PRESERVATION
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Volume 41

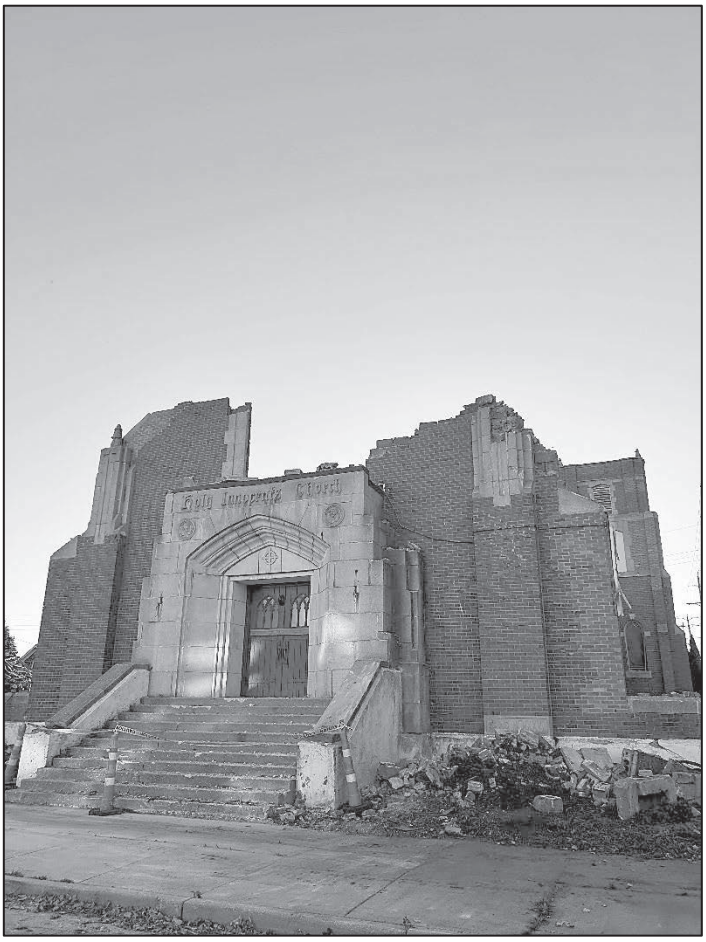
Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church Demolished for Residential Development

In October 2025, the building formerly known as Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church, located at 2509 Sixteenth Street, was reduced to rubble. Earlier this year, the Racine Common Council approved a $2 million plan to demolish the historic church and construct four affordable homes.

Before its demolition, the church bore two names on its exterior: a sign on the Sixteenth Street side read "Saint Nicholas Church," while "Holy Innocents Church" was chiseled in stone above the main entrance on Holmes Avenue.

Originally built in 1927 as Holy Innocents Catholic Church in the Late Gothic Revival style, the building became home to Saint Nicholas Episcopal parish in 1996, after the Episcopal Diocese of Wisconsin acquired it following the merger of the Roman Catholic parishes of Holy Innocents and St. Stephen's.

The church had been vacant for some time and suffered significant interior damage. According to statements from the Diocese, "a land-contract sale was initiated in 2015. The land contract subsequently failed, and the Diocese regained possession in 2023. At that time, the building was in a severely deteriorated condition, with an estimated $200,000+ required simply to make it usable again."



Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church under demolition
Photo Courtesy of Randy Guarnero

A *Racine County Eye* article published in April 2024 reported that representatives of the Diocese approached the City to explore interest in acquiring and redeveloping the property. City records show that the Community Development Authority took ownership of the building in October 2024.

The Holy Innocents Church congregation was established long before the 1927 building was constructed. According to a *Racine Times* article from September 24, 1928, found in the Wisconsin Historical Society archives, the church began in 1867 as a Sunday school for children led by "Mrs. Fall" and "Mrs. Dean." Growing interest soon created a demand for a dedicated place of worship. The congregation built its first church two years later at an unknown location somewhere on Washington Avenue. Six years after that, it was organized as a mission, with Racine College instructors Dr. Falk and Professor Wheeler leading services.

In 1907, the congregation's second church was built at the corner of Washington and Owen Avenues. That building was sold to a developer in 1926 and demolished to make way for a commercial structure that still stands today.

Numerous newspaper articles from that era detail the congregation's fundraising efforts. The 1928 *Racine Times* article describes the dedication of the new Holy Innocents Church, attended by the Bishop of Milwaukee, who praised the church's Rector Emeritus, Rev. C. A. Capwell, for his "untiring effort and self sacrifice" in helping to

build the new church.

Another article highlights individual contributions to the church's structure and furnishings—such as the altar, communion rail, pulpit, lectern, front doors, and many pews—donated as memorials.

