

# Walk & Talk Self-Guided Tours

# Minnehaha Falls

Difficulty: Moderate – 2-mile round-trip walk on unpaved park trails and concrete steps



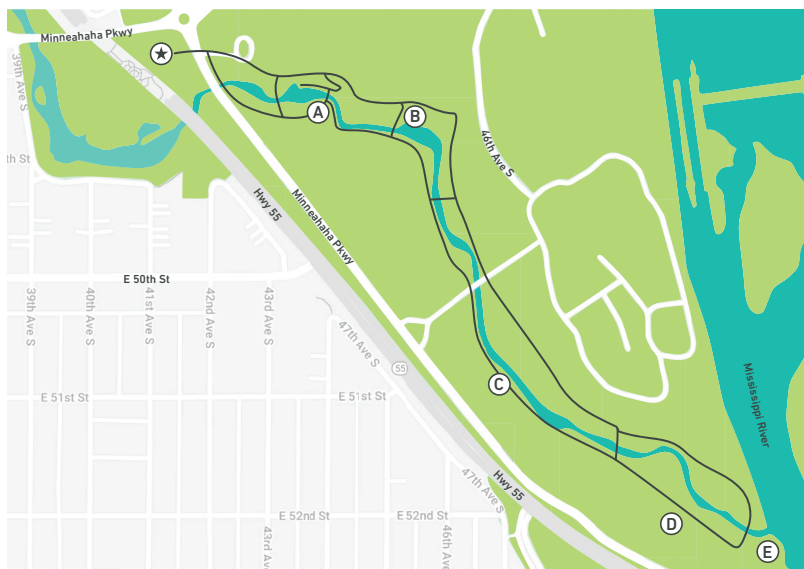
**About Your Guide:** Matt Karl, Minneapolis Parks Foundation's Business and Administration Director and long-time Minneapolis Park explorer.

This walk features historic sites such as the Longfellow House and the old Ard Godfrey Mill as well as beautifully wooded scenery along the Minnehaha Falls Lower Glen Trail.

★ **Longfellow House** – Longfellow House was built by Robert “Fish” Jones, in the style of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Jones operated the Longfellow Zoological Gardens and lived in the house from 1907 until his death in 1930. Ownership then transferred to the Park Board, which gave many of the animals to the Como Zoo and then closed the park completely in 1937. Longfellow House served as a public library until the late 1960s and later as a warming house for ice skaters and a haunted house for the MS Society. When Hiawatha Avenue was widened into a multi-lane highway, the house was moved to its present location.

**A. Minnehaha Falls** – The mask-like sculpture is of Dakota Chief Little Crow, a leader who believed in compromise and co-existence with white settlers. In 1862, the US failed to pay annuities mandated by the Treaty of Mendota. Little Crow did what he could to help his people, but when war broke out between several Dakota tribes and the US, Little Crow lead his forces into battle. In 1863, Little Crow was mortally shot near Hutchinson, Minnesota. His remains were eventually acquired by the Minnesota Historical Society, which publicly displayed them for decades – something unthinkable today. In 1971, the Society returned Little Crow’s remains to his grandson for burial. This sculpture was designed and created by artist Ed Noisecat and was installed in 1995.

**B. Former Site of the Minnehaha Park Zoo** – This fairly nondescript area of the park was once the site of an attraction as popular as the falls themselves. By 1898, the Park Board had amassed a menagerie of 200 animals representing 30 species. The zoo included a fenced-off pen for deer, elk, and even a moose; a large, caged area for five bears; a swimming pool for an alligator; and smaller cages for dozens of other animals. But newly hired Superintendent Theodore Wirth thought the zoo was inharmonious with its surroundings and cruel for some of the animals. The Park Board closed down most of the zoo in 1907, transferring many of the animals to “Fish” Jones’ zoo. The bears stayed until around 1918, and the hoofed animals remained until 1923.



**C. Ruins of the Ard Godfrey Mill Dam** – Ard Godfrey moved from Maine to Minneapolis in 1847 to help establish a mill at Saint Anthony Falls. He soon made a claim on the lower portion of Minnehaha Creek and, by 1857, had created a mill pond by erecting a low dam across the creek. Adjacent to the creek he built a flour mill: a two-storied, rectangular, wood-framed building. The power came from a large, wooden water wheel. The mill eventually was destroyed by fire in 1887. The rotting water wheel stood for many years, but now all that remains of Godfrey’s work are portions of the stone foundations of the mill dam, visible on each bank of the creek.

**D. Ruins of the Ard Godfrey Mill Dam** – Horace Cleveland urged the Park Board to acquire land along the banks of the Mississippi in South Minneapolis to prevent them from being destroyed by industries such as quarrying. It’s ironic, then, that in 1907 quarrying was allowed in Minnehaha Park by none other than the Park Board! The quarry was initially short-lived, operating just one or two years. Its output was used to build nearby parkways. In 1938, the WPA reopened the quarry and operated it for four years, producing gravel, sand, and stone used on park projects and at the airport.

**E. End at the mouth of Minnehaha Creek at the Mississippi River and return to the Longfellow House.**



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