

# NATIVE AMERICAN CONTEXT STATEMENT AND RECONNAISSANCE LEVEL SURVEY SUPPLEMENT

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Prepared for  
**The City of Minneapolis Department of  
Community Planning & Economic Development**

Prepared by  
**Two Pines Resource Group, LLC**

SAMPLE CHAPTER  
March 2016

DRAFT

**Cover Image**

*Indian Tepees on the Site of Bridge Square with the John H. Stevens House, 1852*  
Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society (Neg. No. 583)

*Minneapolis Pow Wow, 1951*  
Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society (Neg. No. 35609)

Minneapolis American Indian Center  
1530 E Franklin Avenue

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Prepared for  
City of Minneapolis  
Department of Community Planning  
and Economic Development  
250 South 4th Street  
Room 300, Public Service Center  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Prepared by  
Eva B. Terrell, M.A.  
and  
Michelle M. Terrell, Ph.D., RPA  
Two Pines Resource Group, LLC  
17711 260<sup>th</sup> Street  
Shafer, MN 55074

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## CHAPTER 3 . FIRST PEOPLE OF THE MINNEAPOLIS AREA

From the remains of campsites marked by fragments of stone tools and pottery to earthen burial mounds, the lives of the first Native Americans to reside in the Minneapolis area are reflected on the landscape and in the archaeological record. Artifacts, which some elders consider to be gifts from the ancestors, provide tangible connections with these past inhabitants and offer a means of learning about their lives. While over 60 archaeological sites have thus far been identified within the boundaries of Minneapolis, the majority of these sites are associated with the city’s industrial heritage. To date, less than 15 Native American heritage archaeological sites have been recorded within the city and an additional seven site leads<sup>1</sup> reported (Table 2). While development has destroyed or obscured many features associated with the initial Native American occupants of Minneapolis such as mounds, earthworks, habitation sites, and traditional cultural properties, archaeological and cultural resource investigations have demonstrated the continued preservation of heritage sites particularly near the Mississippi River, its tributary streams, and the chain of lakes (Figure 2).

