

Fred Favor, 1911-1982

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The pages that follow constitute the transcript of an interview conducted as part of the Wilmette Public Library District's Oral History program, started in 1975 by a committee of the Friends of the Wilmette Public Library which has been chaired since its inception by Rhea Adler, a resident of the Village of Wilmette since 1932.

A copy of the tape on which this transcript is based is available for circulation, and may be obtained by checking with a Reference Librarian concerning circulation procedures.

This program would not have been possible without the cooperation of the many long-time residents of the Village interested in helping to preserve particulars of a fascinating past, and the patience, energy and effort of a small but dedicated group of interviewers, transcribers and typists who share the belief that the past is too important to be forgotten.

Richard E. Thompson
Director

ABSTRACT

Interviewee: Fred Favor

Interviewer: Rhea Adler

Date of interview: December 5, 1978

Born Hyde Park, came to Wilmette at four years of age
Wilmette boundary on west at Ridge Road %No Man's Land+between Wilmette
and Kenilworth - %Gross Point+west of Ridge Avenue - originally included some
of Kenilworth and Winnetka and some of Evanston
Heavily forested - legend of Indian trees just a legend - three different forested
areas
Early schools - old village hail - early transportation, North Shore line, Chicago
Northwestern
Early political activity - Earl Orner - C.P. Dubbs
Bahá'í came to Village - Horace Holly first plan commission
Evanston attempt to annex Wilmette
Regimes under Harry Kinne and William Alexander prior to all of above were
Oscar Schmidt and Father William Netstraetter
Wilmette government and schools through the depression years, warrants issued
- Herbert Mulford active in finance
Tremendous growth of Village 1940's - fire and police departments inadequate to
needs - schools needed
Early days %west of tracks,+few east/west streets from Green Bay Road to Ridge
Road
Gross Point geographically dry, but socially %wet+until 1919 (1920- 1933
Volstead Act or 18th amendment) - no village charter at Springfield, Illinois
Ouilmette family and land grant at Prairie du Chien - 1829 Impetus after fire of
1871 - Llewellyn Park station on Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul horse-
drawn cabs
Condition of streets - Green Bay did not go north of
Wilmette (originally called Railroad Avenue)
Samuel Insull and North Shore line
The formation of Hollister Press - Mike Weber editor
1917- 1947 (death) - Jean Ten Broeck

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RA: And how long did you live in Wilmette?

FF: Fifty-one years. I was born in Hyde Park.

RA: Born here. Interesting. Was it a separate village in those days?

FF: No. Hyde Park had been annexed to Chicago about the year of the Columbian Exposition.

RA: That's interesting, too, but how old were you when you came to Wilmette?

FF: Going on four.

RA: So you do remember a great deal about the village then?

FF: Yes. In those days, of course, it was a much smaller village. I suspect that there were not more than two or three thousand people. The west boundary is what is now known as Ridge Road - what's been long called "No Man's Land," that triangle along the lake between Kenilworth and Wilmette was not part of the village in those days and did not become part of the village until sometime later.

RA: How late?

FF: Just before the Second World War it was annexed.

RA: And what was that called before?

FF: Along the lake there? It was called "No Man's Land" because it belonged neither to Kenilworth nor to Wilmette. West of Wilmette, in those early days, was an entirely separate village, the village called Gross Point - named sort of second hand, I suppose, from the Gross Point at

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which the lighthouse stands in the northern part of Evanston. The village of Gross Point actually existed until about the time of the first World War and then dissolved and, a year or so later, most of the territory was taken into Wilmette, but part of it is now in Evanston and part in Kenilworth and part even in Winnetka.

RA: That is very interesting.

FF: A characteristic of Wilmette in those days and it still is, I think, is that it is heavily forested. Of course, there were more woods and groves in those days because there were many patches that had not been built up although basically today Wilmette resembles very much the Wilmette of 60 years ago - urn - east of the Ridge. There were, as I said, many wooded areas - the north side of Chestnut Avenue from the lake to the railroad tracks was Gage's Woods.

RA: Do you think that was virgin timber or had it been cut over once?

FF: I suspect that it had been cut over. There is lot of legend, and erroneous legend, about some Wilmette trees. They have a peculiar shape and it is always ascribed to the fact that years ago some Indian marked the trail, but if you do a little arithmetic, you find that the Indians left long before these trees could have been planted. The Gage's Woods, however, and in many other groves around the village had not been tended as a forester

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would, but there were paths through there - a short cut to the high school for the young people who lived on the east side of town. There was another grove just east of the newly created terminal of the Chicago elevated line, bounded by Third Street and Linden Avenue and Maple Avenue. Most of the southwest corner of the village was a large woods. Good place to take the kids for a school picnic.

RA: That is east of the tracks or west?

FF: That would be west of the tracks, almost to Ridge. There were a couple of marshy places. One was Wilmette Avenue which was built through a marsh and got a little damp when the rains were heavy and the other big marsh was up the north end of 15th Street about where it intersects Elmwood Avenue, and also where it now intersects Green Bay Road. There was no Green Bay Road in those days, but that is about the point at which the marsh came in and all that was marsh and golf course up there - Elmwood Avenue.

