

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 03001374 Date Determined Eligible: 1/9/04

Oh yawahi -- Pilot Knob  
Property Name

Dakota  
County

MN  
State

Multiple Name

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This property is determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Beth Boland*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

*4/30/04*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

=====

**Amended Items in Nomination:**

The significance of the site rests in part on the fact that the site was a traditional burial place for the Dakota Indian people. There is also a sizable cemetery on the site. Criterion Consideration D applies.

This was verified with Susan Roth of the MN SHPO.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
other names/site number Pilot Hill, Pilot Bluff, Pilot Ridge, Saugeaukee, Paha Oipa

2. Location

street & number off Minnesota State Highway 55  not for publication  
city or town Mendota Heights  vicinity  
state Minnesota code MN county Dakota code 037 zip code 55120

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ian R. Stewart 11/17/03  
Signature of certifying official Date

Ian R. Stewart, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, MN Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	<u>Beth Boland</u>	<u>1/9/04</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
	14	buildings
1	1	sites
	1	structure
	1	objects
1	17	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape, natural feature

Religion, ceremonial site

Funerary, cemetery

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape, natural feature

Religion, ceremonial site

Funerary, cemetery

Domestic, single dwellings

Vacant/not in use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage, Native American
Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance

AD 1650 - 2003

Significant Dates

1851

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Dakota

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property 112**

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	1   5   Zone	4   8   7   0   6   0   Easting	4   9   6   9   8   0   0   Northing
2.	1   5	4   8   7   1   0   0	4   9   6   8   9   2   0
3.	1   5   Zone	4   8   6   3   0   0   Easting	4   9   6   8   9   2   0   Northing
4.	1   5	4   8   6   4   2   0	4   9   6   9   8   0   0

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Bruce M. White and Alan Woolworth

organization Turnstone Historical Research date 9/23/2003

street and number 275 E. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 790 telephone 651-3100601

city or town St. Paul state MN zip code 55101

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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County and State

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob

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**Description**

Oheyawahi (“the hill most visited”), or Pilot Knob, also known as Pilot Hill, Pilot Ridge, Pilot Bluff, and Saugeauke (see Figure 1), is a prominent high hill on the east bank of the Minnesota River near its mouth. Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob consists of a hill or bluff topped with a knob-shaped formation descending to varying degrees on all sides. The geographer and ethnographer Joseph Nicollet stated that in the late 1830s, he estimated the elevation of Pilot Knob to be over 1000 feet above sea level—a slight exaggeration—calculating the hill to be 262 feet above the “common low water” of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. This was 156 feet above the level of nearby Fort Snelling (Nicollet 1843b: 237). The top of the hill was slightly flattened in the 1920s from its historic form. The current USGS map for this area indicates an elevation of over 940 feet for the summit of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob in contrast to Fort Snelling’s 800 feet, suggesting that sixteen feet or more may have been removed from the summit in the 1920s (USGS 1993). Another recent estimate states that as much as twenty feet was removed from the peak (Rock 1981: 92).

On the north side, the bluff descends in a series of rolling slopes and terraces, ending in a ravine adjacent to the historic village and former trading post of Mendota, an area now included in the Mendota Historic District (NRHP 6/22/70). On the west side, the drop is sharper, ending abruptly with a limestone cliff above the broad Minnesota River Valley and the Fort Snelling Historic District (NRHP 10/15/66). On the east side is a wide, gently sloping plain. At various points throughout the site, Oheyawahi presents impressive views of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, Historic Fort Snelling, and downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul. In all, the hill, between its lowest contour on the east adjacent to Sibley Memorial Highway and the level areas on the west side of the summit, may have consisted of more than 170 acres. Of this, 112 acres are included in this nomination.

At the time of the first federal land survey, Oheyawahi was “thinly wooded” with bur and black oaks and an undergrowth of oak, aspen, hazel, plum, and red osier dogwood (U.S. General Land Office 1853, Township 28 North, Range 23 West, line between sections 27 and 28). Later on, up to recent years, open farm fields covered much of the site, except for the area incorporated into a formerly Masonic, now public, cemetery.

Little development occurred on Pilot Knob in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lieutenant James Thompson’s 1839 map of the area (see Figure 2) shows two roads passing around the hill, the Trader’s Road, later called Black Dog Road, roughly the same route as present-day Sibley Memorial Highway (Old Highway 13) and the St. Croix Road, corresponding to present-day Highway 55. The St. Croix Road cut directly across the country to near Hastings just south of the mouth of the St. Croix (Neill 1881: 213). Lieutenant E. K. Smith’s 1838 map shows a trail in the same location (Hotopp 1999: 12). It is likely that the route of the St. Croix Road through the Mendota area was followed later by the route of the Mendota-Wabasha Road, an early Minnesota territorial road (Singley 1974: 7-8).

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Photographs taken in 1870 and around 1880 show only one structure, a white house or barn just below the summit of the bluff (MHS AV collection 1870, 1880). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, several railroads were built near the western boundary of the formation (Warner and Foote 1879; Pinkney 1896). The Minnesota Valley Railroad, later to be acquired by the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railway, skirted the edge of the cliff below Pilot Knob along the river flats. The Minnesota Central Railway, later sold to the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul, circled the western edge of Pilot Knob (Warner and Foote 1879; Roise 1995: 21, 23). The latter is the route now used for Dakota County's Big Rivers Regional Trail, paralleling Sibley Memorial Highway through Mendota, and is used as the western boundary of the site defined in this nomination. This railroad company also had a line crossing the river below Fort Snelling. These lines affected only the periphery of Oheyawahi.

Much of the present-day road system around Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob was in place by 1879 (Warner and Foote 1879). The route of the former St. Croix Road is shown as a well-established road. A later source names this the Hastings and Dakota Road (see map in Newson [1887]). This road joins another, an east-west road sometimes called Mendota Road—present-day Highway 110—roughly where those two highways intersect today. A short section of road from this intersection northwest crosses the upper railroad line and joins the route of the old Trader's or Black Dog Road, which paralleled the railroad line around the western edge of the bluff.

In the 1880s, plans were made to develop the area of Pilot Knob. Thomas Newson, a St. Paul journalist, was part of a syndicate that sought to turn the bluff into a residential neighborhood that would rival St. Paul's prosperous Summit Avenue, a "new suburban town," a "charming suburb" with "charming homes" overlooking the "peerless landscape." At the center of the eighty-two acres controlled by the investors would be a ten-acre park around the top of the knob, on which would be placed a forty- to fifty-foot-high statue of Henry Sibley (Newson 1887, Aug. 28). The plan fell through.

The first available USGS map for the area, published in 1896 (see Figure 3), shows three roads that following the routes of present-day Sibley Memorial Highway, Highway 55, and Highway 110 (USGS 1896). This map, based on a topographic survey done in 1894, provides one of the first detailed depictions of the contours of the Pilot Knob hill. The three roads did little to interrupt the contours of the bluff. At that date the northern portions of the bluff descended gradually to the area of the St. Peter's Catholic Church cemetery. The map shows a sharp drop on the west side of the bluff and a broader, gently sloping plateau directly north and east between the summit of the bluff and present-day Highway 55.

The predecessors to Highways 55, 110, and the Sibley Highway were reconfigured at the time of the construction of the Mendota Bridge in 1926, cutting through the gradual slope of Oheyawahi at its north and east side (USGS 1896, 1951). The route of Highway 55 was shifted outward around the north end of the hill, leaving the old route of the road as a property line cutting across the east side of Oheyawahi (MHS AV Collection 1935). The new route of

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Highway 55 was deepened and cut back into the hill slightly at the north end at the time of the rebuilding of the Mendota highway interchange in the 1990s (MnDOT 1982; Hedlund 2003, March 14, 1997 aerial photograph). This work affected only the edges of the portion of Oheyawahi included in this nomination.

Plans were made around 1926 by a Masonic group to purchase portions of the hill for a cemetery. First reports were that the group would purchase 140 acres—which would have covered much of Oheyawahi—but negotiations may have fallen through. The first recorded purchase by the group in 1926, from the family of Alexander and Ellen Perron was for thirty-five acres, which was soon dedicated for burial purposes (Dakota County Property Records, March 10, 31, April 19, 1926). Later land purchases from the Perron family through the next twenty-five years expanded the cemetery's holdings to seventy-nine acres, although less than around fifty acres have been platted for burial plots over the years. Included in the purchase was the site of a brick farmhouse used for many years as a residence for cemetery employees and destroyed around the 1970s (Dakota County Property Records 1927, Sept. 10a, b., c; 1933, April 20; 1936, April 27a, b.; 1936, April 30; 1938, Nov. 17a, b; Acacia Cemetery ca. 1990s).

The cemetery came to be called Acacia Park Cemetery. To achieve the desired landscape within this earliest cemetery parcel purchased from Ellen Perron, it appears that as much as twenty feet of the top of the knob, adjacent to Pilot Knob Road, was removed at the time the cemetery was prepared for opening. This landscaping revealed the evidence of prior Native burials (Rock 1981: 92; based on 1981 phone interview with cemetery manager Byron Lyons). Further reference to Native burials is found in articles printed at the time of the dedication of the cemetery. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on October 1, 1928, reported that “during the landscaping of the grounds many graves of the Indians were found and the bones carefully transferred to other parts of the park and there reburied.” The *St. Paul Daily Reporter* on October 6, 1928, provided the same information.

Native remains may also have been found during the digging of graves on the cemetery following the initial landscaping. Milly Smith reported in her 1995 account of Pilot Knob that “Arthur Doree, son-in-law to the original caretaker, said that in digging [new] graves, older graves of Indians were dug into and the bodies removed to a vault on the property.” In a more recent interview, Arthur Doree (2003, April 8) stated that while he and others were digging a grave near Babyland—the portion of the cemetery reserved for babies, at the bottom of the hill adjacent to the former railroad tracks and Old Highway 13—they encountered bones. Rather than removing them they gently moved them aside and placed the coffin in the grave.

Apparently some Native remains have been preserved in a cemetery vault for many years. In 1962, a newspaper account stated that teenage vandals broke into cemetery property and removed some of the remains of Native burials preserved there, although these were later recovered. More recently cemetery officials found bones of unknown origin in a small concrete vault and turned them over to the Minnesota Office of State Archaeologist for further study (Dudzick 2003, March 20; Bachmeier 2003, March 27). A group of ten mounds (21DK18) to the



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north across Highway 55 just above the village of Mendota was identified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Winchell 1911:174). Eight mounds were similarly located in Mendota (21DK17). In even closer proximity, north of Highway 55 opposite the north end of Oheyawahi, human remains possibly of Native American origin were discovered during grave digging at the St. Peter's Church cemetery (21DK66). These remains are also in the process of examination by the Office of State Archaeologist.

Acacia Cemetery gradually expanded its acreage on the bluff in the 1930s and later. An arrangement of driveways was built to cover around fifty acres of the cemetery, marking off wide lawns with unobtrusive ground-level grave markers, providing a sense of park-like tranquility. Two stone buildings were constructed at the top of the hill near the entrance to the cemetery. A variety of other structures built on cemetery land were constructed over the years, including a maintenance structure on the south end of the cemetery grounds and a nearby house for the cemetery manager, fronting on Pilot Knob Road (Roise 1994, June 22).

The south one-third of the hill was redeveloped beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the 1980s to include commercial and industrial sites, as a result of efforts by the Metropolitan Airports Commission to remove housing in close proximity to the south airport runway approach (*Dakota County Tribune*, Aug. 30, Sept. 20, 1973, May 23, 1974). No comparable redevelopment occurred on the central and northern part of the bluff in the area surrounding Acacia Cemetery, although several houses have been removed on the south end of the property, as well as a gas station and motel that were located in the far northwestern corner adjacent to the Mendota Bridge (MHS AV collection 1959, July 21). Pines, spruces, cedars, maples, and other trees planted to mark the cemetery and denser growth of cottonwoods, box elder, oaks, and other native trees on vacant lands mark the biggest change on the north and central portion of Oheyawahi (*Golfer and Sportsman* 1942, August).

Cemetery lands east of Pilot Knob Road have remained undeveloped aside from two houses, a maintenance shed, and several smaller structures, used as housing by cemetery management and for other cemetery functions (Roise 1994, June 22). Surrounding fields are marked on the edges with tree plantings and remain mostly open as they were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other farm and suburban structures, formerly on property owned by the City of Mendota Heights, have been removed, allowing lands to revert to their earlier status as open space. Between the old and new routes of Highway 55 is a sliver of land containing an old farmhouse and a currently operating dog kennel and boarding stable. Two suburban-style houses continue to be located on the east side of Pilot Knob Road on the southern portion of the nominated property.

There are a total of 14 non-contributing buildings within the Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob site, which include seven residences. The one non-contributing structure is a steel-towered electrical line, which passes east-west through the site along the section line near the south end of the site. Acacia Cemetery is considered a non-contributing site. The Treaty of Mendota marker within the cemetery, erected in 1922, is considered a non-contributing object.

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A piece of privately owned land north of the cemetery, cleared of former structures and trees and now reclaimed by native red osier dogwood and other plant growth, provides an impressive panorama of Fort Snelling and the city of Minneapolis, a view comparable to that described by early visitors. Downtown St. Paul may be seen through the trees at other points on Oheyawahi including the land east of Pilot Knob Road. The continually expanding skyline of the Twin Cities provides an opportunity for visitors to experience a sense of wonder similar to that felt by 19<sup>th</sup> century visitors, despite the distraction of frequent overflights of airplanes taking off and landing from nearby Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The undeveloped character of the site provides a striking contrast with the distant city skyline, and evokes feelings comparable to those described by visitors of the 1840s and 1850s.

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob continues to be an identifiable landmark of the Twin Cities area. Changes within Oheyawahi have not irreversibly affected the site's historic and sacred character. The site retains an undeveloped character in the midst of suburbia and portions of the property still provide the extensive view described historically. Advertisements for the cemetery continue to describe the area as having a "pristine beauty" (Acacia Park Cemetery ca. 2003). The area draws birdwatchers and those interested in the magnificent view (*Southwest Review*, Sept. 15, 1996). Oheyawahi retains integrity of setting, feeling, and association and location. Despite the surrounding development, the area is cut off from urban clutter. This is enhanced by the growth of trees, some planted by Acacia Cemetery. The removal of more recent houses on the site and the potential removal of others will augment the ability of the site to communicate its historic and cultural meaning. The multi-lane highway on the north and east has contributed to isolating an island of tranquility from its surroundings, providing an opportunity for communion with the site's sacred and historic character. The principal view of the site from Ft. Snelling remains a view of an undeveloped hill and this view significantly contributes to the setting of Ft. Snelling as a National Historic Landmark.

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**Significance**

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob is significant at the statewide level as a traditional cultural property associated with Dakota Indian people as a landmark, a gathering place, a burial place, and an important Medicine or Wakan Ceremony grounds. It is also associated with European-American history as a geographic feature included in the physical and cultural landscape of Fort Snelling, the earliest American military post built in the region. Oheyawahi is significant under National Register Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Exploration/Settlement. The Period of Significance from 1650 to the present time (2003) is determined by the association with the Eastern Dakota, documented to have been in the area since at least the mid-1600s. In addition, the site is associated with four Statewide Historic Contexts: Eastern Dakota (1650-1837), Initial United States Presence (1803-1837), Indian Communities and Reservations (1837-1934), and a thematic context, Geographic Features of Cultural Significance.

**Historical Overview**

Iowa Indians are said to have occupied the lower St. Peters or Minnesota River in late precontact times. Cheyenne Indians may also have been in the region, but moved westward under pressures from the Santee or Eastern Dakota tribes which migrated from the north to the mouth of this stream, according to historical tradition, in the early 1500s. European sources mention them in the region as early as 1650. The Mdewakanton and related Mantonton bands of the Santee Dakota settled around the mouth of the river, an area which became known as Mdoté Minisota, referring to the mouth of the Minnesota River. The place was later called Mendota (Williamson, Thomas S. 1902, 1: 241-46; Durand 1994: 56; Anderson, Gary 1984: 23).

By about 1775, the Mdewakanton Dakota lived in a great village of 400 or more lodges seven miles above the mouth of the Minnesota River. It was called Tetankantane, Titankatanni, or "great old village." Here, under pressure from the Ojibwe and other groups, great war leaders such as Wabasha, Little Crow, and Red Wing rose to defend their people. Soon they became rivals and the great village lost its cohesion. These leaders took their followers and built villages down river from Mdoté on the west bank of the Mississippi River (Anderson, Gary 1984: 74, 79).

Because of its geographical location as a central place among scattered villages, Mdoté Minisota became a strategic location, a gathering place for spring councils among the various Mdewakanton groups and a place for ceremonies and burials. A network of trails connected the location to other villages. European traders and diplomats used Mdoté Minisota as a place to meet large numbers of Mdewakanton. Among these were British explorer Jonathan Carver, in 1776-67, British traders Peter Pond in 1775, and Charles Gautier de Verville in 1778, and diplomat Louis-Joseph Ainsse, in 1787 (Meyer 1993: 15; Parker, ed., 1976: 90-100, 116; Gates, ed., 1965: 45-57; *Wisconsin Historical Collections* 1888, 11: 100-135; *Michigan Pioneer and*

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*Historical Collections* 1908, 11: 486-87). In 1810, a group of British traders established perhaps the first documented trading post at Mdote Minisota. Some 300 lodges of Dakota people came from their wintering places to camp at the post in the spring of 1811 (Anderson, Thomas G. 1882: 178-79; Nute 1930).

The first U.S. government-sponsored expedition to the region was led by Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike, whose journey in 1805-06 was the northern counterpart to that of Lewis and Clark in the west. Pike came with a small military unit north from St. Louis and arrived at the island later named after him at the mouth of the Minnesota River in September 1805. While there, he negotiated with local Dakota leaders for a ten-square-mile tract of land at this location to be used as a military fort (Meyer 1993: 25; Folwell 1956: 92-94; Coues, ed., 1965: 76-85).

No further government explorations of the region occurred until 1817, when Major Stephen H. Long conducted an investigation to locate sites for military posts on the Upper Mississippi River. At Mdote, he selected the site for the future fort at the high bluff west of the mouth of the Minnesota River (Kane, Holmquist, and Gilman 1978: 76). Two years later Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth led a detachment of the Fifth Infantry to the location. They established Cantonment St. Peters or New Hope on the east bank of the Minnesota River, just below Oheyawahi. Conditions at the location were difficult during the following winter. Many soldiers died of scurvy. To improve the health of the soldiers, the command was shifted the following summer to a spring known as Coldwater, up the Mississippi River a short distance. That summer construction began on the fort known first as Fort St. Anthony, later Fort Snelling (Kane, et al., 1978: 152-53; Folwell 1956: 135-38).

In the years following, Fort Snelling became an important location in the history of trade, intertribal diplomacy, and early settlement in the Minnesota region. Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro, who was stationed at the fort through 1839, did his best to define the region around the fort as a neutral territory in which various Native American communities and groups could come safely without fear of their enemies. Government officials negotiated a variety of peace treaties between Ojibwe and Dakota at the fort during this period. The Ojibwe encamped at Coldwater during the Treaty of 1837, when they negotiated the sale of their lands east of the Mississippi River to the U.S. (White and White 1998; Taliaferro 1894: 216; McClurken 2000: 27-35).

The earliest white settlement in the Minnesota region occurred on the Fort Snelling reservation in the 1820s through the early 1840s, at Coldwater, and at the trading post of American Fur Company trader Henry H. Sibley on the east bank of the Minnesota River opposite Pike Island at what became the village of Mendota. Early residents included traders married to Dakota and Ojibwe women and former residents of the Selkirk Colony in Canada (White and White 1998: 161-66; Folwell 1956: 215-26). These settlements led later to the beginnings of St. Paul, St. Anthony, and later, Minneapolis.

Fort Snelling lost importance in the 1850s when the treaties of 1851 removed most Dakota people from southeastern Minnesota and European settlement increased. The post

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became important again during the U.S.–Dakota Conflict of 1862, when some of the Eastern Dakota fought against the tide of white settlers coming into the region. During the winter of 1862-63, an internment camp below the fort on the west bank of the Minnesota River contained hundreds of Dakota people prior to their removal to Dakota Territory in the summer of 1863. It was a time of great suffering for Dakota people (Folwell 1956: 433, 514; Meyer 1993: 136, 139, 145-46).

While most of the Dakota were removed from Minnesota in 1863, some remained, particularly those who aided whites as scouts and soldiers during the Conflict (Meyer 1993: 258-72). In the 1870s and 1880s, exiled Dakota began to return to former village sites in Minnesota. Because of the continued presence of Dakota and Dakota mixed-bloods and the influence of former fur trader and respected state leader Henry H. Sibley, Mendota was hospitable to those who returned (Diedrich 1995: 109). Mendota's community of people of Dakota ancestry has continued to the present time (*St. Paul Globe* 1902, April 20; *Riverview Times*, March 2001).

Though close to St. Paul and Minneapolis, the village of Mendota and the surrounding township were rural areas well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This began to change in 1926 with the construction of the Mendota Bridge, which provided a connection across the Minnesota River to both major cities (*Minneapolis Journal*, 1926, Nov. 9). Expanding highways since the 1920s have made Mendota Township, now Mendota Heights, a major suburb of the Twin Cities, though many rural and open spaces have persisted in the area until recent years (Roise 1995, Aug.: 21-24; Mendota Heights 2002: 6).

### Early European Accounts of Oheyawahi

Although the Dakota and other Indian groups clearly knew of this high bluff at the mouth of the Minnesota River, the earliest references to it occur in the accounts of European-American visitors. There are no firm references to Oheyawahi by the French, although a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century writer suggested that they may have referred to it as "la Butte des Morts" or the hill of the dead (Newson [1887]: 19).

The earliest known direct references to the bluff call it Pilot Hill. It must be supposed that the name referred to the hill's usefulness as a landmark for travelers and steamboat pilots, in common with similar names elsewhere in the United States. Two maps, one dated 1821 (see Figure 4), another dated 1823, show Pilot Hill to the southeast of Cantonment St. Peters (also known as Cantonment New Hope), the first encampment of U.S. Army troops that reached the mouth of the St. Peters (now Minnesota) River in 1819 (Fort Snelling maps 1821, 1823; see also Hotopp 1999: 8, 9). It was only later that European-Americans focused on the knob-like top of the bluff, calling the whole hill Pilot Knob, the most common English name used today (Hotopp 1999: 12, 13). But some sources later made a distinction between the hill and its top. One 1854 writer called the hill Pilot Ridge and the top Pilot Knob (*St. Paul Daily Democrat*, May 1, 1854).

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James E. Colhoun, who accompanied Major Stephen H. Long on his exploration of the Minnesota region in 1823-24, called the hill Pilot Bluff, also locating it in reference to the 1819 encampment. Colhoun noted:

The mouth of St. Peter's was first occupied by troops under the command of Col. [Henry] Leavenworth in August 1819. They were cantoned that year at the base of the Pilot-bluff on the south side of St. Peter's R[iver] where they suffered much from sickness, especially from the scurvy (Kane, Holmquist, and Gilman 1978: 282).

The exact location where the soldiers who died were buried has not been determined, although it is possible that they were buried out of the river's floodplain, on Pilot Knob.

### Native Names for Oheyawahi

Various 19<sup>th</sup>-century sources recorded a Dakota name for the bluff. The names bear no relationship to the English names. Instead of emphasizing the knob-shaped top, the name refers to the cultural and social importance of the whole hill. Stephen Riggs gave two alternative names, *ohayahe* and *ohé-yawahe*, both meaning "a hill that is much visited, as Pilot-Knob near Fort Snelling" (Riggs 1992: 354). Andrew W. Williamson (1884: 109) gave the name as \*Okheyawabe, from *okhe* for hill, and *yawabe*, "referring to its being much visited; the Dakota name of Pilot Knob, back of Mendota" (Williamson, Andrew W. 1976: 20). More recent Dakota sources prefer the spelling Oheyawahi for the hill (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and The 106 Group 2000; Crooks 2003).

The Ojibwe also had a name for the bluff. Major Lawrence Taliaferro, the Indian agent at Fort Snelling in the 1830s and 1840s, drew a map (see Hotopp 1999: 9) in which he identified the bluff as "Mount Saugeauke," which Paul Durand says is "from the Ojibwa SAGI (*near the mouth of a river*) plus AKI (*land, earth, place*), or "Hill-Near-Mouth of River" (Durand 1994: 63-64). Father Federic Baraga's dictionary of the Ojibwe language corroborates this (1973, 2: 360, Sâgi, mouth of a river; 2: 24, Aki, Earth, the globe, the world, country, farm, soil, ground).

Documentary evidence shows that the reason the hill was "much visited" by the Dakota included the hill's sacred character and its use as a ceremonial gathering place and a burial location.

### Oheyawahi as a Sacred Place

Nineteenth-century sources state that for the Dakota people, Mdoté Minisota, the mouth of the Minnesota River, was of central cultural importance. The *Dakota Friend*, a newspaper written and published by the missionaries Samuel and Gideon Pond, stated that "one of the great natural facts which perhaps ought to be recognized and recorded to start is this, viz: That the

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mouth of the Minnesota River (Watpa Minisota,) lies immediately over the center of the earth and under the center of the heavens" (*Dakota Friend*, 1851, May; see also Neill 1882b).

The central importance of this area is related in part to a connection to Unktehi, a central figure in Eastern Dakota beliefs. Unktehi was a giant, powerful being who took male and female forms and was sometimes described as resembling an immense ox. Male and female forms appeared in different places. As the Ponds wrote, "The earth is animated by the spirit of the female, while the dwelling place of the male is in the waters." Bubbling springs were said to have been one manifestation of Unktehi. Unktehi was said to have created the earth in its current form, after a great flood. Unktehi was sometimes known as *Taku Wakan*, which to the Ponds suggested that the being was supernatural or "hard to be killed." This referred to the fact that Unktehi had great powers of creation and destruction (*Minnesota Democrat*, March 3, March 31, April 7, 1852; Durand 1994: 96)

One of the places in which Unktehi was said to dwell was an elevation located between Fort Snelling and Minnehaha Falls called Morgan's Mound, Morgan's Hill, or Taku Wakan Tipi, meaning "the dwelling place of Unktehi." From this elevation, a passageway was said to exist that led to the Minnesota River. It has been suggested that the spring of water at Camp Coldwater was another manifestation of Unktehi (*Minnesota Democrat*, May 8, 1854; Eastman, Mary 1995: 2; Durand 1994: 86; Hotopp 1999: 40-41).

There was also a strong association in Dakota beliefs between Unktehi and Oheyawahi. Paul Durand (1994: 64) gives the following quotation from Samuel Pond:

An old Dakota tradition states that about 1800, a band of Sioux was camped just below what was later Fort Snelling on the flat between the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. Suddenly the waters began to rise very rapidly. Looking up the Mississippi, they saw an immense animal descending the river damming the water behind as he approached. As the waters filled the gorge, they quickly struck their tipis and fled to the top of the bluff. This animal, the UN-KTE-HI, traveled slowly at the time shaking himself and spouting water. Turning up the Minnesota River, it finally disappeared into the opposite bluff causing the elevation now known as Pilot Knob to reach its present height.

The association of Unktehi with Oheyawahi also had to do with Unktehi's role in the *Wakan Wacipi*, the Medicine or Wakan Ceremony, a health-giving ritual that the Eastern Dakota people share with other Midwestern Native peoples including the Ojibwe, who called it the Midewiwin. The Eastern Dakota attribute the teachings of the Medicine Ceremony to Unktehi and many aspects of the ceremony refer to the being's powerful role in making the world what it is (Skinner 1920: 262; Gideon Pond 1889: 219-28).

Several sources refer to the importance of Oheyawahi as a center for the Medicine Ceremony. The geographer and ethnologist Joseph Nicollet (Bray 1970: 199-211) attended a

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Medicine dance there on February 15, 1837. The occasion was "the initiation of Big Soldier, a village chief on the Mississippi, nine miles below St. Peter." Nicollet wrote:

The ceremony took place in an oak grove crowning a plateau halfway up the high hill of Pilot Knob, behind the facilities of the American [Fur] Company on the right bank of the St. Peter River. A great congregation of people, a camp with eighty lodges, more than three hundred *midé* [the Ojibwe term for a member of the Midewiwin] men and women, eighteen inches of snow, a temperature of 6° to 10° Fahrenheit below freezing, and a northwest wind multiplying the effects of this temperature transformed this day into a spectacle such as civilized societies cannot imagine (211).

According to Nicollet, the Dakota spent eight days in gathering and making preparations. Dakota people came from all over, undoubtedly camping out all over Pilot Knob. "Each of the delegations of the various villages had its camp quarters with its tents and families, and the members of the medicine body formed as many separate faculties as there were villages." A messenger came on the day of the initiation to invite everyone to the ceremony and to threaten those that were late with being "condemned to offering a banquet." Nicollet did not describe the exact ceremonies given on that occasion, but throughout his writings are detailed descriptions of the usual rituals and feasts designed to promote health and well-being. Samuel Pond also gave detailed descriptions of Medicine ceremonies like those given on Pilot Knob (Samuel Pond 1986: 93-96).

A Medicine Ceremony was pictured by Seth Eastman in a watercolor (in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society) titled "Medicine Dance of the Sioux Indians on the St. Peters River near Fort Snelling" (see Figure 5) dating from around 1847 (Seth Eastman 1847b). The location identification and the landforms shown in the picture suggest that the dance may have been on Pilot Knob (see Mary Henderson Eastman 1995: 193). Eastman was commandant of Fort Snelling in the 1840s, and was noted for his accurate renditions of the country and of the Dakota people.

A similar account of ceremonies in the area of Pilot Knob was given in 1892 by Ellen Rice Hollinshead (Morgan 1998: 80-81), a sister of early fur trader Henry M. Rice, who witnessed a Dakota Medicine dance in the summer of 1848 in an area just below the northern portion of Pilot Knob, possibly on the later St. Peter's Church site. She described the construction of a canvas tent in which the ceremonies took place. Dakota men, women, and children gathered, wearing their best ornaments. The ceremonies resembled those witnessed by Nicollet, involving healing rituals and feasts. Hollinshead reported that because her house was nearby, she "was an observer every day and a weary listener every night." When the ceremonies were over, "the Sioux from the plains returned to their homes."



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**Oheyawahi as a Burial Place**

Many accounts describe Dakota burial scaffolds on high areas along rivers throughout the region. According to Samuel Pond (1986: 162-69), among the Dakota, after death, human remains were generally placed on such scaffolds or in the branches of trees for a period of time. The bodies were wrapped in skins or placed in coffins obtained from whites. On poles next to scaffolds, streamers of cloth or American flags were hung, as pictured in the paintings of Seth Eastman (see Figure 6). Food or other offerings were sometimes placed on the scaffolds. After a period of days, or longer if the ground was frozen, human remains were buried in the ground, two to three feet deep. The graves were marked with fences and posts, partly as a protection against animals.

The importance of Oheyawahi as a burial place was recorded in a traditional Dakota account describing an incident said to have occurred in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. An account by Samuel or Gideon Pond told of the young couple Scarlet Dove and Eagle Eye, who were on a hunting trip on Lake Pepin when Eagle Eye was killed in an unfortunate hunting accident by an arrow from a friend. In deep mourning, Scarlet Dove wrapped the body of her husband in ornamented skins and took it back with her more than a hundred miles to the Minnesota River, where she erected a scaffold "on that beautiful hill opposite the site of Fort Snelling, in the rear of the little town of Mendota, which is known by the name of Pilot Knob." Then using the straps by which she had carried her burden, the mourning Scarlet Dove hanged herself to the scaffold and died. "Her highest hope was to meet the beloved spirit of her Eagle-Eye in the world of spirits" (*Minnesota Democrat*, June 10, 1851; also Durand 1994: 64).

In another account, Gideon Pond wrote that, according to tradition, the Iowa people who once lived along the south side of the Minnesota River fought their last battle with the Dakota "in Minnesota, on Pilot Knob, back of Mendota" (Gideon Pond 1872, 1: 146). This may have resulted in some burials on Pilot Knob.

Although Lieutenant Pike made no reference to Oheyawahi by name, the narrative of his journey suggests that he may have seen it used as a burial place. On September 21, 1805, before landing on the island later named after him in the mouth of the Minnesota River, Pike noticed a white flag on shore. On investigation he discovered a burial scaffold holding four bodies. Two days later Pike wrote a letter stating that he had visited a "mausoleum" of the Dakota in the same area (Coues, ed., 1965, 1: 79, 234).

Charles Joseph Latrobe, in his account published in 1835 (214-15), wrote of the "notable summit called the Pilot Knob" and stated:

From the summit of the Pilot Knob, surmounted by the tomb of an Indian Chief, the view is most extended and interesting; comprising both rivers before and after their junction, the Fort in all its details, and a wide level country to the north and west beyond the Great Falls [St. Anthony Falls].

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Most visitors who mentioned Pilot Knob acknowledged the importance of the bluff to the Dakota. When he visited the region in 1849, E. S. Seymour (1850: 113) noted:

From the summit we were favored with a delightful view of the surrounding country; verdant plains interspersed with groves following the meandering course of the Mississippi, the St. Peter's, and their tributaries, greeted the sight as far as the eye could reach; the town of St. Paul, with its new buildings glistening in the sun was distinctly visible from this eminence. There were indications that this mound had formerly been held sacred by the Indians, as the burial place of their dead.

Seymour appears to suggest that the Dakota use of Pilot Knob as a burial place or sacred place was in the past. However, an 1854 newspaper account of a trip up the Minnesota River (*St. Paul Democrat*, May 1, 1854) notes that it continued to be important at that time. The author reported that upon entering the Minnesota,

Up there, cloud-ward, on our left above all and over all, you may observe an elevated mound-like ridge, which is called Pilot Ridge. Now carry the vision along this ridge a little eastward and you will likewise observe upon it, a lump-like swell, which is termed "*Pilot Knob*"—a point that is noted for its "commanding," in military phrase, the fort in front of it, but more famed for the magnificent view from its summit 1000 feet above the ocean, and nearly 300 above the water level of the rivers underneath. Standing upon the Knob amidst its Indian graves, viewing like the Egypto-Jew Moses from Pisgah's top, "the landscape o'er," and a more beautiful spectacle can hardly be conceived of than is therefrom presented.

