the 1920s. A mature, agriculturally-based settlement system was in place by the time the village of Edina was incorporated in 1887. The first inroads of nonfarm development were made in the 1880s, but reorientation of land use patterns toward streetcars and automobiles was not rapid until after 1905. Rural development differed somewhat from place to place within the city, parts of which did not become suburbanized until the 1950s.

The important women's history themes that reflect Edina's agrarian heritage are:

- Pioneer women
- Farm families and farm work
- The farmhouse as gendered space
- Farm gardens and home grounds
- Women's role in scientific farming and agricultural education
- Women and the Grange
- The feminization of education

Suburban Women

Since the late Victorian era, the suburban ideal has centered on a single-family dwelling owned by those who lived in it. In Edina, low-density suburban residential development first appeared along the village's border with West Minneapolis (Hopkins) in the late 1880s and followed the expansion of the regional street railway system west of Lake Harriet after 1905. When the booming economy of the 1910s-1920s made home ownership possible for many Twin Citians, they leapt at the chance to move out into the country and take up new homes in Morningside and Country Club. The influx of suburban residents transformed the remaining rural areas within the city limits after World War II.

Key themes in the heritage of women in Edina during the suburban era include:

- The growth of suburban middle class culture
- Suburban homemakers and the "domestic science" movement
- Cultural impact of the automobile
- Gendered space in suburban residential development
- Women's work outside the home
- Female entrepreneurs
- Participation of women in community affairs

Associated Heritage Resources

Background knowledge indicates that heritage preservation resources associated with women's history probably encompass most of the historic property types known to occur in Edina. Within the general category of buildings and structures, the following resource types stand out:

- Notable examples of domestic architectural styles and vernacular house types that incorporate gendered spaces
- Buildings that show the history and development of institutions, organizations, and other entities where women played predominant roles
- Schools and other buildings that provide a physical record of the experience of female teachers
- Houses and domestic interiors where the direct involvement of women in the design and construction can be documented
- Buildings owned or occupied by prominent or influential women
- Commercial buildings where women made up a significant proportion of the workforce
- Buildings and structures designed by female architects and engineers
- Commercial and residential properties developed, built, or marketed by women
- Buildings containing the offices or studios of women artists, writers, or musicians

The concept of gendered space is also applicable to designed and vernacular landscapes. Groups of buildings and structures that physically and spatially comprise a specific environment often reflect women's history themes. Farmsteads and suburban home grounds and gardens, for example, have potentially significant gendered associations.

Eligibility Requirements

For a property to qualify for designation as an Edina Heritage Landmark on the basis of its association with women's history themes, it would need to meet at least one of the heritage landmark eligibility criteria by being associated with a local historic context and retain historic integrity of those physical features necessary to convey its significance. Mere association with women is not enough, in and of itself, to qualify: a property's specific association must be considered important as well. In other words, gender should not be a factor in the identification of heritage resources and the evaluation of their historical significance; places associated with Edina women should be designated as heritage landmarks solely on the basis of their historic significance and integrity, not because of the gender of the individuals or groups associated with them.

The contributions of farm women to the broad patterns of rural settlement and agricultural development seem obvious and the associative value of preserved farmhouses with the lives and labor of individual women underpins their resource value. Therefore, all of the city's preserved historic farmhouses need to be considered women's heritage resources, even when the specific association is not particularly well

documented. Within the context of suburban development, the recently completed multiple property study of bungalow architecture in the Morningside neighborhood touched on the issues of gendered space and women's influence on the design of early twentieth century houses. One would expect modern suburban house types to reflect the direct involvement of individual women in planning their homes. There is abundant evidence in the literature to suggest that women generally played a pivotal role in the arrangement of home interiors and grounds. However, the construction histories of only a very small number of historic buildings in Edina have been documented in sufficient detail to allow this kind of analysis.

