OUTLINE REPORT

BACKGROUND

- Born in New England in 1814, H.W.S. Cleveland was educated with Emerson’s theories of form to follow function and naturalism in the landscape. (Tishler and Luckhardt, 1985)
- He began his practice in Chicago as a land surveyor in 1835. (Tishler and Luckhardt, 1985)
- Cleveland wrote several articles and gave speeches to share the ideals that drove his designs in landscape architecture. His own writings parallel the work of Emerson both in terminology and theory. (Nadenicek, 1997)
- He advocated to preserve the natural features of lakes and the Mississippi River banks. In time, these are invaluable as a means of giving Minneapolis a unique and distinct character. (Cleveland, 1883)

Horace William Shaler Cleveland began his education in New England where he was introduced to the ideologies of Emerson. He applied these theories throughout his career as he migrated west. He began working in Illinois at the age of 21 as a landscape surveyor. He worked with Frederick Olmsted on Prospect Park in Brooklyn and remained close friends for the rest of their lives. He continued practicing in Chicago but faced many difficulties through the recessions of the 1880’s. In 1872 he first introduced his theories of landscape architecture as part of an address to the first president of the University of Minnesota. The address was titled “The Application of Landscape Architecture to the Wants of the West.” (Tishler and Luckhardt, 1985) Cleveland worked in Chicago long enough to recognize the backwards nature of their planning efforts. The city was already built and they were attempting to clear areas for parks in the outskirts of the city.

Cleveland recognized the potential in St. Paul and Minneapolis’ natural landscape as these cities were just beginning to grow. He moved to Minneapolis in 1886 to spend the remainder of his career in Minnesota. He advocated for the acquisition and design of Minneapolis and St. Paul Parks and Parkways. Cleveland emphasized the preservation of open spaces. Once these sites were built over they would be too costly to recreate, as he learned in Chicago. Cleveland believed that with a successful design, growth was inevitable. He intended to leave his design and instructions vague to allow for future growth. He saw that Minneapolis and St. Paul would expand into one another in the next century. (Tishler and Luckhardt, 1985) The goals achieved through his design are best understood by looking at the legacy of his work in Minneapolis and St. Paul.
CONTEXTUAL WORK

- System of Parks and Parkways for the City of Minneapolis
- Como Park, St. Paul
- Summit Avenue Boulevard, St. Paul
- Washburn Park Addition, Minneapolis
- Saint Anthony Park District, St. Paul
- Preservation of the Mississippi River Shore Line

As a landscape architect, H.W.S. Cleveland shaped the growth of Minneapolis by advocating the preservation of the existing landscape. In Minnesota, these natural resources are seen in the lakes and along the Mississippi River (Cleveland, 1883). All of Cleveland’s proposals in Minnesota started with the existing natural elements. The forms he designs functionally meet the necessary circulation connections. He designs the path to follow the natural topography of the land to avoid unnecessary and costly cuts and fills. He applied this criteria to his work with Warren B. Dunnel on the Minnesota Veterans’ Home Complex (Koop, 1988).

MINNESOTA VETERANS HOME COMPLEX

In a letter to the Minnesota Soldiers’ Home, H.W.S. Cleveland provides insight into his intentions for the landscape and overall site plan (Evenson, 1991 and Bernard Jacobs Architects Ltd., 1993).

- **Roads**: Cleveland originally designed the roads to enter the campus and the ring road as curvilinear paths that follow the topography of the site. The paths follow the ravine on the Mississippi River banks and accentuate the mature landscape. One oval road around the Administration Building, Building 10, circled a rolling green lawn with large shady trees as a quiet and restful place near the domiciliary buildings.

- **Buildings**: In the original layout plan, Cleveland provides a general sense of the optimal placement of buildings across the campus. In his letter he writes “I have only attempted to show where [the buildings] may be advantageously placed. Any slight changes from the positions I have indicated may be determined when the time comes for their construction, but the general system being once determined it is easy to see how the details may be best adapted to it when all of the necessities are known.” The hospital, domiciliary, and mechanical buildings are scattered across the site as ‘cabins’. They are not meant to follow a grid, the orientation of the occupied buildings optimized views of the Mississippi River.
• **Parks:** The trees were thinned from the upper plateau to best enhance the ‘open park’ design. The trees were intended to be irregularly scattered, singly or in groups, but nowhere sufficiently dense to interfere with its character as an open park. This was understood to be continued with future maintenance and thinning of new growth. In alignment with Emerson’s theories, Cleveland saw the beauty in nature as trueness to the place. He disapproved of artificial embellishments like fabricated ruins, statues or excess terracing.