The reference to the graves found on the "lump-like swell" that topped the bluff called Pilot Knob is borne out by a number of paintings by the artist Seth Eastman, who painted a well-known view of Pilot Knob around 1847, from the river below Fort Snelling, showing a Dakota burial scaffold at the summit of the bluff (see Figure 7). In other works Eastman did more detailed views of such scaffolds, several of which are likely intended to show the summit of Pilot Knob. In particular, the painting titled "Indian Graves at the Mouth of the St. Peters" (see Figure 6) also painted around 1847, suggests the summit of Pilot Knob (Seth Eastman 1846-48b, 1847a). Another painting of a burial scaffold on the Minnesota River appears to show Fort Snelling in the background, but may depict a burial area on the bluff upstream from Pilot Knob (Seth Eastman 1846-48a; for various depictions of scaffolds see McDermott 1961: plate 31, 32, 112; Boehme, Feest, and Johnston 1995: 28, 78; Mary Eastman 1995: 83, 112, 154; Hotopp 1999: 43, 44). Eastman's portrayal of burial scaffolds on Pilot Knob in the 1840s is seconded by the written account by his wife, Mary Henderson Eastman, who wrote in her book of Dakota life

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and legends that Pilot Knob was used as a "burial-place by the Indians," and later, in one of her stories (Mary Henderson Eastman 1995: 2, 71), stated:

The sky was without a cloud when the sun rose on the Mississippi. The morning mists passed slowly away as if they loved to linger round the hills. Pilot Knob rose above them, proud to be the burial place of her warrior children.

Although the Dakota villages were removed from the area of the Twin Cities after the signing of the Treaty of 1851, there were still Dakota around Mendota, since many of the Frenchmen employed by the fur trader Henry Sibley in Mendota were married to Dakota women. Even after the banishment of the Dakota nation from Minnesota to Nebraska after the Conflict of 1862, these Dakota women and their relatives were allowed to remain in the Mendota area. In the 1880s relatives began to drift back into Minnesota (Meyer 1993: 273). A strong motivation for the return of Dakota to Minnesota was the presence of the graves of their ancestors in the region. In 1936, Dakota anthropologist Ella Deloria, after visiting Dakota communities in Minnesota, wrote:

When I visited a Santee community south of St. Paul, one of the women told me, "We were driven out of Minnesota wholesale, though the majority of our people were innocent. But we could not stay away so we managed to find our way back, because our *makapahas* were here." The term means earth-hills and is the Santee idiom for graves (Anderson 1997: 236).

An article in the *Hastings Gazette* of February 20, 1886, made clear that Mendota was one of the places to which the Dakota were now returning, stating: "The Pilot Knob is an ancient burial place of the Dakota's, and is yearly visited by many of the Indians of that nation."

### **Oheyawahi and Its Viewshed**

Minnesota has a number of geographic features of cultural and historical significance (Zellie 1989: 2-4, 22-23, ). Many sites like Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob are found along river valleys used by Native Americans and white explorers, traders, and early settlers. Such sites are rich in layered associations with events and people of the state's early history. Among these, however, Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob is unique in its direct connection to an area where the first American military presence was manifested and where Minnesota's territorial and state history began.

Reference is sometimes made to the importance of Pilot Knob for steamboat pilots, although this cannot be documented in early sources. Nonetheless, the hill and its prominent top were a multi-dimensional landmark for visitors to the region. For European Americans Pilot Knob was important for its views: the view from its heights and for the view of its bulk from

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other locations. As shown in several views by Seth Eastman, the hill was most prominent when viewed from Fort Snelling and below (Seth Eastman 1846-48b, 1847-48). The association of the hill with Native Americans made the hill a symbolic counterpoint to the fort and to other evidences of the transformation of the region by white settlement. This same symbolic counterpoint between the Native-American presence and the changes occurring was evident when European Americans climbed to the top of the hill to view the surrounding country. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and up to the present the view from Pilot Knob was valued for what it revealed of the changing panorama of Minnesota history.

Oheyawahi was located within the original boundaries of the Fort Snelling Reservation and was an important part of the landscape of the fort (U.S. General Land Office 1853). For European Americans, Oheyawahi was the major location from which to view the surrounding country and contemplate the changes that occurred throughout the settlement period. The countryside changed as Minnesota grew from a territory to a state and as the Twin Cities became a major metropolis, and Pilot Knob continued to serve as a place to view the unfolding story.

Aside from statements about the importance of Pilot Knob to the Dakota, the fact most frequently mentioned by 19<sup>th</sup>-century visitors was the magnificent view from this bluff. It was the first thing that Mendota's most famous resident, Henry H. Sibley, an American Fur Company trader who became the state's first elected governor, remembered seeing on his arrival in 1834. Around 1887 Sibley wrote to Thomas Newson ([1887]; *St. Paul Globe*, Aug. 7, 1887), saying:

I arrived at Mendota Nov. 7, 1834, or fifty-three years ago. Was much impressed with the picturesque beauty of the spot and its surroundings, when seen from the high ground overlooking the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, and especially from Pilot Knob.

Similarly, in an unfinished autobiography, Sibley told of reaching the area of present-day Mendota overland, traveling along a trail that took him from the area of Wabasha across country (Blegen 1927, 8:353). He wrote,

When I reached the brink of the hill overlooking the surrounding country I was struck with the picturesque beauty of the scene. From that outlook the course of the Mississippi River from the north, suddenly turning eastward to where St. Paul now stands, the Minnesota River from the west, the principal tributary of the main stream, and at the junction, rose the military post of Fort Snelling perched upon a high and commanding point, with its stone walls, and blockhouses, bidding defiance to any attempt at capture by the poorly armed savages, should such be made.

Sibley traveled by horseback to reach the mouth of the Minnesota River (Blegen 1927, 8: 350-53), so it is likely that Sibley described the view he saw while passing over the lower slopes of Pilot Knob, adjacent to the trail he took to reach the area, probably the St. Croix Road

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terminating at the upper end of Pilot Knob just above the village of Mendota (MHS Fort Snelling Map Collection 1839).

It was because of the magnificent view from this site that Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, when he introduced the bill that would designate Minnesota as a territory in 1849, proposed that Mendota be designated as the site for the territory's capital,

urging the beauty and fitness of Mendota's situation at the junction of the two rivers, with the Pilot Knob peak as a grand place for a capitol building, with its beautiful and extensive view of the valleys of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers (Dean 1908, 12: 2).

Although he lived in Mendota, Henry Sibley, as delegate from Minnesota in Congress at the time, followed popular consensus by arranging for St. Paul to become the capital.

Even though Mendota missed out on becoming the territorial capital, Pilot Knob continued to be mentioned for the beauty of its view. J. Wesley Bond, for example, in a St. Paul newspaper article, and later in an influential guidebook to Minnesota called *Minnesota and Its Resources*, published in New York in 1853 (p. 160; also *Minnesota Democrat*, July 8, 1851), wrote:

From the summit of Pilot Knob, which lies back of Mendota, a view may be obtained of the surrounding country as far as the eye can grasp, affording to the spectator a sight of one of the most charming natural pictures to be found in this territory, so justly celebrated for scenic beauty. The view describes a circle of eight or ten miles—a grand spectacle of rolling prairie, extended plain and groves, the valley of the Minnesota with its meandering stream, a bird's-eye view of Fort Snelling, Lake Harriet in the distance—the town of St. Anthony just visible through nooks of the intervening groves—and St. Paul, looking like a city set upon a hill, its buildings and spires distinctly visible, and presenting in appearance the distant view of a city containing a population of one hundred thousand human beings.

In the newspaper version of the account, the author concluded by telling of what a friend said to him while they stood "on the graves of the Indian dead, silently enjoying the graphic spectacle." The friend stated that it was a pity that the country surrounding Pilot Knob would soon be spoiled. "Civilization will destroy its wild beauty—dig it up—fence it—and crowd it with houses, and the plodding discord of the white settlements." Despite this pessimistic view, however, although changes have occurred in and around the hill, much remains of what 19<sup>th</sup> century Minnesotans valued in Pilot Knob.

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**The Treaty of 1851**

In addition to its use as a burial ground and a ceremonial location for Native peoples, Oheyawahi was used as a place of a more general ceremonial character for groups that came to Fort Snelling. On May 27, 1839, in his last year at the fort, Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro noted in his diary:

At 10 this day, on Pilot Knob, alias Mt. Saugeaukee 250 of the Sisseton band of Traverse des Sioux arrived . . . & came in Drums beating, Flags flying . . . Those mounted looked well.

Perhaps the best-documented event generally regarded to have occurred on and around Oheyawahi was the second of two Dakota treaties of 1851. The United States government designed these treaties to carry out the transfer of remaining Dakota lands in Minnesota Territory, including a portion of present-day South Dakota, as well as land in Iowa, from the Dakota to the United States. A measure of their importance was the presence of one of the major treaty negotiators, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Luke Lea (Folwell 1956: 277, 287). In all, the treaties involved an estimated 35,000,000 acres. Alexander Ramsey, the governor of Minnesota Territory, who was another of the treaty negotiators, stated that the area included was "the garden spot of the Mississippi Valley," forming "a territory equal in area to the state of Virginia [including present-day West Virginia] or the whole of New England." Lea and Ramsey together wrote a report of the treaty stating that the two treaties "may be considered among the most important ever negotiated with our Indian tribes" (U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1851: 18-19, 150).

The first of the two treaties, with upper Dakota bands, was negotiated at Traverse des Sioux in July 1851 at a site that is now on the National Register (NRHP 3/20/73). The second treaty, with the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute, was negotiated in late July and signed August 5 somewhere on Oheyawahi. One of the earliest historians of Minnesota, Edward D. Neill, who was in Minnesota Territory at the time of the treaty, stated: "during the first week in August, a treaty was . . . concluded beneath an oak bower, on Pilot Knob, Mendota" (Neill 1882: 560). Historian Thomas Hughes (1905: 10, pt. 1: 112) reported, "On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, the commissioners met the Medewakanton and Wahpekuta bands in council on Pilot Knob, Mendota, and a duplicate of the Traverse des Sioux treaty, with necessary modifications was signed by them."

Such statements reflected the common understanding of Minnesotans in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, although they do not specify the exact location of the treaty negotiations or of other activities relating to the treaty. Some people who were not around in 1851 took the statements to mean that the treaty took place at the summit of Pilot Knob, an apparent misunderstanding that

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resulted in the placement of a historic marker at this location around 1922 and that persists among a few people today.

Historical literature shows that the Treaty of 1851 at Mendota involved a variety of activities, including the negotiations and treaty signing, attendant ceremonies, and encampments by Dakota people. These activities were carried out at a number of different locations in the Mendota area. According to the treaty journal kept by Thomas Foster, secretary of the U.S. delegation, negotiations were originally intended to take place on July 29, 1851, in the large warehouse of the American Fur Company near the river in the town of Mendota (*Minnesota Pioneer*, Aug. 7, 1851; also quoted in Snyder 2002: 5, 7). At the end of the first meeting, the Dakota leader Wabasha announced that it was warm in the warehouse and asked that the next day's council be held "in the open air" (Snyder 2002: 12). The next day, according to the treaty journal, "Under the direction of Alexis Bailly, Esq., a large arbor was this morning constructed on the high plain near Pilot Knob, immediately above the landing, and commanding a fine view of Fort Snelling, and the beautiful surrounding country." A stand and tables were placed for the commissioners with a number of "seats in a circular form for the chiefs." Negotiations took place there at 3:00 P.M. The next day also "the Council assembled as before in the bower upon the hill" (Snyder 2002: 13).

A contemporary newspaper (*Minnesota Pioneer*, August 7, 1851) provided further information on treaty activities, stating that

during the Treaty of Mendota, those high knobs in the rear of that place, were occupied by the Indian encampments. A more charming landscape was never seen, than is there presented. In one direction lies extended the vast valley of the Minnesota, stretching away until it is lost in the distance; in another direction the village of Saint Anthony is seen scattering amongst the green trees; while down the Mississippi, Saint Paul, appearing already like a city, extends far along the bluff, over looking the river. These charming vistas, added to the delightful view of Fort Snelling, render the view the most charming in the world. (Snyder 2002: 6).

These accounts are the major primary sources for locating the various events associated with the treaty. The initial negotiations took place in the American Fur Company warehouse. This building no longer exists, but available evidence, including early paintings, locate it on a rise above the river, just below Henry Sibley's stone house in the village of Mendota (Helen White 2002: 10).

Evidence in the primary sources about the location of Dakota encampments is also clear. The reference to "high knobs" indicates the hill of Pilot Knob as one encampment location. In fact Frank B. Mayer, an artist who attended both the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota treaty negotiations made two sketches recording Dakota encampments on Pilot Knob during the treaty.

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Mayer ascended Pilot Knob at the time of the treaty and noted in his diary that “the view from Pilot Knob, once a favourite burial place of the Sioux, is very extensive, commanding the valley of the St. Peters, the Mississippi, Fort Snelling, St. Paul and St. Anthony” (Heilbron 1986: 35, 241). In one view (see Figure 9) he recorded a scene of the Mississippi Valley from Pilot Knob at the time of the treaty (Heilbron 1986: 35). The sketch depicts a wide-angle view looking down the slope of Oheyawahi in a northeasterly direction towards St. Paul, showing the edge of the bluff above Mendota at left and St. Paul in the distance at center right. Dakota tipis are shown in the distance on the far side of the bowl-shaped valley in which the village of Mendota is located and in the middle ground of the painting, down the slope from the top of the hill. The landscape that Mayer recorded is obscured today by the growth of trees, though glimpses of downtown St. Paul and the St. Paul Cathedral are possible today from Oheyawahi, in particular from the open field on the east side of Pilot Knob Road. The likely location of nearest treaty encampments shown in this sketch is the area northeast of the summit of Pilot Knob, in the broad, sloping plateau near the interchange of Highways 55 and 110.

Another of Mayer’s sketches shows a wide-angle view to the west and southwest, with a portion of a burial scaffold on the summit of Pilot Knob in the right foreground. Tipis are shown at left, further down the bluff. Given the wide angle of view in the picture and the sharp drop in elevation in this area, this encampment would appear to be at the southeast portion of the present-day Acacia Cemetery below the summit of the hill.

Together these two sketches and the newspaper account from 1851 provide documentation for treaty encampments on Oheyawahi, within the nominated area, but they do not pinpoint the exact location of the treaty signing. Despite the popular belief that the actual treaty signing was located at the summit of Pilot Knob, various authors, over the years, have expressed different interpretations of the primary documents about where the treaty was signed. In 1901, the newspaperman and photographer Edward Bromley stated, in the *Minneapolis Journal*:

Pilot Knob is celebrated, according to popular belief, as the place where the treaty of 1851 with the lower bands of Sioux Indians was made. Governor Alexander Ramsey, who was one of the commissioners, Luke Lea [the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs] being the other, that treated with the Indians upon that occasion, is authority for the statement that there was no particular reason why the commissioners and Indians should go to the summit of the hill to make the treaty, as there were several other desirable points between that height and the river. The treaty, which followed close upon the heels of the larger one made at Traverse des Sioux, was really consummated on a spot only a short distance from the Sibley and Faribault houses, on the first level, in fact, above these now time-worn relics. The exact spot Governor Ramsey would be at a loss to locate at this late date.



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It is clear from this account that Ramsey, who died in 1903, did not remember the exact location of the treaty signing more than fifty years after the event. He appears to have stated to Bromley that there was no need to have the treaty signing on the top of the hill since several locations would do as well between the summit and the river. He did not give a more specific location. Based on this information Bromley drew his conclusion that the treaty occurred on the "first level" above the Sibley and Faribault Houses, revising his earlier conclusion about Pilot Knob, stated in 1899, that "it was on this hill that one of the most important treaties was made with the Sioux Indians" (Bromley 1899, Sept. 24). However, in his 1901 article Bromley made no specific reference to a particular location. Given the various rises of land in greater or lesser proximity to the Sibley and Faribault Houses, it is not clear which of them Bromley concluded was the treaty location. Bromley's account is an interpretation, not a primary source.

In 1990, historians Susan Granger and Scott Kelly, in a study of treaty sites done for the Minnesota SHPO, concluded that the mostly likely location for the treaty negotiations was the area part way up the hill, north and northeast of the summit (Granger and Kelly 1990: 11-15). This would have placed the treaty signing in the area depicted in Frank B. Mayer's sketch recording the view toward St. Paul from the summit. Granger and Kelly stated that the supplies for the treaty would have been hauled to the treaty site along the adjacent early trails. They pointed out that treaty sites were sometimes selected based on the cultural importance of a site for Native Americans (Section F, page 1). Thus, the Dakota insistence to moving outdoors may have had to do not only with the heat but also, possibly, with the belief that it was important to hold this important negotiation on sacred grounds. Granger and Kelly argued for more detailed study to try to pinpoint the setting for the various treaty-related sites, but made clear that they believed that the most likely area for the treaty signing was within the area that is now nominated for the National Register.

More recently, Michelle Terrell, in a study occasioned by a townhome development proposal on Pilot Knob in the City of Mendota Heights, made the suggestion that the treaty-signing location was not on the area traditionally called Pilot Knob but at the site of St. Peter's Church located on a slight rise above the river, southwest of the Henry H. Sibley House (Terrell 2003: 71, 73-79). Terrell's argument was based mainly on Bromley's 1901 account, though she noted the presence of a ceremony on this site in 1849 and suggested that the Medicine Ceremony described by Nicollet must have occurred there in 1837. She also suggested that the entire Oheyawahi hill was bare of trees usable for the treaty arbor, making it an unlikely location for the treaty.

To determine where the treaty signing was located, the best source is the treaty account which stated that the treaty arbor was "constructed on the high plain near Pilot Knob, immediately above the landing, and commanding a fine view of Fort Snelling, and the beautiful surrounding country." Assuming that this account is correct three factors must be considered determinative in locating the treaty signing.

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First, to correspond to the description, the treaty site should be located “on a high plain near Pilot Knob.” A variety of terraces throughout the area south of Mendota could fit the description of a high plain, although it would seem more reasonable to conclude that the upper levels would be more likely than the lower ones. More difficult to interpret is the phrase, “near Pilot Knob.” The meaning depends on whether it refers to the entire hill of Pilot Knob or to the summit alone. If the entire hill is meant it might be concluded that the treaty was signed at a place below the Pilot Knob hill, but not actually on the hill, such as the St. Peter’s Church site or some other rise above the river. If the summit alone is meant, then the likely location for the treaty negotiation would be a location like the “plateau halfway up the high hill of Pilot Knob,” described by Joseph Nicollet in his 1837 account of a Medicine Ceremony. The second meaning seems more likely in this context given the frequent use of the name in this period and after to refer not to the entirety of Oheyawahi, but only to the summit of the hill (*St. Paul Daily Democrat*, May 1, 1854). This suggests that the phrase would apply better to the location described by Nicollet than to the St. Peter’s Church site.

Second, the relationship of the treaty site to the landing depends entirely on identifying the location of the landing site (that is, “immediately above the landing”). A map of Mendota from around 1856 shows that much of the river front in the town of Mendota was sharply higher than the level of the river, providing a poor location for a river landing (Folsom [1857?]). The argument is made that the landing referred to is the levee below St. Peter’s Church. One narrow spot with the lowest river bank, located at the intersection of B and Water Streets, was identified as a “levee.” This levee was on the river side of the rise where St. Peter’s Church was located.

However, strong evidence points in another direction, to the location of the Fort Snelling ferry landing on the east side of the mouth of the Minnesota River. The river makes a broad bend just above its mouth. The bend was cut off from the east side of the river in the 1960s when a new channel was cut just below the east end of the Mendota Bridge. The area is now part of Fort Snelling State Park and is known as Picnic Island. This location, coincidentally, was the site of Cantonment St. Peters, where the first U.S. troops camped on their arrival in 1819. James E. Colhoun, who reached the site a few years later, noted that the troops were “cantonment that year at the base of the Pilot-bluff on the south side of St. Peter’s R[iver]” (Kane, Holmquist, and Gilman 1978: 282). From Colhoun’s point of view the entirety of Pilot Hill was seen as being above this landing site. Several of Seth Eastman’s views of Pilot Knob make clear the relationship. His view of the hill from below shows the landing site on the east side of the river in the foreground with Pike Island at left. Pilot Knob clearly looms above the site (see Figure 7). Similarly, Eastman’s view from the summit of Pilot Knob looking toward the fort shows the landing site in the middle ground, making clear the possible visual link between the two sites (see Figure 8). In terms of the treaty description, a variety of the most likely locations throughout the hill, within the nominated area, could be concluded to be “immediately above the landing,”

Third, the “fine view of Fort Snelling and surrounding area” would certainly be possible from a variety of sites on the hill of Pilot Knob. In part this would depend on the amount of

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vegetation in the way and the elevation of the site. While trees were found throughout the Pilot Knob area, even close to the summit, as indicated by the 1853 survey notes and by several Eastman paintings, it does not appear that they would have prevented a wide vista from various points on the hill (Seth Eastman 1846-48a; 1847-48; Mary Henderson Eastman 1995: 83, 154). Evidence from one of Eastman's paintings suggests that at least a portion of the St. Peter's Church site, contrary to its current state, was entirely denuded of trees, which would have allowed a view in various directions (Seth Eastman 1847-48). Given the scattered nature of trees throughout the Mendota area, the presence or absence of trees on any particular site is not in and of itself definitive in determining the treaty-signing location.

The effect of elevation, however, is another matter. On this point the St. Peter's Church site seems a less likely alternative. Today, when viewed from the occasional openings between the trees at the St. Peter's Church site, an undistinguished view of Fort Snelling and the area around and beyond it is revealed. Only the northeastern and southeastern walls of the fort are clearly visible. It is plain that even if the area were entirely denuded of trees, little beyond the fort to the northwest would have been seen. Almost any of the upper terraces on the Pilot Knob hill would have provided a much finer view. In particular, the area north and northeast of the summit of Pilot Knob proposed by Granger and Kelly in 1991 is a more likely site. From much of the middle and upper portions of Pilot Knob, as described by Frank B. Mayer, it would have been possible to see the fort, St. Anthony, and St. Paul and many other areas. This area also better fits the description given by Joseph Nicollet of the 1837 Medicine Ceremony site, in an oak grove, on a plateau, behind the American Fur Company facility "halfway up the high hill of Pilot Knob." It is doubtful that the church site, located upriver from the Sibley House to the southwest would have been described as "behind" the location of Sibley's house, warehouse, or other buildings, while the entirety of Pilot Knob fits the description much better.

The evidence discussed here shows that the case for locating the treaty signing on the site of St. Peter's Church is unconvincing. Moreover, there is nothing in the historical record that specifically associates St. Peter's Church with the 1851 Treaty, which is especially problematic considering the church was built barely two years after the treaty (*Over the Years*, April & July 1966; *Minneapolis Times*, Sept. 30, 1903; *St. Paul Dispatch*, Sept. 30, 1903; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Sept. 30, 1903). It is especially puzzling why Edward Bromley, who visited Mendota at the time he wrote his 1901 article and would have known of the existence of the church, made no mention of this location as a possibility for the treaty site.

In summary, the weight of the evidence, based on various crucial details found in the primary sources, supports the conclusion that the treaty signing took place somewhere in the nomination area, on the northern terraces of Pilot Knob. That, coupled with the long tradition placing the treaty signing site on the hill, suggests that the preponderance of evidence points to the area identified by Granger and Kelly in 1991. Beyond that, however, as stated by Granger and Kelly (1990: 5), the exact site of the treaty signing should not be considered the only site of importance in relation to the 1851 Treaty. Rather the treaty-signing site is only one of several

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components of importance in relation to such treaties. The evidence demonstrates that there is a strong association of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob with the Treaty of 1851, through the presence of treaty encampments there and the symbolic value the site had for Dakota people who signed the treaty. The Treaty of 1851 is an important aspect of our nation's history for Native Americans and European Americans alike. Together, the two 1851 treaties with the Dakota are nationally significant because they ceded 35 million acres of land to the United States.

**Later Views of Oheyawahi**

Throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, acknowledgment was always made to the historical and cultural importance of the Oheyawahi. In a newspaper article and a pamphlet written to publicize his development plan, Thomas Newson told of the importance of the bluff to the Dakota, Sibley's view from the bluff in 1834, and many other aspects of its history (Newson 1887, Aug. 28; Newson [1887]). Newson also gave a description of the bluff as it was then. To ascend Oheyawahi, one passed over the track of the Iowa Division of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway, which ran around the base of the bluff, and ascended a road that crossed a field. At the summit of Pilot Knob, one gazed out over a view of "unparalleled beauty." Newson wrote that Pilot Knob was considered the highest point of land between the Twin Cities. He described the view from there in spiritual terms, suggesting that the Dakota view of the sacredness of the place had become more widespread:

From this elevated position one gets the finest view in the Northwest. . . . From Pilot Knob can be witnessed one unending panorama of natural beauty from all points of the compass, which impresses the eye more as a picture than the grand handiwork of a great, unseen Power. This high point of ground was at one time the burial place of many bodies of defunct Sioux Indians, lofty places, when accessible, being always chosen for that purpose.

After Newson's development proposal fell through, the farm just below summit of the hill was inhabited between the late 1880s and early 1900s by Esdras Bernier, a Mendota storekeeper and for a time Mendota's postmaster. A reminiscence by one of the children, Louis Bernier (1968, May), suggests that the Berniers were well aware of the importance of the area:

Pilot Knob is the spot where the Treaty of Mendota was signed with the Indians in 1851 which opened land west of the Minnesota River to settlers. It was used as a burying ground for years by the Indians and we would find arrows and bones digging up on the hill when we were boys.

Bernier noted that the family had a beautiful view from the brick house. On Sunday evenings the family would "watch for the lights of the excursion boat coming back down the Minnesota River

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from Shakopee,” returning to St. Paul. On calm nights, “you could hear Retreat being sounded and hear the band from Fort Snelling.”

No other plans to develop or preserve Pilot Knob have been recorded until the 1920s. Meanwhile the homes of fur traders Henry H. Sibley and Hypolite Dupuis—both now part of the National Register Old Mendota Historic District—were gradually preserved in the village of Mendota through the efforts of the Daughters of the American Revolution, beginning in 1909 (Landscape Research 1997: 48-49; Marcaccini and Woytanowitz 1997, 55: 190-93). This group turned in the 1920s to Pilot Knob, hoping to further commemorate Henry Sibley. Apparently around 1922 the group erected the 1851 treaty commemoration plaque now found in Acacia Cemetery.

In March 1925, a bill was introduced in the Minnesota Legislature “providing for a commission to investigate the feasibility and possibility of acquiring a tract of land on Pilot Knob for memorial purposes.” The bill followed a suggestion made by the Daughters of the American Revolution that a memorial tablet or statue be erected to the memory of General Sibley. Instead, the land surrounding the summit of Pilot Knob was purchased by a Masonic group with the intention of making it into a cemetery under the name Acacia Cemetery. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (May 1, 1926, p. 9, cols. 3 & 4; see also Folwell 1961, 3: 268) reported that the land’s

final purchase reverts the historic landmark to one of its original uses. Prior to General Sibley’s arrival at Pilot Knob in November 1834, the Knob was used as a burial ground for Sioux Indian tribes of the vicinity. Its original name, so far as records of the Minnesota Historical society reveal, was “La Butte des Morts,” which translated reads “The Knoll of the Dead.”

When the cemetery was dedicated, its managers highlighted the rich history of Pilot Knob. An arbor was erected in the center of the cemetery to commemorate the one put up for the Treaty of 1851. At the same time, it was reported in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* of October 1, 1928, that “valuing the historicity of the grounds the committee has pledged itself to erect memorials to the men, Indian and white, who have made Pilot Knob famous.”

Since then, the management of Acacia Cemetery has continued to highlight the history and sacred importance of Pilot Knob for Native Americans. An advertising leaflet from around the 1980s emphasized the Native history of the area. Pilot Knob, “the site of Acacia” was “rich in historic traditions relating to Indians who first selected the location for their special ceremonies,” a possible reference to the well-known Medicine Dance associations of the site. To honor the site the cemetery sought to preserve the “beauty inherent in the area.” (Minnesota-Acacia Park Cemetery Association [1980s?]).

Among others recognizing the importance of the site was the City of Mendota Heights which stated in its 2002 Comprehensive Plan that the hill was “considered sacred to the Dakota”

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and important in American history. The city's website (Mendota Heights 2002a) stated, that "the Dakota Indians considered the hill sacred" and noted, "this prominent hill on the Minnesota Historic Inventory overlooks the confluence of the rivers. It is unusual in its broad scope of historical significance."

A variety of state surveys have singled out Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob for notice. It was included in the 1975 *Minnesota Inventory of Historic and Prehistoric Places* (1975: 18). A 1989 study of geographic features of historical and cultural significance in Minnesota listed the site (Zellie 1989, May; MNSHPO 1989, Jan.). A discussion of land-cession treaty sites in Minnesota stated that the site appeared to be potentially eligible for the National Register and called for further research (Granger and Kelly 1990, Sept.; Granger 2002, Dec. 30). A 1994 survey of the area affected by nearby Metropolitan Airport developments resulted in the conclusion by a contractor and by the SHPO that Acacia Cemetery was eligible for the National Register on its own for its design characteristics, but no further effort was made to examine the eligibility of Oheyawahi as a whole for its importance to Native American and European-American history (Roise 1995, Aug.: 21-25; Bloomberg 1995). However, Oheyawahi was included in the Minnesota Preservation Alliance's 2003 list of the ten most endangered historic properties in Minnesota (*St. Paul Pioneer Press* 2003, May 3).

While the graves of Dakota people may not be visible today on Oheyawahi, the sacredness of the site continues to be acknowledged by Dakota people. A map prepared in 2000 by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community identified Pilot Knob as a sacred site. In a June 2003 study, The 106 Group concluded that Pilot Knob was eligible to the National Register as a traditional cultural property and a geographic feature (Terrel 2003:84-85). In January 2003, Stanley Crooks of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community wrote about the importance of Oheyawahi for Dakota oral tradition and in written documentation. He stated that the site "has never lost its significance among our people." Ann Larson of the Lower Sioux Community, wrote another statement on the significance of the site, emphasizing the extensive use of the area by Dakota people.

In an interview in April 2003, Chris Leith, a spiritual leader of the Prairie Island Dakota Community, also insisted on the continuing spiritual importance of Oheyawahi for Dakota people. Leith recalled that Pilot Knob was sometimes known as *Paha Oipa*, meaning "top of the hill," and it was sometimes used as a lookout point, because it was possible to see all around the country from there. As is the case with many sites of sacred importance, Leith was reluctant to discuss the details of spiritual belief about Oheyawahi such as those described by the Ponds in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He stated that the site is a "sacred landmark," one that served as a meeting place and a burial place for Dakota people, but it would not have been the location of a village. He explained that burials would have been placed there because it was understood that the area was sacred and that the graves would not be disturbed. Leith stated that the origins of the sacredness of Oheyawahi could not be explained by any person. "There are many questions that no human

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being can answer.” When Leith was pressed for details about the connection of the site to Unktehi, Leith stated:

I just answered it. . . . You asked me something in a different way. . . . That’s a European concept. If they don’t get an answer, well then they’ll ask another way. They can’t accept what they’ve been told. They want to change it. . . . Our ceremonies come in dreams and visions. Our way of life is conducted under dreams and visions. We don’t change it. We don’t have that right. It is not of our making.

Leith emphasized that sites such as Oheyawahi should be “left alone” and not built upon. He stated that people might build there, “but it might not ever last.” When asked about the possibility of doing archaeology on the site, Leith said simply: “Leave it alone.” People who did not leave the area alone had to “be made aware or else they are going to face the consequences.”

Other Native people outside of Minnesota recognized Oheyawahi as a place of sacred importance. Chief Arvol Looking Horse, 19<sup>th</sup> Generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe, a widely respected spiritual leader (2002, Dec. 13; 2001), wrote in support of the protection of Pilot Knob, stating that “it is important to become educated in the significance of preserving sites that are very sacred in our history as a People.” He noted the importance of Pilot Knob as the location of the Treaty of 1851 and as “a burial place for the ancestors that needs to [be] maintained and understood as a ‘Sacred Site.’ To build and erase a rich historical importance would prove so much ignorance by those that perpetrate this type of dishonorable behavior.” Looking Horse held a pipe ceremony on Pilot Knob while passing through the Mendota area in 1999, while on his way to the Camp Coldwater area in support of its protection.

The late Robert A. Brown, chairman of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community, a community of Dakotas based in Mendota, saw the preservation of Pilot Knob as important to Dakota identity. Brown, whose ancestors, both Dakota and French, lived in Mendota since at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, suggested in an interview in April 2003 that the importance of sacred places such as Oheyawahi comes in part from its historical importance, including its use as a burial place:

It is part of the story of the Dakota people and if you let all these things go and you let . . . the important places, that were part of your heritage go, if you forget about where your ancestors are lying in rest, you take all these things away from a Dakota person or anybody really, you take their heritage away from them, then they are no longer that people.

Brown, who died in August 2003, was buried in Acacia Cemetery after a funeral in the old St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Mendota. Two days before the funeral a pipe ceremony in his honor was held by the community on a northern slope of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob overlooking

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Fort Snelling, the mouth of the Minnesota River, downtown Minneapolis, and the surrounding country.

**Summary and Conclusions**

There is a broad consensus over a period of almost 200 years as to the importance of Oheyawahi as a place of traditional importance to the Dakota people, as a meeting place, a burial place, and a place for important ceremonies. In addition, Oheyawahi has taken its place in European-American history, marking a crucially important treaty and witnessing the growth of the post at Fort Snelling, and the settlement in the area, and in the wider Twin Cities. It continues to be an important geographical feature within the physical, historical, and cultural landscape of Fort Snelling and wider Twin Cities area.

Aside from places related to the U.S.–Dakota Conflict, few areas of importance to Dakota history and culture in Minnesota have been listed on the National Register either in the Fort Snelling area or in Minnesota in general. Through the efforts of the Minnesota SHPO, Maka Yusota (Boiling Springs) at Shakopee was listed on the National Register as a place of traditional cultural importance to the Dakota (NRHP 1/16/03). Other locations of importance to Native Americans in or near the Fort Snelling Historic Landmark district have been damaged or destroyed. Work is currently underway by The 106 Group to study Carver’s Cave in St. Paul. Taku Wakan Tipi or Morgan’s Mound is now covered with a Veteran’s Administration Hospital, a major highway, housing, and portions of the Twin Cities airport. The location of the signing of the Ojibwe Treaty of 1837 at the Fort Snelling Indian Agency has been largely destroyed by highway construction (Harrison 2002: 27). Although water still flows to Coldwater Spring, its status as a possible traditional cultural property for Native American people has yet to be examined thoroughly.

Oheyawahi remains one of the major places of importance to the Dakota, within the area of Mdote and perhaps elsewhere, still retaining adequate integrity to communicate both its historical and cultural importance. For this reason and for the importance of the site to European American history, Oheyawahi provides a unique opportunity for people of all backgrounds to experience a key part of their past. The site truly bears out the statement of the City of Mendota Heights that it is a place “unusual in its broad scope of historical significance,” one deserving of placement on the National Register of Historic Places.