RA: Do you remember that golf course?

FF: Only vaguely because that disappeared fairly early.

RA: And I believe that is the North Shore golf course now?

FF: I'm still trying to remember. I think that that was the name of it.

RA: I think they went west to Glenview and are flourishing today.

FF: There were two parks in town. There was the big Vattmann

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Park at Lake Avenue and 15th Street. That was the first park we knew about and they were just beginning to develop the park along the lakefront. Actually, it was developed largely by encouraging people to dump heavy debris behind the breakwater and behind the sea wall. And that is all man-made land - land made out of junk and was filled later with sand and soil and grass. The Park District - urn - the history of the Park District is that it was created for the purpose of preserving land area of Wilmette - the lake shore and somehow they picked up this tract over on Lake Avenue and 15th Street and made a park out of that and that was the big playground.

RA: About when was that established. Do you remember?

FF: No, because that was..

RA: Well established.

FF: Well established.

RA: I see.

FF: There were only two schools in town in those days. There was the Logan School which was an eight room brick structure, and then there was the central School with its annex, called the Byron C. Stolp Building, named after a noted physician of the area. The Stolp Building was used as a junior high school way back in those days. The kids went through fifth grade at the Logan School or the Central School and then moved over to the Stolp Building for their junior high school years - sixth, seventh and eighth grade - something like that.

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The main business district, the - what we would call in those days the main business district, at the intersection of Central and Wilmette Avenue, looked then very much as it does today. The only building that I can remember drawn in since world - the first world war was the one at the southwest - no, the southeast corner of that intersection, opposite the ex-village hall property - the old village hall, the one with the pillars - the one that looked like a truncated Parthenon.

RA: Yes.

FF: That had been built when we arrived in Wilmette. Of course, our main transportation was sometimes the Northwestern Railroad, but more likely to be the North Shore Electric Line which, in those days, terminated in Evanston with a connection to the elevated line and wandered its way up through all the north shore suburbs and eventually got to Milwaukee. They later built a line through the Skokie Valley. Of course, both those lines have been long since abandoned.

RA: Although the right of way of the Skokie Valley is still there, I guess, along the Wilmette property.

FF: The Wilmette property is....

RA: The, North Shore property.

FF: Of course they never owned a great deal of property in Wilmette because to get from the main Wilmette district and make their connection to the elevated line, they had

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to use Greenleaf Avenue.

RA: That was supposed to have been temporary, was it not, with the eventuality that they would parallel the Northwestern?

FF: Parallel the Northwestern to Evanston and go east on a line just north of Dyche Stadium somewhere on a line with Isabella Street and Central Street.

RA: Which was the original boundary of the Ouilmette Reservation?

FF: Which was Central Street. Evanston was the original boundary. of the Ouilmette Reservation. Actually the line between Evanston and Wilmette and between New Trier Township and Evanston Township has - was juggled a little bit in the early days which accounts for its irregularity today.

RA: Um hum. This is very interesting. Now you've set the stage, so to speak, geographically on what the community was like early. What do you remember as an editor about what went on in the village of Wilmette - politically, socially, economically?

FF: I'd start with politically.

RA: All right.

FF: Vigorous political campaigns are not new to Wilmette. I can recall one such about 1923 when Malcolm MacCurtcher was opposing the current village president, who was Edward Zipf. And Mr. MacCurtcher, a lawyer, and active in veterans affairs knew that his primary attack (indistinct) in the previous year's Memorial Day Parade, Mr. Zipf had

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not removed his hat with sufficient alacrity when the flag went by.

RA: Most interesting.

FF: One of the chief political figures in those days was Earl Orner. He was village clerk about the beginning of the century and for 20 years thereafter, and then he served three of those two year terms as village president and, indeed, many years later came out of retirement and made an unsuccessful attempt to jump back into village affairs. His popularity arose from the fact that for an enormous number of years he was the ticket agent for the Chicago Northwestern Railroad in Wilmette. A turbulent public figure, and a most interesting one, was a Mr. C. P. Dubbs.

RA: Oh, yes.

FF: Mr. Carbon P. Dubbs.

RA: The P was for Petroleum, wasn't it?

FF: Well, there was a legend to that effect, but it may have been adopted by Mr. Dubbs himself. We don't know.

RA: I see.

FF: He was a man of considerable wealth which was derived from the fact that he and his father held patent on a method of refining oil - crude oil. And he had a beautiful big house, second biggest house, perhaps, here in Wilmette, over there on Michigan Avenue on lake property.

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RA: Near where the Michigan Shores Club now is. Right?

FF: Right.

RA: Just north.

FF: That is correct. Just north of the Michigan Shores Club. Yes. I said that was the second biggest house because an enormous castle was once constructed by a member of the Goldblatt family and that was located just south of the harbor and east of Sheridan Road.

RA: May I question - did they build it or did they buy it?

FF: They bought it. That is correct. The first owner was an architect, I believe, by the name of Benjamin Marshall.