• **Riverbanks:** Cleveland proposed “generally to preserve the native wood and shrubbery growing on the steep sides of the bluffs, and contrast it by open lawn or meadow on the level spaces and the bottom land bordering the Minnehaha.” This shapes the experience of the Mississippi River from campus. The dominant vegetation with scattered buildings has been the historic image of the Minnesota Veterans Home Complex as it is seen as a visitor enters the site and from the opposite banks of the Mississippi River.

**RECOMMENDED LANDSCAPE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The proposed Building 22 will replace the existing Building 17 in the Northern half of the site between Women’s Building 6 and the main driveway from the Steel Bridge. Building 17 broke away from Cleveland’s original circulation plan for the campus. As a large building, it cut into the landscape rather than conforming to it. The design contrasts with the historic buildings scattered through the Southeastern portion of the site.

When continuing to expand the Minnesota Veterans’ Home Complex, it is important to reference Cleveland’s original intentions. However, the damage to the natural landscape has already occurred in the area of Building 17. For Building 22, replacing Building 17, the design should respect the still historic area of the campus. Future designs may re-introduce Cleveland’s original ideals concerning the natural elements of the landscape. Below is a list of basic design guidelines informed by Cleveland’s writings and his contextual work in the Minneapolis and St. Paul area (Cleveland, 1883 and Evenson, 1991).

- Maintain only indigenous plants, grasses, and trees.
- Allow dense plant growth on steep slopes.
- Open park design on plateaus where trees should be irregularly scattered, singly or in groups.
- Work with existing topography, no excessive cuts and fills
- Limit artificial embellishment.
- Design curvilinear paths to follow the natural topography.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

CITED REFERENCES


Cleveland, H. W. S. (1883). Suggestions for a System of Parks and Parkways for the City of Minneapolis. (Read at a meeting of the Park Commissioners) Minneapolis: Johnson, Smith & Harrison.


SOURCES CITED IN REFERENCES ABOVE (NOT FOUND)


APPENDIX A

HISTORIC SITE PLANS

The following site plans were retrieved from the Historic American Building Survey, archived online at the Library of Congress website. Dates were approximated by referencing records of the construction and razing of buildings across the Minnesota Veterans Home Complex. (HABS, 1998)

C.A. 1887 - H.W.S. Cleveland original site plan designed for the Minnesota Veterans Home Complex. No evidence suggests the existence of “parade grounds” nor is there any reference to “parade grounds” in subsequent site plans.

C.A. 1930's - The site plan reflecting the remaining original buildings and the additions of the Pavilion (1895-96), Women’s Building 6 (1905-6), Steel Bridge (1908), and Laundry Building 13 (1909-10). The Home Garden, Poultry Yard and Poultry House are detailed on the Northeaster corner of the grounds.

PLAN OF GROUNDS OF MINNESOTA SOLDIERS HOME
AS DESIGNED BY H.W.S. CLEVELAND, LANDSCAPE GARDENER
C.A. 1887
SITE PLAN REFLECTING ALTERNATIONS TO H.W.S. CLEVELAND’S ORIGINAL PLAN AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY ADDITIONS
C.A. 1930’S
REHABILITATION OF GROUNDS - MINNESOTA SOLDIERS HOME
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION PROJECT NO. 5623
C.A. 1935
This letter from H.W.S. Cleveland, outlines his plans for the Minnesota Soldiers’ Home Grounds. It was addressed to the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota Soldiers’ Home on August 8, 1888. The letter is referenced in a report by Roald N. Evenson and possibly retrieved from the Horace Cleveland files at the Ramsey County Historical Society.
Letter from H.W.S. Cleveland, outlining his plans for the Soldiers' Home Grounds

Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 8, 1888

To the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota Soldiers' Home,

Gentlemen: I submit herewith my design for the arrangement of the grounds of the Soldiers' Home at Minnehaha Falls.

Your familiarity with the locality, from frequent inspection during the progress of the work to its present state, renders it unnecessary for me to explain that the disposition of the buildings and the arrangement of the driveways has been governed by, and adapted to, the natural topography of the ground so as secure the most graceful and pleasing effects, and also to avoid the costly and unsightly work of heavy cuts and fills.

The main avenues of approach to the buildings must of necessity be from the north, and their entrance upon the grounds has been arranged with reference to the proposed park, through which all access from that side must be had. One of these would be on the river bank connecting with the boulevard which it is proposed to construct up river from this point. The other is on the bluff which forms the eastern side of the valley of the Minnehaha, about 800 feet west of the first-named entrance. Both of these would be on the upper plateau on which the buildings will be placed and will lead to them all on an almost level grade.

