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# Historic Madison

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A Journal of the Four Lake Region



MADISON BECOMES A CITY  
GORDON SINYKIN  
KEHL: FIRST FAMILY OF DANCE  
LEAVING GREENBUSH

Volume XX • 2005





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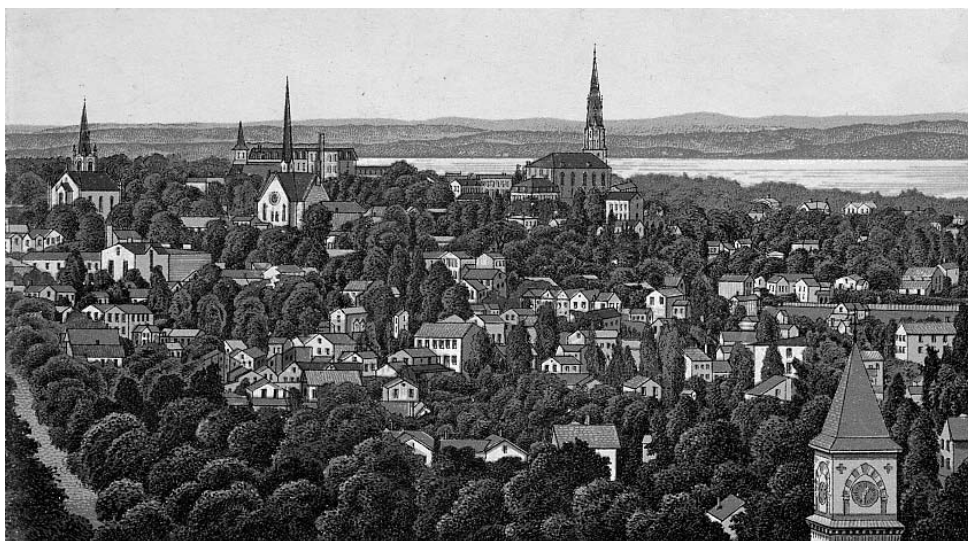
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On the front cover: Capitol entrance, 1885



Kehl

32

First Family of Dance

by Mark Gajewski



Madison Becomes a City

2

by Mark Gajewski

16

Gordon Sinykin

edited by Lyle Anderson



50 Leaving Greenbush

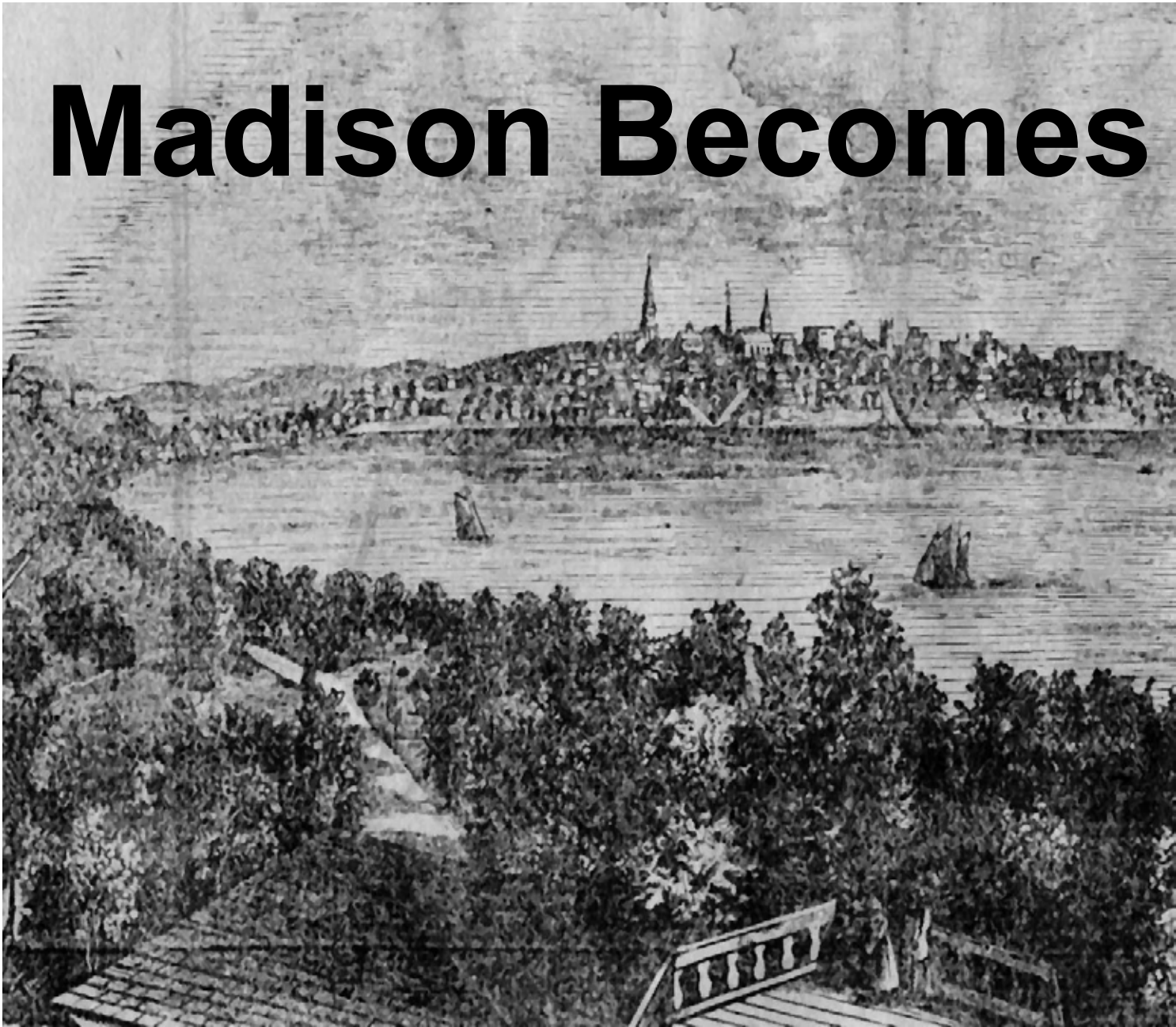
by Florence Zmudzinski

70

Madison 1885



# Madison Becomes



**M**adison, which existed only on a map created by speculator James Duane Doty, was named the capital of Wisconsin by the first territorial legislature on November 24, 1836. Madison's first permanent non-native settlers were Eben and Roseline Peck, who opened a boarding house on what is now King Street at Doty's behest in April 1837. Two months later, on June 10, a group of workers arrived to erect the Capitol building. Those few who remained that winter formed the nucleus of what remained for many years a small town.

By 1846 Madison was large enough to obtain a village charter, but the charter had serious limitations.

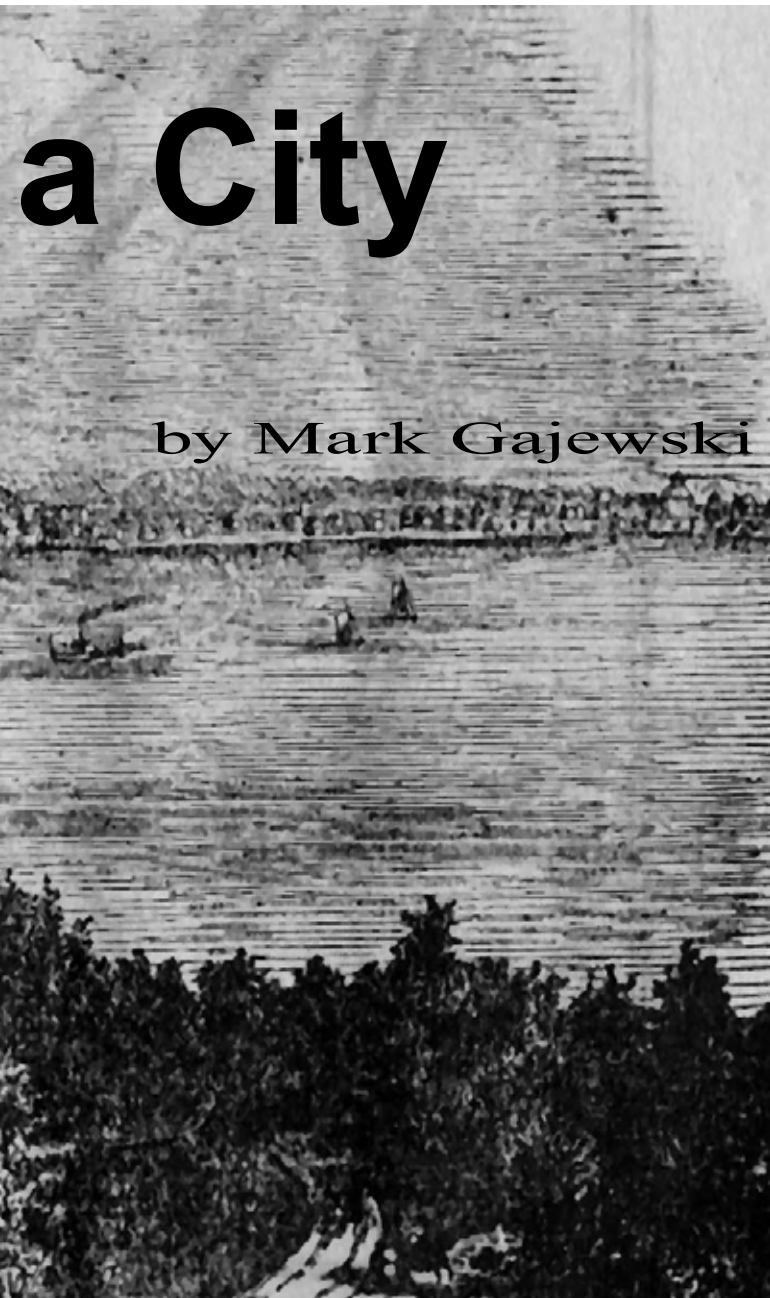
First, the property tax rate was limited to \$5 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Despite other revenue sources, such as liquor licenses, fines, and special assessments, the village did not have enough money to pay for basic necessities, such as schools, fire equipment, roads, and sidewalks.

Second, both the town of Madison and village of Madison claimed the right to levy and collect liquor



# a City

by Mark Gajewski



*Madison from the Lake Side Water Cure, December 1855*

license fees, one of the largest sources of revenue (the village was located in the town, which was one of the 35 townships that comprised Dane County).

Third, the village generated 84% of town tax revenues, but received only 20% back.

Fourth, Madison was under-represented on the county board.

Because of revenue shortfalls, each year village

authorities had to request that the legislature amend the charter so they could raise enough money to fund village projects. By 1852 the amendment section nearly exceeded the length of the charter itself. That year village leaders requested that the legislature approve a city charter to enhance Madison's ability to tax, borrow, and govern. The request was not approved.<sup>a</sup>

By the mid-1850s, Madison was growing rapidly, and infrastructure improvements were needed. The population passed 7,000, making it the second largest community in the state.<sup>b</sup> In February 1855 the Madison Hydraulic Company was organized to pump water from Fourth Lake into a reservoir on University Hill for use in houses, businesses, and fountains on the Capitol Square and UW grounds. In April telegraph wires reached the Square. On July 19 gas lights flickered to life for the first time. The Lake Side Water Cure opened that summer, and the Beloit & Madison Railroad was completed. On October 29 Madison experienced its "first really destructive fire" when the planing machines and factory of Campbell, Hogg and Welch were destroyed, along with the house of Mr. McConnell. That same week the sidewalk along Morris Street from the Capitol Square to the Argus office was installed. Though contracts had been let for 100 houses on the west side of town and a similar number on the east side, there were "not enough dwelling houses in Madison to accommodate new settlers."<sup>c</sup> On February 5, 1856, the Madison Board of Education released its first annual report, noting there was "only one brick schoolhouse owned by the town, accommodating one thirtieth of the eligible students... 1,600 children are unprovided for. Private schools take up the slack for some. We need a high school, then three schools of lower grades, properly ventilated, for the houses occupied by schools are better fitted for slaughterhouses than places in which to develop intellect."<sup>d</sup>

In January 1856 former governor Leonard Farwell, backed by a citizen petition, persuaded the village board to aggressively pursue a city charter. A committee including Simeon Mills, Augustus A. Bird, and Julius P. Atwood drafted one. On

## 4 Historic Madison

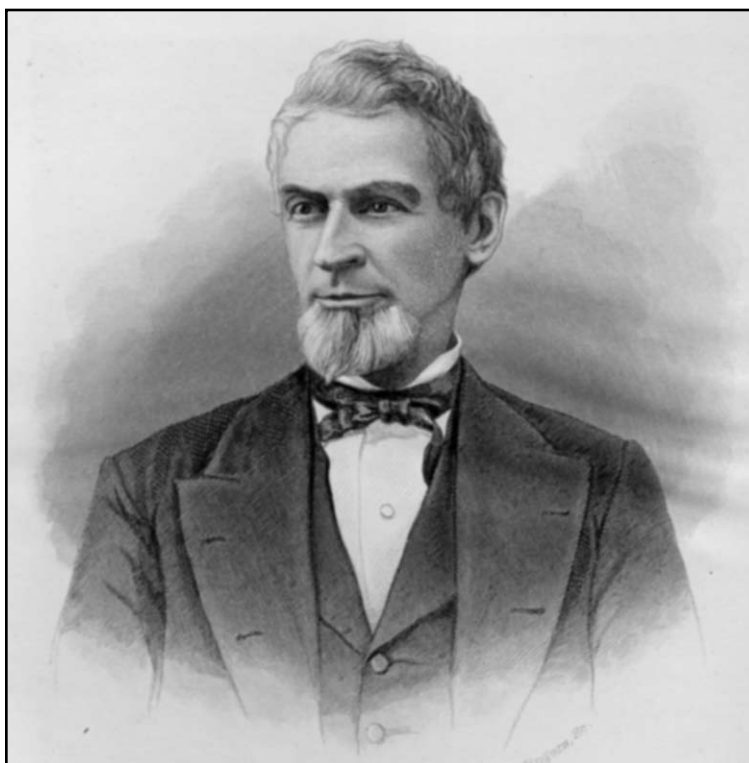
January 21 the *Argus & Democrat* reported that the committee's work was nearly done, and that "the bill will probably be introduced into the Assembly by Colonel Bird on Wednesday or Thursday."

On February 2 the village board approved the charter by resolution. Under its terms the city officers were to be a mayor, clerk, city attorney, police magistrate, marshal, and three aldermen per ward. The clerk and attorney were to be appointed by the council, and the remaining positions were to be filled by an election on the first Monday in March.

The charter bill dragged through the Assembly, opposed by some who objected to a provision related to railroads. On February 28, First Ward Democrats met at John Hourihan's hall and adopted a resolution: "whereas our municipal government has been changed to a city, without first submitting said city charter to a vote of the people, for their acceptance or rejection, and has conferred extraordinary powers on the city council, among these, to wit: to loan the credit of the city, or take stock in railroads to the amount of \$300,000, therefore, resolved that our candidates for aldermen are hereby pledged as honorable men to resist any act of said city of Madison or board of aldermen from loaning the credit of the city, or taking stock in any railroad, during their term of office."<sup>e</sup> Similarly, on March 5, the People's caucus, a loose coalition of Whigs, Republicans and Democrats who had broken with their party, derogatorily referred to

by mainline Democrats as "Shanghai," met in the basement of the Methodist Church. Julius T. Clark offered a resolution that "no one shall be nominated for Second Ward alderman who won't pledge in writing to oppose taking stock in or loaning credit of the city to railroads."<sup>f</sup> The resolution did not pass.

Despite these concerns, the charter bill was passed by the legislature on March 5, to take effect on March 7.<sup>g</sup>



*Simeon Mills. Madison's second permanent settler, he helped draft the city charter.*

*History of Dane County, 1880*

The months leading up to adoption of the charter and the first city election were rancorous, featuring sharply drawn battle lines between Democrats, Republicans and Whigs; those opposed to slavery and those willing to tolerate it; those wanting the city to invest in railroads and those opposed; supporters and enemies of the Barstow administration; mud slinging by party newspapers; and attempted behind the scenes kingmaking by Leonard Farwell. These conflicting viewpoints all played a part in the outcome of the first city election.

Madison's newspapers were blatantly political and reflected the polarization of the village. At least three – the *Wisconsin State Journal*, *Staats Zeitung*, and *Daily Patriot* – were determined to oust Governor William Barstow, a Democrat. They claimed Barstow was corrupt, that he had awarded a contract to erect the lunatic asylum to his friend, Andrew Proudfit, and had authorized payment to him of \$452,000, far in excess of the \$22,000 voted by the legislature.<sup>h</sup> The most vocal opponents of Barstow were S. H. and Stephen Decatur "Pump" Carpenter, the editors

and publishers of the *Daily Patriot*. The latter, who had invented a rotary water pump, was on a mission to “pump” corruption out of the Capitol. Barstow’s primary defenders were Elias A. Calkins and James K. Proudfit, publishers of the *Daily Argus & Democrat*, though Carpenter charged that they were only nominal editors and that “Barstow, the acting governor, and Andrew Proudfit, the lunatic asylum contractor, own the *Daily Argus*. The editorials are clearly the product of the executive office.”<sup>i</sup>

Throughout 1855 and 1856, Calkins belittled the opposing party. “The self styled ‘republicans,’ popularly termed ‘Shanghais,’ have issued their call for a state convention at Madison on September 5,” he wrote. “We have had the curiosity to look through their paper to ascertain, if possible, what they propose to make the issue in November, and find in all of them the same old stereotyped humbug and clap-trap declamation about ‘Freedom, Humanity, Resistance to Slavery Aggression.’ Not a word about matters of interest at home – the state government, the finances, and the election of competent men to fill state offices, but ‘Slavery in the South, Slavery in the Territories, Slavery Propagandism, Kansas and Nebraska’ – these are the only matters to which they desire people should direct their attention.”<sup>j</sup>

Further, Calkins charged that “the two Madison papers are reeking with calumnies about Barstow. Every Tuesday in the *Daily Patriot* can be found a long abusive article in the particular style which Horace A. Tenney has made his own. Tenney leaves his potato patch on Sunday and comes to town, not to church, but to write a newspaper article abusing somebody. He usually abuses Barstow and the balance, or the editors of the *Daily Argus & Democrat*.”<sup>k</sup>

Carpenter and Calkins attacked each other as well. Calkins wrote that while Pump Carpenter was “enjoying ease and plenty in Madison” his mother was living in poverty in the Rock County poorhouse. Pump replied that a younger brother had taken her to Janesville, then left for California. Because she was crippled with rheumatism, he didn’t want to move her, so he paid a family to care for her. Carpenter claimed he was gone from Wisconsin for most of two years so he couldn’t care for her himself. He said she had been moved, unbeknownst to him, to the poorhouse when the money he’d sent to the family

for her care ran out. By that time he had already sent for his mother to come to Madison to live in his new house.

Carpenter then countercharged that Calkins had been living in sin in a local hotel. “The chaste editor of the *Argus*, smarting under an exposure of being ejected from a public hotel for paying the board bill of a strange female, made the statement he did in relation to our aged parent! Our readers will recollect at the time the *Argus* complained of the high price of board, yet few perhaps knew the secret of that complaint. The editor being a single man thought it hard to pay double price for board and lodging for two.”<sup>l</sup>

Much of the animosity between the party newspapers was fueled by the drawn out gubernatorial election of 1855 between incumbent governor William Barstow and his Republican and Know Nothing opponent, Coles Bashford.

The election, held on November 9, 1855, was not decided until March 21 of the following year. The result was disputed by both sides; as the initial vote and supplementary returns throughout the state were tallied, each party’s newspaper published vote counts on a daily basis that showed their candidate the victor. On December 15 the board of state canvassers met, re-counted votes, threw many out (mostly Bashford’s), and added supplementary returns (favoring Barstow) that had come straight to the state, bypassing county canvassers. On December 17 the board reported that Barstow had been reelected by 157 votes.

Bashford challenged the canvassers’ decision. On December 21 the *Daily Argus & Democrat* charged that the challenge was motivated solely by money: “\$40,000 was bet in the Wisconsin gubernatorial election. Mr. Bashford’s bettors won’t let the stakeholders release the money. The election will be contested as long as it may benefit the losing bettors. They hope to gain the consent of Barstow bettors to withdraw the stakes, then they’ll step aside. They have no hope of overturning the election in the Supreme Court.”<sup>m</sup> The next day the *Daily Patriot* alleged that “half of the \$40,000 that was bet on Barstow was bet by Barstow and Proudfit.”

On January 7, 1856, Barstow was sworn into office. That same morning Coles Bashford appeared





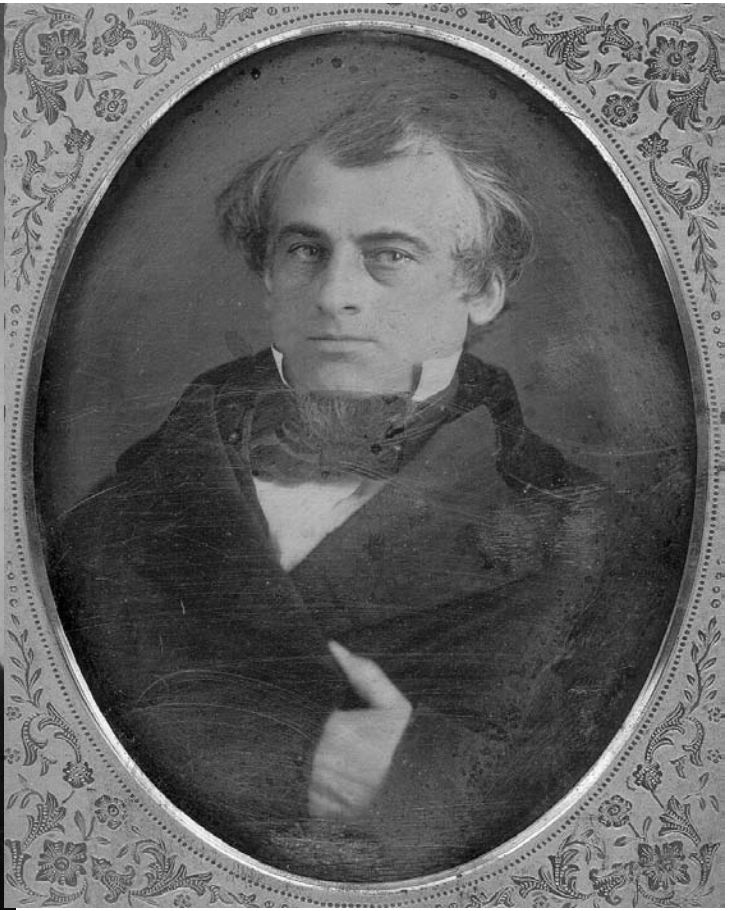
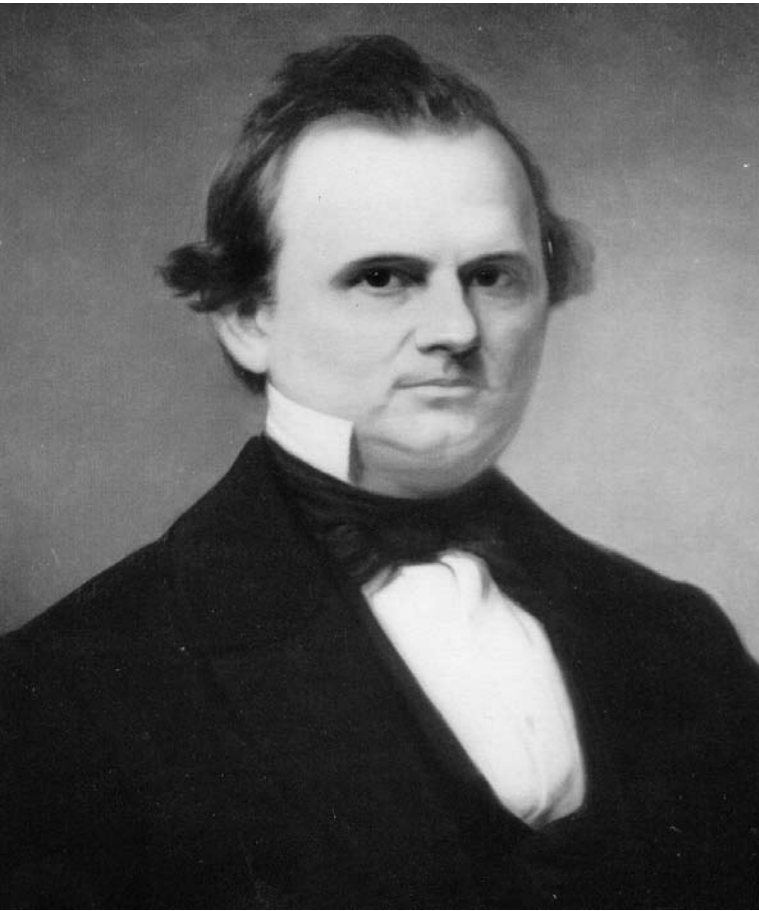
before the chief justice of the Supreme Court and also took the oath. On January 10 Bashford called on Barstow and formally demanded the office of governor. Barstow declined. Soon thereafter Pump Carpenter published a letter from an unnamed personal friend in which Governor Barstow offered to bury the hatchet with Carpenter for the good of the Democratic party. The letter said the *Argus*' editor Calkins "is impetuous and imprudent, and lacks the ability to determine where blows can be given to best advantage." He offered to give Pump the *Argus & Democrat*, or to let it be merged with the *Daily Patriot*. He said Pump could be given evidence supporting the governor's vote tally, enabling Pump to say he'd been deceived by Bashford's vote counters and allowing him to switch his support to Barstow. This would heal wounds, restore the confidence of Democrats, and let them combine their energies against the Shanghais."

On January 12 Bashford's legal counsel approached Attorney General George B. Smith in the theater at Fairchild's Hall just as the curtain

was rising on *Little Toddlekens* and handed him an application to begin legal proceedings in the Supreme Court. Barstow was summoned to appear on February 5 to prove by what right he held the governorship. Barstow moved to dismiss the case; the court held that was tantamount to confessing Bashford was correct and admitting Barstow held office illegally. Barstow refused to recognize the court's jurisdiction in the case, claiming it would give the court an imperial power over an equal branch of government.

As the case proceeded, Bashford charged that supplemental returns from Polk County and Chippewa County were fraudulent. He claimed that they were submitted on two halves of the same sheet of paper, a type of paper in use around the Capitol building (it was alleged by Pump Carpenter that Algernon S. Wood, whom he nicknamed "A. Supplement Wood," had personally forged the returns).

On March 8 Barstow declined to submit his official rights and power to a coordinate department. He protested against further interference in his office by



the Supreme Court, and asserted his independence from judicial control.

Two days later, in the midst of this power struggle, the charter election was held in Madison.

