



Neighborhood News

The Newsletter of The Old Third Ward Association, Inc.
Summer 2000

Dear Neighbors

Spring has come to the OTW and with this issue an inaugural advice column by Dave Bluma on defining our corner of the city with flowers and butterflies. Dave's home occupies the flower-filled yard on Fifth Street, which was the hit of last year's Home Tour.

Soon we will be seeing plaques going up on the homes that have been featured in our previous Home Tours. These plaques identify the home's first occupants and also reinforce the range of history and architecture that makes up the OTW

The City Planning Department is in the process of reviewing the Second Draft of the River Front Development Plan. To date, the plans for high density, high-income housing between the Atlas Mill and the Fox River Mill is still in place. Also, nothing seems to have changed regarding consideration of traffic and parking repercussions of development. The OTW Board has been in contact with the Planning Department and will be giving some written commentary about our concerns. We will, as usual, keep you informed.

Lastly, I would like to thank Jim Rader for his work as President for the past year Jim helped organize and he gave us much needed financial advice. He will remain involved in monitoring the Riverfront Development. We thank you for coming forward when you did and for your past and future efforts. Bill Anderson, a long-time Board member, has graciously agreed to act as President.

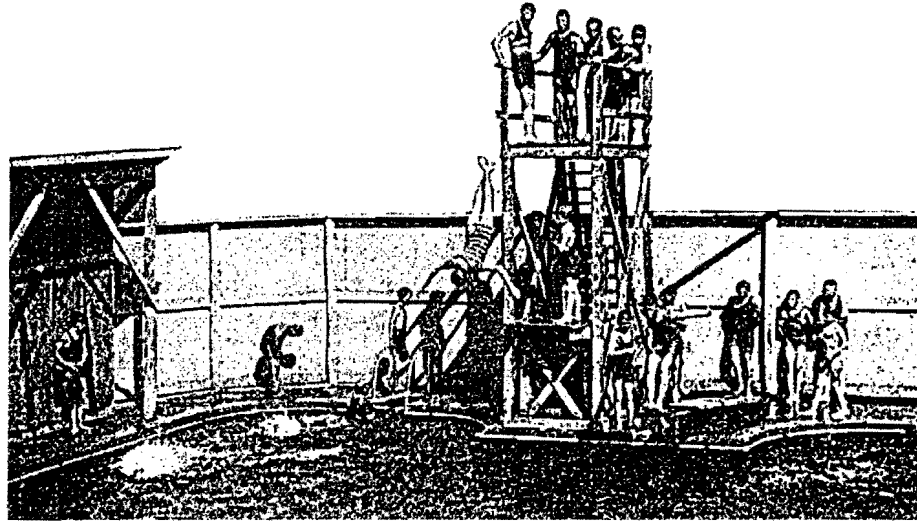
Linda Muldoon, Editor, Neighborhood News

THE OLD SWIMMING POOL

Those of you familiar with the Walking Tour know that at one time there was a swimming pool next to the Water Department on the River. The steps which once led to the pool are still visible on the bluff where Elm meets Prospect. Young people came to the pool from around the City. Boys and girls swam on opposite days.

While interviewing many of the folks who remember swimming there in the 20's and 30's,

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The swimming pool on the river. (late 20's—early 30's.)

the story of water department employees spying on the girls on the days they swam has surfaced several times. Hyacinth Dagen, now 88, reports pinning a canvas flap shut over their peephole to gain privacy.

Tom Mullen also tells a story from the 1930's of a group of young men who, one hot night, decided to go swimming and proceeded down the hill. The first off the diving board in the dark was Frank Steenis of Fifth St. What makes this a story at all is that the pool had been drained that day - and yes, except for the broken leg, Frank survived. The Steenis family used to set up a red box in front of their house at 406 W. Fifth to sell candy, gum, and home-made root beer to the thirsty, would-be swimmers. With this money they bought a "carbide cannon" with which to loudly celebrate the Fourth of July.

