

Harvey Waddell

Interviewed by an unidentified interviewer on an unknown date at an unknown location.

Oral history tape number: 27

This is Harvey Waddell talking about the south side of Madison in the 1920s. Harvey?

I sure did forget something. I ran part of the tape and that didn't show up. I want to say that the streetcar line ran on Mills Street down to Erin Street, across to Park Street, and then on Park Street down to Lakeside and from Lakeside down to the Northwestern tracks at the end of Lakeside.

Now, the part that didn't record that I want to talk about is going over the tracks, over to Monona Park, which is Olin Park at this time. Over the tracks stood the old Madison Sanitarium and it was run by a Dr. Lindsay, who lived on the south side. There were ten or twelve beds in the hospital. He did do a little operating. In fact, he operated on my aunt. So much for that. That was torn down and there's a... I can't tell you what the building is, but there's another building in there now. Then just up the hill a little bit, on a little knoll between there and Murphy's Creek, was Bellevue Court. There were a half a dozen houses up there on the knoll. Then from there on you walked over to Monona Park.

In Monona Park they had the pavilion up there. The round pavilion is still there, but the concession stand was torn down. They used to have boxing matches and wrestling matches and so forth there. In fact, Jimmy Demetral and Johnny Myers from Chicago wrestled for the middle weight championship there at that pavilion. I don't know what it's used for now.

Then again from Monona Park over to the fairgrounds and over to the road going down to the fairgrounds was cattails and so forth. There was one house stood in there. I must say then, at the fairgrounds, the old race track, which is not there any more, used to have horse racing, motorcycle racing. No automobiles. That is just a highlight. From there on the whole area where there wasn't a house was all cattails and marsh.

Oh, yes, and I must say that we didn't have electricity out in our neck of the woods until I was a junior in high school, 1923. We did not have sewerage and water put in until the 1930s. I can't tell you the exact year. We were married in 1930 and when I took Frieda out to dinner at one time out there, she asked my mother where the john was, and my mother said "Out there." Also, we got all our water from the well, from the pump, which is probably the best water you'll ever get. Thank you again. That's it.

As a small boy I grew up out there and carried papers out there during that time. The edge of the city of Madison ran to the street immediately south of St. Mary's Hospital, from Brittingham Park over to where it ended near Vilas Park. The area from the pumping station, the present pumping station, between the lake and Park Street, to Lakeside Street and going way over to the south side settlement where the people lived and so forth was all reeds and trees and so forth and more or less lake wilderness.

Now, on the other side of the street, from the city limits street clear over to, let's say, where Midland Street comes into the Fitchburg Road [now Fish Hatchery Road] at the present time, was a big hill. That hill was where we used to ski on. In the flat between Park Street and the hill stood Pieh and their big barns and Pieh's sand pit. Now the sand pit was what they dug out of the hill. The hill towards Vilas Park and Murphy's Creek was just trees and so-called wilderness.

Now on the south end of the hill, where the present Midland Street came in, on the top of the hill there was Keyes home and they had a sand pit at that end of the hill. The Fitchburg Road ran into Park Street there, but it was nothing more or less than a dirt road and there were no houses along there at the time. I got on the Fitchburg Road, from Midland Street on.

On the Murphy's Creek side between Fitchburg Road and Murphy's Creek stood Eckstein Pond. Not very big, but it covered the whole area in there from Keyes sand pit down between Fitchburg Road and Murphy's Creek, down to where Murphy's Creek comes into Park Street, on

that side. It goes up to the Fitchburg Road. From the Fitchburg Road on in to Midland Street, when it got down into the Murphy's Creek area, was low land. The gypsies used to camp where Bowman Field is now and where the Madison Newspapers is.

Going south on the other side on the Fitchburg Road, clear out and beyond were small truck gardens run by farmers who brought their stuff into the city of Madison, provided work for kids and women and so forth, picking onions and radishes and so on and so forth. Now, the Lakeside Street, along Park Street, on the east side of the road stood two or three houses. One was where the Rieders lived, one was where Tom [O'Dea] the constructor, lived, and on the corner of Park Street and Emerson stood [Nim] Johnson's home.

