

About the Warner Memorial Road

1916
W. W. Warner Will
Warner Memorial Road

Final judgment of the estate of W. W. Warner was entered in the county court in Madison in December of 1916. The following bequests were then available.

Dane County Humane Society	\$500.00
Attic Angels	\$500.00
Madison General Hospital	\$1,000.00

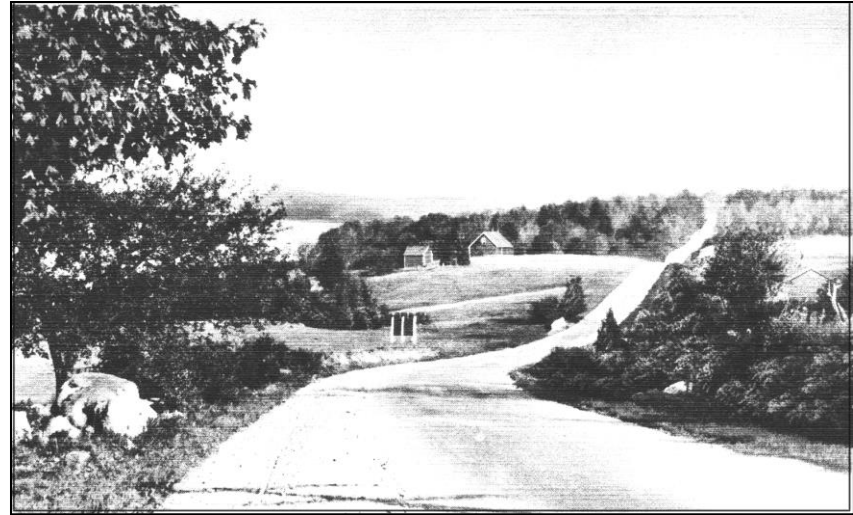
Museum of the State Historical Society: (Many items owned by Mr. Warner)

Sauk County Historical Society	\$200.00
Yahara River Improvement Assn.	\$1,000.00

To the city of Madison, \$20,000 for the building of a sea wall on Lake Monona shore and \$75,000 for the establishment of a public park on the site of the Conklin property on East Gorham Street under certain conditions. If... Madison does not accept the bequest then the money will go to the Town (Township) of Baraboo to construct a cement road from the high bridge to Devil's Lake. The only condition that the Town would have to meet was appropriating \$5,000 to be expended in planting trees, building a sidewalk to the lake, etc.

In May of 1917, the Madison city council turned down Warner's gift as they would have to add to it to buy the land for the park and like Baraboo, the city was in the process of trying to replace the money lost from the absence of saloon license monies coming in. The Town of Baraboo would receive money for the concrete road to Devil's Lake.

In June, a bill was introduced into the state senate to allow the township to construct the road into the city as well as into the state park. The county would then contribute \$2,500, the city \$1,400 and the town \$1,100.



Early view of the Warner Road from Baraboo

The road was not to be constructed without hurdles. The following is an excerpt from correspondence to the Chairman of the Town of Baraboo from the State Highway Engineer of the Wisconsin Highway Commission.

"The unanimous opinion was that a grave mistake was being made in the location of this road which has been selected by the town board. From both an engineering and practical standpoint the route suggested is indefensible and could not possibly have been selected except by giving unjustified importance to the desires of a very few people (those living along the East Sauk Road and those summering on the Messenger Shore), as compared to the good not only of the people of the city of Baraboo and of the surrounding territory, but of the whole state."

The letter went on to state:

"It is possible to lay a route near the present lake road by relocating on the west side of the track between the two present grade crossings, which would be practically a water grade (except coming out of Baraboo where the hill is reasonable) which would be a direct line to the lake"

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Further it stated:

“The final solution of connecting the north and south ends of the lake is along the east shore of the lake, either west of the tracks, or on the edge of the bluffs along the tracks, both of which plans are possible although expensive. Either of these plans, would offer the paramount advantage of leaving the west bluff untouched by any construction and free for the occupancy of cottagers and campers in its beautiful natural state.