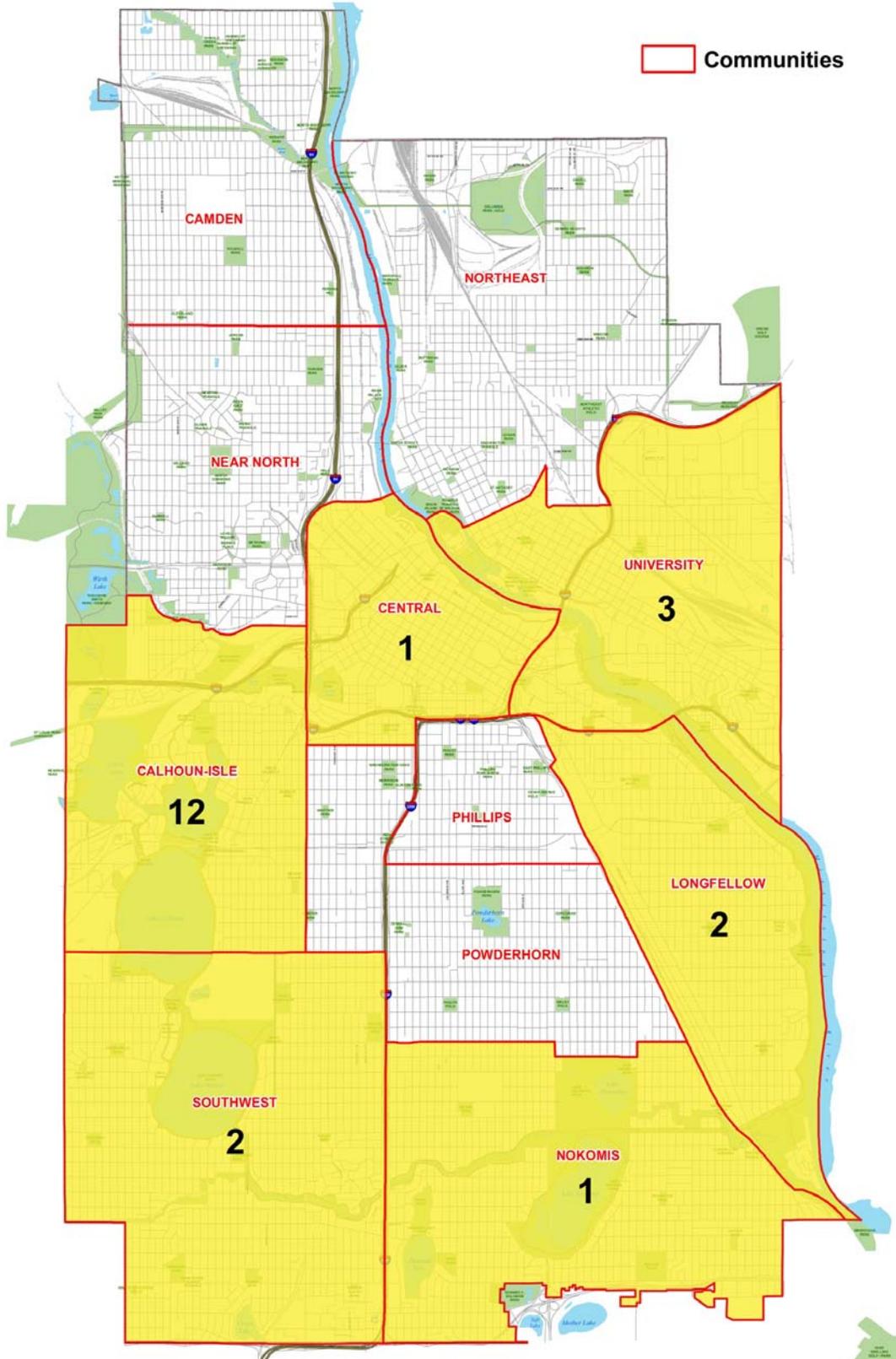
**TABLE 2. MINNEAPOLIS NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROPERTIES**

Property ID No. (PID)	SHPO No.	Address	Property Type	Association
None	21-HE-117	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Woodland
None	21-HE-312	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Archaic
None	21-HE-313	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Archaic / Woodland
None	21-HE-314	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Archaic / Woodland
None	21-HE-315	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Woodland
None	21-HE-342	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Woodland
None	21-HE-343	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Indeterminate
None	21-HE-373	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Indeterminate
None	21-HE-386	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Woodland
None	21-HE-391	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Indeterminate
None	21-HE-394	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Indeterminate
None	21-HE-409	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Indeterminate
None	21-HE-411	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Indeterminate
None	21-HE-412	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Indeterminate
None	21-HE-w	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Reported artifact finds
None	21-HE-x	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Mound Locale / Woodland (probable)
None	21-HE-y	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Paleoindian
None	21-HE-z	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Mound Locale / Woodland (probable)
None	21-HE-ae	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Reported artifact finds
None	21-HE-af	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Reported artifact finds
None	21-HE-ai	Restricted*	Site (Archaeological)	Mound Locale / Woodland (probable)

*\*The location of archaeological sites is not provided in public documents in order to protect these sensitive resources from unauthorized disturbance.*

<sup>1</sup> A site lead is the reported location of a potential archaeological resource that has not been verified by a professional archaeologist. Site leads are assigned letter designations rather than site numbers and are hence commonly referred to as “alpha” sites.

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**FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWN AND REPORTED NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROPERTIES**

The principal property type associated with this period is archaeological sites. Due to the limited number of Native American heritage archaeological sites thus far identified within the city, all such sites have the potential to contribute to our understanding of the lives of these first people of the Minneapolis area. However, single artifact findspots typically have limited information potential and are generally not considered worthy of historical designation. Archaeological sites with good integrity, and particularly undisturbed, stratified sites, have the potential to provide significant information about the material culture and lives of Minneapolis' first residents, including where they lived, what they ate, and changes that took place in their culture and way of life over time. Therefore, well-preserved Native American heritage archaeological sites would be potentially historically significant for their ability to yield information important to our understanding of this era (NRHP Criterion D; HPC Criterion 7).