RA: Right. Were you ever in that house?

FF: Oh, only after I was (indistinct) from the Goldblatt family and there was an attempt to sell it to the community as a community house. One of the most interesting and certainly a world famous (indistinct) is across the street - across Sheridan Road from the Goldblatt side, the Baha'i Temple. A little group, I well remember, acquired that property, oh, about 1915 or 1920, perhaps, and slowly, step by step, began the creation of what we irreverently allude to as "the Divine Orange Squeezer."

RA: Yes, and it has just this past few weeks been made a national landmark.

FF: Yes. There was a great deal of opposition - there always is - when a new denomination comes into a neighborhood .

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a great deal of opposition, and I think there might have been some litigation in the early days to keep the members from erecting their temple. Actually the first structure was rather unsightly. It was simply a round building.

RA: Concrete basement, wasn't it?

FF: Concrete basement and it was painted black.

RA: With tar paper over the top of it. That was what existed when we came to Wilmette in 1932. That was all there was.

FF: That's right, but it wasn't too long thereafter when they began the construction of the temple as we know it today.

RA: Only as they acquired the money to do so.

FF: Only as they acquired the money to do so did they proceed.

RA: And I believe it was the first one ever to have been built outside Haifa, wasn't it?

FF: As I remember, this is the first of - outside that

RA: Now they have numerous ones in the world. In Germany there's one. They show those to you when you go in to see their movie.

FF; One of my good friends, the late Horace Holly, was for many years the Secretary there.

RA: Oh, yes. He was very active in the village of Wilmette, was he not?

FF: He was indeed. And he was a member of the first historical commission.

RA: Oh, yes.

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FF: Nevertheless, although the Bahad̄ people are good neighbors in Wilmette, and have been for many years, their arrival touched off a renewed interest in zoning. About 1920 the first Plan Commission was organized and, if you can find a copy of their report, possibly in the basement of your Library, yoū find that Wilmette did not grow in accordance with that original plan. Those people were thinking in terms of a village that would be confined by the lake on the east and the Ridge on the west. They never seemed to have envisioned any growth west of Ridge Road and it may be that they did their work, and that was part of the village of Grosse Point.

RA: Now, let me ask you this. Do you remember the attempt by Evanston to annex Wilmette?

FF: Yes, indeed.

RA: Could this have come out of that?

FF: Undoubtedly it did.

RA: This is an interesting point which no one seems to have brought up before, but we do have in the Archival Vertical files in Wilmette material on the Evanston attempt to annex Wilmette.

FF: I don̄ know how serious that was and certainly it was never taken too seriously in Wilmette. It just didn̄ seem that Wilmette would gain anything from such an annexation.

RA: This is what the papers revealed - that the village fathers

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of that day felt very keenly that there was more to be lost than to be gained.

FF: That was in Mr. Zipf's day and he.

RA: Was it?

FFopposed that with his characteristic zeal.

RA: Do you remember any other regimes other than Mr. Zipf's and Mr. Dubbs?

FF: Well, there was Mr. Orner, in between and then, of course, Mr. Dubbs was followed by Mr. Harry Kinne and he by Mr. William Alexander.

RA: These are the sequence of the 20th century presidents.

FEq I cannot go back for certain before Mr. Zipf's time, although Mr. Oscar Schmidt was in there and the most - I think the century began with a most interesting village president. He served three times, although at short intervals, and that was the Reverend William Netstraetter, pastor of St. Joseph's Church.

RA: He served as village president?

FF: He did indeed - on three occasions.

RA: I am very interested in that because I have had people tell about his interest in establishing the high school.

FF: Yes, indeed, and was on the first Board of Education....

RA: Yes.

FF:of the high school.

RA: But I hadn't realized that he had been village president. You see, when the high school established in 1900, by law

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five people were to be elected to the Board by a sort of gentleman's agreement. Although they were elected at large by the entire township, each of the five communities that made up the township in those days was allocated one representative, and Father Netstraetter was elected as the member from Grosse Point although the church was always in Wilmette on the east side of the Ridge.

RA: That is interesting and he....

FF: I misspoke. The original Wilmette only went to 15th Street, but the annexation shortly after the incorporation took it all the way to the Ridge so that there was a common boundary very early.

RA: Oh, yes. There was a man who was township commissioner when I first came to Wilmette who was an elderly gentleman who lived, I believe, on Forest or Walnut. Do you recall him? FF: I will in about day after tomorrow and I'll let you know. We shall amend the tape accordingly.

RA: I have tried to recall his name. Helen Rye was very active when I first came to the village in trying to re-elect him to the Board of Supervisors. I think it was Cook County then. He served on the Cook County Board of Supervisors. I used to remember his name, but that was my first introduction to politics in the village of Wilmette.

FF: Well, in your own area you came about ten years too late for one of the biggest (indistinct)

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that was started by the fact that in those days the zoning permitted multiple family buildings in certain areas about the business district and one of those was the northeast corner of Linden Avenue and 5th Street.

RA: 5th Street - in what we call the Linden Crest apartments?

