

Milwaukee CCC/WPA Legacy Day: Bus Tour Narration Thursday, July 22

Bus Tour Notes:

Welcome to the first part of our Celebration of the Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration! My name is Barbara Leigh, Artistic/Producing Director of Milwaukee Public Theatre, and...

I'm Mary Schueller. I have a special interest in this project, as my father was in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

And I'm Frank Matusinec from Historic Milwaukee. There are several other people on the bus today who have a lot of knowledge about the sites we'll be visiting and about the CCC and WPA: Lois Quinn, who has written extensively about jobs for workers on relief through the UW Extension; and Chris Litzau, who is the executive director of the Milwaukee Community Service Corps.

The sites we will highlight on our bus tour today were carefully chosen as former projects completed by Civilian Conservation Corps volunteers and Works Progress Administration workers. Seventy-five years ago, these were the sites of hope throughout Milwaukee that began the slow process of recovery out of the Great Depression. The sites we'll see on this tour are only a fraction of the projects completed as humanitarian work relief projects. But hopefully this will encourage you to go back and explore these wonderful sites on your own and in greater depth.

On our way to and between sites we'll be giving you some background on why and how the CCC and WPA got started. And why there was a special focus on Milwaukee's parks and public housing.

Individual park maps may be found at
<http://www.county.milwaukee.gov/AbTheParkSystemmap10627.htm>

As you probably know, Milwaukee was founded on the confluence of three rivers, the Milwaukee, the Menomonee and the Kinnickinnic. The Native Americans who settled here called it the "Gathering Place by the Waters". The waterways that run through Milwaukee County form the basis for what have become our parks.

In fact, parks have been a feature of Milwaukee since the earliest settlements in 1835. The town plats laid out by Solomon Juneau, Byron Kilbourn, George Walker and their associates contained provision for "public squares" in all three of the communities that formed the early city.

Between 1870 and 1900, Milwaukee's population quadrupled from 70,000 to 285,000. And there weren't enough public spaces set aside for such a large and growing population. Several prominent citizens got the state legislature to pass a bill to enable the City of Milwaukee to acquire land for parks. The actions of this group and the resulting legislation laid the foundation for development of a park system within the city and establishment of a City of Milwaukee Park Commission. By 1930 the county and city park system had grown to nearly 3,000 acres. The wisdom and foresight of this expansion became clear during the Depression of the 1930's when there was no money for land acquisition.

At the time of the stock market crash on October 24, 1929, the folks who heavily invested in the stock market lost their fortunes overnight. When banks permanently closed, those who had money in savings accounts received only 10% of their savings back and the rest was lost.

Many of Milwaukee's manufacturing plants had to lay off their workers or were forced out of business.

We think times are tough now? By 1931, there were only 28 states that had banks that were still open as the United States struggled against total economic collapse.

By 1932, roughly 77% of Milwaukee's population was unemployed. Many families were living in Third World conditions in crates or tents in our park areas or along the beach of Lake Michigan. There are

pictures in the Milwaukee Historical Society that show large families living in garages during the winter months. And, the Milwaukee Journal contained articles of a large transient camp on the grounds of Currie Park where the Red Cross ran a soup kitchen.

Federal humanitarian relief work programs finally became available in March 1933 at the beginning of the Roosevelt administration. The first of these programs was the Civilian Conservation Corps or the CCCs. You can only imagine how grateful families were to have a son who qualified. This program hired unemployed, single, male workers between the ages of 18 and 25 whose parents or guardian was collecting Federal Relief. Each CCC volunteer earned \$30 a month, with \$25 of their wages sent directly home. To many families, this was the only income coming into a household.

On July 1, 1933, camps were established at Honey Creek Parkway, Sheridan, and Whitnall Parks. And by the time the federal government passed the **Civil Works Administration** in November 1933, with less than 48 hours notice, the Milwaukee Park Commission put approximately 4,000 men to work in various city parks.

1. Honey Creek Parkway. We're now entering the site of one of those camps, on **Honey Creek Parkway**. On November 10, 1933, Civilian Conservation Corps Company 656 came from Mountain, Wisconsin located near Peshtigo. They literally pitched their tents two miles away in West Allis. Company 656 specialized in erosion work and it was their job to clean up the creek bed and riprap the shoreline. They did most of this work in the winter when they didn't have to deal with mud.

On June 15, 1935, Company 656 was joined by CCC Company 2670 which brought the work force to around 400 men working on the Honey Creek project. Their official CCC category was park work whose co-sponsor was Milwaukee County. During the CCC era, most of the funding was for personnel, so when construction materials were needed in great abundance, stone was harvested from the closest location with the greatest supply. As a result, many bridges and buildings in Southeastern Wisconsin are constructed using Lannon Stone where the site of the quarry was Currie Park.