Even before the charter was approved by the Legislature, local candidates geared up for what turned out to be a contentious city election. Both the Democrats and Shanghais held caucuses in the four wards, electing slates of candidates that included three aldermen, a justice of the peace, an assessor, a constable, and representatives to a city-wide convention to select candidates for mayor, police justice, treasurer, and Marshal.<sup>o</sup>

Democratic unity was shattered in the First Ward. Three hundred of them met on March 6 at the Wisconsin House and selected candidates. After the meeting George B. Smith, "the Attorney General of supplements, finding he could not control one out of 50 of the Democrats of his own ward, sneaked off into a private corner with some dozen followers

*(Opposite, left)*

*Stephen Decatur "Pump" Carpenter. Editor of the Daily Patriot, he crusaded against government corruption.*

*Madison Past and Present*

*(Opposite, right)*

*Andrew Proudfit. Candidate for alderman who was accused of corrupt practices while building the Insane Asylum.*

*History of Dane County, 1880*

*(Left)*

*Governor William Barstow. The incumbent Democratic governor, his reelection was overturned in the Supreme Court.*

*WHS image 32642*

*(Above)*

*Governor Coles Bashford. Challenger to incumbent governor William Barstow, he fought to overturn fraudulent election results.*

*WHS image 2537*



*Augustus A. Bird, 1856*

*Capitol commissioner and member of the Assembly, he helped draft the city charter.*

*WHS image 27657*

and nominated a ticket to suit themselves. All this was done to secure men favorable to the treason of resisting the Supreme Court.”<sup>p</sup> The Smith slate of First Ward candidates was published in the *Argus & Democrat*, but the original slate was never mentioned in that Democratic paper.

In the weeks before the election it was assumed that Jairus Fairchild, a Democrat, would be elected mayor. However, Augustus A. Bird soon became a candidate.

Fairchild, born on December 27, 1801, was one of Madison’s leading businessmen. He had settled here in 1846, coming from Kent, Ohio, where he had been a partner in a mercantile business with Owen Brown, father of abolitionist John Brown. He was elected the first state treasurer in 1848, but failed to obtain the Democratic nomination for governor in both 1851 and 1853. He operated a brickyard in Madison and a sawmill in the northern pinery, and ran lumber

down the Wisconsin River. He was president of the Madison & Watertown Railroad, chairman of the Madison Hydraulic Company, and a partner in the Capital House with Leonard Farwell and Levi B. Vilas. He erected a three-story yellow brick building in 1846, “the first in town to venture so high and far ahead of the times,”<sup>q</sup> and the stone Fairchild Block in 1853; Fairchild’s Hall on the third floor was one of the primary entertainment venues in the village. He sold fancy and dress goods, crockery, and glassware in his store.<sup>r</sup>

Bird, born on April 1, 1802, in Vermont, was one of Madison’s earliest residents. He moved to Milwaukee in 1836, where he was a building contractor and speculator. In May 1837 he was named one of three commissioners, along with James Duane Doty and John O’Neill, to erect the Capitol, and led the first crew of workers to the uninhabited townsite the following month. He directed construction until April 1838. Bird was Dane County sheriff from 1841 to 1845, and served in the Assembly in 1851 and 1856.<sup>s</sup>

Many leading Democrats wanted one of the men to step aside so that the mayor could be elected unanimously. Former Republican governor Leonard Farwell, who originally supported Fairchild, his business partner, attempted to play the role of kingmaker, for he wanted to ensure a pro-business mayor was elected. Farwell was Madison’s premier developer and promoter. He owned much of the east side of town, and was involved in three railroads “which will be of great benefit to Madison. He is also more largely interested in the prosperity and growth of Madison than any other man, and naturally felt a deep interest in having men of experience and first rate business qualifications elected as our first city officers.”<sup>t</sup> When Bird entered the race, Farwell convinced Bird to withdraw and recommend Julius P. Atwood as his replacement.

Atwood, the youngest of the three mayoral candidates, was born in Vermont in 1825 and came to Madison in 1851. He had been elected Dane County judge on July 6, 1854.<sup>u</sup> Since Atwood was a friend of both Bird and Fairchild, it was assumed each would withdraw from the race in his favor, ensuring unanimity.

On March 7 around 800 Whigs, Democrats, and Republicans met to select the People’s ticket,



awarding Jairus Fairchild the Shanghai nomination for mayor, a somewhat surprising choice since, according to the *Daily Patriot*, “Fairchild is among the most respected, and an unflinching and consistent, Democrat. We are indebted to him for our prosperity.”<sup>v</sup> Said the *Argus & Democrat*: “Mr. Fairchild, having always acted with the Democrats, and being a candidate before the Democratic convention, will probably not run. The Shanghai ticket can be beaten easily.”

Later that evening, in the Democratic convention, Bird was nominated for mayor but declined as arranged beforehand. In the ballot that followed, Atwood received 16 votes and Fairchild three (interestingly, Fairchild’s son Cassius was one of the Democratic delegates to the convention). It was understood Fairchild would not run unless as a Democrat, so everyone present assumed that Atwood would be Madison’s first mayor.

However, at noon on March 8 Fairchild said he would continue in the race as the Shanghai candidate. Atwood wanted to resign the Democratic nomination, but was talked out of it.<sup>w</sup>

Almost immediately, the mud started to fly.

The Democrats launched the opening salvo in the *Argus & Democrat* on March 8: “All who favor the railroad interests of Madison, and an economical and efficient city government, will vote Democratic. The *Wisconsin State Journal* supports the anti-railroad, bolting, bogus Democratic card for alderman in the First Ward.”

The Shanghais responded with three separate articles in the *Daily Patriot* on March 10:

“Be it remembered that J. P. Atwood has always been in favor of the Barstow dynasty, and has lost no opportunity to secretly aid the petty schemes of the usurper. As matters now stand, what good citizen can sustain him?”

“The bloody hour has come! The Usurper, William A. Barstow, has hurled his threats of defiance and resistance at the Supreme Court and the people of this state... Fellow citizens, Barstow has threatened to shoot you down like dogs if you dare to question his usurped authority. This is no ordinary struggle between



*Leonard J. Farwell, 1853  
Former governor of Wisconsin and leading Madison developer  
and businessman.*

*WHS image 11334*

‘Shanghai’ and ‘Democrat.’ It is a struggle between law and defiant usurpation. Threats have gone forth that the Capitol shall be burned to ashes before Barstow shall give up, and who knows but that our own dwellings may fall in the conflagration? Citizens who would secure law and order and effectually rebuke the treasonable conduct of Barstow vote for J. C. Fairchild.”

“In the Third Ward a set of discharged school land hunters and clerks brought in several suspicious characters who do not live in this city but who voted to impose a set of candidates on the Third Ward which voters will never endorse. In other wards this game has been played and some of these infamous scoundrels have succeeded in getting on some ticket; they wish to control the police force to encourage Bill Barstow in his acts of treason against the state, and his efforts to drench our streets with the blood of our citizens... Shall it be said that Madison has elected a police force to hurl all our municipal power against her citizens, and in defense of a treasonable usurper? Forbid



*Jairus C. Fairchild*  
*Leading businessman who became Madison's first mayor.*  
*History of Dane County, 1880*

it Almighty God! Go to the polls today and put your veto on Treason by voting for the ticket of the people. In no other way can you save our town from the curse of a civil war, and the effusion of blood... If such conduct and such treatment is Democracy, God deliver us from the sin of being considered its disciples."

On the evening of March 10 the *Argus* printed handbills and posted them around town charging that Fairchild was a Know Nothing. In response, on the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, election day, W. A. White wrote an article that appeared in the *Daily Patriot* and was also posted about the city on handbills: "Would Not Introduce a Mechanic. J. P. Atwood is the candidate favored by Barstow partisans for mayor. He is president of the Madison Institute, and only a few weeks since refused to introduce Mr. F. F. Mackay, whose Shakespearean readings so delighted our citizens, because he was a mechanic." The *Argus & Democrat* later charged that in 1843 White was traveling through Indiana lecturing against slavery with Frederick Douglass and the two had shared a bed in a farmer's house. The *Argus* was not

pleased with the mixing of races.<sup>x</sup>

On March 11, Fairchild beat Atwood 711 votes to 406.

Among the first city aldermen were five regular Democrats, three independent Democrats (the original Democratic nominees from the First Ward), and four from the People's ticket. Only two were pro-Barstow – A. S. Wood and J. N. Jones. The justices of the peace, assessors, and constables were predominantly from the People's party, though at least six of the twelve had been nominated by both parties. The only regular Democrat to win one of these posts was J. W. Hunt, who defeated Thomas Reynolds in the Second Ward by a single vote. Two of the aldermen were brothers – Seth and Peter Van Bergen, the latter the incumbent village president.

Johnston J. Starks, of the People's party, was elected treasurer, and Fred Mohr, a Democrat, became marshal. A. B. Braley, "a very popular man and not generally considered as sold bodily to Barstow, though leaning that way, beat William Welch for police justice."<sup>y</sup>

In all, fifty percent of the votes cast for aldermen were Democratic, 8% were for the second Democratic slate in the First Ward, and 41% were for the People's party. Votes for city officers were split almost exactly in half.

**T**he party newspapers offered analyses of the results on March 12.

Said the *Wisconsin State Journal*: "The election of Colonel Fairchild was a staggering blow to the Barstow forces at the capital... To ensure success they sought out one of their most popular men – J. P. Atwood – generally respected and esteemed as a courteous, dignified and honorable man, largely interested in the growth and prosperity of Madison and commanding the more strength in consequence of his relations with our leading businessmen. The anti-Barstow men... put in nomination Colonel Fairchild, known throughout the state as decidedly anti-Barstow. The dead weight of Barstowism was placed upon the back of Judge Atwood. No man can 'run' here with such a crushing weight upon him. Colonel Fairchild is elected by over 300 majority in

the face of partisan appeals, and of German handbills directed to German voters, informing them that the eyes of the democracy of the state were upon them, that unless they wished 'the city to fall into the hands of temperance fanatics and Know Nothings, of Shanghais and demagogues,' they must vote the regular Democratic ticket. The results speak in unmistakable tones of the verdict of the people on the usurpation, the fraud and villainy of the last state canvass. They repudiate everything tainted in the slightest degree with the pestilential breath of such iniquities."

Replied the *Argus & Democrat*: "The folly of faction was never more manifest than in the *Wisconsin State Journal* this morning, when it claims Colonel Fairchild's election as an anti-Barstow triumph. After it had appealed to citizens for weeks to drop all party lines in the choice of officers, after disclaiming all party issues, and even recommending Colonel Fairchild to support as a Democrat it is too late for it to claim a party triumph. Colonel Fairchild is indebted for his election to the united support of about 100 voters around the Milwaukee and Mississippi railroad depot on the sole issue of loaning city credit to railroads. He has long been a prominent and influential Democrat. Colonel Fairchild has the ability to make an efficient and popular mayor. His good business talent and administrative ability fit him for the office. He lacks some good qualities Judge Atwood would have possessed... We hope to learn that the charge of Know Nothingism brought against him was without foundation."

The *Daily Patriot* shot back: "Three attachés of the *Argus* office – Andrew Proudfit, John S. Folds, and Stephen McHugh – were regular Democratic nominees in the Fourth Ward, the strongest Democratic ward in the city, having a majority of Irish voters. All were severely beaten because they were attached to the fortunes of Barstow. We glory in the conduct of the honest hearted Irish and Germans of this town. We regret to announce Governor Farwell was beaten for alderman in the Third Ward by the meanest thing in town – A. Supplement Wood. The fight was not made on Farwell but on Barstow directly, and as Governor Farwell supported Barstow's card for mayor, the Germans of the Third Ward voted generally against



*Julius P. Atwood*  
Democratic mayoral candidate and Dane County judge, he  
also helped draft the city charter.  
*Madison Past and Present*

him."

The *Patriot* continued: "George B. Smith of 'supplement' notoriety with 12 others undertook to lead the Democracy of the First Ward by the nose. The grand sandhedrium and vice-regent of pandemonium might rake all the brothels, the tombs and penitentiaries of the United States with the skimmer of despair and could not find a meaner or more infamous scoundrel. This contemptible wretch undertook to ride over the Democrats of the First Ward and secure the election of a set of Barstow tools. But thank God the noble and true hearted Irish and Germans, as well as Americans, joined hand in hand and heart to heart and sealed the fate of the conspirators."

Ten days after the city election, Barstow finally resigned as governor, "seeing in the Supreme Court but a slaughterhouse to which he must furnish himself as the predetermined victim."<sup>z</sup> The same



day evidence of irregularities in the state canvass were presented to the Supreme Court. It was charged that state canvassers changed the counts of county canvasses; supplementary returns went straight to the state and bypassed the county; and returns from Briggs Creek, Spring Creek, and Gilbert's Mills appeared fraudulent.

On March 24 the Supreme Court ruled that state canvassers had no authority to count precinct and supplementary returns. The court was silent on the alleged frauds. Bashford was declared governor by 1,009 votes. At 11 a.m. on March 25 Bashford went to the Supreme Court and paid for a copy of the judgment in his favor. With 50 or 60 men he went to the governor's office. He rapped at the door and was admitted. Bashford demanded possession of the office from Acting Governor Arthur McArthur. McArthur rose from his chair and left the room, and Bashford took his place.<sup>aa</sup>

On April 7 Jairus Fairchild was inaugurated Madison's first mayor. Some highlights from his inaugural address:


"We challenge the world to produce a location for a city whose position enhances so many practical advantages, combining beauty with utility, health with facilities of living, a climate free from changes that disturb the labor, or impairs the energies of our people, on shores of lakes of surpassing loveliness, the capital of the state and residence of her officers, the seat of her university, surrounded by the largest settled county in the state, with a soil principally owned by its occupants, and luxuriously fertile, we claim and can demonstrate, that Madison must of necessity become from position alone a rapidly growing city."<sup>ab</sup>


Fairchild said the city must keep within the sum taxed, and strike off unnecessary items from the budget. He said the city "needs school houses, properly warmed, because education is the foundation of our own and our nation's greatness. Water should be free or so cheaply supplied to be accessible to all. There is a charter to establish city waterworks in private hands, but nothing has been done... Our lake water is unsurpassed in purity."

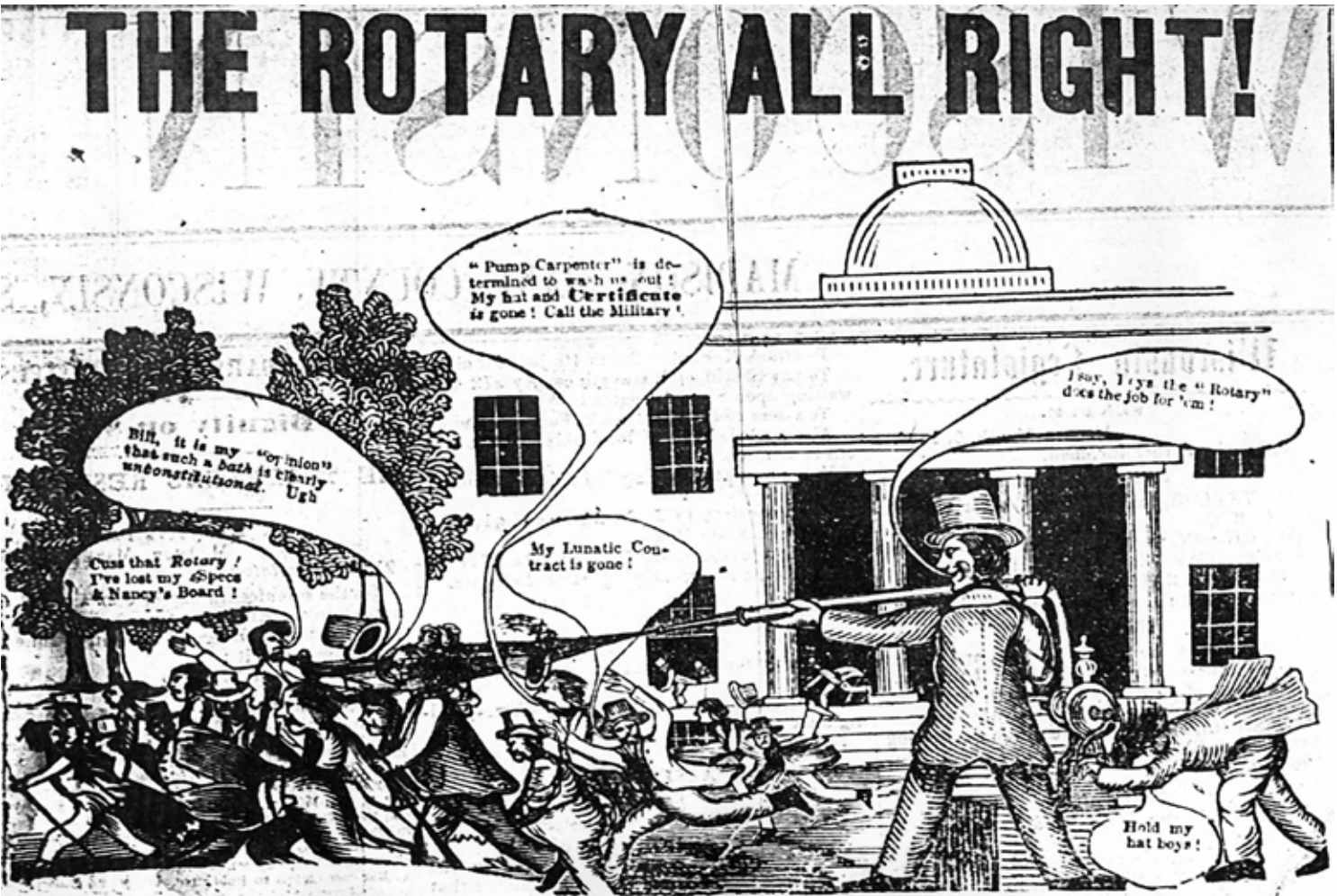
He added that the city needed a fire department and apparatus; to construct sidewalks, pave streets, and plant trees; and to erect market houses and a City Hall. The

*Daily Patriot, March 15, 1856*

**NINE THOUSAND CHEERS!**  
**THE SUPREME COURT SUSTAINED BY THE PEOPLE!!**  
**Treason and Conspiracy Rebuked!!!**  
**THE ROTARY**  
**IN FIRST-RATE WORKING ORDER.**  
**COLONEL FAIRCHILD ELECTED MAYOR!**  
**MAJORITY, 305!**  
**10 out of 12 Aldermen Anti-Barstow**  
**Every Constable and Assessor Anti-Treason?**  
**Three out of four Justices Anti-Treason!**  
**Anti-Treason Treasurer 275 maj!**  
**ALL HAIL THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE.**  
**An Awful "Turn" to Conspirators!**  
**CROW YE NOBLE ROOSTER, CROW!**



**The Argoose**  **Cleaned Out!**  
**WE ARE TOO FULL FOR UTTERANCE.**



*Pump Carpenter pumps corruption from the Capitol, Daily Patriot, March 11, 1856*

*(Carpenter): "I say, boys, the 'Rotary' does the job for 'em." (Proudfit): "My Lunatic contract is gone." (Barstow): "Pump Carpenter is determined to wash us out. My hat and certificate is gone. Call the military!" (George B. Smith): "Bill, it is my 'opinion' that such a bath is clearly unconstitutional. Ugh." (E. A. Calkins): "Curse that Rotary. I've lost my Specs and Nancy's Board!"*

city must "promote the construction of railroads, plank roads and turnpikes to connect us with all parts of the state. Yet I cannot lend a willing support to schemes of expenditure of money in which Madison or her citizens can have only the interest of paying the losses." He said the council must establish ordinances, but "laws must protect and defend – not burden or injure." He called for the mayor and council to cooperate.

After the inaugural ceremony and council meeting, Nelson and Russell of the Capital House invited all the newly elected officers to a complimentary supper at 9 p.m. The table was set with "smoking meats, luscious sauces, quivering jellies, frosted cakes, and knickknacks inviting the appetite to revelry." Dr.

Tom O. Edwards (soon to be the father-in-law of J. P. Atwood) offered a toast – His Honor Mayor Fairchild – may he live a thousand years and his shadow never be less.

Fairchild responded. He did not expect to live half as long as his kind friend had wished him. But should he live a tenth part of the time, or even until 30 years in the future, he wished to be able to look around and see some monument of good and usefulness that should preserve the fame of the first administration of the city. He wished to see the present council provide for the erection of schoolhouses that 30 years to come would be pointed out as models of their kind. He wished to see every enterprise for building up the city, for extending its trade, for protecting its interests,

## 14 Historic Madison

fostered and successful, so that at any time in the long future which his friend had indicated, they could be pointed at as the work devised or completed by the first city administration.<sup>ac</sup>

### Notes

a Summarized from David Mollenhoff's *Madison: A History of the Formative Years*, p. 69.

b The village was organized in four wards. The First contained the UW and the tract north of West Washington Avenue and west of Wisconsin Avenue. The Second included the area between East Washington Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue and Fourth Lake. The Third consisted of the section east of Wisconsin Avenue and south of East Washington Avenue. The Fourth Ward, west of Wisconsin Avenue and south of Washington Avenue, included the Greenbush addition.

c *Daily Argus & Democrat*, October 7, 1855.

d *Weekly Patriot*, February 10, March 24, and April 14, 1855; *Daily Patriot*, February 5, 1856; and *Daily Argus & Democrat*, July 20 and October 10, 1855.

e *Daily Patriot*, March 1, 1856

f *Daily Patriot*, March 7, 1856

g *Argus & Democrat*, February 19, February 25, February 28, February 29, and March 5, 1856.

h *Weekly Patriot*, March 24, 1855 ("Shanghai" party newspaper)

i *Daily Patriot*, January 21, 1856.

j *Daily Argus & Democrat*, July 18, 1855.

k *Daily Argus & Democrat*, August 21, 1855

l *Daily Patriot*, December 31, 1855, and January 11, 1856

m *Daily Argus & Democrat*, December 21, 1855

n *Daily Patriot*, January 11 and 17, 1856

o Among the leading Democrats were Thomas C. Burke, Lansing W. Hoyt, Caspar Zwickey, John Rodermund, John W. Hunt, E. Doerschlag, Algernon S. Wood, William Rasdall, Willard Knight, Andrew Proudfit, Timothy Kenney, Joseph Hobbins, Lyman C. Draper, Cassius Fairchild, James K. Proudfit, William N. Seymour. Leading Shanghais included

Johnson J. Starks, William Welch, Thomas Heeran, Abiel E. Brooks, David Wright, Napoleon Bonaparte Van Slyke, Thomas Reynolds, Eri S. Oakley, James Jack, Leonard J. Farwell, Peter H. Van Bergen, Seth M. Van Bergen, William A. White, Chauncey Abbott, and E. E. Wyman.

p *Daily Patriot*, March 10, 1856

q *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 7, 1856.

r Fairchild was the father of Civil War hero and three-term governor Lucius Fairchild; another son, Cassius, also served with distinction in the war and died of wounds suffered at Shiloh a few years after the end of the conflict. Jairus died on July 18, 1862, and was buried at Forest Hill Cemetery.

s Bird subsequently served as mayor from 1857 to 1858. He died on February 25, 1870.

t *Argus & Democrat*, March 15, 1856

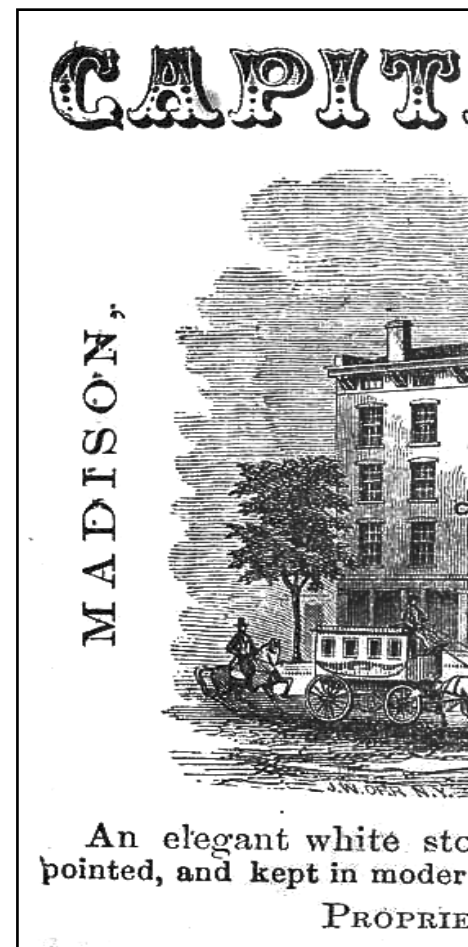
u Atwood served as judge until January 1, 1857. He was captain of the Governor's Guard at the start of the Civil War, and served briefly as lieutenant colonel of the 6<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin until resigning due to ill health on September 21, 1861. He practiced law at Chicago, then Deadwood, South Dakota, then Denver, where he died on November 30, 1880.

v *Daily Patriot*, March 10, 1856

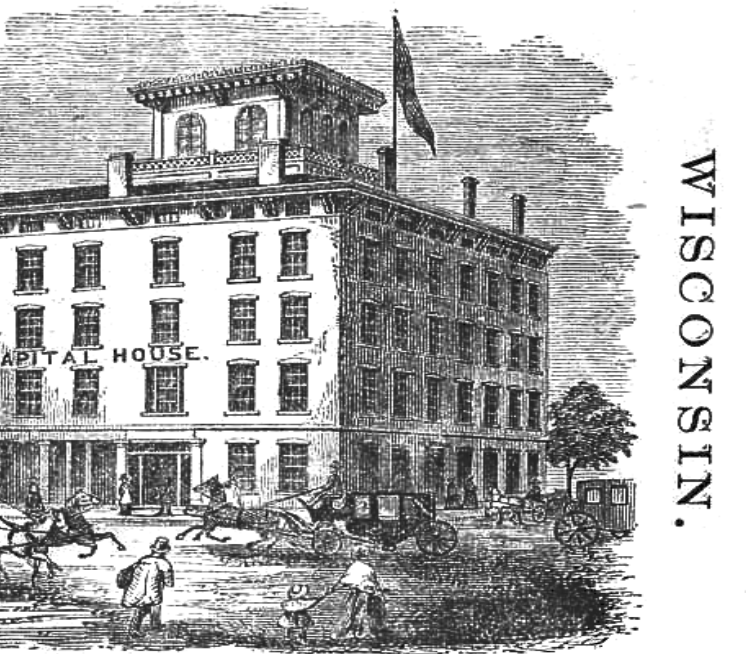
w *Argus & Democrat*, March 18, 1856

x *Argus & Democrat*, March 25, 1856

y *Daily Patriot*, March 12, 1856



# AL HOUSE,



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n style.