FF: The Linden Crest apartments. And that, 50 years ago, raised a tremendous furor and resulted in (indistinct) restricted zoning for the rest of the village.

RA: I see. This is very interesting that it began that early because there wasn't much discussion of zoning....

FF: Well, you will find in the literature of that day - it seems too bad that (indistinct)

RA: They are doing that now.

FF: Because if those could be found, you would find a rather vigorous literary style. I am afraid that that sort of writing has passed away, probably because of the rigor of the Illinois libel laws.

RA: Well, all writing has had its.

FF: We're far more polite now.

RA: And there is less flavor, let's say, to the writing today than there is when you go back and read 19th century books.

FF: When Mr. Dubbs campaigned for re-election - I think in 1931 - on a very restrictive zoning platform - the literature is interesting to read now in a historical perspective, but it has a little bit of a bite to it.

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RA: (Indistinct) may have some of that from Mr. Dubb's time because I found the date that he was elected to the village president - '31 - I think you're very right.

FF: And the other campaign issue in those days was a master street plan which was subject to all sorts of misinterpretation. The group who drew up the street plan had allowed for not only the paved part of the street, but the parkway along the side which did and probably still do belong to the village and not the property owner and, of course, that increased the width of the street enormously. Many people misunderstood that and thought that the village.

RA: They were taking their property.

FF: They were taking all the parkway, too.

RA: Oh, I can see how that would create quite a furor.

FF: That created quite a furor and quite a large number of votes, but the extension of Wilmette began right after the World War. The Village of Grosse Point went out of existence - ceased to be. That was for several months unincorporated territory. There was an early movement to annex to Wilmette. I think the first chunk that was taken in took the village as far west as Locust Road. Isn't that the diagonal street?

RA: No. That's a straight street. Oh, Illinois Road.

FF: Illinois Road is the one I mean - was the first jump and then Locust Road - was the second and then west as far as anybody was willing to come into Wilmette, and they -

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Wilmette rushing west and Glenview rushing east and on the same day they both annexed the same territory and it took a long court battle to decide who or which would have what and that accounts for the jagged boundary of Wilmette on the west.

RA: Is this also the reason why the school district boundary and the village boundary do not coincide because part of the people of Glenview are in the Wilmette school district?

FF: No. That is the fact that we haven't yet caught up with history. District 39, which is what we call the Wilmette School District, had co- permanent boundaries, or nearly so, with Wilmette. Then west of that was the Grosse Point or Highcrest School District. No40, if I'm not mistaken.

RA: And that was rural.

FF: And that was rural.

RA: ...country.

FF: And that was not taken into the Wilmette School District until the early 30's. And District 37, which was a (Indistinct) than that.

RA: Is now under discussion.

FF: but it still is an independent district taking in part of Wilmette and Glenview and Northfield.

RA: And Northfield - right?

FF: But the boundaries, of course, of the school district very seldom coincide with those of the village because when you annex unincorporated territory you can't annex the school

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district or part of the school district at the same time. The school districts, after all, were there first. They've been there since the 1870s, but the growth of Wilmette west of the Ridge was erratic, but almost immediate. The first was that strip north of.

RA: Through about the era of Mr. Kinne's tenure in office. What came next historically in the village?

FF: Well, to go back to the Kinne days, the next thing of importance, I think, that happened was what Wilmette did not do. In the late 30s the federal government was providing money for all sorts of public works. Winnetka, our neighbor to the north, took advantage of that fact to separate the grades of the railroads and the street, but Kenilworth and Wilmette were unable to go along with that project although we later calculated that the earth dug out of Winnetka would have been almost to the cubic yard what Wilmette would have needed for elevation.

RA: For heaven's sakes.

FF: But since there was no cooperation between the villages in that day, and I suppose there still is not, the people of Wilmette cross the tracks with hazard while those in Winnetka do so with relative safety.

RA: An they still are doing it that way.

FF: The Kinne days, of course, went from 1935 to 1945. I think Mr. Kinne holds the record for tenure of office.

RA: Ten years.

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FF: I - those were the first part of his administration were dealing mainly with the great depression. In the early 30s there was a great deal of tax - real estate tax litigation. For several years no real estate taxes were collected in Cook County, the result being the village and the other local government agencies had to live on what they could borrow through tax anticipation warrants.

RA: And wasn't that the period of time when the schools were.

FF: Oh, the schools were even worse. They used warrants and they used script. I remember that for the benefit of the school teachers and the policemen and the firemen, committees were organized to sell these warrants because otherwise employees, the teachers and the other employees, would have had to take warrants instead of salary and - as many of them had to do, and then dispose of them at whatever price they could get. The - of course, the war changed a great deal of that. The second part of Mr. Kinne's administration was dealing with the problems that were created by the war itself.

RA: As far as the schools were concerned, wasn't Herbert Mulford very active at that point?