Home Tour Time

Home Tour 2000 is set for September. Once again volunteers will be needed to serve as guides. Research on the four tour homes is being done and the Committee would be grateful for any information or pictures any of you might have on the following: *(Please contact Dave Bluma)*

1. The visit of John F. Kennedy to 303 S. Walnut St. during the 1960 election. Also, the Lennon family of the same address.
2. The Wichman family and the Putney family.
3. The Baldwin family of 707 S. State Street.

The Bloomin Times

By Dave Bluma

Old Third Ward Community Participation

This column is being written to encourage residents of the OTW to participate in a community event. When I mention marigolds to friends, the first response I usually get is, "South Oneida St." With the cooperation of a few neighbors, that street is turned into a brilliant display of color.

Working together as a neighborhood, we can add to the beauty of the OTW while at the same time helping to define ourselves as a distinct place.

If you need help getting started or have questions, you can usually find me working in my yard during the evening at 621 W. 5th St. You can also reach me at 428-4595. I'd also like to hear suggestions for the next issue of The Blooming Times.

Butterfly Gardening

1999 was my first year living in the Old Third Ward. I decided to experiment with the plants that I had not worked with before. One of these plants was the butterfly bush. I did not really believe that by planting them I would have butterflies in the yard. Was I surprised! Once the bushes started flowering, there were butterflies on them every day, as many as two dozen at a time. These bushes are quite easy to grow. The bushes that I planted were purchased in a dormant state, bare root, from Jung

Seed Co. You can order a catalog by mailing a request to: J.W. Jung Seed Co., 335 S. High St., Randolph, WI 53957.

Jung also has two retail stores in Madison, a store in Stevens Point, and a store in Randolph. This year's catalog lists 7 colors of butterfly bushes at a price of \$5.95 each.

PAPER HALL OF FAME

Chris Doyle, representing the Paper Industry Hall of Fame, has met with the OTW Board and given personal tours to several of our members regarding the renovation of the Atlas Mill. The intent of this organization is to restore the Atlas Mill and to use half of the space as a museum and to lease the remaining space. The building would have exhibits, tours, and meetings. Chris Doyle hopes to show the museum in the broad picture of the history which sits in our neighborhood. Not only did many of the early workers live in the neighborhood, but also, the architect of the first mill was Thomas O'Keefe who once lived on the SW corner of Sixth and Walnut. He is also the architect of St. Mary's Church.

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Following the Ladies

When trying to trace the histories of the houses of the OTW, many of the connections between families and the reasons for real estate transfers are obscured due to the invisibility of the females of the family. Maiden names have been dropped and so the lineage of half of the family is difficult to trace. Yet, once known, the connection of one family to another through marriage makes neighborhood relationships clearer. Many marriages occurred between the sons and daughters of the early settlers of the OTW.

Two Nineteenth Century women whose stories surfaced while researching their husbands appear below.

Libbie C. Baer

The home of John M. Baer still exists at 517 S. State St. John Baer's story is a dramatic one of the Civil War. After enlisting at age 16, he suffered wounds at Vicksburg and Snaggy Point, he became a prisoner of war at Cheneyville, La. His exploits take up over three pages in *Soldiers' Album of Personal Record*. Captain Baer first settled in Black Creek after the war. He served as Magistrate, Supervisor, Registrar of Deeds, and Chairman of the Outagamie County Board. He was also Appleton's Postmaster. Their son, John Baer, attended Lawrence, and then went on to become a national cartoonist and journalist as well as a U.S. Congressman from N. Dakota.



Cynthia and Theodore Conkey House, 433 W. Prospect Street

Libbie Riley was born in Ohio in 1849. She married John Baer, a soldier, in 1867. An article in the *Milwaukee Journal* in 1892 states that she "has long been known as a writer of children's stories." She was related to James Whitcomb Riley, the poet. She, too, wrote poems and was noticed as early as age 10 for her writing. In addition, she was the organizer of the first Indian Women's Relief Corp in the world.

John Baer outlived his wife. A letter to the *Appleton Weekend Review* in 1931 from John Baer, then living in California with his daughter reports, "About all the trouble I have are the effects of my old wound; it affects my hips and makes getting around some job . . . Wish all old soldiers could live in such a climate as this and enjoy the fruit and flowers we have here."

