

*What Do You Remember?*  
*Memories of a Neighborhood*

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**Cover Photo: Joseph Pavek Grocery Store at 5<sup>th</sup> and Jackson streets, La Crosse, WI. Photo courtesy of the Area Research Center, Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.**

## Preface

The Powell-Hood Park-Hamilton Neighborhood Steering Committee's plans for revitalizing their neighborhood, while focusing on major physical issues like housing and facilities, include history. Recognizing that the present and the past are closely associated in vibrant communities, the steering committee called for a greater awareness of neighborhood history. In the fall of 1998, Professor Charles Lee, of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Department of History, proposed the idea of compiling a neighborhood history to our Public History class. Early in the school year we met with two of the steering committee members, Sandy Herold and Margaret Larson. They brought with them a list of ten people whom the committee had decided might have interesting information about the neighborhood. The members of the class divided up those ten people and interviewed them. With the help of those ten people, the class found fourteen more names, and these people were interviewed as well.

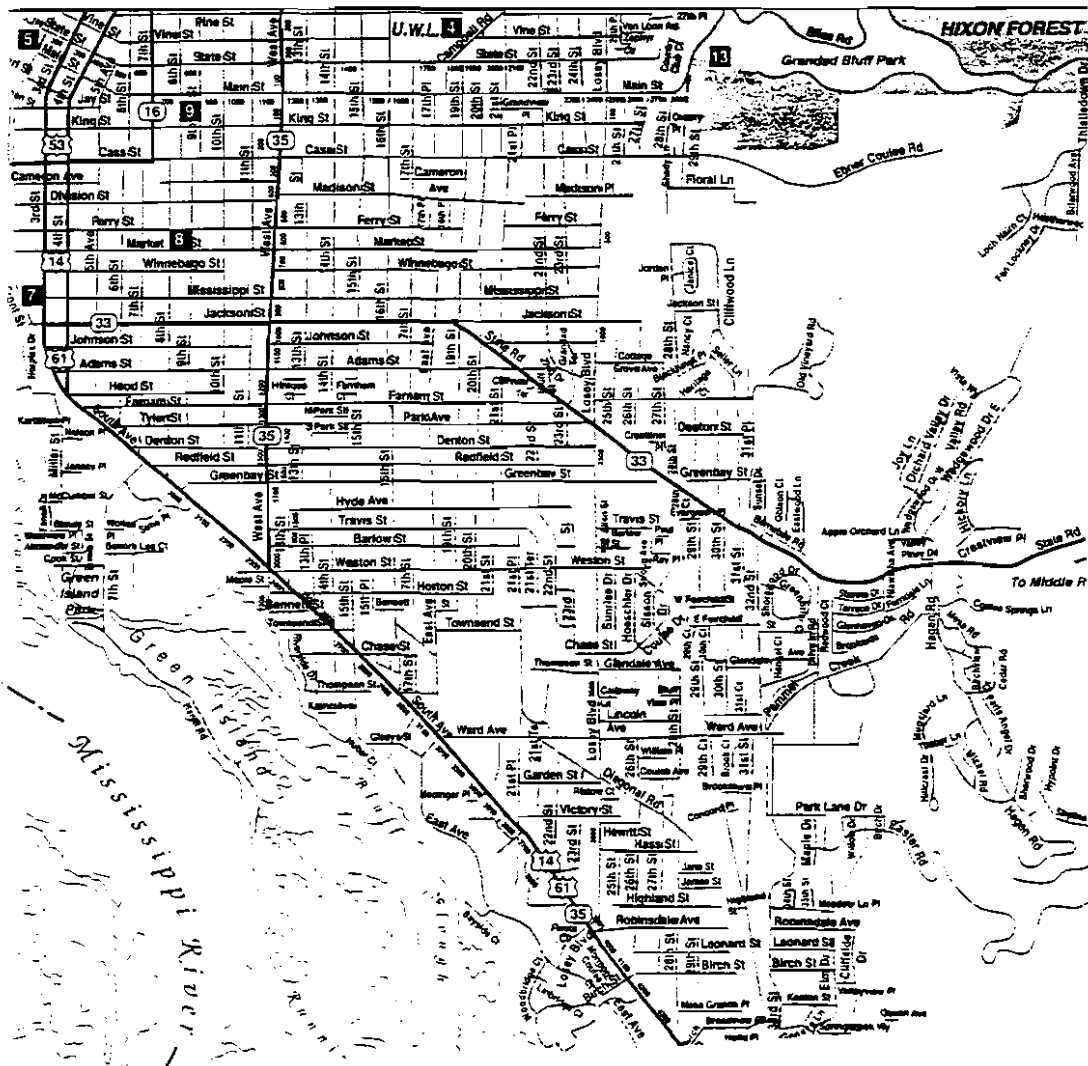
The interviewing processes used were quite extensive. They first involved an initial meeting date during which the interviewer and the interviewee could become acquainted and share background information. After this initial meeting, the interviewers did research to form questions using the background information previously gathered as a guide. Each class member then conducted interviews on topics ranging from family lives to changes in the neighborhood. After each class member interviewed two people, the tapes were secured at the Area Research Center at UW-L to be put in the archive, and the students moved on to the second part of the project.

The class split into two project groups. The first group built a photo exhibit showing people, places, and things around the neighborhood. The people who worked on the photo exhibit were Heather Allen, Travis Glasshof, Amy Klasen, Jeffrey Kollath, Corrie Mitchell, and Paula Stevenson-Dibenedetto. The second group compiled the interviews into this book. This group of people transcribed interviews from the audio tapes to a computer, and then edited the information. The people who worked on this book were Terri Boesel, Gabe Fowler, Martha Halverson, Gina Nocco, and Jesse Slane.

The goal of this project was to help gather and record the history of the neighborhood through the eyes of its residents. It was never intended to be all-inclusive

or tell the neighborhood's whole story. Instead, we let the story unfold through memories of the people who have played, lived, learned, and worked in the neighborhood.

We hope that if you enjoy the memories shared in this book that you will continue the process we have begun. We encourage you to expand on what we have and begin recording the memories of your own personal experiences and neighborhood events on the blank pages provided at the end of each chapter.



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## Introduction to the Neighborhood

This is a collection of memories from the residents of one of La Crosse's oldest neighborhoods. It was one of the first areas settled in La Crosse. Records show businesses began appearing as early as the 1860's. Nearly half of housing in the neighborhood reflects its age, as much of it was built prior to 1940. The boundaries of the neighborhood are defined by Green Bay Street on the south, West Avenue on the east, Jackson Street on the north, and Third Street and South Avenue on the west which includes roughly fifty blocks. Today the neighborhood is home to approximately 2,700 people of varying ethnic and racial backgrounds.

## Neighborhood Residents Interviewed

The following are people who helped contribute to this project by dedicating their time, energy, and resources. Many of their memories are shared throughout portions of this book. (They are listed alphabetically).

1. Paul Cuta: Farnam Street. Paul is a University of Wisconsin-La Crosse graduate who has lived in the neighborhood his entire life. He is a member of the Oktoberfest Photography Club.
2. Herb Fuchs: 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Herb was born in La Crosse and has lived in the neighborhood most of his life. He is a University of Wisconsin-La Crosse graduate and a World War II veteran. He has worked as both a teacher and a principal.
3. Alberta Gund: Farnam Street. Alberta was born and raised in the neighborhood. She worked as a dental assistant and as a certified nurse's aid. She is now retired.
4. Charles Hefti: Adams Street. Charles has lived in the neighborhood his entire life. He worked at Frank Len Automotive on Third Street for 51 years. He is third generation in this neighborhood. His grandfather was a police officer in La Crosse in 1864.
5. Kathleen Hefti: Adams Street. Kathleen has lived in the neighborhood since she and Charles married in 1955. She is a member of the Neighborhood Steering Committee.
6. Paul Hefti: Adams Street. Paul has spent his entire life in the same house on Adams Street. He has a fantastic Folk Art display made of plastic bottles in his yard.
7. Phyllis Hermanson: Redfield Street. Phyllis has been living on Redfield Street since 1955. She worked at Allis Chalmers for 24 years and then moved on to La Crosse Footwear for 17 years until her retirement. Phyllis has a huge salt and pepper shaker collection.
8. Sandy Herold: Denton Street. Sandy has lived in the neighborhood all her life. She helped initiate Project Watchdog, and has been a large contributor to our class's overall goal.
9. Steve Kulcinski: 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Steve has lived in the neighborhood for over seventy years. He is a World War II veteran and has a vast knowledge of the neighborhood. His family is one of the oldest in the neighborhood.

10. Martin Langen has lived on Denton Street since 1938. He worked as an electrician and served as the Electrical Foreman during the construction of the Murphy Building at Viterbo College.
11. Audrey Medinger: Redfield Street. Audrey has lived on Redfield Street since 1959. She worked as a domestic engineer and raised eight children. Her family has been largely involved in politics. Her son John is currently the Mayor of La Crosse.
12. Dorothy Paulikas: Hoeschler Drive. Dorothy was a teacher from 1957 to 1994 and worked at Leon School and Valley View, before coming to Hamilton School. She taught at Hamilton, the neighborhood school, from 1969 to 1994.
13. Albert Roellich: 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Albert has lived in the neighborhood for many years. He served in Patton's Army in World War II.
14. Len Roellich: 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Len works as a foreman for Construction Electrician. He is also the business manager for the Electrical Workers Union.
15. Tom Roellich: Weston Street. Tom served as an Alderman on the City Council. He was also a supervisor on the La Crosse County Board.
16. Harriet Sovoboda: Tyler Street. Harriet has lived in the neighborhood for a long time. Her children grew up in La Crosse. Harriet worked at the Modern Laundry.
17. Frank Spika: 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Frank has lived in the neighborhood for most of his life. He remembers a time when trolley cars roamed the streets of La Crosse.
18. Ray Spika: Tyler Street. Ray has lived in La Crosse for a long time. He has a lot of knowledge about the former businesses in the area.
19. Kenneth Troyanek. Denton Street. Ken has lived in the neighborhood his whole life. He can easily point out where the old "hot spots" of the neighborhood were.
20. Estelle Weber: Adams Street. Estelle has lived in the neighborhood for a long time. She spent her time as a domestic engineer and raised her children.
21. John Weber: Adams Street. John and Estelle are married. John works as a civil engineer.
22. Tom Weber: Tom has spent his whole life in the neighborhood. He talked to us about the changes in the neighborhood and in La Crosse.
23. Tony Xiong: Johnson Street. Tony is from Laos. He was naturalized as a citizen in 1996. He works at Trane Company.