On the other side of the street was the corner of Midland and Park Street and that's where [Ferdinand C.] Plaenert's home stood. They also had a sand pit in the area that went from Spruce Street and Pine Street on towards the [unclear]. At this point the hill that I just described between Park Street and Murphy's Creek was taken down during the 1930 Depression period by the CCC workers. Now, talking about the area east of Oregon Road, or present Park Street, clear over to the railroad tracks that ran through the south side, the Northwestern and St. Paul tracks, was the settlement that we called South Madison at that time.

In the area from Park Street, outside of the three homes that I described on Park Street, there were no homes on Lakeside Street down to Whittier Street. The area from Whittier Street over to present Olin Avenue and that whole square in there, outside of the three houses that were on Park Street and around the corner on Olin Avenue, one house there, it was all again wilderness and in the planning. Now continuing between Lakeside Street and Park Street, at that time was Tom Street, and there was a hill in there also between Emerson Street and Gilson Street.

On the top of that hill stood T.C. Richmond's beautiful colonial home, overlooking the lake [Lake Monona] and overlooking what was Madison at that time. The houses on Lakeside Street, all along there, until we got to the store settlement, that hill... incidentally now, where it was cut down during the 1930s, during the Depression by the CCC, and the present Romney Apartments are there in that whole block. I said Emerson Street bounded the Richmond estate, but it was Hickory Street.

There were two other houses on Lakeside Street before you got to the Southside Settlement. One was a three-flat building at the corner of Whittier Street and Lakeside, all by itself, and then Northcott's home on the corner of, well, that was at the corner of Lakeside and Whittier. The other house was at the end of Lowell Street.

Now, Gilson Street had about a half a dozen houses on it at the time, between Lakeside and Olin Avenue. Now at that time, Olin Avenue did not run... the part over the railroad tracks was not there. It ran right down to the railroad tracks and across the railroad tracks. Along the railroad tracks, after you cross the railroad tracks on the south side, was Waterman's coal yard. I'll stop there for a minute to kind of pick up where I left off. I do have an error when I said the Richmond property was bounded on the south by Park Street. I made a mistake. It was Olin Avenue. That's neither here nor there.

I would like to go out beyond Murphy's Creek now, the Fairview area, which runs from Murphy's Creek to the Northwestern railroad tracks and west, again into the woods and wilderness with a few houses along the present Park Street, which was Oregon Road then. I might suggest that there was Seymour Johnson, horseshoe champion, on the one side and there was Tony Banana's store. The building is still there. On the other side was the Graves family residence and Mrs. Christianson's store. And then up the line was one other house. There were no side streets at that time.

The Oregon Road was more or less a hill. Then up on top of the hill on one side of the street going down towards the railroad track was another farm. I don't recall, but I think it was Brand's farm on that side. On the other side was one lone house, Lindsay's.

Then we go on clear out to the Five Pointers, as we called it then. That's where the Beltline is now and where the Mayflower Motel is. On the west side of the road at the corner was the Outhouse truck gardens. Down the line a ways was Custer's. On the other side of the road, dirt road, understand, where the Beltline is now, was Custer's truck garden. Then there was Nichols and Barrs and any number of small truck gardens, as I said before, that took care of vegetables and so forth in the city of Madison. On the other side of Park Street, on the north side of the crossroads, up on top of the hill was a little farm that Baxter's had, and then that hill ran into the rock cut where the railroad went through. Beyond that outside of a few houses, clear out to where the Badger School stood was just one or two houses and that was it. The reason it was called the Five Pointers was that the road ran east and west and Syene Road that cuts the other way and the road going up the hill to where the Baxter's farm was, that was the Five Pointer.

Now I will go back to after you cross the railroad tracks from Bram's farm was the road going over to the west side of the fairgrounds. Heiders had a home right in there and that was it. Starting at what is Gilson Street now, but was Maple Avenue, where it came in at Murphy's Creek, there were a few houses up until we got to Pine Street or Olin Avenue again. The section of between Gilson Street and Park Street, south of what is present Olin Avenue, was partially woods and, as I said before, were a few spare houses in there and the old oak tree is still standing in there. I had to stop a minute and get the record going.