FF: Indeed yes. Herbert Mulford had been active on the Wilmette school board in the early 20s and after he left that school board, he was on the high school board

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for a great number of years. Of course, at the end of the war began the population explosion - the impact of the people wanting to live in a suburban area like Wilmette. Growth, of course, was tremendous. A major growth came in the late 30s, but nothing like what the growth in the late 40s. And it was obvious that the facilities that Wilmette possessed, the services, all the (Indistinct) would be inadequate and that problem was addressed by Mr. Alexander when he succeeded Mr. Kinne.

RA: That would be William Alexander.

FF: William Alexander. William Henry Alexander.

RA: I see. And that was in 1945.

FF: Well, Mr. Alexander had been on the Board for four years previous to that. Then when Mr. Kinne retired, he was succeeded by Mr. Alexander, but the mere fact that a great deal of changes were being proposed, generated a great deal of opposition and people were opposed to spending any money for any purpose. In fact, it was a common saying that there was a large group of Wilmette people who wouldn't even finance the second coming if it involved a bond issue.
(Laughter)

RA: I had never heard that before.

FF: The . . . in many ways, the plan for a better Wilmette in 47, 48 was too much too suddenly for people who were very comfortable as they were, had no contact with the public schools and were content if the supermarket remained open

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6 days a week. They were not particularly alarmed about the lack of facilities for the Police and Fire Departments, or for the need for more space for the growing community⁷ and since they never used any of the parks, they didn't care if other people were also denied parks and playgrounds and they saw in the days when we thought that it was a good idea to have neighborhood schools. And we didn't realize what a valuable educational experience it was to bus the kids to
(Indistinct)

RA: Um - advantage?

FF: That is the modern philosophy, is it not?

RA: One wonders, doesn't one, as to how valuable it is?

FF: Well, it was easier to convince people, I think, in the newly developing areas of the community, the west end, that there should be more facilities out there. You see, the people who lived east of the Ridge had not seen a great deal of building. That part of the community had been built up by 1920 and there was only an occasional vacant lot or there was an old corner house that yielded to an apartment building or a town house, and so those people couldn't get the idea that the same number of homes would produce more kids, but that's exactly what happened in the 40's.

RA: That was an explosion that was temporary, too.

FF: Yes. Now I, of course, I suppose - having known how to deal with the problem of surplus kids for 20 years - we

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wouldn't have all these school buildings on our hands now, but if we could only have postponed their education, why we could have leveled off this enrollment roller coaster.

RA: Somehow children just don't wait while....

FF: Yes. They just don't wait. That's so true.

FF: But it was necessary, of course, to renovate all of our public schools. I think all but Laurel got some kind of renovation, didn't they?

RA: But it became so expensive to maintain (Indistinct) school.

FF: Although that was one of the battles of the 1920's....

RA: Yes.

FF: ÷ that alternative was, of course, that the kids who came from the %₁₀+ terminal area would have about eight to ten blocks to walk to school, and that was considered excessive in the days when children walked to school.

RA: And yet - I taped the Weedon sisters and the oldest one, one of the older ones - Vivian, and they were ecstatic over having walked to school from up in that area to Central School before Laurel School existed. And they learned on the way about nature and the board walks. I have a very good tape from the one in the east.

FF: Well, they may be ecstatic now about that experience, but they were somewhat less than ecstatic, I suspect, when they had to do it.

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RA: Well, do you really think so when it was the habit of the day that they....

FF: Well, they realized there was no alternative, but they envied the kids who lived across that street from the school.

RA: Well, that's probably true.

FF: And they - in those days before Logan School - they had to come all the way to Central School. They also had some mighty hazardous walking in the winter and in the spring. I can remember when we moved to Wilmette, our first house was on 15th Street. That was a dirt road, Highland Avenue, which runs from 15th west. Was just being paved. It was paved, I think, by the developer. There were only two or three houses. The Paddocks lived over there and the Dingys lived over there and that was all there was between our house and the Ridge. The street north of that, Washington, although in those days it was Charles Street. Washington Avenue had been built up, but there were relatively few houses on Central Avenue and, as I said, very few houses on Highland and south of Central, the streets had not been cut through. Maple and Gregory were probably on the map, but nobody had broken ground for a right-of-way.

RA: Well, there was no right-of-way, actually, on the south side of Wilmette Avenue to Isabella. That was all one long block from 15th Street to the Ridge.

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FF: To the Ridge, right? Although there are some north side streets.

RA: Yes.

FF: one of them being named after the Nanzig family.

RA: No longer.

FF: No longer, I know, but it was the custom in those days to name a street for one of the major property owners down there and where Nanzig Street, which is probably 16th and 17th or something like that, cuts through now, it was all wooded. That's probably why Grosse Point went into farming and Wilmette went into residencies....

RA: I had that asked of me.

FF: because Wilmette was heavily wooded and it would have taken enormous time and money to clear it. While east of the Ridge, which you know, is a glacial moraine, west of the Ridge was open country and reasonably dry, but not too dry and I use that word in two senses. It was very suitable for the vegetable farming that those people wanted to do. It was later called truck farming. The philosophy of the two groups was quite different. There were a number of refreshment establishments on the west side of the Ridge, but none on the east and it was only very recently, I believe, that John Barleycorn has made any intrusion into Wilmette. Isn't that right?