24. Faling Yang: West Avenue. Faling has been a naturalized citizen from Laos since 1993. He is on the La Crosse police force.

## **Our Childhood Memories**

Many smiles and laughs accompanied the anecdotes and memories of those interviewed when questioned about their childhood. Family outings, games, neighborhood picnics, and special places were talked about as being memorable and enjoyable experiences of youth. Overall, most interviewed agreed that the times were much simpler back when they were growing up. There weren't as many organized functions, store-bought toys, or safety concerns. Many of the women recalled ice-skating as being their favorite pastime in the winter, while many of the men remembered fishing down by the river before all of the industrialization came into the area. While there are many similarities among the neighborhood resident's stories, each story is special, unique, and memorable in its own way.

### **Q: What did families do for fun when you were children?**

Herb Fuchs: We used to go and fish. Everyone loved to fish, and we went duck hunting, and rabbit hunting, and so we were really interested in every sport.

Paul Hefti: Most folks had a garden. This whole yard was garden. Grew tomatoes, potatoes, gourds, lettuce, cabbage, onion, tomatoes, beets, whatever you like.

Charles Hefti: <chuckling> I'll tell you a cute story. You could take your goose or turkey or whatever to Hum's bakery and they'd bake it for you for Thanksgiving, and then you'd come on Thanksgiving morning and they'd have it all baked up out of their oven and ready to serve. Well my mother was one for the neck of a turkey--she just loved the neck. So my dad cut the neck off of our turkey so she could cook it at home for herself and took the turkey over to Hums to have it baked. Well when we got our turkey back there was a neck on it! We never got the same turkey back--either that or it grew another one! <chuckling>

Tony Xiong: Now in the summer most of the time we just go to the park.

Connie Xiong: They (Xiong children) play games, nintendo games, or watch a movie, or other times Tony and I take them to the movies at the theater.

### **Q: What did you do for fun as a child?**

Frank Spika: We used to play games, like "GO." We'd have a one block start and we'd run and hide and the other teams would try to look for us. And other games like "Run Chief Run," and "Chase the Rabbit," mostly similar types of games. And we'd play

marbles, and ball in the alley a lot. You had to hit the ball straight away, or if you hit it into the other guys yard you were out.

Tom Weber: We played football, and of course tackle usually, stickball, any kind of athletic thing. In the winter we'd throw snowballs at cars and take off running or hook behind bumpers and drag behind, you know the same kinds of stuff kids do now, only we did it in what we thought to be harmless kinds of fun. We rode bikes around town and tried to stay out of trouble as best we could.

Paul Cuta: We used to dig holes in snowbanks and make tunnels in them every winter.

Alberta Gund: Everyone played together, the girls would play house, and in the fall when the leaves fell from the trees we were very anxious about that because we would rake them in the form of a house, and make rooms in them, and we would imagine what was a livingroom, kitchen and so forth and so on. That would go through maybe third grade. Also, the neighbors across the alley had a weeping willow tree, and that also was a house for us in the summertime. And we would imagine rooms in there, we had little items that we'd put out in the kitchen like little tables and chairs or something like that and would just imagine partitions. We were very upset when it came time to clip the willow off, when it didn't go to the ground anymore our home was destroyed!

Charles Hefti: On Hass's farm it'd be a real treat in the summer time. They'd get the ice cream mixer out, and then hand mixer, and in the evening they'd mix a batch of home-made ice cream.

Herb Fuchs: We made our own games. Played Hopscotch... In the winter time we went and we played hockey and skated, and at night we went on the skating rink. We never had any money to do anything.

Kathleen Hefti: You'd have to make your own fun, they didn't have all of these organized things.

Charles Hefti: We'd play kick the can. We didn't have all of those toys like they have today. You'd find a spot you liked on South Avenue and you'd play football in an empty lot rather than even come to a park. There were no houses, nothing.

Paul Hefti: Well we used to play marbles over at the park (Hood). We'd have a big ring and shoot the marbles in, and when the kid's run short of marbles they'd put a penny in for so many marbles. Today all of the kids have lost their marbles! <chuckling>.

Sandy Herold: Having twenty-five kids in a matter of five households there was always something to do and something going on. We used to have dog shows, and competitions, and everybody would make ribbons and pass out the ribbons, and naturally the results were all rigged by who ever dreamed up the idea that day. In the summer when it was really hot out we'd take wet towels and lay on the ground, and we had one spot where a couple of us in the neighborhood would do that and there would be butterflies. The

butterflies would come and sun themselves just like we were. Some of the other simpler things kids would do was ride the railroad tracks and pick up pop bottles. I also remember when kids slept out in home-made tents in their yards. I'm sure that out in the country people still do it, but in town I don't know very many parents that feel it is safe today.

**Q: It seems that many children in this neighborhood skated when they were younger, did you?**

Alberta Gund: Our parents and us kids would make a skating rink in the back yard, and we'd have to build up the sides and that with dirt, and then it was flooded. My brother and I we would make-believe that we were figure skaters. I remember my mother even making me a figure skating outfit. Our school also had skating parties. We went over to the Powell Park rink, that would be for an hour, and we skated. That was one of the greatest activities we ever had because during my seventh and Eighth Grade years I don't think that there was a night in the winter time when we didn't all go skating. It could be below zero and we'd go, we just loved to skate.

Tom Weber: There were two skating rinks, Hood and Powell Park, and we hung out there in the winter. There were always things to do.

Estelle Weber: I remember we'd all go put on our ice skates in the winter time and skate out in the street when it was really slippery, when there was lots of ice on there. I remember doing that down on Tenth in seventh and eighth grade.

Phyllis Hermanson: My kids used to go sliding and skating down in Powell Park seven or eight blocks away when I'd take them.

Herb Fuchs: You had a hard time getting into the warm up shelters because there were so many people skating.

**Q: What types of discipline did your parents use when you were little?**

Charles Hefti: Oh we had discipline at home. What my mom and dad said that was the law and there was no deviation. What they said it was ok well this is it. The kids would be scattered out all over the neighborhood and my dad would stick his head out the back door and whistle, and we'd better be coming down the alley, it was time to be eating. At meal time we'd better be there. One whistle and we'd better be coming home. That was it.

Estelle Weber: the Baptist pastor and his wife and two kids lived in the house behind the church and his kids would have to go to church every week. Boy if they got a little bit naughty they'd bring any of them out and give their kid a good licking out there on the corner. I always told my kids they were lucky they were raised Catholic because I don't think that was as hard on them as some of the other religions actually! <chuckling>

**Q: What were some of your responsibilities as a child?**

Phyllis Hermanson: We had part time jobs like babysitting, that kind of thing, and we'd come home and just clean the house. One year after school I worked at the China Buffet as a waitress.

Herb Fuchs: I delivered papers, and that was interesting. You went down to the Tribune to get your papers...and that cold coming from the river...for just one dollar and twenty five cents a week. My paper route started over there on Market, and went down to Jackson...and Front Street and First Street were never shoveled. In those days lots of times you'd be up to your shoulders by the time you'd get to the mailbox. It was tough.

Tom Weber: I had two paper routes which used to run in the afternoon. My folks had the paper drop off sight, so four or five paper boys would sit and wait for the Tribune to come through, and the truck would dump the papers there and everyone would grab their bundles of papers. My brother had a paper route too, so we'd sit and wait and wait and wait for the newspapers to get dropped off.

Frank Spika: We used to have to take out ashes and bring in wood and coal in the Spring of the year. Every alley acquired a large pile of ashes, so when Spring came we would haul it all down to the dump three or four blocks away down below the hospital. We did it for our neighbor, and for my aunt, and for my cousin. One time I also had a job splitting wood every Saturday for my cousin, and we helped with various things in the garden like picking potato bugs off of the potato plants.

Sandy Herold: As a child I was in charge of running to get groceries for grandma and running to get groceries for my mom, and they knew who had the better meat deals and the better prices. All within three blocks we had our choice of three grocery stores.

**Q: How do kids and families have it differently today from when you were little?**

Tom Weber: We were just kind of running through the neighborhood, and I don't remember parents ever saying "be wary of these types of people" or "be wary of this or that." I don't remember that at all, in fact those topics were never even talked about. We played out in the street, we played in the yard, we went down the block, we walked to school, and I'm sure I was doing these things alone by the time I was in the first or second grade. It wasn't a big deal. Now I've got a daughter in fourth grade and I can't feel comfortable with her doing those same things. There's definitely a different feeling from when I was a kid. It isn't just this neighborhood. I'd be concerned everywhere. I don't feel comfortable today with her outside the yard.

Alberta Gund: I remember I saved up and I got my bicycle, I was a freshman in High School. I was so proud of that bike. It had a "skirt guard" on it because slacks weren't in mode yet. I was perturbed because my brother who was three and a half years younger than me also had the privilege of getting his bike at that time. I didn't think it was fair. Well they explained to me that he was a boy and so that was just the way it went then.

Sandy Herold: I think it was a simpler life. The kids in the summer didn't have quite as many organized activities and so you had a lot more time on your hands. There were some recreational programs, but they weren't as expanded and kids didn't start them at such young ages.

Tom Weber: When I was a kid there was an awful lot of families that had lots of bigger numbers of kids. I mean it was common to have 5, 6, 7, 8, kids. Lots of people were cousins, brothers, sisters, and didn't venture too far from the family nest. They all kind of lived in and stayed in the neighborhood.

Kathleen Hefti: Families today don't even eat together much.

Charles Hefti: Then every family took care of their own. I mean there was always somebody, a relative living with you during the hard times. At one time there was eleven of us eating and my dad was the only man working in the whole works. I had a grandma that lived with us, cousins, aunts, and uncles, and when they didn't have any place to go my dad took them all in. He fed them all and saw that everybody kept on going. I mean we weren't rich but it got spread around to all of us.

Kathleen Hefti: I think years ago everybody had a grandma or a grandpa living with them that they were taking care of.

Herb Fuchs: Mom had her wood stove, and her steam iron, and did all the cooking of wild game, German food, sauerkraut.

**Q: Did you frequent any businesses or "spots" when you were younger?**

Charles Hefti: A lot of our entertainment when I was a kid was over the hill. There'd be willows, swamp land that you'd spear fish, seine fish. In those days around Lutheran Hospital and Gundersen Clinic there was these window wells, and there'd be frogs in them. Well we'd kill the frogs, take them down to the swamp and fry them...you'd build a wood fire for that.