A third entrance is by a driveway on the low ground along the eastern side of the Minnehaha. This drive will also have a branch crossing the Minnehaha by a bridge, and then ascending the high precipitous bank on the opposite side by a long ascent, cut into its side to afford an entrance from the west. It will follow the course of the Minnehaha to its mouth, and thence across the Mississippi to the island, and thence to the St. Paul park, thus forming the connecting passage between the two great divisions of the proposed great interurban park.

A winding road will start from this driveway at a point near the old stone mill dam and follow the course of the ravine, which starts from the upper plateau at a point just west of the engine-house. This ravine affords the only practicable route for a carriage road between the upper and lower grounds, and would form the readiest approach for visitors from the other side of the river.

As a whole the system of roads will afford as easy and convenient access to any and all of the buildings as the nature of the situation will admit, while they embrace in their course all the peculiar features of natural scenery, which constitute the attractive charm of the place.
The two buildings now approaching completion, and the engine-house [Heating plant], which is begun, are indicated on the plan by dark hatchings.

The location of the administration building was determined by reasons the cogency of which was fully acknowledged by those of you to whom I had the opportunity to explain it on the ground, and the force of which I am confident will be manifest to every visitor.

The proposed site of the hospital is, for reasons that will be obvious when examined, the best that can be selected for that purpose, but it is not unlikely that it may be found expedient, when the ground at that point is properly graded, to change its exact position from the one in which it is represented on the plan. The same, indeed, may be said of the other proposed buildings. I have only attempted to show where they may be advantageously placed. Any slight changes from the positions I have indicated may be determined when the time comes for their construction, but the general system being once determined it is easy to see how the details may be best adapted to it when all of the necessities are known.

Thus far the only preparation of the grounds for occupancy has been the opening and partial construction of the principal driveway, and the thinning out of the wood on the upper plateau. The design for this portion is to make of it a continuous lawn, with trees irregularly scattered, singly or in groups, but nowhere sufficiently dense to interfere with its character as an open park.

The thinning of the original thick wood has been done with this in view, and will require to be further continued hereafter. As the soil is underlaid at very slight depth with strata of rock, there is great danger of injury to the trees that are left standing if the thinning is too vigorously prosecuted at first. It would be of inestimable advantage to those now standing if a heavy mulching of manure could be at once placed around them, or a few inches of black soil, deposited in a circle covering the whole space occupied by their roots. The best preparation for a rich lawn over this whole area will be a heavy top dressing of black soil, filling all the little inequalities of the surface, which should then be evenly raked and sown with lawn grass at a rate of four bushels to the acre. It will be a waste of labor, however, to do this while the work of building is in progress.

It will be seen by reference to the working plan that I propose generally to preserve the native wood and shrubbery growing on the steep sides of the bluffs, and contrast it by open lawn or meadow on the level spaces and the bottom land bordering the Minnehaha.

This stream, for the whole distance within these grounds, flows through a mere swamp, in numerous channels, which forbid a close approach, and are concealed in a dense growth of alders. This should all be cleared, and the stream confined to a single channel at the base of the precipitous, wooded bluffs which form its western side, while the present swamp would be converted into rich meadow, bounded on the eastern side by the wooded hills.
which on which the buildings of the home are placed.

The old stone dam which was erected in the early days of the settlement of the country is still in perfectly good condition, with the exception of one or two gaps, which can be repaired at small cost; and it is so overgrown with trees and shrubbery that its artificial character can be easily concealed, and an opportunity thus afforded for the construction of a lake of perfectly natural appearance, which will form a very pleasing feature in the general aspect of the place. The area below the dam is a broad expanse of low land liable to overflow by the backwater of the Mississippi.

If desirable, this might be utilized for any purpose for which the water power of the lake might be available, and it is so completely secluded from the ornamental portion of the grounds that there need be nothing incongruous in devoting it to such use. Otherwise it might be converted into meadow by excavating a single channel and raising the rest of the tract, and suffering the outflow of the lake to form a waterfall or a series of cascades.

I deem it unwise to go into more details of future development than I have indicated in these plans and specifications.

I shall be warmly interested in the development of the area, and shall be glad at all times to render such aid as may be in my power by suggestion or advice.

Very respectfully yours,

(signed)  
H. W. S. Cleveland  
Landscape Gardener