Cynthia Conkey

An entire newsletter could be devoted to the Conkey family and in the future perhaps we can do just that. Two Conkey homes still exist on Prospect St.: the original, built by Cynthia and Theodore in 1849, is at 433 W. Prospect; a home built in 1891 and designed by architect Philip Dean for the widowed Mrs. Conkey stands at 423 W. Prospect.

Most neighbors will have the name of Theodore Conkey on their abstracts. Theodore Conkey platted the Old Third Ward, donated the land for the Courthouse; he was a State Senator and Congressman; named Outagamie County, was a Colonel in the Civil War, fought against Quantrell's Raiders, and guarded forts on the frontier after the War. He and Cynthia came to Appleton in 1849. One daughter, Alice, married Alexander Reid. It is in her honor that Alicia Park

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is named. Another daughter, Helen, married Lyman Barnes who was the D.A. for Appleton and in 1892 was elected to the U.S. Congress.

Cynthia Conkey was born in New York of a family filled with early settlers and Revolutionary War soldiers. Her grandfather fought with the Green Mountain Boys.

When he was young, Theodore was a surveyor. While working out of Green Bay, he pitched his tent on the bluff near the present site of the Conkey home. In 1848 he returned to New York and married Cynthis Foote. "Their wedding tour was a two-week's trip by water and stage to Fond du Lac, where they remained one year, Mr. Conkey building the first hotel in that place. . . In 1849 he started from Fond du Lac with his family by steamer for Appleton, but when the voyage was only partly completed something went wrong about the boat, and, after landing the passengers in the woods, it put back for repairs. Mr. Conkey, however, who was in somewhat of a hurry to reach his destination, pushed on in a small boat, leaving his wife to wait for the return of the steamer. He had bought property at Appleton and built a wing dam, now thought to have been the first improvement of that city's since famous water power." (*Commemorative Biographical Record*).

Cynthia Conkey was not someone who would be left behind in later years. "Mrs. Conkey is a woman fitted by nature for a soldier's wife. She passed several months with him at his

post of duty, on two occasions, undergoing the experiences of soldier's life in the field and encountering them with a pluck that won for her the good comradeship of the command. She was accustomed to sleep on the ground with her saddle for a pillow and the stars above her. When the company was driven out of Carthage, she escaped as one of her husband's soldiers on horseback and rode with the line. In the removal from Fort Leavenworth to Carthage she rode the entire distance. She made herself beloved and honored by her attentions to the sick and wounded, to whom she ministered with unceasing and untiring devotion." (*Soldiers' Album of Personal Record*).

Cynthia Conkey was not simply an unrefined outdoors-woman, however. The Appleton Weekly Post in 1906 reported on her life on the occasion on her 83rd birthday. Calling her a venerable lady, it was said that she was in excellent health. "Her faculties are unimpaired and her mental activity is extraordinary, as are also her achievements in handiwork. She is an omnivorous reader. Parkman's twelve charming historic volumes have recently afforded her entertainment for hardly as many weeks. A volume of Balzac is for her reading in moderation. After a lapse of nearly half a century, Mrs. Conkey some time since resumed the art of penciling as a pleasant diversion." She was also studying watercolor painting. "It is no extravagance to say that his venerable lady is making of her well advanced years the crown of a useful life."

HELP

Several Board members have suggested that neighbors might be interested in information regarding period homes and home restoration. Starting with the next newsletter, we will be privileged to have a column on the identification of home styles by Ted Grevestad Nordbrock.

In the meantime we would like to invite questions or suggestions from those of you involved in repairing and restoring (and who isn't!). For example, you might need help in selecting a painter, plasterer, or carpenter. I would add roofer but most have gotten or are getting new roofs. Perhaps we can help you network. If you haven't discovered HGTV, Channel 39, you might give it a try. (If These Walls Could Talk, Restore America.)

Some books and periodicals which you might find helpful are: *Old House Journal*, *This Old House*, *Traditional Building*, *American Bungalow*; *Paint in America* and *Victorian Exterior Decoration*, both by Roger Moss.

