



NEWSLETTER

July – Sept. 2025

When you consider what the passage of time has done to the city, the one constant has been the landscape and the lake that supported its establishment.

Introduction

In 1853, J.J. Brackett, recognized as Lakeville's first settler, established himself on the shores of Prairie Lake, later renamed Lake Marion. Brackett, who was instrumental in the early development of the area, likely saw the lake as a crucial resource for survival and prosperity, providing water, food, and a means of transportation. Lake Marion has since remained a central feature and a bellwether for the Lakeville community, reflecting the area's environmental and social changes over time.

The Drought of the 1930s

The 1930s brought one of the most severe droughts in U.S. history, profoundly affecting Minnesota and Lakeville. Changes in ocean and atmospheric patterns led to prolonged dry conditions, with rainfall dropping to record lows. The drought, lasting from about 1930 to 1936, coincided with the Great Depression, compounding the difficulties faced by Lakeville's primarily agricultural community. Low commodity prices and crop failures due to drought caused significant financial hardship for local farmers and related businesses.

During this period, Lake Marion shrank dramatically, as evidenced by a 1937 aerial photo showing the lake reduced to a small pond. The drought turned many Minnesota farm fields to dust and transformed small lakes into muddy ponds, with the peak of the drought in 1936 setting heat records that still stand today.

The area North of where Casperson Park is today was totally dry. A road extended from Casperson Park to the West side of the lake.

On the South Side of the Lake was Weichlbaums Resort and Antlers Park. There were very few homes on the lake at this point in Lakeville history.



Weather Changes and Recovery

Minnesota experienced a dramatic shift in weather in 1938 and 1939, with unusually high precipitation replacing the dry years. Increased moisture flows from the Gulf of Mexico and more frequent storm systems brought much-needed rainfall to the region. In 1936, Minnesota received only 18.6 inches of precipitation, but by 1938, this had increased to 27.3 inches, aiding the recovery of agriculture and improving living standards.

Lake Marion's water level mirrored these changes: it reached its highest recorded level of 984 feet above sea level in 1929, then dropped 14 feet by 1937. Rain and snow events in 1938 and 1939 resulted in **a 12 foot increase in water levels in less than two years.**

Lake Marion has experienced significant fluctuations in water levels over the decades. After the 1930s drought, levels dropped again briefly from 1961 to 1964, nearing record lows, but rebounded soon after. The 1960s to 1980s saw increased development along the shoreline, with more houses and cabins being built. In 1984, near-record high lake levels threatened some homes with flooding. When the lake is high, deep outlets can cause downstream flooding, particularly in the Lakeville business district.



Water Management Controls

To address these significant water level fluctuation issues, the City of Lakeville and state agencies have implemented various water management controls:

- **State Permits and Controls:** The city requires state permits to manage Lake Marion's water outlets, ensuring that water levels are regulated to prevent flooding and environmental degradation.
- **City Initiatives:** Lakeville's Water Resources Management Plan emphasizes protecting and enhancing surface water quality, managing stormwater, and using natural retention areas to maintain or improve water quality.
- **Flooding and Mitigation:** Regulations, such as imposing slow-no-wake boating restrictions when water levels exceed certain levels which help minimize shoreline erosion and property damage during high water events.
- **Environmental Issues:** The city works with watershed organizations to address runoff, water quality, and land use planning to mitigate the impacts of both drought and flooding.

Conclusion

Lake Marion's history reflects the resilience and adaptability of the Lakeville community. From its role in supporting early settlers to weathering the extremes of drought and flood, the lake remains a vital resource and a symbol of the region's environmental legacy. Through proactive management and community engagement, Lake Marion continues to serve as both a natural asset and a bellwether for Lakeville's well-being.

New Museum Exhibits

Grandmas Kitchen is one of the newest exhibits at the Lakeville Area Historical Society Museums. The exhibit includes many artifacts that exemplify the work of our grandmothers almost a century ago.



We also have a new **Children's Exhibit**.

We invite you to visit the museum during the open house on Friday July 11 from 9 AM – 3 PM Saturday July 12 from 9 AM – Noon at the Heritage Center. Admission is **Free!**

Enjoy a waffle breakfast at the Fire Station on Holyoke Avenue Saturday morning. Then walk across the parking lot to the Heritage Center and the Museum.

HISTORY RESOURCES

- **FOLLOW US (and Like us) ON**  **FACEBOOK** and tell your friends!

Search "Lakeville Area Historical Society"

- **Check out the Lakeville History website at**

MNLAHS.org

Click "Discover History"

- **Museum located at**
20110 Holyoke Ave.
Lakeville

Open: Mondays and Thursdays 9:00 – Noon
Or contact us to arrange a tour

- **Contact us: 952-985-4680 or...LAHS1995@gmail.com**