Seven concrete arched bridges were constructed and finished using Lannon Stone along Honey Creek from South 84th Street South of Hwy 18 to the Honey Creek Bridge north of Bluemound. Three of these bridges have been replaced in the past 77 years. The original four that remain are listed among the Historic Bridges of the United States.

2. Jacobus Park and Nature Preserve. By purpose and design in Milwaukee's Master Park Plan, the Honey Creek Parkway system runs along the northern portion of **Jacobus Park and Nature Preserve**. This is a 31-acre site established in 1907 that originally extended from the Menomonee River to Wells Street.

With pick and shovel, CCC and WPA men removed thousands of tons of sledge to create a lagoon in Jacobus Park and constructed the Lannon Stone footbridges over it. Wooded areas were trimmed and underbrush was thinned and landscaped. At that time, rare plant species were discovered and protected. In 1935, WPA laborers completed park trails, constructed a park pavilion, and graded athletic fields by hand.

If you were to plot all of Milwaukee's parks on a map you would notice that the majority of the early parks cluster along creeks and rivers that intersect the city. These were important sites for boating and swimming in the summer, along with hockey games, speed skating races, winter carnivals, and toboggan runs.

A man by the name of Charles C. Jacobus, who was a former county supervisor from Wauwatosa, saw the importance of preserving and utilizing the natural waterways to develop park areas and green space within Milwaukee's neighborhoods. In 1932, the name of this park site was changed from Sholes Park to Jacobus Park in recognition of what Mr. Jacobus contributed to the Milwaukee Park system.

During the 1930s, the same CCC companies assigned to the Honey Creek project did shoreline erosion control along the Menomonee River. Just up ahead is the CCC camp sign that honors the men who labored here.

A Community Development Block Grant from the City of Wauwatosa provided funds for park development and improvements in recent years, with remaining funds coming from the Jacobus Family Foundation, the Jacobus Park Neighborhood Association, other private donors and Milwaukee County.

In the past 103 years, this park area has provided leisure and sports activities for thousands of Milwaukeeans in the winter and summer. It has also become the home of migrant songbirds, nesting Screech Owls and Cooper's Hawks. It remains a valuable part of Milwaukee's park heritage.

Background on the CCC/WPA (on the way to Greendale)

The CCC volunteers lived in a military-type setting at the job site and had their room and board supplied and supervised by the Department of Defense. The work they performed was primarily construction and conservation projects in our parks and forests. CCC men formed the largest peace-time army in the history of the United States.

The program provided co-matching federal funds for local public works projects. It was up to the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County or the State of Wisconsin to come up with the other half the money for all wages and materials for each work project.

Southeastern Wisconsin had nine CCC companies that originated in Milwaukee with one more company that transferred in from Silver Lake along the Fox River in 1937. Milwaukee's CCC camp sites were located at: Estabrook, Sheridan, Kletzsch and Whitnall Parks, and Bluemound Road and Honey Creek Parkway. Work sites were wherever they were needed. For example, CCC men encamped at Estabrook Park also did work at Currie Park and the men encamped at Sheridan Park in Cudahy did work along the shoreline of Lake Michigan in Grant Park. Then, after an 8-hour shift, they would be trucked back to their camp.

In addition to the 200 men in each CCC camp, each camp hired hundreds of local workers as cooks, teachers, physicians, carpenters, engineers, heavy equipment operators, plumbers and electricians to help keep the camps and their projects working at full capacity. Of Milwaukee's CCC camps, only Camp Estabrook was an integrated camp and Company 2625 from Whitnall Park contained mostly veterans from World War I.

CCC men could get free dental work done by Marquette dental students and attend diploma programs provided at local High Schools or Technical Colleges. Due to the educational opportunities available here, Milwaukee CCC camps ran at full capacity and had a waiting list of men who wanted to be assigned here.

By 1935, the unemployment rate in Milwaukee remained quite high and there remained a need to provide work for a wider age group of workers who were male and female, skilled and non-skilled. The majority of Americans, quite frankly, were unemployed and still waiting for their New Deal.

Out of necessity, Congress passed the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act on April 8, 1935. This legislation supplied federal funds for the **Works Progress Administration** or WPA, to literally put all of America to work. This program not only provided construction and conservation work but created jobs in the arts. The WPA was the largest humanitarian work relief effort in our nation's history and at no other time before or since, has so much effort been invested in our park systems throughout America.

As with previous work programs, the City of Milwaukee immediately planned construction projects throughout the city's twenty-seven wards. The first city projects were approved in September 1935 and within four months, the city had over 12,000 workers employed on projects. In the first sixteen months of WPA, from September 1935 through December 1936, the City of Milwaukee operated 90 different projects, including 52 construction projects and 38 "white collar" projects.

