

## Theodore Wirth Park History and Background

The largest park in the Minneapolis Park System, Theodore Wirth Park is well-known for its year round recreational activities and natural resource treasures. Amenities include the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, 18-hole and 9-hole golf courses, a winter recreation area, and an off-road cycling trail. In 2009, Wirth Park was named “Best Park” in *City Pages’* Best of the Twin Cities edition.



*Swimming contests at Glenwood Park*

Originally named Keegan’s Lake and renamed Glenwood Lake in 1890, the lake was part of 38 acres acquired by the Minneapolis park board in 1909, enlarging the original 64 acres purchased in 1889.

In 1910, a Park Board nursery was established on the west side of the lake, where all plant material was grown for its parklands until 1980. In 1916-17, several thousand yards of gravel, sand and mud

were removed to create the beach, and a beach house was built in 1918. The picnic shelter, up the hill across Glenwood Avenue from the beach areas, was built in 1930. It continues to be a popular spot for family reunions, wedding receptions, and a variety of other events.

In 1938, the lake, along with Glenwood Park, was renamed to honor Theodore Wirth, the parks superintendent who, during his tenure from 1905 to 1938, boldly forged ahead to bring significant segments of the vision of the park system’s founding fathers into being, helping to create the internationally known park system that we know and love today.



*Aqua Follies pool*



*Wirth Beach 1960*

From 1941 to 1964, Wirth Lake was the site of the Aqua Follies, a popular Aquatennial event. An Olympic swimming pool, complete with diving towers, was installed to showcase the water spectacle at the northeast end of the lake. A 6,000-seat grandstand filled with spectators twice daily throughout the Aquatennial. Since 1994, Wirth Beach picnic grounds has been the site of the annual Juneteenth celebration, which commemorates the end of slavery and celebrates the humanity, glory, and strength of African American people. The event attracts as many as 50,000 people.