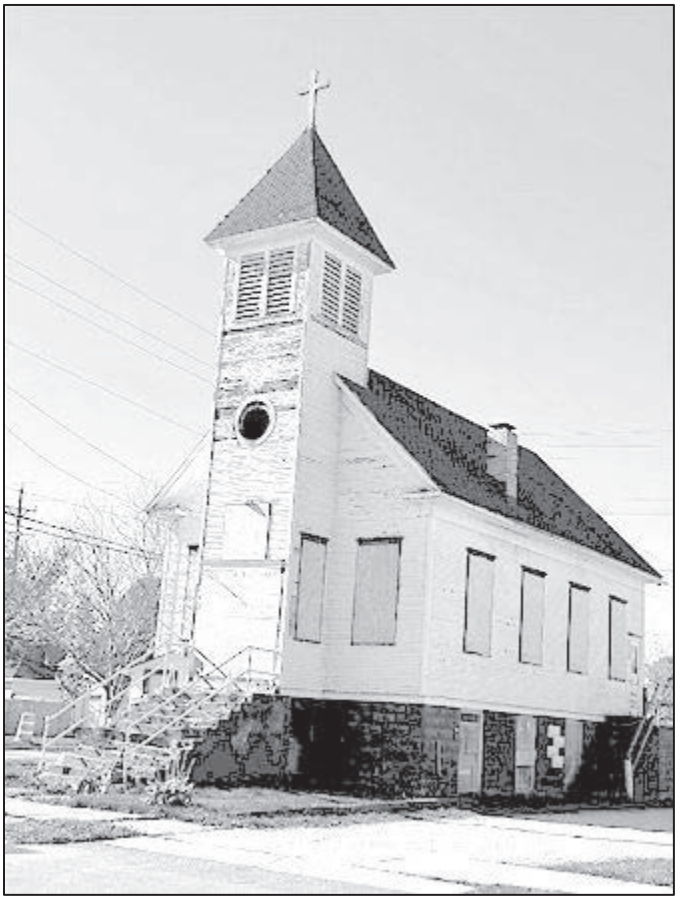
When demolition began this past October, Preservation Racine member Randy Guarnero noted that nothing from the church appeared to be salvaged, including the stone sculptures that adorned the façade.

Sadly, vacant churches in Racine are not uncommon, as Debbie Yale's story on another vacant church in this month's newsletter illustrates. While some former churches have been repurposed into apartments or community centers, many remain empty or face the threat of closure.

If you know of a church that is in danger of closing, or if you were part of a dissolved congregation in Racine or Racine County, please email info@preservationracine.org to share your story.

Debra Schug

A Racine Heritage Building
Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church
1848 Howe Street



Slovak Evangelican Lutheran Church, 1848 Howe Street
Photo: Deborah Yale

The tall, boarded up, little church at the corner of DeKoven Avenue and Howe Street was built in 1912. It was constructed by George Kam, Jr. for about $5,000 with cement block veneer topped by a wood frame. The basement housed classrooms with the auditorium above; it is 24 feet x 46 feet. The building was for a Slovakian-speaking Lutheran congregation that was organized by Reverend John Pelikan, the president of the Slovak Lutheran Synod, on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 1908.

Church trustees, under the name Soslanie Ducha Svateho, which means Descending of the Holy Spirit or Pentecost, purchased Lots 13 and 14, of Block 33 in the Racine Land and Improvement Company Addition on September 29,

Watercolor painting of the church at 1848 Howe Street, by K.W.

1910 for $1,000. Church membership had grown enough to support a new building. The cornerstone was laid on Sunday, October 13, 1912. A Journal Times article at this time reported their services were being held in the "German Lutheran school," likely First Evangelical Lutheran Church's school. However, the Racine city directory of 1914 still did not list a church at 1848 Howe Street, the northwest corner of the intersection, but at the "southwest corner of DeKoven and Howe" it listed the "Holy Ghost Church." There was a storefront there so they may have used both locations in their short history.

In the newspaper articles written about the laying of the cornerstone, the church was called the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church. City directories used that name from 1939 through 1952 when the name changed to the Slovak Lutheran Pentecostal Church. From 1954 on, the church was called Pentecost Lutheran Church. The building was sold on November 11, 1967, to Shiloh Stronghold, Incorporated, although they were already using the building for their services. The 1966 city directory first lists Shiloh Church of God in Christ at 1848 Howe Street. This church was organized by Reverend George Ramsey. Shiloh Church opened a day care in their building in the 1970s. In the mid-1980s Shiloh built a new building on the north half of Lot 14 and Lot 15 with the address of 1836 Howe Street. Templo Morte Des Los Olivas held services in the old building for a few years. Rose of Sharon Church used the building in the early 1990s and All Nations Pentecostal Church occupied it through the rest of the decade. According to city directories there have been no occupants in the building since 1999. Shiloh Church of God has also closed its doors next door, but Shiloh Stronghold, Incorporated, of Kenosha still owns the property which is for sale.

The Pentecost Lutheran Church congregation had built a new building on the triangular block at the intersection of Olive Street and Coolidge Avenue in 1963. They moved into 2213 Coolidge Avenue and dedicated it on November 17, 1963. It remains a vibrant church steeped in history.

Thank you to the Pentecost Lutheran Church website for their historical information, plus Dennis Gotch's Facebook page, Historical Racine Forever and Dennis Tully's Racine Memory Lane. Debbie Yale

DeKoven Center Repair Program

The DeKoven Center is a terrific community asset, offering community and events spaces on a green, 11-acre campus facing Lake Michigan on Racine's south side. At its core are a complex of Gothic, cream-brick buildings built by Lucas Bradley in the mid-1800s, for the former Racine College. Its key buildings were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. Preservation Racine long has had an interest in this campus and the DeKoven Center have been good stewards of this important property.

Workers at the DeKoven Center remove historic stained-glass windows for crating and shipping to a restoration facility in Minnesota.

Credit: The DeKoven Center

On October 27, the DeKoven Center reported to its supporters on some needed repairs. Much of the neighborhood had damage from the hailstorm on May 15, and related roof repairs now are underway at DeKoven. But other planned repairs also have been made. The Gatehouse has new decks, and the Great Hall basement has been freshly painted. Brick tuckpointing has been done on various buildings around the campus. DeKoven's October 27 message continued:

"The most exciting project of all, however, is the restoration of the Great Hall's magnificent stained-glass windows. Each window is being carefully removed and transported to the Willet Hauser studio in Minnesota,

where it will undergo a full year of expert repair and preservation. In their place, temporary recreations will allow the light to continue streaming in as the originals are lovingly renewed. Thanks to the generous support of the Community of St. Mary, Western Province, this major restoration ensures that the windows—and the history they represent—will continue to inspire for generations to come. When they return, newly protected and restored, these windows will shine as a lasting testament to the beauty and endurance of the campus we call home."