But that area south of Pond Street or Olin Avenue and from Gilson Street over to the Oregon Road or Park Street was just partially developed. Those streets were not developed. They were just dirt tracks through there for the few houses that were in there. That was about all that was in there at that time.

Now, I will just stop for a minute and talk about over the tracks on the side of the railroad tracks, which is now Franklin Field, it had not been developed. That was all marshy and so-called wilderness. Van Dusen Street at that time, there were a bunch of houses and that was on the north side of the present Park Street going out to the Beltline. The Madison Gun Club used to stand at the end of Van Dusen Street where [unclear] is now, and they have a skating rink in there. The Madison Gun Club and such names as Vandermere and Harlie Waterman and any number. I was talking about the south side store center with Winter & Harris, with the drugstore, the depot, Kasdin's grocery store, and on the other side of the street was the barber shop. And, believe it or not, we had a dance hall right there. Then alongside of that stood another Johnson home.

Across the street, that's where Gilson Street came in, but on the other side stood... I can't remember his last name, first name was Tony. But anyway, on the side of the street down by the lake we had a swimming beach down there and that was all. Just the sand beach and we played there. That was right at the corner of the railroad tracks. That was a little wooded area in there for a block or so, from Lakeside to the lake, and then Germanfeldts was there next to that. Then, like I said before, from there on it was all cat tails and everything like that.

I did forget to mention the main part of the south side community. That was the Franklin School. The present Franklin School stands there now. The one we went to didn't look like that. It was a state-graded school and we had eight grades. It was made out of white cement blocks and it had two... the hallways went up and entrances went up the middle of the school. The bottom rooms were half-ground rooms, and then there were two rooms on one side and two

rooms on the other, so actually it was a six-room school. I always said that when the school was built, one end of the school was a foot longer than the other end. I don't know. We never measured it. That was the school that we went to. They've got a beautiful brick school there now. When we were going to school down there, all the kids from the Fairview area that lived out there, across Murphy's Creek and all the south side, went to that school and walked. Nobody took them, nobody carted them back and forth. Winter or spring or fall, they walked. Period. I'll say this: It was a good school.

I don't know whether I've missed anything or not. I probably have. I could ramble on for hours and hours in detail and so forth, but I have covered the area pretty much. The south side has changed now. A good share of those houses are still there.

The area of wilderness on both sides of Lakeside Street and clear to the railroad tracks is now all built in. They're built in along Park Street. The South Shore Drive has houses all the way from [unclear] to the pumping station. The first house on the south side shore – and it's still there, at the end of Grayside Street – was Mr. [Louis] Perlman's home. That's the English-type home that is there. That was the first house on the Lake Shore Drive, going out the Lake Shore Drive. Mr. Perlman ran the clothing store on West Washington Avenue where Mound Street came in. It was a flatiron building.

Before he went in there in the store, there was a movie house in there called "The Pastime." We used to go over there, walk over from the south side, go in on Saturday afternoon and watch the serials of *Elmo the Mighty* for six cents. That's all, I think.

Harvey, you mentioned going to the Pastime Theater. That was on West Washington where Mound Street came in.

Right.

Tell me a little about that theater and going to the movies. And tell me what else you did for fun when you were growing up.

When the Pastime Theater was there, we kids used to walk from South Madison, the south side, around the lake there, which was all wilderness. There was a walk around there and a gravel, call it a drive, if you want, but it was mostly walk, to the Pastime there. We'd stay there probably for all the running, all Saturday afternoon, for six cents, and see *Elmo the Mighty*, the serial. Every Saturday it was *Elmo the Mighty* that was the serial. Then after that, when the theater closed, Perlman's Dry Goods store was in that same building. He was there for, oh, I don't know how long. I can't remember now how long and what happened to it after that.

When did they tear down the theater?

They didn't tear down the theater. They just remodeled inside so Perlman's store was in that same triangle building like that.

Oh. But the theater went out of existence?

The theater went out of existence and then Perlman's store was in there after that, yes. In that block, from that flatiron down, there wasn't too much in there. Reinick & Krueger later on had a sheet metal store in there, and then on the corner of Park Street and Washington Avenue eventually was the old, old Valvoline filling station.

Yes. There was a Sinclair there when I was growing up. I can't remember the name of the man that had it. He had it for a long, long time.