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## Capital House

ild and L. J. Farwell, the Capital House hosted the new city officers at  
a dinner on inauguration night.

z *Daily Argus & Democrat*, March 21, 1856.

aa McArthur, a Democrat, the legally-elected lieutenant governor, became acting governor upon Barstow's resignation. McArthur was thus, at four days, Wisconsin's shortest-serving governor. His son, Arthur McArthur (who later changed the spelling of his last name to MacArthur), won the Medal of Honor at age 18 after seizing the colors from a wounded comrade and planting them atop Missionary Ridge during the Civil War battle. He was a lieutenant general in the Philippines from 1898 to 1901. His son was General Douglas MacArthur.

ab *Argus & Democrat*, April 7, 1856.

ac *Weekly Argus & Democrat*, April 15, 1856.

## Madison's first city officers

### Mayor

Jairus Fairchild (P)

### Treasurer

Johnson J. Starks (P)

### First Ward

#### Aldermen

Thomas Heeran (D)

Abiel E. Brooks (D)

Adam Kraetz (D)

#### Justice of the Peace

David N. Wright (P/  
D)

#### Assessor

Lansing W. Hoyt (D)

#### Constable

John Flood (P/D)

### Police Justice

A. B. Braley (D)

### Marshal

Fred Mohr (D)

### Third Ward

#### Aldermen

Peter Van Bergen (P)

Charles G. Mayers (D)

A. S. Wood (D)

#### Justice of the Peace

H. L. Foster (P/D)

#### Assessor

James Donnellon (P/  
D)

#### Constable

Fred Hilgendorff (P/  
D)

### Second Ward

#### Aldermen

Napoleon Bonaparte  
Van Slyke (P)

D. J. Power (P)

J. N. Jones (D)

#### Justice of the Peace

J. W. Hunt (D)

#### Assessor

E. S. Oakley (P)

#### Constable

James Jack (P)

### Fourth Ward

#### Aldermen

Seth M. Van Bergen  
(P)

Timothy Kinney (D)

Joseph Hobbins (D)

#### Justice of the Peace

D. C. Bush (P)

#### Assessor

H. Wright (P)

#### Constable

E. E. Wyman (P)

*P: People's party*

*D: Democratic party*



# Gordon Sinykin



**HISTORIC MADISON ORAL HISTORY SERIES**

**edited by Lyle Anderson**

*Ruth Doyle interviewed Gordon Sinykin on July 17, 1985, as part of Historic Madison's oral history project. In the following article, Ruth's questions are in italics, and Gordon's answers are in standard text.*

*I would like, Gordon, to have you tell us a little bit about your family, your parents, where they came from. You always lived in Madison, I gather?*

I was born in Madison, on June 18, 1910, on the second floor of the very small house at 522 South Park Street. The house is still there. I pass it often.<sup>a</sup> My folks came from the state of Minsk of White Russia, sometime between 1890 and 1895. They came together to New York and lived there for a while, where my mother was a seamstress and my father ran a small lunch counter. Then they moved to Madison about the turn of the century.<sup>b</sup>

*Why did they come to Madison?*

The conditions in New York were very bad. They had gone through quite a recession and depression there. My

eldest sister Ida was born there. Some of the Sinaikos had come out here to Madison, Lake Mills and Ripon; they wrote that there were opportunities out here.

*Were they friends of your family?*

The Sinaikos and the Sinykins are related.

*Was that the same name to begin with?*

Originally our name was Sinaikin, with an "a-i" in the middle instead of the "y." That comes from the word "Sinai," with the common ending in Russia of "k-i-n" or "k-o."<sup>c</sup> In some areas, the ending was "k-i-n" and in others it was "k-o." The Sinaikins and the Sinykins came from a tiny, tiny village called Shemazavad in the state of Minsk. The Sinaikos come from a nearby larger village, but they're related. In fact, our grandfathers were brothers. After my folks came to Madison, my other two sisters [Della and Louise] were born here and, of course, I was. I was the youngest of the family of four. I don't remember anything about living in the little house on Park Street. At a very early age we moved to a house on



*Gordon Sinykin lived in the house on the left on South Park Street after his birth in 1910. Originally numbered 522, then 530, it was recently destroyed. A century ago, The Clinic was a grocery and dry goods store owned by William Sinaiko. The prominent stone below the cornice line is engraved "S."*

*Photo by Lyle Anderson*

Milton Street, between Park Street and Murray Street and, after living there for several years, my father bought an old house, and we moved it to 106 South Murray Street.<sup>d</sup> In those days it was common to buy a house and to move it from one location to another. My father was a junk dealer. That was a very hard way to make a living. I can recall big piles of junk in our yard during World War I which we finally sold. There was an epidemic of flu during World War I, and he was very sick when he came down with the flu. Later this developed into tuberculosis.

*I gather they were people of small income.*

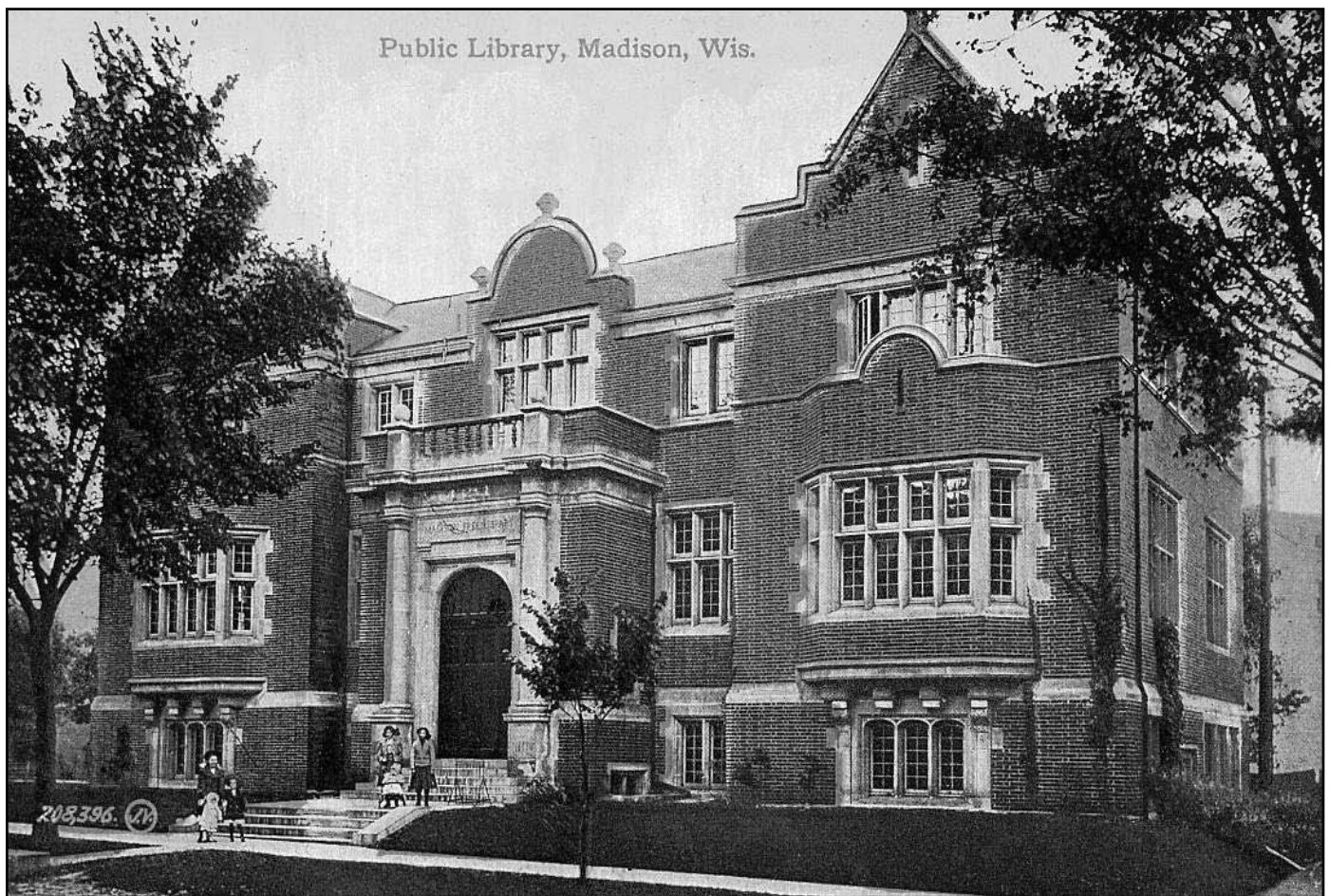
I didn't realize how poor we were. Everything was patched together. But I thought everything was wonderful. We always had enough food. My mother was a great cook, and we all appreciated that. But it was really very, very tough going. We never had hot water, for example, except to take a bath on Saturdays.

*The people in your neighborhood were in similar circumstances?*

They were all in similar circumstances, yes.

*You didn't have any feeling of being different or deprived.*

No. We couldn't afford to put [my father] in a sanitarium, so we kept him isolated in the house. He still worked and he changed from a junk peddler to a peddler of fruit and vegetables. He had a horse and a wagon. From a very early age, I used to help in this peddling in the summertime. On days when he was on the east side, I would take a streetcar from Mills Street. I'd bring a basket of lunch that my mother would prepare for him. I'd get on the streetcar, meet him there, and then I'd work with him the rest of the day. During the days when he was on the west side, I would either meet him or he would come home for lunch.



*Madison Public Library, at the corner of West Dayton and North Carroll streets*

*Postcard courtesy Ann Waidelich*

*Where did he get the fruit and vegetables? He didn't raise all that?*

No. These were purchased from a wholesale fruit and vegetable house known as the J. H. Heilprin Company, which was located on the railroad tracks on [North] Bedford Street [between West Mifflin and West Washington Avenue]. This is what I would do during my vacations from about ten years of age until about fourteen or fifteen.

*Where did you go to school?*

My elementary schooling was at Longfellow School.<sup>e</sup> I have a debt of gratitude which I will never forget to the teachers there. They were very unusual in their attention, in their interest, and their energy in educating us.

*It probably was really exciting for them to have students like the Sinykin kids in class.*

They were sometimes very strict and they wouldn't let us get away with anything. They really drummed English, grammar, and arithmetic [into our heads] and they encouraged us so much to read. I'll never forget my fifth-grade teacher, Miss Evans,<sup>f</sup> from Mankato, Minnesota. I just adored her. She was so interesting and inspiring. And I'll never forget the reading that she used to do. She read out loud to us every day for a half-hour or so. She was a marvelous reader. We all looked forward to that period. She gave me some special time and effort and I felt inspiration from her.

*Did you speak English at home? Did your parents speak English?*

Oh, yes, we spoke English at home. My parents, of course, also spoke Jewish. I remember my interest in reading and how I read on Saturdays. I would have my mother fix me a sandwich in a brown bag. Then I would walk downtown to the city library, and spend the whole day at the city library, on the corner of [West] Dayton and [North] Carroll streets.<sup>g</sup> I would take off for lunch, but I'd spend the whole day reading.

*I gather your folks weren't religious in the traditional sense.*

They were not religious, but I took Hebrew lessons. And we were members of the congregation of the Orthodox synagogue Agudas Achim.

*But that didn't foreclose you from going to the library on Saturday?*

Oh, no. My folks were not overly religious or observant, except on the various important holidays. My mother did keep a kosher house, so there were separate dishes for the meat meals and for what we called the dairy meals.

*I want to talk about the relations of the various ethnic groups in the Bush: the Jews and the Blacks and the Catholics. And also about the splits that have occurred. Why, for instance, were there two small Jewish temples in the Bush area?*

They don't call an Orthodox place of worship a temple. We call it a synagogue. The oldest one was called Agudas Achim.<sup>h</sup> This was on the corner of Mound and Park streets. A group split off from this congregation, formed a separate congregation and built a small synagogue on the corner of Murray and Mound streets, called Adas Jeshurun.<sup>i</sup> So there were two congregations down there in the Bush area, both Orthodox. Both had rabbis and both had services daily and on the holidays. I really can't recall what the differences between them were.

*The Russian Jews weren't separate from the German [Jews] or the Polish [Jews]?*

No. There was no such separation in this city at this time.

*Were you aware of Neighborhood House when you were a little child?*

Yes, but it was not used as much as it was later on. Neighborhood House was on [West] Washington Avenue, right off of Mound Street. I never went there. As a boy I was in there, but I never frequented it or used it. I remember we used to have theater, too, on the corner of Washington Avenue and Mound Street.

*A movie theater?*

We called it the "nickel show." It took a nickel to get in [to the Pastime Theater].

*Were they the kind of movies your mother would let you go see?*

Oh yes! These were like Pearl White and Harold Lloyd and Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and so forth.

*I have heard some conversations with Black people from that area and Italian people about what a wonderful sort of integration existed there.*

In this part of the Ninth Ward, the so-called "Bush,"



there were Jews, there were Italians, and there were Blacks. We played with them, we lived with them, we had them in our house. There wasn't any discrimination, except perhaps some on the religious basis.

*The Catholics and the Jews?*

The Catholics and the Jews. Sometime that reared its head. I didn't grow up with any feeling of prejudice. No. And Blacks, you know, we played with them all the time, and there were Blacks in my house frequently.

*That's what I was told – that your mother was very cordial to people, that they visited her, and that everybody liked her.*

Yes, my mother was a very strong personality. She was very warm and out-going. She really poured everything within her being into me. She used to sit there and talk to me, even when I was a little kid, as if I was a mature adult. She would talk to me about standards of life, of goals, of what I should be thinking about, what I should be aiming for. She could get me to do anything. I adored her. She was an inspiration constantly. But she didn't live very long during my life. She died when I had just turned sixteen.

*What happened to her?*

She had been ailing for a long time. She had ongoing problems with her abdomen. Finally she had very serious surgery. I remember Dr. Joe Dean. She did not recover from this operation. I don't know to this day whether it was cancer or what it was. My mother died in 1926 at the age of fifty-two. My father died in 1932 at the age of fifty-nine.<sup>j</sup>

*So your sisters raised you? Did they keep the family together?*

Yes, we were together. We continued to live at 106 South Murray Street until after my father's death, and then we sold the house. I finished up living in a little place on campus.<sup>k</sup> At the time my father died, I was at the university.

*You're a strong man yourself, Gordon. As strong as*

*your mother. Wouldn't she be proud of all that you've accomplished in these many years? You've been in on everything that's gone on in Madison. One of your former neighbors has told me about always seeing you with a violin case. [Tell us] about your interest in music and the violin.*

I think it began at about the age of ten. I had been interested in violin for some time and kept talking about it. My folks took me down to the Wisconsin School of Music<sup>l</sup> and bought me a violin and started me taking lessons. That was a big investment. Later I went to Frank Bach and took lessons from him.<sup>m</sup> He had a volunteer orchestra of about, let's say, thirty-five pieces, musicians from all over the city. We used to practice once a week in his flat in the [700] block of University Avenue. We played all the classical music, all the symphonies. We worked hard in his rehearsals. We used to play concerts and at various events and various places. Mr. Bach did it as a volunteer, too. He, of course, was teaching lessons to the violinists and cellists, so he was getting some income out of that.

Otherwise he didn't get paid especially for this.

Our family never had an automobile. When we would go out of town, the parents who had cars... would get together and would transport us to Milwaukee or to wherever it was that we were going for the concert. This was very much a part of my life – music and the violin. I didn't have a good ear, so I couldn't become a good violinist. But I could play better with an orchestra where I could hear the melody from the other members of the orchestra. When I got in high school, I played in the high school orchestra. Eventually I ended up as the concertmaster of the orchestra of Madison Central High School.

*Did Mr. Bach teach that, too?*

No. The director of the high school orchestra [was] Paul Sanders. He became an especially good friend of mine and I kept in touch with him until he left Madison. He spent quite a bit of time in Hawaii with the orchestra there at McKinley High School. He came back here

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and died about two years ago.<sup>n</sup> He was living up on the Wisconsin River near where we have a cottage, and I used to see him from time to time. He was a marvelous person.

*You put your violin away at some point?*

When I got into college, a whole new world opened up. I used to say the university here was like being at the World's Fair every day. There was so much to do, so much to see, so much to hear, so many interesting people to get to know. I just didn't have time to spend on the violin, so I gradually stopped playing.

*I gather you were always a very good student and that you enjoyed school enormously.*

Yes, I did. From grade school, I went a year or a year and a half to a junior high school at Randall School.<sup>o</sup> From there I went to Central High School. I particularly enjoyed Central High School. I enjoyed the teachers there very much. I took one summer school session at Wisconsin High School, which is no longer in existence. I did that so I could complete my high school graduation in three and one-half years. I then went on to the university. I worked hard, and I did get very good grades.

I had to have a job when I was in high school. I can remember I worked in my brother-in-law's store, the Fair Store on the east side, which was a general merchandise store.<sup>p</sup>

[Later] I got a job as an usher at the Orpheum Theater



*Garrick Theater stage viewed from the balcony*

*McVicar photo*

## 22 Historic Madison

on Monona Avenue, which later became the Garrick Theatre.<sup>q</sup> I worked as an usher for a while, and then I worked in the box office on the telephones, taking reservations for performances. I would go there after school. I'd come about five o'clock and work through until about nine o'clock, and work all day on Saturday and Sunday. There were performances every day.

*Did you make enough to pay your way?*

Yes. Of course, I was living at home. I was thinking I had to save some money so I could go to college. I continued to work all the time. Later on I used to work summers. When I was in college, I used to work for the adjutant general, Ralph Immell.<sup>r</sup> I would drive him around the state. I also worked in the adjutant general's office doing clerical work.

*That was the beginning of your political interests, was it?*

No, I was interested in politics before that. My parents were very strong supporters of the elder La Follette [Robert M. La Follette, Sr., 1855 - 1925] and stood by him during his opposition to America's entry into World War I. So I was brought up in that background. I was interested in politics right along. I did a lot of reading to try to keep up with it and would go to hear speeches at the university. I remember in my early years particularly hearing somebody like Eugene Debs and how fascinated I was by him. My parents would always try to come up with money for tickets to concerts, like Fritz Kreisler, Mischa Elman,<sup>s</sup> and so forth.

I got interested in politics at an early age. I joined the Young Progressive Club at the university, and I can remember meeting Phil La Follette [Philip Fox La Follette, 1897 - 1965] who spoke there one time. Phil was an instructor in criminal law at the law school. He did this while he was practicing law and while he was district attorney. When I entered law school, he was



*University of Wisconsin law school on Bascom Hill*

*Postcard courtesy Ann Waidelich*

running for governor. That was in 1930. He was just [in the law school] for a short time. I was in his pre-law class. When he was elected governor, Glenn Roberts [Phil La Follette's law partner] took over and finished the course. I was working for General Immell during the summer of 1932. My father had passed away in May of that year. But before that I had told the General that I would like to offer my services to Phil in the coming campaign. He said, "That would be a good idea." I had called Ed Littel, who was his secretary and... told him I would like to do what I could, that I needed to work in the summer for Immell, but I had saved up enough money so that I could go through a summer without earning money.

He said, "Well, would you like to meet Phil?" I said, "Yes, I would!" So he introduced me to Phil. I spent about a minute with him before he said, "Let me get in touch with you." I didn't hear anything. Finally I got a call. (This was the beginning). I was asked if I could drive Phil to Milwaukee and down to some place in northern Illinois that weekend. I did, and that was the beginning of our association. He asked me to go with him on the campaign, and I did.

*This was in 1932?*

Yes. I spent the whole summer on the road and campaigned. He would speak five or six times a day. My duties were to drive him, to get the meeting started, to distribute literature, to write releases for the local papers. We had prepared releases, but we would have a beginning with names of the local people. I would write those and run down to the newspaper office, either the weekly or the daily newspaper, and file these releases. Each night I would also file releases by wire to Madison, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Milwaukee Journal*, and the *Milwaukee Sentinel* to make their stories. I was pretty busy.

*Were you the only full-time person traveling with Phil?*

Yes, I was the only person traveling with him. He was the governor then. This started in July and went through the primary, which was in the latter part of September. That was my initiation and it was a great experience. Of course, I also got very well acquainted with Bob, Junior, who was in the state and also speaking every day.

*I would like to have you say something about General Immell. What kind of man was he?*

I owe a great deal to him. He kind of looked after me

as if I were a member of his family, always checking to make sure that I had enough [money] to go to school with. He was a very unusual person. He kept no hours and was a great story teller. He was a brilliant person. His great capability was getting things done, as an administrator, as an executive. He demonstrated this as the adjutant general as the head of the National Guard. He demonstrated it later in eliminating the terrible forest fires we had in the state, as the chairman of the conservation commission. He did quite an unusual job in conservation. Later he became head of the Works Progress Administration in Wisconsin, which was a federal agency in charge of a Works program of the 1930s. He was indefatigable. He had no hour schedule, no time limit.

*He expected that of you, too?*

He expected that of everybody!

*That's where you got your habit of working twenty-four hours a day.*

[Chuckles] I guess so.

*Now let's talk about Phil La Follette.*

He was very brilliant. He had a mind of unusual acumen. Very, very fast-thinking.

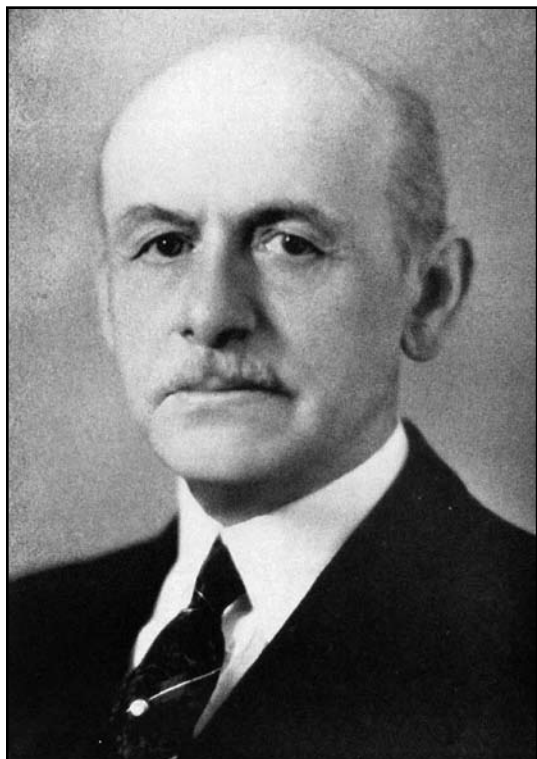
*Was he like his father?*

I didn't know the father. The only time I saw the father was in 1925 when he was lying in his casket at his funeral in the state Capitol. My mother took me downtown to the Capitol, and we stood in line. There was a line about four abreast for all the blocks around the Capitol. We stood in line for hours before we could go by the casket.

*Was Phil a difficult man to get along with?*

No. But when I was with him on the campaign, he didn't talk. He talked hardly at all. He saved all his energy and his throat for speaking. We would only talk when there were necessary things to discuss about the day's routine and arrangements. I remember having to keep him supplied with orange juice. In those days you didn't have cans of orange juice. I had to go out and buy oranges, squeeze them and put them in the thermos jug. After every speech he would have one or two glasses of orange juice, and then he would lie back and go to sleep. He could fall asleep at the drop of a hat. Phil was always organized to keep himself in shape, save energy, to save





*Left: Governor Albert Schmedeman*

*Right: U. S. Senator Robert La Follette, Jr.*

*Bottom: Philip La Follette takes the oath as governor*

*Source:  
Wisconsin Blue Book*



his throat.

He was, I would say, very easy to get along with. We got to know each other's personality and habits, characteristics, and we got along fine. When the campaign was over, Phil realized that he was going to be defeated. I did not. It was a greater surprise to me, I think, than it was to him.<sup>1</sup> We [had been] getting big crowds everywhere. There was a tremendous amount of interest. The farmers would put aside their tasks and take their family and drive into town. We had large crowds, particularly at night. It was not unusual to have a crowd of anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 people. It was a grueling campaign, when the returns came through, I was shaken, terribly disappointed by what had happened. I had to go back to law school for another year.

*Did you take time out from school?*

No, you see, because the primary came near the end of September [September 13, 1932] and school didn't start

until the following week, so I didn't miss any school. I went back to school. The next thing I knew I got a call from Phil. He wanted to talk with me. We got together, and he suggested that I go to work for his law firm. I said, "Well, I had some other ideas about what I was going to do." But he talked me into it, so I went to work for the firm that was known then as La Follette, [Alfred T.] Rogers, and [Glenn D.] Roberts.<sup>2</sup> I was to work part-time during my last year in law school. I wasn't even admitted to the bar! Then came the 1934 campaign and all the events leading up to that.

Before the 1934 campaign got underway, there was extensive discussion about whether to continue in the Republican party or to organize and establish a new political party. Meetings were called of progressive leaders from around the state, who met in groups, and this was discussed pro and con. It was finally decided at a meeting of leaders here in Madison to go ahead with the formation of a party.



*Governor Philip La Follette signing a bill into law in his Capitol office*

*Source: Wisconsin Blue Book*

A convention of leaders was held in Fond du Lac, at which this decision was made final. Petitions were gotten out for the new party. There was a problem as to how it could be done under the then-existing statutes. We had to start an original action in the Supreme Court of the state to get a determination about formation of a new party. The new party came into being, and the Progressive candidates ran under the banner of the Progressive party. That was the year in which Robert M. La Follette, Jr. [1895 - 1953] came up for re-election [to the U. S. Senate]. He also ran as a Progressive. We had both La Follettes running for the top offices, and it was a hard-fought campaign.

*Did you have a county-by-county organization?*

We had done a lot of work in organizing the state and we had organizations in practically every county. There was a great deal of enthusiasm generated and a lot of work was done. You must remember we had an incumbent governor, Governor Schmedeman, a Democrat, to run against, who was endorsed by President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt. This time the crucial election was in November, not the primary election in September, when we were running in the Republican party. It was an exciting campaign, and the results were equally exciting with both Bob and Phil being elected under the new [Progressive] political party banner.<sup>v</sup> Instead of going with Phil, I stayed here in Madison and ran the personal campaigns of Phil and Bob. I devoted full time and had to leave the law practice to do it. Incidentally, we used a section of the law firm offices in which to operate [chuckles]. The clients didn't mind. Nobody objected.

*Both your partners were good friends with the La Follettes?*

Oh yes. The partners were old, good friends, like Glenn Roberts and Jack [John Ernest] Roe, whose father had been a partner of the elder Robert M. La Follette as a lawyer. So Phil became governor, and he asked me to work in the Executive Office. At first I didn't think I should. Except for the time I spent on the campaign, I had been practicing law. He convinced me that I ought to do it, and I came into the Executive Office as one of his secretaries and his Executive Counsel. I stayed there until February of 1938. Phil went into office in January of 1935, so I was there the whole three years. Those were very exciting years, the years of the Depression. Nobody had the view of the Depression and the poverty and

hardship that so many people were enduring as we did, sitting in the Executive Office. [We received] bag after bag of mail, telephone calls, and visits from people who were out of work, who were terribly desperate, looking for some way to keep body and soul together. I won't go into the details of those years.