Alberta Gund: On Eighth and Adams was a confectionery store called "Abottos" run by an Italian man named Rocky Abotto. They had wonderful ice cream. Later on it became the "Bright Spot" and people by the name of Carrs ran it. Our friends the Brady's had a son my age. He won a Santa Claus that stood like three feet tall or more and it was all made out of chocolate. I thought that was the most wonderful thing in the entire world.

Tom Weber: Where Covet's tavern used to be there was an old ice cream parlor and kind of a youth thing. We hung out and played air hockey, and foosball, that was when all of those things were just starting so we did a lot of different stuff.

John Weber: Well we used to have our own skating rink down by the river. We played hockey down there.

Sandy Herold: A lot of teenagers went to a place called "Swede's" that was located on West Avenue... it had like a gazillion French fries that were really cheap, and wonderful hamburgers, tons of pinball machines... it disappeared in 1975 or 1976.

Estelle Weber: He (referring to her husband John Weber) used to spend a lot of time down by the river. before it became, what do you want to call it, civilized? One of the fellas, his dad owned all that land down there, and there was a little shack down there and they were called the "river rats" the bunch of them that would go down there to drink beer, or play cards, hunt or skate, fight between themselves. They'd beat each other up, give each other a bloody noses or whatever!

John Weber: You could go to the Strand Theater at Jackson and West Avenue for ten cents and see a double feature.

Charles Hefti: We went down over a hill by the railroad tracks behind Frank Len. There was a place down there we called the Pollyanna and it was like a lake, a little lake in the middle of everything. There was no hockey allowed over at the chip lot (Hood Park) and so we had this little pond down over there, and we'd go down and shovel all that off. And then Frank Len would throw away all of their old tires, well we'd start a tire on fire sown on each end at night and that would light it all up and we could play hockey down there at night. It was all lit up with the tires burning on both ends of the pond.

Tom Weber: The only thing I ever remember my folks being concerned about was us going down by the river because every year we'd lose one or two kids from the neighborhood who would drown down there. I think we used to lie to them and tell them that we weren't going down there, but we always would go down there, we rode our bikes down there in fact. We'd park our bikes and this was as they were doing dredging, so there'd be a bunch of little potholes there for a couple of years while they were doing that project. The water and the fish would get trapped in those holes, so that was easy fishing, I mean they were trapped and they were starving so we used to just throw in the fish poles and catch lots and lots of fish out of those little pockets of water. With Lutheran Hospital's expansion that has changed Green Island completely.

**Q: How did you get around when you were little?**

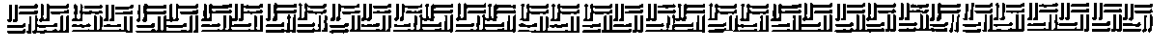
Steve Kulcinski: Well I used to have a little red wagon when I was a kid and I used to go around the block pushing myself on that wagon. I used to go "putt, putt, putt, putt," like a motor. Well there was this kid down the street here that gives me my name. A guy by the name of Leroy Bruha, but then it did fit. Most of the teachers in school, none of them ever called me Steve, they called me "Putt" all the way through school. They still do. It just kind of stuck with me as a nickname. Everybody thinks it's because I repair motors, but that isn't it!

Charles Hefti: where would you go? We'd take the laundry truck, walk, the streetcar... a Sunday thrill used to be that we could go to Copeland Park to a ball game...and that was a big treat to do that. That was a big trick all the kids would do...Pull the trolley. It'd be driving along and you could run as fast as it was going. You'd grab the trolley and pull the cable down and he'd have to get up... You'd cut the power.

Kathleen Hefti: Kids walked. I mean you never had anybody take you some place. You wanted to go someplace you walked.

Paul Hefti: I've never owned an automobile. I've biked everywhere my whole life. Automobiles are ok, but I still like my bicycle.

Sandy Herold: I can remember that we used to walk to the municipal swimming pool out by the university. A lot of parents only had one car, and that was before a lot of mothers even started driving. But I mean we had all day to do it. It was your main activity for the day so you could have taken hours.



**Share your Memories**

1

## Our School Days

Before 1885, all of the students in the neighborhood attended a one-room schoolhouse built in 1874 on Eighth Street between Adams Street and Johnson Street, and the children from multiple grades were taught as one class. The original Hamilton School, constructed in 1885, was built on Eighth Street and Johnson Street. This school was referred to as the "Sixth District School" until 1909 when it was renamed "Hamilton." The current Hamilton Elementary School building was constructed in 1961 on 1111 South Seventh Street. Additions were added in 1973 and in 1983. While the photos we found of Hamilton students of generations ago display a highly predominant European population, today Hamilton hosts students of many different ethnic backgrounds. This reflects the variety of ethnic groups in the neighborhood today. Most of the neighborhood residents attended grade school at Hamilton Public School, but some others attended private school at St. Wenceslaus, Holy Trinity, Holy Cross, or St. Mary's Catholic Schools.

Those interviewed spoke of learning to read, write, and do arithmetic in school, but most emphasized that they were taught differently from children today. The largest difference recognized between their school days and those of children today was in the area of discipline. A majority recalled teachers being much stricter and having more control over their classrooms and students than is allowable today. Many residents in the neighborhood do, however, look back on their school days with fond memories and surprise at how much things have stayed the same over the years.

### **Q: What are some of your school day memories?**

Len Roellich: We moved in summer of 1945, and I started kindergarten that year at Holy Trinity School. Half of us on the block were Lutheran, and half were Catholic, I'm Catholic. All of the Lutheran kids went to Lutheran School, and us Catholics depending upon which nationality you were we went to four different Catholic School. There was St. Wenceslaus on Tenth and Mississippi which was a Bohemian parish, there was a Polish parish called Holy Cross where the Cathedral is today, and Holy Trinity was on Thirteenth and Denton, and that is where I went because I was of German ancestry.

Some Irish people went to St. Mary's on Seventh and Cameron. <laughing> There used to be some battles in the neighborhood over who was better, the Catholics or the Lutherans!

Alberta Gund: Most of the people on my block went to Holy Trinity school which was German. I never knew it had the name of Holy Trinity, it was always called "German Church, Bohemian church, and the Polish Church." I was not too happy originally to go to school because I didn't really know what school was all about. But my aim in life was I always wanted a roll-top desk, and my mother said you will have a desk, and so I thought is this ever going to be wonderful! And it was always wonderful for us to go each day.

**Q: How were you disciplined in school?**

Charles Hefti: You had teachers who were teachers back then. Miss Fulton kindergarten, Miss Gregory first grade, Miss Kelly second grade--oh she was a toughie! She'd grab you by the neck and nail ya!

Kathleen Hefti: Oh they don't dare touch kids now!

Charles Hefti: She'd bat ya along side the head and say "You behave now!" Miss Towers was the principal over there, and boy if you got sent to her you were in big trouble so you listened to your teacher in the classroom rather than to go to Miss Towers <chuckling>.

Kathleen Hefti: Oh yeah! I had teachers who would hit you on the hands with rulers. The kids behaved. They didn't have to call the police and all that, they (teachers) settled it themselves. Its kind of sad that they need a police officer at a school.

Herb Fuchs: I went to a Catholic elementary school. They were very strict. Many times you'd get a good lick across the knuckle, but they don't do that anymore.

Frank Spika: I went to St Wenceslaus where the Skemp clinic is now. It was taught by the sisters. There was a nun who had a reputation of being pretty strict. And she would take you "Out into the hall" as they said, but I didn't know what that was. Well I wanted to experience it. So I committed some kind of an infraction, which made her take me out into the hall. I was going to run up the stairs, but she said, "NO, come back here." So I knelt like she said to by the bell, and she started whacking me across the hinder with a stick and I started yelling like mad! She said "The more you yell the more I'll hit you!" So I quit yelling. She never hurt me, it was a psychological thing.

**Q: What did your school look like?**

Audrey Medinger: In Black River Falls where I went there were all eight grades in one area. That was kind of interesting, but most of my schooling was that type of school. There was only one teacher. There were only three kids in my eighth grade. It worked out, but I don't think it would work today.

Alberta Gund: There were only four rooms in our school (Holy Trinity) but it was such a wonderful school. In the first room there was kindergarten, first grade, and second. Kindergarten was not obligatory at that time so there weren't that many children so the nuns could handle that. Then the third and fourth in one room, then the fifth and sixth in the other and seventh and eighth in the last. Those last two rooms had steel rolling walls, and they were lifted up and there was a little chapel in the seventh and eighth grade rooms so they would say mass in there every day to save on fuel in the winter.

Dorothy Paulikas: We had just a few children that were Hmong from Southeast Asia originally, and then very soon our population just grew by leaps and bounds because many Hmong families would come and live in that area. Also we had Cuban Refugees. At one time I had children of five different nationalities in my classroom, and the population becomes more diverse as the years go on. The students really didn't have a problem adjusting to this. They aren't the first ones to notice that someone isn't exactly the same, they are very accepting. They didn't really look at color or nationality, they just looked at what they were doing. If it looked like fun they would join them. They played in groups by what they liked to do: jump rope, monkey bars, etc. Not by ethnic group.

**Q: What do you feel have been some major changes which have occurred in education since you were in the classroom?**

Dorothy Paulikas: When I was teaching at Hamilton every time there'd be a new Superintendent there'd be a different way of approaching curriculum. Different focuses, different ideas of how to deal with children, different policies in the schools. I think what helped out our building was having the same principal for so many years.

Frank Spika: We didn't have pencil sharpeners so we used to sharpen our pencils by scratching with the lead on the bottoms of our shoes. That would put a point on the pencils.

Dorothy Paulikas. There were some major grade changes at Hamilton. For awhile the entire fourth grade was bussed out of Hamilton. We taught first, second, third, and fifth. No kindergarten and no fourth grade for several years until the new buildings were built. The kindergarten also used to be only half day. Today with parents working there is full day everyday all day, and that has been for some years now.

**What did you do at recess?**

Alberta Gund: We would play jacks, the boys would play marbles, the games were of that nature. They just had a sand pit and the boys would draw their circles. We also had relays at school. The girls would play "One, Two, Three, O'Leary" which was done with a ball and you would use your leg to do a maneuver and if you made a mistake or didn't go over the ball the next person would go. You tried to get up to eight. Oh we would play hopscotch, that was a real big thing.