Willet Hauser Architectural Glass in Winona, Minnesota, is the same firm currently doing a large window restoration for Holy Communion Lutheran Church in Racine. We reported on that project in a previous Preservation Racine newsletter (Summer 2025, volume 39, page 14).

Scott Leonard

From the President

Three Racine properties were razed this year—the Lakefront YMCA, the older downtown YMCA (401 Wisconsin Avenue), and St. Nicholas Episcopal Church. Deb Schug wrote about 401 Wisconsin in our Fall 2025 newsletter and she has more on St. Nicholas in this issue.

In such cases, we often hear people say things like, "How can they tear down such a historic building?" or "Why don't they do something about it?" The good news is that "they" really are "us" and our elected officials, and that there are laws that allow for official review and public comment on proposals to raze historic buildings. The bad news is that, at least in Racine, the law has narrow application and is seldom used.

As explained in the Fall newsletter article, local governments can have ordinances requiring official review and public comment on proposals to significantly alter or raze historic buildings. Racine's ordinance (Chapter 58) also lays out how to designate local landmarks that will be subject to that review and comment process. But in Racine, only six properties have that designation (see table), leaving many other historic properties vulnerable. City officials can review things like zoning changes for undesignated buildings. But for the six designated buildings, they can focus on how proposed changes impact historic and architectural integrity.

Even so, when citizens believe that an interesting and varied architectural fabric is good for the community and for economic development, they can use the ordinance to expand the list of designated properties. With that in mind, I am doing something that no one in Racine has done in 14 years. I have applied to have the home that I co-own and share with my spouse, Kevin Shirley, added to Racine's local landmark list.

Under the ordinance, our home at 1144 Main Street already qualifies because before 2006, it was on a much larger (71 properties!) and well researched list of landmarks. No fee applies to this application, though a fee and some research are needed for properties not designated prior to 2006. Our application will be considered by the PHDC (Planning Heritage and Design Commission) and then by the Common Council.

What will this designation mean to us, as owners? We still can perform all the routine maintenance that we do now, and make like-for-like repairs, without any approval. But if we plan more significant changes to the exterior—a new style of windows, an addition, even tearing the whole place down—then we must justify those changes before the PHDC. Kevin and I feel that anything the PHDC would deny us are things we'd never want to do to our home in the first place. We agree that helping to protect the

Name	Address	Year built	National Register Landmark	National Register district	pre-2006 Racine landmark	post-2006 Racine landmark
Racine Local Landmarks						
Blake House/Pres Racine	936 Main	1868		Southside	✓	2007
First Presbyterian Church	716 College	1852	1973			2008
MT & A Lincoln statue	1001 Main/East Park	1943		Southside	✓	2008
Cooley House	1135 Main	~1853	1973	Southside	✓	2008
Boyd-Gaskell House	1611 College	1872		Southside	✓	2008
residence	845 Villa	1856				2011
Olin House	1144 Main	1868		Southside	✓	pending
Buildings Razed in 2025						
Lakefront YMCA	725 Lake	1960				
YMCA/Racine Bible College	401 Wisconsin	1916		Old Main St		
St. Nicholas/Holy Innocents	2509 16th	1927				

integrity of our property down through time is more important to us than the possibility of facing this type of public review. Other homeowners may agree, or not.

We hope that going through this process will help to shine light on Racine's little used landmark ordinance and inspire others to work to add other properties to the list. Local landmark designation may not have prevented the razing of the three properties in 2025, but it would have triggered a review and comment process that would have given citizens the opportunity to be heard. That opportunity is important and helps to turn unproductive focus away from blaming the faceless "they."

We perhaps can look to the example of Milwaukee and its very proactive landmarks commission. On November 3, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) unanimously approved designation of two local landmarks—the Miller High Life Theatre (Auditorium, 1909) and the UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena (1950). They are owned by the Wisconsin Center District, which has commissioned a study to replace the buildings with a hotel. It is not known what their study will recommend. But the HPC determined, in the face of opposition from the owner, that it was better to anticipate a future demolition proposal and allow for official review and public comment. Even after the review process, the City could approve demolition, but at least the public would have been heard, in a way that has not been happening in Racine.

Camp Utley update

The Racine Common Council on August 6 approved Preservation Racine's request for an informational marker about Camp Utley, as described in the Fall newsletter. We have placed the order with Graves Signs of Mount Pleasant. When completed, we will donate the sign to the City and they will install it on city property near Main and Wisconsin, in the 1800 block. We hope to have a small dedication ceremony, but it is not clear that this can happen before winter.

Although we have received generous contributions from friends of the late Charlie Rice to be used toward the cost of the sign, the final estimate came in higher than we expected. The Preservation Racine Board has committed to completing this project, and additional contributions toward that cost are welcome.

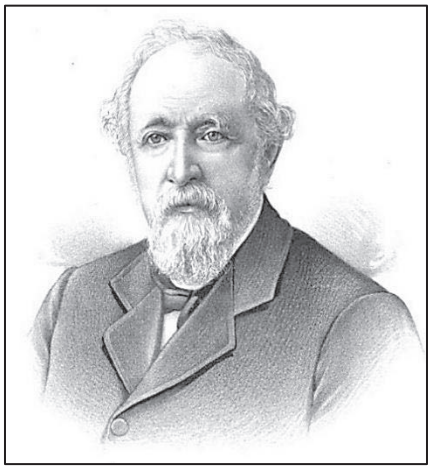
Scott Leonard,
Vice President and acting president

***CORRECTION**: St Joseph Catholic Church celebrated its 150th anniversary this year (not 175th). See page 7, Fall 2025 Newsletter.*

Who was General William Lawrence Utley?