The indigenous occupation of the Minneapolis area is divided by archaeologists into three cultural traditions:

- Paleoindian (c. 11,200 – c. 7500 B.C.)
- Archaic (c. 7500 – c. 500 B.C.)
- Woodland (1000 B. C. – A.D. 1750)

These traditions are primarily defined by innovations visible in the archaeological record such as changes in the types of tools and style of pottery that people used, as well as variations in subsistence patterns (e.g., hunting, gathering, and cultivation) that occurred in response to a transforming landscape (Figure 3). It should be noted that the cultural traditions described in this chapter provide only a general overview of Minnesota's first 12,000 years of human occupation. Our understanding of the cultural history of Minnesota prior to approximately 2,000 years ago is especially undeveloped because few archaeological sites from these earlier periods have been identified; however, traditional knowledge and oral histories provide other ways of learning about the past.



**FIGURE 3. PROJECTILE POINT FROM WITA WASTE / NICOLLET ISLAND (21-HE-373)**

## **PALEOINDIAN TRADITION (C. 11,200 – C. 7500 B.C.)**

The earliest archaeological evidence for human habitation within what is now Minneapolis dates to the Paleoindian period, which is the initial era of human occupation in Minnesota. Some 14,000 years ago the retreat of the Wisconsin Glaciation allowed humans to enter the region for the first time (Buhta et al. 2011:30). These people, called Paleoindians by archaeologists, were highly mobile hunters and gatherers. Through the boreal forest and across the grasslands that then covered the region, they pursued herds of large game, including mastodon, bison, and woodland caribou, as well as a variety of smaller animals. Paleoindians are known for the large, finely-crafted lanceolate (“leaf shaped”) stone projectile points that they used as spear tips and knives. As they traveled, probably in small bands, they obtained and transported, sometimes for hundreds of miles, the lithic raw materials needed to make these distinctive stone tools (Dobbs 1990a:56).

These first people occupied a landscape that was still dramatically changing. A melt-water infused post-glacial Mississippi River was in the process of creating the river's current gorge through present-day Minneapolis. At Mdote/Mendota, this ancestral Mississippi joined the torrential floodwaters of Glacial River Warren, which had begun carving the Minnesota River valley through the plains about 11,000 years ago. Near present-day St. Paul, a massive thundering waterfall formed where the combined force of these two rivers scoured out the soft material that had in-filled an earlier pre-glacial valley of the Mississippi River (Madigan 2003:33; Ojakangas 2009:282). At the River Warren Falls, the action of the river, which flowed atop a resistant layer of Platteville Limestone, wore away at the softer underlying St. Peter Sandstone until the shelf of limestone was undercut to the point of collapse. In this way, the waterfall progressed upstream a few feet each year. Within another pre-glacial valley of the Mississippi River, giant blocks of glacial ice would melt to form the Minneapolis chain of lakes. These changes and continued shifts in the climate also impacted the area's vegetation so that by about 9,500 years ago the Minneapolis area was no longer covered in boreal forest, but rather was on the border between an expanse of coniferous pine forest to the north and deciduous oak-elm forest to the south (Gibbon 2012:38-43).

Statewide, archaeological evidence for Paleoindians is generally sparse, in part because their mobile way of life did not result in concentrations of artifacts like those associated with long-term occupations, and also because much of the land surface that they occupied has since been buried beneath thick deposits of sediment and more recent soils. Paleoindian archaeological sites that have been found include temporary campsites, animal butchering locations, and places where stone tools were made. Sites from the Paleoindian Tradition are identified by the presence of lanceolate points, which are divided into two groups: those that are fluted, or grooved (Clovis and Folsom points), and those that are non-fluted (Plano). Chipped-stone axes and adzes, large “turtleback” scraping tools, and trihedral blades used for a variety of tasks are also characteristic of the Paleoindian period.