**Q: How did you get to school?**

Herb Fuchs: I remember walking to school and see no one even shoveled. The guys were working eight, nine, ten hours a day in those days, and the shoveling used to be done in the evening. So when I walked to school we had an awful time wading through those snowbanks.

Alberta Gund: Like three girls would meet on my corner that would come from two blocks west and from the south. We always met at the corners and would pick up each other. It was so wonderful how we talked about things, helping each other out. There was such camaraderie. When we walked to school in the winter time the snow piles were always larger than now, it seemed constantly that they were larger. The boys would make these cones out of paper, and on the way they would ice the banks and we'd have slides.

**Q: What and how were you taught?**

Kathleen Hefti : They just taught you how to read and write and that was it. See they had these things. "See Dick Run, See Jane Run..." and they don't teach like that anymore. And we were taught to hold our pencils like this (between thumb and forefinger) to get control of it. Today I see kids holding it real funny ways, they'll have it all wrapped around, and I don't know how they can write like that!

Phyllis Hermason: At Aquinas there was chemistry and algebra, and I played in the orchestra, and we had math and English, the usual.

Alberta Gund: There was a priest at our school who instructed us in religion for an hour each day. He was so unique, and he was there a long time. He had nicknames for everybody. He expected a lot. If you got all C's you were a "C.C.C. boy" and you had better shape up. He gave away beautiful paintings and always brought two dogs.

**Q: How big were class sizes?**

Steve Kulcinski: I was in the first class at Longfellow, I would say there were approximately thirty kids in my class.

Alberta Gund: By the time we graduated from Holy Trinity we had ten girls in our class and eleven boys.

Dorothy Paulikas: When I began teaching at Hamilton I believe there were two kindergartens, they were half day. Then there were three firsts, and two of each of the other grades. There were between twenty-five and thirty students per class.

 Share your Memories

## Our Working Life

There was a strong work ethic in the Powell-Hood Park-Hamilton Neighborhood. Though wages had changed through the years as did businesses and the makeup of society, people have always worked hard to support their families. Big businesses like Allis Chalmers, Trane, and Heileman employed a great portion of the town. These businesses as well as the people who worked there hold a rich history. In this section we asked residents about their work experiences, including their first jobs. It's a look into the daily lives of these people. They have discussed the roles of men and women in the workforce, and how they have changed through the years.

Breweries, being an important aspect of La Crosse, were talked about as well as the affects of Prohibition. On January 16<sup>th</sup> 1920, the United States ratified the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment that prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol. This major step by the Temperance Movement was to protect the family against the harmful effects of alcohol. The Prohibition Era had several ill effects on America as a whole. It led to corruption in all levels of the government, an astounding death toll, and an alarming crime rate. Prohibition was deemed a failure by the United States Government and was ended in 1933 when the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment was repealed by the ratification of the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment. Prohibition had a large effect on the country and these effects can be seen directly through the happenings in this neighborhood. This portion will discuss the working lives of neighborhood residents.

**Q: How would you describe the work ethic in your neighborhood while you were growing up?**

Tom Weber: It was a blue-collar neighborhood. Most people that lived here had a lower to middle income type for the time period. Now it has changed but when I was growing up it was a hardworking middle class neighborhood.

**Q: How old were you when you started your first job?**

Frank Spika: When I was 14 I was an office boy. I did odd jobs around the office at Heileman. I did a little typing and every morning I would go to the Post Office and pick up then sort the mail. Then I would get water across the street for the inverted water tank because we didn't have any drinking water in the office. After school I would return and do menial tasks and office work and then I would take the outgoing mail to the Post

Office. That was a daily job plus all day on Saturdays. I got fifteen dollars a month. The year was 1920.

Charles Hefti: I worked from the time I was 13 years old and I have been working ever since. Even when I was 11 and 12, I was working on a farm in Stoddard for my summers. Once I came to Frank Len Automotive, I worked seven days a week for three dollars a week. I'd run home from Central High School and I'd go to work.

**Q: What would be a typical workday in you life?**

Faling Yang: I work third shift as a police officer and when I get home I help put the kids in bed. I get up at about 2:00 in the afternoon and pick up the kids then I cook for them.

Audrey Medinger: I woke up the kids in the morning. I fed them breakfast, then lots of times I had to pack their lunch and see that they had their books, mittens, and coats depending on their age. I was always busy with something during the day. I did some sewing, cleaning, and baking. I can't say there was anything unusual that I did but I was always doing something. I also got involved with different things like politics and other things like that.

Herb Fuchs: The Pearl Button Factory used to be just where the causeway starts before crossing the La Crosse River. They'd go on the river to gather shells. They'd make beautiful buttons out of these shells. But as soon as plastic came in the picture and plastic was proven to be more uniform, and easier and cheaper to make, the pearl-made buttons went out of the picture.

Frank Spika: My mother never worked anywhere except when she was a young girl she used to be responsible for washing the dance floor as well as cleaning the lamps, filling them, and making sure the wicks were straight. This was at the Bohemian Dance Hall on 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Tyler.

**Q: What have been some of the changes concerning men and women in the workforce?**

Phyllis Hermanson: When I worked at Allis Chalmers I don't believe there were many women in the factories. Most women worked in the office.

Tom Weber: When I was young most families had one parent, usually the father, working outside the home. The moms were housewives. It was an older traditionally valued neighborhood.

Sandy Herold: It was different working in the 1970's when the men really weren't tickled pink about women working in the factories. When women took jobs during World War II and you see images of "Rosie the Riveter" it was different because that was a situation

where women were needed in the labor force. In the 1970's it was like women were the problem because they were replacing the normal lifestyle. In retrospect I'm not so sure they weren't right due to the fact that with more women in the work force, there's an impact on families and that leads to an impact on neighborhoods and cities.

**Q: Because La Crosse is such a brewery-oriented town, what were some of the occupations associated with it?**

Ray Spika: I dig up stuff and one day I dug up a part of this old cooper crate. Boy! They had a lot of tools. They made big oak stays where they bend them and steam them. The pressure was in there from the weight and then they had to roll them around. These coopers had to build a masterpiece of every barrel. Some of these barrels might have been full barrels, 32 gallons.

Frank Spika: My dad was a cooper. He worked at a place near the Lutheran Hospital. They had 15-20 men working there and I think that shed was owned by Gund Brewery. That brewery was in the vicinity of the Lutheran Hospital but some buildings are standing. But that was a seasonal job and in the winter he was lucky enough to get a job as a solicitor for a Bohemian paper. When prohibition set in that floundered too and he had to get other work.

Paul Hefti: I worked in the bottle house at Heileman Brewery. The job changed around a lot. They'd put you upstairs; making cartons, filling the circle, and watching the bottles come through. A lot of times if a bottle would come through and it had just a little spec of tobacco on it, it was rejected.

**Q: What were the breweries like during Prohibition?**

Herb Fuchs: Well it affected the area in this respect; Bardo Brewery and Michel's Brewery had quite a few employees. Heileman and Gund Breweries were the biggest breweries in the country. Everybody was laid off and some breweries like Heileman made near-beer and nobody cared for that too much so more and more people were making beer themselves in stills and things of that type. It did effect the economy because of the high unemployment. The average workers in those days were only making ten to fifteen dollars a week.

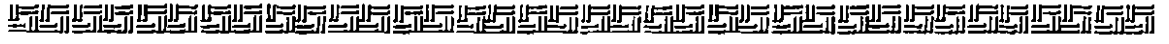
Frank Spika: Heileman was not as affected as other breweries because it kept running while other breweries shut down during Prohibition. Heileman made homebrew, root beer, and crème soda.

**Q: How did taverns, businesses, and people handle Prohibition?**

Steve Kulcinski: There were a lot of places that sold beer during Prohibition. There was a confectionary store at 1514 Farnam that sold beer. I had to come and get it for my dad. And on 7<sup>th</sup> and Farnam there were a group of houses. And the fact is a few years ago they dug these houses up and underneath the ground were tunnels. These people would

go from one house to another, making moonshine. Taverns didn't completely close. That's when near beer first started. They would conserve the near beer because it didn't have any alcohol and then they'd have the bootleg alcohol underneath the table. Occasionally the police would raid the taverns and catch the people but like I said in those houses on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, if the police would raid one house the people would use the tunnels to run to another.

Charles Hefti: I understand that there were moonshiners down in the swamps. They had stills in the swamps somewhere.



## **Share your Memories**

## Our Means Of Travel

Transportation has undergone marvelous transformations since the need to move from place to place was understood. The evolution of transportation has led a path to the present which displayed some of the most primitive and complex forms of its kind.

Roller skating, walking, and bicycling may be simple examples but without doubt it got the job done and perhaps at the time of days of gas rationing this mode of transportation can be looked at as noble. However, it certainly is more exciting to hear stories of steam engines, locomotives, and trolley cars. The Powell-Hood Park-Hamilton neighborhood reflects back to the days of old and recalls long bicycle rides, boat rides, the Model T, railroads, and even the tunneling that was done during Prohibition.

**Q: What do you remember about the transportation in the city of LaCrosse?**

Frank Spika: Previous to my actual existence they had cars pulled by horses, but I'd say that in the Twentieth Century we had electric cars with overhead pulleys... we had street cars going by here and everything else.

**Q: Whereabouts were the steam locomotive turntables?**

Frank Spika: Yes they call that the roundhouse, that was at the southern end of town where Herbie lives, it was an area where a steam engine had sort of a pit and over the pit there were rails. It was a pit that had the rails even with the ground. So they used to turn this engine around to go the other direction. That's what they call a roundhouse. Imagine a large tub and there was a rail across it and that tub is sufficient to turn the engine around, they could work on it from underneath like the pits they have in garages.

**Q: How did cars impact the neighborhood, what did it change?**

Steve Kulcinski: Well these streets are all the same, they've been repaved. The curbing and everything we've had that for quite a while. We had a Model T. Wherever you drive down the street and you look and you see a real narrow garage, you can bet that one time there was a Model T, or a Plymouth, or a Model A. They were all narrow. All they had was small garages for them. We would leave from the corner of the house here, that's where I was born and brought up in. That's where Sandy lives. At four o'clock on a Saturday morning we would leave, and we would get to Minneapolis at eight o'clock at night. Now that's a hundred some miles in a Model T.