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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Oheyawahi includes that portion of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob bounded on the west by the 810-foot contour line and on the east by the 900/880-foot contour lines. Intervening contours mark the north and south property lines. This area includes all land parcels between the Big Rivers Regional Trail on the west and the highway right-of-way for Minnesota State Highway 55 on the north and east. Included in the eligible area are three land parcels, totaling four acres, in the northwest corner of the site entirely within the Highway 55 right of way. The southern boundary of the site is generally formed by an east-west line extending from the Regional Trail on the west to Highway 55 on the east, centered on a point approximately 250 feet north of the intersection of Pilot Knob Road and Commerce Drive. This line is approximately 100 feet south of the section line. Below this line in the center of the southern portion of the site, a trapezoid of one-and-a-half acres is included within the site. It is bounded by Pilot Knob Road on the east extending southward to the intersection of Commerce Drive (ca. 250'), then extending approximately 420 feet to the west along the north curb line of Commerce Drive, and then northwest at an approximate 45 degree angle to rejoin the major southern boundary. The site is within a polygon defined by the USGS points listed in Section 10 on the nomination form.

**Verbal Boundary Justification**

Given the varying contours on various sides of Oheyawahi it impossible to use a single contour line as a way of defining the hill. The abrupt drop of the hill on the west side ending at the 810-foot contour line is easier to demarcate than the other sides of the hill which slope more gradually. Historically the area was defined by a combination of factors, including topography and the route of trails, railroad tracks, and highways. For current purposes, the areas included within the historically defined area of the hill which retain substantial characteristics of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob and which convey a sense of the original historic and sacred bluff have been included in the eligible area. Coincidentally the trenching done for Highway 55 provides an easy line of demarcation on the north and east, as does the Regional Trail adjacent to Sibley Memorial Highway on the west. On the south, the areas of greatest integrity include all Acacia Cemetery lands on the west side of Pilot Knob Road and the residential yards and vacant public lands on the east side of the road. Farther south, portions of the historic Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob now developed as warehouse and commercial space have been excluded because of their lack of integrity.

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**Maps**

(MHS) Minnesota Historical Society, Fort Snelling Map Collection.

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**Photographs**

(MHS AV Collection) Minnesota Historical Society, Audio-Visual Collection

1870a. View of Fort Snelling. MH5.9/F1/2/p10.

1870b. The railroad bridge across the Minnesota River. Photo by J. P. Doremus. MH5.9/F1.3/r107.

Ca. 1904-26 [1926]. The Mendota Bridge Road. Neg. no. 95111.

1880. The railroad tracks and depot below Fort Snelling. MH5.9/F1.3/p43.

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1935. Aerial view of the Mendota Bridge and the surrounding area. MD2.1B/p13.

1959, July 21. Aerial view of the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. Photo by *St. Paul Dispatch-Pioneer Press*. MD2.1B/p9.

**Aerial Photographs**

University of Minnesota, John Borchert Map Library.

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1970. Map of Fort Snelling Area. WK-ILL-231, 9-11-70

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
 Dakota County, Minnesota  
 Supplemental Maps and Illustrations



Figure 1. Sketch map showing location and boundaries (dashed line) of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob in Mendota Heights, Dakota County, Minnesota. North is to the top of the page. Scale is approximately 1 inch to 700 feet.

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
Supplemental Maps and Illustrations

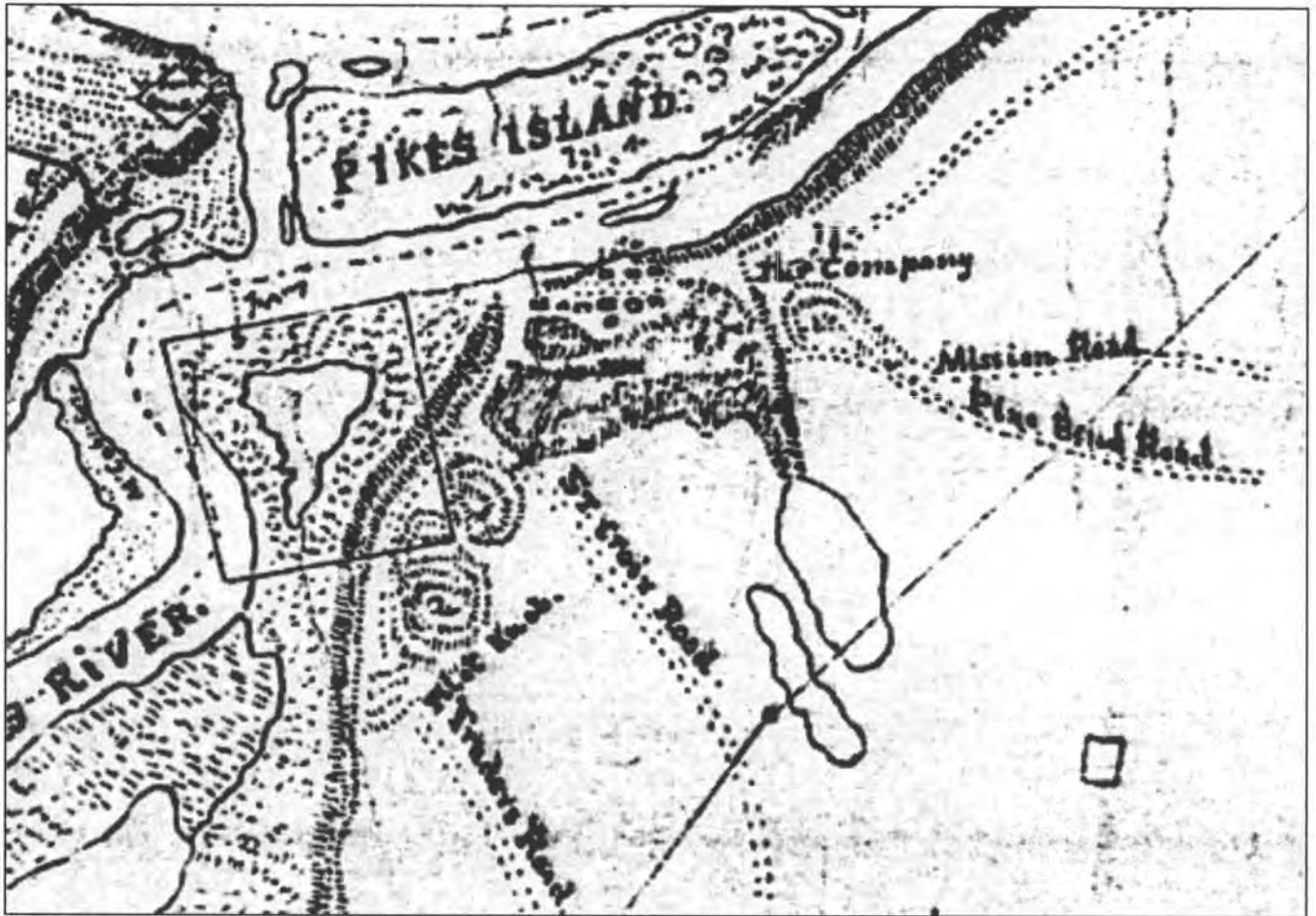


Figure 2. A portion of James Thompson's 1853 map of the Fort Snelling area, showing Pilot Knob and the roads passing through the area

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
Supplemental Maps and Illustrations



Figure 3. Detail from the 1896 map of the Minnesota, St. Paul Quadrangle, 15-minute series, showing the contours of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
Supplemental Maps and Illustrations

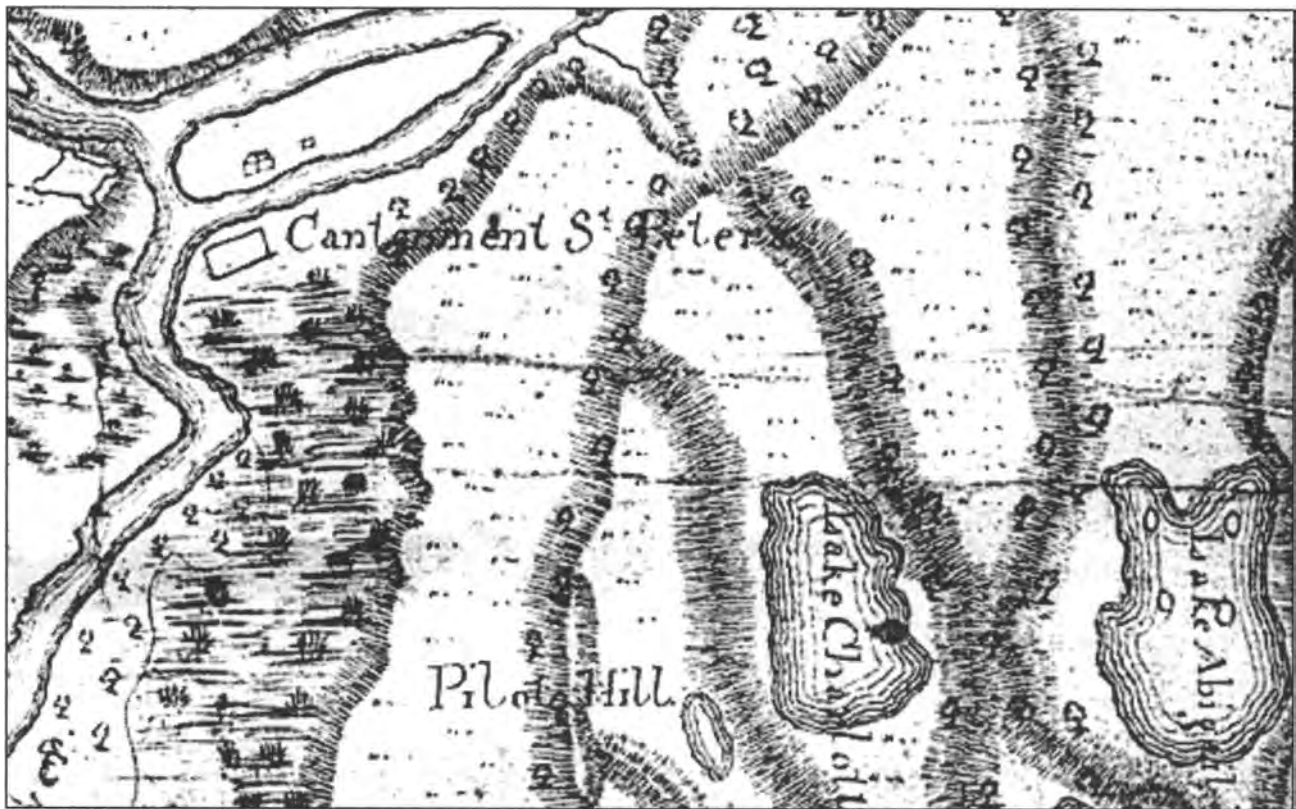


Figure 4. Detail from an 1821 map of the Fort Snelling area, showing Pilot Hill



**Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
Supplemental Maps and Illustrations**

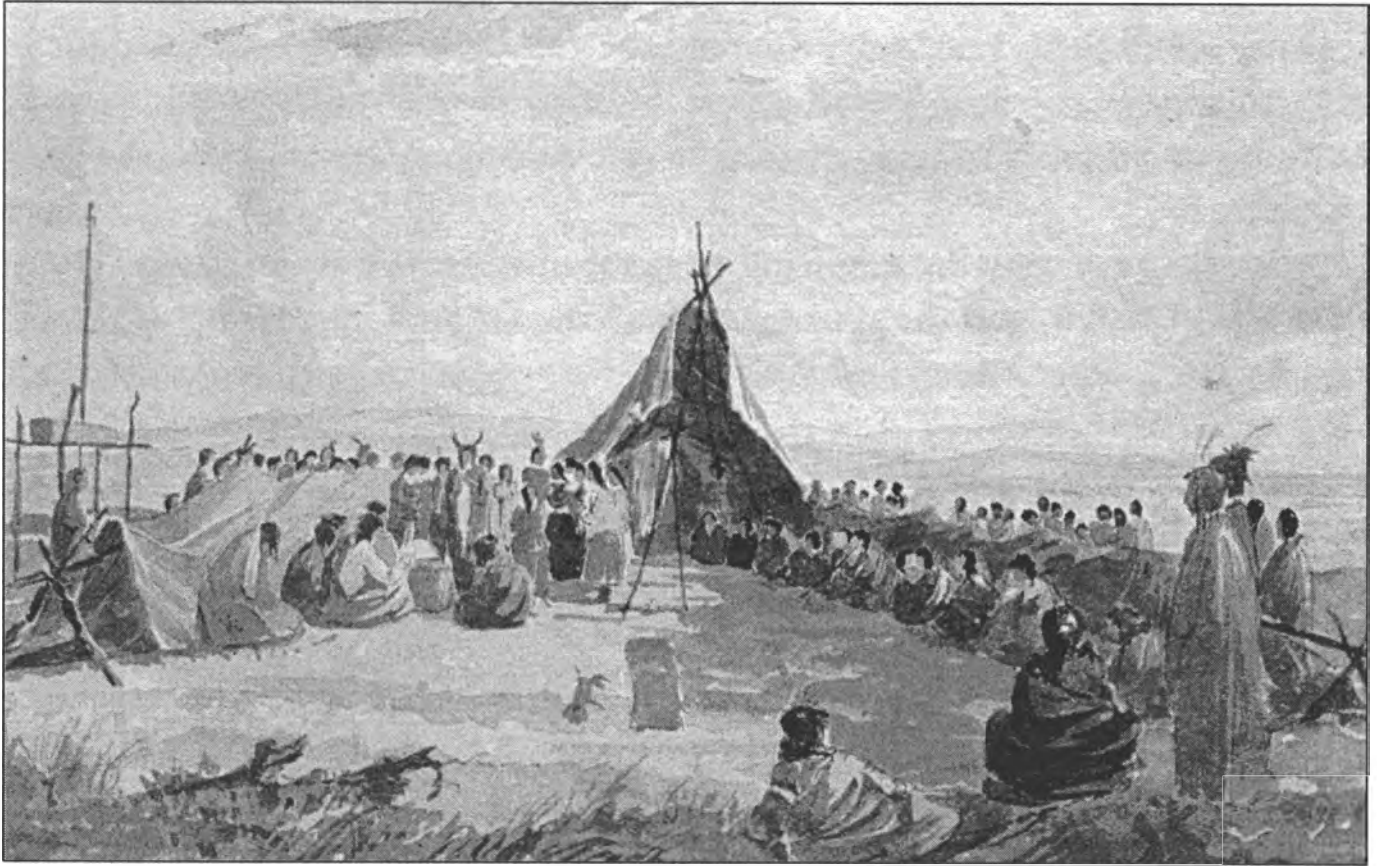


Figure 5. Medicine Dance of the Sioux or Dakota Indians on the St. Peters River near Fort Snelling, by Seth Eastman, Minnesota Historical Society, AV1881.85.2

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
Supplemental Maps and Illustrations



Figure 6. Indian Graves at the mouth of the St. Peters, a watercolor by Seth Eastman, Minnesota Historical Society, AV2989.44.281

**Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob**  
**Dakota County, Minnesota**  
**Supplemental Maps and Illustrations**



Figure 7. Oheyawahi or Pilot Knob, as viewed from below Fort Snelling, looking southeast, around 1846-48, by Seth Eastman, Minnesota Historical Society, AV1991.85.23

**Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob**  
**Dakota County, Minnesota**  
**Supplemental Maps and Illustrations**



Figure 8. Seth Eastman view looking toward Fort Snelling from near the top of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob, around the 1840s, location of original unknown

**Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
Supplemental Maps and Illustrations**



Figure 9. Frank B. Mayer view from summit of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob looking north toward St. Paul, 1851, original in Newberry Library, Chicago



Ohaya Wahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
MHS 014738-7A

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob

014738-7A

Dakota County, Minnesota

Scott Anfinson, Minnesota Historical Society

9/03

Minnesota Historical Society

looking SE at Acacia Cemetery buildings and Treaty of Mendota marker

014738-7A

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Oheya wahi / Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
MHS 014738 - 13A



Oheya wahi/Pilot Knob

014738-13A

Dakota County, Minnesota

Scott Anfinson, Minnesota Historical Society

9/2003

Minnesota Historical Society

looking south on Pilot Knob Rd from north end of Pilot Knob

014738-13A

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Oheyawahi / Pilot Knob

014738-2A

Dakota County, Minnesota

Scott Anfinson, Minnesota Historical Society

9/03

Minnesota Historical Society

looking SE at Pilot Knob (in distance) from old Ft. Snelling

014738-2A

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Oheyawahi / Pilot Knob  
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MHS 014738-5A

Oheyawahi / Pilot Knob

014738-5A

Dakota County, Minnesota

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9/03

Minnesota Historical Society

Looking North on Pilot Knob Rd from just SE of Acacia Cemetery

014738-5A

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Oheya-wahi/Pilot Knob

Dakota County, Minnesota

MHS 52234

52234

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
St. Paul Dispatch - Pioneer Press

3/23/59

Minnesota Historical Society

Looking NW at Acacia Cemetery on Pilot Knob

52234

Aerial view of the Acacia Park Cemetery in Mendota Heights,  
Minnesota on March 23, 1959.

Photo by St. Paul Dispatch-Pioneer Press.

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Ohewawahi/Pilot Knob

Dakota County, Minnesota

MHS 1486-B



Oheya wahi / Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota

Kenneth Wright

1928

Minnesota Historical Society

looking NW at Acacia Cemetery dedication on Pilot Knob

1486-B

1486-B

Aerial view of Acacia Park and the Mendota Bridge, looking north  
to the Ford Bridge in Dakota County, Minnesota, ca. 1930.

Photo by Kenneth Wright.

MHS Locator #MD2.1B/p7. Negative #1486-B.

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Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
MHS 014737-2

Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob

014737-2

Dakota County, Minnesota

Bruce White, Turnstone Historical Research

8/2003

Minnesota Historical Society

looking SE at Pilot Knob across junction of Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers

014737-2



Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
MHS 014738 - 11A

Oheya wahn/Pilot Knob

014738-11A

Dakota County, Minnesota

Scott Anfinson, Minnesota Historical Society

9/2003

Minnesota Historical Society

looking NW at Ft. Snelling and Minneapolis skyline from NW end of Pilot Knob

014738-11A

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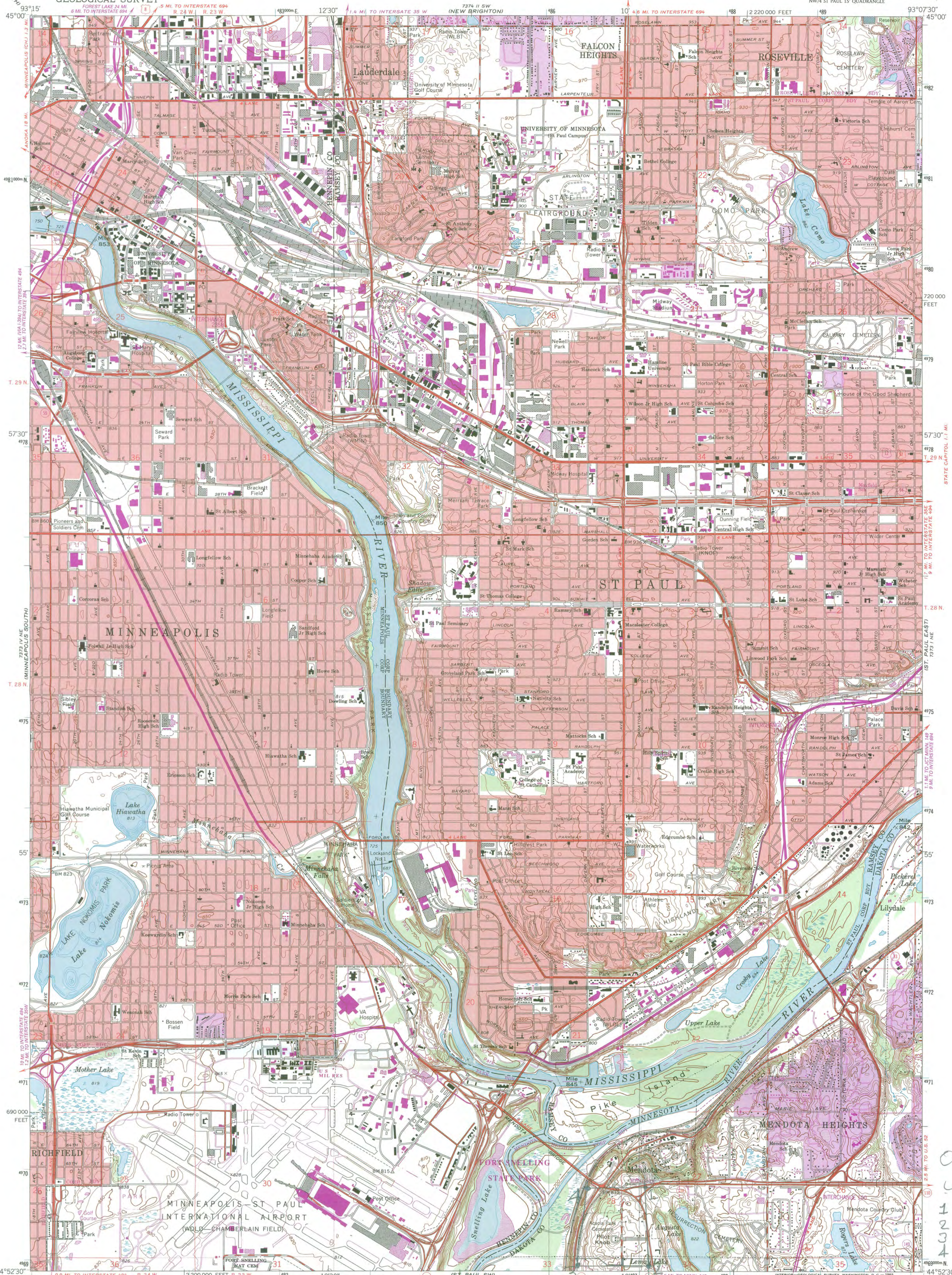
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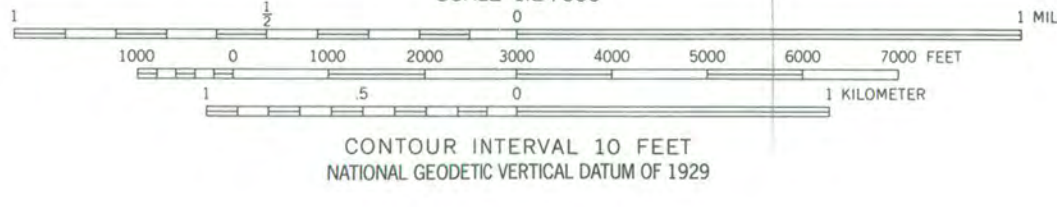
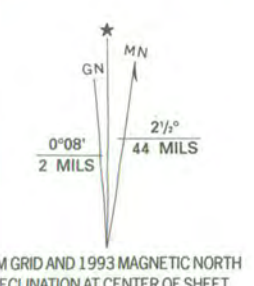
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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

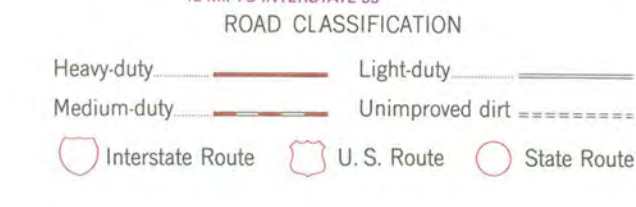
ST PAUL WEST QUADRANGLE  
MINNESOTA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
NW/4 ST PAUL 15' QUADRANGLE



Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1947. Field checked 1951. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967. Map edited 1967  
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Minnesota coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue  
1927 North American Datum (NAD 27)  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks  
The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are given in USGS Bulletin 1875  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Dotted land lines established by private survey



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
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A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ST PAUL WEST, MINN.  
NW/4 ST PAUL 15' QUADRANGLE  
44093-H2-TF-024  
1967  
REVISED 1993  
DMA 7373 1 NW - SERIES V872

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with State of Minnesota agencies from aerial photographs taken 1991 and other sources. Contours not revised. This information not field checked. Map edited 1993  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

Ojeyawahi/Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota  
UTM Referenced  
(zone 15)  
1 487060 4967800  
2 487100 4968920  
3 486300 4968920  
4 486420 4967800



Ohewawahi / Pilot Knob  
Dakota County, Minnesota

# National Register of Historic Places

## Note to the record

Additional Documentation: 2017



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Other names/site number: Oheyawahi, Wodakuye Paha (Hill of Relatives), Saugeaukee, Paha Oipa Pilot Hill, Pilot Bluff, Pilot Ridge

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: off Minnesota State Highway 55 at Minnesota State Highway 110

City or town: Mendota Heights State: MN County: Dakota Code 037 Zip Code 55120

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national   X   statewide     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  X   A     B     C   X   D

 <hr/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title: Amy Spong, Deputy SHPO MNHS</b>	<u>1.18.17</u> <b>Date</b>
<hr/> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<hr/> <b>Date</b>
<hr/> <b>Title :</b>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

*for* *Jane A. Smith*  
Signature of the Keeper

3/14/17  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>                    </u>	<u>    9    </u>	buildings
<u>    1    </u>	<u>    3    </u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>    1    </u>	structures
<u>                    </u>	<u>    6    </u>	objects
<u>    1    </u>	<u>   19   </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register     0    

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: gathering site for Indigenous nations

RELIGION: ceremonial site

FUNERARY: cemetery

LANDSCAPE: natural feature

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwellings

COMMERCE/TRADE: boarding kennel

RELIGION: ceremonial site

FUNERARY: cemetery

RECREATION AND CULTURE: fenced, off-leash dog area (temporary).

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

LANDSCAPE: natural feature

LANDSCAPE: conservation area

TRANSPORTATION: pedestrian-related (regional bike trail)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related (vehicular)

WORK IN PROGRESS: vegetative restoration to oak savanna

VACANT/NOT IN USE

Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: N/A

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

#### Summary Paragraph

Oĥéyawahe (“the place of burials), or Pilot Knob, is located in northern Dakota County, MN. It is on the east/south bank of the Minnesota River where this river joins the Mississippi River. Oĥéyawahe overlooks the confluence of the rivers, called “Bdote” by the Dakota and considered the traditional center of the earth by the Bdewákhantunwan or Mdewakanton Dakota people. Oĥéyawahe is significant as an indigenous burial place and continues to be a gathering place for Dakota people. Several large Dakota ceremonies have been held there in the past ten years. The Treaty of 1851, in which the Bdewákhantunwan and Wahpékhute Dakota ceded 35 million acres of land to the United States, was signed at Oĥéyawahe (White and Woolworth 2004). Pilot Knob hill was used as a navigational reference for steam boat captains in the 1800s. Although the top of the hill was flattened slightly in the 1920’s, most of the hill retains its pre-settlement aspect. In 2003, Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob was determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; listing was not possible because of private property owners’ concerns. Since 2003, the City of Mendota Heights purchased approximately 25 acres of private property that is managed as a minimally developed park for public use. This acreage, in the northern and central portion of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob, is undergoing vegetative restoration to oak savanna and prairie, its pre-settlement vegetation. Visitors now have access to Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob and can experience the historic views from the hill—the skylines of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and historic Fort Snelling. Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob retains its historic integrity and continues to be used as a traditional sacred site.

Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob

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## Narrative Description

### Description of Landform

Oĥéyawahe, or Pilot Knob, also known as Pilot Hill, Pilot Ridge, Pilot Bluff, and Saugeaukee (see Figure 1) is a prominent high hill on the east/south bank of the Minnesota River near its mouth. Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob consists of a hill or bluff topped with a knob-shaped formation descending to varying degrees on all sides. The geographer and ethnographer Joseph Nicollet stated that in the 1930s, he estimated the elevation of Pilot Knob to be over 1000 feet above sea level—a slight exaggeration—calculating the hill to be 262 feet above the “common low water” of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. This was 156 feet above the level of nearby Fort Snelling (Nicollet 1843b: 237). The top of the hill was slightly flattened in the 1920s from its historic form. The current USGS map for this area indicates an elevation of over 940 feet for the summit of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob in contrast to Fort Snelling’s 800 feet, suggesting that sixteen feet or more may have been removed from the summit in the 1920s (USGS 1993). Another recent estimate states that as much as twenty feet was removed from the peak (Rock 1981: 92).

On the north side, the bluff descends in a series of rolling slopes and terraces, ending in a ravine adjacent to the historic village and former trading post of Mendota, an area now included in the Mendota Historic District (NRHP 7/22/70). On the west side, the drop is sharper, ending abruptly with a limestone cliff above the broad Minnesota River Valley and the Fort Snelling Historic District (NHL 2/19/60, NRHP 10/15/66). On the east side is a wide, gently sloping plain. At various points throughout the site, Oĥéyawahe presents impressive views of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, Historic Fort Snelling, and downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul. In all, the hill, between its lowest contour on the east adjacent to Sibley Memorial Highway and the level area of the west side of the summit, may have consisted of more than 180 acres. Of this, 112 acres are included in this nomination.

### Vegetation at Time of Historic and Early Cultural Significance

At the time of the first federal land survey, Oĥéyawahe was “thinly wooded” with bur and black oaks and an undergrowth of oak, aspen, hazel, plum, and red osier dogwood (U.S. General Land Office 1853, Township 28 North, Range 23 West, line between sections 27 and 28). The 2007 Natural and Scenic Area Grant application of Trust for Public Land identified the vegetation of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob as oak savanna. This is consistent with a mid-nineteenth century painting of Pilot Knob by Seth Eastman and description of the landscape by early writers. Later on, up to recent years, open farm fields covered much of the site, except for the area incorporated into a cemetery, formerly Masonic, now public.

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Dakota, Minnesota

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**19<sup>th</sup> Century Development on Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob**

Little development occurred on Pilot Knob in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lieutenant James Thompson's 1839 map of the area (see Figure 2) shows two roads passing around the hill. The Trader's Road, later called Black Dog Road, follows roughly the same route as present-day Highway 55. The St. Croix Road cut directly across the country to near Hastings just south of the mouth of the St. Croix (Neill 1881: 213). Lieutenant E. K. Smith's 1838 map shows a trail in the same location (Hotopp 1999: 12). It is likely that the route of the St. Croix Road through the Mendota area was followed later by the route of the Mendota-Wabasha Road, an early Minnesota territorial road (Singley 1974: 7-8).

Photographs taken in 1870 and around 1880 show only one structure, a white house or barn just below the summit of the bluff (MHS AV collection 1870, 1880). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, several railroads were built near the western boundary of the formation (Warner and Foote 1879; Pinkney 1896). The Minnesota Valley Railroad, later to be acquired by the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railway, skirted the edge of the cliff below Pilot Knob along the river flats. The Minnesota Central railway, later sold to the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul, circled the western edge of Pilot Knob (Warner and Foote 1879; Roise 1995: 21, 23). The latter is the route now used for Dakota County's Big Rivers Regional Trail, paralleling Sibley Memorial Highway through Mendota, and is used as the western boundary of the site defined in the nomination. This railroad company also had a line crossing the river below Fort Snelling. These lines affected only the periphery of Ohéyawahe.

Much of the present-day road system around Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob was in place by 1879 (Warner and Foote 1879). The route of the former St. Croix Road is shown as a well-established road. A later source names this the Hastings and Dakota Road (see map in Newson [1887]). This road joins another, an east-west road sometimes called Mendota Road—present-day Highway 110—roughly where those two highways intersect today. A short section of road from this intersection northwest crosses the upper railroad line and joins the route of the old Trader's or Black Dog Road, which paralleled the railroad line around the western edge of the bluff.

In the 1880s, plans were made to develop the area of Pilot Knob. Thomas Newson, a St. Paul journalist, was part of a syndicate that sought to turn the bluff into a residential neighborhood that would rival St. Paul's prosperous Summit Avenue, a "new suburban town," a "charming suburb" with "charming homes" overlooking the "peerless landscape." At the center of the eighty-two acres controlled by the investors would be a ten-acre park around the top of the knob, on which would be placed a forty- to fifty-foot-high statue of Henry Sibley (Newson 1887, Aug. 28). The plan fell through.

The first available USGS map for the area, published in 1896 (see Figure 3), shows three roads following the routes of present-day Sibley Memorial Highway, Highway 55, and Highway 110 (USGS 1896). This map, based on a topographic survey done in 1894, provides one of the

Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob

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first detailed depictions of the contours of the Pilot Knob hill. The three roads did little to interrupt the contours of the bluff. At that date the northern portions of the bluff descended gradually to the area of the St. Peter's Catholic Church cemetery. The map shows a sharp drop on the west side of the bluff and a broader, gently sloping plateau directly north and east between the summit of the bluff and present-day Highway 55.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century Development on Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob**

The predecessors to State Highways 55, 110, and 13 (Sibley Memorial Highway) were reconfigured in 1926 at the time of the construction of the Mendota Bridge (NRHP 12/1/78). These highways cut through the gradual slope of Oĥéyawahe at its north and east side (USGS 1896, 1951). The route of Highway 55 was shifted outward around the north end of the hill, leaving the old route of the road as a property line cutting across the east side of Oĥéyawahe (MHS AV Collection 1935). The new route of Highway 55 was deepened and cut back into the hill slightly at the north end at the time of the rebuilding of the Mendota highway interchange in the 1990s (MnDOT 1982; Hedlund 2003, March 14, 1997 aerial photograph). This work affected only the edges of the portion of Oĥéyawahe included in this nomination.

Plans were made around 1926 by a Masonic group to purchase portions of the hill for a cemetery. First reports were that the group would purchase 140 acres—which would have covered much of Oĥéyawahe—but negotiations may have fallen through. The first recorded purchase by the group in 1926, from the family of Alexander and Ellen Perron was for thirty-five acres, which was soon dedicated for burial purposes (Dakota County Property Records, March 10, 31, April 19, 1926). The cemetery came to be called Acacia Park Cemetery. To achieve the desired landscape within this earliest cemetery parcel purchased from Ellen Perron, it appears that as much as twenty feet of the top of the knob, adjacent to Pilot Knob Road, was removed at the time the cemetery was prepared for opening.

Later land purchases from the Perron family through the next twenty-five years expanded the cemetery's holdings to seventy-nine acres, although less than around fifty acres have been platted for burial plots over the years. Included in the purchase was the site of a brick farmhouse used for many years as a residence for cemetery employees and destroyed around the 1970s (Dakota County Property Records 1927, Sept. 10a,b, c; 1933, April 20; 1936, April 27a, b; 1936, April 30; 1938, Nov. 17a,b; Acacia Cemetery ca. 1990s). An arrangement of driveways was built to cover around fifty acres of the cemetery, marking off wide lawns with unobtrusive ground-level grave markers, providing a sense of park-like tranquility. Two stone buildings were constructed at the top of the hill near the entrance to the cemetery using stone taken from the St. Paul courthouse demolished in 1933 (Millett 1992: 207).. A variety of other structures built on cemetery land were constructed over the years, including a maintenance structure on the south end of the cemetery grounds and a nearby house for the cemetery manager, fronting on Pilot Knob Road (Roise 1994, June 22). Cemetery lands east of Pilot Knob Road remained

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undeveloped aside from two houses, a maintenance shed, and several smaller structures, used as housing for cemetery management and for other cemetery functions (Roise 1994, June 22). (These buildings and structures were removed c. 2008). Pines, spruces, cedars, maples, and other trees planted to mark the cemetery are on the north and central portion of Oĥéyawahe (*Golfer and Sportsman* 1942, August).