The following article was published by the Wisconsin State Journal on Saturday, March 5, 1887. (Sourced from the Wisconsin State Historical Society).

Death of Gen. William L. Utley



Portrait of General Utley

Among the men who became extensively known and prominent in the early history of Wisconsin, and especially during the late civil war, was Gen. William L. Utley, of Racine. For several years he has been in failing health, and for the past six weeks, illness has confined him to his bed. At five o'clock, last evening, March 4th, he breathed his last at his home in Racine. In many respects Gen. Utley was a remarkable man. He possessed those qualities of head and heart, that secured the warm and lasting friendship of his acquaintances; and his death will be sincerely mourned by a large number of persons in all parts of the state. Gen. Utley was a native of Massachusetts, born at Monson, July 10, 1814. He spent many of the early years of his life in New York and Ohio, in a hard struggle to support himself and to secure a good education. In this effort he succeeded. He gave considerable attention to art, and to music, and in 1844, he came to Racine, as a portrait painter and as a musician. In 1848, he became a zealous politician, uniting himself with the free soil party, that supported Van Buren and Adams for president and vice president. Upon the issues of that party he was elected the first marshal of Racine. He served in the assembly in the sessions of 1850-51, and was prominent among the members of that body. He was firm in his principles, active in general legislation, and his genial qualities gave him great popularity with his associates in the assembly. In those days no railroad had been constructed in Wisconsin to make it easy for members to go to their homes, and the consequence was, the members remained at the capital through the entire session, and became almost citizens of the place. Gen. Utley was one of many who became very popular with Madison people, and was a welcome guest in most of the families of the village. On the inauguration of Governor Farwell in 1852, Mr. Utley was appointed adjutant general of the state. There was not very much to do in the line of

(continued on page 8)

Racine's Root River Parks, Part 2

The history of Racine's public parks is astonishingly complex – too long for a single newsletter! So, we have broken it into parts. Part 1 appeared in the Fall 2025 Newsletter.

A Network of Closely Connected People

It is almost a cliché to remind people that Mayor Peter B. Nelson was the "father of the parks," and this is where the story usually starts in 1905. Yet, the back story shows that the will for public parks began as early as 1886, and came from an unexpected professional association, of which Peter Nelson and the Bull-Robinson-Fish-Erskine family conglomerate were members.

The Racine Businessmen's Association, founded in 1886, was formed to propose and progress projects of value to the City of Racine, and especially for the poorer citizens who had nowhere to relax or play. In their first year, they attracted such successful businesses to Racine that the wage base went up by $50,000 per month. And for all these new and existing workers, the association sought to propose and help to fund many leisure amenities. Its members included all the biggest, medium and small-sized businesses, and as their opening listing in the 1886 *Atlas of Racine and Kenosha Counties* explained, "friendly, social and business relations have been established among the business men of the city, and their efforts can now be concentrated upon any project for the public benefit within a few hours." The members included the Bull-Robinson-Fish-Erskine conglomeration of families, many of them living in the 900, 1000 and 1100 blocks on Main Street around the Bull family; and many more, including the Nelson, Johnson, Higgins, and Miles families, living on the 1800, 1900, and 2000 blocks on the north side of Washington Avenue around the (long-ago razed) Erskine residence at the perimeter of Erskine Park. Today, these would be the 2000, 2100, and 2200 blocks. Both groups had intermarried, taken directorships in each others' businesses, and at various times taken positions as Mayors, Aldermen, County Supervisors, County Attorneys, Assemblymen and Senators. These could be called the "cream of the crop" in Racine: astoundingly wealthy, powerful, and public-spirited. One gets the sense that they were all enjoying themselves hugely in their efforts to improve Racine's amenities, crashingly disappointed when defeated, and courageously willing to try again as needed.

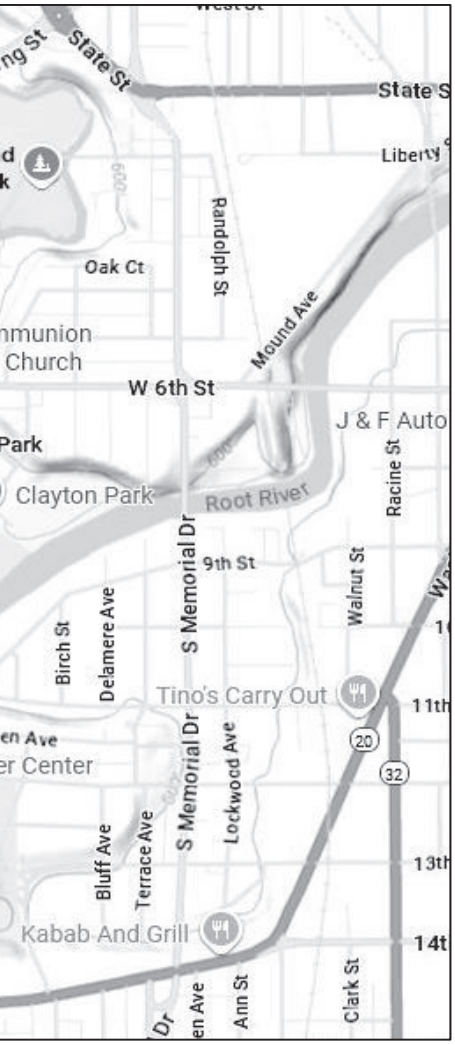
The Businessmen's Association and the Park System