Alberta Gund: When we were in High School of course there was gas rationing so there weren't any cars. We would take our bicycles and meet each other at the corners and at Adams Street, I would say 11<sup>th</sup> and Adams street all the way up we would go up 11<sup>th</sup> street to Aquinas High School at 11<sup>th</sup> and Cass Street. And we were, it was just like a parade we were from one curb to the other curb, we were solid bicycles we just all rode together it was so wonderful.

Steve Kulçinski: Right on this corner right here (tapping) right where that street sign is, at that stop and go light is a horse trough where they used to stop and water the horses. All the people coming in town on wagons to sell their stuff.

Martin Langen: I had an aunt and uncle on the north side and the causeway was called Plank Road, it was so sandy it was over lain with planks and then the horses trotting on there would make quite a lot of noise. My father sold a young horse to the fire department. Then one time we came to town he wanted to see how the horse was doing. We stopped there and looked at the horse. Of course the horse was in pretty good shape. The horses had a door in front of them that would open when the fire alarm rang.

Martin Langen: Then there was a big noise with the horses hoofs, they were all shod on the brick road. Brick street. I saw that once, I saw them take off and the fire trucks had long ladders. They didn't have extensions on ladders like they do today, and they had a driver on the back with a big wheel that would steer the rear wheels so they could make the corner with the long load.

**Q: They had one person working that job of steering the back wheels?**

Martin Langen: They had a driver in front driving the horses and one in back steering the rear wheels.

Charles Hefti: Over here on 6<sup>th</sup> and Mississippi, it's an apartment house now, that was a fire station. This wasn't during my time, but they had it that the horses would be in there and the harnesses were hanging up on racks so when there was a fire call they'd pull the ropes and the harnesses would fall down on to the horses and they'd clip it on and they were ready to go. Once their harnesses were on they'd be hooked to the wagon and pull the fire wagon.



**Share your Memories**

## Our Small Businesses

The world of business has changed a great deal over the years. The days of small family owned businesses on every street corner or block are gone. Large chain stores and supermarkets have replaced them. The days of individuals running small side businesses are also gone. These people no longer have the need or desire to do such things. But this has not always been the case. As recently as twenty or thirty years ago you could find both family and side businesses in almost any neighborhood in any city. If you go back even further, say to the 1940's or 50's, you'd be able to find these small family and side businesses on almost every street. The Powell-Hood Park-Hamilton neighborhood is no exception. Small businesses have been an important part of the history of the neighborhood.

### **Q: What did this neighborhood have in the way of grocery stores?**

Steve Kulcinski: There were grocery stores every couple of blocks.

Kathleen Hefti: Let's see there was a little one over here on 4<sup>th</sup> Street but that's been gone a long time ago. There used to be one on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Winnebago, Ralph's. That was a nice little store we went to. They had good meat. It was right on the corner.

Steve Kulcinski: On the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Tyler was Havlicek's grocery store. On the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Farnam was Boytler's grocery store and then Kahn's Tavern, which is now a parking lot. At 922 Farnam was Techmer's meat market. They sold malt to make beer out of. At 1101 So. 8th was another grocery store.

Ray Spika: There were three grocery stores within a block of me here.

Alberta Gund: One was run by the Hammes family, they were of German descent, and the Bruha family, which was of Bohemian descent, ran the other. Bruha ran that until he was way into his 80's. I think it was about 15-20 years ago that he gave that up and it became the La Crosse Co-op and now it has been turned into a family home.

Steve Kulcinski: This building right here (at 1526 10<sup>th</sup> Street) was a grocery store and it was Ginsky's then Koblenz's grocery store. After that Dick Koblenz made it into an apartment building. At 1035 Tyler used to be a grocery store, the owner was Lapitz. Robert Schreier later bought it out and then (about 15 years ago) it

was made into an apartment house. This was a grocery store (1506 Farnam) called Mulder's market.

Alberta Gund: On 7<sup>th</sup> and Tyler was Havlicek's Grocery. It was family run and the home was attached. On 10<sup>th</sup> and Tyler was Ginsky Brothers Grocery. It was a grocery store and they sold cold meats and stuff but it wasn't a butcher shop.

Martin Langen: Within a block we had four grocery stores one down the alley on Redfield Street, One at the end of the short 11th Street, one on West Avenue and Denton, and one on 10th and Denton.

Alberta Gund: I was thinking of stores and little workshops around the area. The one on Tyler Street, between 12<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, was the Lapitz store. Mr. Lapitz was of Bohemian decent. It was a grocery store, and it always fascinated me to go in the backdoor because that's where they kept the vinegar. The vinegar was kept in a great big barrel and it had a spigot on it so when you came in the store you always smelled the vinegar. I can always associate that with the store. That became Schreier's Grocery and it had ice cream. Lapitz didn't have ice cream and so that was a very big thing. I can remember that that was right in the middle of the store. They had a cold beef area and everything in there. It was the start of grocery stores starting to look a little bit different.

Audrey Medinger: There were four grocery stores, all within only a few blocks.

Charles Hefti: Fifty years ago there was Bruha's grocery store and Hammes Grocery store on the same block. And there was another grocery store right across from the hospital; that was Schlicht's grocery store. There was another grocery store on 7th and Tyler called Havlicek's. Now it's Betty's Sports Inn. And where the Old Style Inn is on 6<sup>th</sup> and Winnebago was another grocery store.

Sandy Herold: On the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Tyler Street was a grocery store called Schreier's Grocery Store. Now it has been split up and made into a duplex. As a child I was in charge of running to get groceries for grandmother and running to get groceries for mom. They knew who had the better meat deals and better butter prices and so on and so forth. We had Zebels IGA, which was on the corner of West Avenue and Denton then we had Schreiers on 11th and Tyler, and then we had Koblenz grocery on 10<sup>th</sup> and Denton. So all within three blocks we had our choice of three grocery stores.

**Q: What were the grocery stores like and how were they different than the ones we have today?**

Ray Spika: You went in there (grocery stores), grabbed what you wanted and said put it on the books. You didn't need money; of course you had to pay them sometime. The same thing happened in the saloons. People had bills all over the place.

Audrey Medinger: The people who ran the stores and maltshops lived right in it because there were living quarters behind it. And of course the people who ran the bar lived there because there was a living quarter in there too. And then the Family Food Grocery they lived up stairs.

Paul Cuta: He (Abotto) had what we called a cake or waffle cone. Which was something not really anybody had. Now people ask you, "Do you want the waffle type cone or do you want the other?" But he was the only one I can remember as a child that had that waffle type cone.

Ray Spika: Schlicht's sold ice cream cones at a cost of two dips for a nickel.

Martin Langen: It wasn't self-service. You'd tell the grocer what you wanted and he would get everything off the shelf for you and assemble it, then you'd pay him for it. They (grocery stores) weren't very big, and they didn't have the variety they do today.

Audrey Medinger: Well that's kind of hard to answer. I like the smaller ones because of the friendliness and the ease to get to them. Of course you couldn't have as many things or as low prices as the bigger places. It's kind of a give and take.

**Q: What has happened to these grocery stores?**

Paul Cuta: The building that was Ginsky Brothers is still there and is a house now, but it still has a store look to it because it has the corner door on it.

Audrey Medinger: Of the neighborhood groceries the only one that's still a grocery is the one that has become the Quillin's on West Avenue and Denton.

Kathleen Hefti: Today Ralph's Grocery is the Friendship Tree. They have lots of nice things. It's a good place to go to sell or buy things.

**Q: What other businesses were in the neighborhood?**

Alberta Gund: On 8<sup>th</sup> and Adams Street was a confectionery. They had wonderful ice cream and we just loved that. An Italian man ran it. I believe his name was Rocky Abotto.

*Steve Kulcinski: This building (1514 Farmam) used to be a confectionery store, now it's a beauty parlor. They sold beer there during prohibition.*

Alberta Gund: On 10<sup>th</sup> and Adams was Humms Bakery. The Holicka family, which was of Bohemian descent, built the original building. At that time it was a grocery store. It is now a recycled clothing store.

Martin Langen: Kiddy corner across the ally was a little one-room building. It was a milk station. The farmers would bring the bulk raw milk in and the neighbor lady would dip it out with a dipper into people's containers. Before noon they closed it down and the farmers took the extra home.

Alberta Gund: Also on 10<sup>th</sup> and Adams was Tabbert's Dry Goods Store. They had a little toy department, and a little room to try on clothes.

Steve Kulcinski: Pepsi Cola built the building right here at 1820 West Avenue It was the Bump Pump Co. We made pumps during the war and I worked there.

Audrey Medinger: Mr. McVey had a malt shop. Mr. McVey had started the Super Ice Cream shop over on 16<sup>th</sup> Street; then he moved over here. He and his wife ran the grocery store and Malt Shop.

Phyllis Hermanson: I've seen a lot of different stores like down on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, all those stores are pretty much gone like Penneys and Sears, they've moved out to the mall.

Steve Kulcinski: Kabat's owned two taverns. One of Kabat's taverns was at 1233 So. 10<sup>th</sup> and the other was at 957 Hood. The building on the corner of West Ave. and Tyler was Justin's Bicycle shop. At 917 Denton was Mitchell's butcher shop. They sold some canned good stuff and meat, you name it. It later became Baum's butcher shop.

Sandy Herold: There was also a grill in the neighborhood called Kahn's Grill. It was across from the tennis courts on 7<sup>th</sup> and Farnam. I can remember on Friday nights my dad would go and get carry out chicken and it was wonderful chicken. They were well known throughout the city for how excellent their chicken was.

Steve Kulcinski: At 1000 Redfield Street was Mitchell's Handy Store. One of the daughters made it into a tavern, later it was sold and then it burned down.

Ray Spika: There was also a Dairy, an Ice Cream Shop, and a Bakery.

Steve Kulcinski: The green house on the corner (9th and Redfield) used to be Sweeny's bicycle shop.

Martin Langen: On the north corner of West and Denton was Weis's Auto Body shop. There were also three butcher shops within five blocks from here. One is still a butcher shop, one is where they recycle magazines and stuff, and apartments have replaced the other.

Charles Hefti: Over on 5<sup>th</sup> Street between Jackson and Johnson was a butcher shop. Over on 6<sup>th</sup> and Johnson, where now a guy sharpens lawn mower blades, was a meat market.

Sandy Herold: A block through the ally was an ice cream store called McVeys.

**Q: What happened to these other businesses?**

Paul Cuta: Later on it (Abotto's Confectionery Store) became the Bright Spot. The building is still there but it has been converted to apartments. It's right by Hamilton School on 8<sup>th</sup> and Adams.