The east bluff has already been ruined by the railroad and quarries and a little further defacement by a public highway would do no great harm.”

In January of 1919, the city council decided to change the location of the Warner Memorial Road from Walnut Street to Vine. The road would then commence at the high bridge (Vine Street), go over the hill on Vine, then along Elm to Walnut and then south to the lake. In 1927, portions of highway 123 were newly developed due to the underpass under the railroad and the building of the Broadway Bridge. The old Warner Road followed Vine to Elm where Mr. & Mrs. Reuben Prothero lived, then to Walnut and then south to the lake. The new route would eliminate those two sharp corners and would run at an angle behind the Prothero home and through the field south of that point coming out on the Warner road near the curve at the top of the hill. The new highway 12 would then connect what was known as Dutch Hollow and the Warner Road.

Note: This was a detour from Hazeltine’s Corners (where Hwy. 59 intersected with today’s highway 12) to Baraboo as Hwy. 12 was being newly constructed from that point to the new Broadway Bridge, Highway 12 and 123 must have been the same road for a certain distance.

In April of 1919 the state assembly concurred in Sen. Staudenmayer’s bill appropriating \$20,000 to build that portion of the road from the north boundary of the park to the waters of the lake, a distance of about one-half mile.

In May of 1919, Lieutenant Governor, E. F. Dithmar of Baraboo, in the absence of Gov. E. L. Philipp signed the bill to appropriate \$20,000 to assist in constructing the road at the north end of Devil’s Lake so that it would join the Warner Road from Baraboo.

In July it was finally decided that the road at Devil’s Lake Park would go through the Claude woods, along the top of the terminal moraine to the east, down the hill near the Luther cottage, east to the present main traveled road and in front of the Praeder Pavilion to the lakefront.

Change Lake Road

In September of 1920, a petition was circulated to change the route to Devil’s Lake so that Crawford’s Crossing would not be utilized. To reach the lake then it was necessary to cross the railroad tracks where postmaster Alger Pearson was killed. The ascent to the tracks was very steep and the crossing was a dangerous one. The proposal was to close the crossing and continue the road from the lake north and down the hill past the pumping station and either past the Potter place or over the river across a new bridge, near the Maxwell dam.

If the changes were made it would be necessary to remove a small knoll near the home of Frank T. Newkirk, the place where Leonard Miller lost his life a few years prior by the caving in of a well. It was felt the new Warner road would not be able to carry all the traffic going to Devil’s Lake. However, the city council decided to wait and see how much traffic the new Warner road would carry. Crawford’s crossing was finally eliminated around the year 2000 and the railroad crossing moved south.

Finally, in July of 1921 the last section of the Warner Memorial Road was poured. This was the last of the concrete work by contractor Hutter & Accola of Sauk City. The contractor was at the job over three years, the reason being that during the war material was impossible to obtain. The new road connected to the state

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constructed road inside the park. The state had added a shoulder to the road inside the park, the county did the same to the 3-1/2 mile stretch of road between Baraboo and the park; however, the city of Baraboo lagged behind and had not accomplished any shoulder on that portion of the road laying within the city. Warner left \$5,000 for a bicycle path also and this work was expected to begin shortly. Also pillars were soon to be constructed at the entrance of the park, part of the stone already being on the ground. It was thought however, that due to the fact that there were very few bicycles around that the \$5,000 would be better used to provide shoulders on the sides of the road. The concrete road was only 11 feet wide; shoulder widths of 3-1/2 feet on each side would increase the width of the road to 18 feet. Warner heirs had no objection.

On July 23, 1921, the road in the park was thrown open to the public. The road from Baraboo to the park had been open for a while. In September the final hurdle was crossed when Mrs. A. A. Pillaer, Mr. Warner's widow, and Paul S. Warner executed the proper instruments allowing the bike path money to be used to construct shoulders along the road between Baraboo and the park. Plans were for a bronze tablet, embedded in a quartzite boulder, to be placed directly at the lake end of the new cement road in October of 1921.

