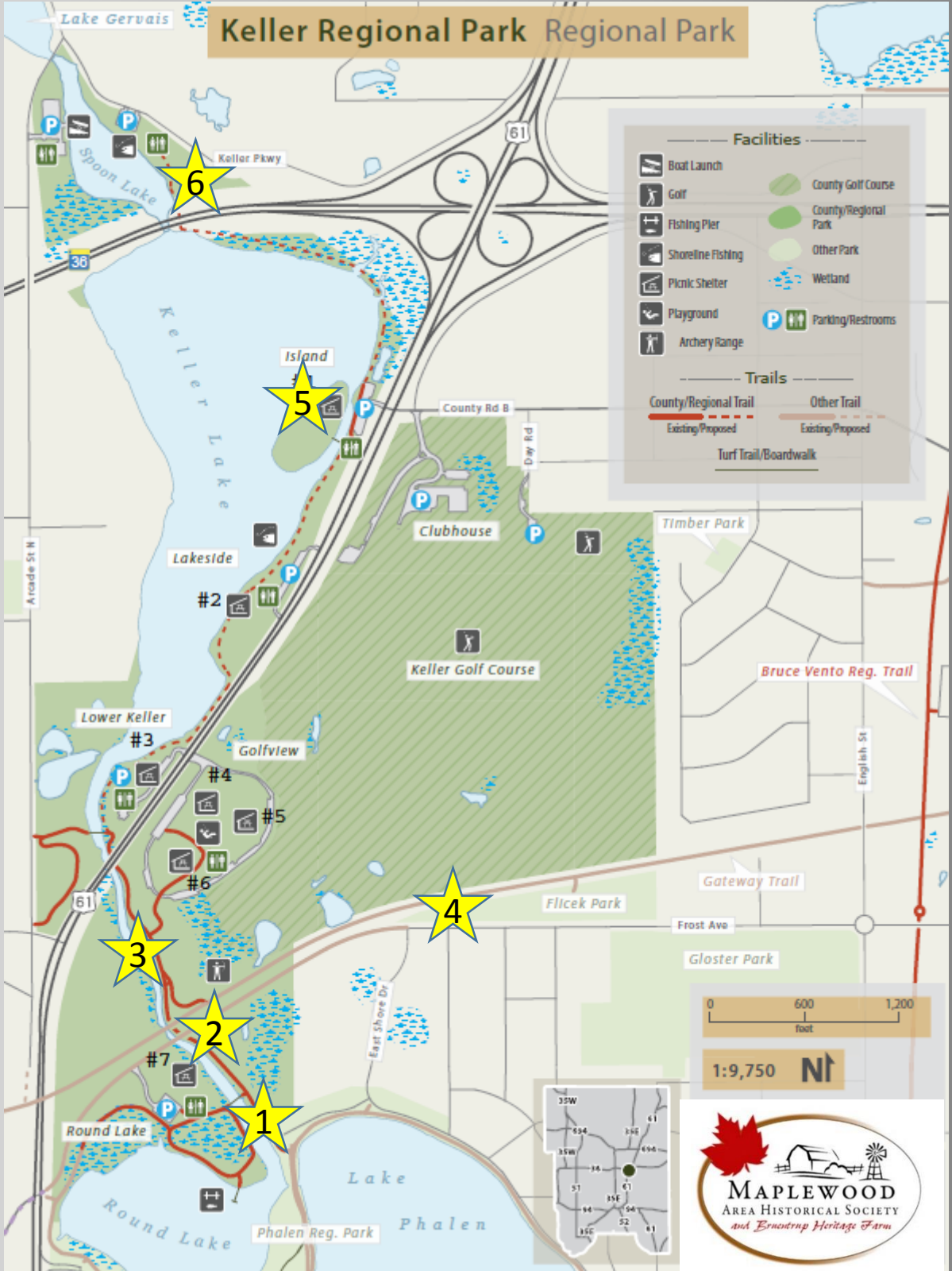




Municipal Forests of Keller Park

Enjoy this self-guided walking tour of the heritage trees along Keller Creek, starting at Lake Phalen and ending at Spoon Lake.