The southern one-third of the hill was redeveloped beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the 1980s to include commercial and industrial sites, as a result of efforts by the Metropolitan Airports Commission to remove housing in close proximity to the south airport runway approach (*Dakota County Tribune*, Aug. 30, Sept. 20, 1973; May 23, 1974). No comparable redevelopment occurred on the central and northern part of the bluff in the area surrounding Acacia Park Cemetery. Several houses, built in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, have been removed on the southern end of the property, as well as two farm houses in the central area, and a gas station and a motel that were located in the far northwestern corner adjacent to the Mendota Bridge (MHS AV Collection 1959, July 21).

Other farm and suburban structures, formerly on property owned by the City of Mendota Heights, have been removed, allowing lands to revert to their earlier status as open space. Between the old and new routes of Highway 55 is a sliver of land containing an old farmhouse and a currently-operating dog kennel and boarding stable. Two suburban-style houses continue to be located on the east side of Pilot Knob Road on the southern portion of the nominated property.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Development on Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob**

#### **Public purchase of northern portion of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob**

Pilot Knob hill was identified as one of the 10 most endangered historic places in Minnesota by the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota in 2003 (Dakota County Website, 12- 20-12). At that time, the Pilot Knob Preservation Association was formed as a nonprofit corporation to advocate for protection of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob as a public cultural and historic resource.

In 2004 a private developer had plans to build a high-density housing development on about 27 acres of the northern portion of Pilot Knob hill. In response to the proposal, Dakota and Ojibwe communities, historians, archaeologists, religious institutions, environmental organizations and area residents raised objections to the development and urged the Mendota Heights City Council to consider further assessment of the site. Some called for establishing Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob as a public open space. When development plans failed, the City of Mendota Heights became interested in purchasing the private property and making it available for public use as an open space site in the City's park system.

Protecting Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob and making it public land was realized in December 2006 when approximately 8 acres of private land were acquired by the City of Mendota Heights. This purchase, known as Phase 1, was made possible through a combination of grants from governmental entities, organizations and individuals. These included the State of Minnesota, in



Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

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part as a grant by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund by recommendation of the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), the Farmland and Natural Areas Program of Dakota County and the City of Mendota Heights. The Trust for Public Land secured grants from The McKnight foundation and the Saint Paul Foundation (The Trust for Public Lands newsletter, 2007, Summer). Uses of these 8 acres are restricted under the terms of the grant from the State of Minnesota to the City of Mendota Heights to help fund the purchase (LSOHC).

In 2008 Acacia Cemetery Association agreed to sell 17 acres of Acacia Park Cemetery land to the City of Mendota Heights. This portion is known as Phase 2. The purchase was funded by Dakota County's Farmland and Natural Areas Program, the City of Mendota Heights (Dakota County Website, 12-20-12) and grants from the State of Minnesota (Lewellan, 2016). Uses of these 17 acres are restricted under the terms of the grants.

The City of Mendota Heights refers to these approximately 25 acres as Historic Pilot Knob and has facilitated public use by installing a small parking lot on the summit of the hill, on Pilot Knob Road at Acacia Blvd. The City also maintains a portable restroom at the entrance. There are two access points to the trail system, one at the upper entrance's parking lot, and the other at the lower entrance on the Big Rivers Regional Trail along the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. A simple trail system allows visitors to experience the historic vistas, and trail spurs lead to three non-contributing overlooks, built since 2003. Two of the overlooks are public art works designed as tributes to the Dakota heritage of the area, comprising colored stones representing the Four Directions in the form of a medicine wheel. The third overlook is a work of art by the artist Seitu Jones, a sculpture of seven blocks of stone in a circle, engraved with the names of the seven council fires of the Dakota Nation. Two interpretive signs at points along the trail inform visitors of the history of the site. A third sign near the entrance concerns the vegetative restoration efforts.

In 2010, Pilot Knob Preservation Association received a grant from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society to develop and publish an interpretive pocket guide to Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob. These guides are available to hikers at the upper and lower trail entrances, and approximately 10,000 pocket guides have been distributed to the public.

Temporary Off-Leash Dog Area

In 2015, the City of Mendota Heights installed a temporary off-leash area dog area on city property south of Acacia Boulevard. Temporary fencing defines the 3 ½ acre site and the off-leash area is intended to be a temporary use for up to five years. Parking is along Acacia Boulevard.

Vegetative Restoration of Historic Pilot Knob

The purpose of the landscape restoration of Historic Pilot Knob is to return the land to its

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pre-settlement vegetation of prairie and oak savanna. This is the landscape of its historic and cultural significance. Oak savanna restoration will allow visitors to experience the expansive view in a natural setting and to enhance the history and cultural importance of the site. It will also increase the ecological value of the land as a component of the Mississippi flyway for migratory birds.

The City Mendota Heights hired Great River Greening, a non-profit land management organization, to develop a natural resource management plan to restore its open space north of Acacia Boulevard to pre-settlement vegetation and to develop the site for public access. Dakota County's Farm and Natural Area Program contributed to the management plan development and costs. (Dakota County Website, Aug 28, 2008). The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund have also provided financial support for restoration costs (GRG 2008). Land management plans for Phase 1 (8.3 acres) and Phase 2 (15 acres) are available on the Great River Greening website. As previously noted, the two parcels are protected from further development, and both parcels are dedicated for public use as city parkland. The ten-year vegetative restoration program is designed to restore the landscape to oak savanna and prairie and to remove and control invasive species.

Phase I native plant restoration began in fall of 2007. Because Ohéyawahe is an Indigenous burial site, it presents special challenges for vegetative restoration. Typically, a prairie restoration is seeded using a harrow, which disturbs the top 6 inches of soil; this amount of disturbance was unacceptable at a burial site. In the fall of 2007 native seedlings of prairie wildflowers and grasses were planted by hand by volunteers from the community. Volunteers returned in fall of 2008 to do more seeding.

Phase II restoration began in March 2008 by seeding native prairie plants using the "snow seeding" method. More seeding of prairie species was done by volunteers in September 2008 (GRG 2008) and in May 2012 (SPPP 2012). Three bur oak groves have been planted by school groups and volunteers: a grove of seven 20-foot oaks, a grove of 4 12-foot oaks, and a grove of 11 small oaks. Volunteers installed a fence around the trees to protect them from deer browsing.

In 2015, Phase III was added to the restoration goals and comprises the easement along Highway 55. That fall, Great River Greening began working with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to remove formal landscaping along the state highway bordering the north end of Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob. Plans are to restore the right-of-way to oak savanna and use prairie plants that support native pollinators, including Monarch butterflies. Fifteen trees, 36 shrubs, and 1,824 wildflower and grass plugs are to be added to the site. Control of invasive species is also a priority Phase III (Buck 2015).

Several non-contributing resources listed in the 2003 NRHP nomination form for Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob have been removed from the site. Two farm houses have been removed from Phase II. The foundation of one house is now used as a snake hibernaculum. To improve the historic aspect and to reduce habitat fragmentation, utility lines were buried and utility poles

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removed along most of the abandoned roadbed in 2013 (Buck 2015). This was made possible by grant of \$75,000 from the American Express and the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded to the City of Mendota Heights. Great River Greening staff organized volunteers to plant native prairie wildflowers and grasses in the roadbed. The road was converted to a foot path leading to an overlook.

Controlling invasive species has been one of the greatest challenges in the vegetative restoration of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob. Volunteers worked to remove the highly invasive common buckthorn in fall 2006. In 2008, a "Biofuels for Restoration Grant" was made by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to remove buckthorn and other invasive woody plants from the public property. Eighteen truckloads of woody debris was transported to the District Heating plant in St. Paul and used as fuel. Volunteers organized by Great River Greening were instrumental in the effort. Volunteers cleared brush again in spring 2009.

Crews from Great River Greening began prescribed burns in 2013 (Buck 2015) and burns are regularly scheduled to set back invasive species and give advantage to the native wildflowers and grasses. Crews also selectively apply herbicides to manage invasive plants. Seasonally-timed mowing targeting invasive species in sites seeded with native plants continues to be done. A Boy Scout group has worked over several years to control burdock, a highly invasive non-native plant.

The first use of conservation grazing in the Twin Cities began in 2013 on Pilot Knob hill when horses were used in specific areas on Pilot Knob. Horses grazed again in 2014. Also in late summer of 2014, goats were brought to Pilot Knob to browse on Canada goldenrod. Goats will preferentially browse on goldenrod, buckthorn and garlic mustard rather than grasses (McKenzie 2014). In late-spring and early summer of 2014, sheep grazed on cool-season grasses, keeping their abundance in check (Poole 2015). In fall of 2014, sheep were returned to graze on overabundant bluegrass. In late summer of 2015, goats browsed on native, but overabundant, Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*). In spring and fall of 2015, sheep were used to browse on bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) growing in lawns where residences had been removed. Seeds of mesic prairie plants are sown in areas that goats and sheep graze so that the seeds are worked into the soil by hooves as the animals feed. (Buck 2015). Thirty volunteers fenced the site for sheep grazing and sowed seed. The sheep are provided by the farm program at Dodge Nature Center, another local partner in the vegetative restoration of Pilot Knob hill (Buck 2015).

A portion of an Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund grant from the State of Minnesota awarded in 2015 will allow Great River Greening to collect data on the effects of grazing and burning on spring wildflowers, amount of bloom, plant diversity and soil nitrogen levels. It will also fund the purchase of additional planting of native plants for native pollinators, with planting to be done by 50 volunteers. An area of the restoration is the site of a three-year bumblebee monitoring project in a restored native landscape. Regular bumblebee surveys are being done by 50 trained volunteer monitors. The purpose of the citizen science project is to collect information on bumblebee diversity and abundance, nesting habitat, floral preferences

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and to learn if species of special interest are increasing in population or declining (ENRTF Work Plan 2015). In surveys conducted in 2015 and 2016, three bumblebee species of special interest (*Bombus fervidus*, *B. affinis*, and *B. pensylvanicus*) were found in the prairie restoration area. The grant also funds evaluation over three years of the effectiveness of goat grazing on controlling Canada goldenrod (ENRTF 2015), a highly invasive native plant.

Vegetative restoration of Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob to its pre-settlement aspect continues to garner public support. According to Great River Greening, from 2006-2015, 1,652 volunteers have given 5,106 hours in support of Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob by working on invasive plant control and planting projects. These volunteers are individuals from the community, from 24 business and 10 school and youth groups (GRG 2016). The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota's Resources (LCCMR) has recommended continued funding for 2016-2019 for Great River Greening, which includes support for the Pilot Knob restoration projects.

### **Summary of Contributing and Noncontributing Resources**

Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob as a whole is one contributing site.

There are a total of 19 noncontributing elements within the Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob site:

- Non-contributing Site: Historic Pilot Knob, approximately 25 acres managed as an open space park and undergoing restoration to oak savanna, the vegetation at the time of the historic significance
- Non-contributing Site: Acacia Park Cemetery
- Non-contributing Site: temporary off-leash dog area of 3.5 acres, planned to be in place for 5 years (until 2020).
- 1 Non-contributing Object in Acacia Park Cemetery: The Treaty of Mendota plaque on boulder, dedicated in 1922
- 5 Non-contributing Objects in Historic Pilot Knob park: 2 medicine wheels on ground, ring of seven stone blocks, 2 interpretive signs
- Non-Contributing Structure in Historic Pilot Knob park: utility pole with transformer and meter on pedestal
- 9 Non-contributing buildings: 2 residences on Pilot Knob Road; 2 residences and 1 dog boarding kennel on Valencourt Circle; 1 residence, 1 maintenance building, 1 chapel and 1 office building on Acacia Park Cemetery grounds

Also non-contributing are the city streets and other modern infrastructure elements, as well as driveways and residential landscape features.

### **Ojéyawahe Retains Its Historic and Cultural Integrity**

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Oh'éyawahe/Pilot Knob continues to be an identifiable landmark of the Twin Cities area. The principal view of the site from Fort Snelling remains a view of an undeveloped hill and this view significantly contributes to the setting of Fort Snelling as a National Historic Landmark. The vegetative restoration on the northern portion of the hill to oak savanna and prairie enhances the sense of place and provides views of the hill described by visitors in the 1840s and 1850s.

Historic Pilot Knob, on the north end of Oh'éyawahe/Pilot Knob, is an educational and recreational resource that provides visitors an impressive panorama of Fort Snelling, the City of Minneapolis, and the City of Saint Paul—views comparable to that described by early visitors. The view of Bdote, the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, remains verdant and wild.

Changes within Oh'éyawahe have not irreversibly affected the site's historic and sacred character. Despite the surrounding development, the area is cut off from urban clutter. The multi-lane highway on the north and east has contributed to isolating an island of tranquility from its surroundings, providing an opportunity for communion with the site's sacred and historic character. The site retains its pre-settlement character. Advertisements for the cemetery describe the area as having a "pristine beauty" (Acacia Park Cemetery c. 2003). The area draws birders and those interested in the magnificent view (*South-West Review*, Sept. 15, 1996). Oh'éyawahe continues to be used as a ceremonial site by Dakota people. The recent removal of structures and the restoration to oak savanna and prairie augments the site's ability to communicate its historic and cultural meaning. Oh'éyawahe/Pilot Knob retains integrity of setting, feeling, association and location.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Native American

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT: Treaty site

ARCHEOLOGY: Prehistoric, Historic-Aboriginal, Historic Non-Aboriginal

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**Period of Significance**

AD 1650-present (Ohéyawahe continues to be a Dakota ceremonial site)

**Significant Dates**

1851 (Signing of Treaty of Mendota)

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

Dakota

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob is significant at the statewide level as a traditional cultural property associated with Dakota Indian people as a landmark, a gathering place, a burial place, and an important Medicine or Wakan Ceremony grounds. It is also associated with European-American history as a geographic feature included in the physical and cultural landscape of Fort Snelling, the earliest American military post built in the region. Ohéyawahe is significant under National Register Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Exploration/Settlement. The Period of Significance from 1650 to the present is determined by the association with the Eastern Dakota, documented to have been in the area since at least the mid-1600s to the present time. In addition, the site is associated with four Statewide Historic Contexts: Eastern Dakota (1650-1837), Initial United States Presence (1803-1837), Indian Communities and Reservations (1837-1934), and a thematic context, Geographic Features of Cultural Significance.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Historical Overview**

Iowa Indians are said to have occupied the lower St. Peters or Minnesota River in late precontact times. Cheyenne Indians may also have been in the region, but moved westward under pressures from the Santee or Eastern Dakota tribes which migrated from the north to the mouth of this stream, according to historical tradition, in the early 1500s. European sources mention them in the region as early as 1650, though they may have been there much earlier. The Bdewákhantŭwaj and related Mantonton bands of the Santee Dakota settled around the mouth of the river, an area which became known as Bdote Mni Sota, referring to the mouth of the Minnesota River. A French document places Matanton Dakota at the mouth of the Minnesota in 1689. The place was later called Mendota (Williamson, Thomas S. 1902, 1: 241-46; Durand 1994: 56; Anderson, Gary 1984: 23; Westerman and White 2012: 45).

By about 1775, the Bdewákhantŭwaj Dakota lived in a great village of 400 or more lodges seven miles above the mouth of the Minnesota River. It was called Tetankantane, Titankatanni, or "great old village." Here, under pressure from the Ojibwe and other groups, great war leaders such as Wabasha, Little Crow, and Red Wing rose to defend their people. Soon they became rivals and the great village lost its cohesion. These leaders took their followers and built villages down river from Bdote on the west bank of the Mississippi River (Anderson, Gary 1984: 74, 79).

Because of its geographical location as a central place among scattered villages, Bdote Mni Sota became a strategic location, a gathering place for spring councils among the various Bdewákhantŭwaj groups and a place for ceremonies and burials. A network of trails connected the location to other villages. European traders and diplomats used Bdote Mni Sota as a place to meet large numbers of Bdewákhantŭwaj. Among these were British explorer Jonathan Carver, in 1776-67, British traders Peter Pond in 1775, and Charles Gautier de Verville in 1778, and diplomat Louis-Joseph Ainsse, in 1787 (Meyer 1993: 15; Parker, ed., 1976: 90-100, 116; Gates, ed., 1965: 45-57; *Wisconsin Historical Collections* 1888, 11: 100-135; *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* 1908, 11: 486-87). In 1810, a group of British traders established perhaps the first documented trading post at Bdote Mni Sota. Some 300 lodges of Dakota people came from their wintering places to camp at the post in the spring of 1811 (Anderson, Thomas G. 1882: 178-79; Nute 1930).

The first U.S. government-sponsored expedition to the region was led by Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike, whose journey in 1805-06 was the northern counterpart to that of Lewis and Clark in the west. Pike came with a small military unit north from St. Louis and arrived at the island later named after him at the mouth of the Minnesota River in September 1805. While



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there, he negotiated with local Dakota leaders for a ten-square-mile tract of land at this location to be used as a military fort (Meyer 1993: 25; Folwell 1956: 92-94; Coues, ed., 1965: 76-85).

No further government explorations of the region occurred until 1817, when Major Stephen H. Long conducted an investigation to locate sites for military posts on the Upper Mississippi River. At Bdote, he selected the site for the future fort at the high bluff west of the mouth of the Minnesota River (Kane, Holmquist, and Gilman 1978: 76). Two years later Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth led a detachment of the Fifth Infantry to the location. They established Cantonment St. Peters or New Hope (21DK34) on the east bank of the Minnesota River, just below Ohéyawahe on present-day Picnic Island. Conditions at the location were difficult during the following winter. Many soldiers died of scurvy. To improve the health of the soldiers, the command was shifted the following summer to a spring known as Coldwater, up the Mississippi River a short distance. That summer construction began on the fort known first as Fort St. Anthony, later Fort Snelling (Kane, et al., 1978: 152-53; Folwell 1956: 135-38).

In the years following, Fort Snelling became an important location in the history of trade, intertribal diplomacy, and early settlement in the Minnesota region. Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro, who was stationed at the fort through 1839, did his best to define the region around the fort as a neutral territory in which various Native American communities and groups could come safely without fear of their enemies. Government officials negotiated a variety of peace treaties between Ojibwe and Dakota at the fort during this period. The Ojibwe encamped at Coldwater during the Treaty of 1837, when they negotiated the sale of their lands east of the Mississippi River to the U.S. (White and White 1998; Taliaferro 1894: 216; McClurken 2000: 27-35).

The earliest white settlement in the Minnesota region occurred on the Fort Snelling reservation in the 1820s through the early 1840s, at Coldwater, and at the trading post of American Fur Company trader Henry H. Sibley on the east bank of the Minnesota River opposite Pike Island at what became the village of Mendota. Early residents included traders married to Dakota and Ojibwe women and former residents of the Selkirk Colony in Canada (White and White 1998: 161-66; Folwell 1956: 215-26). These settlements led later to the beginnings of St. Paul, St. Anthony, and later, Minneapolis.

Fort Snelling lost importance in the 1850s when the treaties of 1851 removed most Dakota people from southeastern Minnesota and European settlement increased. The post became important again during the U.S.-Dakota Conflict of 1862, when some of the Eastern Dakota fought against the tide of white settlers coming into the region. During the winter of 1862-63, an internment camp below the fort on the west bank of the Minnesota River held hundreds of Dakota people prior to their removal to Dakota Territory in the summer of 1863. It was a time of great suffering for Dakota people (Folwell 1956: 433, 514; Meyer 1993: 136, 139, 145-46).

While most of the Dakota were removed from Minnesota in 1863, some remained, particularly those who aided whites as scouts and soldiers during the Conflict (Meyer 1993: 258-

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72). In the 1870s and 1880s, exiled Dakota began to return to former village sites in Minnesota. Because of the continued presence of Dakota and Dakota mixed-bloods and the influence of former fur trader and respected state leader Henry H. Sibley, Mendota was hospitable to those who returned (Diedrich 1995: 109). Mendota's community of people of Dakota ancestry has continued to the present time (*St. Paul Globe* 1902, April 20; *Riverview Times*, March 2001).

Though close to St. Paul and Minneapolis, the village of Mendota and the surrounding township were rural areas well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This began to change in 1926 with the construction of the Mendota Bridge, which provided a connection across the Minnesota River to both major cities (*Minneapolis Journal*, 1926, Nov. 9). Expanding highways since the 1920s have made Mendota Township, now Mendota Heights, a major suburb of the Twin Cities, though many rural and open spaces have persisted in the area until recent years (Roise 1995, Aug.: 21-24; Mendota Heights 2002: 6).

### **Early European Accounts of Ohéyawahe**

Although the Dakota and other Indian groups clearly knew of this high bluff at the mouth of the Minnesota River, the earliest references to it occur in the accounts of European-American visitors. There are no firm references to Ohéyawahe by the French, although a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century writer suggested that they may have referred to it as "la Butte des Morts" or the hill of the dead, because of the burials (Newson [1887]: 19).

The earliest known direct references to the bluff call it Pilot Hill. It must be supposed that the name referred to the hill's usefulness as a landmark for travelers and steamboat pilots, in common with similar names elsewhere in the United States. Two maps, one dated 1821 (see Figure 4), another dated 1823, show Pilot Hill to the southeast of Cantonment St. Peters (also known as Cantonment New Hope), the first encampment of U.S. Army troops that reached the mouth of the St. Peters (now Minnesota) River in 1819 (Fort Snelling maps 1821, 1823; see also Hotopp 1999: 8, 9). It was only later that European-Americans focused on the knob-like top of the bluff, calling the whole hill Pilot Knob, the most common English name used today (Hotopp 1999: 12, 13). But some sources later made a distinction between the hill and its top. One 1854 writer called the hill Pilot Ridge and the top Pilot Knob (*St. Paul Daily Democrat*, May 1, 1854).

James E. Colhoun, who accompanied Major Stephen H. Long on his exploration of the Minnesota region in 1823-24, called the hill Pilot Bluff, also locating it in reference to the 1819 encampment. Colhoun noted:

The mouth of St. Peter's was first occupied by troops under the command of Col. [Henry] Leavenworth in August 1819. They were cantoned that year at the base of the Pilot-bluff on the south side of St. Peter's R[iver] where they suffered much from sickness, especially from the scurvy (Kane, Holmquist, and Gilman 1978: 282).

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The exact location where the soldiers who died were buried has not been determined, although it is possible that they were buried out of the river's floodplain, on Pilot Knob.

### **Native Names for Oĥéyawahe**

Various 19<sup>th</sup>-century sources recorded a Dakota name for the bluff. The names bear no relationship to the English names. Instead of emphasizing the knob-shaped top, the name refers to the cultural and social importance of the whole hill. Stephen Riggs gave two alternative names, *ohéyahe* and *ohé-yawahe*, both meaning “a hill that is much visited, as Pilot-Knob near Fort Snelling” (Riggs 1992: 354). Andrew W. Williamson (1884: 109) gave the name as Okheyawabe, from *okhe* for hill, and *yawabe*, “referring to its being much visited; the Dakota name of Pilot Knob, back of Mendota” (Williamson, Andrew W. 1976: 20). Some Dakota sources have preferred the spelling Oheyawahi for the hill (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and The 106 Group 2000; Crooks 2003). Documentary evidence shows that the reason the hill was “much visited” by the Dakota included the hill's sacred character and its use as a ceremonial gathering place and a burial location (for example, *Hastings Gazette*, Feb 20, 1886).

More recently, students of the Dakota language have asserted that Oĥéyawahe is the more accurate spelling of the Dakota name for the hill. They state that “oĥéya” refers to a place of burial practices, and “waha” is associated with places of significance (Huhá Mazá, 2016; also McKay 2016, in support of Huhá Mazá). In other words, Oĥéyawahe refers to the place where people go to for burials; it is a sacred place much visited .

In a Dakota ceremony held in March 2004 to honor ancestors buried on Oĥéyawahe, Chief Arvol Looking Horse named the hill Wodakuye Paha, or “Hill of Relatives” (Loy, *SWR*, 2004).

The Ojibwe also had a name for the bluff. Major Lawrence Taliaferro, the Indian agent at Fort Snelling in the 1830s and 1840s, drew a map (see Hotopp 1999: 9) in which he identified the bluff as “Mount Saugeaukee,” which Paul Durand says is “from the Ojibwa SAGI (*near the mouth of a river*) plus AKI (*land, earth, place*), or “Hill-Near-Mouth of River” (Durand 1994: 63-64). Father Federic Baraga's dictionary of the Ojibwe language corroborates this (1973, 2: 360, Sâgi, mouth of a river; 2: 24, Aki, Earth, the globe, the world, country, farm, soil, ground).

### **Oĥéyawahe as a Sacred and Ceremonial Place**

Nineteenth-century sources state that for the Dakota people, Bdote Mni Sota, the mouth of the Minnesota River, was of central cultural importance. The *Dakota Friend*, a newspaper written and published by the missionaries Samuel and Gideon Pond, stated that “one of the great natural facts which perhaps ought to be recognized and recorded to start is this, viz: That the mouth of the Minnesota River (Watpa Mni Sota,) lies immediately over the center of the earth and under the center of the heavens” (*Dakota Friend*, 1851, May; see also Neill 1882b; Westerman and White 2012: 20).

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The central importance of this area is related in part to a connection to Uŋktéĥi, a central figure in Eastern Dakota beliefs. Uŋktéĥi was a giant, powerful being who took male and female forms and was sometimes described as resembling an immense ox. Male and female forms appeared in different places. As the Ponds wrote, "The earth is animated by the spirit of the female, while the dwelling place of the male is in the waters." Bubbling springs were said to have been one manifestation of Uŋktéĥi, who was said to have created the earth in its current form, after a great flood. Uŋktéĥi was sometimes known as *Taku Wakan*, which to the Ponds suggested that the being was supernatural or "hard to be killed." This referred to the fact that Uŋktéĥi had great powers of creation and destruction (*Minnesota Democrat*, March 3, March 31, April 7, 1852; Durand 1994: 96)

One of the places in which Uŋktéĥi was said to dwell was an elevation located between Fort Snelling and Minnehaha Falls called Morgan's Mound, Morgan's Hill, or Taku Wakan Tipi, meaning "the dwelling place of Unktehi." From this elevation, a passageway was said to exist that led to the Minnesota River. It has been suggested that the spring of water at Camp Coldwater was another manifestation of Uŋktéĥi (*Minnesota Democrat*, May 8, 1854; Eastman, Mary 1995: 2; Durand 1994: 86; Hotopp 1999: 40-41).

There was also a strong association in Dakota beliefs between Uŋktéĥi and Oĥéyawahe. Paul Durand (1994: 64) gives the following quotation from Samuel Pond:

An old Dakota tradition states that about 1800, a band of Sioux was camped just below what was later Fort Snelling on the flat between the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. Suddenly the waters began to rise very rapidly. Looking up the Mississippi, they saw an immense animal descending the river damming the water behind as he approached. As the waters filled the gorge, they quickly struck their tipis and fled to the top of the bluff. This animal, the UN-KTE-HI, traveled slowly at the time shaking himself and spouting water. Turning up the Minnesota River, it finally disappeared into the opposite bluff causing the elevation now known as Pilot Knob to reach its present height.

The association of Uŋktéĥi with Oĥéyawahe also had to do with Uŋktéĥi's role in the Wakan Waĥipi, the Medicine or Wakan Dance, a health-giving ritual that the Eastern Dakota people share with other Midwestern Native peoples including the Ojibwe, who called it the Midewiwin. The Eastern Dakota attribute the teachings of the Medicine Ceremony to Uŋktéĥi and many aspects of the ceremony refer to the being's powerful role in making the world what it is (Skinner 1920: 262; Gideon Pond 1889: 219-28).

Several sources refer to the importance of Oĥéyawahe as a center for the Medicine Dance. The geographer and ethnologist Joseph Nicollet (Bray 1970: 199-211) attended a Medicine dance there on February 15, 1837. The occasion was "the initiation of Big Soldier, a village chief on the Mississippi, nine miles below St. Peter." Nicollet wrote:

The ceremony took place in an oak grove crowning a plateau halfway up the high hill of Pilot Knob, behind the facilities of the American [Fur] Company on the right bank of the

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St. Peter River. A great congregation of people, a camp with eighty lodges, more than three hundred *midé* [the Ojibwe term for a member of the Midewiwin] men and women, eighteen inches of snow, a temperature of 6° to 10° Fahrenheit below freezing, and a northwest wind multiplying the effects of this temperature transformed this day into a spectacle such as civilized societies cannot imagine (211).

According to Nicollet, the Dakota spent eight days in gathering and making preparations. Dakota people came from all over, undoubtedly camping out all over Pilot Knob. "Each of the delegations of the various villages had its camp quarters with its tents and families, and the members of the medicine body formed as many separate faculties as there were villages." A messenger came on the day of the initiation to invite everyone to the ceremony and to threaten those that were late with being "condemned to offering a banquet." Nicollet did not describe the exact ceremonies given on that occasion, but throughout his writings are detailed descriptions of the usual rituals and feasts designed to promote health and well-being. Samuel Pond also gave detailed descriptions of Medicine ceremonies like those given on Pilot Knob (Samuel Pond 1986: 93-96).

A Medicine Ceremony was pictured by Seth Eastman in a watercolor (in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society) titled "Medicine Dance of the Sioux Indians on the St. Peters River near Fort Snelling" (see Figure 5) dating from around 1847 (Seth Eastman 1847b). The location identification and the landforms shown in the picture suggest that the dance may have been on Pilot Knob (see Mary Henderson Eastman 1995: 193). Eastman was commandant of Fort Snelling in the 1840s, and was noted for his accurate renditions of the country and of the Dakota people.

A similar account of ceremonies in the area of Pilot Knob was given in 1892 by Ellen Rice Hollinshead (Morgan 1998: 80-81), a sister of early fur trader Henry M. Rice, who witnessed a Dakota Medicine dance in the summer of 1848 in an area just below the northern portion of Pilot Knob, possibly on the later St. Peter's Church site. She described the construction of a canvas tent in which the ceremonies took place. Dakota men, women, and children gathered, wearing their best ornaments. The ceremonies resembled those witnessed by Nicollet, involving healing rituals and feasts. Hollinshead reported that because her house was nearby, she "was an observer every day and a weary listener every night." When the ceremonies were over, "the Sioux from the plains returned to their homes."

### **Ohéyawahe as a Burial Place**

Many accounts describe Dakota burial scaffolds on high areas along rivers throughout the region. According to Samuel Pond (1986: 162-69), among the Dakota, after death, human remains were generally placed on such scaffolds or in the branches of trees for a period of time. The bodies were wrapped in skins or placed in coffins obtained from whites. On poles next to scaffolds, streamers of cloth or American flags were hung, as pictured in the paintings of Seth

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Eastman (see Figure 6). Food or other offerings were sometimes placed on the scaffolds. After a period of days, or longer if the ground was frozen, human remains were buried in the ground, two to three feet deep. The graves were marked with fences and posts, partly as a protection against animals.

The importance of Oĥéyawahe as a burial place was recorded in a traditional Dakota account describing an incident said to have occurred in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. An account by Samuel or Gideon Pond told of the young couple Scarlet Dove and Eagle Eye, who were on a hunting trip on Lake Pepin when Eagle Eye was killed in an unfortunate hunting accident by an arrow from a friend. In deep mourning, Scarlet Dove wrapped the body of her husband in ornamented skins and took it back with her more than a hundred miles to the Minnesota River, where she erected a scaffold “on that beautiful hill opposite the site of Fort Snelling, in the rear of the little town of Mendota, which is known by the name of Pilot Knob.” Then using the straps by which she had carried her burden, the mourning Scarlet Dove hanged herself to the scaffold and died. “Her highest hope was to meet the beloved spirit of her Eagle-Eye in the world of spirits” (*Minnesota Democrat*, June 10, 1851; also Durand 1994: 64).

In another account, Gideon Pond wrote that, according to tradition, the Iowa people who once lived along the south side of the Minnesota River fought their last battle with the Dakota “in Minnesota, on Pilot Knob, back of Mendota” (Gideon Pond 1872, 1: 146). This may have resulted in some burials on Pilot Knob.

Although Lieutenant Pike made no reference to Oĥéyawahe by name, the narrative of his journey suggests that he may have seen it used as a burial place. On September 21, 1805, before landing on the island later named after him in the mouth of the Minnesota River, Pike noticed a white flag on shore. On investigation he discovered a burial scaffold holding four bodies. Two days later Pike wrote a letter stating that he had visited a “mausoleum” of the Dakota in the same area (Coues, ed., 1965, 1: 79, 234).

Charles Joseph Latrobe, in his account published in 1835 (214-15), wrote of the “notable summit called the Pilot Knob” and stated:

From the summit of the Pilot Knob, surmounted by the tomb of an Indian Chief, the view is most extended and interesting; comprising both rivers before and after their junction, the Fort in all its details, and a wide level country to the north and west beyond the Great Falls [St. Anthony Falls].

Most visitors who mentioned Pilot Knob acknowledged the importance of the bluff to the Dakota. When he visited the region in 1849, E. S. Seymour (1850: 113) noted:

From the summit we were favored with a delightful view of the surrounding country; verdant plains interspersed with groves following the meandering course of the Mississippi, the St. Peter’s, and their tributaries, greeted the sight as far as the eye could reach; the town of St. Paul, with its new buildings glistening in the sun was distinctly

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visible from this eminence. There were indications that this mound had formerly been held sacred by the Indians, as the burial place of their dead.

Seymour appears to suggest that the Dakota use of Pilot Knob as a burial place or sacred place was in the past. However, an 1854 newspaper account of a trip up the Minnesota River (*St. Paul Democrat*, May 1, 1854) notes that it continued to be important at that time. The author reported that upon entering the Minnesota,

Up there, cloud-ward, on our left above all and over all, you may observe an elevated mound-like ridge, which is called Pilot Ridge. Now carry the vision along this ridge a little eastward and you will likewise observe upon it, a lump-like swell, which is termed "*Pilot Knob*"—a point that is noted for its "commanding," in military phrase, the fort in front of it, but more famed for the magnificent view from its summit 1000 feet above the ocean, and nearly 300 above the water level of the rivers underneath. Standing upon the Knob amidst its Indian graves, viewing like the Egypto-Jew Moses from Pisgah's top, "the landscape o'er," and a more beautiful spectacle can hardly be conceived of than is therefrom presented.