*What was the governor's response to these people? Did Wisconsin set up separate programs?*

He was in real close with the Roosevelt Administration. The Works Program was set up under the sponsorship of the federal government, with the cooperation of the state, and this put a lot of people to work. Phil had also proposed a state Works program, but that didn't get through the legislature. In addition to the Works Program, there was the larger Public Works Programs or projects, and there were other projects, such as Rural Electrification, in Wisconsin. They led the way in developing a state-wide rural electrification program. A number of things mitigated the conditions of the Depression as time went on.

*What made you leave that job in 1938?*

I felt that I had to get back to the practice of law. I felt that if I didn't, that I would just go on as a political worker. I couldn't see the future in that. I felt that my future, my best qualifications, were in the legal field. I went to New York to consider practicing there. I had an offer from one of the big Wall Street firms and thought hard about it. It was a difficult decision. But I decided that I ought to go back to Madison and practice there. I often wonder what it would have been like if I had made the other decision.

So I stayed on here. I went back to my previous firm, which was then called Roberts, Roe and Boardman.<sup>w</sup> Phil was defeated [for another term as governor] in 1938 and came back to the firm as counsel.

*I remember hearing that Phil's group of close friends was very small and that people like you made enormous contributions. It wasn't a great mass movement. I was thinking about the disagreements between him and some of his former followers over the war, and other policies, plus the peculiar position that the Progressives were in with reference to the national Democratic Party. Franklin Roosevelt was, after all, a sympathizer and a friend of the Progressives.*

Phil disagreed with him, and that motivated him to attempt to launch the national Progressive Party, which



*The Sinykins lived in this house at 721 Seneca Place from 1952 to 1983*

*Photo by Lyle Anderson*

proved to be a failure. When the Progressive Party started down hill, the Democratic Party got stronger. The Democratic Party in Wisconsin had been a very conservative group, but it was taking on new members and leadership of a more liberal stripe, mostly after the war.

*So when Phil went to the Army, you went along?*

Phil went into the service early. I went in later. I spent three and one-half years in the service and then came back here. When I saw Phil in Manila in 1945, he talked about starting our own firm. I had some misgivings about it, because I liked the people in the old firm, but I finally went ahead with the idea. He got back here and was discharged in the spring of 1945. I went on some operations in the Southwest Pacific and then on to Japan,

and I came back in the late fall of that year.

I found Phil had a two-room law office in the Tenney Building with the name "La Follette and Sinykin" on the door! That was a pleasing sight. It was pretty slow going for awhile, because I was just starting from scratch.

*Now that was 1945, forty years ago. And you've been the lawyer's lawyer and a practicing lawyer ever since, right?*

Right. I probably should mention that in my military service overseas in the Southwest Pacific, I was in the fifth plane to land in Japan, Atsugi Airfield, on that first day during the latter part of August. I was on the battleship Missouri for the surrender ceremony and saw many interesting things happen in that area.<sup>x</sup> Then



I came back and I went to work as a lawyer with no practice. Things were tough for a while. Then Jim Doyle came along.<sup>y</sup>

*And things were still tough [chuckles].*

Things were still tough. I talked him into coming aboard and said we would share nothing in the way of fees, because there was going to be very little, if any, fees. That was the real start of the firm, which became La Follette, Sinykin and Doyle.

*One of the things we should talk about is your community service since that time. It seems to me there's hardly been a movement in Madison that you haven't been on a board or chairman of a committee or somehow in a leadership role, [such as] Methodist Hospital, which turns out to be an enormous monument that you built and that keeps spreading and increasing in size.<sup>z</sup>*

I got involved in many things, both in the profession and the bar, as well as outside the bar. One of the things I got into early was the Community Welfare Council, which was the sister organization of the United Community Chest, now United Givers [now United Way of Dane County]. It was the planning agency for Madison. I served on the board and as president. Then I served on the board and as an officer of the Health Planning Council. I served on the board and was chairman of the board of Methodist Hospital. I also served on the board and as an officer of the Progressive Magazine for some 45 years.

I was very active in bar activities. I served as president of the Dane County Bar Association [in 1956-57]; as

a member of the board of governors of the State Bar; and as president of the Wisconsin Bar Foundation, the sister organization of the State Bar. The Wisconsin Bar Foundation is involved in charitable and educational activities. We call them pro bono services, services for the good of the public.<sup>aa</sup> I served as a member of the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association. I served as president and as member of the board – and I'm still a member of the board – of the National Conference of Bar Foundations, consisting of over a hundred bar foundations in the United States and Canada.

*I think it's important to know how deeply involved people like you can get in a community. Had you gone to New York, you wouldn't have had these opportunities, and Madison wouldn't have had you.*

These outside activities become very challenging and very, very interesting. You get to feel that you really can't do without them, so I wonder whether it isn't something I'm doing for myself rather than for the public. I have served and am now serving as a member of the Wisconsin Judicial Commission, which hears charges against judges of the state. There are many organizations that I belong to, both professional and otherwise.<sup>ab</sup> I see [looking at scrapbooks] that I served as president and as member of the board

of the Wisconsin B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation. I had forgotten about that.

*One of the things that makes Madison a special kind of community is that there are people like you who are willing to take on these community things. For instance,*



Gordon Sinykin  
The Capital Times, January 25, 1984

*you were on the mayor's commission on human rights at the time of the open housing [discussions]. You were one of the spearheads of that commission. That was a fascinating community effort, which gradually got the support of everybody and was finally pushed through. You were one of the instigators of that, as I remember.*

*Where did you meet Dorothy? And how did you find time to get married with all of this going on?*

Dorothy is a school teacher. She started out teaching in a one-room schoolhouse up in the northern part of Bayfield County. She lived with a farm family and she said she just loved it. They were wonderful to her. She went from there to Reedsburg. She taught in the high school there, and then she came to Madison and taught at Lakewood School in Maple Bluff. I met her when she was in Madison. We married before the war.<sup>ac</sup>

I see I also taught at the Law School for a couple of years. I taught evidence and torts. I liked teaching very much, but it took too much time from my practice.

*Now, tell me about La Follette, Sinykin, Anderson [Axel Roy] and Munson [Earl, Jr.].*

Well, our firm has gradually grown. The last count, I think, we have 21 or 22 lawyers, with several law students. We have three law students right now. And we have one or more paralegals. We have had to develop a whole management scheme. In fact, we now have an office manager who takes charge of operating and running the office, hiring the non-lawyers, supervising them.

*You've lost a partner recently [to retirement].*

[Axel] Roy Anderson remains as a Counsel so he will be doing some things from time to time.<sup>ad</sup>

One of the interesting things I have done has been in the insurance field. Many years ago we talked with the then insurance commissioner, Charles Manson [of Wausau, commissioner 1960-67], about overhauling the insurance laws of the state, which were out-of-date and needed extensive revision. A committee was set up by legislative fiat to study and revise the insurance laws. This covered a period of around 12 or 13 years. A very extensive job was done under the leadership of the director of the project, Spencer Kimball, who, during the course of the project, became Dean of the Law School.<sup>ae</sup>

*Are you getting ready to retire?*

No, I guess not. I am groping for ways and means to cut down so that maybe I can go on a two-thirds or half-time basis. I tried it last year and for a while it seemed like it was going to work, but it didn't. I'm going to have to try again.

*Take your fiddle out and start playing.*

Yes. I should take my fiddle out and put some new strings on it and get a bow. That would be something interesting to do.

Gordon Sinykin died at the age of 80 on January 25, 1991

## Notes

a The address has been changed to 530 South Park Street, upstairs from 528 South Park Street, on the west side of the street a few blocks south of the Greenbush Triangle.

b Samuel Sinaiken and his wife Dora lived at the Park Street address beginning around 1908. Before that they resided first at 633 West Washington Avenue, then 809 Mound Street.

c Early city directories consistently spelled Samuel's last name with a "-ken" ending. Next door to Gordon's birthplace, at 520 South Park Street, was a grocery and dry goods store owned by William Sinaiko, who lived upstairs with his wife Pauline. The current building on this site, now the Klinik Bar, was probably built by Sinaiko around 1920, and still shows a centrally prominent stone engraved "S" just below the cornice line.

d There is no record of the family living on Milton Street, but in the 1916 city directory they are listed at the South Murray Street address.

e 210 South Brooks Street. The oldest section of the building on this site dates from 1918, but it replaced an earlier structure.

f Olwen P. Evans was a teacher at Longfellow School in 1921. She lived at 115 North Butler Street.

g This site is currently the Dayton Street parking ramp across from the downtown Madison Area Technical College.

h The "Knot of Brothers" was founded in 1904.

- i Adas Jeshurun was founded in 1939 and moved to Beth Israel Center in 1949.
- j Both Samuel and Dora Sinykin are buried in Forest Hill Cemetery. Dora's death certificate lists her cause of death as "pneumonia and acute appendicitis."
- k From Murray Street, Gordon moved to 417 Sterling Court, apartment 23. His sisters Della and Louise lived at 210 Langdon Street. Della was then a teacher at Randall School and Louise was a secretary to the adjutant general, Ralph M. Immell, appointed by the governor as chief of the Wisconsin National Guard, with an office in the Capitol. He and his wife Hazel lived in Maple Bluff.
- l The Wisconsin School of Music was located at 122 West Washington Avenue. Elizabeth Buehler was its director.
- m In the bi-annually published city directories between 1900 and 1935, Frank C. Bach rarely appears at the same address twice, and his wife is listed sometimes as Daisy and sometimes as Theresa. In 1910 he was instructor of mandolin, guitar and banjo at the University of Wisconsin School of Music. In 1919 he taught at 122 West Washington Avenue, while living at 2103 Monroe Street. In 1921 he taught violin, mandolin and guitar at 720 University Avenue, with both his home and studio at the same address.
- n "Originator of Capitol Christmas gala dies," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 27, 1981, section 1, p. 4.
- o Randall School first opened in 1906, with many additions in following years. It was always filled to capacity, and only became a kindergarten through sixth grade facility in 1930, when West Senior and Junior High Schools were built.
- p Gordon's sister Ida was married to William Stein and lived at 903 Oakland Avenue. The Fair Store was at 1202-04 Williamson Street, which later housed the Willy Street Co-op and today is the Social Justice Center, Inc., a group of four community involvement and advocacy organizations.
- q When the New Orpheum Theater on State Street opened in 1927, the "old" Orpheum on Monona Avenue (now Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard) was renamed the Garrick (see "Madison's Historic Movie Palaces," *Historic Madison, Journal of the Four Lake Region*, Vol. VII [1981-82], p. 24-28).
- r Brigadier General Ralph Maxwell Immell (1894-1969) became adjutant general of Wisconsin on June 1, 1923.
- s Kreisler (Austrian, 1875-1962) and Elman (Russian American, 1891-1967) were both violin virtuosos of international renown.
- t In the September 1932 Republican primary, Phil La Follette got 319,884 votes (44%) versus 414,575 votes (56%) for Walter J. Kohler, Sr. (1875-1940). In the November gubernatorial election, Madison Mayor Albert George Schmedeman (1864-1946), a Democrat, defeated Kohler 590,114 votes to 470,805.
- u The law firm was located at 1 West Main Street, room 512. Brigadier General Ralph Immell, in addition to being adjutant general, was also an attorney with an office in room 609 of the same building.
- v Phil regained the governorship, defeating Schmedeman by only 13,626 votes.
- w W. Wade Boardman (1905-1983) lived at 2921 Colgate Road in Shorewood Hills. In 1939, both Sinykin and Frederick C. Suhr were employed by the firm. The firm is now Boardman, Suhr, Curry and Field, LLP, at 1 South Pinckney Street.
- x On August 28, 1945, Sinykin was one of the first 150 American troops to land on the Japanese mainland. The USS Missouri (BB-63) arrived in Tokyo Bay the next day, and the Japanese surrender was signed on board the battleship on September 2.
- y Ruth Doyle's husband, James Edward Doyle, Sr. (1915-1987), graduated from the UW (BA 1937) and Columbia Law School (1940), ran for governor in 1954, and became a judge in 1965. Her son Jim is currently the governor of Wisconsin.
- z Methodist Hospital merged with Madison General Hospital in 1987, and was renamed Meriter.
- aa At its annual meeting the Wisconsin Law Foundation still presents the Gordon Sinykin Award of Excellence to a young lawyer or firm for outstanding work in law education or public service.
- ab In 1963, for example, Gordon and his wife Dorothy were original members of the Figure Skating Club of Madison.

ac The Sinykins had two sons, Daniel and Philip, and a daughter, Susan.

ad When Roy Anderson retired, he went into the field of electronic legal research and maintaining library collections electronically.

ae Spencer L. Kimball became dean of the law school in April 1968. He came to Madison from the University of Michigan, but was a UW law school graduate (1958). He resigned the deanship in late 1971, at age 53.

## **HISTORIC MADISON ORAL HISTORY SERIES**

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Florence Zmudzinski





# Kehl

## First Family of Dance

by Mark Gajewski

“Here’s a little news on Professor Kehl. In his work Professor Kehl is considered one of the outstanding men in the world.”<sup>a</sup>

Legendary Madison columnist Roundy Coughlin was accurate in his assessment of the impact Frederick William Kehl had on his life-long passion – dance. Kehl, the “dean of American dance masters,” began teaching in Chicago in 1880. By 1890 he had relocated to Madison, won recognition as the city’s “dancing master,” and founded the city’s first permanent dance academy, what is now the oldest continuously operating family-run dance studio in the nation. For more than half a century he was one of Madison’s most colorful figures, involved not only in dance but countless civic celebrations and activities. His influence, and that of his descendants, particularly his son Leo, was felt not only in Madison but throughout the dance world.

This is the story of five generations of Madison’s first family of dance.

Frederick Kehl was born in Eiterfeld, Germany, on August 19, 1862, descended from a long line of dancers who had taught in Germany, Belgium, and

France since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. His parents, Casper and Justina, the latter an opera star and accomplished ballerina, were natives of Alsace-Lorraine. After both died, their seven children were parceled out among various uncles in Wolf, Germany. Because his uncle did not allow Frederick to dance, he ran away to the United States in 1874 at the age of 12, ultimately settling in Chicago. In 1880, at age 18, he embarked on a long career in dance education by becoming an assistant to Professor Bishoff, one of the leading dance teachers among the Germans on the city’s North Side.

On April 28, 1885, Kehl, at the time still a resident of Chicago, married Barbara Dora Hoeveler of Madison.<sup>b</sup> Her father, John, had settled here in 1856, thus making Frederick and Barbara’s descendants members of a sesquicentennial family.<sup>c</sup> Hoeveler was a partner in H. Christoffers & Company, a furniture store and undertaking establishment.<sup>d</sup> His children were talented musicians and dramatic artists. Barbara was an opera singer, and her brother John was a music teacher. The Hoevelers had ties to the German community in North Chicago, which is possibly how Frederick and Barbara met. Presumably Kehl moved to Madison to live close to his wife’s family. To supplement his income he went to work for his father-in-law, working in the store and superintending funerals by day, and teaching dance every Tuesday night.

*Opposite: Virginia Lee Kehl Mackesey in Orchesis*



*(Left)*  
*Frederick Kehl in 1882,*  
*age 20*

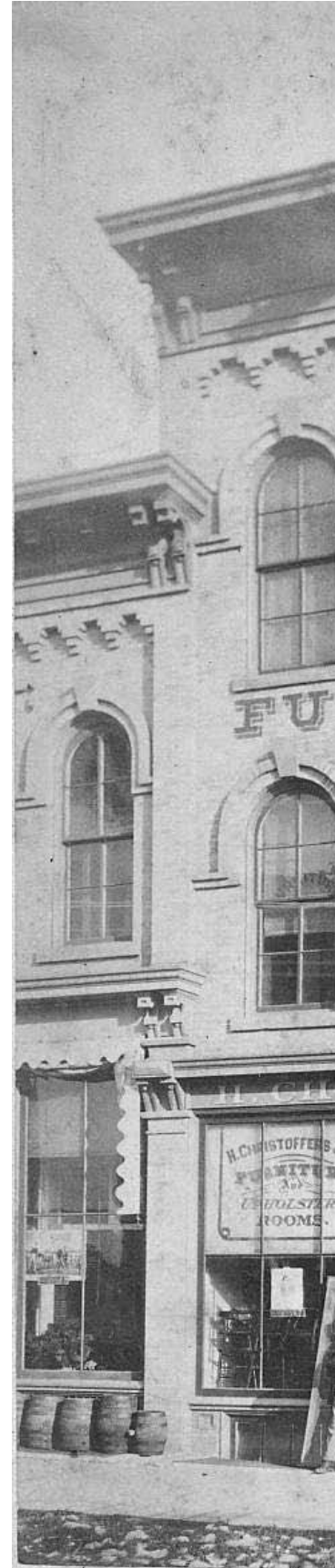
*(Center)*  
*H. Christoffers and*  
*Company Furniture Store*

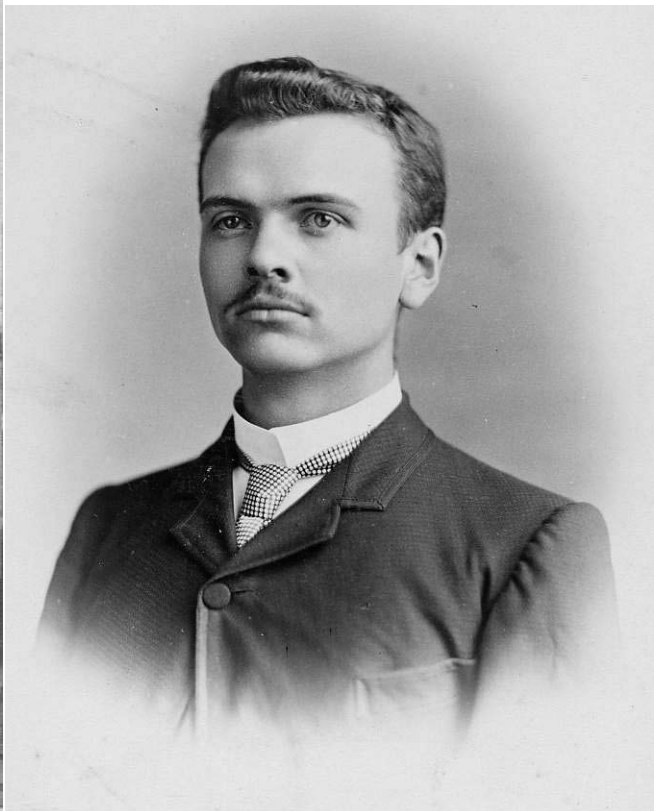
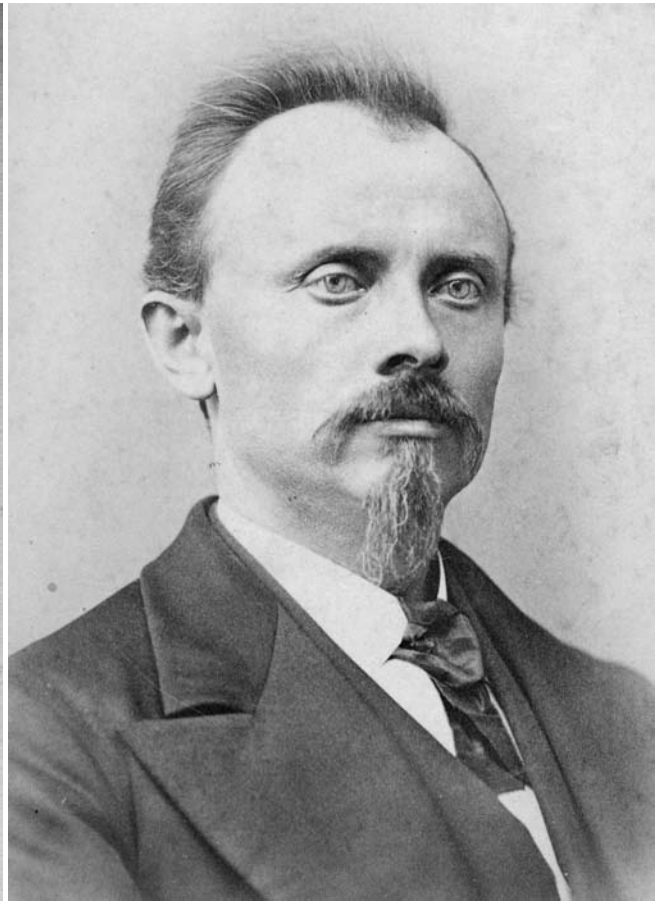
*(Top right)*  
*John Hoeveler, Frederick*  
*Kehl's father-in-law*

*(Bottom right)*  
*Theodore Hoeveler,*  
*Frederick Kehl's brother-*  
*in-law*

Madison at that time was a small city of just over 10,000 people, still mostly clustered on the isthmus, Greenbush, and near east side, though extension of the streetcar line was enabling the city to expand outward. The streets were filled with construction materials; a boom was expected in the plow factory quarter, and in the Third Ward beyond Orton Park Queen Anne, Swiss, Gothic, and Italian-design cottages were going up. Businesses included five agricultural implement dealers, one plow manufacturer, 14 wagon and carriage dealers, seven harness and saddle makers, five livery stables, and 19 blacksmiths. Three ice dealers kept the city cool in summer, and five coal and wood dealers warmed it in winter. Health needs were met by five dentists and 20 physicians. For recreation, Madisonians could take the steam yacht *Mendota* to visit the Insane Asylum or Maple Bluff, or the *Bay State* or *Scutanawbequon* to visit the Winnequah and Tonyawatha resorts on the south shore of Lake Monona. There were three bookstores, eight restaurants, four breweries, and a whopping 55 saloons.

In the 1870s and 1880s Madison's most prominent dance instructor was Professor Anson B. Severance, a resident of Milwaukee who traveled to Madison to teach. In the typical model of the time, each April and September he rented space for a few months in the Odd Fellows Hall, conducting class every other Thursday. He charged students \$5 per term.<sup>c</sup> Interestingly, due to "a slight indisposition," Severance canceled the April term in 1885, the





very month Kehl was married. The seeming lack of competition may have played a role in convincing Kehl to move to Madison.

According to family tradition, Frederick established his first dancing school in his kitchen.<sup>f</sup> The exact date Kehl began teaching in Madison is unclear and will probably never be known with certainty. According to *Madison Past and Present, the Semi-centennial of the Wisconsin State Journal*, he moved to Madison in the fall of 1885, a date echoed by Roundy Coughlin in a 1938 newspaper article. However, Kehl did not appear in a city directory until 1888, where he was listed as a finisher in a furniture business, not as a dance instructor. He first advertised his dance academy in the city directory and local newspapers in 1890. His ad in the 1921 *Badger*

says “34 years in Madison;” his ad in the 1922 *Badger* says “students have learned to dance here for 35 years;” these ads calculate a starting date for the academy of 1886.<sup>g</sup> Yet the program for the 44<sup>th</sup> Kehl review, in the 1925 dance season, calculates a date of 1882, the same date embossed on the cover of another Kehl pamphlet. The program for the Midget Follies of 1936 stated it was the 56<sup>th</sup> annual review, which gives a date of 1880. At any rate, Kehl began teaching in Chicago in 1880, the date used by the Kehls to celebrate the family’s involvement in dance.<sup>h</sup>

Outgrowing his kitchen, Kehl obtained space in Vergeland Hall in the Brown Block on the corner of Pinckney Street and East Washington Avenue. Kehl next moved his academy to the Governor’s Guard Armory



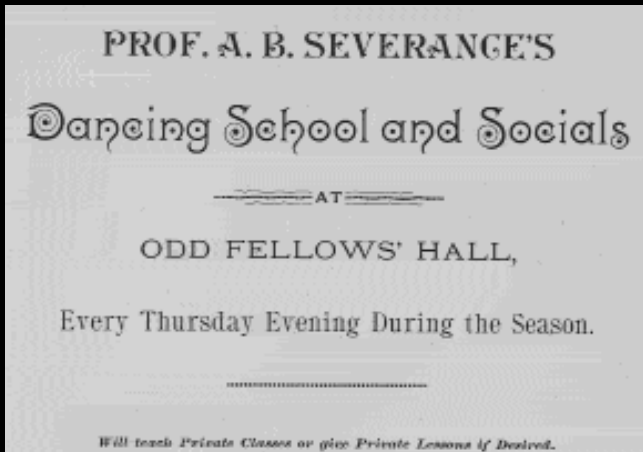
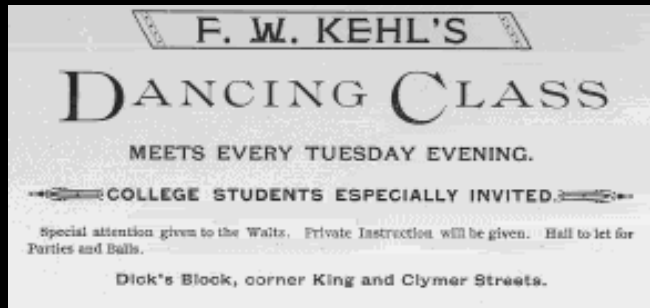
*Frederick Kehl in a carriage decked out for a funeral*



above Blied Hardware at 105 State Street. He recognized the University of Wisconsin and its students as a market. When the University Social Club was organized in the fall of 1888, Kehl served as dance instructor for the 75 couples.<sup>i</sup> The first of many Kehl ads in the annual *Badger* yearbook appeared in 1891, noting “college students especially invited” for dance instruction. Many UW proms and student socials were held at Kehl’s hall. Over the years dancing at Kehl’s became part of university life, and was mentioned no less than a dozen times in yearbooks between 1903 and 1924. In fact, the satire section of the 1924 *Badger* referred to Kehl’s as one of Madison’s “seven wonders.”



Late 1889 and 1890 seemed to mark a turning point for Kehl. By late fall 1889 he was successful enough to lease the third story of Christian Dick’s new \$13,000 building at 125 King Street. Unlike Professor Severance, who continued to rent the Odd Fellows Hall, Kehl now had a permanent, year-round academy in which to teach. Though he still worked for his father-in-law, dance took up more of his time. He began regularly advertising his Tuesday night dance classes each week in the *Madison Democrat*, for the first time competing directly with Professor Severance’s ads.<sup>j</sup> In addition, he also began holding “grand social balls” every Saturday; his academy enabled Kehl to supplement his income and monopolize the dance market when Severance returned to Milwaukee. On September 6, 1890, Kehl was thrown to the street and badly injured while driving his father-in-law’s furniture wagon; describing the accident, the



(Top) Kehl ad, 1891 *Badger*

(Middle) Severance ad, 1891 *Badger*

(Bottom) Kehl ad, 1901 *Badger*

(Left) Frederick and Barbara Kehl



*Madison Democrat* referred to Kehl as the “dancing master of Madison,” implying he was well established in the city by that time. In 1891 Professor Severance lowered his per semester price to \$4, competing with Kehl’s rates of \$4 for gentlemen and \$3 for ladies.