Alberta Gund: People by the name of Carrs ran the Bright Spot.

Audrey Medinger: McVey's is now a laundromat.

**Q: Did people run side businesses out of their homes?**

Alberta Gund: There were these little shops where you could get your shoes repaired. This was important cause shoes were precious things. Mr. Bicha ran one of these. He was a kindly old man. He was like a story book man because he had a limp and he always wore his cobblers apron. As a child with imagination I always thought he was just like the elves and the shoemaker. He always reminded me of that. He had a separate little shop on the grounds of his home on West Avenue between Tyler and Redfield Streets. He had a beautiful front yard with the home built back by the alley but before you got to his home there was his little shoe shop. That has been torn down and there are apartments there now. There was another shoemaker by the name of Satek who lived on 9<sup>th</sup> and Adams Street.

Martin Langen: On 8<sup>th</sup> and Denton a man made cigars, he'd roll the cigars and then he had little frames he'd put them in, like between two boards so they would stay straight. The building is still there, between the house and the garage.

Sandy Herold: One of the other things that was different about the neighborhood is that because there weren't a lot of working mothers, most of the fathers had, not necessarily two jobs, although some of them did, but they had small neighborhood side businesses. This entire neighborhood had its own small economic system. You knew who fixed cars and would get a much better price from them than if you went to a car dealership to have it fixed. Somebody would sell worms for fishing at a lower price than the bait and tackle shop. People would sell vegetables. One gentleman did upholstery and another fixed outboard motors. I just though it was pretty neat that there was this whole underground economic structure.

### **What can you say about the Strand and Swedes Business District?**

Paul Cuta: It was on Jackson St. where the laundromat is now between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. It was all a series of buildings going out from the corner to about a quarter of the block. The rest of the block was entirely residential.

Alberta Gund: It was kind of L-shaped and it ran West Ave and Jackson there were all little stores. It was just kind of nice, but they tore it down.

Paul Cuta: There was a whole complex of buildings. There were little beaneries in there. I think there was a Caramel Corn Shop. There was also a record store there, and a dry cleaner.

Sandy Herold: The area where Walgreen's and the Soap Opera Laundromat are now was Swedes Business District. They had a store in there that sold cheap french fries and wonderful hamburgers. It also had pinball machines. Kids were welcome there and so it was kind of a hangout for kids in the neighborhood. On the corner next door to Swedes Business District was Rude's Drugstore. I think Swedes disappeared in '75 or '76 and the drugstore was gone before that. There was also an actual movie theater. My mom talks about taking us there when we were kids, but I can't remember. It was called the Strand Movie Theater. All that's left of the Strand Movie Theatre now is one section of bricks on the sidewalk in front of the Soap Opera.



**Share your Memories**

## Our Culture and Faith

The ethnicity of the Powell Park-Hood Park-Hamilton School Neighborhood has changed through the years. Bohemian, German, Irish, and Polish were just a few of the nationalities common back then and are still talked about today. In addition, the neighborhood's ethnicity has grown with the recent immigration of other nationalities such as Asians within the last ten years or so.

Nationality and the language spoken often influenced where one shopped or what businesses one frequented. In addition nationality many times affected what church one belonged to and what school one attended. For instance, Holy Trinity Catholic Church was primarily comprised of Germans. It was built in 1888 at 1333 South 13<sup>th</sup> Street. It had initially been called St. Nicholas Parish, but was later changed. Holy Cross Catholic Church, on the other-hand, was established in 1885 at 13<sup>th</sup> and Ferry as a Polish congregation.

Some of the other churches talked about by the neighborhood residents include, St. Wenceslaus, which was founded in 1873 at 946 Winnebago Street. The first Catholic church in La Crosse was St. Mary's, built in 1856. It was a simple church located at 7<sup>th</sup> and Cameron Avenue. Later on, it was moved to West Avenue, and a new brick church was built in its place in 1874-75. However, it was razed in 1961, and its members were dispersed to different parishes. St. Joseph, the Workman Cathedral, was first built in the 1870's. A tower, and eventually a tower clock and bells were added in the early 1880's. Later on, a new cathedral was built on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Main Street. St. John's Church was completed and dedicated in March of 1894 at 832 Avon Street. In its later years, before it was torn down in 1985, it was a Boy's Club. The final church is the St. Thomas More Church located at 13<sup>th</sup> and Weston.

### **Q: What are the different ethnic groups of the neighborhood?**

Sandy Herold: I'm not sure if it (ethnicity) was separated in blocks back at that time, but as I understand it, the Polish families had a strong Catholic background. In fact my great-grandmother, not the Mrs. August Wendt one, but Mary Kulcinski who was on 900 block of Johnson Street. I just know that with her religious background they were Catholic and converted over to Lutheran when the priest made passes at her. I'm not really sure how the blocks were organized but I know that there had been a Catholic and a Lutheran church in the area very near by, somewhere between here and Hamilton School. I think

they are gone, so the only nearest church is Holy Trinity. That's been established for quite some time, too. There was another one further north in the neighborhood. I do know that when I was a child in the 60's the Lutheran and the Catholic children were not supposed to play together. So if that was that strong of a prejudice between the two religions at that point, my guess is that it was much stronger earlier. I mean they just plain told you at the Lutheran schools that you weren't supposed to talk to the Catholic kids because the difference in beliefs, and the fact that basically they were all going to hell because they prayed to Mary. You know the Lutheran church doesn't do confession and has no Mary concept, she's a very minor role. I would guess that there was a little bit of controversy, religion wise, way back when already in the neighborhood. I think that there's still just a little tad of that, but I think what it would be referred to now as a kind of elitism. I mean the two schools representing those denominations are Aquinas High School and Luther High School. Luther is in Onalaska and the Lutheran schools basically stay away from the public schools and they are kind of isolationist. However, the Catholic schools have kind of joined the city conference, and games and so on and so forth, but Onalaska Luther still hasn't. They are still very standoffish. It's the least reformed Lutheran church, the Wisconsin Synod. I just thought that we were always Catholic because of our German background until someone finally spoke about the story of my great-grandma. I always think it's hilarious. Then the other thing is, is that my grandpa, who would have been one of the converted from Catholic to Lutheran, committed suicide. When you committed suicide in those days, you were not allowed to be buried in the regular cemetery. They would bury you on the outside of the fence because by committing suicide it's something about taking your own soul so fast and that you're condemned to hell. So I'm not exactly sure how far on the outside of the fence he was buried, but I guess I know he was, that's what I've heard.

Len Roellich: Primarily this was a Bohemian neighborhood. The people across the street were Bohemian, next door they were Bohemian, and across the alley they were Bohemian. When my dad bought the place it was Bohemian. Gradually as the older people passed away, the people next door sold the house, and then a different nationality moved in. Like Tom (Len's son) indicated, there was a diversified neighborhood when Tom grew up, but when I grew up it was primarily Bohemian. But we were German. I would say this whole area around here was part German and Bohemian and couple of the other nationalities, but it was mixed. So it was I think primarily sort of a Bohemian and German neighborhood, and a few Norwegians in there. It just happened to be this area. Of course now it's entirely a different population. You can observe that.

Dorothy Paulikas: I think it was very varied ethnic backgrounds (when she began to teach in 1969 at Hamilton School), but it was a population of people of European descent, I'd say. It did change over the years I had noticed that. There was a gradual change in our populations. . . . The population just became more and more diverse as the years went on. I don't think the problem started with the students. Sometimes there was a problem because parents didn't understand even the background of certain people that came there. The students really didn't have a problem. They are not the first ones to notice that someone is not exactly the same. They are very accepting. So I don't think there was really a problem with students. They played with children. They played with them not

because of their color or nationality, but because they were doing something that interested them.

Ray Spika: Anyway you went around here all you met was Bohemians just about. That didn't change much until about oh latter '50s early '60s. Then they either died off, sold out, or moved east.

**Q: How did the different nationalities and religious denominations interact and affect each other?**

Alberta Gund: The neighborhood was comprised of German Lutheran people, German Catholics, and a spattering of us Bohemian Catholics. At that time there were great divisions, even in the Catholic church. Holy Trinity was German, the working German class. St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral, was more prosperous Germans. We had Holy Cross, the Polish church, which was on Ferry Street between 13th and 14th. We had St. Mary's, that is no longer existing, on 7th Street. A little bit south of that was Irish, and St. Wenceslaus was Bohemian. . . . There was such loyalty to each nationality. The mass said in Latin, but the epistle, gospel and sermon was preached in Bohemian until I would say the 1930's maybe, just before the war. Then they did not preach anymore in that tongue. I can remember the old people faithfully going to church every day plodding through the snow and that. They (the St. Wenceslaus parish) built three churches and it was quite an accomplishment. I think it's the only parish in the city of La Crosse that did. They had a small little chapel, and they had their brick church, and the present church that stands in yellow brick with tile roof. My journeys over in the Czech Republic resembles the churches over there. When my father was a boy, he cleaned. When they tore down the brick church, the boys in his class cleaned all the bricks. Took the mortar away from them, and they used that to line St. Wenceslaus church for insulation purposes. In the European countries, they still use two types of building materials to insulate. Maybe to this day they don't anymore, but that had been the tradition. That's how they kind of insulated their buildings. I can remember the processions of Corpus Christi, and forty hours of devotion, and that we had very beautiful processions. Another little girl, she had black hair, and I, had red hair, and we kind of remained small until about the third grade. We always had the privilege of leading the processions, and we'd carry baskets of flowers and we strew them in the aisles.

Ray Spika: Just like our church, there's a lot of the old people. They still are very angry. The bishop closed up a lot of churches, you see. Weren't economically feasible or something like that. Anyhow, St. John's, St. Mary's, St. Wenceslaus, Holy Cross, and I don't know what else. That's your ethnicity. You know that's where your food, your music everything (comes from), and once you lose... Our parish priest, Father Cech, Monsignor Cech later, was very anti-German. He didn't want anything to do with them except he'd send them kids out to play ball against Trinity, and he'd say, "Beat the Germans." He didn't care if they were the same religion or nothing.

Tom Weber: They were mostly Catholic that I'm familiar with because I'm Catholic. Holy Trinity is two blocks away. There used to be right down here on 10<sup>th</sup> Street a St.