The reference to the graves found on the "lump-like swell" that topped the bluff called Pilot Knob is borne out by a number of paintings by the artist Seth Eastman, who painted a well-known view of Pilot Knob around 1847, from the river below Fort Snelling, showing a Dakota burial scaffold at the summit of the bluff (see Figure 7). In other works Eastman did more detailed views of such scaffolds, several of which are likely intended to show the summit of Pilot Knob. In particular, the painting titled "Indian Graves at the Mouth of the St. Peters" (see Figure 6) also painted around 1847, suggests the summit of Pilot Knob (Seth Eastman 1846-48b, 1847a). Another painting of a burial scaffold on the Minnesota River appears to show Fort Snelling in the background, but may depict a burial area on the bluff upstream from Pilot Knob (Seth Eastman 1846-48a; for various depictions of scaffolds see McDermott 1961: plate 31, 32, 112; Boehme, Feest, and Johnston 1995: 28, 78; Mary Eastman 1995: 83, 112, 154; Hotopp 1999: 43, 44). Eastman's portrayal of burial scaffolds on Pilot Knob in the 1840s is seconded by the written account by his wife, Mary Henderson Eastman, who wrote in her book of Dakota life and legends that Pilot Knob was used as a "burial-place by the Indians," and later, in one of her stories (Mary Henderson Eastman 1995: 2, 71), stated:

The sky was without a cloud when the sun rose on the Mississippi. The morning mists passed slowly away as if they loved to linger round the hills. Pilot Knob rose above them, proud to be the burial place of her warrior children.

An article in the *St. Paul Pioneer* of April 30, 1863, noted that children who died in the internment camp at Fort Snelling located at Bdote Mni Sota, in the river valley below, during the winter of 1862-63, "were usually buried in an old Indian burial ground back of Mendota," which was likely a reference to Pilot Knob.

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Although the Dakota villages were removed from the area of the Twin Cities after the signing of the Treaty of 1851, there were still Dakota around Mendota, since many of the Frenchmen employed by the fur trader Henry Sibley in Mendota were married to Dakota women. Even after the banishment of the Dakota nation from Minnesota to Nebraska after the Conflict of 1862, these Dakota women and their relatives were allowed to remain in the Mendota area. In the 1880s relatives began to drift back into Minnesota (Meyer 1993: 273). A strong motivation for the return of Dakota to Minnesota was the presence of the graves of their ancestors in the region. In 1936, Dakota anthropologist Ella Deloria, after visiting Dakota communities in Minnesota, wrote:

When I visited a Santee community south of St. Paul, one of the women told me, "We were driven out of Minnesota wholesale, though the majority of our people were innocent. But we could not stay away so we managed to find our way back, because our *makapahas* were here." The term means earth-hills and is the Santee idiom for graves (Anderson 1997: 236).

An article in the *Hastings Gazette* of February 20, 1886, made clear that Mendota was one of the places to which the Dakota were now returning, stating: "The Pilot Knob is an ancient burial place of the Dakota's, and is yearly visited by many of the Indians of that nation."

### **Evidence of Indigenous Burials on Ohéyawahe**

Landscaping done in the 1920's at Acacia Park Cemetery revealed the evidence of prior Native burials (Rock 1981: 92, based on 1981 phone interview with cemetery manager Byron Lyons.) Further reference to Native burials is found in articles printed at the time of the dedication of the cemetery. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on October 1, 1928, reported that "during the landscaping of the grounds many graves of the Indians were found and the bones carefully transferred to other parts of the park and there reburied." The *St. Paul Daily Reporter* on October 6, 1928, provided the same information.

Native remains may also have been found during the digging of graves in the cemetery following the initial landscaping. Milly Smith reported in her 1995 account of Pilot Knob that "Arthur Doree, son-in-law to the original caretaker, said that in digging [new] graves, older graves of Indians were dug into and the bodies removed to a vault on the property." In a more recent interview, Arthur Doree (2003, April 8) stated that while he and others were digging a grave near Babyland—the portion of the cemetery reserved for babies, at the bottom of the hill adjacent to the former railroad tracks and Old Highway 13—they encountered bones. Rather than removing them they gently moved them aside and placed the coffin in the grave.

Some Native remains were preserved in a cemetery vault for many years. In 1962, a newspaper account stated that teenage vandals broke into cemetery property and removed some of the remains of Native burials preserved there, although these were later recovered. More recently cemetery officials found bones of unknown origin in a small concrete vault and turned



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them over to the Minnesota Office of State Archaeologist for further study (Dudzick 2003, March 20; Bachmeier, 2003, March 27). An analysis done in 2003 determined that, based on morphology and context, the remains were Native American, and the remains were turned over to the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. A group of ten mounds (21DK18) to the north across Highway 55 just above the village of Mendota was identified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Winchell 1911: 174). Eight mounds were similarly located in Mendota (21DK17). In even closer proximity, north of Highway 55 opposite the north end of Oĥéyawahe. Human remains were discovered during grave digging at the St. Peter's Church cemetery (21DK66). These remains were also determined to be Native American by the Office of State Archeologist, and were turned over to the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.

**Oĥéyawahe and Its Viewshed**

Minnesota has a number of geographic features of cultural and historical significance (Zellie 1989: 2-4, 22-23, ). Other sites like Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob are found along river valleys used by Native Americans and white explorers, traders, and early settlers. Such sites are rich in layered associations with events and people of the state's early history. Among these, however, Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob is unique in its direct connection to an area where the first American military presence was manifested and where Minnesota's territorial and state history began.

Reference is sometimes made to the importance of Pilot Knob for steamboat pilots, although this cannot be documented in early sources, except by inference. Nonetheless, the hill and its prominent top were a multi-dimensional landmark for visitors to the region. For European Americans Pilot Knob was important for its views: the view from its heights and for the view of its bulk from other locations. As shown in several views by Seth Eastman, the hill was most prominent when viewed from Fort Snelling and below (Seth Eastman 1846-48b, 1847-48). The association of the hill with Native Americans made the hill a symbolic counterpoint to the fort and to other evidences of the transformation of the region by white settlement. This same symbolic counterpoint between the Native-American presence and the changes occurring was evident when European Americans climbed to the top of the hill to view the surrounding country. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and up to the present the view from Pilot Knob was valued for what it revealed of the changing panorama of Minnesota history.

Oĥéyawahe was located within the original boundaries of the Fort Snelling Reservation and was an important part of the landscape of the fort (U.S. General Land Office 1853). For European Americans, Oĥéyawahe was the major location from which to view the surrounding country and contemplate the changes that occurred throughout the settlement period. The countryside changed as Minnesota grew from a territory to a state and as the Twin Cities became a major metropolis, and Pilot Knob continued to serve as a place to view the unfolding story.

Aside from statements about the importance of Pilot Knob to the Dakota, the fact most frequently mentioned by 19<sup>th</sup>-century visitors was the magnificent view from this bluff. It was the first thing that Mendota's most famous resident, Henry H. Sibley, an American Fur Company

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trader who became the state's first elected governor, remembered seeing on his arrival in 1834.

Around 1887 Sibley wrote to Thomas Newson ([1887]; *St. Paul Globe*, Aug. 7, 1887), saying:

I arrived at Mendota Nov. 7, 1834, or fifty-three years ago. Was much impressed with the picturesque beauty of the spot and its surroundings, when seen from the high ground overlooking the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, and especially from Pilot Knob.

Similarly, in an unfinished autobiography, Sibley told of reaching the area of present-day Mendota overland, traveling along a trail that took him from the area of Wabasha across country (Blegen 1927, 8:353). He wrote,

When I reached the brink of the hill overlooking the surrounding country I was struck with the picturesque beauty of the scene. From that outlook the course of the Mississippi River from the north, suddenly turning eastward to where St. Paul now stands, the Minnesota River from the west, the principal tributary of the main stream, and at the junction, rose the military post of Fort Snelling perched upon a high and commanding point, with its stone walls, and blockhouses, bidding defiance to any attempt at capture by the poorly armed savages, should such be made.

Sibley traveled by horseback to reach the mouth of the Minnesota River (Blegen 1927, 8: 350-53), so it is likely that Sibley described the view he saw while passing over the lower slopes of Pilot Knob, adjacent to the trail he took to reach the area, probably the St. Croix Road terminating at the upper end of Pilot Knob just above the village of Mendota (MHS Fort Snelling Map Collection 1839).

It was because of the magnificent view from this site that Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, when he introduced the bill that would designate Minnesota as a territory in 1849, proposed that Mendota be designated as the site for the territory's capital,

urging the beauty and fitness of Mendota's situation at the junction of the two rivers, with the Pilot Knob peak as a grand place for a capitol building, with its beautiful and extensive view of the valleys of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers (Dean 1908, 12: 2).

Although he lived in Mendota, Henry Sibley, as delegate from Minnesota in Congress at the time, followed popular consensus by arranging for St. Paul to become the capital.

Even though Mendota missed out on becoming the territorial capital, Pilot Knob continued to be mentioned for the beauty of its view. J. Wesley Bond, for example, in a St. Paul newspaper article, and later in an influential guidebook to Minnesota called *Minnesota and Its Resources*, published in New York in 1853 (p. 160; also *Minnesota Democrat*, July 8, 1851), wrote:

From the summit of Pilot Knob, which lies back of Mendota, a view may be obtained of the surrounding country as far as the eye can grasp, affording to the spectator a sight of

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one of the most charming natural pictures to be found in this territory, so justly celebrated for scenic beauty. The view describes a circle of eight or ten miles—a grand spectacle of rolling prairie, extended plain and groves, the valley of the Minnesota with its meandering stream, a bird’s-eye view of Fort Snelling, Lake Harriet in the distance—the town of St. Anthony just visible through nooks of the intervening groves—and St. Paul, looking like a city set upon a hill, its buildings and spires distinctly visible, and presenting in appearance the distant view of a city containing a population of one hundred thousand human beings.

In the newspaper version of the account, the author concluded by telling of what a friend said to him while they stood “on the graves of the Indian dead, silently enjoying the graphic spectacle.” The friend stated that it was a pity that the country surrounding Pilot Knob would soon be spoiled. “Civilization will destroy its wild beauty—dig it up—fence it—and crowd it with houses, and the plodding discord of the white settlements.” Despite this pessimistic view, however, although changes have occurred in and around the hill, much remains of what 19<sup>th</sup> century Minnesotans valued in Pilot Knob.

**The Treaty of 1851**

In addition to its use as a burial ground and a ceremonial location for Native peoples, Ohéyawahe was used as a place of a more general ceremonial character for groups that came to Fort Snelling. On May 27, 1839, in his last year at the fort, Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro noted in his diary:

At 10 this day, on Pilot Knob, alias Mt. Saugeaukee 250 of the Sisseeton band of Traverse des Sioux arrived . . . & came in Drums beating, Flags flying . . . Those mounted looked well.

Perhaps the best-documented event generally regarded to have occurred on and around Ohéyawahe was the second of two Dakota treaties of 1851. The United States government designed these treaties to carry out the transfer of remaining Dakota lands in Minnesota Territory, including a portion of present-day South Dakota, as well as land in Iowa, from the Dakota to the United States. A measure of their importance was the presence of one of the major treaty negotiators, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Luke Lea (Folwell 1956: 277, 287). In all, the treaties involved an estimated 35,000,000 acres. Alexander Ramsey, the governor of Minnesota Territory, who was another of the treaty negotiators, stated that the area included was “the garden spot of the Mississippi Valley,” forming “a territory equal in area to the state of Virginia [including present-day West Virginia] or the whole of New England.” Lea and Ramsey together wrote a report of the treaty stating that the two treaties “may be considered among the most important ever negotiated with our Indian tribes” (U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1851: 18-19, 150).

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The first of the two treaties, with upper Dakota bands, was negotiated at Traverse des Sioux in July 1851 at a site that is listed in the National Register (NRHP 3/20/73). The second treaty, with the Mdewakanton (Bdewákhax̄thux̄wax̄) and Wahpekute (Wahpékhute), was negotiated in late July and signed August 5 somewhere on Ohéyawahe. One of the earliest historians of Minnesota, Edward D. Neill, who was in Minnesota Territory at the time of the treaty, stated: “during the first week in August, a treaty was . . . concluded beneath an oak bower, on Pilot Knob, Mendota” (Neill 1882: 560). Historian Thomas Hughes (1905: 10, pt. 1: 112) reported, “On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, the commissioners met the Bdewákhax̄thux̄wax̄ and Wahpékhute bands in council on Pilot Knob, Mendota, and a duplicate of the Traverse des Sioux treaty, with necessary modifications was signed by them.”

Such statements reflected the common understanding of Minnesotans in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, although they do not specify the exact location of the treaty negotiations or of other activities relating to the treaty. Some people who were not around in 1851 took the statements to mean that the treaty took place at the summit of Pilot Knob, an understanding that resulted in the placement of a historic marker at this location around 1922, and that persists among a few people today.

Historical literature shows that the Treaty of 1851 at Mendota involved a variety of activities, including the negotiations and treaty signing, attendant ceremonies, and encampments by Dakota people. These activities were carried out at a number of different locations in the Mendota area. According to the treaty journal kept by Thomas Foster, secretary of the U.S. delegation, negotiations were originally intended to take place on July 29, 1851, in the large warehouse of the American Fur Company near the river in the town of Mendota (*Minnesota Pioneer*, Aug. 7, 1851; also quoted in Snyder 2002: 5, 7). At the end of the first meeting, the Dakota leader Wabasha announced that it was warm in the warehouse and asked that the next day’s council be held “in the open air” (Snyder 2002: 12). The next day, according to the treaty journal, “Under the direction of Alexis Bailly, Esq., a large arbor was this morning constructed on the high plain near Pilot Knob, immediately above the landing, and commanding a fine view of Fort Snelling, and the beautiful surrounding country.” A stand and tables were placed for the commissioners with a number of “seats in a circular form for the chiefs.” Negotiations took place there at 3:00 P.M. The next day also “the Council assembled as before in the bower upon the hill” (Snyder 2002: 13).

A contemporary newspaper (*Minnesota Pioneer*, August 7, 1851) provided further information on treaty activities, stating that

during the Treaty of Mendota, those high knobs in the rear of that place, were occupied by the Indian encampments. A more charming landscape was never seen, than is there presented. In one direction lies extended the vast valley of the Minnesota, stretching away until it is lost in the distance; in another direction the village of Saint Anthony is seen scattering amongst the green trees; while down the Mississippi, Saint Paul, appearing already like a city, extends far along the bluff, over looking the river. These

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charming vistas, added to the delightful view of Fort Snelling, render the view the most charming in the world. (Snyder 2002: 6).

These accounts are the major primary sources for locating the various events associated with the treaty. The initial negotiations took place in the American Fur Company warehouse. This building no longer exists, but available evidence, including early paintings, locate it on a rise above the river, just below Henry Sibley's stone house in the village of Mendota (Helen White 2002: 10).

Evidence in the primary sources about the location of Dakota encampments is also clear. The reference to "high knobs" indicates the hill of Pilot Knob as one encampment location. In fact Frank B. Mayer, an artist who attended both the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota treaty negotiations made two sketches recording Dakota encampments on Pilot Knob during the treaty.

Mayer ascended Pilot Knob at the time of the treaty and noted in his diary that "the view from Pilot Knob, once a favourite burial place of the Sioux, is very extensive, commanding the valley of the St. Peters, the Mississippi, Fort Snelling, St. Paul and St. Anthony" (Heilbron 1986: 35, 241). In one view (see Figure 9) he recorded a scene of the Mississippi Valley from Pilot Knob at the time of the treaty (Heilbron 1986: 35). The sketch depicts a wide-angle view looking down the slope of Oĥéyawahe in a northeasterly direction towards St. Paul, showing the edge of the bluff above Mendota at left and St. Paul in the distance at center right. Dakota tipis are shown in the distance on the far side of the bowl-shaped valley in which the village of Mendota is located and in the middle ground of the painting, down the slope from the top of the hill. The landscape that Mayer recorded is obscured today by the growth of trees, though glimpses of downtown St. Paul and the St. Paul Cathedral are possible today from Oĥéyawahe, in particular from the open field on the east side of Pilot Knob Road. The likely location of nearest treaty encampments shown in this sketch is the area northeast of the summit of Pilot Knob, in the broad, sloping plateau near the interchange of Highways 55 and 110.

Another of Mayer's sketches shows a wide-angle view to the west and southwest, with a portion of a burial scaffold on the summit of Pilot Knob in the right foreground. Tipis are shown at left, further down the bluff. Given the wide angle of view in the picture and the sharp drop in elevation in this area, this encampment would appear to be at the southeast portion of the present-day Acacia Cemetery below the summit of the hill.

Together these two sketches and the newspaper account from 1851 provide documentation for treaty encampments on Oĥéyawahe, within the nominated area, but they do not pinpoint the exact location of the treaty signing. Despite the popular belief that the actual treaty signing was located at the summit of Pilot Knob, various authors, over the years, have expressed different interpretations of the primary documents about where the treaty was signed. In 1901, the newspaperman and photographer Edward Bromley stated, in the *Minneapolis Journal*:

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Pilot Knob is celebrated, according to popular belief, as the place where the treaty of 1851 with the lower bands of Sioux Indians was made. Governor Alexander Ramsey, who was one of the commissioners, Luke Lea [the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs] being the other, that treated with the Indians upon that occasion, is authority for the statement that there was no particular reason why the commissioners and Indians should go to the summit of the hill to make the treaty, as there were several other desirable points between that height and the river. The treaty, which followed close upon the heels of the larger one made at Traverse des Sioux, was really consummated on a spot only a short distance from the Sibley and Faribault houses, on the first level, in fact, above these now time-worn relics. The exact spot Governor Ramsey would be at a loss to locate at this late date.

It is clear from this account that Ramsey, who died in 1903, did not remember the exact location of the treaty signing more than fifty years after the event. He appears to have stated to Bromley that there was no need to have the treaty signing on the top of the hill since several locations would do as well between the summit and the river. He did not give a more specific location. Based on this information Bromley drew his conclusion that the treaty occurred on the "first level" above the Sibley and Faribault Houses, revising his earlier conclusion about Pilot Knob, stated in 1899, that "it was on this hill that one of the most important treaties was made with the Sioux Indians" (Bromley 1899, Sept. 24). However, in his 1901 article Bromley made no specific reference to a particular location. Given the various rises of land in greater or lesser proximity to the Sibley and Faribault Houses, it is not clear which of them Bromley concluded was the treaty location. Bromley's account is an interpretation, not a primary source.

In 1990, historians Susan Granger and Scott Kelly, in a study of treaty sites done for the Minnesota SHPO, concluded that the mostly likely location for the treaty negotiations was the area part way up the hill, north and northeast of the summit (Granger and Kelly 1990: 11-15). This would have placed the treaty signing in the area depicted in Frank B. Mayer's sketch recording the view toward St. Paul from the summit. Granger and Kelly stated that the supplies for the treaty would have been hauled to the treaty site along the adjacent early trails. They pointed out that treaty sites were sometimes selected based on the cultural importance of a site for Native Americans (Section F, page 1). Thus, the Dakota insistence to moving outdoors may have had to do not only with the heat but also, possibly, with the belief that it was important to hold this important negotiation on sacred grounds. Granger and Kelly argued for more detailed study to try to pinpoint the setting for the various treaty-related sites, but made clear that they believed that the most likely area for the treaty signing was within the area that is now nominated for the National Register.

More recently, Michelle Terrell, in a study occasioned by a townhome development proposal on Pilot Knob in the City of Mendota Heights, made the suggestion that the treaty-signing location was not on the area traditionally called Pilot Knob but at the site of St. Peter's Church located on a slight rise above the river, southwest of the Henry H. Sibley House (Terrell

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2003: 71, 73-79). Terrell's argument was based on several sources, including the 1851 account of the treaty location being "immediately above the landing, and commanding a fine view of Fort Snelling, and the beautiful surrounding country" and she noted the presence of a ceremony on this site in 1849, suggesting also that the Medicine Ceremony described by Nicollet may have occurred there in 1837. She also argued that the entire Ohéyawahe hill was bare of trees usable for the treaty arbor, making it an unlikely location for the treaty.

To determine where the treaty signing was located, the primary source is the treaty account which stated that the treaty arbor was "constructed on the high plain near Pilot Knob, immediately above the landing, and commanding a fine view of Fort Snelling, and the beautiful surrounding country." Assuming that this account is correct three factors must be considered determinative in locating the treaty signing.

First, to correspond to the description, the treaty site should be located "on a high plain near Pilot Knob." A variety of terraces throughout the area south of Mendota could fit the description of a high plain, although it would seem more reasonable to conclude that the upper levels would be more likely than the lower ones. More difficult to interpret is the phrase, "near Pilot Knob." The meaning depends on whether it refers to the entire hill of Pilot Knob or to the summit alone. If the entire hill is meant it might be concluded that the treaty was signed at a place below the Pilot Knob hill, but not actually on the hill, such as the St. Peter's Church site or some other rise above the river. If the summit alone is meant, then the likely location for the treaty negotiation would be a location like the "plateau halfway up the high hill of Pilot Knob," described by Joseph Nicollet in his 1837 account of a Medicine Ceremony. The second meaning seems more likely in this context given the frequent use of the name in this period and after to refer not to the entirety of Ohéyawahe, but only to the summit of the hill (*St. Paul Daily Democrat*, May 1, 1854).

Second, the relationship of the treaty site to the landing depends entirely on identifying the location of the landing site (that is, "immediately above the landing"). A map of Mendota from around 1856 shows that much of the river front in the town of Mendota was sharply higher than the level of the river, providing a poor location for a river landing (Folsom ca.1857). The argument is made that the landing referred to is the levee below St. Peter's Church. One narrow spot with the lowest river bank, located at the intersection of B and Water Streets, was identified as a "levee." This levee was on the river side of the rise where St. Peter's Church was located.

However, strong evidence points in another direction, to the location of the Fort Snelling ferry landing on the east side of the mouth of the Minnesota River. The river makes a broad bend just above its mouth. The bend was cut off from the east side of the river in the 1960s when a new channel was cut just below the east end of the Mendota Bridge. The area is now part of Fort Snelling State Park and is known as Picnic Island. This location, coincidentally, was the site of Cantonment St. Peters, where the first U.S. troops camped on their arrival in 1819. James E. Colhoun, who reached the site a few years later, noted that the troops were "cantonment that year at the base of the Pilot-bluff on the south side of St. Peter's R[iver]" (Kane, Holmquist, and Gilman

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1978: 282). From Colhoun's point of view the entirety of Pilot Hill was seen as being above this landing site. Several of Seth Eastman's views of Pilot Knob make clear the relationship. His view of the hill from below shows the landing site on the east side of the river in the foreground with Pike Island at left. Pilot Knob clearly looms above the site (see Figure 7). Similarly, Eastman's view from the summit of Pilot Knob looking toward the fort shows the landing site in the middle ground, making clear the possible visual link between the two sites (see Figure 8). In terms of the treaty description, a variety of the most likely locations throughout the hill, within the nominated area, could be concluded to be "immediately above the landing."

Third, the "fine view of Fort Snelling and surrounding area" would certainly be possible from a variety of sites on the hill of Pilot Knob. In part this would depend on the amount of vegetation in the way and the elevation of the site. While trees were found throughout the Pilot Knob area, even close to the summit, as indicated by the 1853 survey notes and by several Eastman paintings, it does not appear that they would have prevented a wide vista from various points on the hill (Seth Eastman 1846-48a; 1847-48; Mary Henderson Eastman 1995: 83, 154). Evidence from one of Eastman's paintings suggests that at least a portion of the St. Peter's Church site, contrary to its current state, was entirely denuded of trees, which would have allowed a view in various directions (Seth Eastman 1847-48). Given the scattered nature of trees throughout the Mendota area, the presence or absence of trees on any particular site is not in and of itself definitive in determining the treaty-signing location.

The effect of elevation, however, is another matter. On this point the St. Peter's Church site seems a less likely alternative. Today, when viewed from the occasional openings between the trees at the St. Peter's Church site, an undistinguished view of Fort Snelling and the area around and beyond it is revealed. Only the northeastern and southeastern walls of the fort are clearly visible. It is plain that even if the area were entirely denuded of trees, little beyond the fort to the northwest would have been seen. Almost any of the upper terraces on the Pilot Knob hill would have provided a much finer view. In particular, the area north and northeast of the summit of Pilot Knob proposed by Granger and Kelly in 1991 is a more likely site. From much of the middle and upper portions of Pilot Knob, as described by Frank B. Mayer, it would have been possible to see the fort, St. Anthony, and St. Paul and many other areas. This area also better fits the description given by Joseph Nicollet of the 1837 Medicine Ceremony site, in an oak grove, on a plateau, behind the American Fur Company facility "halfway up the high hill of Pilot Knob." It is doubtful that the church site, located upriver from the Sibley House to the southwest would have been described as "behind" the location of Sibley's house, warehouse, or other buildings, while the entirety of Pilot Knob fits the description much better.

The evidence discussed here shows that the case for locating the treaty signing on the site of St. Peter's Church is unconvincing. Moreover, there is nothing in the historical record that specifically associates St. Peter's Church with the 1851 Treaty, which is especially problematic considering the church was built barely two years after the treaty (*Over the Years*, April & July 1966; *Minneapolis Times*, Sept. 30, 1903; *St. Paul Dispatch*, Sept. 30, 1903; *St. Paul Pioneer*



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*Press*, Sept. 30, 1903). It is especially puzzling why Edward Bromley, who visited Mendota at the time he wrote his 1901 article and would have known of the existence of the church, made no mention of this location as a possibility for the treaty site.

In summary, the weight of the evidence, based on various crucial details found in the primary sources, supports the conclusion that the treaty signing took place somewhere in the nomination area, on the northern terraces of Pilot Knob. That, coupled with the long tradition placing the treaty signing site on the hill, suggests that the preponderance of evidence points to the area identified by Granger and Kelly in 1991. Beyond that, however, as stated by Granger and Kelly (1990: 5), the exact site of the treaty signing should not be considered the only site of importance in relation to the 1851 Treaty. Rather the treaty-signing site is only one of several components of importance in relation to such treaties. The evidence demonstrates that there is a strong association of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob with the Treaty of 1851, through the presence of treaty encampments there and the symbolic value the site had for Dakota people who signed the treaty. The Treaty of 1851 is an important aspect of our nation's history for Native Americans and European Americans alike. Together, the two 1851 treaties with the Dakota are nationally significant because they ceded 35 million acres of land to the United States.

**Later Views of Oĥéyawahe**

Throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, acknowledgment was always made to the historical and cultural importance of the Oĥéyawahe. In a newspaper article and a pamphlet written to publicize his development plan, Thomas Newson told of the importance of the bluff to the Dakota, Sibley's view from the bluff in 1834, and many other aspects of its history (Newson 1887, Aug. 28; Newson [1887]). Newson also gave a description of the bluff as it was then. To ascend Oĥéyawahe, one passed over the track of the Iowa Division of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway, which ran around the base of the bluff, and ascended a road that crossed a field. At the summit of Pilot Knob, one gazed out over a view of "unparalleled beauty." Newson wrote that Pilot Knob was considered the highest point of land between the Twin Cities. He described the view from there in spiritual terms, suggesting that the Dakota view of the sacredness of the place had become more widespread:

From this elevated position one gets the finest view in the Northwest. . . . From Pilot Knob can be witnessed one unending panorama of natural beauty from all points of the compass, which impresses the eye more as a picture than the grand handiwork of a great, unseen Power. This high point of ground was at one time the burial place of many bodies of defunct Sioux Indians, lofty places, when accessible, being always chosen for that purpose.

After Newson's development proposal fell through, the farm just the below summit of the hill was inhabited between the late 1880s and early 1900s by Esdras Bernier, a Mendota storekeeper and for a time Mendota's postmaster. A reminiscence by one of the children, Louis

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O. Bernier (1968, May), suggests that the Berniers were well aware of the importance of the area:

Pilot Knob is the spot where the Treaty of Mendota was signed with the Indians in 1851 which opened land west of the Minnesota River to settlers. It was used as a burying ground for years by the Indians and we would find arrows and bones digging up on the hill when we were boys.

Bernier noted that the family had a beautiful view from the brick house. On Sunday evenings the family would “watch for the lights of the excursion boat coming back down the Minnesota River from Shakopee,” returning to St. Paul. On calm nights, “you could hear Retreat being sounded and hear the band from Fort Snelling.”

No other plans to develop or preserve Pilot Knob have been recorded until the 1920s. Meanwhile the homes of fur traders Henry H. Sibley and Hypolite Dupuis—both now part of the National Register Old Mendota Historic District(NRHP 6-22-70)—were gradually preserved in the village of Mendota through the efforts of the Daughters of the American Revolution, beginning in 1909 (Landscape Research 1997: 48-49; Marcaccini and Woytanowitz 1997, 55: 190-93). This group turned in the 1920s to Pilot Knob, hoping to further commemorate Henry Sibley. Apparently around 1922 the group erected the 1851 treaty commemoration plaque now found in Acacia Cemetery.

In March 1925, a bill was introduced in the Minnesota Legislature “providing for a commission to investigate the feasibility and possibility of acquiring a tract of land on Pilot Knob for memorial purposes.” The bill followed a suggestion made by the Daughters of the American Revolution that a memorial tablet or statue be erected to the memory of General Sibley. Instead, the land surrounding the summit of Pilot Knob was purchased by a Masonic group with the intention of making it into a cemetery under the name Acacia Cemetery. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (May 1, 1926, p. 9, cols. 3 & 4; see also Folwell 1961, 3: 268) reported that the land’s

final purchase reverts the historic landmark to one of its original uses. Prior to General Sibley’s arrival at Pilot Knob in November 1834, the Knob was used as a burial ground for Sioux Indian tribes of the vicinity. Its original name, so far as records of the Minnesota Historical society reveal, was “La Butte des Morts,” which translated reads “The Knoll of the Dead.”

When the cemetery was dedicated, its managers highlighted the rich history of Pilot Knob. An arbor was erected in the center of the cemetery to commemorate the one put up for the Treaty of 1851. At the same time, it was reported in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* of October 1, 1928, that “valuing the historicity of the grounds the committee has pledged itself to erect memorials to the men, Indian and white, who have made Pilot Knob famous.”

Since then, the management of Acacia Cemetery has continued to highlight the history and sacred importance of Pilot Knob for Native Americans. An advertising leaflet from around

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the 1980s emphasized the Native history of the area. Pilot Knob, “the site of Acacia” was “rich in historic traditions relating to Indians who first selected the location for their special ceremonies,” a possible reference to the well-known Medicine Dance associations of the site. To honor the site the cemetery sought to preserve the “beauty inherent in the area.” (Minnesota-Acacia Park Cemetery Association [ca.1900]).

Among others recognizing the importance of the site was the City of Mendota Heights which stated in its 2002 Comprehensive Plan that the hill was “considered sacred to the Dakota” and important in American history. The city’s website (Mendota Heights 2002a) stated, that “the Dakota Indians considered the hill sacred” and noted, “this prominent hill on the Minnesota Historic Inventory overlooks the confluence of the rivers. It is unusual in its broad scope of historical significance.”

A variety of state surveys have singled out Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob for notice. It was included in the 1975 *Minnesota Inventory of Historic and Prehistoric Places* (1975: 18). A 1989 study of geographic features of historical and cultural significance in Minnesota listed the site (Zellie 1989, May; MNSHPO 1989, Jan.). A discussion of land-cession treaty sites in Minnesota stated that the site appeared to be potentially eligible for the National Register and called for further research (Granger and Kelly 1990, Sept.; Granger 2002, Dec. 30). A 1994 survey of the area affected by nearby Metropolitan Airport developments resulted in the conclusion by a contractor and by the SHPO that Acacia Cemetery was eligible for the National Register on its own for its design characteristics, but no further effort was made to examine the eligibility of Oĥéyawahe as a whole for its importance to Native American and European-American history (Roise 1995, Aug.: 21-25; Bloomberg 1995). However, Oĥéyawahe was included in the Minnesota Preservation Alliance’s 2003 list of the ten most endangered historic properties in Minnesota (*St. Paul Pioneer Press* 2003, May 3).

### **Present Day Oĥéyawahe as a Sacred Site**

While the graves of Dakota people may not be visible today on Oĥéyawahe, the sacredness of the site continues to be acknowledged by Dakota people. A map prepared in 2000 by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community identified Pilot Knob as a sacred site. In a June 2003 study, The 106 Group concluded that Pilot Knob was eligible to the National Register as a traditional cultural property and a geographic feature (Terrell 2003:84-85). In January 2003, Stanley Crooks of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community wrote about the importance of Oĥéyawahe for Dakota oral tradition and in written documentation. He stated that the site “has never lost its significance among our people.” Ann Larson of the Lower Sioux Community, wrote another statement on the significance of the site, emphasizing the extensive use of the area by Dakota people.

In an interview in April 2003, Chris Leith, a spiritual leader of the Prairie Island Dakota Community, also insisted on the continuing spiritual importance of Oĥéyawahe for Dakota people. Leith recalled that Pilot Knob was sometimes known as *Paha Oipa*, meaning “top of the

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hill,” and it was sometimes used as a lookout point, because it was possible to see all around the country from there. As is the case with many sites of sacred importance, Leith was reluctant to discuss the details of spiritual belief about Oĥéyawahe such as those described by the Ponds in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He stated that the site is a “sacred landmark,” one that served as a meeting place and a burial place for Dakota people, but it would not have been the location of a village. He explained that burials would have been placed there because it was understood that the area was sacred and that the graves would not be disturbed. Leith stated that the origins of the sacredness of Oĥéyawahe could not be explained by any person. “There are many questions that no human being can answer.” When Leith was pressed for details about the connection of the site to Uŋktéĥi, Leith stated:

I just answered it. . . . You asked me something in a different way. . . . That’s a European concept. If they don’t get an answer, well then they’ll ask another way. They can’t accept what they’ve been told. They want to change it. . . . Our ceremonies come in dreams and visions. Our way of life is conducted under dreams and visions. We don’t change it. We don’t have that right. It is not of our making.

Leith emphasized that sites such as Oĥéyawahe should be “left alone” and not built upon. He stated that people might build there, “but it might not ever last.” When asked about the possibility of doing archaeology on the site, Leith said simply: “Leave it alone.” People who did not leave the area alone had to “be made aware or else they are going to face the consequences.”

Other Native people outside of Minnesota recognized Oĥéyawahe as a place of sacred importance. Chief Arvol Looking Horse, 19<sup>th</sup> Generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe, a widely respected spiritual leader (2002, Dec. 13; 2001), wrote in support of the protection of Pilot Knob, stating that “it is important to become educated in the significance of preserving sites that are very sacred in our history as a People.” He noted the importance of Pilot Knob as the location of the Treaty of 1851 and as “a burial place for the ancestors that needs to [be] maintained and understood as a ‘Sacred Site.’ To build and erase a rich historical importance would prove so much ignorance by those that perpetrate this type of dishonorable behavior.” Looking Horse held a pipe ceremony on Pilot Knob while passing through the Mendota area in 1999, while on his way to the Coldwater Spring area in support of its protection.