Kehl did not limit his teaching efforts to Madison and the UW. Beginning in 1890, Kehl instructed at the Hillside Home School, run by Frank Lloyd Wright’s relatives, the Jones sisters.<sup>k</sup> On Saturday nights for nearly 30 years he demonstrated new steps in the Wright-built gymnasium “wearing tails and ballet slippers, a tiny artificial rosebud in his lapel, with a small mustache, princely manners, and bushy gray hair curled with an iron, it was whispered.”<sup>l</sup> He traveled by horse, buggy and train to nearly 50 nearby communities to teach, as well as to England, France, Germany, Miami, and dozens of cities in the U.S. He taught regularly at Beloit beginning in 1894, Baraboo in 1896, and Janesville in 1898. By 1902 classes flourished under his instruction in Waterloo, Sun Prairie, Mazomanie, Spring Green, Boscobel, Richland Center, Dodgeville, Lancaster, Stoughton,

Edgerton, Reedsburg, Elroy, Necedah, New Lisbon, Shullsburg, and Harvard, Illinois.<sup>m</sup>

Kehl obtained space in the former Masonic Temple at 21-23 West Main by 1894. He remained at that site until 1898, when he built an academy at 309 West Johnson Street. In 1906 he erected Colonial Hall at 113-115 East Mifflin (today the Bartell Theatre).<sup>n</sup> By 1923 he also operated a studio at 3-5 North Pinckney.

Kehl faced little competition, except from Professor Severance, in the early years. Miss Paget Daniels started a children’s dancing class in 1889 that did not last; in 1894 J. R. Cullinane and C. A. Godding began a short-lived class at Odd Fellows Hall. In 1919 three competitors were listed in the city directory: The Dance Studio, 424 State Street; On the Square Dance Studio 5, 6, 7, 8 West Main; and the Wisconsin School of Music, 122 West Washington Avenue (which offered dance instruction).

Kehl’s Academy was the scene of many elaborate balls. A typical children’s entertainment program at the Kehl Academy, held in May 1904, featured numbers including Dancing Dolls, Buck and Wing Dance, Spanish Dancers, Grandma’s Minuette, Skirt Dancers, Fools Gavotte, Egyptian Beggar Girls, Cake Walk, Scotch Dancers, Japanese Dance, Dutch Wooden Shoe Dance, Irish Jig, Scarf Ballet and the Butterfly, and Good Night Drill, all followed by a social hop.<sup>o</sup>

Kehl mastered 500 dances from various eras, from the “Berlin” and “Racket” to the “Bunny Hug” and “Lindy Glide” and “Big Apple” and “Shag.” He once estimated that he trained 60,000 students, including the children of many famous Madison families – the Fairchilds, the Tenneys, the Frautschis, the La Follettes, the Kessenichs. It was said that “no girl in Madison would make her debut in society without first having a full course of ballroom dancing and etiquette from the Kehl dance school.” Kehl claimed that, in the early days, he wore brass knuckles to keep drunks out of his studio, since in his opinion “no man with liquor on his breath could possibly dance with a lady.”<sup>p</sup>

Frederick was involved in more than just dance in Madison. He was master of ceremonies at all three of Robert M. La Follette’s gubernatorial inaugurations. He officiated at funerals for 20 years. He operated Schutzen Park on Lake Monona near Dunning Street and Union Corners. He directed the annual flag drill in Vilas Park each 4<sup>th</sup> of July. As early as 1902, he and George Paltz



*Kehl studio at 223 East Mifflin Street*

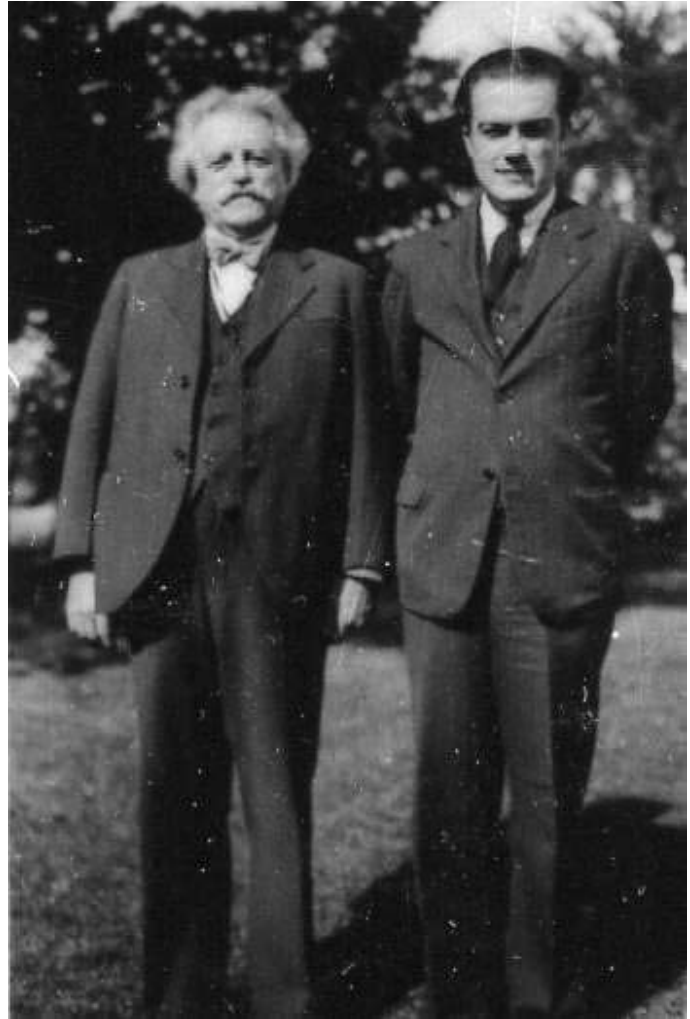
opened the Park Bowling Alley at 30 North Carroll, and he operated as many as 22 alleys in later years. Two were in the studio on Johnson Street, six at the corner of Carroll and Mifflin streets in the basement of the Chapman Building, 14 at Colonial Hall, and some in Fair Oaks. He operated the first public alleys, and taught ladies to bowl. For many years he (and his son Leo) took teams to national bowling tournaments.

While Kehl was the leading figure in Madison dance, he had an impact on his art far beyond the confines of the city.

In 1900 Frederick was third vice president for the American National Association of Teachers of Dancing of the United States and Canada. Beginning in 1901 he was state supervisor for the same organization, and in 1912 was elected president (the organization later became the Dance Masters of America). In 1903 he annotated and revised a book by Albert F. Larson, *Dancing as a Profession*. In 1908 Frederick gained world prominence by winning first place in ballroom dancing at the International Dance Masters meeting in Berlin, with music supplied by the personal orchestra of Kaiser Wilhelm. He was one of the delegates from 16 countries who formed an international union to make dancing uniform worldwide. His reputation was further enhanced at congresses in Berlin and London, where his waltz and two-step methods were adopted as standards. In recognition of his achievements, he was made an honorary member of the Imperial Society of London. He also consulted for Capezio in the construction of pointe shoes.

Frederick campaigned vigorously to rid the dance floors of the nation of “hotcha” and “swing” types of dancing, and to rescue dance from the “savage vulgarity of animalism of the jungle.” He championed the waltz, declaring “the waltz is graceful and good, while jazz leads to petting parties and other indulgences.”<sup>9</sup>

He helped originate the Dancing Masters of America (DMA) Normal School for the training of dance teachers in 1918. At one time he was the oldest active member of the DMA, and over the course of his career he held every office in the organization. In 1930, the Chicago Dancing Masters Association presented Frederick with a gold medal, set with a large blue diamond, for 50 years of active service in promoting dance.



*Frederick Kehl and his son Leo*

Always immaculately groomed, Kehl was known for wearing a high silk hat, cutaway coat, and pin-striped trousers, an outfit he adopted soon after his arrival in Madison. In later life he had a shock of bushy white hair and a mustache and carried a cane. Former students left vivid descriptions of him: “Professor Kehl, in his element, pranced graciously about, signaling with a staccato clacker to stop and correct a misstep or a breach of etiquette. He would line us up in a row for a new step, the gentlemen opposite the ladies, and his elegant enthusiastic little feet would demonstrate to us. Every girl loved to waltz with him and felt honored at being chosen... Professor Kehl endured; he never seemed to change a day. When Frank Lloyd Wright’s new building was erected he was there to lead the dancing in the fine gymnasium with its wonderful equipment and gleaming floor; and he was there every Saturday, year in and year out, as long as the school lasted, nearly 30 years. I know

nothing of his later story, but for me he will exist forever, prancing stylishly about the gym, or pausing in fifth position, snapping his clacker and calling directions with a flashing eye.”<sup>r</sup>

Frederick and Barbara retired to Coral Gables, Florida, a brand new suburb of Miami, in 1925 when her health declined. Kehl’s retirement lasted one month. He opened a studio in Miami that he ran for 14 years. He served as president of Miami’s German Society from 1928 to 1936, and was a pioneer developer, helping create Sweetwater and Sweetwater Groves on the Tamiami Trail. Barbara passed away on July 8, 1929. Kehl returned to Madison in 1936, rejoining the faculty of his school. He died in Chicago on August 17, 1938, at the home of his son Sylvester, ten days after falling ill while returning from a dance convention in New Orleans, where he’d been awarded a gold medal for 46 consecutive years attendance.



*(Clockwise, from left)*

*Leo Kehl’s famous military tap dance*

*Genevieve and Leo Kehl*

*Genevieve Esser*

*Genevieve and Leo Kehl*

Frederick and Barbara had nine children: John, born in February 1886; Godfrey, December 1886; William, 1889; Anna, 1890; Martha, 1891; Sylvester, 1894; Marie, 1896; Edwin, 1899; and Leo, March 10, 1900. The last was to become the most famous of the second generation Kehl dancers.

Leo was stricken with polio at age three, a fact few Madisonians ever knew, but he rehabilitated his body with therapeutic dance exercises designed by his parents. As an adult he usually wore long shirts and long pants to disguise the effects of the disease, which he did not allow to slow him down.

He first danced in public at age three at Madison’s



Fuller Opera House in *Ten Nights in a Barroom*. He attended Holy Redeemer and Madison High School, then studied pre-med at the UW. He also studied at the Stefano Mascagno School of Dance and the Vestoff-Serova Russian School of Dance in New York City, and trained at dance schools in Canada, Mexico, and Cuba. In 1926 he became the first person to tap dance on a radio show, on WIBA.

At age 22, even before Frederick moved to Coral Gables, Leo became director of the Kehl Dance Academy. He viewed dancing in three categories – “graceful, ungraceful, and disgraceful.”<sup>8</sup> Kehl stationery dated March 15, 1934, summarized his work: “All types of dancing taught. Professional stage routines created. Entertainments of every type arranged. Orchestras engaged for any event. Pageants and musical shows coached. Normal courses for teachers. Special dances arranged for stage or screen. Land O’ Dance ballroom available for rentals. Ballroom classes and private lessons. Dramatic art and expression.” At that time Leo was the Principal, Kehl School of Dancing; President, Chicago Association of Dancing Masters; Educational director, Wisconsin Society Teachers of Dancing; Assistant secretary, Dancing Masters of America; and President, Dancing Masters of Wisconsin. In addition, he taught physical education and dance at Holy Redeemer and St. James, as well as in the public schools. He was also an artist, working in chalk and oils. Leo was dance director for

19 years for productions of the UW’s Haresfoot Club.<sup>1</sup>

Leo oversaw the Catholic arm of the USO club during World War II. He often spent hours carving turkeys for servicemen on Thanksgiving. At one point, two staff members copied all the Kehl enrollment records and wrote letters to their students, telling them that Leo was going to work for the USO full time. They started their own studio and invited all the Kehl students to enroll with them. While some believed them, the majority of students were loyal and did not leave.

In 1946 Leo sold the building at 113 East Mifflin and bought and renovated a big brown house at 223 East Mifflin, operating the Kehl School of Dance there for the next 50 years.

Leo was as involved worldwide with dance as his father. In 1927 Leo received the Russian Imperial Gold Medal for teaching the Russian method of classical ballet. He was president of the Dance Masters of Wisconsin for 42 years, an organization he helped found, and was also a founder of the Madison Ballet Guild. He served twice as president of the Chicago National Association of Dance Masters (CNADM), was a member of DMA, and was president of the Dance Masters Educationalists. Leo founded the World Federation of Dance Education in 1951.

He spent seven years surveying the terminology of dance, and his work was adopted



as the standard by professional teachers' organizations. He wrote the first tap dictionary, and developed the first written exams and a code of ethics for dance teacher associations. His books on dance were used by more than 5,000 schools and 30 major universities.

In addition to teaching thousands of Madison's children to dance, he instructed more than 3,000 dance teachers. He was on the faculty of the CNADM, and taught numerous movie stars, including Ralph Bellamy, Melvyn Douglas, Fifi D'Orsay, Vera Ellen, Joan Taylor, and Gene Kelly. In fact, when Kelly fell at age 16 and broke his arm, Leo took up a collection to help pay his medical bills. Two of his Madison students, the Sidell sisters, Billie and Pierre, later starred with Florenz Ziegfeld and in the Folies Bergere in Paris (Billie later joined the faculty at Kehl's).

Leo choreographed for the Dorothy LaVern Stock Company, the Al Jackson Players, the Melvyn Douglas Stock Company, and the UW Players. Shirley Temple performed his military tap dance in the movie *The Little Colonel*.

He was given an Indian name by the Ho Chunk after working with them at the Wisconsin Dells. Instrumental in organizing the Madison West Lions Club, Leo served as chapter president, international counselor and district governor. He was a member of the Elks, and was on the board of directors of the Madison Neighborhood House for 40 years. In 1957 he helped people escape when a fire broke out in a Chicago hotel during a convention, suffering a heart attack in the process. He later had four strokes before passing away on October 18, 1967.

While living on a farm one summer the "handsome, courtly Leo Kehl" met Genevieve Esser at a dance. Born on March 17, 1904, in Mt. Horeb, she grew up in Sauk City; among her playmates was future writer August Derleth. Moving to Madison after her 1922 graduation from Sauk City High School, she stayed at the YWCA, where she captained the basketball team. She graduated from Madison Business College, where

she was noted for her penmanship, shorthand, and typing, and became an outstanding legal secretary and court reporter. Leo and Genevieve married in 1926.

Genevieve was involved in every facet of the dancing school, particularly in sewing costumes and headdresses for annual recitals. She conducted some ballroom classes as well, and was the office secretary for many years. During World War II she worked nights at the Gisholt Machine Company. After Leo's death, she ran the Kehl School, along with her daughters, until she was 86, each day appearing in formal dress, nylons and earrings. Generations of students knew her as "Grandma Kehl." She was recognized for her "unselfish dedication, encouragement, love and

inspiration" as an outstanding senior by the Wisconsin Advisory Council in 1980.<sup>u</sup> She died on October 22, 1991.



*(This page)*

*"Grandma" Kehl and students*

*(Opposite page)*

*(Top left) Virginia Lee Kehl  
(Top right) Jo Jean, Virginia Lee, and Jo Ann Kehl  
(Bottom) Virginia Lee, Jo Ann, and Jo Jean Kehl*





Leo and Genevieve's daughter Virginia Lee was born in 1932, followed by twins Jo Ann and Jo Jean in 1936. Virginia Lee Kehl Mackesey, Jo Ann Kehl McDermott, and Jo Jean Kehl Janus eventually became the third Kehl generation to keep the academy operating.

Virginia Lee began teaching before she was 14 when a faculty member became pregnant. By the time she graduated from Edgewood in 1950, where she'd been a drum majorette for four years, she was teaching as many as five days a week after school, plus all day Saturday. She also taught all summer, and attended special teacher training schools across the country. She majored in dance and minored in physical education at the UW-Madison, studying under famed instructors Margaret H'Doubler and Louise Kloepper. She continued teaching ballroom classes for servicemen at Truax Field, and was one of the first four female cheerleaders at the UW.

She earned bachelors and masters degrees from the CNADM, and passed the exams for Dance Masters of Wisconsin and Dance Masters of America. She trained in Detroit; Washington, D.C.; New York City; Hollywood; the Royal Academy in London; the Paris Opera Company Ballet Academy; and the State School of Ballet in Rome. She also studied folk and national dance throughout the Scandinavian countries. She was offered a position with the USO in Germany, but returned to the studio in Madison instead.

Virginia Lee moved to Poughkeepsie, New York, when her husband was transferred by IBM in 1959, but they returned to Madison about a year later. When Leo

died she was asked to complete his CNADM term. She served that institution as educational director, principal, and president, all positions that had been held by her father. She was also elected president of Dance Masters of Wisconsin.

In the mid-60s she started satellite classes at St. Maria Goretti, and opened Kehl's Verona Studio in 1974. From Leo's death until her retirement in 1983, Virginia Lee served as a co-director of the Kehl enterprise along with her mother Genevieve and sister Jo Jean. Since then she has lived in Boca Raton, Hong Kong, and Atlanta.

Jo Ann assisted her father in the office and taught dance classes beginning in her early teens. She spent two summers in Hawaii working with the Marguerite Duane Dance Troop, then taught hula and ballroom dance in Madison, performing locally with the Kehl hula dance troupe. She also served on the faculty of several statewide and national dance master organizations. Jo Ann majored in business at the UW, then taught at Monona Grove High School. Soon after Leo's death she and her husband moved to Ohio, where they now reside.

Jo Jean became sole



*Bob and Jo Jean Kehl Janus*

*(Opposite, clockwise from top left)  
Jenny, Julie, and Jeanne Janus*

*Leo Janus and partner Polly Mohs*

*Patti and Terri Mackesey*

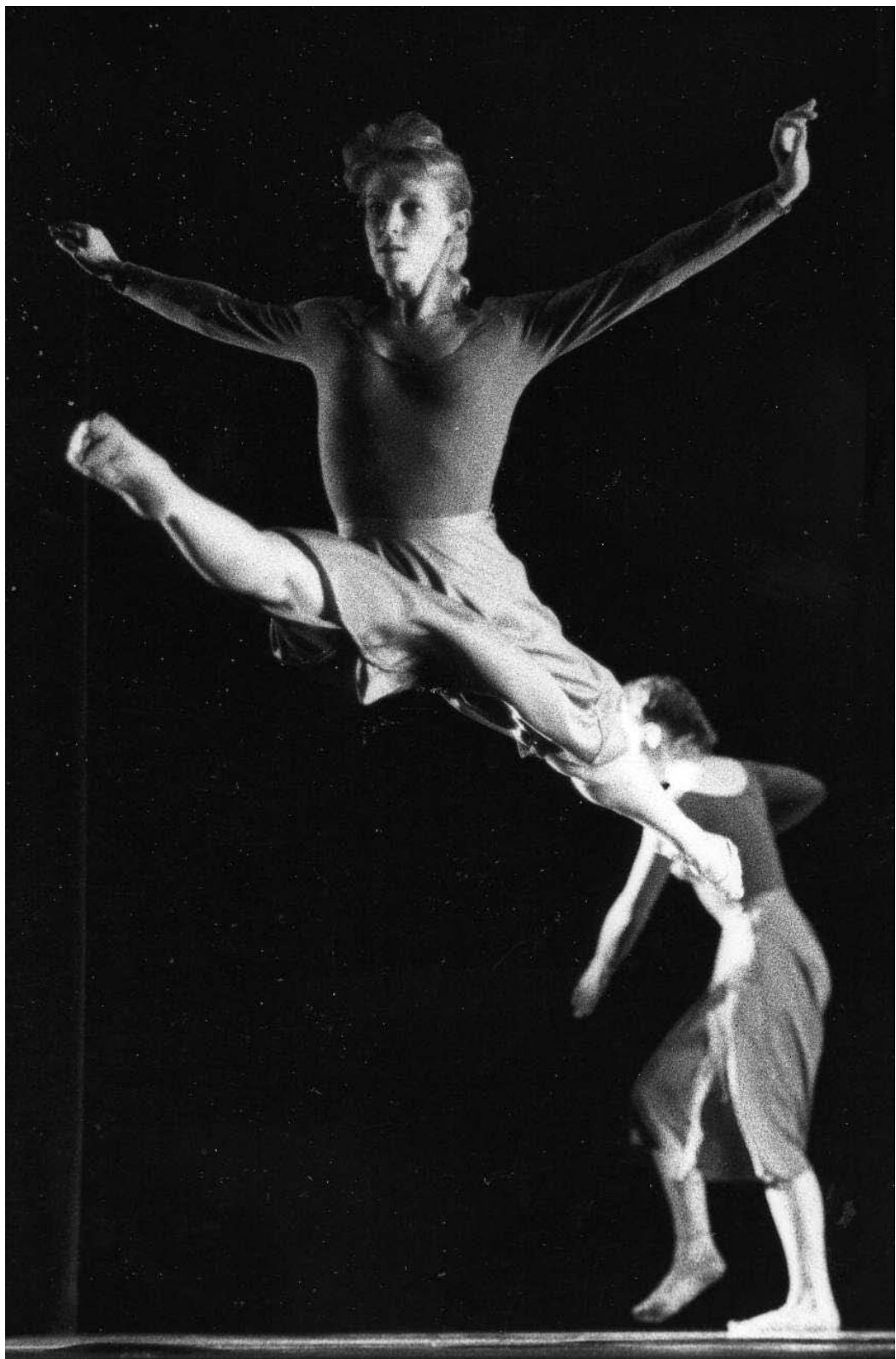
*Kathi, Terri, and Patti Mackesey*





director of the Kehl enterprise in 1991. She was president of the Dance Masters of Wisconsin, vice president of the CNADM, a founding board member of the Wisconsin Dance Ensemble, served many regional and national dance organizations, is a board member of the St. Mary's Medical Center Foundation, and is the long-standing president of Phi Chi Theta Professional Business Fraternity. Jo Jean started dance classes at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monona, opened the Kehl Waunakee studio, coached ice skaters, worked with swing choirs, choreographed school plays, volunteered at St. Mary's and St. Thomas Aquinas, added junior and senior dance teams to supplement the Kehlettes Baton and Drum Corps, led tours to Europe and New York, and hosted a Russian dance group from Moscow. She currently serves as president of the Wisconsin Dance Council, and conducts "fun and fit" classes for the elderly.

The fourth generation daughters all danced before they were three years old. Their brothers danced some, and also operated spotlights and loaded equipment. Three Mackesey daughters – Terri, Kathi, and Mary Jo – and four Janus daughters were dance instructors. Terri was the first member of the fourth generation to join the Kehl staff, teaching for 12 years in Madison and Verona. Later she taught in Minneapolis, and is currently teaching in Barrington, Illinois. Kathi and Mary Jo taught in the Verona branch; their older sister Patti helped out in the studio and brother Tim handled spotlights and



*Jo Ann Janus performing at the University of Kansas*

*(Opposite) Julie Janus and Tyler Walters*

miscellaneous duties.

Julie Janus danced with the All Star Joffrey Ballet of New York City. She was principal dancer with the Atlanta Ballet for a year, and was guest principal for three months with the National Ballet of Iceland.

Julie performed around the world - at Alhambra in Granada, Spain; the Acropolis in Athens; the Winter Olympics in Calgary; Lincoln Center in New York; the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles; and the Schubert and

Auditorium theatres in Chicago. She and her partner, Ron Reagan, son of the president, danced "Romeo and Juliet" at Kehl's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. She and her husband Tyler Walters, a descendant of the UW's first chancellor, John Hiram Lathrop, currently live in North Carolina, teach at Duke and the University of North Carolina, are part owners of a ballet studio, and work with the Carolina Ballet.

Jo Ann Janus began dancing at age two, performing at retirement homes and Edgfest. She earned full scholarships to the Joffrey and Alvin Ailey schools, Gus Giordano's and David Parsons' dance companies, and the CNADM Ballet Forum program. After dancing in New York, she attended the University of Kansas on a full dance scholarship, winning the prestigious Elizabeth Sherbon award her junior year. Jo Ann moved back to Madison to help with the family business when her father became ill, following in the family's teaching and choreographing footsteps.

Jenny Janus Hiltbrand earned a degree in business from the UW and a master's in business administration from Edgewood College. She worked at CUNA for 15 years, all the while teaching dance at night. After being transferred to California, she took a leave of absence and spent a year traveling around the world. Not long after her return, in 1997, she became the fourth





generation to operate the business when her father, suffering from a terminal illness, required wife Jo Jean's constant care. She is assisted by her sisters, Jeanne, who has a BS and MBA in business from the UW, and Jo Ann.

The fifth generation grandchildren are dancing in the Kehl studios in Madison and Waunakee, as well as Atlanta, Cincinnati, and Raleigh, each carrying on the family tradition.

Education has always been the main focus of the Kehl family, training the teachers of the future to carry on the highest quality dance education with an emphasis on technique in a caring, nurturing environment. This is evidenced by the fact that most studios in Madison and the surrounding towns are operated by former students of the Kehl School of Dance – a source of pride for the Kehl family.

Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus summed up the Kehl legacy on February 11, 1980, when he wrote: "Family institutions are a rare and unique gift to any community. The Kehl School of Dance has been a Madison landmark for generations and the school has brought nationwide recognition not only to the Capital city, but to the gifted and talented Kehl troupe. Upon this historic occasion, marking the centennial birthday of the Kehl School, it is an honor to recognize the achievements of the entire family. As individual dance artists and educators, they have brought style, innovation, and international technique to American dance."<sup>1</sup>

*This article could not have been written without the considerable assistance of Jo Jean Kehl Janus, who provided substantial background material on the Kehl family, reviewed multiple drafts, and shared her treasure trove of family photographs. The author also thanks Virginia Lee Kehl Mackesey for supplying information on her branch of the family, and for reviewing drafts of the article.*

## Children's Entertainment

Given by PROF. KEHL at his Academy,

Friday Evening, May 20th 1904.

### PROGRAM:

1. DANCING DOLLS..... Florence Pardee and Mirbell Netherwood
2. BUCK AND WING DANCE..... John Kehl
3. SPANISH DANCERS  
Anna Kehl, Norma Bucknor, Nellie Rice and Lorine Frederickson
4. GRANDMA'S MINUETTE..... Alice Curtis
5. SKIRT DANCERS..... Edna and Shirley Frederickson, Gladys Lemmel
6. FOOLS GAVOTTE..... John and Fred Kehl, George and Nick Annen
7. EGYPTIAN BEGGAR GIRLS  
Elsie Fauerbach, Elizabeth Alford, Clara Fauerbach, Florence Pardee, Mirbell Netherwood, Marie Alford.
8. CAKE WALK..... Frederickson Sisters
9. SCOTCH DANCERS  
Esther Simpson, Ruth Luetscher, Edna Frederickson, Lucile Luetscher
10. JAPANESE DANCE  
Percy Mehlick, Sylvester Kehl, Harold and Frederick Luetscher, Wm. Lewis, Earle Burwell.
11. DUTCH WOODEN SHOE DANCE..... Peter Annen and John Kehl
12. IRISH JIG..... Fred Libby, Alfred Harrington, Chas. Reynolds
13. SCARF BALLET AND THE BUTTERFLY  
Myrbell Netherwood, Florence Pardee, Esther Simpson, Elsie, Clara and Gala Fauerbach, Shirley, Edna and Lorine Frederickson, Alice Curtis, Marie and Elisabeth Alford, Margaret Lewis, Norma Bucknor, Anna Kehl, Sarah Cooley, Nellie Rice, Bessie Payton, Ruth and Eveline Frish, Helma Blankenheim and Katharine Schoen.
14. GOOD NIGHT DRILL  
Rosaline and Elenore Statz, Agnes Kehl, Barbara Wahl, Lillian Baer, Marie Sachs, Hildegard Moory, Myra Ham.