BULK OF WARNER ESTATE TO SON

(Baraboo Daily News, 4/21/1922)

The bulk of the Warner estate went to Paul S. Warner, only son, and not to Arthur Pillaer, who married Mrs. Warner two years ago.

This was made known Thursday with the filing of Mrs. Pillaer's will in county court. Mrs. Pillaer left about \$100,000 of which \$25,000 is in real estate.

The details of the will would not be made public until after it was admitted to probate.

Mrs. Pillaer is said to have left various amounts to relatives and to her husband with the major share of the estate to her son, Paul. The age of the son is given as 45 and that of her husband as 35.

At the time of his death Warner left \$55,000 to his son and the balance of the state to his wife.

Baraboo Daily News, 3/21/1922

GLORIOUS MONUMENT IS WARNER MEMORIAL ROAD

**The Following Tablet Placed at the End of the Highway --- Total
Cost Will
Exceed \$100,000--Public Gives Much Aid**

WARNER MEMORIAL ROAD

**This Enduring Highway Connecting Baraboo With Devils Lake
was made Possible through the Generosity of
WILBUR WILLIAM WARNER
(1850-1916)
Whose Boyhood Home Was Here
To His Cherished Memory this Tablet Is Gratefully Dedicated
October 1921**

Such is the fitting legend on a bronze tablet securely imbedded in a massive quartzite boulder recently placed at the very end, almost at the water's edge, of the cement road linking Devils Lake -- with Baraboo -- a legend that will be read yearly by the thousands who must increasingly visit the state park, and, we may be sure, rarely by serious folk without profound appreciation. Mr. Warner's bequest of \$40,000 stimulated an expenditure that already exceeds \$91,000 and that eventually will run beyond \$100,000! More specifically the Warner benefaction principal and interest has amounted to \$42, 687.21, while Sauk county has contributed

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\$18,043.61, the city of Baraboo \$5,864.95, the town of Baraboo \$1,100 and the state conservation commission \$23,547.71 -- for a total of \$91,243.47.

To complete three foot shoulders, mostly finished now, will cost the county something like \$3,600 more or \$21,634.61 in all, Baraboo city an additional \$5,300, a total for that municipality of \$11,164.94, and the town of Baraboo \$2,309.38 more, or \$3,409.38 altogether, or a grand total for the whole improvement approximately \$102,400. Such is the wonderful monument that has been erected to the memory of Mr. Warner, and a lovelier one exists nowhere in Wisconsin. For about a mile the road ascends, by lazy graceful meandering, from the lake level to the crest of an impressive moraine, whence exquisite vistas are unfolded of water and shoreline in one direction, the fair city three miles north in another; then through a dense forest, it cleaves closely to the irregular base of a rugged bluff, by giant rocks in wild abandon. Famous Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies offers nothing more picturesque.

The road from the high bridge in the heart of Baraboo to the waters of the lake, -- that is about the language of Mr. Warner's will -- is 17,555 feet in length, or three and one-third miles. Its construction was commenced in 1919 and completed so far as the cement is concerned in July 1921. It is 12 feet wide, exclusive of a shoulder of three feet on each side. This will give a dignified breadth of eighteen feet, when early next season the little remaining work on these shoulders is finished.

And this valued improvement all happens because, fortunately for the region, Mr. Warner's "boyhood home was here." Nor can it be entirely without interest just how the acceptable suggestion came to him.

One day, a year or two before his death, he was the guest of O. D. Brandenburg on a motoring trip to Baraboo. They had slightly known each other there in earlier days, and that the acquaintance had deepened into intimacy in later years at Madison, where one had become merchant, the other editor. Not infrequently were they in Baraboo or elsewhere thus together. George Mertens, wifeless,

childless and worth a quarter of a million, had died there but a few years before.