The late Robert A. Brown, chairman of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community, a community of Dakotas based in Mendota, saw the preservation of Pilot Knob as important to Dakota identity. Brown, whose ancestors, both Dakota and French, lived in Mendota since at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, suggested in an interview in April 2003 that the importance of Oĥéyawahe, like other sacred or ceremonial sites comes in part from its historical importance for the Dakota, including its use as a burial place:

It is part of the story of the Dakota people and if you let all these things go and you let . . . the important places, that were part of your heritage go, if you forget about where your ancestors are lying in rest, you take all these things away from a Dakota person or

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anybody really, you take their heritage away from them, then they are no longer that people.

Brown, who died in August 2003, was buried in Acacia Cemetery after a funeral in the old St. Peter's Catholic Church in Mendota. Two days before the funeral a pipe ceremony in his honor was held by the community on a northern slope of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob overlooking Fort Snelling, the mouth of the Minnesota River, downtown Minneapolis, and the surrounding country.

On March 31, 2004, Chief Arvol Looking Horse led a sacred Dakota ceremony attended by about 100 people on Oĥéyawahe to honor the dead buried on the hill. Representatives from the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes spoke. Ceremony leaders gave the hill a new name: Wodakuye Paha, or "Hill of Relatives" (Loy, 2004).

On June 1, 2006, the 8.5 acre site on Oĥéyawahe purchased by the City of Mendota Heights was dedicated with a ceremony attended by about 100 people. Native American musician Mitch Walking Elk sang a Cheyenne/Arapahoe "thanking" song at the beginning of the dedication ceremony of the public open space park overlooking Bdote and several speakers followed, explaining how the land came to be preserved (*SPPS*, 2-6-2008).

On October 3, 2009, Chief Arvol Looking Horse led a Pipe Ceremony at Oĥéyawahe, assisted by Sheldon Wolfchild from Lower Sioux, Chris Leith from Prairie Island, Melvin Grey Owl from Crow Creek, and Melvin Lee Houston from Santee. These Dakota leaders spoke about the importance of preserving Dakota sacred sites. After the ceremony there was a feast and wopida (a "thank you" giveaway) in honor of the Dakota leaders. The ceremony was attended by many Dakota people from Minnesota and adjoining states who were attending the 2009 Dakota Nation We Are One Free Conference which was taking place in the Twin Cities at the time (MMDC website, 2011; Lewellan and Brown, 2009; Regan, 2009).

On June 18, 2011, the participants in the World Peace and Prayer Day (June 18 through June 21, 2011) gathered on Oĥéyawahe and were welcomed by Chief Arvol Looking Horse. The group included the Peace Riders, people rode on horseback from South Dakota to Bdote (Mendota, MN) (FWS website, 2015; MMDC website, 2011). The ceremony led by Chief Looking Horse included Lighting of the Sacred Fire, which began World Peace and Prayer Day. The Sacred Fire was then taken to the Church of St Peter's where it remained for the duration of the World Peace and Prayer Day event.

In addition to these large ceremonies, individuals and small groups continue to visit Oĥéyawahe to pray. It is common to see small bundles of tobacco offerings left on the hill. Also of note, the 250-member Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community holds its annual pow-wows in September on the Church of St. Peter grounds, at the base of Oĥéyawahe. Additionally, small trees grown from cuttings of four oak trees that were cut down during protests by local Dakota and other tribal members during rerouting of Minnesota 55 near Coldwater Spring in 1999 were planted on St. Peter's Church grounds.

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### **Summary and Conclusions**

Ohéyawahe /Pilot Knob is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because it is a Dakota ceremonial site of historic importance and is the site of the signing of the 1851 Treaty. There is a broad consensus over a period of almost 200 years as to the importance of Ohéyawahe as a place of traditional importance to the Dakota and other Native people, as a meeting place, a burial place, and a place for important ceremonies. In addition, Ohéyawahe has taken its place in European-American history, marking a crucially important treaty and witnessing the growth of the post at Fort Snelling, and the settlement in the area, and in the wider Twin Cities. It continues to be an important geographical feature within the physical, historical, and cultural landscape of Fort Snelling and wider Twin Cities area.

Aside from places related to the U.S.–Dakota Conflict, few areas of importance to Dakota history and culture in Minnesota have been listed on the National Register either in the Fort Snelling area or in Minnesota in general. Through the efforts of the Minnesota SHPO, Maka Yusota (Boiling Springs) at Shakopee was listed on the National Register as a place of traditional cultural importance to the Dakota (NRHP 1/16/03). Other locations of importance to Native Americans in or near the Fort Snelling Historic Landmark district have been damaged or destroyed. Indian Mounds Park Mound Group, a portion of the area known as Wakan Tipi was listed on the National Register in 2014 (NRHP 4/11/14). Taku Wakan Tipi or Morgan’s Mound is now covered with a Veteran’s Administration Hospital, a major highway, housing, and portions of the Twin Cities airport. The location of the signing of the Ojibwe Treaty of 1837 at the Fort Snelling Indian Agency has been largely destroyed by highway construction (Harrison 2002: 27). In 2006 Summit Envirosolutions and the Two Pines Resource Group prepared a report for the National Park Service, Mississippi National River and Recreation area, finding Coldwater Spring to be a Traditional Cultural Property, a determination supported by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office. However, the site has not yet been nominated for or listed on the National Register (Summit Envirosolutions and Two Pines Resource Group 2006; Britta Bloomberg 2010; see also White and Westerman 2012: 212-220).

Ohéyawahe /Pilot Knob is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D because the site has yielded human remains of Dakota origin and would likely reveal indigenous artifacts if an archeological study were done. However, under Minnesota state law, burial sites cannot be excavated.

Ohéyawahe remains one of the major places of importance to the Dakota, within the area of Bdote and perhaps elsewhere, still retaining adequate integrity to communicate both its historical and cultural importance. For this reason and for the importance of the site to European American history, Ohéyawahe provides a unique opportunity for people of all backgrounds to experience a key part of their past. The site truly bears out the statement of the City of Mendota Heights that it is a place “unusual in its broad scope of historical significance,” one deserving of placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State

Name of Property

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Oheyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

County and State

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Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Dakota, Minnesota

Name of Property

County and State

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register (03001374)  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 112

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude:

Longitude:

Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Dakota, Minnesota

Name of Property

County and State

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 487060 | Northing: 4969800 |
| 2. Zone: 15 | Easting: 487100 | Northing: 4968920 |
| 3. Zone: 15 | Easting: 486300 | Northing: 4968920 |
| 4. Zone: 15 | Easting: 486420 | Northing: 4969800 |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Oĥéyawahe includes that portion of Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob bounded on the west by the 810-foot contour line and on the east by the 900/880-foot contour lines. Intervening contours mark the north and south property lines. This area includes all land parcels between the Big Rivers Regional Trail on the west and the highway right-of-way for Minnesota State Highway 55 on the north and east. More precisely, on the west, the boundary is the uphill (eastern) edge of the railroad grade now occupied by the regional trail. On the north and east, the boundary is the top of the ditch or back slope cut for Highway 55. The southern boundary of the site is generally formed by an east-west line extending from the Regional Trail on the west to Highway 55 on the east, centered on a point approximately 250 feet north of the intersection of Pilot Knob Road and Commerce Drive. This line is approximately 100 feet south of the section line. Below this line in the center of the southern portion of the site, a trapezoid of one-and-a-half acres is included within the site. It is bounded by Pilot Knob Road on the east extending southward to the intersection of Commerce Drive (ca. 250'), then extending approximately 420 feet to the west along the north curb line of Commerce Drive, and then northwest at an approximate 45 degree angle to rejoin the major southern boundary. The site is within a polygon defined by the UTM points listed in Section 10, above.

Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Dakota, Minnesota

Name of Property

County and State

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

**Verbal Boundary Justification**

Given the varying contours on the sides of Ojéyawahe, it impossible to use a single contour line as a way of defining the hill. The abrupt drop of the hill on the west side ending at the 810-foot contour line is easier to demarcate than the other sides of the hill which slope more gradually. Historically, the area was defined by a combination of factors, including topography and the route of trails, railroad tracks, and highways. For current purposes, the areas included within the historically defined area of the hill which retain substantial characteristics of Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob and which convey a sense of the original historic and sacred bluff have been included in the eligible area. Coincidentally, the trenching done for Highway 55 provides an easy line of demarcation on the north and east, as does the Regional Trail adjacent to Sibley Memorial Highway on the west. On the south, the areas of greatest integrity include all Acacia Cemetery lands on the west side of Pilot Knob Road and the residential yards, temporary dog park and vacant public lands on the east side of the road. Farther south, portions of the historic Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob now developed as warehouse and commercial space have been excluded because of their lack of integrity.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Christine Soutter and Bruce M. White, with contributions from Virginia Martin and Alan Woolworth

organization: Pilot Knob Preservation Association

street & number: P. O. Box 50823

city or town: Mendota state: MN zip code: 55150-0823

e-mail info@pilotknobpreservation.org

telephone: 651-310-0601 (Bruce White, Turnstone Historical Research)

date: November 18, 2016

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Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

County and State

### **Additional Documentation**

#### **Continuation Sheets**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

#### **Continuation Sheets (see below)**

Figure 1. Sketch map of showing location and boundaries of Oĥéyawahe /Pilot Knob in Mendota Heights, MN Created by Bruce White.

Figure 2. A portion of James L. Thompson 1853, version 1839 of the Fort Snelling area, showing Pilot Knob and the roads passing through the area. Minnesota Historical Society, Fort Snelling Collection.

Figure 3. Detail from the 1896 map of the Minnesota, St. Paul Quadrangle, 15-minute series, showing the contours of Oĥéyawahe /Pilot Knob.

Figure 4. Detail from an 1821 map of Fort Snelling area, showing Pilot Hill.

Figure 5. Medicine Dance of the Sioux or Dakota Indians on the St. Peters River near Fort Snelling, by Seth Eastman. Minnesota Historical Society, AV 1881.85.2.

Figure 6. Indian Graves at the mouth of the St. Peters, a watercolor by Seth Eastman. Minnesota Historical Society, AV2989.44.281.

Figure 7. Oĥéyawahe or Pilot Knob, as viewed from below Fort Snelling, looking southeast, around 1846-48, by Seth Eastman. Minnesota Historical Society, AV1991.85.23.

Figure 8. Seth Eastman view looking toward Fort Snelling from near the top of Oĥéyawahe /Pilot Knob, around the 1840s, location of original unknown.

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Dakota, Minnesota

Name of Property

County and State

Figure 9. Frank B. Mayer view from summit of Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob looking north toward St. Paul, 1851, original in Newberry Library, Chicago.

Figure 10. Chief Arvol Looking Horse on Pilot Knob, ca. 1998, photographer unknown, original print in collection of Pilot Knob Preservation Association.

Figure 11. View from summit of Pilot Knob hill from Acacia Park Cemetery, before landscaping, looking over Mendota Bridge, 1926. Minnesota Historical Society

Figure 12. Robert Brown, advocate for protecting Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob, around 2002.

Figure 13. Aerial photo of Historic Pilot Knob, 2015, including map; Great River Greening.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Photograph 1

Name of Property: Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

City or Vicinity: Mendota Heights

County: Dakota County

State: MN

Photographer: Bruce White

Date Photographed: November, 2003

Description of Photograph: View of Pilot Knob hill from Hwy 5, across Picnic Island at Fort Snelling State Park.

1 of 7

Photograph 2

Name of Property: Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

City or Vicinity: Mendota Heights

County: Dakota County

State: MN

Photographer: Bruce White

Date Photographed: June 2009

Description of Photograph: View from Round Tower at Fort Snelling looking across Mendota Bridge to Pilot Knob hill.

2 of 7

Photograph 3

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Dakota, Minnesota

Name of Property

County and State

Name of Property: Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

City or Vicinity: Mendota Heights

County: Dakota County

State: MN

Photographer: Bruce White

Date Photographed: 3-12-16

Description of Photograph: View from summit of Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob looking northeast towards St. Paul.

3 of 7

Photograph 4

Name of Property: Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

City or Vicinity: Mendota Heights

County: Dakota County

State: MN

Photographer: Bruce White

Date Photographed: 3-12-16

Description of Photograph: View from inside Acacia Park Cemetery looking northwest across Mendota Bridge to downtown Minneapolis.

4 of 7

Photograph 5

Name of Property: Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

City or Vicinity: Mendota Heights

County: Dakota County

State: MN

Photographer: Bruce White

Date Photographed: 3-12-16

Description of Photograph: View in Acacia Park Cemetery of Office and Chapel, and of Pilot Knob memorial plaque on boulder.

5 of 7

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

County and State

Photograph 6

Name of Property: Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

City or Vicinity: Mendota Heights

County: Dakota County State: MN

Photographer: Bruce White

Date Photographed: July, 2010

Description of Photograph: View from Pilot Knob of Fort Snelling and downtown Minneapolis.

6 of 7

Photograph 7

Name of Property: Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

City or Vicinity: Mendota Heights

County: Dakota County State: MN

Photographer: Chris Soutter

Date Photographed: 3-22-2010

Description of Photograph: View Hwy 5 x Shepard Road, looking across Pike Island to Pilot Knob hill.

7 of 7

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State

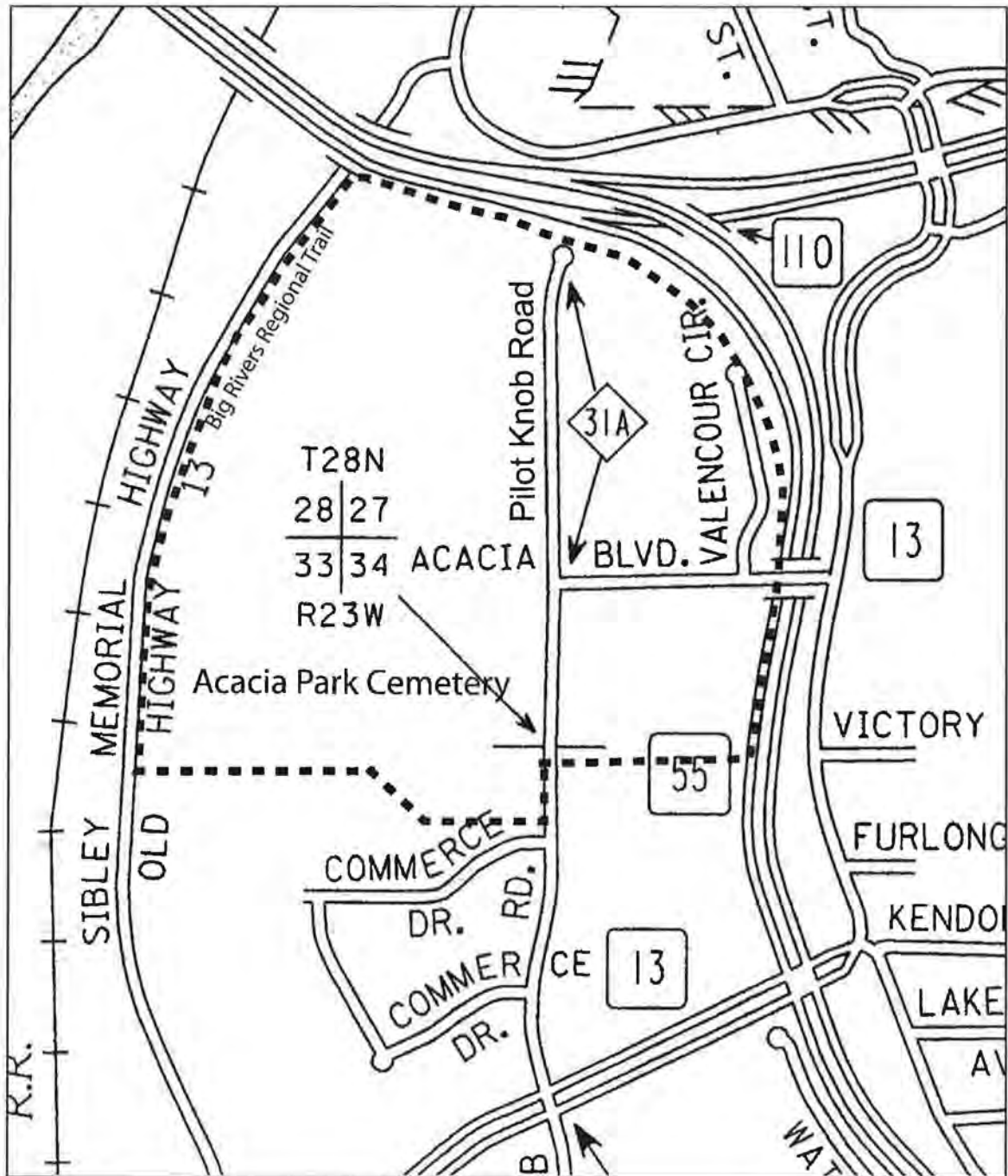


Figure 1. Sketch map showing location and boundaries of Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob in Mendota Heights, Dakota County, Minnesota

Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State

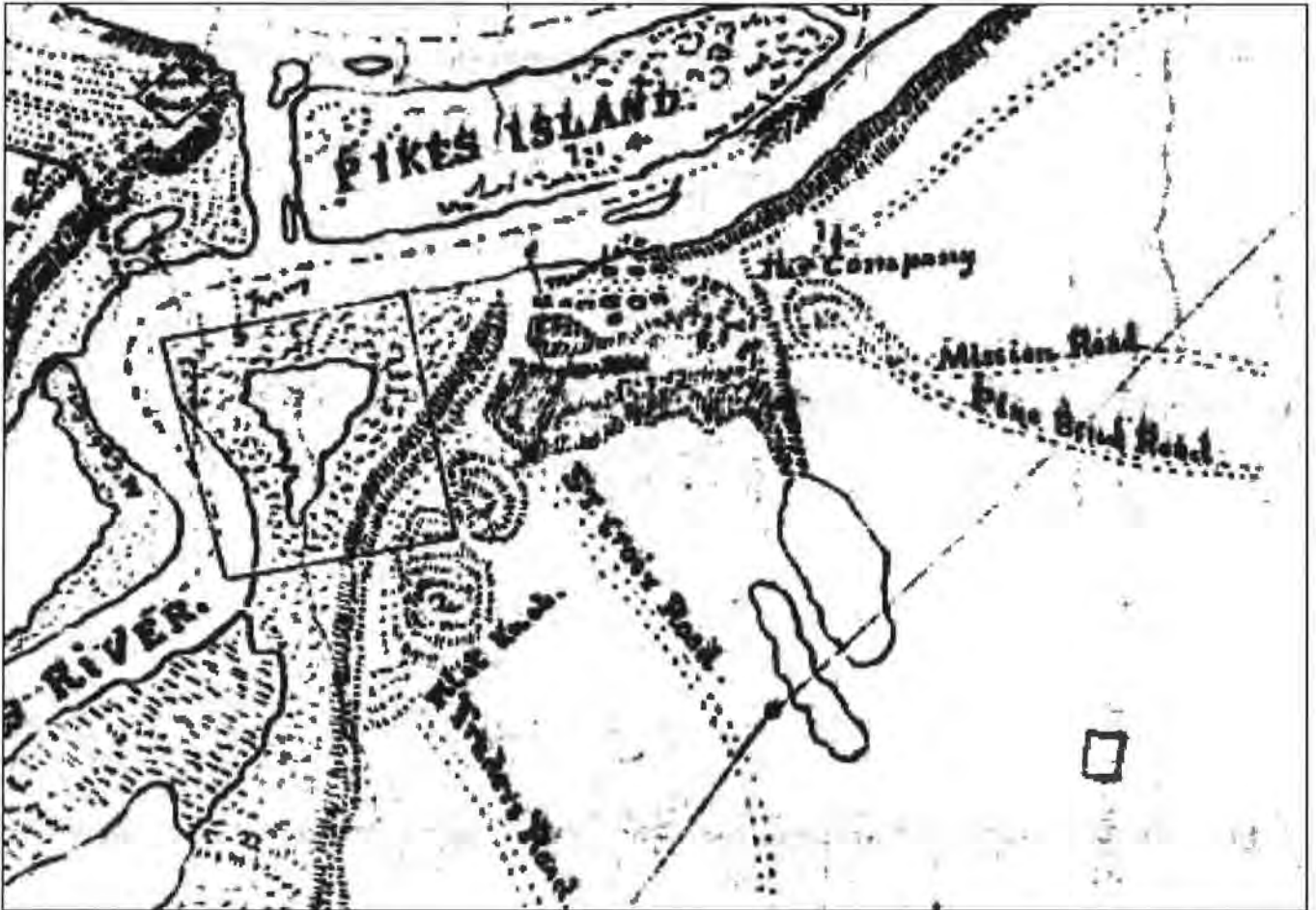


Figure 2. A portion of an 1853 version of James Thompson's 1839 map of the Fort Snelling area, showing Pilot Knob and the roads passing through the area

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State



Figure 3. Detail from the 1896 map of the Minnesota, St. Paul Quadrangle, 15-minute series, showing the contours of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State

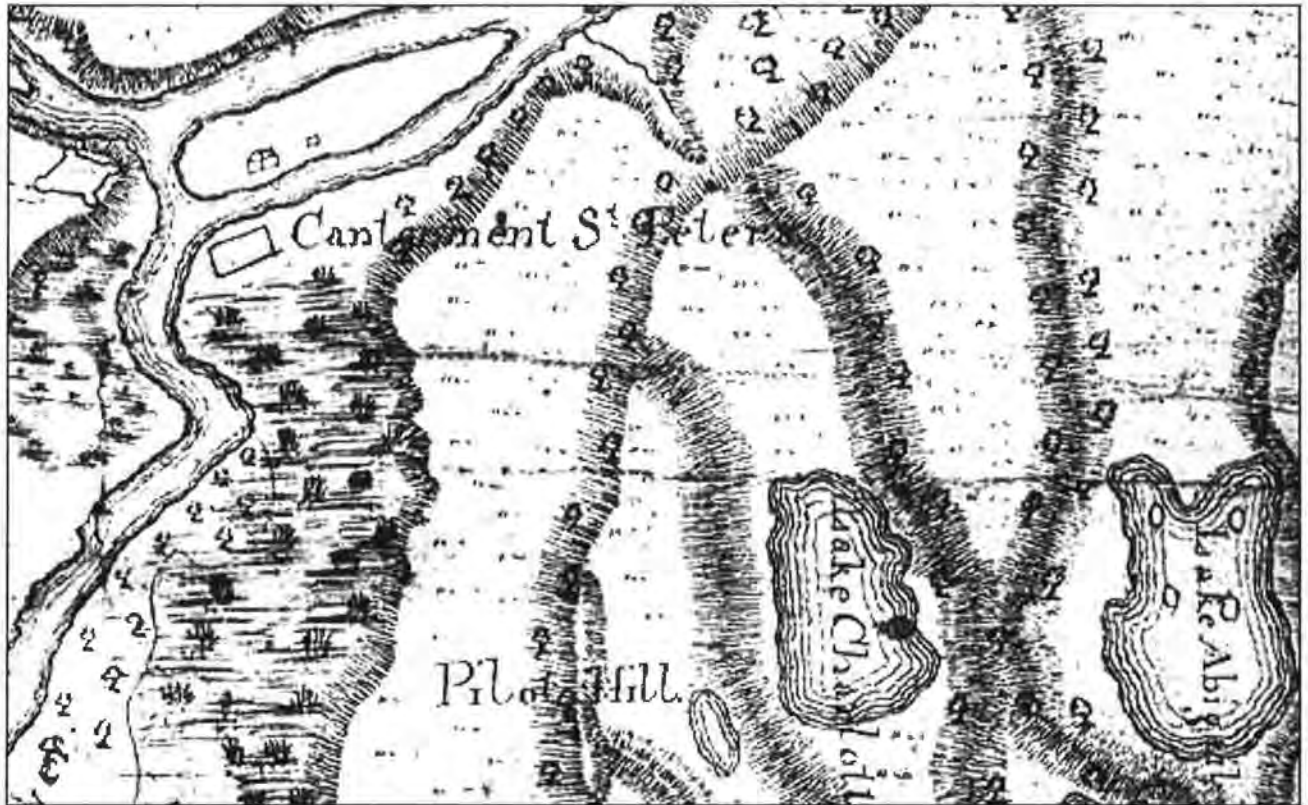


Figure 4. Detail from an 1821 map of the Fort Snelling area, showing Pilot Hill

Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State



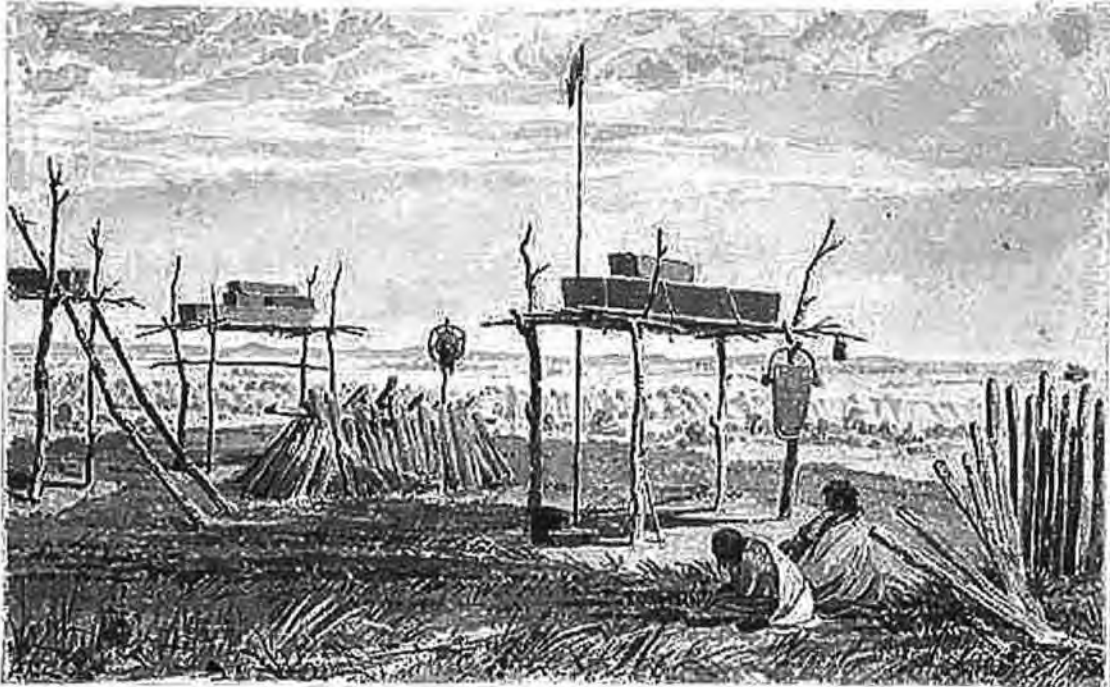
Figure 5. Medicine Dance of the Sioux or Dakota Indians on the St. Peters River near Fort Snelling, by Seth Eastman, Minnesota Historical Society, AV1881.85.2

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

County and State



*S. Eastman 1849  
No. 17 Indian graves at the mouth of the St. Peters*

Figure 6. Indian Graves at the mouth of the St. Peters, a watercolor by Seth Eastman, Minnesota Historical Society, AV2989.44.281

Oĥéyawaĥe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State



Figure 7. Oĥéyawaĥe or Pilot Knob, as viewed from below Fort Snelling, looking southeast, around 1846-48, by Seth Eastman, Minnesota Historical Society, AV1991.85.23

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State



Figure 8. Seth Eastman view looking toward Fort Snelling from near the top of Ohéyawahe /Pilot Knob, around the 1840s, location of original unknown



Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

County and State



Figure 9. Frank B. Mayer view from summit of Ohéyawahe /Pilot Knob looking north toward St. Paul, 1851, original in Newberry Library, Chicago

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State



Figure 10. Chief Arvol Looking Horse on Pilot Knob, ca. 1998, photographer unknown, copy print in collection of Pilot Knob Preservation Association.

Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

County and State



Figure 11. View from summit of Pilot Knob hill from Acacia Park Cemetery, before landscaping, looking over Mendota Bridge, 1926. Minnesota Historical Society

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob

Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota

County and State

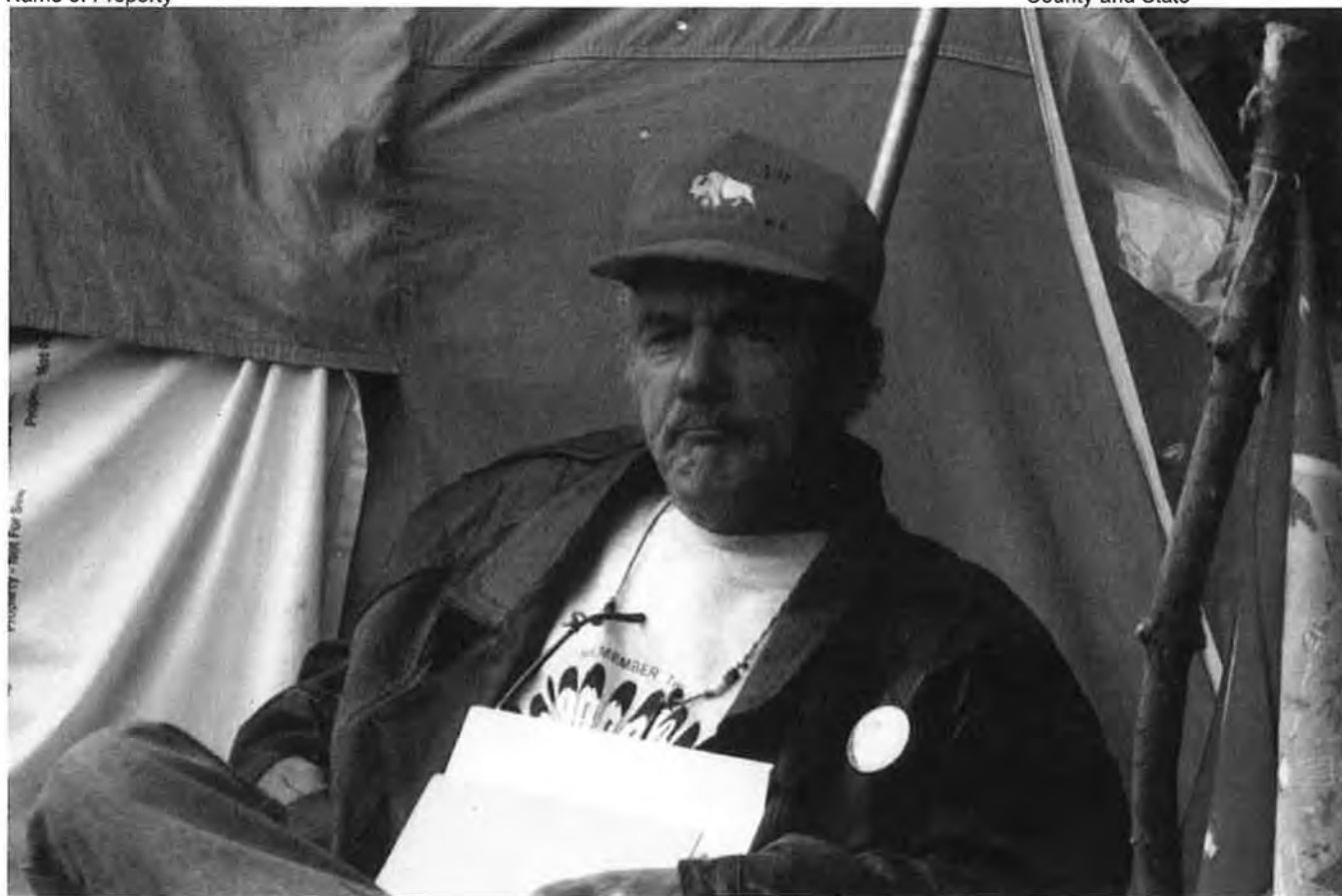
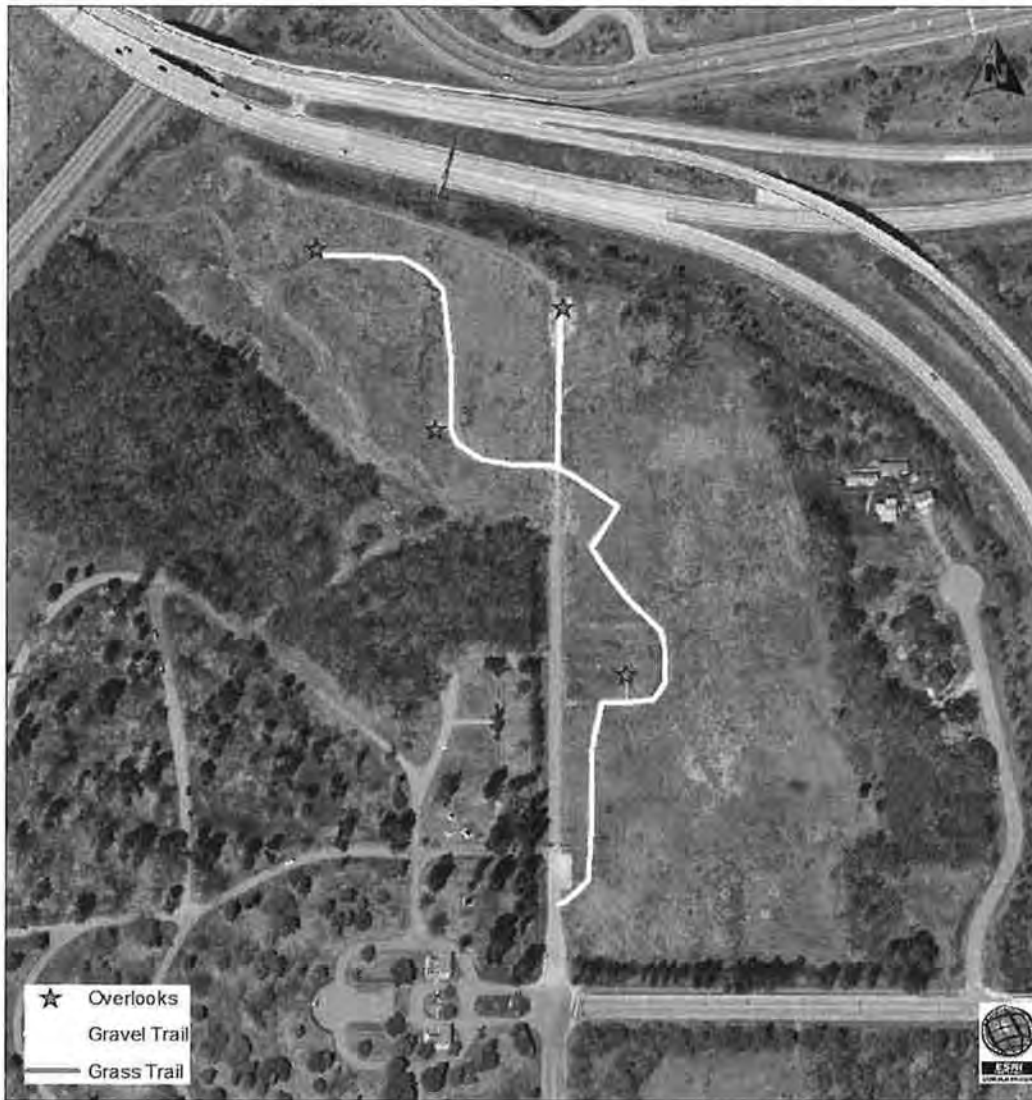


Figure 12. Robert Brown, advocate for protecting Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob, around 2002.

