

A City Park is Restored, Renamed

Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

The approach to the Baraboo River on Broadway has recently been enhanced—well, on the West side at least. For years it has been one of Baraboo's many ballparks, but sometimes seemed a bit neglected, with overgrowth of weeds along the fence and along the river.

This summer, without any fanfare, it seemed to undergo a rebirth, with new outfield fencing, sodded infield, raised pitcher's mound, etc. The brush was cleaned out, even along the river bank, and someone did a nice mowing job. I'm told that soon a nice sign will go up—STATZ PARK. All of this has a history and deserves a story.

From Broadway to Statz Park

For a number of years the little ballpark was known as Broadway Park, and few noted the dedication on the scoreboard: Statz-Zantow Field. This scoreboard was placed in the early 1990's in memory of Mark Statz and Tim Zantow, young friends tragically killed in an automobile accident. There was a scoreboard dedication ceremony, with the Statz and Zantow families in attendance. The softball field was upgraded then also.

It continued to be called Broadway Park, and saw heavy use for a time since Pierce Park was yet to be built. Parking was limited, and even today bleacher seating is limited. Recently Roman and Bea Statz and numerous family members and friends took renewed interest, converting it to an official size Little League field for 9 to 12 year olds.

Fencing was re-located, the grounds refurbished, trees planted, and surrounding brush, especially on the riverbank, was cleared out. Soon Broadway Park will be officially renamed Statz Park. The Park will contain not only the ball field but the cleared river bank and grounds. The Riverwalk continues East under the bridge to Kiwanis Park and the gazebo, and West to Mary Rountree Evans Park.

Also on the grounds is a portion of the 1928 bridge, with the old railing and the brass dedicatory plaque still attached, a nice historical touch. I understand that part of the road bank will be planted in prairie plants. Not only Statz family members but other friends made all of this happen, too many to attempt to give individual recognition.

Other history

There is more history to this area, thanks to the research of, Joe Ward. Once a barn occupied the property, and through a series of purchases George Martiny, developer and real estate entrepreneur of the mid-1900's, established ownership. One purchase was from H.L. Brethauer and one from the Theurer estate. Happily the city purchased the property from George for \$3500 in 1948.

I have seen short newspaper clippings to the effect that, perhaps 60 years ago, the city planned a river road from this property to what in 1923 would become the Mary Rountree Evans Park. An old stone retaining wall can easily be seen starting west from Statz Park on the new Riverwalk. It remains as



Statz-Zantow Field is named after Tim Zantow and Mark Statz, friends who were tragically killed in an automobile accident in the early 1990's



A part of the 1928 bridge was saved when the present bridge was constructed, including the brass dedication plaque.

part of that early effort, it is believed. A running path existed for some 60 years for high school athletes to sprint to their football field, located then at the Rountree Evans location.

The State Highways in Baraboo

Broadway, on which the Statz Park is located, is perhaps Baraboo's most important street. It carries state highways 113 and 123 traffic, and hopefully will still be City 12. It is the gateway to the business section, both North and South.

The last I knew, however, there was not a prominent sign on Eighth Avenue indicating "Business District" with an arrow. The inquisitive tourist sees only another tree-lined street, and travels on to West Baraboo.

Broadway is now nearly all commercial, but badly in need of widening and reconstruction from Fourth to Eighth. Downtown street lights all the way from Fifth to Eighth Avenue would invite Highway 33 travelers to turn and visit and shop. A four block boulevard with a small center parkway would be classy if possible.

Highway 33 on Eighth Street cries for new paving, as does the frequently postponed rebuilding of busy South Blvd. Surely the state highway commission can now turn its attention away from the Dells-Delton area and their continual rebuilding, relocation, and improvement of Highway 12 there.

Baraboo's Broadway is unique in another way, for with a couple exceptions, the buildings are set back from the street and the signage is subdued and not garish. It has the potential to be a real gateway not only to the business section but to the Riverwalk and other developments—and to Statz Park! It is time for the state to look at its highways and responsibilities within the city limits of Baraboo.