A few thoughts about restoration vs. repair: The number one guideline for restoration is very much like that of a physician, "Do no harm". In general, true restoration work makes no changes that are not reversible and documentation is kept of the changes that are made. You may say that this is not what your house is about and this is most likely true. However, many of us

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Skeleton on Sixth

(The following is from an undated clipping, probably from the 20's.)

"An uncanny feeling crept over Theodore Albrecht, Fairview St., when he entered the barn at the rear of the Frank Schreiter home at Sixth and Walnut Sts., which he had purchased recently to dismantle.

What foul deed had been committed here in years past? Or what ghoulish fancy had unearthed the remains of what once had been a human being. Scattered about the barn on the ground floor and up in the hay loft, he found the mouldering bones of a human skeleton.

Albrecht wanted the lumber in the barn. He had no use for the bones. Besides, he believed this was a matter for the police and the coroner"

Police Chief George T. Prim and Coroner Ellsworth visited the site and determined that the bones had belonged to Dr. J.V. Canavan, former Mayor of Appleton. Dr. Canavan had used the bones in his medical practice and had kept them from medical school. Dr. Canavan had lived on this same site.

"The barn is probably one of the oldest buildings in Appleton. It is a relic of the days when Kentucky thoroughbred horses were kept here. It was formerly the Goff barn on Prospect St. and had been moved over to Walnut St. about 25 years ago. "It was an old barn 35 years ago," said Peter Hoeffel, who remembers its location on Prospect St."

The Goff home which is referred to is that of Ephraim Goff, former Mayor, and it still stands at 325 W. Prospect. The frequency with which homes were moved in the 19th Century is now quite foreign to us. The 1874 City Directory, for example, lists a company devoted to house moving at College and Walnut.

Help

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have been frustrated by former owners who modernized and threw away pieces of the house.

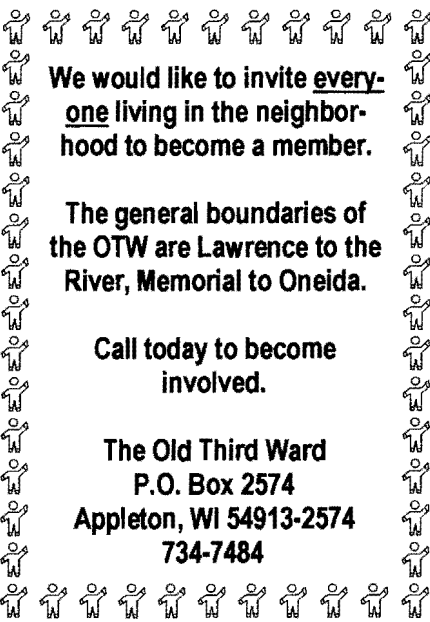
Did you know that: Porch floors were frequently painted grey so as to hide the dirt, but the ceilings on late 19th century porches were often painted light blue. The idea was to bring the sky onto the porch and to add light.

Did you know that: Many of the foundations and chimneys on our older homes were made using lime based mortar. The Neenah Clock Tower most recently had problems with the flaking of bricks because earlier repairs had been made using new concrete and had trapped water against the old bricks. More problems were created because of this repair. The old mortar was porous and the new concrete is not.

Did you know that: Some repairs to porch columns, window sills and the like can be made without having new wood milled. Several companies make an epoxy product which will consolidate damaged wood fi-

bers and fill gaps in rotted or missing wood. The company I am the most familiar with is Abatron (Wood E-Pox) based in Kenosha.