During the 1890s individuals in the Racine Businessmen's Association were forming ideas for a public park system. The first "feeler" had been put out in January 1901 by Herbert E. Miles, secretary and treasurer of Massena B. Erskine's Racine Wagon and Carriage Company; he was also married to Massena's daughter, Flora, and lived next door to Charles Erskine on Washington Avenue, opposite Asylum (now Taylor) Avenue. Mr. Miles' report was read at the Racine Businessmen's Association weekly meeting, August 8, 1902. As he explained, the City was then considering buying Riverside Park (consisting of a steep bluff and flat lands running from the northeast corner of Mound Cemetery to the riverbank and up to

Modern map showing parks proposed in 1902-1905 in light gray and already owned by the City

Island Park), and he had proposed to Mayor Higgins that if the City went ahead with that, he would donate $1,000 for the best landscape architects available to create a comprehensive plan for it and all present and envisaged public parks. He was told "not now" by Mayor Higgins, who almost certainly knew that Charles Erskine was planning to offer his park to the city, and wanted to keep things in a viable order. That offer was made public a month later in February 1901, and was reiterated in the meeting notice along with the offer of a so-far unidentified site from John W. Owen - but those will be discussed in Part 3 of this series in the Spring 2026 Newsletter.

After Herbert E. Miles' report was read, Otis W. Johnson (a director of the J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company) revealed a detailed "park and boulevard system" for the Root River lands including Erskine Park, Island Park, the hillside section of the cemetery already owned by the City, Riverside Park, and all the riverside lands as far as the Rapids (roughly today's Quarry Lake). He explained that he and David G. Janes (real estate magnate) had already toured the grounds with an undisclosed landscape architect who "did not know of a more desirable place." (Although nothing more is in writing about this tour, the architect's behavior and comment are so typical of Jens Jensen, that he was almost certainly the one they meant and had always intended.) Several speakers voiced their



showing bluffs. Darker gray shows sites

approval of the project. Dr. Sorensen deplored the fact that Erskine Park had not been purchased by the City when offered, February 5, 1901. Charles Freeman, D. H. Flett, B. B. Northrup, and William Henry Miller had all also been thinking along Otis Johnson's lines, and Peter Nelson added that he disapproved of the current front-yard-park system, and the fact that the children had to keep off the grass at the public schools. Before the meeting closed, president W. H. Kranz warmly agreed to have a committee draw up articles of incorporation for a Racine Public Park Association that would propose the acquisition of the Island, Riverside, and Erskine parks.

More Offers of Parks

A mix of politics and funding made it impossible to buy Charles E. Erskine's park immediately (to be discussed in Part 3 in the Spring 2026 Newsletter), but a series of smaller offers rapidly appeared. First, the day after Erskine's February 5, 1901, offer was announced, William H. Miller offered his 55 wooded acres "just above Henry Osborne's farm." Second, Attorney and Assemblyman John. T. Owen offered his own 34 acres on the north side of Rapids Road, just west of the rail tracks on December 17, 1901. Third, on April 15, 1902, August C. Frank and his father-in-law Ernest J. Hueffner offered "The Island" (14 acres) in the river fork just north of Erskine's park. But, just as the City had no funds to purchase Erskine's parkland, it had no money for any of these others. But it did lease the Erskine and Island parks, for which the *Racine Daily Journal* congratulated them heartily. Leasing was a good start!

Cemetery Park – or Riverside Park?

In 1902 the City already owned Riverside Park but it was smaller than it is today. The land on the cemetery bluffs and below belonged to the cemetery, which was also owned by the City. It was unusable for burials, as the bluff was steep and the lowland was marshy. That area was known as Cemetery Park. When the Businessmen's Association's Park Association requested that land to add to Riverside Park, they considered it merely a matter of redesignating city-owned land. But, as we'll see in Part 3, this caused a strong backlash from Alderman William H. Bell of the 6th Ward, which encompassed all the proposed parks.

The Island Park and Lewis Field

When Peter Nelson was elected mayor in 1903, he and city engineer P. H. Connolly decided that "The Island" would indeed make a good park and playground. Although the water was said to be stinking from a sewer and factory run-off at Liberty Street, it was blessed with a popular "lagoon" or "swimming hole" that divided the island vertically in half (it is now filled and covered with a parking lot). Nelson and Connolly and City Clerk Charles Armstrong negotiated to lease the Island with an option to purchase for $5,000. They raised that money by 1905 through subscriptions from the Businessmen's Association, and the major golfing families, whereupon William Horlick (who was one of them) agreed to purchase and donate the land and the subscription was instead used for maintenance and improvements. The park was renamed "Horlick Park," and it opened to great success the following year, complete with a costly playground donated unobtrusively by the directors of the J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company.

Three years later in 1908, the City purchased the ten acres of land in the second fork of the river beside Horlick Park, for $5,000. Just before the sale went through, William Mitchell Lewis paid for the lands and donated them to the City for park purposes. The City then closed off the lagoon and cut a channel between the remaining forks between Liberty and Spring Streets to recreate the Island and to flush the system regularly, relieving the stench and sewage. The newly added ground was named "the Lewis Field," and Jens Jensen – who had long ago made plans for the entire area – was called to consult in putting his vision into operation. He had designed a "refectory" (refreshments area) for the combined park, and A. Arthur Guilbert, son-in-law of Stephen Bull (Sr.), and his partner Edmund Funston were commissioned to oversee the building, which had viewing platforms overlooking the Lewis Field sports facilities. At that point, the old lagoon became a long, narrow parking lot to serve the refectory. The entire complex opened to great approval and popularity, and when it was discovered that three quarters of the children who used it either came from the neighboring school or lived within less than a mile, more such playgrounds in the north and south of the City were planned. The Case Company donated the playground equipment for those as well.