SOCIAL HOP AFTER PROGRAM.

### Notes

- a Wisconsin State Journal, May 7, 1938
- b Kehl wedding announcement, Wisconsin State Journal, April 28, 1885, and Madison Democrat, April 29, 1885. "Married at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, April 28, at Holy Redeemer, by Reverend Zitterl, Frederick William Kehl of Chicago and Miss Barbara Hoeveler

of Madison. Reception at the bride's parents' house on Francis [sic] Street."

c Madison was chartered as a city on March 7, 1856.

d H. Christoffers & Company dealt in fine furniture at 115 West Main Street, with "particular attention given to undertaking" (Madison's other undertakers were Deming Fitch and Christian Frautschi). The firm's partners were Henry Christoffers, Herbert Daubner, and John Hoeveler. Hoeveler was born in Grosskoenigsdorf near Cologne, and came to the U. S. in 1854. After spending a year in New York, he moved to Madison. He made desks for the Assembly in the 1860s.

e Milwaukee Directory 1879. The firm of Severance and Williams, a brass and string band, was operated by Anson B. Severance, Collamer B. Severance, and Thomas Williams.

f Program for Kehl's Centennial – *A Century of Dance*, June 14, 1980, Memorial Union.

g The *Badger* was published by the junior class and bore that classes' year. Thus, the 1921 *Badger* was actually published in 1920.

h See *Madison Past and Present, the Semi-centennial of the Wisconsin State Journal* (1902), page 106, for the original reference to Kehl's arrival in Madison; the May 7, 1938, *Wisconsin State Journal* for the Roundy Coughlin article; the city directories for 1888 and 1890; the advertising section of the 1921 and 1922 *Badger*.

i 1891 *Badger*. The University Social Club was organized in the fall of 1888 and first met in January 1889. The club held eight parties that year. It was reorganized in the fall of 1889 and arrangements were made for 12 parties. Socials were held at the Armory every two weeks. Only juniors and seniors could be members. The object of the club was to afford some means of social improvement in the large body of students who formerly took no part in the social affairs of the university.

j Relations between Kehl and the Severances must have been cordial. The *Capital Times* of April 29, 1916, reported that "dance teachers Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Severance of Milwaukee attended the Kehl recital" held in the high school that year.

k *Capital Times*, November 18, 1928 and *Spring Green Weekly Home News*, October 23, 1890. The Hillside Home School was started by Jane Lloyd Jones and Ellen Lloyd Jones in 1887. It was a model coeducational institution that attracted students from all over the country. Classes included Latin, Greek, German, French, painting, manual arts, modeling, vocal music, piano, violin, wood carving, and usual school subjects. The sisters expanded their gymnasium the summer of 1890. In 1904 Frank Lloyd Wright built the sisters a stone school and gymnasium when the school outgrew its original quarters. Kehl came from Madison to instruct in dancing.

l Kehl Centennial program.

m *Madison Past and Present*, p. 166.

n Madison Directories 1890-1891, 1892-1893, 1896-1897, and 1898-1899. In 1890 the Kehls lived in their dancing academy at 125 King Street. By 1892 they lived at 723 West Washington Avenue. In 1896 they again lived in their academy at 21-23 West Main. In 1898 they lived at 311 West Johnson, next to the academy.

o Program from *Children's Entertainment*, May 20, 1904.

p *Capital Times*, August 17, 1938.

q *Capital Times*, August 17, 1938.

r Mary Ellen Chase, 1939.

s Kehl Centennial program.

t 1949 *Badger*. The Haresfoot Club was founded by ten men at the UW in 1898. It was the third oldest all-male musical comedy revue in the country. Alumni included Frederic March (born Ernest Frederick McIntyre Bickel) and Don Ameche (born Dominic Felix Amici).

u Kehl Centennial program.

v Kehl Centennial program.

*The Only Permanent Dancing School in the City*

## KEHL'S SCHOOL of DANCING

Students have learned to dance here for 35 years and have always been satisfied. We teach you for less money and in less time than any other teacher in the city. Classes or private lessons any time to suit the pupils, by lady or gentleman teacher.

Academy: 309 W. Johnson St.
Phone: Badger 1770

*Kehl ad, 1922 Badger yearbook*



# Leaving Greenbush

by Florence Zmudzinski



The Triangle Relocation Supervisor Looks Back on Urban  
Renewal, Public Housing, and Equal Opportunity



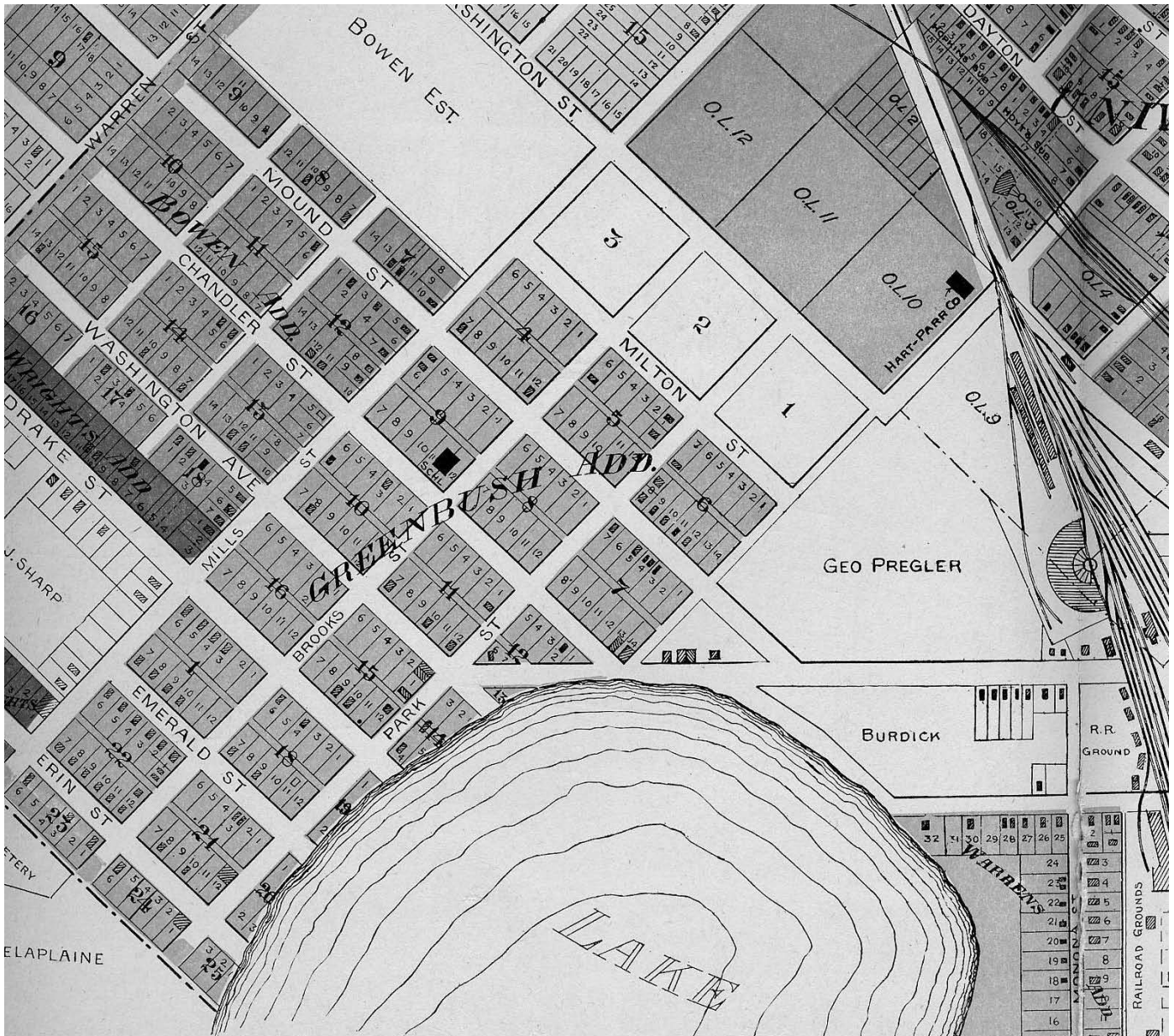
(Opening page)

*Dale Beckett supervising workmen from Arrowwood Nursery digging up Mrs. Brasci's 37-year-old grapevine from her yard at 611 Regent Street. The vine, threatened with destruction when the Brasci house fell victim to urban renewal, was replanted outside her new Gay Braxton apartment in the Triangle redevelopment thanks to the efforts of Fran Remeika and others.*

*Photo by Tom Barlet, The Capital Times, June 22, 1965*

(Title page)

*Aerial view of the Brittingham and Triangle redevelopment areas, looking down West Washington Avenue between Park Street (at the top of the photo), Regent Street (on the bottom), and West Main Street (on the left).*



*The Greenbush Addition, which took its name from the Catholic Greenbush cemetery in the bottom left corner (now the site of St. Mary's Hospital), was platted in 1854 by Dr. Chandler B. Chapman and John Yates Smith. George Pregler's undeveloped land, destined to be known as the Triangle, is in the right center, bounded by the railroad roundhouse to the east.*

*Leonard Gay's 1899 Atlas of Dane County*



The Greenbush, a diverse ethnic neighborhood, thrived in the heart of Madison beginning in 1901. Sadly, sixty years later, it was erased by what some considered a well-meaning but ill-conceived federal program called urban renewal. The city's two urban renewal projects - Brittingham and the Triangle - were located next to one another about six blocks west of the Capitol Square. The seven and one half-acre Brittingham Project was bordered by Proudfit Street, West Main Street, and West Washington Avenue, taking its name from Brittingham Park on Monona Bay. The Triangle Project was a 52-acre, triangle-shaped site bounded by South Park Street, West Washington Avenue, and Regent Street, extending two blocks west to South Mills Street.

The Triangle and Brittingham areas were developed as Pregler's Addition between 1901 and 1930 by local businessman George Pregler (1854-1930). He filled in the low-lying marshland with construction debris and ashes collected from neighboring household furnaces. He moved old houses scheduled for destruction elsewhere in the city to his land, fixed them, and built additional houses, selling them for \$5 down and \$5 to \$10 per month.<sup>a</sup> Most were purchased by Italian immigrants, who often lived in crowded conditions as their families grew and relatives from the old country joined them. There were 10 Italian families in 1900, and 1,200 by 1917. Many of the men were employed by John F. Icke and George Nelson, general contractors. They helped pave Madison's streets, lay concrete sidewalks and curbs, build office buildings and houses, and carved the stone statuary for the Capitol. The Greenbush was ethnically diverse. In addition to the Italians, Jews, Irish, Poles, and African-Americans took advantage of the inexpensive housing.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church and school, Longfellow School, the Italian Methodist Church, the Italian Workmen's Club, Adas Jeshurun Synagogue, Neighborhood House,<sup>b</sup> and Brittingham Park provided spiritual, educational and recreational services for these families. The neighborhood included a drug store, grocery stores, meat markets, restaurants, gas stations, taverns, and a junk yard.<sup>c</sup>

From an early date many "outsiders" were concerned about conditions in the Bush. Though there were modern buildings, such as the Oliva Flats at 749 West Washington Avenue,<sup>d</sup> others were older. In 1917

Lawrence Veiller, a national housing expert, spoke in Madison at the invitation of the Madison Civics Club. "Your Greenbush zone is a plague spot," he said. "It is small but it is a civic cancer and the surgeon's knife should be used immediately and liberally before this thing spreads."<sup>e</sup> The Madison Woman's Club took up the cause and persuaded the Civics Club and the Board of Commerce to hire Louis Claude and Edward Starck, Madison's prairie school architects, to design six stucco model tenements, complete with indoor toilets. They were built on the east side of South Park Street at the corner of Regent, and stood until they were torn down during urban renewal.<sup>f</sup>

The Federal Housing Act of 1949, signed by President Harry S. Truman, was the first significant urban renewal legislation. It authorized the federal government to lend cities money to develop urban renewal plans, and to pay cities two-thirds of the net cost of each project (the total cost of acquiring properties and tearing them down in a blighted area, less the price the land brought when sold for development). Subsequently, the Federal Housing Act of 1954, signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and the Federal Housing Act of 1961, signed by President John F. Kennedy, broadened the scope of urban renewal to include rehabilitation and conservation of older houses and neighborhoods as an alternative to total clearance. According to President Kennedy, the 1961 act was intended to achieve three objectives: first, to renew cities and assure sound growth in rapidly expanding metropolitan areas; second, to provide decent housing for all; and third, to encourage a prosperous and efficient construction industry as an essential component of general economic prosperity and growth.<sup>g</sup> Unfortunately, the 1954 and 1961 acts came too late to be considered for the Brittingham and Triangle projects.

Walter Johnson, Madison's planning department director, said, "Following enactment of the 1949 Federal Housing Law and completion of the 1950 Housing Census, we evaluated housing conditions in Madison and determined that one area in the city had an inordinate number of poor or substandard housing units. We felt the block next to Brittingham Park would make a good pilot project. In 1954 a proposal was made to the City Council and the United States Housing and Home Finance Agency for a redevelopment project in that block."<sup>h</sup>

***West Washington Avenue  
businesses***

*Jerry Licari's Spot Tavern,  
767-771*

*Borden's Garage, 765-769*

*Zack Trotter's Tuxedo Café,  
763*



***Views of the Bush before urban renewal***

*(Above) 15 & 19 Bay View Court*

*(Below) 715 - 723 West Washington Avenue*

*(Right) Joe Licari Tire Company, corner of West Main Street and  
West Washington Avenue. Photo taken by Angus McVicar on July  
2, 1936.*

*WHS image ID 4119*



The block, 7.46 acres in size, contained 28 residential and nine commercial structures. Of these 37 buildings, 92 percent of the residential and 66 percent of the commercial were considered substandard. The 1950 housing census listed 69 dwelling units, only 15 of which were owner-occupied. A physical survey of the area revealed a substantial number of dilapidated and deteriorated buildings and non-conforming land use. An occupancy survey showed inadequate sanitary facilities and overcrowding. Thirty-two families (25 white and seven non-white), two individuals, and seven businesses were targeted for relocation.

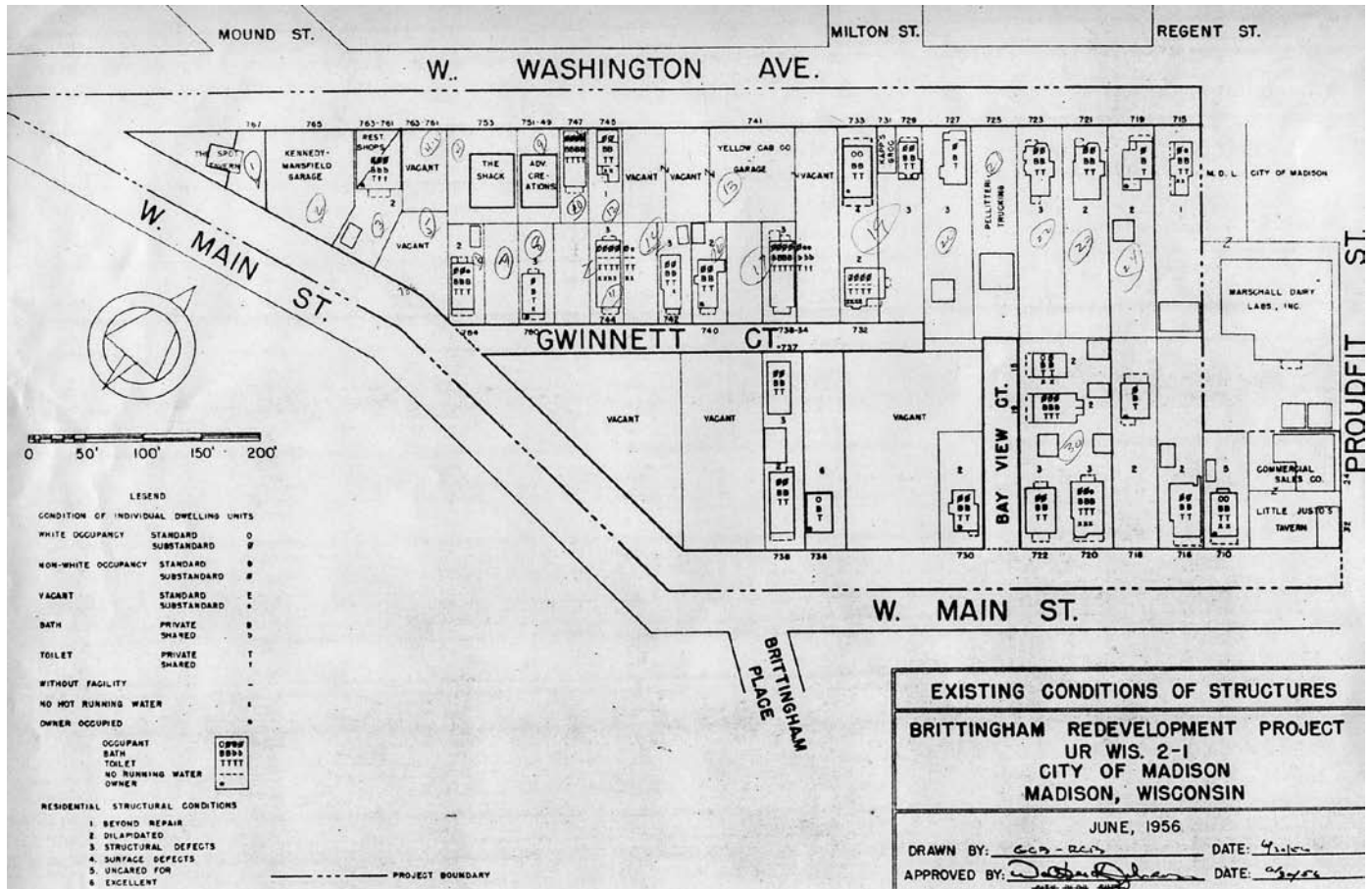
Flood control along Monona Bay and Brittingham Park, as well as widening West Washington Avenue, were also included in the project. Final approval of the Brittingham urban renewal plan was received in December 1956. Land acquisition and clearing began in 1957 under the direction of the City Plan Department.

The Brittingham project was well under way in 1958 when it was slowed by a Milwaukee County Circuit Court ruling that Milwaukee could not exercise the right of eminent domain to acquire property for its urban renewal projects without first having a jury trial to show the need for taking the land. The Wisconsin legislature rapidly responded by enacting the *Blight Elimination and Slum Clearance Act*.<sup>i</sup> This gave Wisconsin cities the right to create redevelopment authorities empowered to condemn property without a jury verdict. The Madison Redevelopment Authority (MRA) was created by a unanimous vote of the Madison Common Council on July 10, 1958. In November, a one million dollar bond issue to cover the city's share of the cost of urban renewal was approved by a vote of 16,784 to 11,165. However, the state law was subsequently challenged in *Redevelopment Authority of the City of Madison v. Joseph and Catherine Canepa*.<sup>j</sup> The section of the law on condemnation was declared unconstitutional (though creation of local redevelopment authorities was affirmed) by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in June 1959. Finally, in 1961, an amendment to the Wisconsin Constitution was adopted to allow condemnation to proceed without a verdict of necessity.

In the meantime, land acquisition in the Brittingham project area by the MRA continued. Two appraisals were obtained for each property, and the city either negotiated a purchase price somewhere between the two or used the condemnation process if an agreement could not be reached. After months of negotiation, Zach Trotter's Tuxedo Café at 763 West Washington Avenue, and Licari's Spot Tavern at 767 West Washington Avenue,<sup>k</sup> were the last properties acquired.

The Brittingham Project was completed in 1961 after the land was sold to private developers. Fisher and Fischer Builders, Inc., built a small office building along Proudfit Street. Sampson Enterprises, Inc. constructed Sampson Plaza (now called Parkview), consisting of 10 three-story apartment buildings with elevators, parking under each building, and an outdoor swimming pool. Ground was broken in January 1963, and the first occupants moved in during the winter of 1963-64. The complex contained 150 units, including efficiencies and one- and two-bedroom apartments. Monthly rents ranged from \$125 to \$170, a price out





*Survey of conditions of structures in the Brittingham redevelopment project area, June 1956*

of reach for most of the people who had been displaced by the project. Those who could afford the rents had already been relocated elsewhere and were reluctant to move again.

When the Brittingham project ended in 1967, it had cost the city \$674,000. It was the state's first totally completed urban renewal project.

“It was on the basis and experience (with Brittingham) that the city felt it could pretty well evaluate whether further urban renewal projects should be undertaken and it was decided to go ahead with the Triangle project,” explained City Planning Director Walter Johnson.<sup>1</sup> The Triangle project was much larger than the Brittingham project and the problems, especially with relocation of displaced individuals, were considerably greater. Final federal approval called for two-thirds of the area to be developed for apartments and one-third for commercial and public uses. The land was

ultimately zoned for a shopping center, medical center, and high-rise and garden apartments. Widening and realigning Regent Street with Proudfit Street was also part of the project.

The Triangle consisted of 52.5 acres of land and 267 structures, containing 436 dwelling units and 42 businesses. The 1,155 individuals living in the area were comprised of 301 families and 135 unrelated individuals, generally roomers or students. A survey conducted by Neighborhood House in fall 1960 found that the residents of the Triangle were predominately white, with people of other races living among them. About one-third of the units were occupied by persons who had lived there for one year or less, mostly students, young families, and Black Truax airfield personnel. Another third were occupied by persons who had lived in the Triangle more than 10 years. These long-term residents were largely middle-aged or elderly, and often depended on rental income from a flat or room in their building for part or all of their income. Most families were small (two to



*Roger Rupnow pointing to the newly erected Brittingham Redevelopment Project sign during a snow flurry, March 1957.*

five members), but there were a significant number of large families with six to 15 members. Family incomes were low; 95 reported incomes of \$5,000 or less, and 29 between \$5,000 and \$9,000. There were 64 known public assistance cases, composed of 40 families and 24 individuals.<sup>m</sup>

The booklet *Triangle Redevelopment & You*, published by the MRA in 1959, indicated that “a number of buildings in good condition will be left undisturbed,” raising the hopes of some owners that their homes would be saved. On the same page the booklet went on to say that “a considerable number of those which are in good condition but which do not fit in with the new land use plans for the area will have to be removed.”<sup>n</sup> This qualifying statement proved to be the overriding factor. In fact, as early as 1958, Eugene Gangstad, a community planner in the Renewal Planning Section of the Madison Planning Department, built a scale model of the Triangle Urban Renewal Area. It was created to suggest to the electorate, as they prepared for the November 11, 1958 vote on the million dollar redevelopment bond issue, what the area could look like with removal of all existing buildings and all new construction.<sup>o</sup>

Property acquisition by the MRA started in 1960. Again, two appraisals were obtained, but this time it

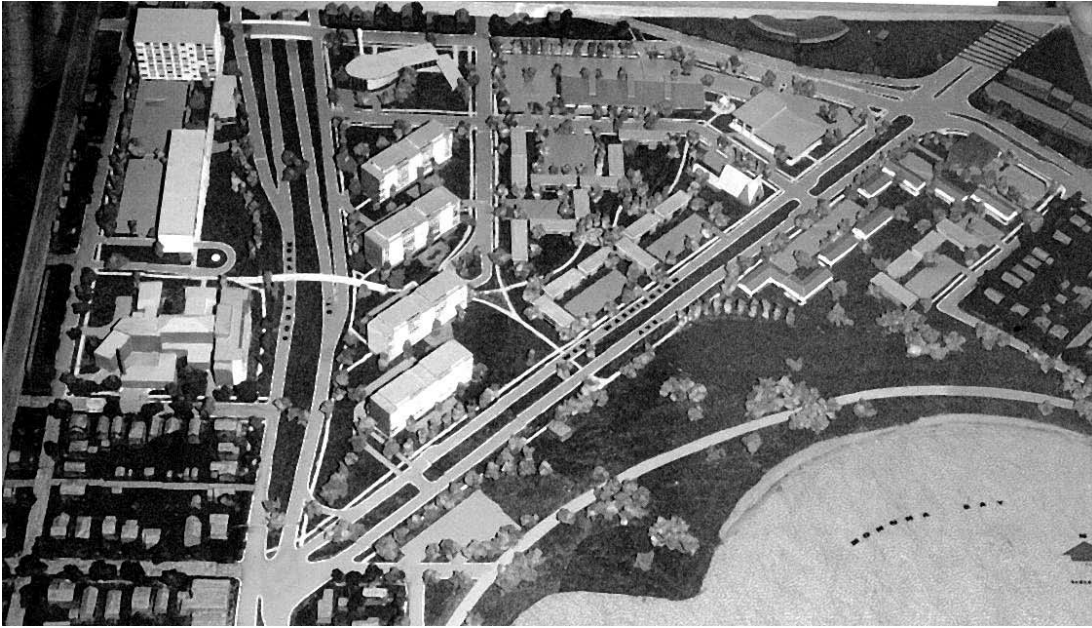
was decided that the owner would be offered the higher appraisal amount if the two were within 15% of each other. If the offer wasn’t accepted within approximately six months, the MRA used its powers of condemnation to obtain the property. In addition, families could receive up to \$200 for actual moving costs and losses suffered during relocation. There was dissatisfaction with the prices offered by the MRA after it was rumored that other city departments and the UW were offering higher prices for properties they wanted to acquire elsewhere in the city.