The Paleoindian Tradition is commonly divided into Early and Late stages. Sites dating to the Early Paleoindian period (11,200 to 10,500 B.C.), when fluted Clovis and Folsom spear points were in use, are scarce and largely limited to the discovery of single spear points without any associated features or artifacts (Gibbon 2012:48-49). While sites dating to the Late Paleoindian stage, between 10,500 and 7500 B.C., are more prevalent throughout Minnesota, they likewise consist mostly of surface-collected Plano spear

points; therefore little information is known about life during this time period (Dobbs 1990a; Gibbon 2012:50, 52). To date, a single findspot (21HEy) within the boundary of Minneapolis has produced a possible Early Paleoindian artifact. This site consists of a single fluted projectile point referred to as the "Washington Avenue Bridge Clovis." This point was reportedly discovered in 1941 along the upper bank of the Mississippi River to the south of the Washington Avenue Bridge near the University of Minnesota campus (Steinbring 1974). This site location has not been confirmed by archaeologists (Higginbottom 1996). This point is now in the holdings of the Koochiching County Historical Society (Buhta et al. 2011:38). Based on previously documented sites in the region, Paleoindian sites are most likely to be found on glacial beach ridges and/or in proximity to major drainages and inland lakes. Within the City of Minneapolis, sites of this era should be anticipated along the upper bluffs of the Mississippi River channel and around inland lakes associated with ancient drainages.

### **ARCHAIC PERIOD (C. 7500 – C. 500 B.C.)**

About 9,000 years ago, the region that is now Minnesota continued to experience dramatic environmental changes. Warmer temperatures and decreased precipitation resulted in much of the state being covered by an expanse of prairie interspersed with large lakes and swiftly-flowing rivers fed by glacial runoff (Gibbon et al. 2002:10). These environmental changes contributed to the extinction of the large mammals of the Ice Age and their replacement by our current group of animals including white-tailed deer, moose, and bear among others (Gibbon 2012:43-44). Bison also flourished as the prairie continued to expand eastward; Anfinson 1997:35). In response to this transforming landscape and the variety of game, fish, and plant resources now present, changes also took place in the lives of the people of the region. Referred to as the Archaic period, this era is marked by an increase in the diversity of tool types, raw materials, and local resources being used. The large lanceolate projectile points of the Paleoindian tradition were replaced by smaller notched and stemmed stone points for hunting game, while the use of groundstone tools for processing plant material increased. Other implements introduced during the Archaic period included atlatl darts and tools made of bone and native copper. Because of an increased ability to depend on regional resources within an increasingly stable environment, Archaic people became less nomadic and established longer-term seasonal camps with temporary structures and associated storage pits.

Due to the use of resources available within particular regions, Archaic-tradition artifact assemblages demonstrate more regional cultural variations than do Paleoindian sites. For this reason, four distinct Archaic contexts have been identified in Minnesota: Shield Archaic, Lake-Forest Archaic, Prairie Archaic, and Eastern Archaic. During the Archaic period, the Minneapolis area was on the border between the expanse of prairie to the west of the Mississippi River utilized by Prairie Archaic people, and the deciduous forest biome to the east and southeast associated with the people of the Eastern Archaic. While much remains to be learned about both complexes, the archaeological evidence that has been gathered to date indicates that bison hunting played a significant role in the way life of the people of the Prairie Archaic (Dobbs 1990a:92). Artifacts found at Prairie Archaic sites includes projectile points, hafted knives, end and side scrapers, choppers, utilized lithic flakes, and, to a limited extent, groundstone tools (Dobbs 1990a:92). Conversely, Eastern Archaic peoples relied on deer as well as aquatic (fish, clams, and mussels) and plant (tree nuts) resources. Eastern Archaic sites typically

contain a wide variety of projectile point styles and a preponderance of groundstone tools including axes, mauls, and gouges (Dobbs 1990a:97).