The Milwaukee Parks Department website states that there isn't one park in the 140-park system that did not have a project done by WPA workers. Many of the roads and bridges we will drive on were constructed with WPA funds.

During those Great Depression years, the Milwaukee County Park Commission along with the Departments of Public Works and Public Housing had the daunting task of applying for Federal Funds, matching those funds and creating useful work projects to aid every unemployed person in our city. It was a time when Milwaukee invested in its own people and in projects that increased our quality of life. This is the rich legacy we celebrate today.

3. Village of Greendale. We are going to continue our tour by going south on 76th Street to Grange Avenue where we will go into the historic **Village of Greendale**. It is one of three Greenbelt Communities built with WPA labor between 1935 and 1938. The project was funded by another of Roosevelt's Depression-era programs called the Resettlement Administration. The Resettlement Administration literally paid farmers to move because their farmland merged with a metropolitan area or was in the way of another project, such as a highway.

With the use of horses, carts and plows, WPA workers leveled Greendale farmland for the construction of a 750-unit housing development where single and multi-families enjoyed the benefits of rural life with the closeness of city-living.

This was an experiment called *New Deal Urban Planning* where Greendale was chosen as a site for this project. It helped provide an urban vision of development for future suburbs that eventually surrounded the city of Milwaukee. The WPA's labor intensive work using horses, carts and plows contrasted with the modern technology used by skilled craftsmen employed under the Resettlement Administration. The RA built an electric rail line to bring skilled Milwaukee tradesmen to the Greendale site while the project was underway. But once completed, you needed a car if you lived here and worked in Milwaukee.

This was very ironic, since the village was created for low-income people. One of the results was that the village slowly declined—especially the village shops, after the development of Southridge. But thanks to the Reiman Family, the village has been reborn and has been a mecca for people with professions who want a rural environment but easy access to shopping and the airport.

The two other Greenbelt communities in the United States are located in Greenbelt, Maryland, outside of Washington, D.C. and Greenhills, Ohio, north of Cincinnati.

Sometime, when you have an opportunity, visit the Greendale Historical Society displays where they are more than happy to share its unique WPA history.

4. Whitnall Park and Boerner Botanical Gardens. As we proceed south on 92nd Street, we come to the fourth stop on our tour today that bears the name of a man who is known as the *Father of the Milwaukee Park System*. Guesses? That man, of course, is Charles B. Whitnall who served as Secretary of the Milwaukee County Park Commission from 1907 until his retirement in 1941.

When Whitnall was 70 years old, he collaborated with a 26-year old student of landscape architecture from the University of Wisconsin named Alfred Boerner. Together, they found an ideal parcel of land in Hales Corners that we know as **Whitnall Park and Boerner Botanical Gardens**.

It was Whitnall's dream to provide a sanctuary for the citizens of Milwaukee to enjoy lakes, streams, wildlife, flowers and native trees of Wisconsin. The original parcel of 606 acres of cornfields was purchased at the cost of \$376 an acre. At the time, the purchase just about depleted the County's park funds, which is why it took around five years to convince the County Park Commission of the need to purchase the land. This was accomplished just before the Great Depression started in 1929.

Fortunately, by the time funds became available for CCC and WPA work programs, a master plan had been developed for the gardens.

Mr. Boerner's philosophy was to display plant material in formal landscaped gardens so that home owners, businesses, industrial and municipal sites could re-create these formal gardens in their own living space. Boerner designed the original five formal gardens that remain as his contribution to the Milwaukee County Park system.

On June 22, 1933, after completing their period of conditioning at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, Civilian Conservation Corps Company 636 set up camp with 200 Milwaukee. The men began grading the land with rakes, picks and shovels to install roads and transform a cornfield into an 18-hole golf course.

Using WPA funds and labor in 1935, a new administration building for the botanical gardens was completed along with a golf clubhouse. The exterior was completed with an abundance of fieldstone harvested from the surrounding farmland. The interior of the clubhouse is decorated with rough-hewn beams, hand-carved woodwork, and hand-split fieldstone for the fireplace. Stone for the statuary in the Gardens came from a quarry located in Currie Park. The stone was carved by local artists with WPA funds.

From 1933 until 1941, there were three CCC companies in residence at Whitnall Park. In addition to Company 636, this site provided work for Company 2672 and Company 2625, which was an all-Veteran's unit of WWI.

As America switched gears to prepare for World War II, it is interesting that the CCC barrack buildings at Whitnall Park were immediately used to house pilots that trained at a local airfield later named to honor Billy Mitchell.