Wencesluas. There were actually a number of churches that went through here. There was a Baptist church. There were Lutheran churches on 16<sup>th</sup> and Farnam. So there was kind of a mixture, but I think predominantly there were a number of Catholics that lived in the neighborhood. There was pretty much everything kind of mixed. It just happened that there were a lot of people that lived, I think, in this neighborhood that went to Holy Trinity. So they were Catholic, but there were a lot of other faiths close by.

Tom Roellich: Twenty-eight boys on the block. I recall, when I was about ten years old, half of us were Lutheran and half were Catholic. I'm Catholic and all the Lutheran kids went to the Lutheran school on West Avenue and Ferry Street, First Evangelical Lutheran Church Wisconsin Synod, I believe. Us Catholic kids, depending upon what nationality you were, we went to four different catholic schools. It was St. Wencenslaus on 10th and Mississippi, which was a Bohemian parish. There was the Polish parish Holy Cross where the present St. Joseph Cathedral School is now. Holy Trinity School, which is still standing on 13th and Park Avenue and 13th and Denton, that's where I went to school because I was German ancestry. Then there were some Irish people that lived down the block. They went over to St. Mary's, and that school and church was on the corner of 7th and Cameron Avenue. There used to be some battles in the neighborhood, who was better the Catholics or the Lutherans but we all got along good.

Steve Kulcinski: There's no problem so far as being different religion. There's no problem. Fact is when Father Plessity? was at Holy Trinity, we'd go over at night and sit with him for hours. He was just that nice of a guy. He never tried to change me from Lutheran to Catholic. He gave me a little prayer before I went into the service, and I carried it all during the war and it was Catholic and I'm Lutheran. But my dog tags said what I was, I was Lutheran. But there were never any fights between Catholics or Lutherans or the Polish, you name it. We had Germans, Norwegians, Polocks, and Bohemians you name it. We're all in the same neighborhood.

**Q: What was it like having different languages spoken in the neighborhood at school, church, or in your own home?**

Martin Langen: Some people couldn't speak English. They'd speak German. I imagine there were Norwegians who couldn't speak English either. My mother's folks were Swiss, and I could understand my grandmother real well. She spoke Swiss. At home we'd talk German and English, but when we started going to school, then we started speaking English all the time, but before I went to school I didn't know there was any difference. You just talk whatever you were talking. My father was an assessor, and there was a boy my age there while they were marking down the cattle and stuff on that sheet. The boy and I were playing and talking, and sometimes I'd talk to him and he just didn't answer me. I thought can't he hear. It was a couple years later when it dawned on me that he couldn't understand. I must have been talking German to him. He didn't know what I was saying. When he'd start talking I could understand him all right. Then we'd get along good until I'd lapse into that German. If I start talking German I'd keep right on

talking German until he'd start talking English, and then I'd answer him back in English. I must have been pretty young at that time that I didn't know the difference.

Ray Spika: When you went to school it was always Bohemian spoken around here. My mother and her sister, and their neighbor, they'd be talking German and then you'd go into the front room and there might be somebody there talking in Bohemian.

Dorothy Paulikas: The first Hmong families came to Hamilton School in September of 1980. That's when our school population really began to grow. We didn't have anyone who could translate the language for a number of years, an employee, but the children translated for each other because there were some children that either came knowing some English, some American, language or picked it up very quickly. So they could help other children. (During parent/teacher conferences in the beginning) the children had to translate because there wasn't anyone else, unless sometimes the Hmong family would bring another Hmong person who understood English quite well and could translate. Their own children translated for them, and even in later years some Hmong families did not wish to use the translator, but preferred for their children to translate for them. That seemed to work out okay.

**Q: What else would you like to share about your culture and faith?**

Martin: They had Holy Trinity. St. Wencenslaus was another Catholic church. Then, part of Holy Trinity was sort of divided. They started Thomas More out on Weston Street. There was a Polish church and an Irish church and the cathedral. All Catholic churches. There weren't any Protestant churches right in the immediate area here. Well they'd have the German sermon in the German church and English in the cathedral, but they'd have German too.

Connie Xiong: We have a religion, but don't know how to explain our religion.

Tony Xiong: Just Hmong culture.

Steve Kulcinski: The building at 927 Adams Street was a tavern. At one time it use to be Temp's Tavern. This guy in the yellow house would walk across the street, get all his beer, and then he would heat it with a poker because that's the way Germans drink their beer, with a hot poker in it.

Estelle Weber: The church events were always nice. We celebrated our hundredth year at (Holy) Trinity about ten, eleven years ago. My dad's uncles, two of them were founders of the church. They're the one's that got together, and started the church. They got a lot of people together. They were the ones who were noted as being talked about as the ones who did that. We had a lot of good connections all those years with the church as such too. It's a very nice parish to belong to because it's friendly, down to earth, and everybody's nice to everybody. There are a lot of the kids that are going there now that came from parents of kids that went to school over there.



## **Share your Memories**

## Our Past Times and Events

In the past, people did all sorts of things for recreation. Neighborhood and family get-togethers for some were rare, but, for others, they were a great time. In the early part of the century radio and television, which were just emerging, had not fully developed yet. It was quite a few years before they became common in most everyone's home. In the mean time, people found pleasure in simple things such as picnics, softball and baseball, fishing and hunting, and dancing. Movies were a real treat when they came into existence. Festivals, fairs, and circuses were big, exciting events to a growing neighborhood. People found enjoyment in all of these activities and many more.

### **Q: What type of gatherings did you attend?**

Charles Hefti: My dad worked for the Laundry (Modern Laundry), a big outing would be the Laundry would throw a picnic for all of their people out at Myrick Park out there. You could bring your family and they'd give the kids a treat. We had ice cream. They'd have the girls serve ice cream cones for you, and they'd give you a free picnic lunch there and everything else. That was a big outing, to go to something like that.

Connie Xiong: (At parties) Oh, drink beer. Make a lot of food, lots of eggrolls, lots of fried rice and stir fry, and sweet and sour pork. Usually we do it at someone else's house because my house is too small, usually my father's house.

Charles Hefti: Family reunion. I vaguely remember one. They had one over in the Gazebo over in Pettibone. My aunts and uncles and cousins, the whole bunch was there and we were at the Gazebo. That was a big outing to get the whole family together.

Herb Fuchs: In the summertime, the big thing, we'd all get together. Each one, you'd tell my mother, would tell the next person that they're going to bring potato salad or something. Then the fisherman would fry up a bunch of fish. They always had a giant kettle. The thing was almost as big as this table I would say. It'd be about two and half feet in diameter. They'd get these snapping turtles and other ingredients and it was all put in that kettle. You'd have the best turtle soup you could ever eat. Each parent donated twenty-five cents, plus a food donation. The kids each got a soda pop, and of course then they had their keg of beer. That was a very summer event. Happened quite often.

### **Q: Where did you go to watch movies?**

Estelle Weber: There was a Strand Movie Theater. That was a busy place on a Sunday afternoon.

John Weber: Right where the laundry mat is. In fact the sidewalk out there is still part of when the theater was there, with them little red squares. That was the entrance into the theater. You'd go to the Strand Theater for ten cents and see a double feature.

Tom Weber: That was open a couple times. I can remember on Saturday mornings, a couple of times, going there, but that was at the stage when it... I know it was open when I was alive, but I can only remember going there a couple of times. In fact it was mostly closed down. It was still standing and they did have on a couple of Saturdays I remember it opened up.

Steve Kulcinski: It was next door to Rude's drugstore. Rude's drugstore sat on West Avenue, and the Strand Theater sat on Jackson Street. When my kids were small we would take them all over there to the movies and when I was small even. We'd go to the Strand Theater and you'd see the serials and Roy Rogers and Gene Autry and then they always had serials that you'd have to go back after the next week and see Buck Rogers and stuff like that. Stuff that is now coming to pass. They are going into space. Then it was just a myth.

Frank Spika: That was a popular place. It had its ups and downs. Even when we lived here for a long time we'd go up to Strand Theater just a block away. Right through the park, on Jackson Street. It's the Soap Opera now, the laundry mat. There were many, many good times we had there. They (silent movies) had music accompaniment. Usually quite an expert pianist would play music. Sometimes they had it synchronized with the play, but that was in later years. We had a few theaters downtown. Strand was built about 1915 or thereabouts. On Saturdays, mostly on Saturdays (Serials-continuing movies). The Hidden Hand, the Iron Claw, and things like that. They left you in suspense until the next week, always a cliffhanger. One time, there was a theater on Main Street, off of Third, and they had an egg for admission. I don't know if it was around Easter or what. So I think about five of us got an egg, went up to this place, and they had discontinued it. So there we were no money, and five eggs. What'll we do? We just have to go home, and before we got home, four of the eggs had broken. Only one kid had an egg left. They used to have potato shows. A potato got you in free, and various other gimmicks.

Charles Hefti: One night a week Marc, Bob Marc, from Community Camera, that was really small then, but one night a week he'd go to the parks, different parks, and they'd put the canvas up and they'd show a movie. People would come with their lawn chairs and sit over in the park battling mosquitoes and flies and watching the movie. It was a movie. You didn't care (what it was). It would have been in the 30's.

Kathleen Hefti: You wouldn't care what it (a movie in the park) was. You just watched it. That's when people didn't have any money. A little bit went a long way. I mean a free movie was something great.

**Q: What were the different festivals, fairs, circuses, and other events like?**

Len Roellich: They had an ice carnival here back in 1923. 1923-24, I think, it was that we had a Winter Carnival here.

Herb Fuchs: Then, in the wintertime, the big thing was they had an ice carnival. Winter Carnival we use to call it. That was a tremendous getting ready for. Everybody participated in something of it. Then of course you had sleds there, and they had all kinds of decorated wagons and stuff. They didn't have all these automobiles and things that they have today. That was a thing to look forward to, that Winter Carnival.

Alberta Gund: The Sokols was an athletic movement that steamed from the Czech Republic, which means falcon. The Germans had it in the form of what they call the turners. They would do calisthenics and high jumping, broad jumping, parallel bars, rings, all the gymnastics. That was very, very big. Then they would have what they call a gathering of all these Bohemian Sokols, and they called it a slet. The last one was in 1938, and it was held in La Crosse on Powell's Park grounds and it was very, very beautiful.

Estelle Weber: When we were kids, they called them (festivals), like Turkey Fests. We'd always have them in November. They'd spin like the roulette wheel. If you were lucky it would land on your number, and you would get a nice great big turkey. Turkey Fests were fun. They'd have fishing ponds for the kids.