Prepared by **Maplewood Area Historical Society**





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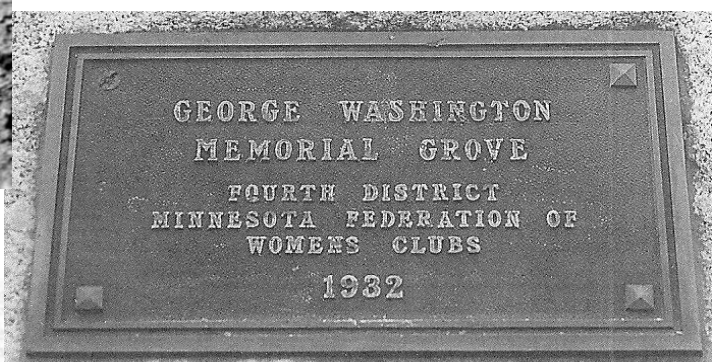
In the 1920's, the 4th District of Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs consisted of 40 women's clubs in Ramsey County that promoted the advancement of women in an era before they were given the right to vote. On May 2, 1927 they obtained approval from the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners to reforest the "non-productive land" in Keller Park by planting "municipal forests" on 13 ½ acres.¹ By 1932, five groves had been planted by the 4th District.

1

There are two Eastern Cottonwood trees that are not part of the municipal forests but are significant for their size. They are located on the eastern shore of Keller Creek, beside the walking path from the parking lot at the north end of Lake Phalen.² Before 1900, the creek was a narrow, shallow channel through adjoining swamp. The canal was dredged around 1913. The age of these cottonwoods is unknown so we don't know if they came in before or after the dredging.

2

A grove of 10 American Elms was planted and dedicated here on May, 1932 as the Washington Memorial Grove to commemorate the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth on February 22, 1732.³ No trees survive but the rock and plaque were re-dedicated on May 16, 2015. The below aerial photo from 1945 shows the location and the other photos show the plaque and 1932 dedication.



Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society

¹ St. Paul Dispatch, May 2, 1927.

² "Heritage Trees of Maplewood" by Joe Quick, 1999.

³ St. Paul Dispatch, May 5, 1932.



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3 Another grove was started on May 4, 1929 when 27 American Elms were planted along Keller Creek about ½ way between Lake Phalen and Lake Keller just north of today's WPA dam. ⁴ This grove was called "Memory Grove" and a plaque was dedicated here in 1932 in memory of 27 local and state leaders of the 4th district. This plaque no longer exists at the site today but the rock is still on the bank of the creek. Old highway 61 shown in this 1945 aerial photo also no longer exists today.

⁴ St. Paul Dispatch, May 5, 1929.



4 Also, on that same day of May 4, 1929, 2,500 White and Norway pine trees were planted at a third grove that was ½ mile east of Keller Creek between Frost Avenue and the SOO Line Railroad tracks, where today's Flicek Park is located. ⁵ No trees survive today; they may have succumbed to drought and vandalism during the dry Depression years. ⁶

5 A fourth grove of 5,000 trees was started on May 10, 1930 on the "Anna O'Toole Island in Keller Lake". ⁷ There were two islands in Keller at that time and we don't know if this is the lone surviving island along the eastern shore. No forest of that size exists on the island today but there are at least two very old Eastern Cottonwoods on the south central portion of the island. ⁸ Somewhere in 1914 – 1921, the lake was dredged and soil was piled here to create the high-and- dry island we visit today.

⁵ St. Paul Dispatch, May 5, 1929.

⁶ "The Minnesota Clubwoman" 1932.

⁷ "The Minnesota Clubwoman" magazine, May 1930.

⁸ "Heritage Trees of Maplewood" by Joe Quick, 1999.



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6

On May 14, 1927 3,000 trees were planted by 40 Boy Scouts on the southeast corner of Spoon Lake.⁸ In 1928, another 3,000 trees were planted near the same site and on May 4, 1929, a plaque was dedicated for the “Rounds-Akers Grove” in memory of the two ladies responsible for creating the grove.⁹ This plaque, shown below, remains today. Many Red pines, jack pines, and white pine trees remain at the site today and are believed to be part of the original planting. The 1945 aerial photo does not show the current-day parking lot and restrooms.

⁸ St. Paul Dispatch, May 2, 1927.

⁹ “The Minnesota Clubwoman” magazine, May 1928.