We are going to take a 20-minute break now so that you can stretch your legs. Please go inside to view ***The History of the Milwaukee County Parks System 100-years*** display on loan from the Milwaukee Historical Society. The display is located on the Lower Level of the Education and Visitor Center. There will be a volunteer inside to point you in the direction of the display.

(Past the golf course, etc.) We are heading East on Rawson Avenue, named in honor of an early pioneer named Oliver Rawson, who cleared the land with the help of his eleven children. Here they began foundations of a settlement in the 1840s.

(Frank: information on South Milwaukee).

As we travel a few miles into South Milwaukee, we will come to the **Oak Creek Parkway**. Oak Creek Dam was listed as a National Landmark in 2003. The original dam to receive this honor is located near the mouth of the Oak Creek River. It was originally built by John Fowle in the early 1840s where he operated both a gristmill and a sawmill. It was known by local residents as Fowle's Mill.

The original Oak Creek settlement consisted of a few houses, a stage coach station, and a tavern. The original dam was made of wood and had a wagon road over it that was rebuilt by WPA laborers around 1935. The mill was torn down in 1932 by Civil Works Administration workers.

As we go through the Oak Creek Parkway, please note the stone bridges, a lagoon and boat house on the right and their similarity to the style of bridge construction at the Honey Creek Parkway project.

5. Grant Park. From the Parkway we come to the entrance to **Grant Park** and the well-known Grant Park Clubhouse on the edge of the golf course.

Here, the Fowle family once again played an important role. Horace Fowle, son of John Fowle of Fowle's Mill, built his house in 1892 on the exact site of the log cabin where he was born in 1837. Fowle and his wife raised their nine children in the house that is now known as the Grant Park Clubhouse. In 1907, the Fowles offered to sell their land to the county but the park commission showed little interest until Patrick Cudahy offered to buy the property on behalf of the Milwaukee County park commission. Today, this 381-acre site is the second largest park in the County's park system.

A special division of the WPA that we haven't talked much about was the Federal Art Project. With these funds Grant Park hosted outdoor theatrical performances during the summer months. Right after this bus tour you will be entertained by the play, *Camp We-Kan-Tak-It*. The play is a perfect example of Living Newspaper-style Theater from the Federal Art Project and the kind of entertainment you would've seen here in the 1930s.

The Federal Art Project also provided funds to hire local artists to produce statuary and ornamentation for tax-supported buildings. Under the Division of Creative Paintings, Sculptures and Printmaking, area artists were hired to produce the gargoyles on one of Grant Park's pavilions in areas 5 & 6, and a little further is the park's Covered Bridge main entrance.

Peace Bridge: Notice the inscriptions on the bridge. One side says: "*Enter this wild wood and view the haunts of nature.*" Over the years, this inscription has taken on a hidden meaning. Some people believe the *haunts of nature* actually come from the ghosts of people who chose this spot to commit suicide. So, if you are looking for a spooky place to hike on Halloween, this is your spot. On the other side of the bridge is a message that says, "*May the God-given peace of this leafy solitude rest upon and abide with thee.*"

Grant Park is noted for its Seven Bridges Trail begun in the early 1900s by Frederick C. Wulff, who was the Superintendent of Horticulture for the Milwaukee County Park system. He lived in the park with his family and his house is still there and referred to as the Scout House. Mr. Wulff developed the County greenhouse and nursery where thousands of plants were raised for use in other county parks and boulevards in Milwaukee.

In the 1930s, the trail was completed as a WPA project. Here, workers constructed retaining walls to stop erosion along creek beds and deep ravines. WPA workers also installed Lannon Stone hiking paths, staircases and stone piers called jetties. Most likely CCC Company 1644 from Sheridan Park in Cudahy helped with the construction of the jetties because this was their specialty.

Later in today's itinerary there will be a panel discussion where you will hear from Chris Litzau, who is the director of the Milwaukee Community Service Corps. This organization is a grandchild of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Wisconsin Conservation Corps. In 1995 and 1996, members of the Wisconsin Conservation Corps were trained by Grant Park's Maintenance staff. Under their direction, WCC youth reconstructed damaged sections of Grant Park's trail system, rebuilt staircases and six bridges, added railings and signs, and remodeled a lodge that can be rented for the overnight camping in the park. Although the Wisconsin Conservation Corps officially ended in 2003, there is a movement afoot to reinstate this valuable program.

6. Warnimont Park. The park consists of 291.6 acres and is named after Eugene Warnimont who served as a county supervisor for 35 years. Initial acquisition of land for the park began in 1948 and development of the site commenced in 1958.

Its bluffs offer a panoramic view of Lake Michigan and a paved bicycle trail, part of the Oak Leaf Trail system, loops through the park and past an 18 hole par three golf course. There are no designated picnic areas or athletic fields; however, it is a fine place to bike or hike.