Alberta Gund: It (St. Wencenslaus School's gym/auditorium with stage) was used for raffles, a big turkey raffle. We looked forward to that because that was really something. That was the only time you ever saw or knew of a turkey. I mean that was really something. Turkeys weren't prevalent then. It was also goose and duck. They'd have these big wheels, and they'd spin them, and then you knew what you were going to win. I was happy when they got the goose because I loved goose. It was so wonderful tasting. When we had this turkey raffle, the older girls would dress in their Bohemian traditional costumes, and we'd have sort of a Bohemian dinner. The married women would of course do all the cooking for days. Everybody from La Crosse would come to that.

Estelle Weber: The old fairgrounds were out by the university. My aunt lived there on La Crosse Street, right next to the stable, where they kept the horses. She was the last house on La Crosse Street. I always thought the fair was exciting when it was out there. The most fun was trying to sneak in for nothing when I was little. The horses were stabled right along there, and I'll never forget that. I always thought that was nice.

Martin Langen: I saw Buffalo Bill. That was sort of a rodeo in a way. They'd have trains of horses going through different maneuvers and things like that. Then, when Buffalo Bill came out, he came out riding real fast. A man had a basket with glass balls that he threw up in the air, and Buffalo bill would shoot them out. Never missed. Bang! Bang! I couldn't figure out whether he was that good or whether he had bird shots, or whether the concussion busted the glass. It was awful thin looking glass. I was probably 12.

Steve Kulcinski: The fair which was out beyond between the grandstand and the fence at UW-La Crosse. That used to be the fair grounds. They usually had the fair in between because where the football field is, it was a racetrack. I worked with a guy, when I was a kid, on Model Ts over at Redfield Street. Behind it was a car garage, and he built Model T racing cars, which raced at the fair grounds.

Sandy Herold: They had circus people come and visit. They had set up the trapeze on the clotheslines, and they would winter here. Then they would go off to the Flying Floyds. They weren't just any circus people, they were very well known.

Steve Kulcinski: They use to come, and all of us kids used to go out and watch when they came in on the train. This was the circus lot, behind Badger Corrugating Co.; this was where they'd have the circus every year. Ringling Bros., and Barnum and Bailey. All of them.

Estelle Weber: Well then, the circus was right out here on West Avenue and Green Bay. That was always fun whenever it would come to town. That was Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey. (It came) practically every summer or every couple of summers. Then we would sit on the curb of Green Bay, like 10th and Green Bay or any of this vicinity, and watch the wagons as they'd pull into town with the animals and such. They'd have a long parade out to the grounds. So that was fun as a kid to remember.

Steve Kulcinski: It would come in where the train depot was. Right where they just built the new Holiday hotel across from the Civic Center. The circus would come in there on the train, and then they would bring the wagons down Front Street to 3<sup>rd</sup> and turn off on Green Bay Street. Green Bay Street was all brick street, and then on West Avenue they would turn right and go to the circus the place, which is right behind the Badger Corrugating Co., that was the circus lot. Later on, after they started building that up, they went out to Erickson Field, which is out beyond Tranes. They had the circuses out there. They'd have sideshows and elephants. The elephants done all the work putting up the tents and everything. They'd have trapeze acts and stuff like that, and my uncle would be in some of the things over here.

**Q: What else do you like to do for leisure?**

Steve Kulcinski: We use to play cards more. Go on picnics. My dad used to work until six o'clock at night, eight in the morning until six at night. Then my mother would pick him up from work with his kids, and then we'd go fishing over in the lagoon. Then we'd fish until dark and have a picnic supper. My dad would take us fishing all the time on weekends. When he didn't have to work. He worked six days a week. Finally we got a boat and we used to do a lot of fishing down around Genoa just off of the rocks, and we always caught a lot of fish. My dad was quite a fisherman.

Herb Fuchs: Everybody loved to fish in this family. In the wintertime, and fall of the year, we went duck hunting and rabbit hunting. So we were interested in every sport.

Steve Kulcinski: We (Steve and his brother) use to go ice fishing, and in fall I never went out for football because that's when it went right into trapping season. I've been trapping since I was eleven years old. That's sixty-two years. I have a collection of old traps, I have a collection of decoys, old plugs, I've got a collection of that, I've got a collection of about almost everything. Trapping years ago, the fact is I've helped pay for my house with it, my first furnace, my first TV. We had a lot of Christmases that you were usually laid off in the winter because that's when the worked slacked, and then I would go trapping. There was good money in trapping. You'd catch two to three thousand muskrats and you'd get \$1.50, \$1.75 a piece for them. At that time you'd make three to four thousand dollars in a month. That was good money. Trapped beaver. I think I caught about sixty some one year. That's when if you caught five or ten that would be a lot. I had sixty one year, and then 50 one year. It varied on the conditions of trapping. Used to be they had open water trapping. Well when they had open water trapping one day I caught fourteen beaver. That's quite a few to catch and fact is I almost sunk the boat I had so many. They were big; any where's up to ninety pounds a piece. Well you take ten fifty pound beaver and you got five hundred pound of weight in your boat. That's quite a bit. Mink, I've trapped a lot of mink. Highest I ever caught in one day was seven. The most I think I caught in a year was thirty-four in ten days. That's still a pretty good average when you get twenty-three to twenty-seven dollars a piece, but now they're almost worthless. You get ten to twelve dollars, fifteen. So it don't really pay to trap now, but it gets in your blood and you like to put a challenge. Mink is the smartest thing there is, mink and otter, and sometimes you get a smart beaver.

Paul Hefti: (Talking about his bottle display in yard) You know when they (curious people) come, and I see them, I bring them in and give them a tour and they are happy, but if I say, "No, get away. I don't want you around here," then the sparks will fly. So I keep on the good side of them. I have had people here from Switzerland, Germany, France, Bangladesh, Texas, all over. I'd imagine over a thousand (visitors). I have four guest books. I have them sign a guest book. So if people don't believe it, well then here's the book, but I hate to show it to them because it takes them a half an hour or so to look it over. By that time I could do something else. I also have them put down in the book two of their favorite items because there's a lot of stuff that I like to either take down or keep up, but the stuff that they like the best I like to keep up. Otherwise if I wouldn't do that I'd have so much stuff that I wouldn't be able to cut the grass. (How he got started). I started at 5:30pm 1986. One of those bicycle wheels. Well I put up one and a fellow came around and looked at it and said, "That looks nice." So I put up another one. I have been adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. Now I need a computer.

Faling Yang: We (Faling and his wife, Karin) like to go out to eat fish on Friday nights. We hang out. We just go out to eat most of the time on the weekends when I'm off, but otherwise we just stay at home and do whatever.

Ray Spika: The Bohemian Hall was built in, I think 1880. My great-grandfather Frank Kreutz built that. Well it was the celebration just before Lent and we'd go and eat or something like that. Then everybody had to fast from then on in. So before the forty days

of fasting, they'd have a hell of a dance. They'd have Christmas parties, masquerade balls, and wedding dances. My grandmother, my dad says she used to cook for over a hundred weddings. It used to be a saloon and dance hall, but now they've torn out that wall so it's just one big room.

Herb Fuchs: The Bohemians had a tavern over here on 7th Street. The Bohemian Hall it was called. They had a marvelous time there. It was a tavern connected to a hall and that was where they had their dancing.

Frank Spika: It was a saloon neighborhood. They had a dance hall in conjunction. My dad used to play the accordion and my brother Joe use to play the violin for the dances. They use to have... oh maybe weddings and things and also like a pre-Lenten dance, and various other festivals would be accommodated.

Steve Kulcinski: Bohemian Hall had dances. My brother played there one week and the next week Havlicek's Band would play there because Havlicek was related to the owners.

Frank Spika: They (Centennial Beer Gardens) also had a beer tavern or a saloon with a dance hall connected but they also had a large open space surrounded by fencing, where then they had a band stand where the band would play and the people would sit out and get into the card games or drinking beer.

Steve Kulcinski: We all hung around, at one time, out at Powell Park. What they flood now (for ice-skating) is nothing. I mean the whole thing was flooded. I imagine it was about three times as big as what it is now. People practiced speed skating, and figure skating, and stuff like that. We'd hang around Hood Street. There's always something to do at the park. Craft work and stuff like that.

Tom Weber: Oh we did a lot of different things with the church. My dad was president of the Men's Club there (at Holy Trinity). We use to do things like clean up the Oktoberfest grounds. When the Oktoberfest first started the Men's Club had a contract. So we'd get up at what was essentially closing time, because all the fathers would take their sons with, and my brothers and I and my dad would get up real early in the morning and go and clean the Oktoberfest grounds for three, four hours. This was even when it was over by Mary Sawyer Auditorium, which is where the juvenile detention center is, there use to be an auditorium there. That parking lot use to be the Oktoberfest grounds before they are at where they are now. The Holy Trinity Men's Club use to clean that all the time. They also had chicken Q's, and they had all kinds of activities at church that as members, because we went to grade school and because our parents were active, we were involved with pretty much every activity they had going.

Steve Kulcinski: Well, like I say ever since I've been repairing engines you get odd ones. I like the 1939 ones, that was a good year, and I probably got about 40 or 50 1939 different engines all the way from horse and a quarter up to eight/ten horse, somewhere in there. They never made real big engines and I have a collection of them. Quite a few of them.

Estelle Weber: I don't remember that we ever had too much right in this neighborhood going on. I had always wished that we could have had block parties or something. I just thought that would have been a lot of fun.

Martin Langen: My dad took us on a ride on the river, an excursion boat to Winona. There we got off the boat for probably twenty minutes. We'd just walk around the park. Then back on again, and came back in the same day.

Alberta Gund: It seemed like there were two nights, and it was just like everybody was coming out of their houses and going down to Powell's Park for these ball games (softball). That was a real big thing. They were all teams that you knew, like the breweries had a team. You knew the players so that made it very interesting. (They) probably lived in the neighborhood and etc.

Herb Fuchs: Of course everybody played ball, baseball amateur baseball was a big thing and sixteen inch softball was a big thing at that time.

John Weber: Where the football field is, there was a racetrack around there that they had harness racing with the fair. Where the football is, the track went around. Also, there was a football field that was down a little bit below that and that's when G. Heileman Brewery had a semi-pro football team. They played out there. I guess they played the Packers once. I remember going down, I wish I had that there orange Heileman badge. You went down as a kid as a booster and you registered at the Heileman's office. They gave you that thing (a badge), and you could get into the football games for free because you were in the booster club.