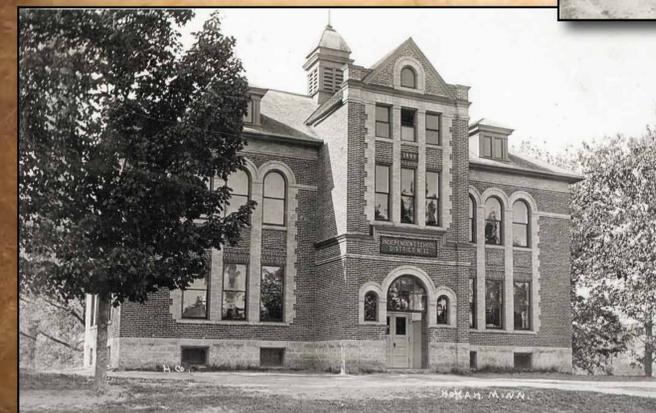


# Hokah History

Hokah is a Sioux or Dakota word meaning root or heron. Early maps referred to the Root River as Hokah. Hokah was also the name of a Chief, Wecheschatope in the Sioux language, whose village stood on the site now occupied by the city of Hokah. Edward Thompson founded Hokah in 1851. Thompson Creek and Mt. Tom are named for him and his brother Clark W. Thompson. In 1852 Ed Thompson built a dam and cut a waterway in solid rock creating a millpond, later named Lake Como. In 1866 he constructed a dam in the Root River, a supply canal to the mills and tailraces to the mouth of Thompson Creek. In 1866 the Southern Minnesota Railroad began operations building a machine shop and foundries. It manufactured its own cars turning out 300 by the end of 1870. The shops were razed and operations moved from Hokah to Wells Minnesota in 1880. The loss of the railroad workers and their families had a devastating effect on Hokah. At that time there were four flouring mills, with their elevators and cooper shops that closed one by one. Hokah was a destination for visitors to enjoy day trips by train to boat, swim or fish in Lake Como and Como Falls. In August of 1909 the lake was lost to a flood, was rebuilt in 1922, and by the late 1930's was filled in due to siltation. The 1920's saw the construction of several buildings on Main St. A city hall was built as a Works Progress Administration project in 1938. The controversial Hokah Chief newspaper was printed in Hokah from 1856-1952. Herb Wheaton was its fiery editor for the last forty of the ninety six years of publication. Hokah celebrated its centennial in August of 1951 and sesquicentennial in August of 2001.



Main & 2nd St. area prior to 1920



District 12 School 1899-1958 was located on south side of Main St. between 2nd & 3rd St.



Hokah Cooperative Cheese Co., organized in 1926, conducted business in this building on Main St. and in 1930 moved to a new building in North Hokah

## PARK & WEST MAIN ST.



Circa 1911. Originally named Village Park now referred to as Veteran's Park



Park mid 1940's



1918 funeral of Wm. E Guenther, who is named on entrance arch. Park Gazebo destroyed by fire early 1950's

## Hokah Heritage Signs Project 2011 Series of six signs depicting the City of Hokah's historic landmarks



Figure 1. T.H. Lewis' 1884 surveying map of the Hokah Effigy Mounds superimposed on an aerial photo of the park

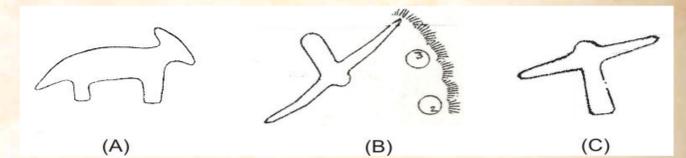


Figure 2. (A) shows Hokah's animal effigy (deer? Fox?), (B) shows the 225 foot wingspan bird effigy formerly in the middle of Hokah and (C) shows another smaller bird effigy.

T.H. Lewis described the Hokah Mounds in an article in Science (Vol. 106, 1885):

"There are three mounds on the public square, one being a bird effigy, [Figure 2B] 70 ft. above the Root River, its height being 1 1/2 ft. Length of body is 87 ft., span of wings is 225 ft. The wings of this effigy are slightly flexed backward. The body is rounded at its extremity. A smaller bird effigy, [Figure 2C] 60 ft. above the river... has no flexure in its wings and has a rectangular termination of its body. Another animal effigy [Figure 2A] is on lot 1, block 17, at 95 ft. above the river. From the extremity of the snout to the tip of the tail, its length in a right line is just sixty-two and a half feet, and the body is a foot and a half in height... Formerly there existed several other effigies, and thirty or forty mounds and embankments, on the same terrace with the birds, which have been removed in grading streets and lots."

The animal effigy shown in Figure 2A could be a deer, but has a somewhat long tail for that representation. Something odd to note is that while the animal effigy follows the rule of heading in the direction of the flow of the Root River, its feet are on the opposite side from the waterway. The birds appear to be flying in the direction of the flow of the Mississippi River.