RA: That's right, but I understand that along Ridge Road . . . and they may have been all on the west side, this came

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from one of the Hoffmanns - that there were 17 taverns....

FF: I'm sure that that was a conservative estimate and most of the revenue of the old Village of Grosse Point was derived from the licenses, and when it became illicit in 1919 to have a liquor license, it no longer became necessary to pay that fee to the village and the Village of Grosse Point ran out of money and slowly dissolved.

RA: I see. That is a very interesting point because people always....

FF: And, of course, the zeal of the Wilmette Constabulary - somewhat erratic, I believe, at times - kept the lid on the illicit establishments as soon as the annexation took place.

RA: Well, then, too, the ruralness of Grosse Point - I was asked this question, %Why did I think they never had a village charter as Wilmette did?+

FF: Well, I'm sure that - and this is a legal question that you'd have to refer to someone learned in the law - Grosse Point was unincorporated until after the passage of the Uniform Cities and Villages Act. So actually, they wouldn't have had a charter except a %Pro Forma+one in recognition that the action had already been taken, and they may have had a charter issued by the Illinois Secretary of State.

RA: No, there was no record.

FF: The trouble is we don't have too many records of the old Village of Grosse Point.

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RA: But this is in Springfield because they wrote for one, and my feeble answer was, %These were German farmers who used to over- taxation, coming over here to establish new homes, they wanted it to remain rural because they preferred to pay rural taxes rather than city. The Historical Society has a book that one of the Gages, Stanley Gage, I believe, did on the genealogical aspects of the members of the %e Olde Settlers+group....

FF: But that tells us very little about the problems of the village.

RA: of the village. Right?

FF: The Gage (Indistinct) woods, north of Chestnut Avenue were the Gage's Woods and I suppose it was because there was . it was Gage property and the houses that they built are still standing so the name still comes to mind.

[Transcriber may have misattributed the quote]

FF: The name still comes to mind, but we don't have any Gage Street in Wilmette, do we?

RA: No, not that I know. There used to be a Gage Street that ran north and south.

FF: Well, that may have been in the days when what are now the numbered streets were named. There was....

RA: That's right. I think it was 13th Street.

FF: There was Alexander Street.

RA: That's right.

FF: And that was named for Alexander McDaniel.

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RA: And that's right.

FF: And they probably picked his first name because Evanston already had - and I wish they had been as careful when they names an east-west thoroughfare in Wilmette Central Avenue because it used to be confused all the time with Central Street.

RA: Still does.

FF: A right-of-way in Evanston and there was - and there have been legends built up such as the fact that Antoine's - who was Mrs. Ouilmette? What was her name?

RA: Archange.

FF: Archange Ouilmette - (Ou- weee- may) was an Indian princess, but she was....

RA: A half-breed.

FF: Well, she may have been a half or a quarter or an eighth. She was actually a French girl.

RA: That's right. She was - Chevalier was her maiden name.

FF: Chevalier was her maiden name and she was created a French an Indian princess simply by the treaty of....

RA: Prairie du Chien.

FF: ... Prairie du Chien in....

RA: In 1829.

FF.: Because they wanted to reward her husband, Antoine Ouilmette for his services during the Fort Dearborn Massacre.

RA: Right.

FF: So they couldn't actually give him any Indian land, but

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since his wife had some Indian ancestry, they could make the grant out to them jointly and thus get around the letter of the treaty.

RA: There were a number of those grants.

FF: But don't forget that while the Mr. and Mrs. Ouilmette or Wilmette got two sections of land - a section being 600 acres or a square mile - that stretched from Central Street on the south, 15th Street on the west, and ended on the north, but looked at the east. Remember that the lake shore cuts in at that point. If you figure it out - about - more than half of that east section is Lake Michigan is in Lake Michigan. Well, it is apparent why the Ouilmettes sold off their land with such alacrity.

RA: Well, I thought it was, after....

FF: ...because except when the fishing was good, that was all they could do with the east end of their territory and it was too wooded to farm.

RA: There was another fact....

FF: And everybody - and, of course, there was the fact that it was so far from Chicago that it would never be suitable for settlement.

RA: Plus the Blackhawk War.

FF: Plus the Blackhawk War.

RA: And the law that said that all Indians must be moved across the Mississippi.

FF: Yes, but by that time I suppose the idea must have gotten

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into people's heads that the Ouilmettes were Indians.

RA: Well, they did follow the Indians, though, who were their friends.

FF: The Ouilmette children, though - the second generation - followed the....

RA: Mother and Father died out there, too.

FF: When we had this 75th Anniversary together, we found that some of the descendents....

RA: Were in California.

FF: We found some also in Council Bluffs.

RA: That's where the father and mother died.

FF: Yes.

RA: But he did not go out there with them when the family moved out there, but do you know that it wasn't until 1879 that President Grant finally signed the release of that land so that they - so that there was clear title to it.

FF: Yes. There was clear title to it because Mr. John Westerfield had begun to develop (Indistinct) right after the Civil War.