"Too bad he didn't do something for the old home town where he made all his money," Mr. Brandenburg observed.

"What could he have done?" inquired Mr. Warner casually.

"Left enough to build a concrete boulevard from Devils Lake to Baraboo."

"What would it cost?"

"O, say \$10,000 a mile."

"Three miles, \$30,000," mused Mr. Warner "and something more for maintenance," he added, apparently without special interest.

"Perhaps."

"Ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes."

And so, when a year or two later the Warner will was read it was found to contain a legacy of \$40,000 for the lake road.

And who may W.W. Warner have been? Notably he was the gentleman of culture in business, who industriously, "working his way," reached the sophomore year in the university of Wisconsin, yet continued a thorough, earnest, student of polished quality to the end of his days. He read and spoke French and German easily, was a finished English scholar, wrote with lucidity, facility and force, an open intelligent, frank and fearless part in the discussion of public affairs -- the useful, safe, contentious citizen always. For thirty-eight years he was a merchant in Madison, and won fairly a fortune of more than a quarter million dollars by selling musical instruments, wholesale and retail, and, more definitely, by making his collections with quite the expectation and the certainty upon which banks operate.

Thus he developed an enterprise that was known throughout the trade for its local prestige in things musical and for its financial strength and sound business methods. But never was Mr. Warner so deeply immersed in commercial pursuits that he failed to follow joyously his literary proclivities. His reading was wide, of the best in literature; and over all the world he had traveled with understanding, keen and open. Of both mineralogy and archeology he was

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exceedingly fond and his home contained a generous cabinet of highly interesting specimens. For several years during his boyhood and early manhood he was a mining prospector in Colorado, first going to that state by ox team, while yet only eleven years old. Several other trips to the gold region followed, but finally he returned to Wisconsin to reside permanently. In Baraboo was "his boyhood home," and there he married; at Madison he won honorable distinction for mercantile achievements and fine public spirit; at Devils Lake he revealed graciously the sweet sentimentalism of the enlightened philanthropist.

In 1932, The Ritzenthaler brothers constructed tourist cabins on the east side of their station and in 1932 graveled an extension of the Warner Road extending it from Vine to Highway 12 (South Boulevard) past the cabins.

In July of 1941, the Highway Commissioner, Arthur E. Tuttle announced that the Warner Road, from Walnut Street to the entrance of Devil's Lake Park, would be widened to 30 feet and the concrete covered over with blacktop. Also, a four-foot wide bituminous sidewalk and bicycle path would be laid east of the highway. Work was scheduled to commence soon after Memorial Day of that year. The pedestrian path was Warner's wish twenty years prior.

1941

Warner Road Widened and bicycle path constructed

In the September of 1941, the Warner Road was widened from 12 to 30 feet by adding blacktop to each side and finally a bicycle path was to be constructed. It was planned that sometime later the complete road would be covered with another layer of blacktop, as the concrete was quite rough. The roadwork would be between Walnut Street and the park entrance, and would be paid for by a special state highway fund.

It was reported in the fall of 1938 that the long awaited four foot wide pedestrian and bicycle path was started on the east side of Warner Road with a bituminous surface. The plan was to finish it

prior to Memorial Day of 1939. It was later reported, "In July of 1942, the bicycle path was nearing completion."

Also in 1942, a bituminous surface was laid over the old concrete, Warner Memorial Road. This became a very popular route for the Badger Ordinance workers, who preferred the east Sauk road, which terminated at the Badger plant.

That section of the East Sauk Road from Highway 59 north to the south end of Walnut Street was transformed into the Warner Memorial Road. The following article was written in May of 1926 by **Mrs. A. K. Bassett** for the Baraboo News.

East Sauk Road an Indian Path 75 Years Ago

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Where is the blasting?

Oh, it is over on the East Sauk Road.