About 4900 B.C., the climate shifted once again to one that was cooler and wetter and which brought about a distinct late Archaic phase. This transition led to the establishment, by about 1200 B.C., of the state's present mix of prairie and forest biomes (Anfinson 1997:42; Gibbon 2012:72-73). In this new environment, the herds of buffalo moved westward, but the shallow prairie lakes, which were previously prone to being seasonal, were nearly always present. While bison continued to be an important part of the subsistence cycle of the late Archaic, the people within the central and northern portion of what is now Minnesota, including Minneapolis, developed a lake oriented habitation pattern that relied more on deer and increasingly took advantage of aquatic resources such as fish and wild rice (Dobbs 1990s; Gibbon 2012:88). Habitation sites of this period are typically located along rivers or on islands and peninsulas of lakes (Dobbs 1990a; Anfinson 1997:42).

In the immediate Minneapolis area, environmental data suggests that much of the present city was covered by prairie during the initial Archaic period, but transitioned to a mixture of prairie and oak savannah during the late Archaic. The Mississippi River flowed through this region within a wide shallow valley like that north of the present Plymouth Avenue Bridge, while the chain of lakes and the tributary streams of the Mississippi River interrupted an otherwise gently rolling landscape. The falls themselves were still downstream from their present location. During the Archaic period, about 5,000 years ago, the great River Warren falls split into two waterfalls as it reached the confluence at Mdote/Mendota (Madigan 2003:34). While the falls that proceeded up the Minnesota River valley eventually collapsed into a series of rapids, the falls on the Mississippi continued to progress north up the river valley spawning smaller waterfalls, including Minnehaha Falls, as it undercut the valleys of its tributaries. By the close of the Archaic Period (about 2,500 years ago), the falls on the Mississippi River had progressed north to a point near the present Lake Street-Marshall Avenue Bridge.

To date three archaeological sites identified as having a definitive Archaic period component have been recorded within Minneapolis. These sites, which are located proximate to one another and near the city's chain of lakes, are 21HE312, 21HE313, and 21HE314. These sites were identified as being associated with the Archaic period on the basis of the style of the projectile points recovered; the preponderance and types of lithic artifacts present (including cobble tools); and the lack of associated pottery sherds. Other aceramic lithic scatters documented within the city limits may also date to the Archaic period, but they lack diagnostic artifacts that would allow them to be authoritatively associated with this era.

## **WOODLAND TRADITION (C. 1000 B.C. – A.D. 1750)**

As the climate of the state continued to stabilize, the region's inhabitants began to use the resources available to them in an increasing variety of ways. Hunting and gathering, which had been the primary means of subsistence, was supplemented by a seasonal round that took advantage of seasonally available and locally abundant fish, game, and plant resources (Arzigian 2008:57). In central and southern Minnesota, the period was also marked by the introduction of domesticated plants such as squash, gourds, and beans. The presence of more reliable food sources, led to the adoption of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle as evidenced in the long-term or reoccurring seasonal occupation of village sites. Tied to this increased environmental stability and regional settlement patterns were the advent of ceramic technology and the construction of earthen mounds. These changes occurred in Minnesota between approximately 3,000 and 900 years ago. It should be noted that these innovations were not adopted in all areas of the state at the same time or necessarily together.

Woodland sites are more frequently documented by Minnesota archaeologists because they are more widely distributed and not usually as deeply buried as Paleoindian and Archaic sites. The presence of ceramics and distinct tool types also allows these sites to be more readily assigned to a particular tradition than non-diagnostic lithic scatters. Consequently, a relative abundance of Woodland-period artifacts has enabled archaeologists to develop a chronological framework consisting of an Early and Middle (Initial) (ca. 1000 B.C.–A.D. 500) and Late (Terminal) (ca. A.D. 500-1750) Woodland periods, and to assign Woodland sites to distinct traditions. Those Woodland traditions that are likely to be most evident in the Minneapolis area include the Southeast Minnesota Early Woodland Complex (500 –200 B.C.); the Havana-Related Complex of the Middle Woodland (200 B.C. – A.D. 200/300); the Central Minnesota Transitional Woodland Complex (A.D. 300-1000); and the Southeast Minnesota Late Woodland Complex (A.D. 500-1150) (Arzigian 2008).