RA: And he was related to the Dingeess. His wife was a Dingee and there were three generations of Dingeess that came Out and had eyes on that property from 1833 when the Ouilmette's vacated it to 1872, and Soloman was the first. They were shipbuilders in Yonkers and then - the next one - never came out here. That was when Alexander McDaniel was his -

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representative out here. He sent him out here for that purpose and he built a cottage up in Winnetka and lived there five years, single, until this land began - they had the sale of 1833 or 1835 - on the court house steps in Chicago. And that was when the land began to change hands, but they had no right.

FF: They had no clear title until after the incorporation.

FF: The Dingees were around town for many years. Esther Dingee Bauer was the second woman who served on the Village Board. I can't remember for the life of me who....

RA: I had forgotten that she was.

FF: A village trustee. Yes.

RA: Esther? I had forgotten - what was her name? I had forgotten she was a Dingee. Well, Mrs. McClure, up in Highland Park was also a Dingee. And they were very active. They raised pickles that they shipped over the Great Lakes and through the canal down the Hudson down to New York City and I somewhere saw a record of how many thousands of barrels of pickles.

FF: That was at one time the pickle business - was one time.

RA: Westerfield ran it.

FF: Yes. It was at one time a big industry.

RA: But there was also Squire Dingee pickles. That was the other brother....

FF: Yes.

RA: ð but he lived in Chicago and he had no survivors. They according to interviewer, Rhea Adler, Esther Dunshee Bower, wife of Lorin Bower, was the second woman who served on the village board

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all died prior to marriage, but that early history that hasn't been really fully developed, and it should be.

FF: Wilmette, like many other communities, got its impetus as a residential town, of course, from the Chicago fire, but it was around the late 90s that it became particularly desirable to live on the north shore because some enterprising people who also wanted to develop Ravinia Park as a cultural center were building a trolley line from Waukegan as far south as they could get any right-of-way. And they made a connection in Evanston with the Chicago elevated line. Now the Chicago elevated line had apparently taken over a spur of the Milwaukee Railroad which once had a terminal at about Isabella Street.

RA: And what did they call it?

FF: They called it Llewellyn Park. The trolleys were the primary mode of travel in those days before the automobile and the paved road. And there was a car between Evanston and Waukegan every 15 minutes or so. Of course, the taxi business was always with us from the very beginning. When people would come out from the city, the usual mode of transportation would be the steam line - the Chicago and Northwestern and there was always a cab waiting.

RA: And what was the cab like in those days?

FF: Well, in the first place it was a horse drawn cab. The horse drawn cabs didn't disappear until - oh, 1918 or 1919 or somewhere in there. Mr. (Indistinct) had his livery

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stable over on 12th Street, about across the street from where the Bank of Wilmette might now be. And the motorized taxi did not come in until about 1915 to 1920. There wasn't much difference in speed between the motorized taxis and the horse drawn ones because the road and streets were in such primitive condition that you couldn't go fast either way.

RA: What were they?

FF: What?

RA: They had tar?

FF: Oh yes, macadam.

RA: But liquid tar, was it?

FF: Yes.

RA: That they kept the dust down.

FF: But - very early they had to keep the dust down and there was the water cart that came around to do it, but early on they adopted the brick pavement which still exists in many places.

RA: How well I know. It is very rough to ride a bicycle over the brick streets - mostly the north-south streets.

FF: Although in many places those have been paved over and the bricks probably....

RA: Are underneath the macadam.

FF: ...underneath the macadam. Yes. The - going back to commuters and transportation, another reason that there were not so great uses of the automobile except within the

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community was that it was so difficult to get out of it. What is now Green Bay Road did extend south into Evanston.

RA: But not north?

FF: But not north and it was relatively late, in the 20s, that they cut through. The kids going to high school from the western part of the village, of course, would go up 15th Street and then take the path and usually cross the tracks at Kenilworth Avenue when they came around that way. Ridge Road eventually was put through and, as you know, that was not really a north and south street. That actually followed the glacial moraine.

RA: And that was all part of the old Green Bay trail, wasn't it? As I understand it, there were two routes - the Green Bay Trail?

FF: The good weather route and the foul weather route.

RA: That's right.

FF: And in foul weather, neither one of them were any good.

RA: That is quite true when you read some of those 19th century....

FF: But Green Bay Road has nothing to do with the Green Bay Trail in Wilmette. When you get as far north as Glencoe or Highland Park, you do pick up legitimate pieces of the old Green Bay trail.

RA: Doesn't it at Tower Road go east of the tracks there for a ways up - um -

FF: Herbert Mulford, who was the great authority on that, and

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he could trace it pretty well from Tower Road north. There were - but as you pointed out, there were several ways of getting to Tower Road. Along the lakeshore, if the weather permitted if you - if it was a little wetter, you went to higher ground, along the Ridge, but that involved a long detour out from Chicago because that was the old Grosse Point Road.

RA: Didn't they have the Green Bay Trail....

FF: Which goes into Niles Township.