South of the golf course is the Lawrence P. Kelly Senior Center (named for a long-time former Mayor of Cudahy). This facility serves thousands of seniors with its recreation programs, as well as its nutrition center.

The original nine-hole golf course started operations in 1963 and was expanded to 18 holes in 1983. The senior center facility was developed in the mid-1970's.

Milwaukee County was able to accomplish the golf course expansion and development of the senior center due to reversion of lands from the federal government in the early 1970's. This land on the south end of the park had previously served as a U.S. Army "Nike Site."

7. Sheridan Park. As we travel north on Lake Drive we will come to the former summer home of Patrick Cudahy. His grand estate was on forty acres of land overlooking Lake Michigan. The family eventually donated the site to the City of Cudahy for use as a park. The park originally was called Cudahy Park and has a statue dedicated to its donor. In 1920 the park was re-named in remembrance of one of Cudahy's Civil War heroes named Phillip Sheridan.

Sheridan Park was a very important spot during the Great Depression years. The park hosted a WPA Toy Loan Center that operated like a library. Here, repaired toys such as teddy bears, dolls, roller skates and ice skates were collected and distributed to over 32,000 area children. The articles were "checked out" and played with it for two weeks and returned to the Sheridan Park Toy Center.

This site was home to Company 1644 of the Civilian Conservation Corps. In addition to the usual park roads and trails, this company constructed the concrete piers or jetties into Lake Michigan. Following World War II, Sheridan Park was the site approved for trailer park housing for returning veterans.

Sheridan Park is listed as a Milwaukee County Landmark for its historical and cultural significance to the county. There's even a plaque showing where the CCC camp was located.

8. South Shore Park. The **South Shore Park Pavilion** was designed by the Milwaukee architectural firm of Clas & Clas and completed in 1933. Like many other buildings in the Milwaukee County Parks System, it was constructed with relief labor made available through Depression-era programs of the federal government. It replaced an earlier bathhouse constructed in 1912 at the same location on the shore of Lake Michigan in the Bay View neighborhood. The property was designated for its historic significance.

In the early 1900s, when South Shore Park was known as the 17th Ward Lake Shore Park, there was no permanent public bathhouse building where swimmers could change into their swimming suits, lock up their personal items, and take a shower. Rather, there were temporary bathhouses set up on the beach. In 1910, plans were being made for the bathhouse, but were put on hold due to a controversy over a sewer outlet at the foot of E. Rusk Avenue. This sewer had been built in 1893 to control flooding of Deer Creek. The sewer, according to the 1911 *Annual Report of the Park Commission*, was 10 feet in diameter, with 16-inch-thick walls.

Nearby residents and park users complained that the sewer emitted a foul odor in summer. This sewer odor was a concern for the park commissioners. The common council, however, went ahead and gave permission for plans to be drawn up for the bathhouse. Park commissioners still insisted that the sewer be removed or closed; however, the commissioner of health claimed that the sewer posed no health problems.

Plans for the bathhouse moved forward, and it was completed in the summer of 1912 at a cost of \$11,405. The bathhouse was situated directly on top of the sewer, with four feet of soil between the bathhouse footings and the top of the sewer. The mouth of the sewer was only 100 feet from the bathhouse.

The bathhouse was rectangular in shape, built of rusticated concrete block and was situated parallel to the lakeshore. On the side facing west, the gabled roofed structure had a front double-door entrance that was flanked by bay windows and single-door entrances. The beachfront side had a basement ground level entrance and a large open porch on the upper level stretching across the entire building. In 1913, an additional 4.28 acres were purchased that allowed for the installation of a circular drive in front of the bathhouse. Trees were planted and steps were installed around the bathhouse.

Some people didn't like having to walk through a stream of cold water in order to go in or out of the bathhouse. So instead, "we just rolled our outer clothing in a bundle and buried it in the sand," recalled Arthur Hickman, former Bay View resident, in his book *Bay View As I Remember It*.

The bathhouse had a women's section on the south end and a men's section on the north end. There was a community dressing room for the children and individual dressing stalls for the "older folk," recalled Hickman. Street clothes were placed in baskets and an attendant issued a numbered safety pin as a receipt. A refreshment stand was in the open area just east of the building.

The bathing beach itself was located south of the bathhouse to about E. Meredith Street, but later the beach was moved to the north. "With the building of the breakwater and the grading of parkland," wrote Hickman, "the shore line changed so much that the bathing beach was moved to the north side of the bathhouse."