The first house in the Triangle was torn down on January 16, 1962, at 15 South Murray Street. The last was demolished in 1964. In an effort to save some of the houses, a City Council resolution was proposed in 1963

requiring the MRA “to offer for sale properties to be cleared” so that they could be moved to other locations, but it was opposed by the MRA and defeated.<sup>p</sup> Only one commercial building, a Glidden paint store, was moved, from 911 to 1024 Regent Street.<sup>q</sup>

At the time of the Brittingham and Triangle projects, available replacement housing in Madison was in appallingly short supply, particularly for low-income elderly, minorities, and large families. The only public housing in Madison at the time consisted of 150 temporary units in the old Truax barracks and 120 permanent units, also at Truax, both of which were primarily for veterans. The Madison Housing Authority (MHA) had identified the need for 300 units in an August 1949 survey.<sup>r</sup> However, opponents of public housing, primarily realtors, succeeded in putting the following question to a referendum vote in November 1950: “Resolved, that the City of Madison shall not execute any contract or agreement with the Housing Authority of the City of Madison for the construction of dwellings which are to be free from general property taxes assessed by the City of Madison.” The wording came from material distributed by a national realtors’ lobbying group. It required those who favored public housing to vote “no.” The referendum failed by about 1,500 votes out of

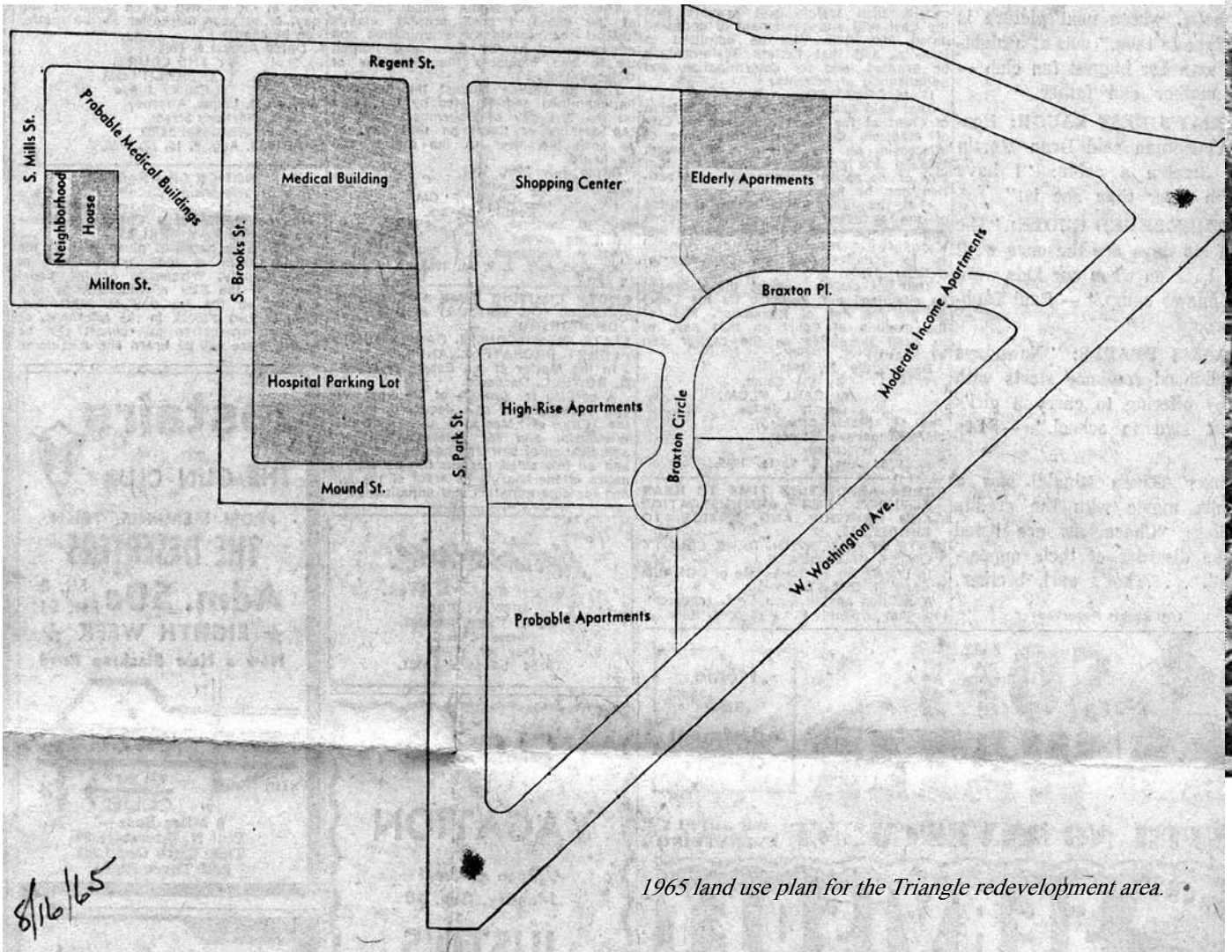




*(Left) A model built by Gene Gangstad of the City Planning Department staff in 1958, to illustrate what the Triangle redevelopment area might look like.*

*Photo courtesy Gene Gangstad*

*(Right) Originally built as a furniture store by Louis Perlman about 1911, this building served the Bush as Neighborhood House from 1921 to 1963.*



*1965 land use plan for the Triangle redevelopment area.*

30,000 cast.

In 1959, the Madison Branch of the NAACP conducted a study of 200 Black families in Madison. It found that all but 30 households were located in so-called "traditional (i.e. minority) neighborhoods:" 70 in South Madison, 80 in the Greenbush, and 20 on the near east side (East Dayton and East Mifflin near North Blount streets). Black home ownership had increased since the 1950 census, but very few new owners were located outside the traditional neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup>



A few long-time residents began to move out of the Triangle area as early as 1958, after the MRA made a structural and occupancy survey justifying an urban renewal application. These were economically self-sufficient families, with enough income and a good credit rating, to be able to relocate to other parts of the city without much difficulty. The Federal Housing Act of 1960 offered special mortgage assistance through its Section 221 and 222 programs for displaced families to buy or build new homes. One of the developers who took advantage of this option was Jacob Sinaiko (1898-1965), who had experience building low cost housing in South Madison. He built seven houses in the Rosedale Addition near Seminole Highway.<sup>1</sup> As home owners began to leave the Triangle, many of the buildings that remained were inexpensive rental properties, providing temporary low-cost housing for students, low-income families, and especially minorities who were denied housing in other parts of the city.

As the Brittingham project proceeded, Neighborhood House, 768 West Washington Avenue, which had been serving the Bush since 1916, encouraged the city to create public and/or cooperative housing on the Brittingham project site. The Brittingham Park Civic Council, made up of local residents, businessmen, and organization representatives, believed such housing would facilitate the relocation of low and moderate income families and the elderly from the Triangle Urban Renewal Project which was getting underway. It appeared to be a logical, perhaps an ideal solution, particularly since the Brittingham Project was located directly across West Washington Avenue from the Triangle.

However, this idea was not acted on for several reasons. Urban renewal was designed to create land upon which private enterprise would build new housing and thus increase the city's tax base. The MRA had no authority to build public housing. The MHA did, but it was persuaded to scatter public housing throughout the city rather than concentrate it in one location.

As part of the urban renewal application process, the Madison Planning Department and MRA created a Relocation Plan.<sup>u</sup> In spite of common knowledge of a tight housing market in Madison<sup>v</sup> and the limited amount of conveniently located, decent, safe, and sanitary low-rent housing, Roger Rupnow, director of the MRA, assured the City Council and the federal government that relocation would not be a problem. At the time I, Florence Zmudzinski, was serving as the MRA housing relocation supervisor. After working with displaced residents for only a few months, my staff and I learned otherwise. In August 1962, I submitted a report to the MRA Board detailing the need for greater support and leadership from both private and public sectors of the community in order to achieve the goal of standard housing, especially for low income and

minority families. It was a highly critical report regarding the lack of existing housing resources and no prospect for building new units for the most needy. I described Madison as a city that was unprepared to expedite relocation, misinformed as to the availability of low income housing, and generally hostile toward the low income and minority people being displaced.<sup>w</sup> Following the release of my report, the difficulties encountered in the acquisition of properties and relocation of families displaced by the Triangle Project received considerable media attention.<sup>x</sup>

Finally, the City Council authorized 160 units of low cost public housing. The MRA agreed to allow construction of 60 of those units as public housing for the elderly on the Triangle Urban Renewal site. The MHA deciding to build 100 units elsewhere - 36 units at its



*"Demolition of buildings bought by the city under the Brittingham redevelopment program became strikingly evident when this brick apartment house on West Washington Avenue started to disintegrate under the wreckers' hammers. Here a crewman of the Allen Wrecking Company operates a power shovel to pick up debris while his helper and a bystander look on."*

*Wisconsin State Journal, February 15, 1958*



Truax Field site (it already had 100 units there), 36 units at Webb Street on the east side, and 28 units scattered in South Madison. But none of these were ready in time for relocation of Brittingham residents.

Legal and real estate advice were not readily available to residents or to the housing relocation staff. Acquisition and demolition were proceeding without coordinating with the people affected. Residents who remained on site were surrounded by rubble where familiar houses had been only days before. Poverty and race were not taken into account in the projects' planning stages. Many feared that blight would follow the people who were being relocated.

The primary resource for finding housing was daily newspaper rental listings, but the properties listed were often substandard. There was a great need for immediate inspection of advertised units by city building inspectors to determine condition, because individuals could only be referred to units approved as "standard." With a 1.5% vacancy rate at the time, sound units were rented in a matter of days. Inspectors' reports usually came in to the relocation office after the units had been rented to people other than those being relocated.

Most people assumed that there was no racial discrimination in housing in Madison. On the contrary, it was not unusual to have doors slammed shut or to be told that a unit had just been rented



*Florence Zmudzinski speaking at the Memorial Union in December, 1962, to the UW Student Council on Civil Rights, about the Triangle relocation efforts.*

*Daily Cardinal, December 6, 1962*



*Groundbreaking ceremony, August 1, 1963, at 32 Proudfit Street on the Brittingham redevelopment site, for an office building to house a Sentry Insurance agency. (Left to right): Sol Levin, city planning department staff member; Roger Rupnow, executive director of MRA; John Fischer of the building firm; Gene Gangstad, Rupnow's assistant; Mayor Henry E. Reynolds, with the pick; Arnold Gehner, member of MRA; Leo Cooper, with shovel, Ninth Ward alderman; and E.H. Lemmenes, branch manager of Sentry Insurance.*

*Photo courtesy Gene Gangstad*

when relocation staff responded to a listing accompanied by a Black person.

Relocation of individuals and families involved more than locating units and making referrals. Relocation staff acted as a mediator in many cases - negotiating with landlords, calling relatives together for discussions, and contacting public and private agencies to find the best resolution when a particular situation was the concern of many, but the person or family being relocated had difficulty making a decision.

Madison was one of many cities in the country to embrace urban renewal. At the time, most major cities were attempting to revitalize blighted areas with varying degrees of success. In Madison, groups were actively involved both for and against urban renewal. The Mayor's Citizens Advisory Committee was the city's official urban renewal, citizen participation agency.<sup>y</sup> The League of Women Voters, the Madison Citizens for Fair Housing, the Local Committee on Urban Renewal, Capital City Citizens, and the Housing, Relocation & Welfare Study Committee,<sup>z</sup> as well as various city-wide religious organizations, produced studies, articles and position papers. Students at the University of Wisconsin wrote theses on the subject. Groups opposed to urban renewal held rallies in Brittingham Park. One of these, the Madison Home Owners Association, was formed in August 1963 by residents of the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> wards, which comprised the Triangle and the area south of University Avenue being considered for the General Neighborhood Renewal Program (GNRP). Their goal was to discontinue urban renewal and dissolve the MRA. At a picnic that fall they hung the MRA in effigy. They spearheaded a referendum to disband the MRA on the April 1964 ballot, but it lost by 367 votes out of 39,000.

The spring 1963 mayoral election pitted incumbent Henry Reynolds (who won) against challenger Albert J. McGinnis, chairman of the MRA. Emotions ran high as the community debated not only the future of urban renewal, but also fair housing and equal opportunities for minorities, low cost and/or public housing, and property rights.

Subsequent redevelopment planning by the MRA was directed toward in-fill, rehabilitation, and conservation of housing stock rather than demolition. In November 1964, the *Capital Times* revealed that Roger Rupnow, director of the MRA, and his brother had bought two houses near

## Personal Reactions to Urban Renewal

People displaced from the Triangle urban renewal area voiced a wide range of opinions when surveyed by the housing relocation staff after they had moved.<sup>ak</sup>

*Urban renewal is good, except for the hardship to the elderly. I love my new house and my new neighbors. My husband misses the old people in the Triangle. He misses talking Italian.*

*Urban renewal is good, but not knocking down the good buildings. Here in our new neighborhood all of our neighbors are young, there's none like us.*

*They pushed me out of my house and it just stands there, empty.*

*There were lots of homes that had to go but the church (St. Joseph's) — that's different. My father worked on that building with his own hands. There must have been something the diocese could have done — a new church in the same place — that would have been good.*

*I miss my old neighbors. On my day off, I still go back and visit them.*

*There were some terrible places there but the Church and the Club — without these my father will be lost.*

*I think this has been another effort to push all of the Negroes into South Madison.*

*Urban renewal won't help me because I had the nicest flat in the project, but it's good for others who lived in terrible houses.*

*The Triangle was like the slums, it didn't look nice or anything but I liked it there better, because I knew everybody and lived there all my life.*

*Urban renewal is good because the neighborhood was so rundown. Here we have a nice building, there's more space, a nice safe yard for the kids, we're near schools and stores. I really like it.*

*I'm 600% for what is being done. I can't understand why anyone is against it. The neighborhood had changed and wasn't a good place for anyone to live. We have a better house, better neighbors, we're a little pinched financially, but it's well worth it.*



the proposed UW general neighborhood renewal plan area. This finding of possible conflict of interest, along with years of general criticism of his administration of urban renewal, led to Roger Rupnow's resignation.<sup>aa</sup> Sol Levin was appointed MRA director.<sup>ab</sup>

In July 1961, the Madison City Council committed the city to construct 160 units of public housing. Sixty units were set aside for the elderly in the Triangle (Gay Braxton Apartments), and 100 other units throughout the city were targeted for families. Rents in these units were pegged at 25% of income for eligible families. Former Triangle residents who were eligible were given first priority when the units became available.

Josephine Brasci's thirty-seven year old grape vine was dug up and successfully transplanted from her yard in the Triangle to the area near her apartment when she moved into one of the public housing units for the elderly in the Triangle.<sup>ac</sup> Another long time elderly resident was relocated into an apartment on the exact same spot where her old home had stood.

The Madison City Council passed the Equal Opportunities Ordinance in December 1963 after more than 2,000 residents signed a petition sponsored by the Madison Citizens for Fair Housing. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was created by the new city ordinance to hear and act upon allegations of discrimination in both housing and employment.<sup>ad</sup>

The Black residents of the Triangle were relocated into



*Gay Braxton Apartments dedication ceremony, June 24, 1965. Attorney (and future Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice) Roland Day, at the microphone, was master of ceremonies. The vintage Ford in the background was owned by Alphonzi Chiovaro, a 90-year-old fisherman, who was provided space at the Gay Braxton Apartments to park his vehicle while he lived there. Miss Gay Braxton was the head of the Neighborhood House in the Triangle area for nearly 40 years.*

*Photo by Edwin Stein used courtesy of the Wisconsin State Journal*

20 of the 23 wards in the city, although most moved into the traditional neighborhoods.

The federal housing acts made possible the construction of low- and moderate-cost housing under private auspices. In the Triangle, the Bayview Foundation, created by representatives from several near west side neighborhoods, built 102 units.

The U.S. Air Force constructed “Capehart Housing” near Sun Prairie in 1963. Named for U.S. Senator Homer Capehart (R-IN), the law allowed private developers to build housing for military families and turn the management of and mortgage on the property over to the Defense Department. Truax servicemen displaced from the Triangle were given preference in these units.<sup>ae</sup>

The City Council passed the “Minimum Housing and Property Maintenance Code” in 1966, which requires both private home owners and apartment owners to maintain their buildings.<sup>af</sup>

The Triangle Urban Renewal area was eventually redeveloped to include 339 units of public housing for families, the elderly, and the handicapped. In addition, there are 102 rent-subsidized townhouses managed by the Bayview Foundation. The expansion of Madison General Hospital and the other medical facilities that were built in the Triangle<sup>ag</sup> were sought-after tenants from the beginning of the project. The final parcel was sold in 1977 to Midway Foods, which moved from 820 South Park Street into the Triangle to provide a grocery store for the residents.

The South Madison Rehabilitation Project affected a 71-acre area east of South Park Street, from Wingra Creek to Buick Street, between 1962 and 1969. The project included spot clearance and redevelopment of land for 24 single family houses and two duplexes. Sixty-six houses were rehabilitated. Three multi-family apartment complexes totaling 106 units, two commercial structures, and a day care center were built. Streets were paved, sidewalks and street lights were installed, storm and sanitary sewers were built, and trees were planted. Penn Park was redeveloped, and a tot-lot was built on Fisher Street.<sup>ah</sup>

The General Neighborhood Renewal Plan (GNRP) was a planning project designed to determine what kind of conservation/renewal/rehabilitation projects would be feasible in a very large area between University Avenue and Regent Street, from Camp Randall on the west to Frances Street on the east. The GNRP ran into a great deal of opposition and was never fully implemented. However, over time, portions of this area have been redeveloped by the university and the city.<sup>ai</sup>

The University Avenue Project involved the 600 through 900 blocks of University Avenue and West Johnson Street. The building occupants were relocated, the land was cleared and sold to the UW, and the Lake Park Corporation was formed by the former business owners, who built the University Square shopping center on part of the site.<sup>aj</sup>

After 40 years the people who lived in the Bush continue to maintain close friendships. Festa Italia, held annually, and other informal get-togethers keep the spirit of the old neighborhood alive. Three monuments have been erected on the Triangle site to honor the neighborhood. The first is a memorial plaque and map attached to a granite boulder at the corner of Regent and Park streets. It was placed there on July 4, 1982, through the efforts of Nick Stassi, Frank Rane, and other former residents. On October 27, 1991, the Dane County Historical Society’s



*“MRA ‘Hanged’ in Protest... Sp  
(Brittingham and Triangle) neighbor  
Authority ‘misrepresented both to  
available’ when propo*



Speaking at a picnic at Brittingham Park attended by 100 displaced residents of the hood, Mrs. Fran Remeika, a former realtor, charged that the Madison Redevelopment to the federal government and to the city the amount of low cost housing which was erty in the area was condemned." *The Capital Times*, August 26, 1963

*Photo by Tom Barlet used courtesy of The Capital Times*

Greenbush marker was dedicated at the corner of West Washington Avenue and Park Street. Catherine Tripalin Murray, president of the Italian-American Women's Club, was instrumental in the wording and placement of the marker. The most recent effort is a public sculpture called "The Spirit of Greenbush," created by Antonio Testolin, located at the corner of Regent and North Murray streets. It was created with the help of a series of interviews with former residents and several community meetings, and includes 33 photographs of the old neighborhood.

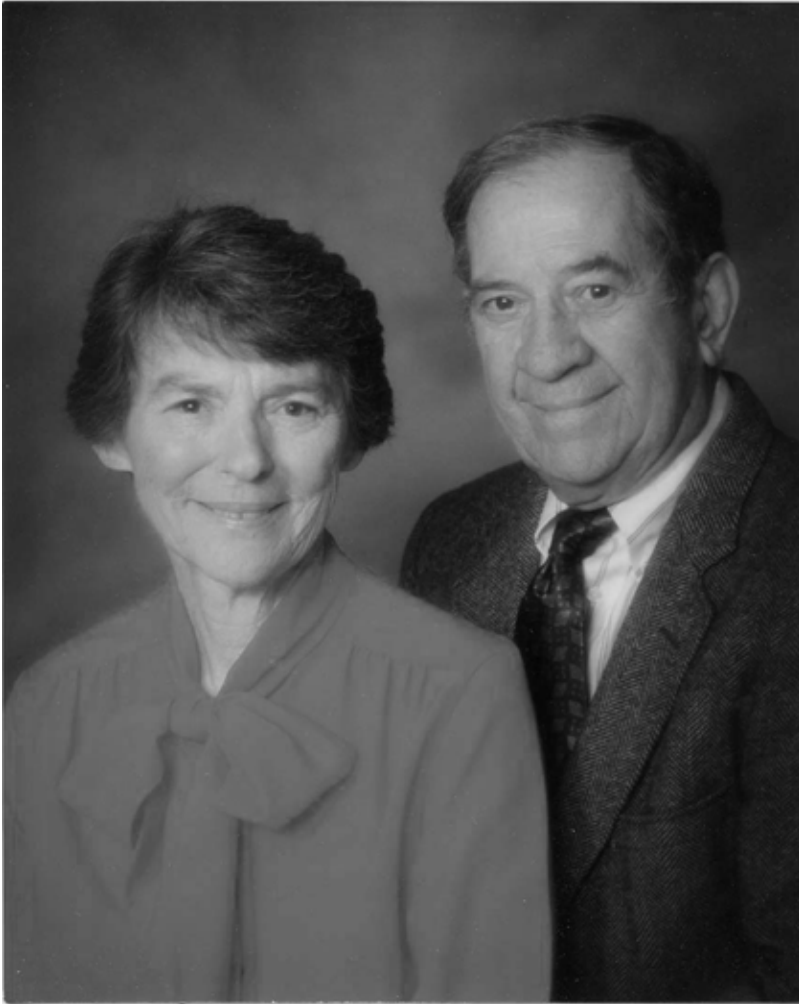
### Conclusions from the October 1963 *Relocation* *Report*

*Moving has been very difficult for many people. Moving for any reason: fire, death, change of job, sale of the property by the landlord, is always difficult for some people. It has been more difficult here because of the inevitability of the move and the finality of the destruction of the ethnic community.*

*The goal of urban renewal is to 'revitalize our city areas which are decaying, and to prevent good areas from starting to decay.' The Brittingham and Triangle areas were in a state of decay and urban renewal spot-lighted the problems. Since these projects, there has been far more awareness of decay and the dangers of possible decay.*

*The full opportunity of occupying housing that is decent, safe, and sanitary; housing within their financial means and in reasonably convenient locations had been less than a total reality for all. There has not been full opportunity for the minority groups since only a small percentage of the available units are open to them. There are relatively few units available for rent to large families.*

*The Redevelopment Authority has been the object of frustration, fear and disappointment to the residents. It has also been held responsible for the many social problems found in the area. The problems were there and have been there for many years; urban renewal has only brought them to the attention of the citizens and city agencies.*



*Florence and Chester Zmudzinski on their 50th wedding anniversary.*

*The author could not have written this article without the encouragement of Margaret Bogue, and the word processing and photo scanning of Mary Celnicker, Carol and Iza Goroff, and Jane and Donald Neumeyer. Ann Waidelich provided editorial assistance and historical research. The article expands upon an oral history interview Historic Madison conducted with me on January 7, 1984, and utilizes Madison Redevelopment Authority urban renewal project records in the Wisconsin Historical Society archives.*

*This article is dedicated to Walter Johnson (1919 — 2005), Madison's first city planning director (1946 — 1960), who hired me to be the relocation supervisor, and to his first wife Dorothy, who died in 1979, whom I met in graduate school and who was the only person I knew in Madison when Chester and I moved here in 1949.*

## About the author

Florence Zmudzinski is a retired social worker. She earned a Bachelor's degree in 1939 from Penn State University and a Master's degree in social work from the University of Pittsburgh in 1942. She married fellow social work student Chester Zmudzinski in 1941. One of her many positions before coming to Madison was with the International Institute of Minnesota, in St. Paul, working to relocate Japanese-Americans from World War II detention camps. In 1949 Chester was named director of Neighborhood House in the Greenbush and the East Side Youth Activities Council, which became the Atwood Neighborhood Center. He developed the South Madison and Wilmar neighborhood centers, then was a school social worker from 1971 until 1985, when he retired. Florence volunteered at Neighborhood House, then served as field work supervisor for the UW School of Social Work from 1955 to 1960. Walter Johnson, Madison's city planning director, whose wife Dorothy had been a fellow student of Florence's at the University of Pittsburgh, asked Florence to apply for the job of relocation officer for the Brittingham Urban Renewal Project. She continued in that position with the Triangle Urban Renewal Project. Florence supervised Elizabeth Pendleton and two part-time social work students, Elizabeth Oxnem Keena and Emily Morgan, relocating people displaced by urban renewal from 1960 to 1965. She was then a social worker with the Madison Metropolitan School District from 1966 until she retired in 1986. The Zmudzinskis have two children. Chester died in 2001. Florence is still active in community affairs with the League of Women Voters of Dane County, serving on the City of Madison Housing Committee since 1998.



## Notes

a “A Young Immigrant ... Made Greenbush,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 9, 1916.

b St. Joseph’s Catholic Church was established in 1916. The new church at 1905 West Beltline Highway was dedicated on September 10, 1961. The last mass in old St. Joseph’s was said on July 28, 1963. The school building was torn down in August and the church building on November 5, 1963. The bell was sold to Taliesin, and the bell for the new church came from St. Kilian’s Church in Hartford.

Longfellow School, 210 South Brooks Street, served the neighborhood from 1858 to 1980. The current building, which now belongs to Meriter Hospital, was erected in 1919.

The Italian Methodist Church was founded in 1919. The church was built in 1922 at the corner of South Lake and Milton streets. It merged with the South Madison Methodist Church in 1962 to form Calvary United Methodist Church, located at 633 West Badger Road. In 1997 the church dissolved due to low attendance.

The Italian Workmen’s Club was formed in 1911 as a mutual benefit organization. In 1922 the clubhouse was built at 914 Regent Street. It is also the home of the Italian American Women’s Club.

Adas Jeshurun Synagogue, 725 Mound Street, was founded as an Orthodox congregation in 1939. When urban renewal forced it to close on April 29, 1962, the Torah was carried to Beth Israel Center. Another synagogue, Agudas Achim, 827 Mound Street, served the Greenbush from 1906 to 1949. The building was sold to the Knights of Pythias when the congregation moved into the new Beth Israel Center at 1406 Mound Street.

Neighborhood House, 768 West Washington Avenue, was founded in 1916 as a settlement house for Italian immigrants and evolved into a multi-faceted community center. Gay Braxton was its director from 1921 to 1949, followed by Chester Zmudzinski from 1949 to 1970. It was relocated to 29 South Mills Street as a result of urban renewal.

c Some of the businesses included Schiro’s Tavern, Tony Urso’s West Side Palm Garden, Troia’s Meat Market and Grocery, White Front Grocery, Stone Front Tavern, Gerke’s Junk Yard, Stein’s Meat Market, Reea’s Grocery Store & Meat Market, Genna’s Barber Shop, and The Nibble-Nook. See Heggland, Tim, *The Greenbush-Vilas Neighborhood: A Walking Tour, Madison Landmarks Commission*, 1991; Goroff, Carol and Iza and Murray, Catherine

Tripalin, *The Spirit of Greenbush*, 2000; Dinsmore, Antonina Paratore, *In Greenbush*, 2004.

d “Modern Tenement Occupied by Italian Laborers and Families,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 14, 1910.

e “Slums of Large Cities No Worse than Madison’s,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 20, 1916.

f “Civics Club Got Results with Greenbush,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 4, 1987.

g Housing Act of 1949 (63 Stat. 413, PL 171), Housing Act of 1954 (68 Stat. 590, PL 560), Housing Act of 1961 (75 Stat. 149, PL 87-70).

h “Renewal Areas Once Held Many Poor Buildings,” *The Capital Times*, March 20, 1964. Walter Johnson was the city’s first planning director. He was trained as an architect and lawyer and served the city from 1946 through 1958, leaving to become director of the Wisconsin Department of Resource Development. Kenneth Clark was promoted to planning director in 1960 and served until 1969. He had a degree in landscape architecture and had worked for the Rockford Housing Authority.

i 1958-1959 Laws of Wisconsin, Special Session, 1958 c.3., a.k.a. Wisconsin Statutes Sec. 66.1337.

j 7 Wis. 2d 643 (1959).

k Zach Trotter’s Tuxedo Cafe relocated, after several attempts to find an acceptable location were thwarted by city officials, to 1616 Beld Street. He died on January 2, 1966, at the age of 72. His wife Maxine continued the business. It later it became Mr. P’s Place, owned by Roger Parks and his son Eugene.