RA: Yes. And Milwaukee Avenue and Elston Avenue are on a diagonal in where the Indian Trail.

FF: They were used as access routes, but it was not a very settled thing because you picked your route at your own convenience, till you got out to the hinterlands of Hubbard Woods.

RA: Didn't I understand that Milwaukee Road comes together with the Green Bay Trail above Waukegan and goes on up to Waukegan - er - to Green Bay?

FF: There probably is more fiction than fact connected with the Green Bay Trail, and Mr. Mulford didn't find out much new about it. He just found out a lot of things that weren't so and you must remember that the railroad was there in the - the Northwestern Railroad was built in the 50's.

RA: That's right.

FF: And so once the railroad was there, there was no need

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for these trails except as farm roads.

RA: And the man, Blodgett, the man who initiated that road through here and got a hold of the land, lived in Waukegan, I believe.

FF: There was a small station on that freight line of the Northwestern which is, or at least until recent years, was called Blodgett.

R1: Oh? Yes, it seems to me I see.

FF: West of Highland Park, somewhere on the way up to Libertyville but, of course, that area has changed so greatly with the new super highways that it has obliterated many of the things we could use as landmarks.

RA: But really Wilmette first came into being as a place because of that railroad. Didn't it?

FF: Of course. That was the history in all directions out of Chicago. And Wilmette and the other north shore towns came into being as residential suburbs primarily because they were no good for anything else. The wood wasn't any good for lumbering. The soil wasn't any good for farming and what in the dickens could the landowners do with it but sell it to people who wanted to build houses and because the railroad was there and was ready in those days to go into passenger service instead of trying to get out of it. They had ready access to Chicago. Actually it didn't take them very much longer to get in on the train than it does now. Half an hour, forty- five minutes was the usual running

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time.

RA Then 1850 was really early for a road going out of Chicago, wasn't it?

FF: Yes.

RA: This I believe was one of the first roads.

FF: One of the first roads.

RA: And it was in the later 50's and 60's that they went west.

FF: Right after the Civil War, of course, there was tremendous.

RA: Yes. (indistinct) but if you wanted to go into Chicago, chances are you must take the Northwestern to its terminal at Madison Street and then take the old horse cars across to the loop because the North Shore line until 1919 or 1920 terminated in Evanston. It was not until then that Mr. Insull acquired all the utilities that he made the arrangements between the elevated line and the North Shore line that the one should use the tracks for the other all the way to the loop.

FF: And it was a tremendous convenience.

RA: Oh, yes. I didn't realize that he was the one that coordinated that.

FF: He coordinated that and bought the power for the elevated line and for the North Shore line from the Commonwealth Edison Company of which he was also the owner.

RA: Well, I don't want to tire you and you've been very gracious with your time.

FF: It's been a great pleasure.

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RA:but I really feel that this is one of the most comprehensive tapes that we have done in the three years of taping.

FF: As I said, in two or three days I will think of many more things.

RA: Well....

FF: You wanted a word about Mike Weber. Could we put that on?

RA: Oh yes, indeed.

FF: Well, Mr. Weber was a very interesting bachelor. He's a native of Wisconsin. He decided to go into the newspaper business and began working about 1912 or 1913 or 1914 for the City News Bureau in Chicago and the first story he was called out to cover was the capsizing of the ~~Eastland~~ in the Chicago River. A couple of years later he heard that there was a vacancy on a little publication out on the north shore, a company that got out weekly papers for such communities as Wilmette and Glencoe. He applied for the job, but he applied for an absentee editor because the absentee manager was over in France at the time.

RA: And who was he?

FF: It was Lloyd Hollister who acquired an interest in the - it was a printing company.

RA: What was it called at that time?

FF: Well, the Wilmette paper was called the Lake Shore News

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and it was a spinoff from the old Evanston News Index. The Winnetka Talk had been acquired by what was to become the Hollister papers - from a church group historically. An then affiliate group of some kind had started a paper called the Glencoe News and they all ended up in the same shop and eventually under the same ownership. So when Mr. Hollister got back from France he found he had an editor and Mr. Weber was there from 1917 until his death forty years later. He was editor of all those publications.

RA: When he died.

FF: Yes.

RA: He was quite a character in the community. Everyone knew Mike Weber.

FF: He was one of the quietest wealthy people in the community. I am surprised he ever was willing to become president of the Rotary Club because they must have had to twist his arm to make him do it because if there was anything he abominated, it was getting up and making a speech.

RA: I can imagine that to be true. Do you think of anyone else who was on the press during your....

FF: Well, you already have some remarks on Miss Jean Ten Broeck who joined the company at a date which I will not reveal.

RA: She was very young at that time she told me.

FF: Very young, yes. And who remained there until a relatively recent time when she retired.

RA: I believe she still goes in occasionally just to keep her

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finger in or maybe just feel a part of it.

FF: But those were the only people who remained there for.

RA: Periods of time.

FF:long periods of time.

RA: Well, I am very grateful to you, Mr. Favor, and this is Rhea Adler signing off for the Wilmette Public Library.