In 1929, plans were made to build a new bathhouse. The new bathhouse was intended to serve bathers, as well as be used for general park purposes. However, when the Great Depression hit, construction costs had to be reduced, and construction was delayed until 1933. The architectural firm of Clas & Clas designed the Northern Italian style bathhouse. It is a masonry building with a hipped roof of Italian tile. Situated parallel to the lakeshore, the main façade has a large tower and a semicircular entrance. No longer a bathhouse, today it is known as the **South Shore Park Pavilion**.

The odor from the Rusk sewer was finally addressed in the 1930s. To stop the flow of wastewater into the lake, the sewer outlet was bulkheaded and the wastewater was directed into new sewer lines that traveled north to Jones Island. The spot of the former sewer outlet, and the old bathhouse, is adjacent to the pavilion to the south. It's now the site of the tot lot.

With its wall of windows overlooking Lake Michigan, the Pavilion is a popular wedding and party spot, as well as serving as a bathhouse for the adjacent beach and South Shore Park headquarters. The Bay View Historical Society, along with the Milwaukee County Historical Society, designated the Pavilion as a landmark on November 10, 2008.

9. McKinley Flushing Station. We will now continue north to 3000 Lincoln Memorial Drive to one of Milwaukee's oldest buildings on the Milwaukee River. This is the **McKinley Flushing Station** built in 1888, and home to a water pump that was once the largest in the world. For this reason, it was designated as a Milwaukee Landmark in 1990 for its historic and cultural contribution to the City of Milwaukee.

The McKinley Flushing Station is now a partnership between the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and the Alterra Coffee House since September 2002. The building has already won preservation awards from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and from the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission.

Inside the education center you can view displays on storm water runoff and pollution, as well as a model of the deep tunnel system administered by the Milwaukee Sewerage District.

10. McKinley Marina and Bradford Beach. This was once a spot in Milwaukee where the homeless put up their shanties and stayed due to the easy railroad access. It was also one of the first areas the

Milwaukee Park Commissioners wanted to clean up. The easiest way to do that was to give them a job cleaning up the shoreline of Lake Michigan and constructing beautifully planted boulevards. Many of the unemployed men who gathered here were transported to job sites at Jones Island or at nearby filtration plants.

The Bradford Beach Bathhouse was designed by Milwaukee County Architect Gilbert Grunwald and constructed in 1950 at a total cost of approximately \$255,000. The building represents an excellent example of the Art Moderne style popular during the Post-World War II period. The property is listed as a Milwaukee Landmark for its cultural and architectural significance.

The McKinley Park site was a busy one right after World War II, when trailers were brought to the park to provide housing for returning servicemen.

Just beyond where we'll be turning into Ravine Drive is the Linwood Water Filtration Plant. Linwood and the sewerage plant extension at Jones Island were the sites of the largest Public Works Administration projects in Wisconsin during the Great Depression. They employed 1,700 men a year who laid a total of 1,933 miles of water mains throughout the city. The unique part about the workers hired under the Public Works Administration for these important infrastructure projects was that they were skilled union workers who were provided a competitive wage. This wage was slightly higher than the minimum subsistence wage for short intervals offered through other WPA programs.

10. Lake Park. From the very beginning of Milwaukee's park development, commissioners realized the importance of preserving the Lake Michigan shoreline and keeping it available to the public.

In the late-1800s, most of the shoreline property was already privately-owned and could not be purchased except at a cost far beyond the budget of the Milwaukee park Commission. So the commission came up with a plan to purchase a difficult piece of property that contained steep ravines that nobody seemed to want.

With the aid of two grants, the City of Milwaukee purchased land for one of its first five parks in 1890. This property was given the temporary name of **Lake Park** due to its easy public access to Lake Michigan. At that point in time the park consisted of approximately 124 acres (current size is approximately 140 acres). The park site met all the guidelines that the Commission had established for land acquisition and satisfied their desire to improve public access to Lake Michigan without having to cross railroad tracks.

Realizing that large parks would require the services of the best talent obtainable, the Commission in 1892 hired the nationally renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (best known for his work on Central Park in New York City and Washington Park in Milwaukee) to design the site.

In 1905, a scenic drive along Lake Michigan was approved by the city of Milwaukee that included an elegant concrete bridge leading to the north side of Lake Park. This is where you could hitch your horse at the government lighthouse and enjoy a view of the lake. The lighthouse is of course, the North Point Lighthouse located within Lake Park. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

Considerable grading, planting, as well as road and walk construction was also accomplished in the 1890's and early 1900's. Among the projects was filling of the second ravine north of the lighthouse to create a 10 acre meadow. The bandstand, which was located just west of the pavilion until the early 1950's, provided a venue for concerts during the summer months for many years and the athletic fields gave eastsiders facilities which had previously been absent from that area of the city.