### Southeast Minnesota Early Woodland Complex (500 – 200 B.C.)

The diagnostic artifact type for the Southeast Minnesota Early Woodland Complex is La Moille Thick ceramics. The five sites in Minnesota that have produced this ware type are located within riverine settings in the southeastern and south-central portions of the state. Three of the sites are situated along the Mississippi River, but not north of St. Paul. It has been suggested that these sites "might reflect the gradual nature of the transition between Archaic and Woodland in this region" (Arzigian 2008:30-34).

### Havana-Related Complex of the Middle Woodland (200 B.C. – A.D. 200/300)

The Havana-Related Complex dates to the Middle Woodland (ca. 200 B.C. – A.D. 200/300) in central and eastern Minnesota (Arzigian 2008). This period is marked by the presence of northern Havana Hopewell ceramic and burial mound traditions that originated in the Illinois River valley (Dobbs 1990a:130). The exchange of cultural concepts between Minnesota's Havana-related cultures and the Havana Hopewell is likely tied to an extensive trade network that focused on the transfer of raw materials from one region to another (Dobbs 1990a:130). Havana-related sites have a strong association with the Mississippi and St. Croix river valleys and inland lakes (Arzigian 2008:36, 41).

Central Minnesota Transitional Woodland Complex (A.D. 300-1000)

This context marks the transition between the Middle and Late Woodland cultures in central Minnesota that occurred about A.D. 300–1000 (Arzigian 2008:85). Ceramics encompassed by this complex include St. Croix wares, followed slightly later in time by Onamia wares. Projectile points associated with this complex include triangular points and small, side-notched points. Important subsistence resources included deer, along with beaver, bear, bison, and other small mammals, and to a lesser degree fish. Evidenced in this complex, and the subsequent Blackduck Woodland populations, is a shift towards a seasonal round subsistence strategy (Gibbon and Hohman-Caine 1980). Sites of this era are associated with lakes and stream outlets.

Southeast Minnesota Late Woodland Complex (A.D. 500-1150)

The Southeast Minnesota Late Woodland Complex is associated with populations that continued to hunt, gather, and fish, but which also began growing crops towards the end of the period. Effigy and other mounds are typical of this period, as are cord-impressed ceramics and true triangular bow-and-arrow projectile points. Sites are found along terraces and bluffs associated with the Mississippi River and its tributaries, and west to the Blue Earth River valley (Arzigian 2008:93).

While due to the presence of pottery, more archaeological sites within Minneapolis can be assigned to the Woodland period than to the previous Paleoindian and Archaic periods, our understanding of the lives of Woodland people in the Minneapolis area is limited. To date no Woodland period sites within the city have undergone an intensive archaeological investigation, and the six sites (21HE117, 21HE313, 21HE314, 21HE315, 21HE342, and 21HE386) that have produced pottery fragments have produced a combined total of less than 30 sherds of which most were non-diagnostic body sherds. The few sherds that exhibited decoration or rim shapes indicate only that the Minneapolis area was occupied from the Initial through Terminal Woodland periods. Also likely associated with the Woodland period are three locations (21HE<sub>x</sub>, 21HE<sub>z</sub>, and 21HE<sub>ai</sub>) where mounds were observed within the boundary of Minneapolis during the nineteenth century. As mound construction began during the Woodland period, these earthworks likely originated during this period. Due to development since their documentation, earthworks are no longer visible at these three locations. It should also be noted that because the recording of earthworks within Minnesota did not occur until after the development of the Minneapolis area had begun in earnest, the three documented locations do not likely reflect all of the mound groups present within the city's boundaries.