Buildings, structures, sites, and objects that possess well documented and historically important associations with women's history themes should be considered eligible for heritage landmark designation whenever they reflected established historic contexts and represent intact examples of identified heritage resource types. Integrity of historical association is probably the most important aspect to be considered when evaluating a property's eligibility. In general, heritage resources that are being evaluated on the basis of their historical association with specific events or patterns of events should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The integrity of their association with women's history themes should be bolstered by direct links between the historic property and an important event or pattern of events, substantiated by primary historical documentation. Mere association with gender is never sufficient to support eligibility of a property for heritage landmark designation—the association must be shown to be important within a specific historic context. In most cases, historical associations with women's history or the lives of individual women will be a contributing factor in evaluating the significance of heritage resources, but it will not be the primary justification for designation. Many properties will have links to one or more aspects of women's history, but relatively few will achieve significance primarily as landmarks of women's history.

Parts of buildings, such as kitchens and other gendered spaces, are not eligible for heritage landmark designation independent of the rest of the building. Sites where the location itself possesses historical value because of its association with women's history may be considered for landmark status even if no standing structures survive from the period of historical significance. If the association with women's history is sufficiently well documented, the site should be evaluated for landmark eligibility.

Most properties considered eligible on the basis of their links to individual women will meet the same criteria for significance as properties associated with individually significant males. Each property associated with an important woman or group of women should be compared to other, similar properties to ensure that the resource being considered for heritage landmark designation best represents the person or group's contributions to Edina history.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The thematic study produced the following important findings:

- Women's history themes are underrepresented in the inventory of properties designated or determined eligible for designation as Edina Heritage Landmarks.
- Heritage resource surveys and historical research already done in Edina are inadequate for identifying and evaluating heritage landmarks that preserve significant aspects of women's history.
- There is considerable potential for designating heritage landmarks that reflect the important contributions of women in Edina where the primary historical significance is gender-themed.
- The existing outline of local historic contexts that is incorporated in the city's comprehensive plan provides a workable framework for conducting future surveys and thematic studies.

Examples of historic buildings which derive their primary historical significance from well-documented associations with Edina women's history themes include:

- George W. and Sarah G. Baird House, 4400 West 50th Street; listed in the National Register in 1980, locally designated in 1978 and 2002. Historically significant for its association with Granger movement leader Sarah Baird.
- Minnehaha Grange Hall, Frank Tupa Park; listed in the National Register in 1970 and designated an Edina Heritage Landmark. Historically and architecturally significant for its association with the history of the Minnehaha Grange and its activities focused on women's issues.
- Cahill School, co-located with the Minnehaha Grange Hall in Frank Tupa Park; listed in the National Register in 1970 and designated an Edina Heritage Landmark. Historically and architecturally significant for its association with the feminization of public education and the development of the local school district.

The study identified a number of critical information gaps that will need to be addressed by future surveys. The following recommendations are intended to guide the Heritage Preservation Board in setting survey goals and priorities:

- 1) When documenting individual residential properties for nomination as Heritage Landmarks, background research should focus on describing any gendered spaces present and on identification of individual women connected to the property; archival study should attempt to reconstruct the physical history of the subject property, with particular emphasis on the planning, design, and original construction phases, to gain an understanding of the role of women in its development.
- 2) Conduct a systematic, intensive survey of local newspapers, business directories, and trade publications to identify potential heritage preservation resources associated with female architects, builders, realtors, designers, developers, and trades people.

- 3) Assemble information on local organizations involved with women's civic and political activities, including but not limited to the Morningside and Edina women's clubs and the League of Women Voters.
- 4) Identify information needs relating to women's history themes in Edina's postwar history (circa 1945-1974) to be addressed by future surveys.
- 5) Conduct archaeological surveys in areas predicted to contain intact prehistoric and post-contact period sites and determine how each type of site is likely to be associated with women's history themes. Predictive models should establish the likely presence of sites reflecting gendered spaces and activities.
- 6) Undertake intensive archival research to refine, modify, and elaborate on the following Tier 2 local historic contexts with respect to women's history themes and associated resource types: "Edina Mills: Agriculture and Rural Life," "The Cahill Settlement: Edina's Irish Heritage," "Morningside: Edina's Streetcar Suburb," "Country Club: Edina's First Planned Community," "Southdale: Shopping Mall Culture," and "Country Clubs and Parks: The Heritage of Recreation, Leisure and Sport."