They are grading and graveled it for a highway for automobile travel, to be used as a detour for route 12 while 12 is closed this summer, outside of Baraboo as far as Sumpter, undergoing repairs.

Some 75 years ago the first settlers came over this road with an ox team. It was then only an Indian path and blazed trail. One pioneer family lost the trail and at nightfall found themselves at the top of the south bluff overlooking Devil's lake. The mother in the party sat down and sobbed.

"There ain't any use going any farther, we've come to the jumping off place."

Establish Stage Line

As time wore on a tavern was built on this road and a stagecoach line was established over it from Baraboo to Sauk City. The road over the bluff between the Martin place and the prairie was always looked upon as a gruesome stretch of travel. Many an early

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traveler told of narrow escapes from Indian robbers, wild cats and even ghosts.

In time several houses were built along this stretch. Here was the home of the Smiths, Whites, Harts, Harrisons and Clarks. As they passed out of existence the little shacks remained and were a stronghold for such families as the Van Wormers, McIntyres and Quigleys. Their stay of some ten or fifteen years was a "reign of terror" on corn-cribs, oat-bins and chicken coops in the outlying vicinity. The Quigleys, who will be recalled by many of the older residents of Baraboo, were nicknamed "The happy Family". They drove a span of skinny horses hitched to an old rickety lumber wagon. On this were placed several seats to accommodate them all.

The Quigley Family

There was Mr. and Mrs. on the front spring seat, and then there was Olie and Charley on the first board seat. Next came Bill and Gene (Gene was the cross-eyed one) and Dan and Henry sat in behind. When they went to town they all went along and stayed all day. As I remember they used to trade over at "Mont" Peck's. None of the boys shaved and none of them worked daytimes. One night as the young folks in our neighborhood were coming home from a party about midnight we met Dan Quigley going to Baraboo carrying a gunny-sack.

George Weidenkopf inquired about his errand, Dan said that Gene was sick and he was going after medicine. When asked if he intended to carry the medicine in the big sack he said no but intended to stop at the store and bring home some potatoes. George urged him to turn back as the police would put him in jail this time of night. Dan refused to do this as he feared Gene would die without some medicine.

However, George finally persuaded him to go back saying "You just make a sugar-tit and put that into Gene's mouth and he will be alright by morning."

After this the Quigley's procured their supplies from the Sauk Prairie. Their nightly raids became a menace to the prairie folks. Finally two young men by the names of Wilson and Stone took it upon

themselves to get rid of the thieves. Loading their Winchester rifles and taking plenty of ammunition they walked to the Quigley home in the wee hours of the morning.

They Depart

Here, from the ambush, they let fire a dozen or more boxes of shells over the roof of the robber's nest. In just two days time the entire Quigley family including horses, chickens, lumber wagon, dog, cats and all made a speedy departure for Michigan.

The Clark property was sold soon after this and the Quigley placed was purchased by Fred Arndt of Baraboo who has converted it into a neat little summer home. The other Clark house was purchased by Mrs. Messenger and the buildings were torn down and moved to the lake. Ed. martin now owns the land

Home of Charcoal Burner

Beyond the Arndt place stood a little log cabin, once the home of a charcoal burner. Much tragedy came into the life of this family and they finally separated and left for parts unknown. The little log cabin by the roadside marked on of the most picturesque points in Sauk Co. Here the traveler, coming from the south gets his first glimpse of Devil's lake with its towering cliffs and pines pointing heavenward and Turkes Head like a mighty giant stands out against the clear blue sky.

The little cabin and some ten acres of land were finally purchased by Oscar Altpeter. He gave the name of "Podunk." Mr. Altpeter has spent his leisure hours raising potatoes, apples, sweet corn and hob. Last fall he erected a beautiful new cottage which is in keeping with the beautiful natural scenery along this road.

Many days have passed since the robbers and thieves made this a dreaded road to drive. Nature lovers are buying up the property along the way and with the advent of a real road it will not be many years before this scenic road will be dotted with summer homes.

The End.