Jerry Licari relocated the tavern to 1405 Emil Street from the corner of West Washington and West Main streets. His father Joe had opened a tire business in the building in the 1930s. Jerry retired in 1983, but the bar still exists.

l “Renewal Areas Once Held Many Poor Buildings,” *The Capital Times*, March 20, 1964.

m Neighborhood House “Survey,” October, 1960.

n Madison Redevelopment Authority “Triangle Redevelopment and You,” 1959, p.8.

o Eugene Gangstad became deputy director of the Redevelopment Authority and, in 1969, assistant director of the Department of Housing and Community Development. He retired in 1989 from the Housing Operations Section of the Madison Planning Department.

p Madison Common Council, Resolution No. 5673, File No. 4614, April 1963.



q The building had been the Glidden Drive-In Paint Center. It was bought by Fred L. Caywood, former owner of Badger Tire Company, located on the site where the building was moved to in March 1965. It housed the UW Department of Meteorology beginning in 1967, and is now the Dean Optical Laboratory.

r Madison Housing Authority, "Supplementary Report on Low-Rent Housing Program for the City of Madison," 1950.

s NAACP, Madison Branch, "Negro Housing in Madison," 1959.

t "Liberal FHA Terms Assist Such Projects as Sinaiko's," *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 25, 1961.

u Madison Planning Department, "Triangle Urban Renewal Area: Project Eligibility and Relocation Report," 1959.

v In 1946 both the *Capital Times* (January 11-17) and the *Wisconsin State Journal* (January 6-11) ran a series of articles concerning the difficulty returning veterans were having obtaining housing. Also, see Madison Housing Authority "General Report on a Housing Condition Survey of Selected Areas in Madison," 1949.

w Zmudzinski, Florence, "Relocation Report to the Madison Redevelopment Authority," August 1962.

x "Relocation Critique Stirs Up Fuss" (first of a series on the Zmudzinski Relocation Report), *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 16, 1962.

y The Mayor's Citizens Advisory Committee was appointed by the mayor to advise him on issues facing the city. It served as the community input agency required by the urban renewal legislation.

z The League of Women Voters of Madison is a non-partisan study group that analyzes issues and publishes reports in an effort to educate voters on local issues.

Madison Citizens for Fair Housing was formed to obtain anti-discrimination legislation. They campaigned house to house and in neighborhood meetings for the passage of Madison's Equal Opportunities Ordinance.

The Local Committee on Urban Renewal was chaired by Chester Zmudzinski, director of Neighborhood House, and composed of representatives from Mr. Zion Church, Italian Workmen's Club, Bersagliare Fraternal Organization, Calvary Methodist Church, NAACP, Adas Jeshurun Congregation, Second Baptist Church, AME Church, Neighborhood House, and the Longfellow PTA.

Capital City Citizens was organized in 1964 by a

small group of 10<sup>th</sup> ward residents discouraged over the deteriorating physical condition of parts of Madison. They supported the principles of urban renewal. They changed their name to Capital Community Citizens when they decided to expand their interests to include urban design and growth problems in all of Dane County.

The Housing, Relocation and Welfare Study Committee was created by the City Council in 1964 as a result of public pressure to stop further urban renewal projects. Its charge was to look into the problems of urban renewal and recommend solutions.

aa Roger Rupnow joined the Madison City Planning Department in 1957 and became the urban renewal coordinator in 1958. When the MRA was created in July 1958 he was appointed its director. After his resignation in 1964, he left the city to become an assistant professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

ab Sol Levin was just 33 years old when he took over as head of the MRA in 1964. In 1968 the staffs of the MRA and the MHA were combined under his direction. He left in 1978 to become a housing and community development consultant. In 1979 the City Council replaced the Madison Redevelopment Authority and the Madison Housing Authority with the Community Development Authority. Sol Levin died in 2002.

ac The grapevine was grown from a rooted cutting Giorgio Brasci may have brought from Sicily when he came to America in 1910. Professor George Kingbeil rooted two cuttings as insurance against the transplant not surviving. Since the transplant survived, one of the cuttings was given to Olbrich Gardens. It now covers a pergola at the entrance to the herb garden. The other cutting was given to J.W. Jung; it is sold through the Jung Seed catalog as "King of the North."

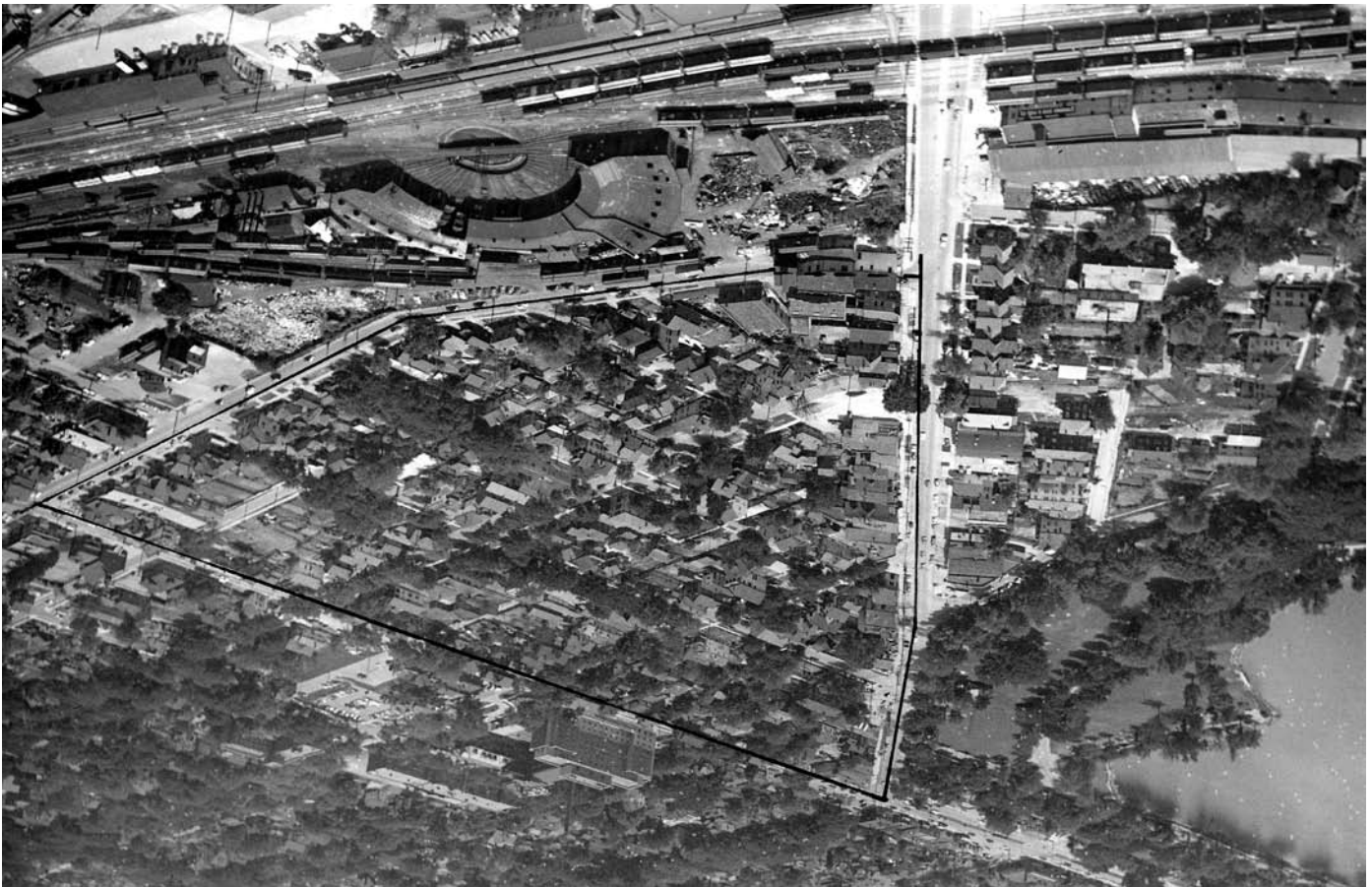
ad Unpaid EOC commissioners handled complaints until 1968 when a full-time director, Reverend James C. Wright, and paid staff were hired. See *Historic Madison: A Journal of the Four Lake Region*, Vol. XVIII, 2003, for three interviews with people involved in promoting the Equal Opportunities Ordinance.

ae Baldwin, William C., "Wherry and Capehart: Army Family Housing Privatization Programs in the 1950s," *Engineer: The Professional Bulletin for Army Engineers*, April 1996, p. 42-44.

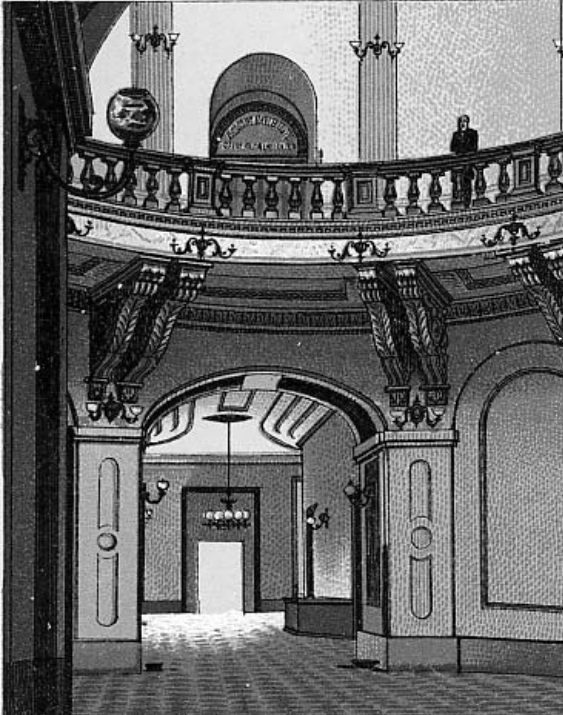
af Madison General Ordinances, Chapter 27.

- ag Oak Park Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, 1 South Park; UW Health, 20 South Park; Madison Medical Center and Davis-Duehr-Dean eye clinic.
- ah Madison Department of Planning and Development, "South Madison Neighborhood Plan," 1980.
- ai Madison Redevelopment Authority, "General Neighborhood Renewal Plan Application: University Renewal Area," Wis. R-21(GN), 1963. amended 1967.
- aj Madison Redevelopment Authority, "University Avenue Urban Renewal Project," Wis. R-26; "Final Project Report Part I: Application for Loan and Grant," 1967; "Part II: Local Project Approval Data," 1968, amended 1987.
- ak Madison Redevelopment Authority, "Triangle Urban Renewal Area (Interim) Relocation Report," October 1963.

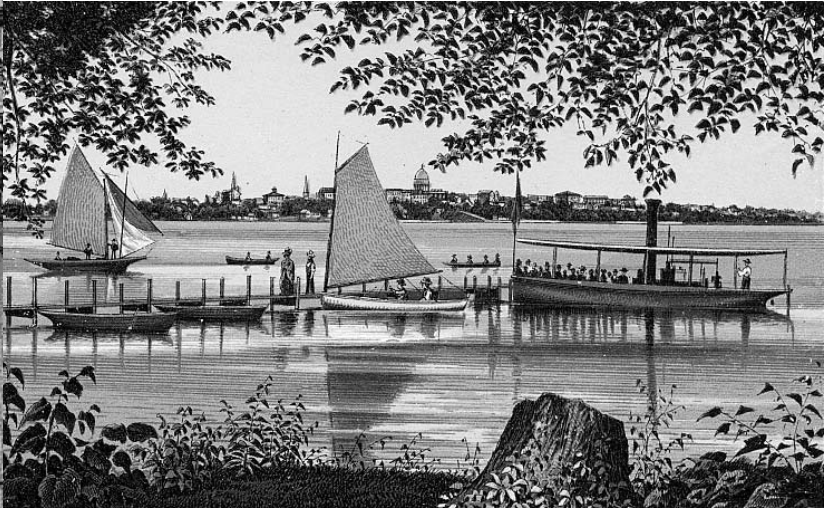
*View of the redevelopment area, looking east up Washington Avenue, with Park Street in the foreground. Monona Bay is to the right. The railroad roundhouse is in the upper left.*



# Madison 1885



These are some of the line drawings from an 1885 album that was donated to Historic Madison several years ago. To see all of the drawings, visit our web site.



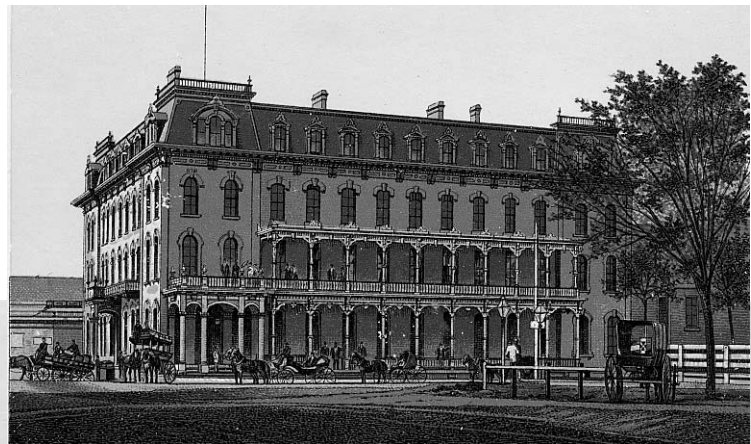
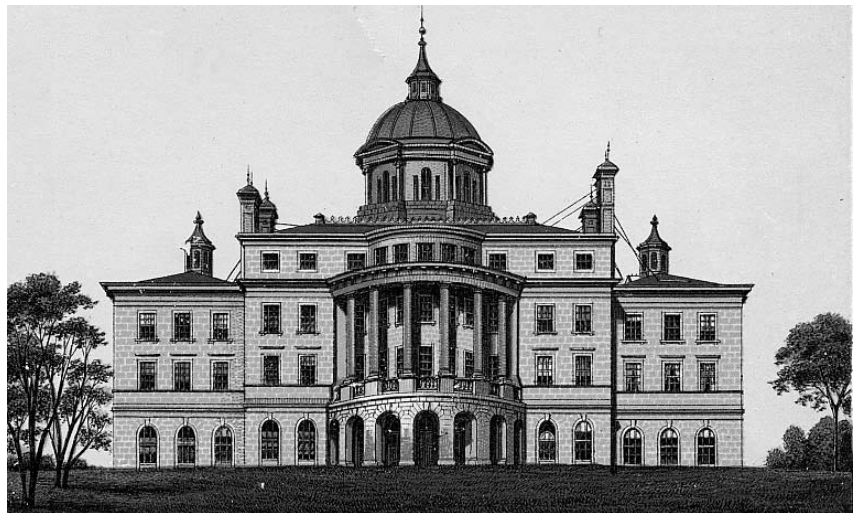
*(Clockwise, this page)*

*Rotunda; Monona Assembly pier; the Capitol; Old Abe*

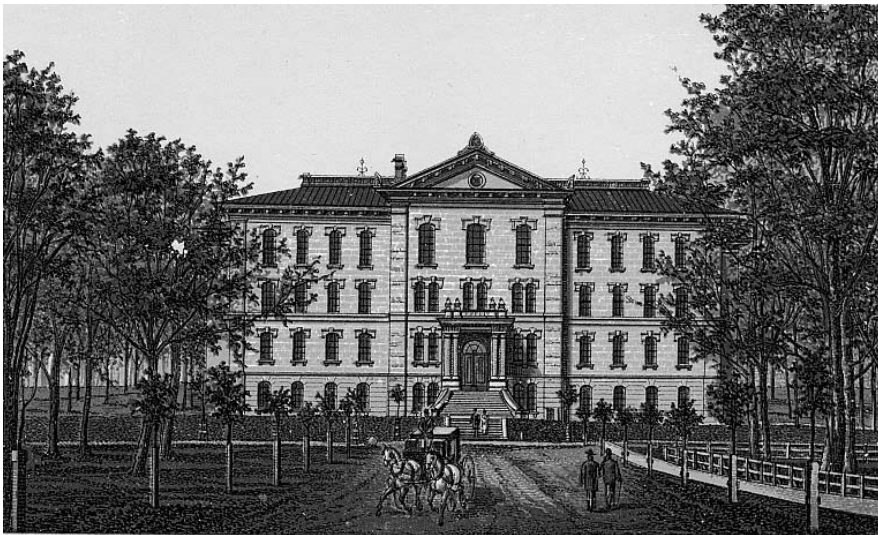
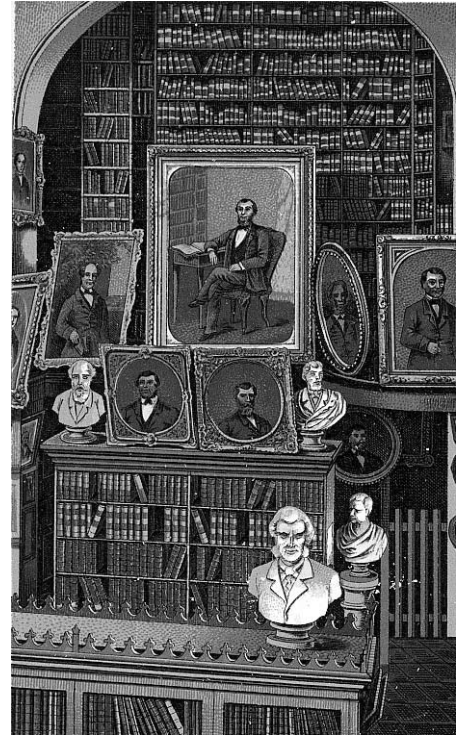
*(Clockwise, opposite page)*

*Music Hall; Bascom Hall; Park Hotel; State Street and University from the Capitol*









*(Clockwise, from top left)*

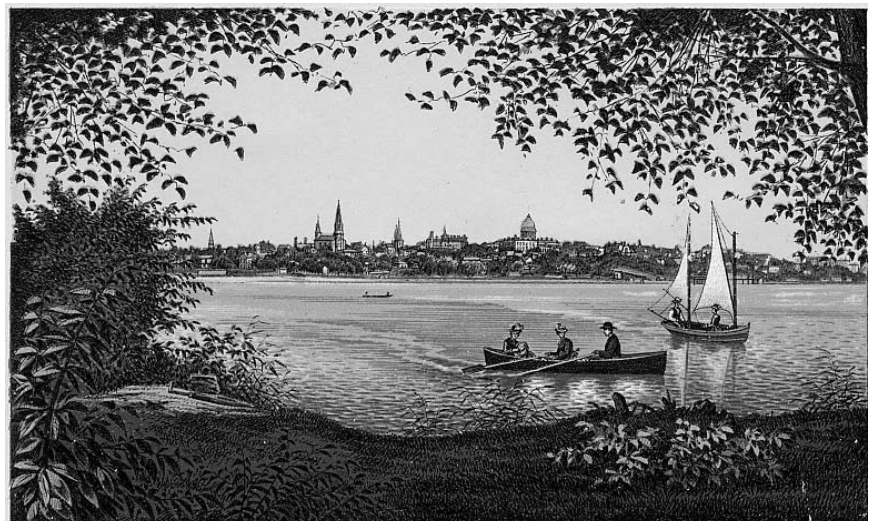
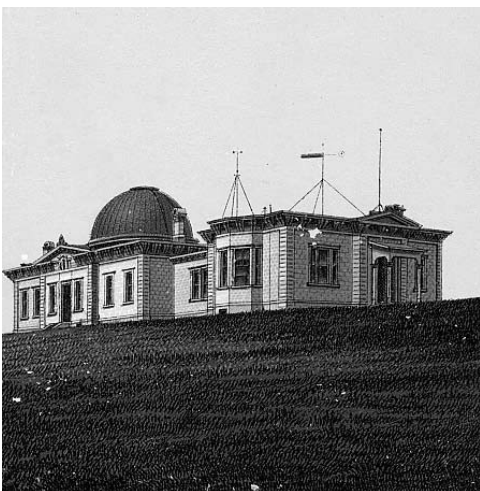
*Wisconsin Avenue from the Capitol*

*Inside the historical library*

*Lake Monona*

*Washburn Observatory*

*Science Hall*







March 7, 2006 is the 150th anniversary of Madison receiving its city charter. Please join Historic Madison as we celebrate this milestone with special events throughout 2006.

### **SURROUNDED BY REALITY**

A play by John Nicholas Schweitzer, commissioned by Historic Madison and presented by the Madison Theatre Guild.

Performances March 17-25, 2006, at the Gerald A. Bartell Community Theatre, and March 30 through April 2, 2006, at the Overture Center.

### **FOREST HILL CEMETERY TOUR**

Visit the graves of the first mayor and first city officers.

April 8, 2006

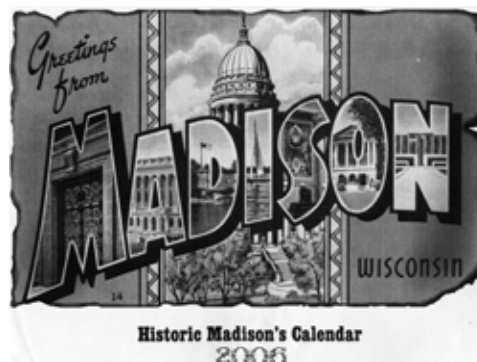
### **FOUNDING FAMILIES REUNION**

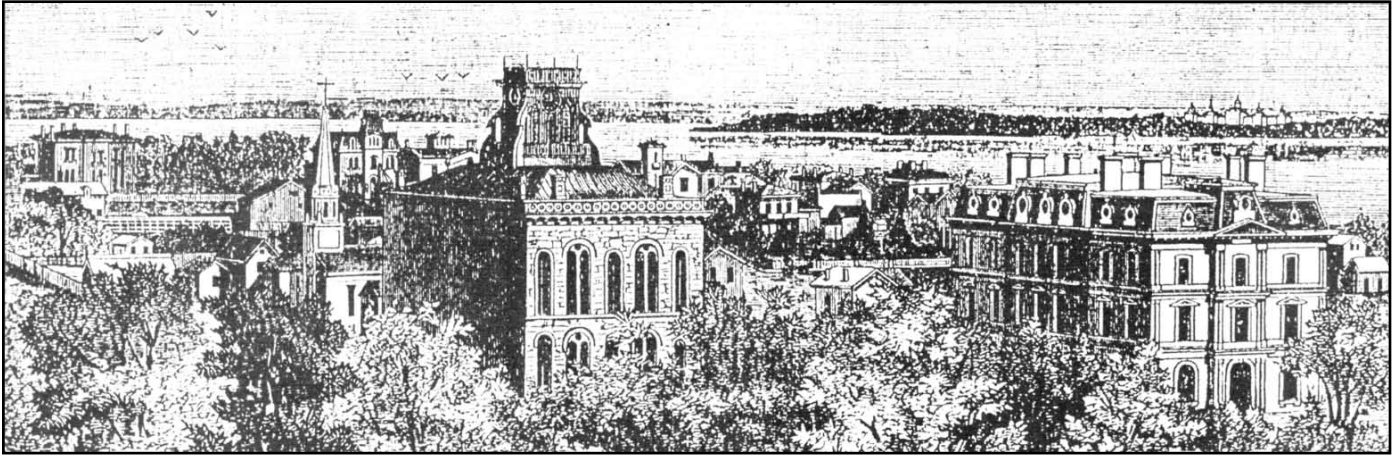
Join descendants of Madison families who settled here prior to the Civil War as part of a community-wide celebration at Monona Terrace.

April 9, 2006

### **HISTORIC MADISON 2006 CALENDAR**

Twelve historic photographs of Madison, along with 12 to 15 monthly historical facts.





## 2005 Board of Directors

*President*

Mark Gajewski

*Vice president*

Beth Holden

*Treasurer*

Nancy Finley

*Secretary*

Peggy Ellerkamp

Lyle Anderson

Thomas Boykoff

Barbara Essock

Bruce Gregg

Ron Porter

Patty Putnam

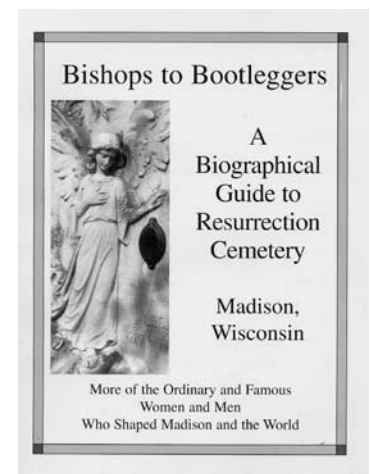
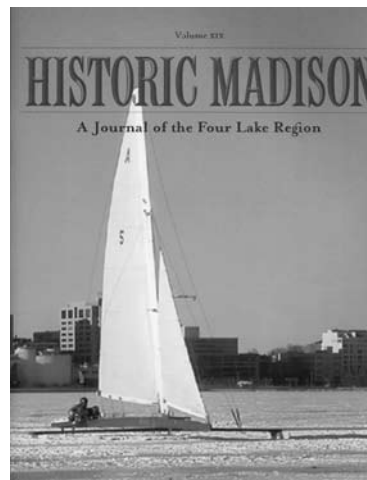
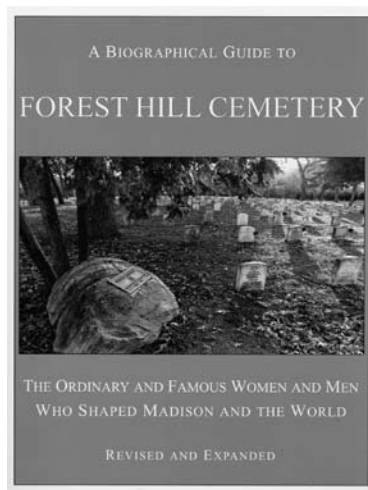
Jim Stickels

Patty Struck

Barbara Underwood

Jerre Ziebelman

## Historic Madison publications



**Forest Hill Cemetery:** A biographical guide to ordinary and famous Madisonians buried at Forest Hill Cemetery; **Bishops to Bootleggers:** A biographical guide to ordinary and famous Madisonians buried at Resurrection Cemetery; and many of the first twenty volumes of the **Journal of the Four Lake Region** are available for purchase from Historic Madison.