An interesting fact associated with the park's early development is that both the pavilion and grand staircase were designed by Alfred C. Clas who was not only an architect and planner of considerable note, but also one of the original members of the Milwaukee County Park Commission. Mr. Clas served as a commissioner for 10 years, 1907-1917.

By the time federal work programs became available in 1931, Lake Park needed extensive maintenance. CWA workers were immediately hired to maintain the native trees and plants, and groom dirt paths, stone steps and retaining walls. Because of its location, it supplied work for hundreds of inner city workers.

Lake Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996, when several architects were credited for the park's special features. The original Olmsted design of Lake Park continues to offer majestic vistas of Lake Michigan from two levels. The largest portion is perched on a 100-foot high bluff with a series of open meadows screened from the city with predominantly native trees and shrubs.

Over the years, a great deal of development and redevelopment has occurred. The park now contains the following amenities:

- 18 hole Pitch and Putt golf course
- Lawn bowling
- Extensive play equipment areas
- A fine restaurant in the pavilion
- Lighted tennis courts
- Athletic fields
- Picnic areas
- A portion of the Oak Leaf Trail as well as nature trails.

A major renovation of the grand staircase was completed and a rock staircase falls is currently running.

11. Gordon Park was donated by the Gordon Family. On 1909 the site had early bathing beaches along the Milwaukee River. A WPA program built a pool and bathhouse and a bridge over railroad tracks from Humboldt Blvd. There was also a warming house for ice skaters on the Milwaukee River. A toboggan slide in **Riverside Park** provided a crossing on the river's ice ending up in Gordon Park. A ski jump in Gordon Park provided a place for competitions. The park was also the scene of winter carnivals, hockey games and skating races.

Heading North on Humboldt we're also passing **Kern Park**, to Capital Drive. To the East and North is the **Milwaukee River Parkway and Estabrook, Lincoln and Kletzsch Parks**. We had originally planned to take this route, but the roads are completely torn up and closed for repaving. Hopefully they will be open later this summer and you can come back and visit these truly beautiful parks

12. Parklawn. The city also placed 2,891 workers on WPA projects building the infrastructure needed for a federal housing project constructed by the Public Works Administration. After abandoning plans to conduct a slum clearance program in the sixth ward, a 42-acre parcel was purchased on the outskirts of Milwaukee for the "**Parklawn**" apartments. The rural site required extension of sewer and water mains, streets, curbs and gutters, street lighting, police and fire alarm units, and a bridge across Lincoln Creek at North 43rd Street -- all projects constructed by WPA workers. Workers also built a six acre playground and recreational area for the families in the 518 apartments.

The location of Parklawn is designed to maximize its natural setting along Lincoln Creek, a waterway that it borders on the north, and Sherman Boulevard, a historic park boulevard at its eastern edge. Unfortunately, again, the fact that there was no public transportation to Parklawn meant that the inhabitants were isolated and had difficulty accessing jobs without a vehicle.

There was a major restoration of the site in recent years, and in addition to dwelling units, Parklawn includes a community center, YMCA, daycare center, and a state-of-the-art, wireless technology-based elementary school, or "cyberschool" (approximately enrollment of 400). Parklawn Housing Development continues to be one of Milwaukee's success stories with HOPE VI grants from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Today, it is home to 380 residents. The entire development is an energy-efficient model for other urban housing developments throughout the United States.

13. Sherman Park is one of the older parks in the system and had its origins with the City of Milwaukee.

In 1891, the State of Wisconsin passed legislation that allowed the City of Milwaukee to acquire park sites beyond what was then its city limits. Among the acquisitions made that year was a heavily wooded 24-acre parcel south of Burleigh Street and just east of what was then called 43rd Street. The park was initially referred to as the Perrigo Tract as this was the name of the family from which the land was purchased.

During the 1890's the site which came to be known as North Park saw very limited efforts at development other than clearing of underbrush and construction of a road along its eastern boundary. Since it was not served at that time by public transportation, the park remained a largely unimproved site used only by a few patrons for picnics and as a nursery for the city parks department.

The city annexed the area in 1899 and in 1900 the site was officially named **Sherman Park** in honor of the Civil War General William T. Sherman. What had been 43rd Street was renamed Sherman Boulevard after residents along the street petitioned that it be done.

In 1908 a pavilion was constructed to replace a smaller facility which had been destroyed by fire, however, most of the significant development within the park took place decades later. Park development during the 1920's and 30's included a new much larger pavilion, baseball diamonds, tennis courts and a bowling green.

Sherman Park consisting of 20.8 acres was transferred to Milwaukee County as part of the consolidation of parks in 1937.

In 1940, what had been a baseball diamond was replaced with a lighted softball field. This facility which hosted the best leagues in the city was hugely popular and attracted crowds of 2,000 – 5,000 per game. This popularity continued until the 1970's when the Wilson softball stadium was constructed.