And it was Valvoline gasoline. Well, wasn't Sinclair gasoline, too? Or was that just the name of the guy that ran it?

Bud Mitchell.

Mitchell! That's the guy.

If we take long enough, we'll remember everything.

That's right.

Well, what else did you do besides going to the movie? Did you play the standard games?

Oh, you mean as a kid on the south side?

Yes.

We could play ball anywhere in the area. Nobody ever kicked you out. Most of the time on Pond Street coming down from Park Street, which was Oregon Road, and it was Pond Street then, which is Olin Avenue, as it came down there, it was all flat land in there where Whittier and Lowell Street is and where all that new housing is in there. We used to play ball pretty much in that one section right next to Pond Street. Nobody ever bothered us. Of course, by the time we kids got through, it was worn down enough. But the grass was always so high, you know, swamp weed. Then where Emerson goes through now, from Whittier clear up to Park Street, the road, Emerson was built up so high that went through there and the rest was all swamp land in there. There was one house that came down from Pond Street, part way down to solid land, where Irvins lived. That house is still there, at the corner, but that was the only thing that was in there. The rest was all wet.

Did you get your feet wet? How could you slide and stuff like that?

Oh, well, in the wintertime, see, Pond Street was a hill and then it came down into the flats and then up. We used to start from here and we'd ice a track along the road. Start from the top. All the kids would get their mother's wash tubs and go to each house and pump the water and come in and pull the bobsled down and make the track. We'd go from the top of that hill, clear up almost to Park Street. And, of course, no automobiles, understand.

One time we were sliding there on Saturday in the morning or something like that and the mailman came along, coming down towards the hill. He was down in the flats. We're coming down the hill on our bobsled. He had turned in, off of Whittier Street. He had a horse and a cutter. Here stands the horse and cutter while he's delivering mail. We're coming down with the bobsled and we slammed right into the cutter, right alongside of the horse. He never moved a step. He didn't flare up or anything like that. We slammed right into the one runner, like to this runner of the cutter, and the horse never moved a step. He just stood there. Boy, we could have had a real dandy then, too.

Well, those horses were amazing. I remember the milk man's horse. He would stand still in front of the house while the milk man went the back way and then pretty soon that horse would plod along. You can't do that with a truck!

No. And then another thing. Roundtop, which is Nob Hill now, there was nothing there but one house. We used to go out there and ski. We either walked or once in a while when the coal man went out that direction, we'd throw the skis on top of the coal pile and we'd stand on the runners while he went out there. Waterman's coal yard was there then. And then, of course, the hill went

down like so, and then out. Franklin Field, which is Franklin Park now, that was a swamp. See, that's all been built in and drained and it runs over to the edge of Murphy's Creek there.

Then, like I told you before, at the end of Van Dusen Street and where Colby comes in over there, there's a little skating rink there now they have each winter. The Madison Gun Club was right on the high ground there and they did their shooting off into that swamp there. Then at the end of Lakeside Street, see, that's all built up in there now, and of course, the road has changed it all. But at the end of Lakeside Street, right along the St. Paul Railroad there, was the road from Lakeside Street about six feet wide, concrete, that they put in there, that went over to the fairgrounds. The only house that was next to the fairgrounds there at the end of that was where Shaws used to live. He had a little garden, but he wasn't a farmer. That was just the house that was in there.

The only other house was after you went across the tracks at the end of Lakeside Street and you went over and crossed the little bridge that was Murphy's Creek going into Lake Monona. There was a house over there on this side of the street, all by itself, right at the edge, and that was all swamp and marshland in there, too. That was right at the edge of the swamp land. Then that dirt road also went over the tracks and came in to the road to the fairgrounds where Shaws' house was.

Then everything, where the railroad tracks went like this, here was that strip of concrete down here, from Lakeside Street down there, then here was the road that went over to Monona Park and then came down here at the other edge of Monona Park and went across right there where the road went into the fairgrounds. Monona Park used to have the old assembly building there. I don't remember dates or anything like that; it's a little before my time. But as I understand it, that old assembly building was what they used when the Capitol burned. I'm not sure, but that's where they met. And then, of course, when I was a kid, what they used there, they had fights and wrestling matches.