Ohéyawahe/Pilot Knob  
Name of Property

Dakota, Minnesota  
County and State



**Pilot Knob Hill Open Space Trails and Overlooks** 0 200 400 800 Feet

Figure 13. Aerial photo of Historic Pilot Knob, 2015, including map; Great River Greening.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Oñéyawahe/Pilot Knob
Name of Property
Dakota County, Minnesota
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Locations

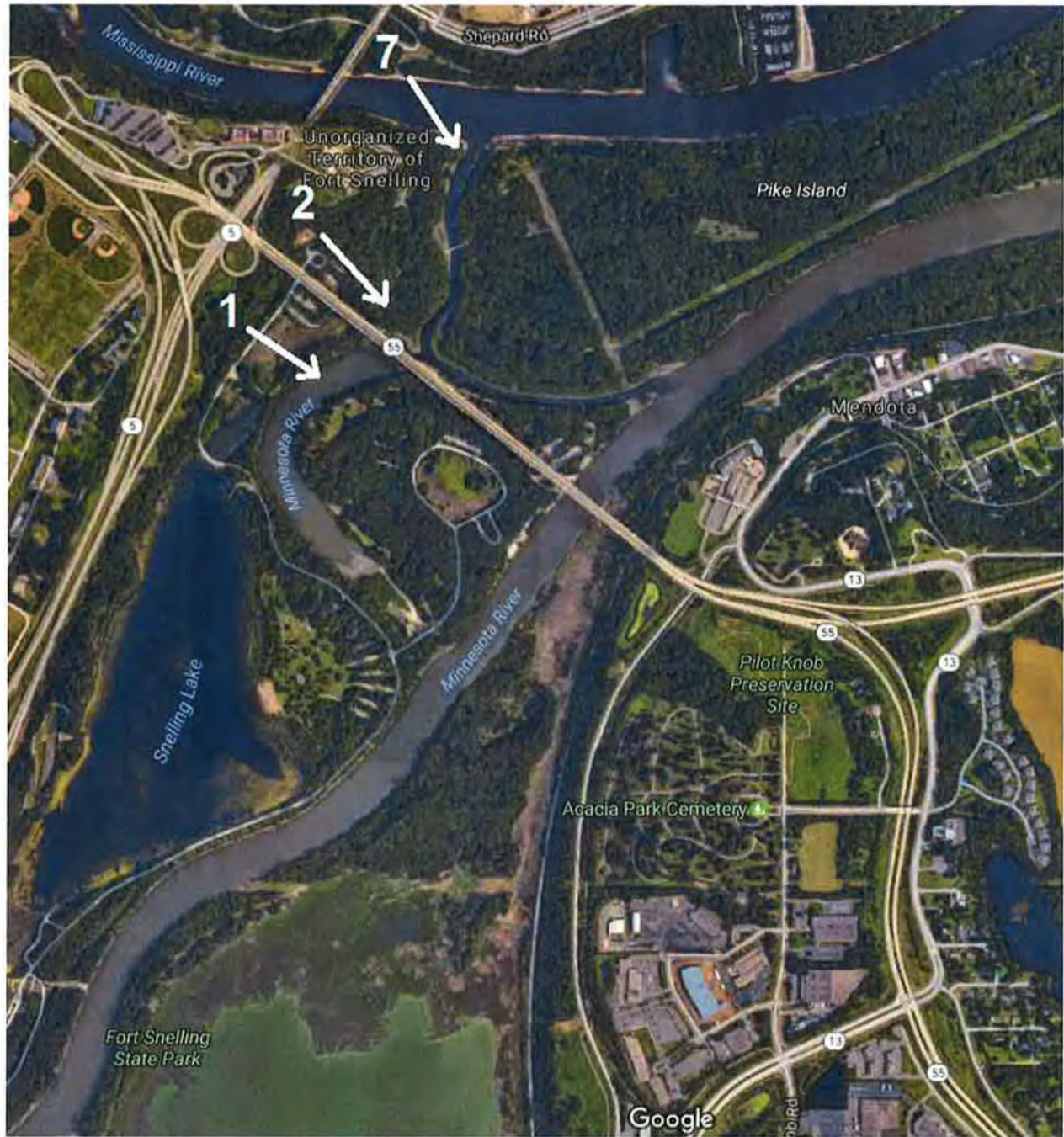


Photo Location Map 1: Photos 1, 2 and 7.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Oñéyawahe/Pilot Knob
Name of Property
Dakota County, Minnesota
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Locations

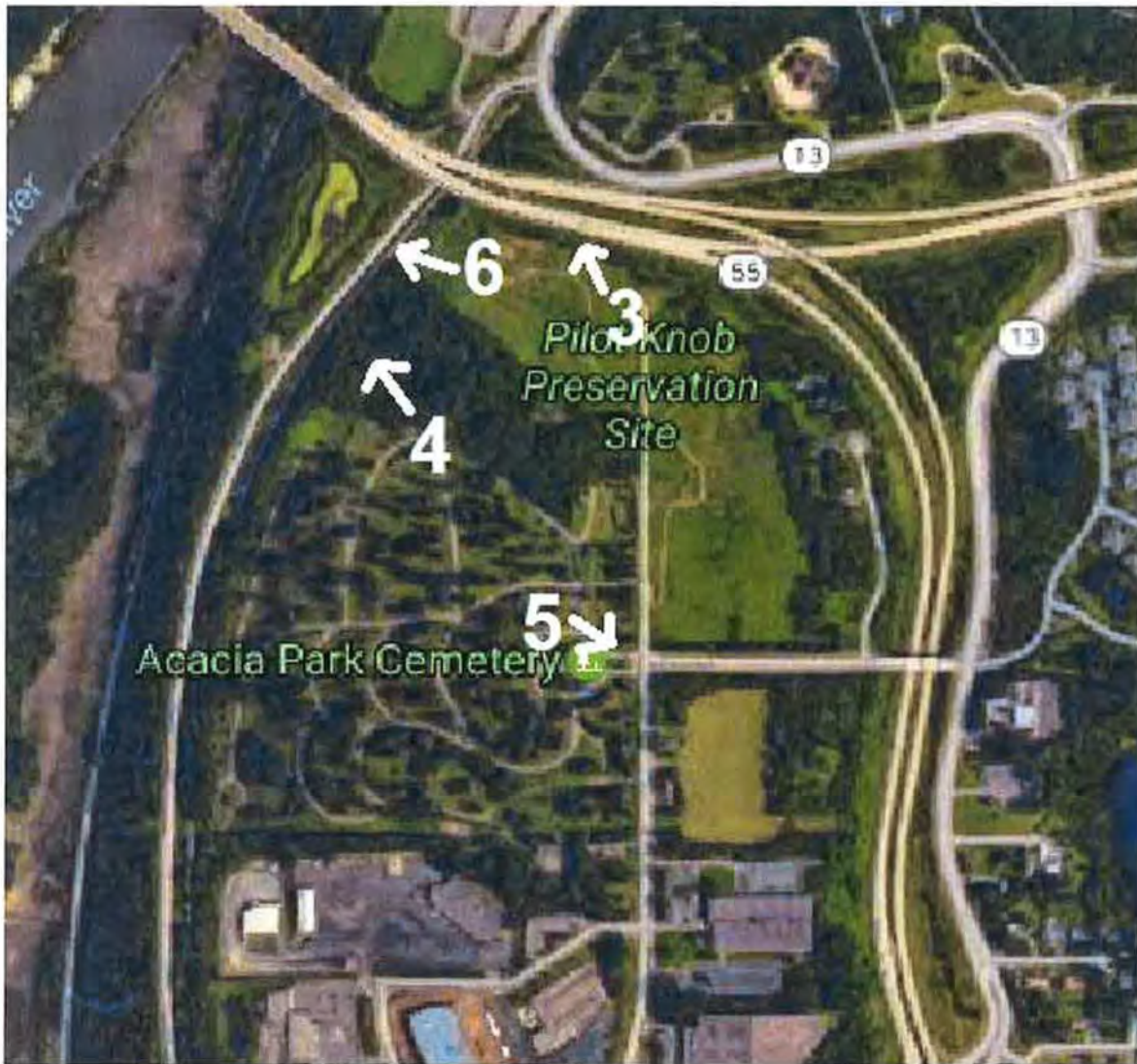


Photo Location Map 2: Photos 3, 4, 5 and 6.

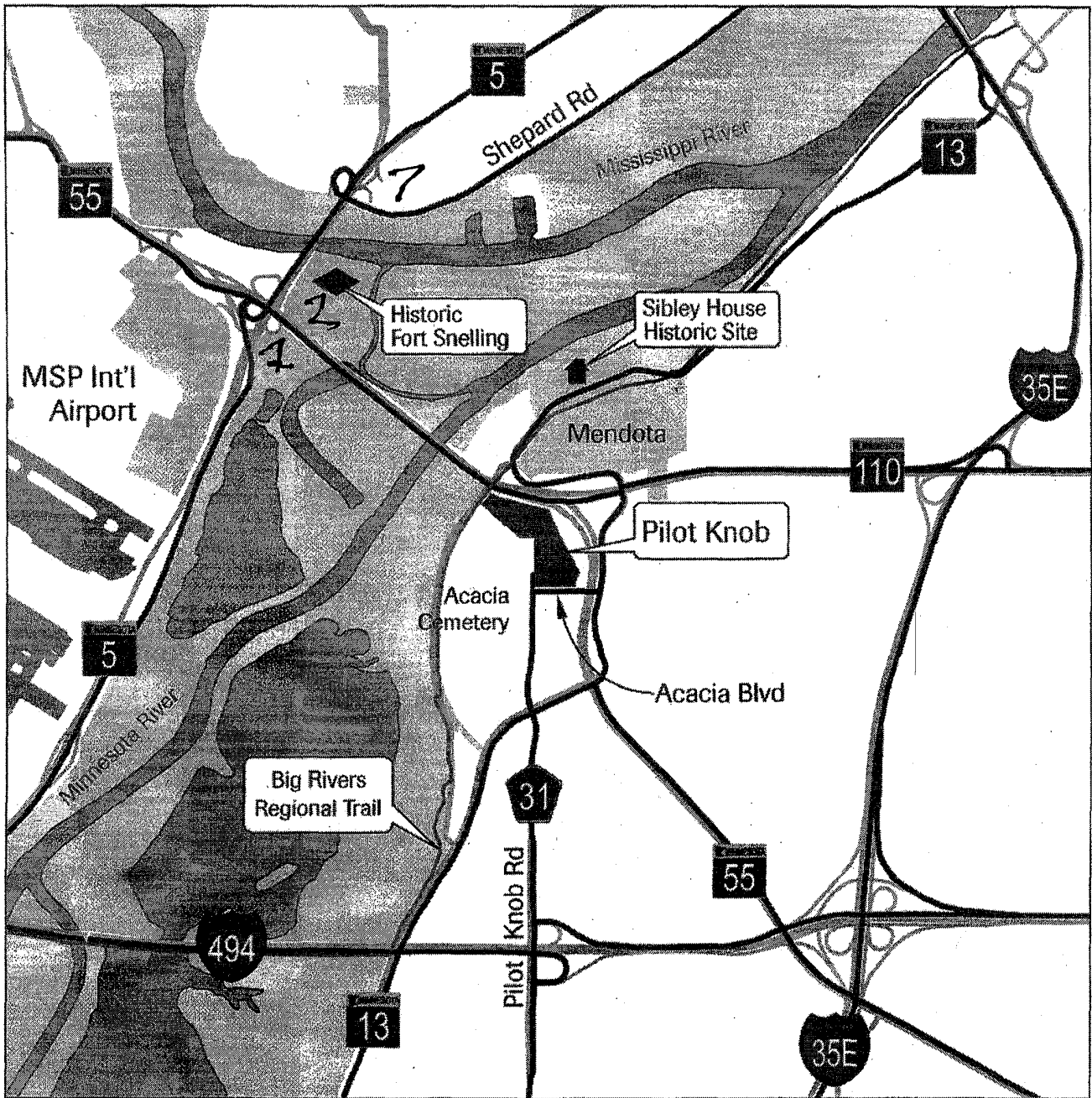


PHOTO LOCATION MAP 1

PHOTOS 1, 2, 7

PHOTOS 3-6 ON MAP 2



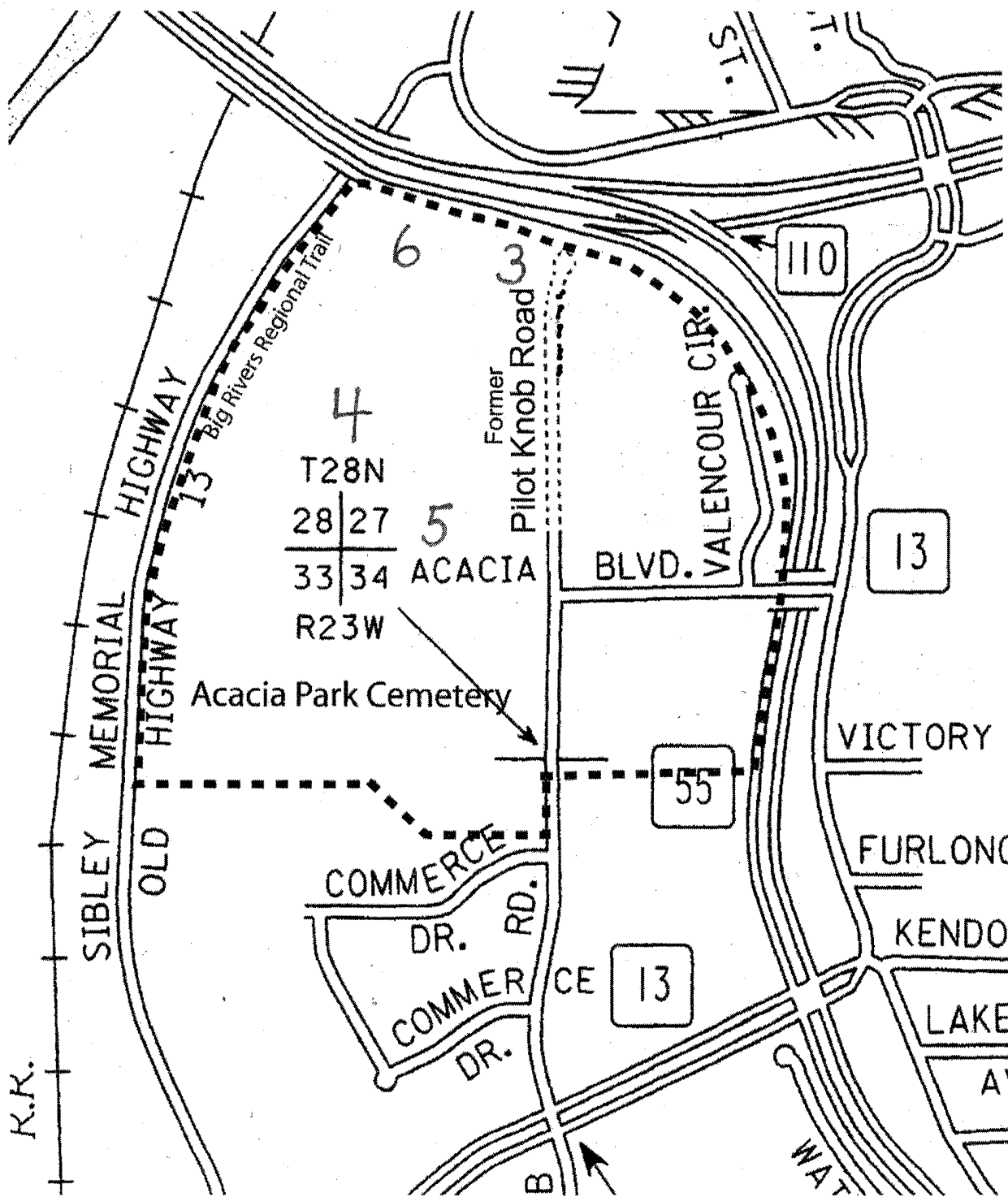
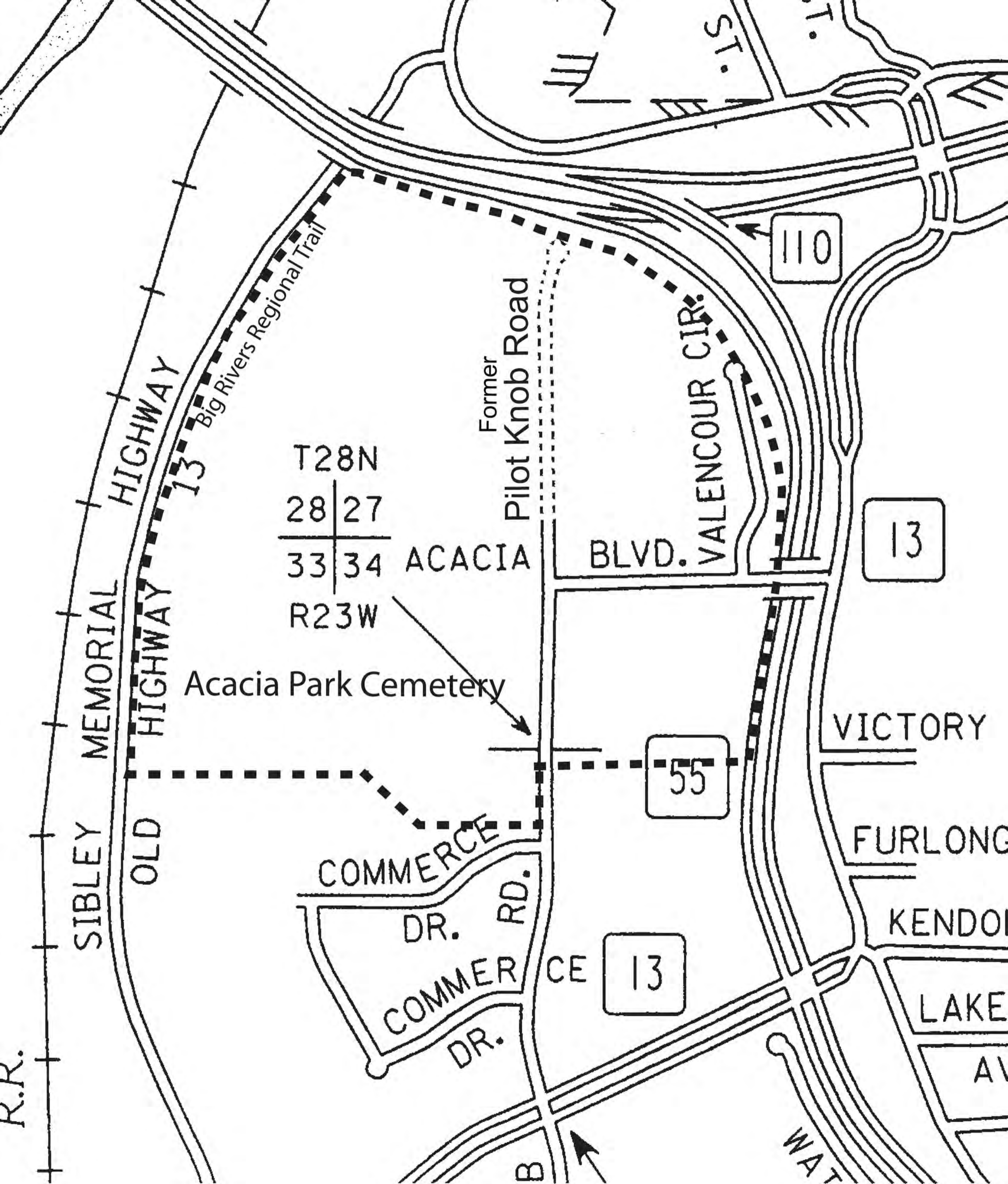


PHOTO LOCATION MAP 2

PHOTOS 3, 4, 5, 6

PHOTOS 1-2, 7 ON MAP 1



.IS

110

13

55

13

HIGHWAY 13

HIGHWAY 13

OLD

MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

SIBLEY

R.R.

Big Rivers Regional Trail

Former Pilot Knob Road

VALENCOUR CIR. BLVD.

T28N

28 | 27

33 | 34

ACACIA

R23W

Acacia Park Cemetery

COMMERCE DR.

COMMER RD. DR.