There are so many names, connections, powerful city and county administrators, state assemblymen and senators, that the story is hard to follow – not least because there were many benign and malicious transactions behind the scenes. Yet the huge, wealthy community working to achieve a park system worked untiringly together and with goodwill. A fly emerged from the ointment when the City began working to develop the Erskine and Riverside parks, and that will be detailed in our next (Spring) Newsletter.

Pippin Michelli

his office at that time, but what there was to do was done promptly and well. In 1860 and 1861 he served in the state senate. On the breaking of the war in 1861 he was appointed by Governor Randall adjutant general and was very efficient in organizing troops for the army. Within six months he placed 30,000 soldiers in the field, and was highly complimented by President Lincoln, in a private letter, for his energetic and efficient action. At the close of the legislative session of 1862, he was presented with a commission as colonel, with orders to raise a regiment in ten days. Within the time named, he reported at Madison with men enough for two regiments, and was assigned to the command of the 22d (sic) infantry. This regiment left Camp Utley, at Racine, on the 16th of September, 1862, and went to Kentucky, where it was engaged in much hard service. It passed on to Nashville, Lookout Mountain and other points. During its sojourn in Kentucky, the slave owners would endeavor to secure their negroes who had taken refuge in the camps of the 22d, but Colonel Utley refused to give them up and afforded them ample protection. This course gave the gallant colonel prominence among the heroes of the war, this position being among the first in which an officer had assumed it. Colonel Utley had long been a strong anti-slavery man. Ill-health, in 1864, compelled him to resign his position in the army and return to his home. His military experience was active and exciting and he made an excellent war record. He was for a long time a prisoner at "Libby" [a Prison in Richmond].

His health becoming in a great measure restored, in company with his son Hamilton, The Racine Journal Times was purchased, and by them conducted for nine years. Gen. Utley was a ready and spicy writer, and many of his articles found wide circulation through numerous papers in all parts of the country. He was appointed postmaster of Racine in 1869, and served two terms. He devoted considerable attention to stock-raising, especially horses; and some stock became quite celebrated. Gen. Utley became prominent as a greenbacker, and was an active member of that party and established The New Deal, which became its warm advocate. This paper, about three years ago, was discontinued, and the general, with others, began the publication of the Daily Times and Utley's Dollar Weekly, but ill health had prevented him from writing for it for several months to any considerable extent. From this brief sketch it will be seen that General Utley has experienced a busy life, in which he has acted a prominent part. He was widely known throughout the west as a brave and gallant officer during the war, and as a charitable, kind and genial man in private life. He leaves a wife and two sons-Hamilton, the editor of The Times, and William, whose loss in his death was very great. They have the sympathy of hosts of friends. The funeral of General Utley will occur at Racine on Tuesday next at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, under the direction of Gov. Harvey post No. 17, G.A.R., of which he was an honored member.

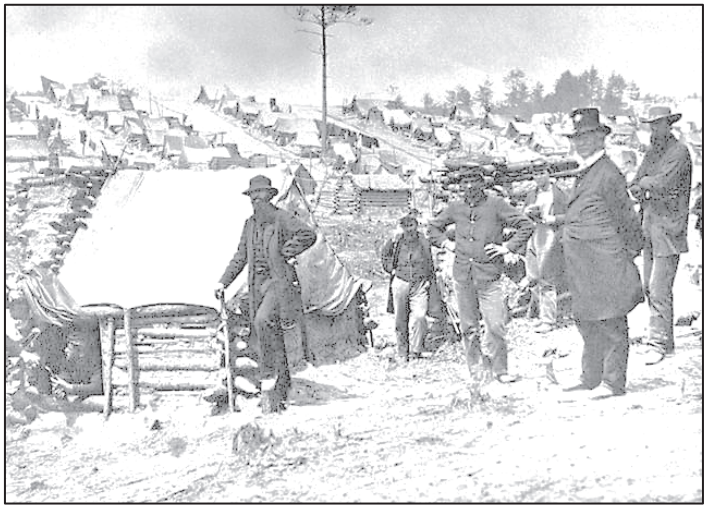
* * *

As a footnote to the announcement of Gen. Utley's death, it should be noted the many talents and nuances to his incredible life. When he was four years old, his family moved to Newbury Center, Ohio (twenty miles east of Cleveland), where his father educated him. As a young man, he travelled to New York to study portrait painting and became an amateur violinist, accompanying his uncle's dance classes. Arriving in Racine in 1844, he became the proprietor of the Racine House (the largest hotel in the area), painted portraits and taught dancing lessons. While in New York, on January 14, 1839, he married Louisa Wing with whom he had five children. Only their son Hamilton lived into adulthood. Louisa passed away in 1864, a few months before Gen. Utley resigned from the army. In 1866 Gen. Utley married Sarah Jane Wooster, widow of Dr. Wooster, who had been a surgeon for the 15th Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment. She gave him a stepson, Park Wooster, and together they had a son, William L. Utley. It was reported that "between his stepson and himself existed ties of endearment and love as strong as blood could have made them".

Vivian Merlo

A Peek into Camp Life at Camp Utley

In June of 1861 the fourth Regiment of the infantry under Col. H. E. Paine moved into the newly completed Camp Utley, between Sixteenth Street and DeKoven Avenue in Racine. The Camp included 75 acres along the Lake Michigan shoreline on a farm owned by Truman G. Wright. The shoreline was more than 1,000 feet east of the



Soldiers at Camp Utley, first winter, 1861

current shoreline and Main Street was in use in front of Racine College.

Camp Utley had 1,500 light artillery men during the winter of 1861. Quartermaster McCoy and Commissary S. D. Clough met with women in Racine a few days before the arrival of the first troops. These women made towels, aided in sewing needs and made articles for the camp, as well as caring for the sick in the hospital. The camp soon became a favorite spot for Racine citizens to visit, where they watched the troops hold artillery practice and go through their army paces. Initially soldiers were housed in tents, while wooden buildings were provided for the

Interior of new buildings, Camp Utley, Dec 17, 1861

kitchen, dining room, commissary and the quartermaster departments.

