

## Blue Mound, Luverne

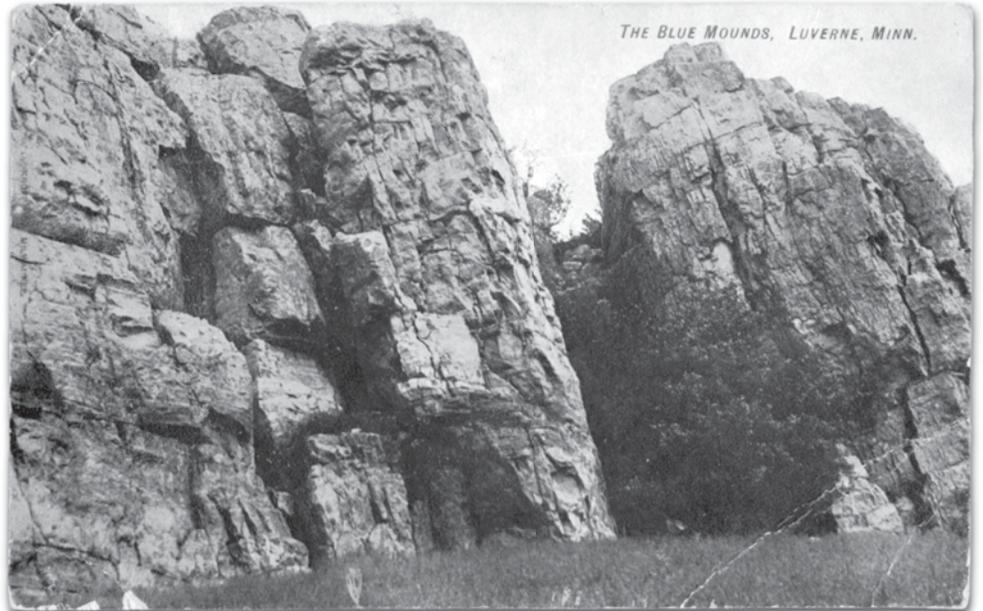


IT'S NOT REALLY BLUE and it falls more into the category of a cliff than a mound. Nonetheless, southwestern Minnesota's Blue Mound—one of several cliffs in a park that shares its name—has a long-storied history.

Comprised of pinkish-purple Sioux quartzite, the cliff is roughly one mile long and up to 90 feet high. Early westbound non-native settlers passing through the region, which sits on the edge of the gently rolling Great Plains, gave the site its name because, from a distance, it appeared blue—possibly from the late-afternoon sun reflecting off the lichen-covered rock.

The quartzite was formed from quartz sand channeled off an ancient mountain range and deposited onto the floor of the sea that once covered the region. It developed its extremely hard consistency from the weight of the sand and sea above it. Ripple marks, left from when the sand lay on the sea floor, can be seen today among the rock outcroppings at Blue Mounds State Park.

It has long been rumored, based on early residents' claims that piles of bones littered the base of the site, that Native Americans used these cliffs as a bison jump. Whether that conjecture was, at best, shaky or because nineteenth-century scavengers sold bison bones by the wagonload to fertilizer companies, no evidence exists today to support these claims.



*Postcard view of the Blue Mound, about 1909* (MHS COLLECTIONS)

Early photos and postcards show that Blue Mound was a popular site-seeing location. In the 1930s the WPA built two reservoirs and a recreation area nearby. A campground and park were developed later, and in 1961 the name of the park was changed from the Mound Springs Recreation Area to Blue Mounds State Park.

As a nod to its heritage and the days when settlers passed by the unique geological formation, a bison herd was introduced in the early 1960s, and in the 1970s portions of the park were restored to prairie. Today, those features share Blue Mound with enthusiastic rock climbers.

—STEVEN R. KINSELLA

Sources: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/state\\_parks/blue\\_mounds/narrative.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/blue_mounds/narrative.html) (accessed May 22, 2011); *Blue Mounds State Park Annual Report*, 1977; Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, Subject Files, 1955–77 (box 19); Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Division: State Parks Files, Management Plans for State Parks, and State Parks Maps and Drawings. All records are in the Minnesota Historical Society.

*Among other pursuits, Steven R. Kinsella of St. Paul is a freelance writer. His book, 900 Miles from Nowhere: Voices from the Homestead Frontier (2006) was a finalist for the Great Plains Book Award.*

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