VICTORY

FURLONG

KENDON

LAKE

AV

WAT

B



Comp. Cold. Water

1899

Public Gardens

Indian Agency

Lands End

ST. PETERS RIVER

PIKE'S ISLAND

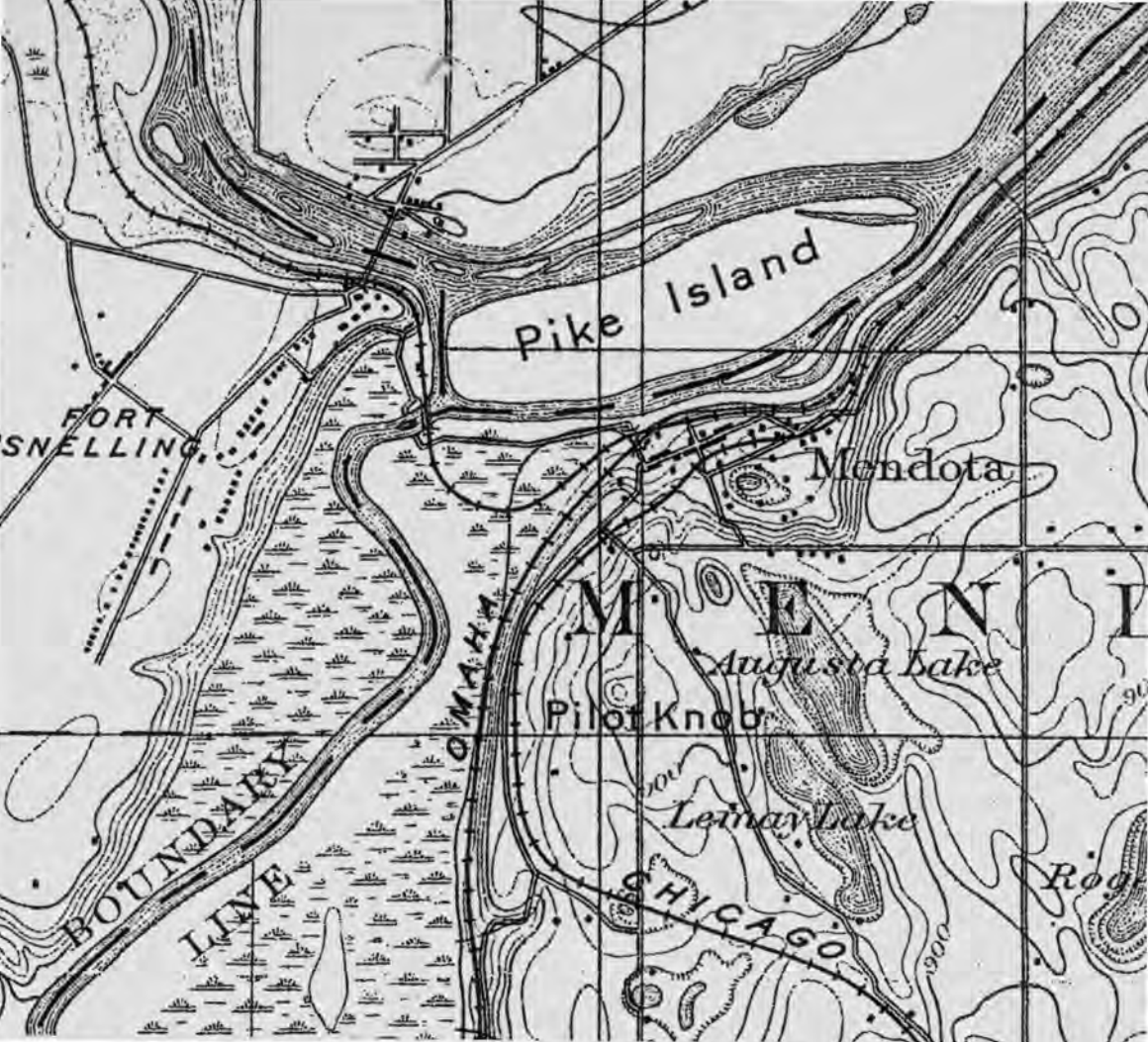
St. Croix Road

Flat Road  
Traders Road

The Company

Mission Road

Pine Bend Road



Pike Island

FORT SNELLING

Mendota

MENDOTA

Augusta Lake

Pilot Knob

LeMay Lake

CHICAGO

OMAHA

BOUNDARY

Rog

900

900

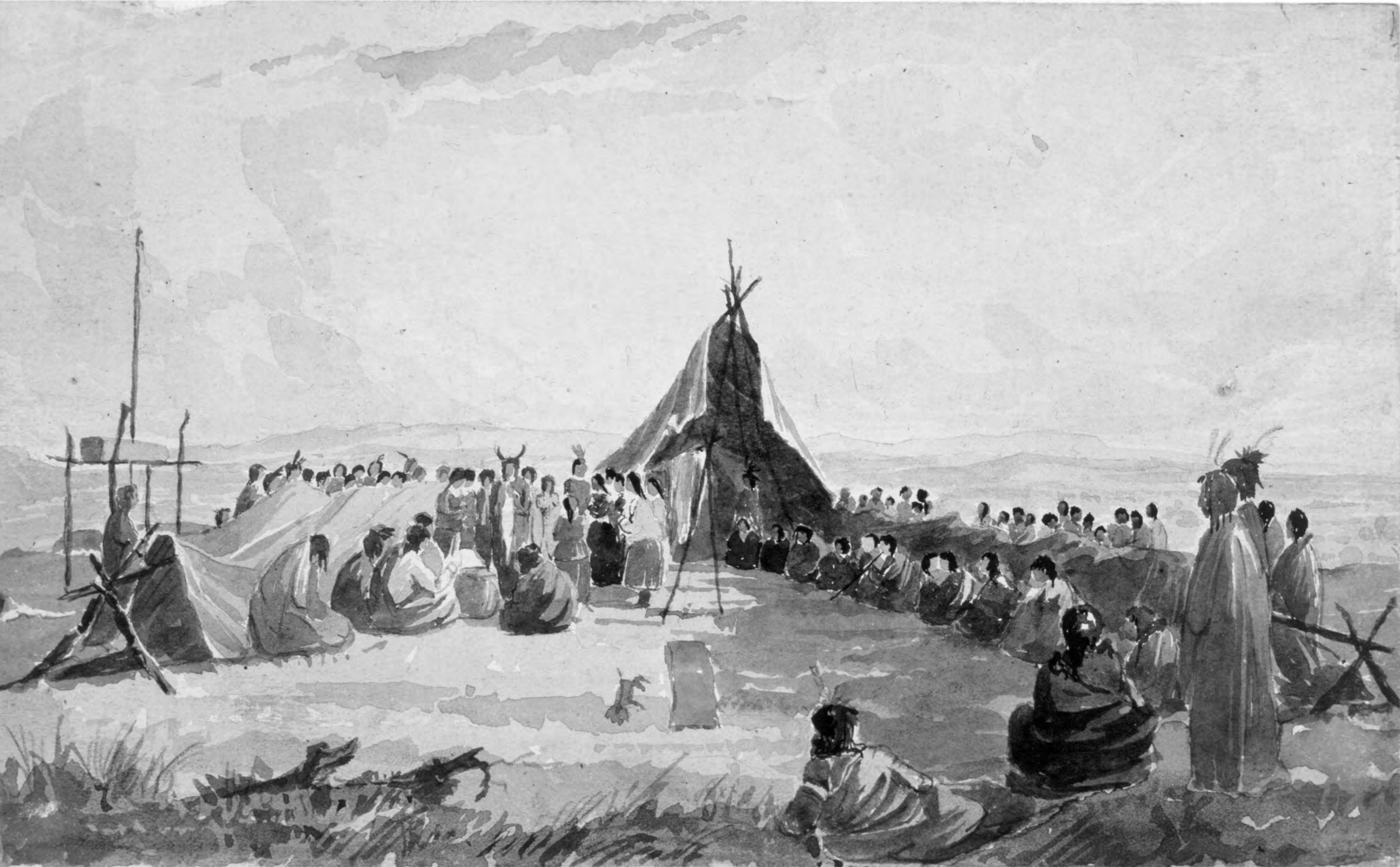


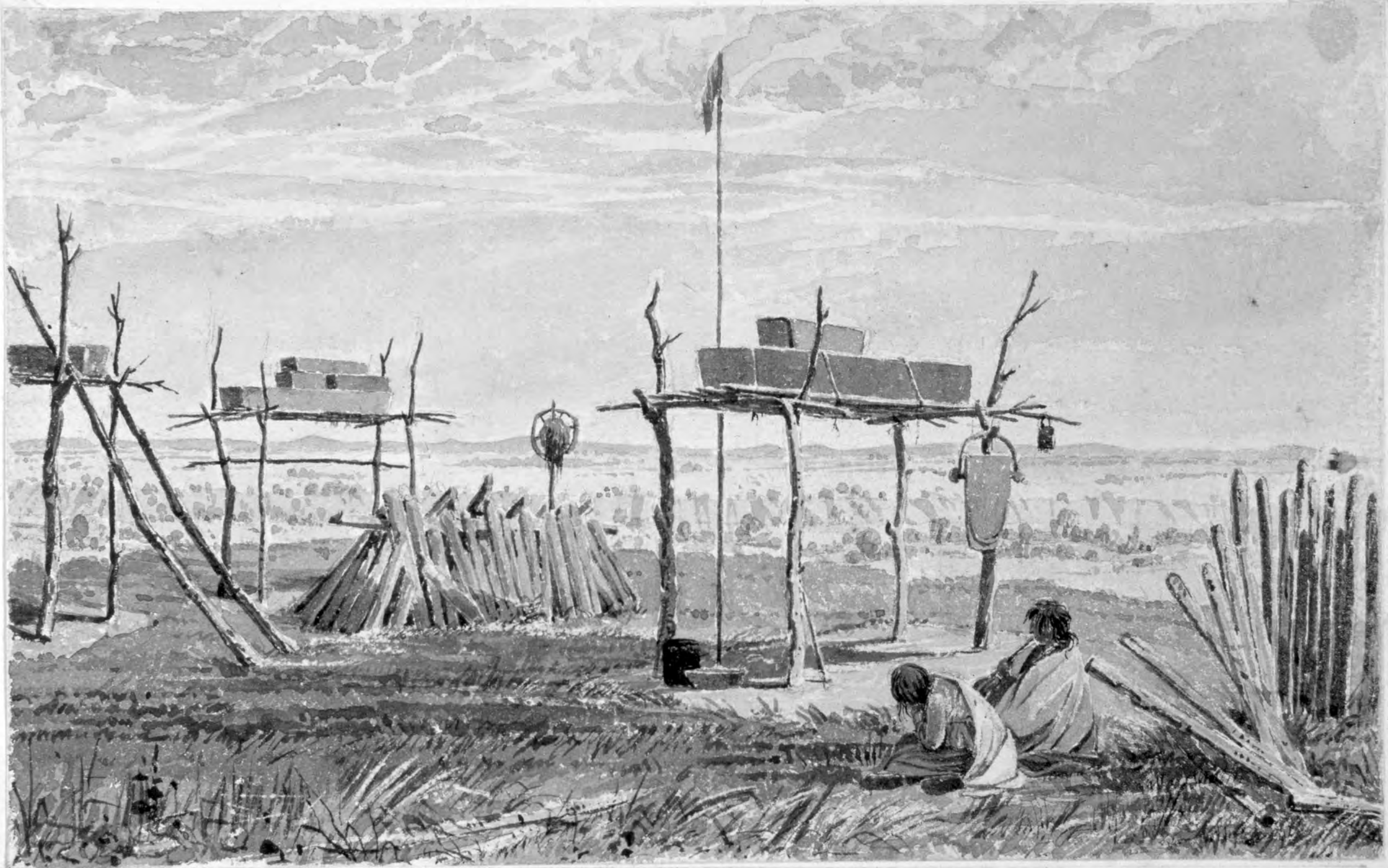
Campana

P.L. Hill

La B. Baja

La B. Alta

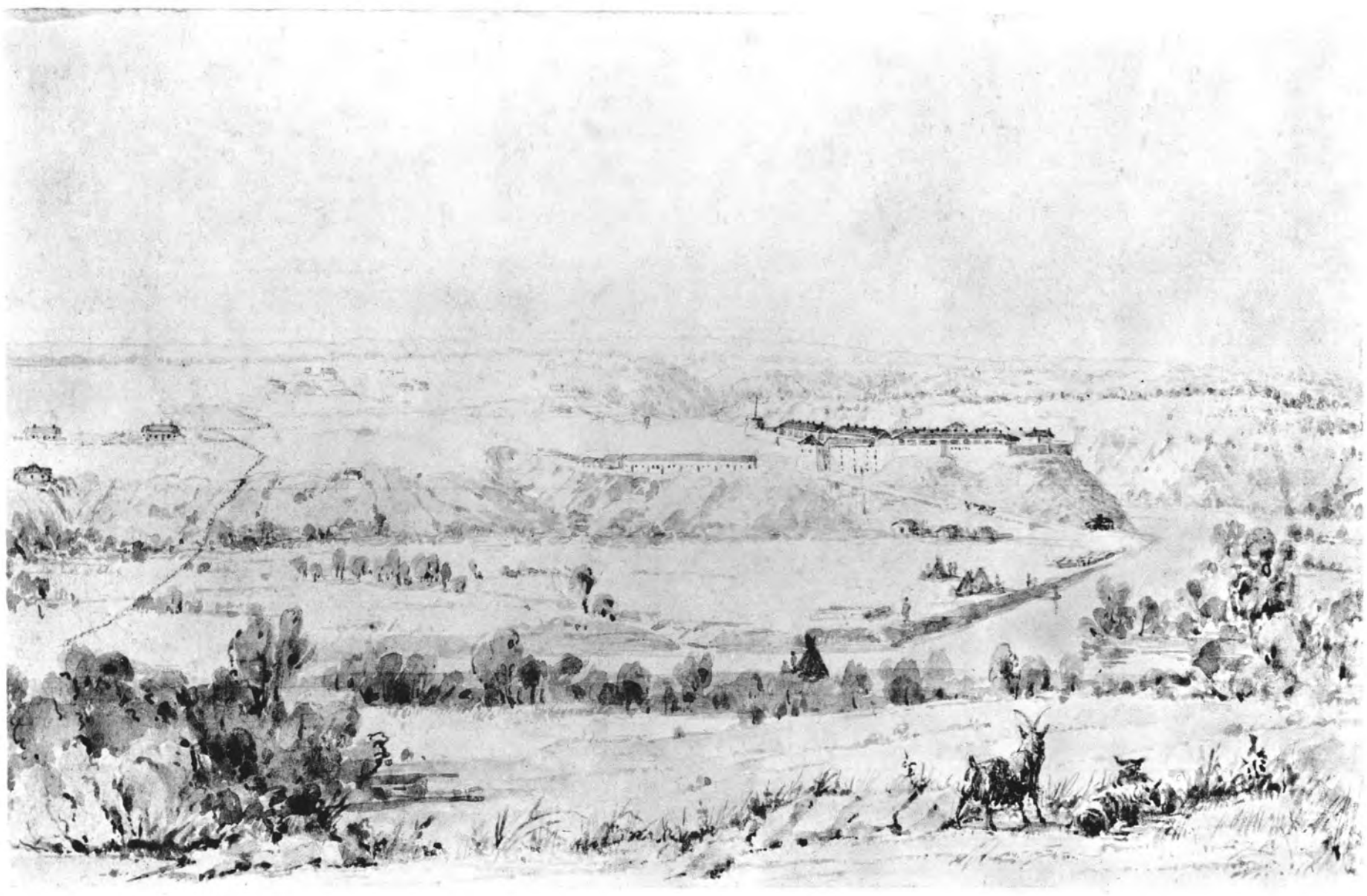


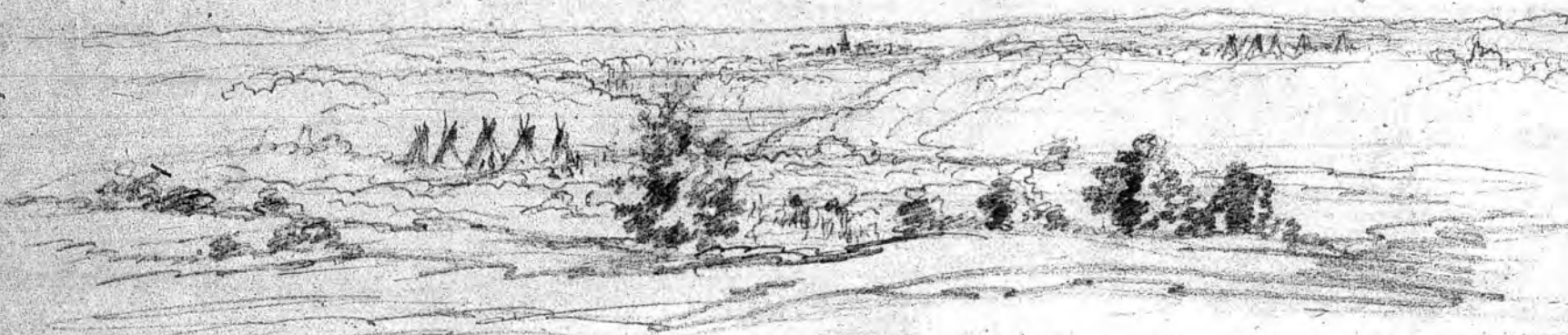


S. Eastman 1847.  
No. 17 Indian graves at the mouth of the St. Peter's  
River, Minnesota.





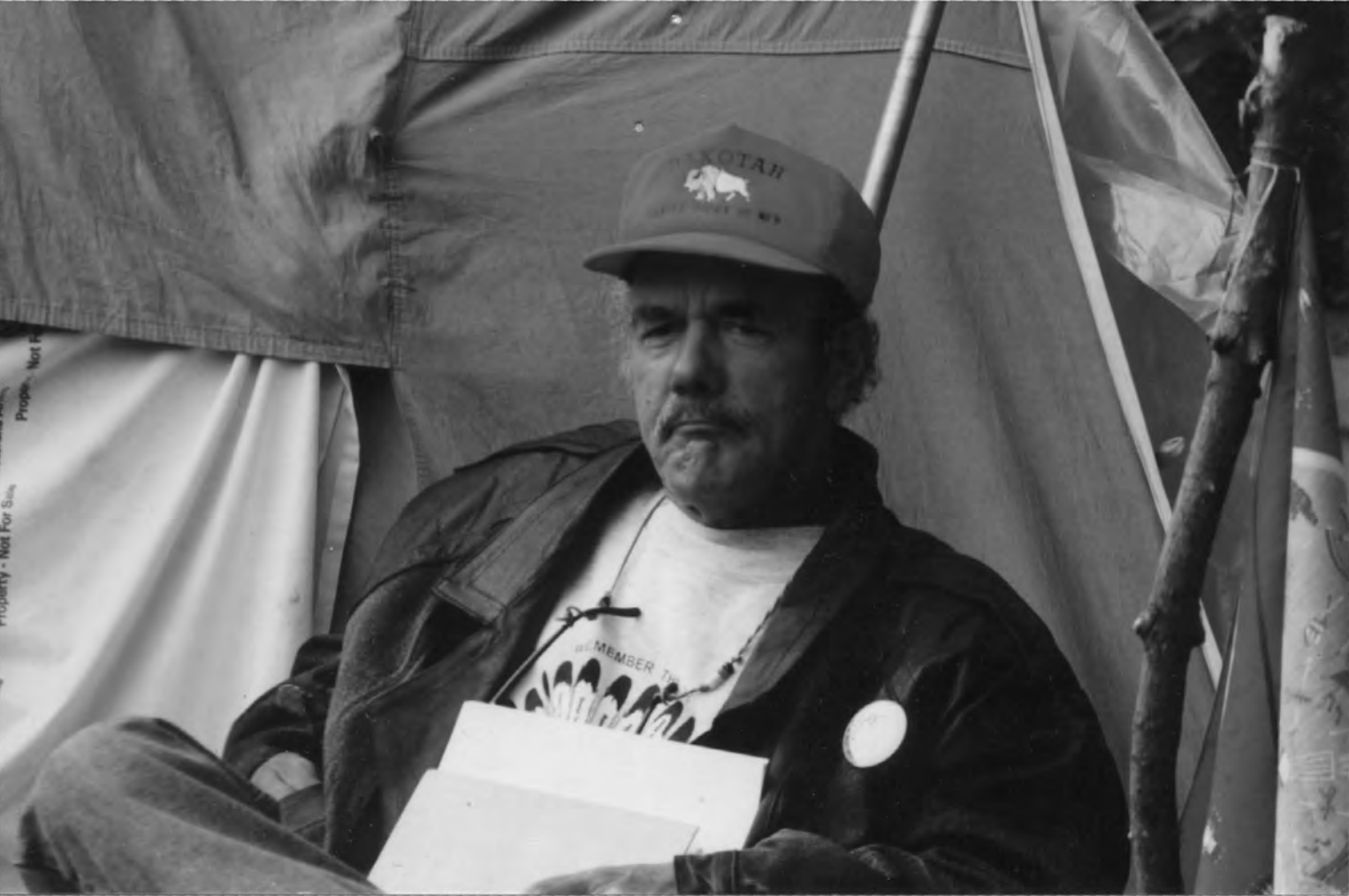




Valley of the Mississippi, & St Paul from Pilot Knob.



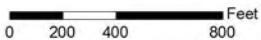




Property - Not For Sale  
Properly - Not For Sale



**Pilot Knob Hill Open Space  
Trails and Overlooks**















1911 1962  
PILOT KNOLL





National Register of Historic Places  
Memo to File

# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: OWNER OBJECTION

PROPERTY NAME: Oheyawahi--Pilot Knob

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MINNESOTA, Dakota

DATE RECEIVED: 11/26/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/09/04  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03001374

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: Y  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

\_\_\_ ACCEPT \_\_\_ RETURN \_\_\_ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Significant under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage/ Native  
Americas, and also Exploration Settlement as a TAD and historic site.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Eligible - A

REVIEWER Poland

DISCIPLINE Historic

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 1/9/04

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR (Y)/N

September 17, 2003

*Via Certified Mail*

State Historic Preservation Officer  
c/o Britta L. Bloomberg  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
St. Paul MN 55102-1906

REF: LAND AT HWY. 55 & PILOT KNOB ROAD, MENDOTA HEIGHTS

To Whom it May Concern:

This correspondence is in response to the letter we received dated September 10, 2003, with regard to Oheyawhi/Pilot Knob and the above referenced property being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

As owner of half of the undivided interest of the above property, I hereby object to having the property considered by the State review board for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

*Joel T. Bottenhoff*  
Joel T. Bottenhoff  
(952) 401-1805

21000 State Highway 7  
Excelsior MN 55331

State of Minnesota

County of Hennepin

Before me, a Notary Public, on this day personally appeared Joel Bottenhoff known/proved to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the forgoing instrument and acknowledged to me that they executed the same for the purpose and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office  
this 23 day of September, 2003

*Margaret M. Dolge*

My commission expires the 31 day of Jan. 2005





September 17, 2003

*Via Certified Mail*

State Historic Preservation Officer  
c/o Britta L. Bloomberg  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
St. Paul MN 55102-1906

REF: LAND AT HWY. 55 & PILOT KNOB ROAD, MENDOTA HEIGHTS

To Whom it May Concern:

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As owner of half of the undivided interest of the above property, I hereby object to having the property considered by the State review board for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

*Christine T. Buttenhoff*

Christine T. Buttenhoff  
(952) 401-1805  
21000 State Highway 7  
Excelsior MN 55331

State of Minnesota

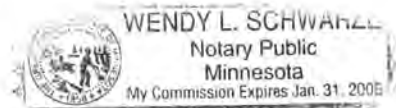
County of Hennepin

Before me, a Notary Public, on this day personally appeared Christine T. Buttenhoff, known/proved to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the forgoing instrument and acknowledged to me that they executed the same for the purpose and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office  
this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of September 2003

*Wendy L. Schwanze*

My commission expires the 31<sup>st</sup> day of January 15 2005



September 17, 2003

*Via Certified Mail*

State Historic Preservation Officer  
c/o Britta L. Bloomberg  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
St. Paul MN 55102-1906

REF: LAND AT HWY. 55 & PILOT KNOB ROAD, MENDOTA HEIGHTS

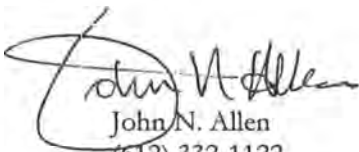
To Whom it May Concern:

This correspondence is in response to the letter we received dated September 10, 2003, with regard to Oheyawhi/Pilot Knob and the above referenced property being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

As owner of half of the undivided interest of the above property, I hereby object to having the property considered by the State review board for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,




John N. Allen  
(612) 332-1122  
321 First Avenue North  
Minneapolis MN 55401

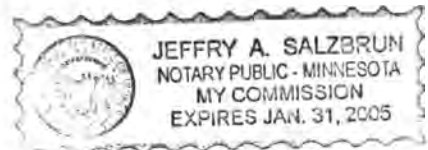
State of Minnesota

County of Hennepin

Before me, a Notary Public, on this day personally appeared JOHN N. ALLEN, known/proved to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the forgoing instrument and acknowledged to me that they executed the same for the purpose and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office  
this 17th day of Sept. 2003

  
My commission expires the 1st day of JAN. 2005



September 17, 2003

*Via Certified Mail*

State Historic Preservation Officer  
c/o Britta L. Bloomberg  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
St. Paul MN 55102-1906

REF: LAND AT HWY. 55 & PILOT KNOB ROAD, MENDOTA HEIGHTS

To Whom it May Concern:

This correspondence is in response to the letter we received dated September 10, 2003, with regard to Oheyawhi/Pilot Knob and the above referenced property being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

As owner of half of the undivided interest of the above property, I hereby object to having the property considered by the State review board for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

*Rebecca B. Allen*

Rebecca B. Allen  
(612) 332-1122  
321 First Avenue North  
Minneapolis MN 55401

State of Minnesota

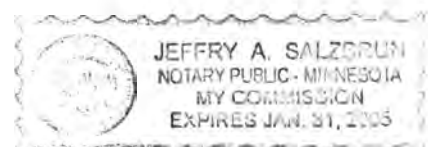
County of Hennepin

Before me, a Notary Public, on this day personally appeared REBECCA B ALLEN, known/proved to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the forgoing instrument and acknowledged to me that they executed the same for the purpose and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office  
this 17th day of Sept. 2003

*Jeff S*

My commission expires the 1st day of JAN. 2005



State Historical Preservation Office  
C/o Britta Bloomberg  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Blvd W  
St Paul, MN 55102

Re: Land at Hwy 55 & Pilot Knob Road, Mendota Heights

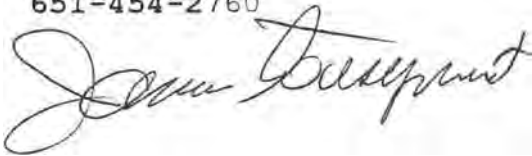
To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is to express my objection to my property being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

I hereby object to having the property considered by the State review board for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

James L Tousignant  
651-454-2760



*James L. Tousignant* 10/28/2003



# ACACIA PARK CEMETERY

2151 Pilot Knob Road  
Mendota Heights, MN 55120-1198  
(651) 452-1555  
FAX: (651) 452-2986

October 28, 2003

Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State Review Board  
State Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Blvd West  
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

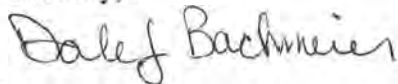
Dear Ms. Bloomberg,

I, Dale J. Bachmeier, General Manager of the Acacia Park Cemetery Association respectfully submit this letter on behalf of the Acacia Park Cemetery Board of Directors, Mendota Heights, MN.

We respectfully request that the cemetery not be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Cemetery Association did not request placement on the National Register and does not believe that such placement is in the best interests of either the Association or the Mendota Heights community.

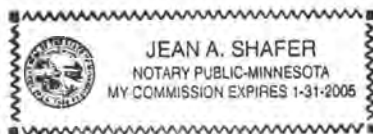
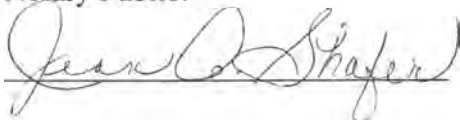
We appreciate your communication with us in this matter and hope that you would contact us if there are any further details that need to be addressed.

Sincerely,



Dale J. Bachmeier  
General Manager  
Acacia Park Cemetery

Notary Public:



15 October, 2003

Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102-1906

Attn: Britta L. Bloomberg

Dear Ms. Bloomberg:

I am writing this letter in response to the proposed nomination to the National Historical Register of the Pilot Knob property. I feel that the site as proposed no longer holds the historical significance it may once have had. Over the last seventy or better years, the area has been home to a motel, bar and gas station, as well as several homes and a kennel business, which still exist and operate on the site.

It is my understanding that the listing on the National Historical Register is merely a recognition and not in itself any form of protection for the site. I do not feel, as a property owner directly impacted by this nomination, that another layer of bureaucratic regulation is necessary.

During the reconstruction of the Mendota Bridge and the Highway 110/Highway 55 interchange in the 1990's the physical integrity of the bluff and frontage along Highway 55 was severely compromised by the removal of several thousand cubic tons of soil.

I do feel that it would be proper to memorialize the historical and spiritual significance with a park area and perhaps an interpretive center at the end of Pilot Knob on the Garron property that would blend into the natural beauty of the area and protect the vista from Fort Snelling. The developer currently being considered by the City of Mendota Heights has already agreed to set aside a small area for a commemorative site. Funding for the purchase of a larger area could be a combination of privately raised and public funds. Preserving that area would then free up the remainder to be redeveloped as the city and property owners see fit.

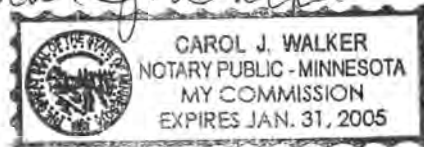
I appreciate the opportunity to voice my opinion regarding the above matter and hope that you will give it your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Snyder  
2085 Valencour Circle  
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

*Carol J. Walker 11/20/03*



**Ministar  
BUILDERS, INC.**

A Ron Clark Company  
7500 West 78th Street  
Edina, MN 55439  
MN Lic. #20161602

**952-947-3003**  
Fax 952-947-3030

Monday, October 27, 2003

State Historic Preservation Office  
Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Blvd. W.  
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

Re: Nomination of Pilot Knob properties to the NRHP.

To the Secretary of the State Review Board:

As the holder of equitable title to the subject properties, we would like to state, for the record of the meeting that is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, October 28, 2003, that we are opposed to their nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Regards,



Timothy L. Bohlman

Minnesota Historical Society  
State Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102  
651/296-5434

**TO:** Carol Shull, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places

**FROM:** Scott Anfinson, Minnesota SHPO Archaeologist

**DATE:** 11/17/03

**NAME OF PROPERTY:** Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob

**COUNTY AND STATE:** Dakota, Minnesota



**SUBJECT:** National Register:  
 Nomination  
 Multiple Property Documentation Form  
 Request for determination of eligibility  
 Request for removal (Reference No.     )  
 Nomination resubmission  
 Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.     )  
 Additional documentation (Reference No.     )

**DOCUMENTATION:**

- Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
- Multiple Property Documentation Form
- Continuation Sheets
- Removal Documentation
- Photographs
- Original USGS Map
- Sketch map(s)
- Correspondence
  - Owner Objection
    - The enclosed owner objections
    - Do  Do not  constitute a majority of property owners

**STAFF COMMENTS:**

Oheawahi/Pilot Knob is owned by seven (7) private landowners and three (3) public owners. Five (5) of the private landowners have objected to the listing. Two of the the objectors (Joel Buitenhoff, John Allen) listed their wives as separate owners and the validity of whether these objections should be counted as two or four has not been determined, but this would not have any bearing on the outcome of the objections. Whether it is 5 of 7 or 7 of 9, a majority of the private landowners have objected.



# National Register of Historic Places

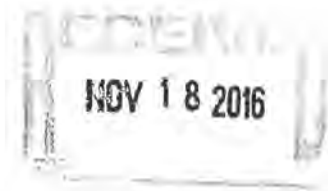
## Note to the record

Correspondence associated with 2020 additional documentation



Metropolitan District  
Waters Edge  
1500 West County Road B-2  
Roseville, MN 55113-3174

November 10, 2016



Mr. David Mather, National Register Archaeologist  
State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West, St. Paul, MN 55101

Subject: Oheyawahi Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places

Dear Mr. Mather:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the nomination of Oheyawahi to the National Register of Historic Places. MnDOT is very supportive of the listing of this important site to the National Register of Historic Places for its significance to Dakota people. The Metro District, in coordination with the Office of Land Management and the Office of Environmental Stewardship, provides the following comments in order to ensure clarity on the property's areas of significance, contributing and non-contributing elements, and boundaries. In order to be able to assess any future project's effects to the National Register property, clear understanding of these issues is critical.

Our Cultural Resources Unit staff will also submit more detailed comments via track changes in the nomination document to you by email.

**Areas of Significance**

The nomination as written includes four areas of significance for the site: Ethnic Heritage-Native American; Exploration/Settlement; Politics/Government-treaty site; and Archaeology – Prehistoric, Historic-Aboriginal, and historic non-aboriginal. After reading the nomination and other works regarding the location of the Treaty Site of 1851, we feel that the argument for its location in this area is too speculative to warrant listing on the National Register. Some scholars, including the nomination's authors, place the treaty site somewhere within the proposed boundaries for the site; others place it closer to the river. National Register Bulletin 15 states that "A property is not eligible if its associations are speculative." While the treaty signing occurred somewhere in the general area, without more definitive proof as to its exact location, its association within the proposed boundaries cannot be verified and therefore, we recommend that this area of significance for the site be removed. As currently written, it would be impossible to assess effects to the treaty site location, since its location is unknown and no essential physical features for it can be identified.

We have no concerns about the other areas of significance.

An Equal Opportunity Employer



### Contributing and Non-Contributing Resources

- The nomination lists the site of Oheyawahi as one contributing resource, but does not include a clear description of the hill and what its essential physical features are. We would recommend that this be added, since such details are critical to be able to assess effects when future projects happen in the area.
- The nomination should either include the roads Pilot Knob, Acacia Boulevard and Valencour Circle as non-contributing elements, or the boundaries of the district should be drawn to exclude them, since they do not have integrity to convey the property's significance as an important landform to the Dakota people. In the current document, the roads are not listed as either contributing or non-contributing, but they are within the proposed boundaries.
- When all of the listed non-contributing elements are drawn within the proposed district boundaries, there are significantly more areas that are non-contributing as opposed to contributing (see map below). Based on the predominance of non-contributing areas over the majority of the hill, it appears that the site does not have sufficient integrity to convey its historical association. The description of the property's integrity within the nomination does not sufficiently document how it retains integrity of setting, feeling and association with so many non-contributing elements within the proposed boundaries. (The integrity of location is sufficient, and material, design and workmanship are not applicable to this type of property.) We would recommend that the document be revised to more clearly present a discussion of the integrity in detail by each of the seven aspects of integrity, and to clarify what are the contributing elements and how they relate to the non-contributing elements, which currently cover most of the hill (yellow hatched areas).



### **Boundaries**

Figure 1 in the nomination presents a sketch map showing the proposed National Register boundaries for the site. The map is very general, and does not provide an accurate and clear legal record of the boundaries. Also, the verbal description and justification for the boundaries in the nomination is vague. For example, the nomination states that the proposed boundaries "includes all land parcels between the Big Rivers Regional Trail on the west and the highway right-of-way for Minnesota State Highway 55 on the north and east." The highway right-of-way on the north and east extend to include the actual highway and lands beyond. These areas clearly do not have sufficient integrity to convey historic association with the site, and any potential that they could be interpreted as being within the boundaries should be corrected.

Based on the information contained in the nomination, MnDOT does not feel that there is an adequate description to know exactly where the boundaries fall. A more detailed description is needed in order to clearly know what is within and what is outside the boundaries, especially when public agencies perform work in the area. Such details are critical for FHWA's compliance with Section 106 and Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act, as well as MnDOT's and local agency's obligations under state statutes. We therefore recommend the following.

- The current proposed boundaries include the Big Rivers Regional Trail as the western boundary for the district (Parcel Number 27-02800-20-010). As apparent in the photograph below, the land within this parcel does not have sufficient integrity to convey its association with the site. As a paved trail on top of a graded railroad bed, it lacks sufficient integrity of setting, feeling and association. We recommend that this parcel be excluded from the boundaries.



- The majority of MnDOT's right-of-way on the north and east sides should be excluded from the boundaries of the National Register project. These areas have been heavily disturbed through the construction of 2:1 engineered slopes, and therefore do not retain sufficient integrity to convey its association with the property as an important Dakota site. See the attached proposed verbal description that accurately describes the boundaries.
- In order to clearly delineate these boundaries, a detailed legal description has been prepared by our Office of Land Management, and we respectfully request they be included in the nomination. These boundaries are based on excluding areas that have poor integrity and no longer convey the historic association of the site. With this clear description, agencies will be able to clearly know when they are or they are not working within the site.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review and comment on the nomination. As stated above, MnDOT is very supportive of the nomination and feels that with some of the clarifications recommended herein, the nomination will be a sufficient document to not only list the property, but to allow various agencies to protect it through clear understanding of why it is significant, and exactly where its boundaries are located.

Sincerely,



Scott McBride, P.E.  
Metro District Engineer

cc: Commissioner Charles A. Zelle, MnDOT  
Ed Fairbanks, MnDOT Tribal Liaison  
Eric Davis, MnDOT Chief of Staff  
Jon Solberg, MnDOT South Area Manager  
Joseph Pignato, Office of Land Management  
Lynn Clarkowski, Office of Environmental Stewardship  
Kristen Zschomler, MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit

## Oheyawahi Boundary Definition

Excepting therefrom that part of the Minnesota Department of Transportation property which lies easterly and northerly of Line 1 described below, northwesterly and westerly of Line 2 described below, and southerly of Line 3 described below;

Line 1. Beginning at Right of Way Boundary Corner B722 as shown on Minnesota Department of Transportation Right of Way Plat No. 19-98 as the same is on file and of record in the office of the County Recorder in and for Dakota County, Minnesota; thence northerly on an azimuth of 359 degrees 21 minutes 37 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 581.92 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B14; thence northerly to Right of Way Boundary Corner B2 as shown on said Plat No. 19-98; thence on an azimuth of 359 degrees 37 minutes 48 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 45.52 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B3; thence deflect to the right along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 on a tangential curve, having a radius of 180.00 feet and a delta angle of 22 degrees 20 minutes 36 seconds for 70.19 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B4; thence on an azimuth of 23 degrees 53 minutes 41 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 140.95 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B5; thence northerly for 365.06 feet along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 on a non-tangential curve, concave to the west, having a radius of 2753.94 feet, a delta angle of 07 degrees 35 minutes 42 seconds and a chord azimuth of 348 degrees 04 minutes 16 seconds to Right of Way Boundary Corner B806; thence northerly for 12.23 feet along the boundary of Minnesota Department of Transportation Right of Way Plat No. 19-99, as the same is on file and of record in the office of said County Recorder, on a non-tangential curve, concave to the west, having a radius of 2753.94 feet, a delta angle of 00 degrees 15 minutes 16 seconds and a chord azimuth of 344 degrees 08 minutes 41 seconds to Right of Way Boundary Corner B1; thence northerly on an azimuth of 344 degrees 01 minute 08 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-99 to the southerly line of Lot 6, Block 3, Pilot Knob Heights; thence easterly along said southerly line to the point of termination of Line 4 described below; thence northerly along said Line 4 to its point of beginning; thence westerly along the northerly line of said Lot 6 for 30.00 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B3 as shown on said Plat No. 19-99; thence westerly on an azimuth of 268 degrees 56 minutes 48 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-99 for 210.99 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B4; thence on an azimuth of 336 degrees 28 minutes 14 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-99 for 349.13 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B5; thence on an azimuth of 286 degrees 27 minutes 07 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-99 for 150.48 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B6; thence southwestwardly for 177.17 feet along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-99 on a non-tangential curve, concave to the southeast, having a radius of 232.70 feet, a delta angle of 43 degrees 37 minutes 24 seconds and a chord azimuth of 232 degrees 07 minutes 55 seconds to Right of Way Boundary Corner B907; thence on an azimuth of 359 degrees 21 minutes 37 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-99 for 139.91 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B1001; thence westerly on an azimuth of 282 degrees 44 minutes 32 seconds along the boundary of Minnesota Department of Transportation Right of Way Plat No. 19-100, as the same is on file and of record in the office of said County Recorder, for 446.37 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B2; thence westerly along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-100 on a non-tangential curve, concave to the north, having a radius of 1472.14 feet, a delta angle of 14 degrees 49 minutes 45 seconds, a chord azimuth of 291 degrees 19 minutes 54 seconds and an arc length of 381.01 feet to the point of termination of Line 2 described below and there terminating;

- Line 2. Beginning at the intersection of the south line of Section 28, Township 28 North, Range 23 West, with the easterly line of the tract of land quit claimed to the State of Minnesota in Document Number 1231596 filed and of record in the office of said County Recorder; thence northerly along said easterly line to its intersection with the southerly plat boundary of said Plat No. 19-100 and there terminating;
- Line 3. Beginning at the point of beginning of Line 2 described above; thence easterly along the south line of said Section 28 to the westerly plat boundary of Acacia Park South Addition; thence southerly along said westerly plat boundary to its intersection with the westerly extension of the southerly line of the North Half of Lot 3, Block 1, Gardenville Re-Arrangement; thence easterly along said southerly line to its intersection with the westerly plat boundary of Minnesota Department of Transportation Right of Way Plat No. 19-110 as the same is on file and of record in the office of said County Recorder; thence northerly along said westerly plat boundary to Right of Way Boundary Corner B414; thence easterly along the south line of said Section 28 to the southwest corner of Section 27, Township 28 North, Range 23 West; thence easterly along the south line of said Section 27 to Right of Way Boundary Corner B722 as shown on said Plat No. 19-98 and there terminating;
- Line 4. Commencing at Right of Way Boundary Corner B4 as shown on said Plat No. 19-99; thence easterly on an azimuth of 88 degrees 56 minutes 48 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-99 and the northerly line of Lot 6, Block 3, Pilot Knob Heights for 210.99 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B3; thence continue on the last described course for 30.00 feet to the point of beginning of Line 4 to be described; thence on an azimuth of 145 degrees 45 minutes 44 seconds for 80.48 feet; thence on an azimuth of 157 degrees 06 minutes 55 seconds for 65.02 feet, more or less, to the southerly line of said Lot 6 and there terminating;

Also excepting from said Pilot Knob Historic Site the following described tract: Beginning at Right of Way Boundary Corner B1 as shown on said Plat No. 19-98; thence easterly on an azimuth of 89 degrees 40 minutes 39 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 771.03 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B2; thence southerly to Right of Way Boundary Corner B14 as shown on said Plat No. 19-98; thence westerly on an azimuth of 269 degrees 40 minutes 39 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 688.00 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B15; thence on an azimuth of 167 degrees 11 minutes 43 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 47.45 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B16; thence on an azimuth of 179 degrees 21 minutes 38 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 50.00 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B17; thence on an azimuth of 190 degrees 40 minutes 08 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 50.99 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B18; thence on an azimuth of 179 degrees 21 minutes 36 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 160.00 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B19; thence on an azimuth of 182 degrees 32 minutes 27 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 90.14 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B20; thence on an azimuth of 175 degrees 20 minutes 19 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 193.23 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B713; thence on an azimuth of 269 degrees 04 minutes 20 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 53.55 feet to the southwest corner of Section 27, Township 28 North, Range 23 West; thence on an azimuth of 269 degrees 33 minutes 14 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 33.00 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B414; thence on an azimuth of 359 degrees 21 minutes 36 seconds along the boundary of said Plat No. 19-98 for 739.73 feet to Right of Way Boundary Corner B1 and the point of beginning of the tract described.



November 14, 2016

Secretary,  
State Review Board  
Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Blvd. W.  
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

re: Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places

Dear State Review Board Members:

The City of Mendota Heights is pleased to offer the following comments concerning the nomination of a portion of Oheyawahi/Pilot Knob for consideration for inclusion into the National Register of Historic Places.

In general, the City of Mendota Heights is supportive of actions which will help to preserve the portions of the property that are historically significant, and has supported the designation of Pilot Knob as being worthy for inclusion in the National Registry. However, we are concerned about the inclusion of lands that no longer have integrity and cannot convey the historic significance of the property.

Specifically, the City of Mendota Heights has concerns about the following provisions:

1. The inclusion of the rights-of-way for the portions of Valencour Circle, Acacia Boulevard, and Pilot Knob Road as identified on the nominations map. As you are aware, these roads represent twentieth-century improvements to the hill, including impervious surfacing and significant grading. The streets currently provide traffic access to not only a portion of historic Pilot Knob, but also to several private properties in the area. Our concerns relate to possible constraints to future maintenance which might be encountered as a result of the National Register designation.

At minimum, the rights of way for these three streets should either be identified as non-contributing resources to Pilot Knob, or the nominating boundaries should be re-drawn to exclude them, since they do not have integrity and do not convey the historic significance of the site.



2. A portion of the Big Rivers Regional Trail is included within the proposed National Register boundaries. This is a significant regional resource, and we likewise are concerned about the impact of the designation of the National Registry on this trail. Again, the trail area has no integrity for the hill, and should therefore not be included within the proposed boundaries.
3. The City is unclear why the portion of Pilot Knob that is being restored is not listed as being a contributing resource. Since this portion of the hill has been restored to pre-settlement era vegetation, we believe it should be included as a contributing resource.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the nomination for Oheyawahi/ Pilot Knob.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Krebsbach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S".

Sandra Krebsbach, Mayor  
Mendota Heights, Minnesota

Cc: Gail Lewellan, Pilot Knob Preservation Society

Minnesota Historical Society  
State Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102  
651-259-3454



**TO:** Stephanie Toothman, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places

**FROM:** David Mather

**DATE:** January 20, 2017

**NAME OF PROPERTY:** Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob

**COUNTY AND STATE:** Dakota County, Minnesota

**SUBJECT:** National Register:  
 Nomination  
 Multiple Property Documentation Form  
 Request for determination of eligibility  
 Request for removal (Reference No. )  
 Nomination resubmission  
 Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No. )  
 Additional documentation (Reference No. 03001374) – *and request for listing (rather than DOE)*

**DOCUMENTATION:**

- Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
- Multiple Property Documentation Form
- Continuation Sheets
- Removal Documentation
- Photographs
- CD w/ image files
- Original USGS Map – *in original DOE submittal*
- Sketch map(s)
- Correspondence
  - Owner Objection
    - The enclosed owner objections
    - Do  Do not  constitute a majority of property owners

**STAFF COMMENTS:** Overlooking Fort Snelling and the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, the site of Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob is a Traditional Cultural Property of significance to the Dakota Nation, and a significant landmark in early Minnesota history. The site was nominated to the NRHP in 2003, and was approved by the State Review Board, but could not be listed at that time due to private landowner objections. The property was officially determined eligible on January 9, 2004. Later that year, on April 3, 2004, the Keeper amended the DOE to include Criterion D as well as Criterion A.

Since that time, the City of Mendota Heights has acquired formerly private property within the site area, and it has been restored to a natural setting. This has significantly enhanced the historical integrity of the site. In 2016, the Pilot Knob Preservation Association prepared an update of the National Register documentation, funded in part from a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant. The balance of private land owners has changed since the original nomination, and notices were sent to all current owners. The Pilot Knob Preservation Association had also hosted a series of informational meetings and other outreach efforts with landowners. No objections to listing were received in response to the updated nomination, **and therefore we are pleased to request that Ojéyawahe/Pilot Knob now be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.** The boundary is unchanged from the 2004 DOE. This update was

unanimously approved by the State Review Board. We presented it to the board because we knew it would be of interest to them, and because Oĥéyawahe/Pilot Knob is directly relevant to the current update of the National Register documentation for the Fort Snelling Historic District (a current Underrepresented Communities Grant project). The updated nomination was shared in advance with the Dakota communities in Minnesota: Upper Sioux, Lower Sioux and Prairie Island Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, and the Cultural Resources Director of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

Please note that the spelling of the Dakota name has changed slightly from the original nomination (Oĥéyawahe vs. Oheyawahi). This reflects further consultation by the authors with Dakota language experts. Also, we have clarified language of the boundary description from the original 2003 nomination in response to questions from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the City of Mendota Heights, and because some of the lots mentioned in the original description no longer exist. As stated previously, however, the boundary itself has not changed.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 11/26/2003      Date of Pending List:      Date of 16th Day:      Date of 45th Day: 3/14/2017      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL            | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |  |

Accept       Return       Reject      3/14/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Julie Ernstein  Discipline Archeologist

Telephone (202)354-2217 Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.