Directions to Historic Pilot Knob

Historic Pilot Knob is a natural area owned by the City of Mendota Heights. It is the part of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob that is open to the public.

**Historic Pilot Knob Can be Visited Every Day During Daylight Hours.** There are interpretive signs and trails; there are no other facilities.

**Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in the public.**

**Historic Pilot Knob is located at 2100 Pilot Knob Road, Mendota Heights. From I-494, take the Pilot Knob Road exit, then drive north until the road ends.**

**From State Highway 13, take the Acacia Blvd. exit west to Pilot Knob Road. Turn right into parking lot or park along Acacia Blvd. From 494, take the Pilot Knob Road exit, then drive north until the road ends.**

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In 1700s, Henry Hastings Sibley (later Minnesota’s first elected governor) takes charge of the American Fur Company post at Mendota.

In 1820, Lt. Zebulon Pike, first U.S. government official sent to area, reaches the mouth of the Minnesota River.

First steamboat arrives at Fort Snelling.

In a treaty signed on Pilot Knob, the Dakota cede Minnesota to the U.S. government.

During the U.S.-Dakota Conflict, most Dakota people from Minnesota remained. The Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community continues today.

Many Dakota people begin to return to their former homes, including Mendota, where some Dakota had earlier. After 1862 some Dakota women in Mendota supported themselves by making moccasins and other items to sell in St. Paul and the surrounding area.

In 1851, the United States forced the Dakota to sign the Treaty of 1851. It is the part of Dakota community and of significance in the history of Minnesota statehood. Oheyawahi was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in March 2017.

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob is a place of cultural importance to the Dakota and allied native peoples inhabit much of Minnesota when French traders and missionaries first enter the area.

A Dakota woman prepared a hide in the area of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob in the 1890’s or earlier. After 1862 some Dakota women in Mendota supported themselves by making moccasins and other items to sell in St. Paul and the surrounding area.

For centuries, Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob was the site of signing of the Treaty of 1851. Oheyawahi, “a hill much visited,” also now, “the hill of all the relatives,” a sacred place of reverence. Please treat Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob with the respect accorded to cemeteries and other sacred places.

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A Place to Learn About Early State History

A Place to Reflect on Many Stories

A Place to Appreciate Dakota Heritage

A Place of Reverence

A Place of Resurgence

Historic Pilot Knob

NRHP SITE IN MENDOTA HEIGHTS, MN

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Please take only pictures, leave only footprints.
A Place to Read the Landscape

Look across the river valley to Fort Snelling. This broad valley was carved by glacial meltwater about 12,000 years ago. Between 12,000 and 10,000 years ago, the valley was cut deeper by large volumes of water carried by Glacial River Warren, which went on to form Lake Agassiz in northwestern Minnesota. The floodplain you see today is the result of the Mississippi River and the Minnesota River, which is the remnant of Glacial River Warren, depositing sediment over the last 10,000 years.

Imagine 12,000 years ago, when Glacial River Warren merged with the Mississippi River just below Pilot Knob, at present-day Pike Island. As water rushed through the river valley, a massive waterfall formed downstream just south of downtown St. Paul. The waterfall gradually retreated upstream. About 10,000 years ago, the waterfall split in two at Pike Island. One channel moved up the Minnesota River until it was extinguished near Savage. The other channel moved up the Mississippi River, then split again to form Minnehaha Falls and St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis.

People have dramatically altered the landscape seen in Seth Eastman’s 1847 painting (see brochure cover). As settlers poured into the area in the mid-1800s, it was purchased by a variety of private owners. In 2002, developers recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, F. R. Bigelow Foundation, The Saint Paul Foundation, the Minnesota Historic Areas Program), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (through its Remediation Fund, Natural and Scenic, and Metro Greenways programs), Minnesota’s Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources), P. F. Bingham Foundation, the Minnehaha Foundation, The Saint Paul Foundation, The Scrooby Foundation, and private citizens.

This brochure was developed and produced by Pilot Knob Preservation Association. For detailed information on topics in this pocket guide, visit www.pilotknobpreservation.org.