Development in more recent years has seen the construction of the Mary Ryan Branch of the Boys and Girls Club, which opened in 1991.

In addition to the Boys and Girls Club, the park has lighted tennis courts, basketball courts, wading pool, play equipment, picnic areas as well as a lighted softball field. It continues to provide a variety of recreational opportunities to the adjacent neighborhood.

14. Washington Park. It was originally known as West Park or the Vliet Street Tract and was purchased for park development in 1891. Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted was hired to design Washington Park. He is the same man that designed Central Park in New York City and Lake Park in Milwaukee. His vision for Washington Park included an athletic field with a half-mile horse race track and a grand stand for viewing.

As early as 1902, the City Park Board had decided that Washington Park should be the home of all Milwaukee sports. His Master Park Plan included athletic fields, lawn tennis courts, a six-hole golf course, a one-mile horse racing track, and a grandstand facility with lockers. Washington Park was also the site of Milwaukee's first toboggan slide. By 1914, boaters enjoyed a man-made 7-acre lake and lagoons in the summer and used them for ice skating in the winter.

Washington Park was considered to be among the top six zoos in the country and was the forerunner of our present Milwaukee County Zoo. This park contains some large statuary donated by some of the German-American cultural societies to display the pride and artistic achievements of German immigrants. Eventually, the golf course had to be eliminated due to the rapid expansion of the zoo.

By 1935 when WPA funds and workers became available, many of the earlier developments within Washington Park needed repair or replacement. With a \$100,000 donation given by Emil Blatz. The Temple of Music Band Shell was built by WPA workers and dedicated in August 1938 with an estimated crowd of 40,000 in attendance. NBC and CBS radio broadcast parts of the concert to the rest of America.

What is very unique about the Washington Park site are the planted boulevards that surround it. The Milwaukee Park Commission wanted to extend the beauty of the park right into the surrounding neighborhood and hired WPA workers to do the work. Washington Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District because of these boulevards.

While Washington Park has undergone many changes in its 120-year history, it continues to provide outdoor recreation in its baseball diamonds, soccer fields, basketball and tennis courts, sand volleyball, play equipment and numerous picnic areas. The park contains a major senior citizen center that will host our play and panel discussion after the tour. The Center is operated by Milwaukee County's Department on Aging.

In 2007, Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center opened a satellite center in the park in an effort to help rejuvenate the run-down green space, while at the same time giving local kids a chance to experience nature through interactive programming.

This concludes our bus tour but before we go, we need to give credit to a few individuals who have worked a lifetime researching and recording the history of Milwaukee parks. We especially want to thank the Wisconsin Humanities Council, the Wisconsin Arts Board, the Milwaukee Arts Board, the Milwaukee Housing Authority, and Milwaukee County Parks for partially funding this project, and Milwaukee historians Laurie Albano, whose book **Milwaukee County Parks** provided wonderful photo records of the parks history, and Lois Quinn, author of **Jobs for Workers on Relief in Milwaukee County, 1930-1994**. We also want to congratulate the Milwaukee County Park system for receiving the Gold Medal Award for being chosen best managed park system in the nation.

Additional Resources:

www.county.milwaukee.gov/Parks.

<http://www.altweeklies.com/aan/Wire?tag=852254>: "Mr. Jobs: Investment Board Head Discusses Milwaukee's Efforts to Create Employment." *Altweeklies Wire, Shepherd Express*, Article by Louis Fortis & Lisa Kaiser, 01-23-2009.

Cream City Chronicles; Stories of Milwaukee's Past, by John Gurda, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2006.

Historic Photos of Milwaukee, by Elizabeth A. Chasco Page, Turner Publishing Co., 2007.

Images of America; Milwaukee County Parks, by Laurie Muench Albano, Arcadia Publishing, 2007.

Jobs for Workers on Relief in Milwaukee County: 1930s-1990s

by Lois M. Quinn, John Pawasarat and Laura Serebin, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute, February 1995.

Milwaukee Then and Now, by Sandra Ackerman, Thunder Bay Press, 2004.

The Making of Milwaukee, by John Gurda, Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999.

The Soldiers of Poverty, by Mary J. Schueller, Rustic Books LLC, 2006

Useful Work for Unskilled Women; A Unique Milwaukee WPA Project, by Mary Kellogg Rice, Milwaukee County Historical Society, 2003.

Also see:

www.milwaukeepublictheatre.org

Fireside Chatter WPA Resource Guide, Mary J. Schueller, Milwaukee Public Theatre, 2010

Humdinger CCC Resource Guide, by Mary J. Schueller, Milwaukee Public Theatre, 2009