The 25 x 40-foot commissary storeroom was on the north end of the camp. On the south end was the 25 x 78-foot kitchen. The east side of the camp was used as sleeping quarters for the cooking staff. In the dining room were 10 tables each measuring 100 feet long and seating 100 men. Five wells were sunk, bricked up and provided with pumps at a cost of less than $100. Fireplaces were provided for cooking and boiling. In an 1861 letter written to his mother, a soldier reports "We have now things pretty well straightened out, and are beginning to live again. The tent grounds are laid out in streets – about 5 rods wide, each company having its own street. Each tent has from six to eight men, and is supplied with a pail and washtub. Every man has a blanket and towel furnished him and also soap, a washbasin and various other little things to match. As you see, we are pretty well supplied with the necessaries."

Later a series of connected buildings were constructed as combination dormitories and dining rooms. They were 25 x 100 foot each, accommodating 100 men. A cook's room was at one end of the building and a sergeant's room at the other, with plain board tables and benches down the middle. On the sides were two tiers of bunks. The tables at night were often used as bowling alleys by soldiers coming from a night in Racine. A cannon ball would be used in lieu of a bowling ball.

On the Fourth of July 1861, a date which the legislature that spring had made a legal holiday, Racine women provided and served the dinner for the Fourth Regiment at Camp Utley. Farmers brought in provisions, J. I. Case Company furnished 15 bushels of strawberries, and committees were appointed from Racine Wards and all County towns. The Fourth Regiment was in the parade, which started at the West Public Square and included three bands, fire companies, speakers, clergy, committees, city authorities, Racine College faculty and students, school teachers and students, County officers and civic organizations. A thirteen-gun salute was sounded at sunrise and a thirty-four-gun salute at sunset with fireworks closing the day's celebrations.

A Rivers Falls soldier stationed at Camp Utley wrote home about the Fourth of July festivities. "We had a very good time on the Fourth of July, although rather a hard one. The ladies of Racine furnished us with a splendid dinner, and it had been so long since I have seen any pies and cakes, that I devoted my whole time to them including strawberries." In that same letter he reported that "we have two uniforms, one of blue drilling, which is to be worn for everyday duty, and another of very fine dark grey cloth for a dress suit."

Reveille was at 5 a.m. after which the troops were drilled for 6 hours a day: guard drills from 5 until 6 a.m., company drills from 8 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 5:30 p.m., and battalion drills from 10 to 11:30 a.m. and 2 to 3 p.m. Racine citizens, especially the young men, showed great interest in camp activities. The regiment raised money by charging a dime for "bus" service from Haymarket Square (Monument Square) to visit the camp.

Camp Utley was in operation all during the Civil War. Its closing date is recorded as October 8, 1865.

Vivian Merlo

2025 Tour Recap

Our 2025 Tour of Historic Places on September 28 with the theme "Tracks, Homes, and Sacred Spaces" was another fine success—the weather cooperated and there wasn't a competing Packers football game that day!

As always, we express our gratitude to all involved, first of all to the property owners for sharing their buildings with

our community and visitors. Homeowners past and present had lovingly maintained and restored four widely different houses—a pioneer entrepreneur's 1867 cream brick Italianate, a druggist's 1903 late Victorian, a musical brewing family's 1908 Early Craftsman with Queen Anne features, and a Lithuanian immigrant's Usonian style Edgar Tafel house. Two church congregations opened their doors to us—the 150-year-old Gothic style St. Joseph's Catholic Church on the city's north side, and the 50-year-old modern circular Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church just west of Racine. Located in the center of all of these was the City of Racine's impressive brick and limestone Transit Center, historically the 1901/02 Chicago and North Western Railway Depot. A local collector once again provided a display of artifacts and advertising, this time from several Racine shoe factories, complete with protective steel and aluminum shoes! From the private homes to the sacred or public spaces, many with subtle railroad track connections, each tour site was a treasure trove of historical details.

We also thank all the volunteers for their contributions—the overall tour coordinators, the building researchers, the writers, editors, and proofreaders, and the site captains who wrote the scripts and oversaw the dedicated volunteer docents—some were Preservation Racine members and some not, including first-timers as well as experienced guides.

But wait, there's more! Our marketing committee solicited businesses to advertise in our tour booklet, and numerous local companies and institutions served as pre-tour community ticket outlets. Generous patrons, from individuals and families to several businesses, provided much-appreciated monetary support, whether a few dollars or a few hundred or more. Other volunteers helped with signage, banners, and posters to advertise the tour beforehand and at each tour site. And let's not forget our webmaster and anyone who posted and shared tour information on social media.

Behind the scenes were many others—a ticket committee coordinated pre-tour and day-of-tour ticket sales, even selling tickets online for the first time. The tickets and tour booklets were designed with a convenient map of the tour sites. Plus there were the professional photographers who photographed each building, and the dedicated artist who once again sketched each building; both portraits have been used in our tour booklets and our marketing and advertising materials, and the originals were framed and presented as gifts to the site owners.

A volunteer floral coordinator worked with local florists who donated beautiful and appropriate arrangements at each site, plus there were decorations on the tables where the tour goers could rest for a few minutes while enjoying light refreshments. Finally, the post-tour casual dinner celebration was a relaxing conclusion to unwind from a busy and fun day.