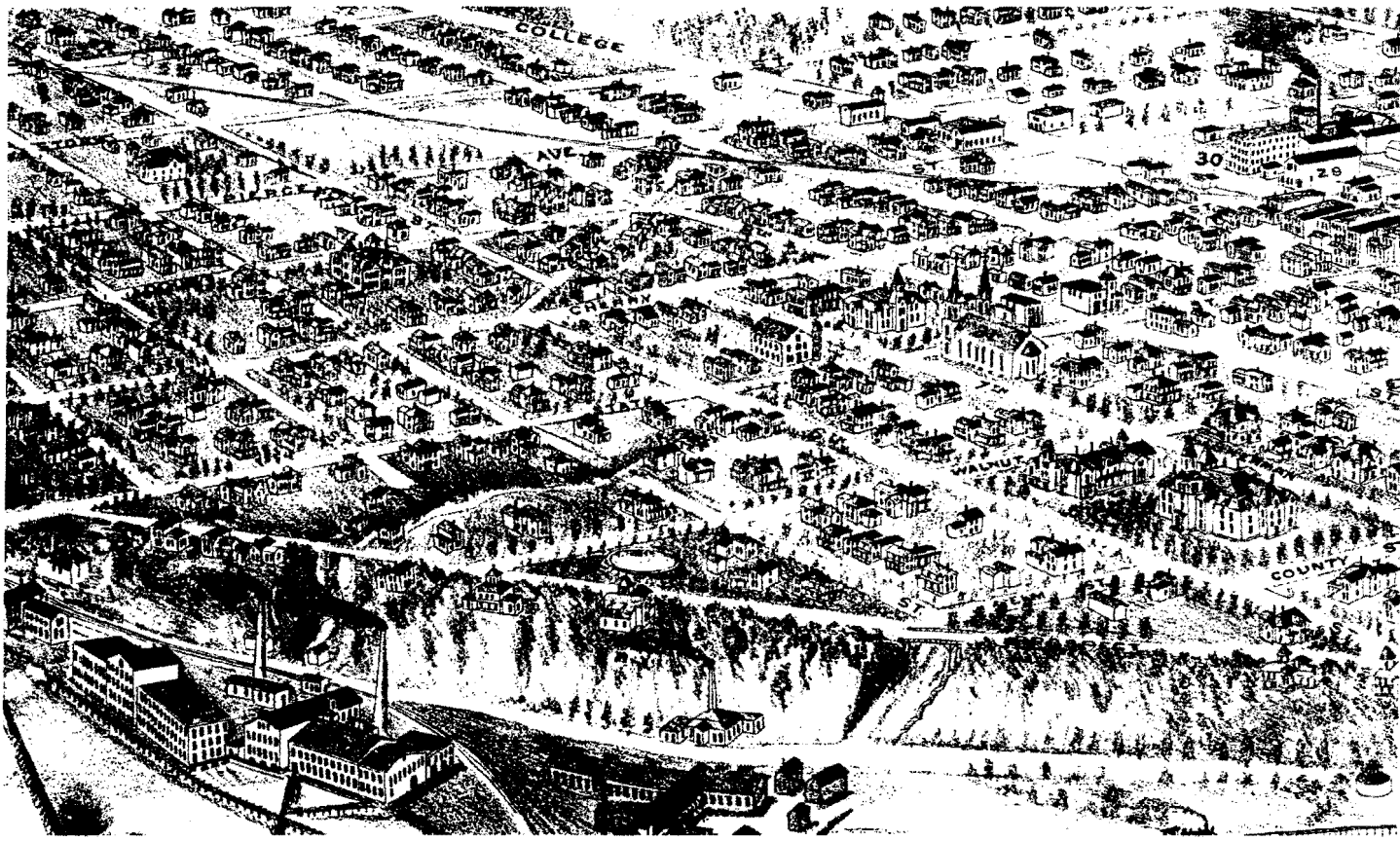
Did you know that: Homeowners may remove asbestos siding from their homes without calling in special asbestos teams. The reason this can be done is that the siding is not "friable", i. e., crumbling and powdery. Complete guidelines are available from the City Health Dept. Asbestos and other similar siding was added to houses in the 1940's in order to avoid the expense of painting. Many times this siding was added over the old clapboard and decorative trim. The result of this well-intentioned improvement is that the character of the house is severely changed. Narrow bands of clapboard resonate quite differently than the broad blocks of the imitation siding. Also, the door and window trim have lost their intended 3-D quality. The surface of the building is now flatter, with few shadows.


**We would like to invite every-
one living in the neighbor-
hood to become a member.**

**The general boundaries of
the OTW are Lawrence to the
River, Memorial to Oneida.**

**Call today to become
involved.**

**The Old Third Ward
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1896 map of The Old Third Ward

Old Third Ward
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