



**The Southwest Corner of the Stadium Drive / Drake Road Intersection:
Historical Events and Environmental Impacts on the Asylum Lake Watershed**
by Mark Hoffman

The eight-acre tract of land on the southwest corner of the Stadium Drive and Drake Road intersection returned to private hands in 1957 when the Kalamazoo State Hospital declared it surplus to their needs. The State of Michigan sold the property for \$2,000 to Warren Frost, where he built the present mobile home park (1957 Public Act #144). According to recent reports, developing the land to accommodate the trailers called for extensive filling – which included wetlands in the Asylum Lake watershed. Septic tanks were also installed for sanitary sewage. By the early 1960s, the park was fully operational, while at the same time US 131 was being constructed along its western side and to the south, cutting through the State Hospital’s Colony Farm Orchard property (the farmland south of Parkview Avenue had been transferred to WMU in 1959).

Published reports in 1978, 1990, and 1992 reveal that the development of US 131 disturbed the leach bed of the septic systems for the mobile home park, and would add contamination for 30 years to the Asylum Lake watershed, including the streams west of Drake Road. (Previously, a herd of garbage-fed pigs that polluted Asylum Lake was phased out by State Hospital officials around 1957 because of Kalamazoo’s westerly expansion and public health concerns.) After several years of debate, and at the determination of Research Park proponents, the City of Kalamazoo extended a

gravity sewer to the mobile home park in the mid-1990s which terminated the need for the in-ground septic system and its long-standing source of watershed contamination.

Within twenty years after the State Hospital released the 8-acre parcel of land on Drake Road and Stadium Drive, the Asylum Lake property (southeast of the trailer park) and Colony Farm Orchard (south of the trailer park) would also be declared surplus to the State Hospital’s needs and subsequently conveyed by the Michigan Legislature to WMU with the all-important restriction declaring each property’s use for “public park, recreation, or open space purposes...” (MSU also retained the right, as directed in the 1977 transfer language, to continue its Entomology research on the Colony Farm Orchard – which continues today and culminates over 40 years of studies on the property.) *DISCONTINUED IN 2009*

RESTRICTION
REMOVED
IN 2009

Finally, in terms of “Wellhead Protection,” the City’s wellfields at Stadium Drive and Kendall Avenue draw water from the aquifer upon which Asylum Lake, its watershed, and a portion of the trailer park are located (within the 5-year time of travel zone). Improving and protecting this watershed is critical for clean drinking water.