

1 Native Landscaping

Take a look around the front of the History Center building. Here you will see many native prairie plants including grasses and forbs (wildflowers). Once established, the landscape will resemble the unplowed prairie that greeted the county's European settlers.

Native plants are well adapted to the sandy, drought-prone soil of Sherburne County. Their extensive root systems make them resistant to drought and able to thrive without an irrigation system. Over the next few years, these native prairie plants will establish themselves: "The first year they sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap!"

This prairie restoration includes about 30 species of native grasses and forbs. The greater diversity of plants in a prairie attracts more diverse wildlife than traditional landscaping.

2 Bailey Station

The Bailey gas station once stood near the intersection of County Road 14 and Highway 10 between Elk River and Big Lake. Built in the early 1930s, the station was owned for many years by Vic Peterson and was known to locals as Vic's Place. The Jefferson Highway (now Hwy 10) was one of the first paved highways in the state. As the car became more common there was pressure to improve the roads. Where most Americans had lived their lives primarily within a radius of 6 or 8 miles, the car extended their horizons from the township or even the county to the whole state. The car also gave middle class families in the Twin Cities access to vacation spots from Big Lake here in Sherburne County and to the many destinations 'up north.' Gas stations lined the highway to serve these new travelers as they passed through Sherburne County.

Longtime county residents remember buying candy at Vic's Place when they were children. Sometimes if Vic was busy working on his light plant in the basement, he would let the kids open the case and help themselves, telling them, "You know the price, leave the money on the counter."

3 The Red River Ox Cart Trail

Imagine a line of 100 or more carts pulled by oxen trundling across the prairie. That is what you might have seen back in 1850, before railroads and highways eased transportation across the vast distances on the prairie.

Sherburne County has long been an important transportation corridor. The main leg of the trail between St. Paul and St. Cloud crossed the corner of the parcel of land just to the west of the History Center property.

Along with the panels at this station, we will be installing a full-size replica Red River ox cart in 2007.

4 Stuve Farmstead

A series of families struggled to scratch a living from the sandy soils of this marginal farm. It is now a historic archaeological site. St. Cloud State University test excavations in 2001 and 2002 didn't find much associated with the 1920s farm, but they did produce numerous bottles and cans from the mid-20th century associated with the use of the old silo pit as a dump.

Can you spot the corner of a stone foundation hidden in the trees as you approach the Stuve Farmstead rest spot? This was an outbuilding. The larger foundation farther along the path belonged to the barn that once stood on this site. The location of the Stuve house is not known for sure. Future archaeological work might reveal its foundation.

5 Oak Savanna

The glaciers left behind a large sandy area called the Anoka Sand Plain, which covers much of Sherburne County. Native prairie plants and bur oaks are well adapted to surviving on this sandy soil. The oak savanna ecosystem features scattered oak trees standing above the prairie grasses and forbs. Oak savannas are now very rare.

Oak savannas developed on the edge of different ecological zones (prairie, pine forest, and Big Woods) and tend to be rich areas for wildlife. Throughout history, people have taken advantage of these abundant wild resources. In spring you might see pasque flowers along the trail. Summer will bring a multitude of iridescent dragonflies that flit around busily—and eat our Minnesota mosquitoes!

As a result of the 1837 treaty between the United States and the Dakota and Ojibwe, this area became a buffer zone between the two tribes. Although both tribes were attracted here by the abundant plant and animal resources of this oak savanna landscape, neither settled permanently in the area. In the 19th century and even early 20th century, groups of Ojibwe still came through the county to gather wild rice (actually an aquatic grass) from some of the local lakes where it still grew.

As you approach the Fox House you pass an open grass landscape to the south of the trail dotted with just a few trees. This was once oak savanna, but today many of the grasses here are not native. Brome grass was planted here as a forage grass because with its high protein content it was a good grass for feeding cattle. Today the Minnesota DNR classifies brome grass as an invasive species.

This area also has many cedar trees. Cedars were planted in the mid-20th century as a conservation measure, but we are now removing many of them so that the bur oaks will have a chance to spread again.

6 Fox House

The Herbert M. Fox House was built in the late 1870s. It is on the National Register of Historic Places because of its unusual vertical plank construction technique. Take a look at the window cutout on the north wall of the house and you can see how the boards run vertically instead of horizontally. The earliest settlers in the county used construction techniques they were familiar with and started off by building small houses that could be added onto later as they became more established.

This house originally sat on a farm in Santiago Township in what is now the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. It was moved in 1980 when all the structures were cleared off the Refuge. It then sat on the corner of Highway 10 and Bradley Boulevard and was moved in July 2006 to this location, where it once again sits in an oak savanna landscape.



7 A Conservation Ethic

Bill and Margaret Cox donated 220 acres to the county in 1997, including the land that the History Center was built on and the Oak Savanna Park to the north. Their aim was to protect their pasture from development. Conservation was important to the Coxes from the beginning. Bill started to plant trees in the early 1940s to repair the damage to this fragile land done by farming.

As you drive around Sherburne County, you can see the many lines of trees along the roads and between fields. These are windrows that were planted in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s as people tried to reverse the erosion that poor farming practices, drought, and wind had inflicted on the land. Today many of those trees are being cut down, the casualty of large center pivot irrigators and development.

8 Clitty Lake

Clitty Lake was named after Jacob and Ann Clitty, the first European-American settlers on this property.

Wetlands formed as the glaciers retreated some 10,000 years ago. Clitty Lake is an example of a lake formed by large blocks of ice that melted over hundreds of years. The water level in Clitty Lake can vary a lot depending on the season and how much rain there has been. It can look like a lake in early spring and be almost filled in with grasses by late summer. In the drought years of the 1930s, a farmer was able to harvest a hay crop from what is a lake bed today.

The dominant plant in this wetland is reed canary grass, a crop encouraged by the county agent in the 1930s drought years because of its hardiness. Today the DNR considers reed canary grass an invasive species. It is a major threat to wetlands because it out-competes native species.

This wetland attracts a diverse collection of wildlife, from waterfowl to muskrats. Stop at the bench for some bird watching and look for muskrat houses on the lake.

Sherburne **History** *center*

Legacy Trail Guide

Discover Sherburne County *ON FOOT!*

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Learn more about Sherburne County History in the Life on the Edge exhibit inside the History Center.

A plant checklist for the History Center is available at the front desk. Other outdoor guides are available in the gift shop.

You can access the Oak Savanna Park Trails from the Legacy Trail. From there, visit the Becker City Park.

Hours:

Tuesday: 10 am–8 pm

Wednesday-Friday: 10 am–5 pm

Saturday: 10 am–4 pm

Closed Sunday and Monday

**No motorized vehicles or horses on Legacy Trail,
please.**

Thank you!



Alert! Poison Ivy Danger-please DO NOT leave the trail! Sandals not recommended on trail.