Now for the bottom line (many thanks to our treasurer for the financial figures). This year we sold 277 tickets. This included 36 at $10 (half price) for docents and site captains; 120 at $15 at pre-sales at the various ticket outlets in the community; and 60 at $15 at the Starving Artists Fair, via Square, and even online for the first time. In addition, 61 tickets were sold on the day of the tour at the full price of $20, mostly at the main ticket location plus some at the various tour sites. Total ticket sales thus amounted to $4,280.

The advertisements from 30-some businesses in our booklet brought in over $5,800, and monetary donations from about 60 patrons amounted to almost $8670.

In all, our total income (not detailing a few additional incidental sales items) was over $19,000.

This year's tour expenses of a little over $2100 were lower than usual, in part because we did not need to order any new yard signs. In addition, in previous years we often had many more tour booklets than were actually used, so this year fewer were printed. Also, the cost of the post-tour dinner meal was kept low by having it prepared by a member rather than a catering service, which in the past has cost twice as much or more.

So the tour profit to date, with perhaps a few invoices and donations yet to trickle in, is about $17,594.32.

For this success, we are also most of all grateful to all of the people who attended the tour, enjoyed the buildings' histories, and learned something about our community's past as well as the value of historic preservation.

All the people, businesses, and institutions which contributed to our successful tour are described in detail in the tour booklet, along with descriptions of the buildings and their histories—but the tourgoers always get to hear much more about the buildings and their past and present owners, including family stories. If you missed attending the tour or you would just like an extra booklet for someone, we will have some available to pick up at the future membership meetings.

Thank you all for your valuable contributions!

Janet Carter

Made in Racine – Coffee

I know what you're thinking..."I had no idea that we ever made coffee here in Racine at one time!" Well, in a way, you would be right, since it wasn't "real" coffee as we know it. Instead, it was a product formulated by our own Dr. Shoop, and was called, "Imitation Health Coffee." So, for all you coffee lovers out there, as well as those interested in a little history, please read on!

I think most of us are familiar with the Dr. Shoop name. He was a local patent medicine manufacturer of various products that claimed to "cure" ailments such as rheumatism, coughs, diseases affecting the heart, nerves, stomach, and kidneys, as well as a host of other diseases. Dr. Shoop moved to Racine in 1883, and immediately opened up his medical practice. By 1890, he started producing his line of patent medicines, which proved to be very successful. However, with the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906, claims of "cure-alls" would now have to be substantiated. Because of this, Shoop began to branch out with a new line of toiletries, as well as a "health coffee". It was no secret that Dr. Shoop felt that coffee was quite hazardous to one's health. In his booklet concerning coffee, he mentions that, "Coffee defeats many a physician who is making his very best endeavors to cure diseases, but this is the way I won out against the evil effects of coffee", referring to his own coffee product.

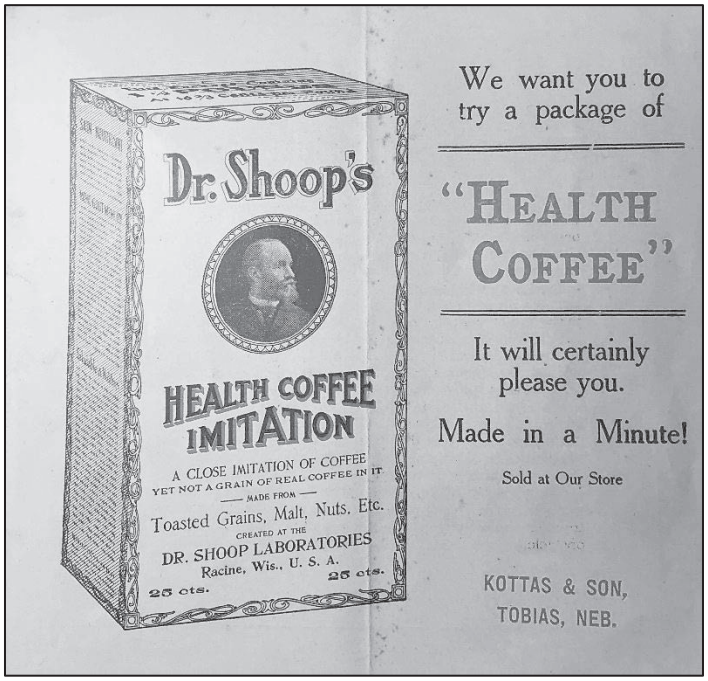
Shoop always maintained that his products rarely met with failure, except when patients became "slaves" to coffee. Those being treated (while giving up coffee) would usually show signs of improvement. However, he discovered that those who reverted back to drinking coffee would again experience health issues, or so he claimed. He concluded that it was then more difficult to treat the damaging effects of coffee than the original disease itself. Shoop even claimed to have consulted with many other physicians on the same subject who, of course, agreed with him. So, Shoop began his mission to rid the world of the harmful effects of coffee by introducing his own brand of "health coffee".

Shoop would write in his booklet that, "I will compete with this growing evil. I will supply the true flavor, the satisfying taste, the pleasing aroma, omitting the dangerous and poisonous caffeine of real coffee. And this is to announce that I have succeeded. Those who desire to retain their health, those who wish to get well again, should certainly make a trial of Dr. Shoop's Health Coffee Imitation. Not an atom, I promise you, of real coffee is used in my new creation. Parched nutritious grains and cereals form the true base of this health-giving, strength-building cereal drink. Toasted nutritious roots and nuts lend a harmonizing and satisfying flavor to the wholesome, gratifying health coffee. It is economical, convenient, nourishing, and satisfying".

And that was his pitch. Was it successful? Well, to a certain extent, it was, for he manufactured this product for about five or six years, as far as I can tell.

So, the next time you visit your local Starbucks, try asking them for some health coffee, and see what they say. Surely, you'll find that Dr. Shoop may have been way ahead of his time!

Jim Mercier



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