

ODWNA Neighborhood Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, October 14, 2014

Place: Winchell Elementary Library

Board Members:

Present: Peter Kushner, President; Chris Shook, Vice President; Diana Morton-Thompson, Treasurer; Sandy Bolstad, Secretary; Tom Keyser, Barb Ross

Absent: Becky Mutsaers, Kathy Shook.



I. Call to Order: Peter Kushner, 7:00 pm

- Welcome
- Reminder of new format this year:
 - 6:30 – 7:00pm Room will be open, at least a few board members will be present, opportunity for time to meet your neighbors and socialize
 - 7:00 – 7:20pm Neighborhood Business and Concerns
 - 7:20pm Speaker
- Sent email out about neighborhood crime, Asylum Lake Preserve Robbery update – ok to use preserve, just be careful, on alert.
- Leaf pick up schedule on the City website and a link to it from our website.

II. Secretary's Report

- Sign-in sheet going around, this helps us keep track of attendance at meetings plus gives you an opportunity to sign-up for ENews if you haven't already signed up for it and wish to receive news by email.
- Extra postcards are available tonight if you didn't receive one in the mail, please feel free to take one.
- Next meeting is November 19th and David Brose will be speaking to us about "Native Americans in Kalamazoo". Last year he drew a huge crowd, so get here early to get a good seat.

III. Treasurer's Report

- Money that we collect largely goes to mailing the postcards (takes about \$1,100 per year to cover expenses) and to the signs for things like the Neighborhood Meetings and the Car Show.

IV. Neighborhood Business (Old and New):

- Paul Scott had quick note regarding Asylum Lake – Friday October 16 is a day for volunteers to help remove brush. They will meet at the Parkview Ave. parking lot.
- Asylum Lake Preservation Association meets at the Parkview Hills Clubhouse at 7:30pm the 2nd Tuesday of the month (except no meetings in November or December). Everyone is welcome.
- Chris Shook reported on the MDOT Corridor Study. There was a huge turnout and MDOT received many very nice do-able suggestions from the community.
- Frank Wolff provided an update on Woods Lake. There will be a meeting at the Woods Lake Beach Tuesday, October 21 at 5:00pm. Two new people in charge and they may be interested in hearing our views on priorities since they need to have the project re-bid due to high costs on previous bids.

V. Public Comments:

- None

Notes from our Speaker:

Guest Speakers: Mark Hoffman

Topic: Michigan Asylum for the Insane, Colony Farm Unit and Asylum Lake. A History of the Properties and Pioneers.

Mark started by providing credits and recognitions of several people that influenced his work or contributed to it, including several that were in the audience. He also called our attention to a book that was about the Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital which he brought with him which was called "Asylum for the Insane". Mark also brought many maps of the Asylum Lake Preserve, both old and new, and had many slides of Deeds and other official documents that supported what he had to tell us, which was based on his thesis.

In the 1800's per the Treaty of Chicago, the Federal Government took the Native American lands and started selling them for about \$1.25 per acre.

In 1831 Phineas Hunt from Ohio purchase 279 acres north of Parkview. Others who came to own land that later became the State Hospital and Asylum Lake Property included: Ogden Smith owned a chunk of 80 acres. David and Campbell Sergeant owned about 80 acres. Rodolphus Loring owned about 158.76 acres and John Smith owned 40 acres. The Loring/McMartin house was built in 1840, and is the only house still standing from the Pioneer era.

Many land transactions took place:

- Enoch Harris who was the first African American mentioned in Kalamazoo purchased the land S. of Parkview from Phineas Hunt.
- Kellogg and Hindes married 2 sisters who were the daughters of the Sergeant's, who owned part of the property. These couples built homes and farmed the land, Kellogg was having financial difficulties and he and Hindes lost some other properties near downtown to foreclosure. He and Hindes had a falling out. Ogden Smith, who lived in New Jersey but never lived here, was distantly related and he took them to court for money that was owed to him, and ultimately ended up with their land.
- Ogden Smith's property was never farmed and that's why the Oak Savannah remains to this day.
- Because of correspondence with Ogden Smith, it was stated that the NE corner of Parkview and 11th was a burial ground (there is a home there now).
- George Cobb buys Seargeant's and Ogden Smith's lands (Ogden Smith dies shortly after) and sells some parcels to Hindes. Hindes later came to own most of the Asylum Lake Property.
- The Michigan Central Railroad came through between 1846 and 1905. It was a fruit belt railroad that ran between Kalamazoo and the Lakeshore and in 1852 reached Chicago. It later became an Interurban Railroad between 1906 and 1924, but then went bankrupt (probably due primarily to the invention and mass production of the automobile) around 1924.
- Range Road was renamed Colony Farm Road then 12th Street and then became Drake Road.
- Asylum Lake was first named Loring's Lake, then McMartins Lake before being named Asylum Lake.

In the 1800's, new laws were put into place prohibiting placing the mentally ill into jails. In the 1840's about 100 people had been identified in the state of Michigan who "needed help". By 1853, the location had been identified and in 1854 building started. The Neil Hindes farm house was relocated and was the first house to hold patients prior to buildings being built.

In 1865 two gentlemen from Chicago studied water and sewer in Kalamazoo. At the SE corner of the lake there is an earthen dam that probably contributed to the expansion of the lake. Unsure if these 2 facts are related, but previous to that they washed sheep there.

By 1886, a hospital had been built for 100 patients, but it held 800 patients.

In 1887, the hospital bought Hinder's land and farm animals and home from his children. The legislature allowed them to build 2 cottages. Cottages were cheaper to build and the people living in the cottages could work the farms. 4 cottages were built (3 overlooking the lake).

- VanDeusen Cottage, later named Grosvenor Cottage was built in 1888.
- Mitchell Cottage was built in 1889
- Palmer Cottage was built in 1889
- Pratt Cottage was built in 1892. It had a fire in 1929 and was later rebuilt.

The hospital administrators wanted their own railroad because Winchell was so muddy and they had to go back and forth with patients a lot between the hospital and the cottages. In 1898 they purchased an easement so they could build railroad access. The railroad for the hospital never came to pass but they did utilize the existing railroad. The railroad also accommodated building a bridge for one of the farmers to access all of his land.

In 1910 tunnels were built to connect two of the cottages to the newly built Rich Cottage. There was also another cottage named Brady Cottage (the Physicians and staff lived here).

The farming operation by the hospital was quite profitable. At its peak the total hospital ownership of land in the Kalamazoo area was 1,352 – 1,388 acres, not including the NW unit/tuberculosis unit. From 1916 – 1930, Herman Ostrander was the Medical Superintendent and was quite vocal that overcrowding was the main issue.

But then came WWII and with soldiers who wouldn't be farming as patients, new machinery for farming that required more training and was cause for more liability, in 1957 the state decided to phase out institutional farming.

- In 1969 the patients were moved from the cottages to Blakeslee and Oakland.
- In 1971 the legislature had the cottages demolished.
- In 1977 the legislature had the tunnels demolished.

From 1963 – 2009 MSU conducted a lot of Fruit Pest Research at Asylum Lake, spraying pesticides there.

Today:

- Little Asylum Lake is about 10 feet deep at the deepest point and covers 9 acres.
- Big Asylum Lake is about 50 feet deep at the deepest point and covers 46 ½ acres.

VI. **Adjournment:** 8:45 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Sandy Bolstad, ODWNA Secretary