

1911

Mendota Beach.

Spring Harbor Spring Park.

Merrill Park.

Blackhawk

Middleton Beach
West Lake Park.

Merrillville Park.
Merrillville Park.
Merrillville Park.

HIGHLANDS

M.S. MAUTZ

5
4
3
2
1
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

E.N.

MENDOTA

209

E.N.

MENDOTA

A
W BREITER
29
BREITER
28
L.

Huck Finn on Ice

When Ernest Warner platted Mendota Beach in 1896, he could not have imagined that the street ends he provided as a public access to the lake would save a life. Fortunately for two youngsters, court rulings in 1997 and 1998 affirmed the city's ownership of street ends on Lake Mendota following a 1997 suit filed by some property owners alleging that the city no longer maintained them. Fast-forward to a breezy day in February 2002. Kyle Metzloff happened to be walking down one of these street ends when he spotted two 11-year-old boys adrift on an ice floe headed for the open waters of the lake. Metzloff grabbed a nearby kayak and paddled to their rescue. A neighbor later remarked that the boys looked as if "Huck Finn was coming across the lake on a raft." (*WSJ* 2/25/2002)

5606 Lake Mendota Drive—Bird Haven

43°05.305'N, 89°28.436'W

During the 1930s and '40s, Mr. and Mrs. Edward L. Roloff lived in a cozy cottage a few doors north of Capital Avenue. In 1916, Mrs. Roloff organized the bird and nature study class at Highlands Mendota Beach School. Thanks to her efforts, bird and nature study was made compulsory in Dane County schools. An avid horticulturalist, she specialized in wildflowers. Each spring and summer, visitors from Madison and beyond came to see her beautiful garden and its collection of trees, perennials, and 10,000 tulips. In 1936, 1939, and 1942, stories of her garden were featured on WHA radio broadcasts (*WSJ* 6/19/1947).⁵

Upham Court

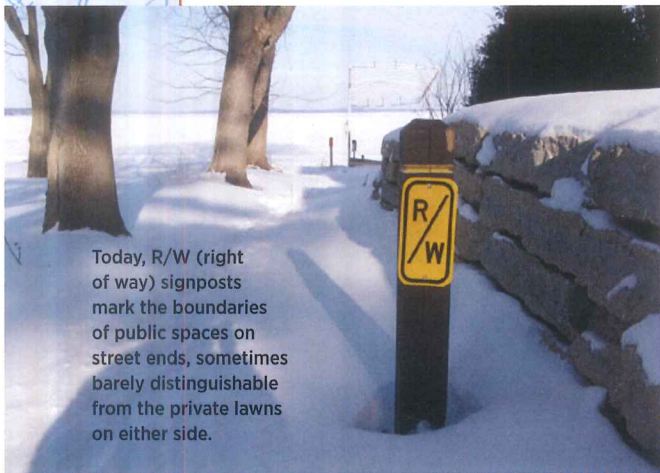
43°05.285'N, 89°28.396'W

The lakeside portion of the structure tucked into the trees on the southeast side of Upham Court was built in 1907 as a two-story cottage. The cottage was enlarged in 1917 with an addition on the street side of the house. Herbert Thomas, a prominent defense attorney, owned the building from 1925 to 1945. He is known for successfully defending Governor Walter Kohler Jr. in the corrupt practices trial brought against him in the 1930s (*HM* 2002).

Across the Lake—and Back

43°05.320'N, 89°28.477'W

At 9 a.m. on September 8, 1961, David Lewis, a 15-year-old sophomore at West High School, stepped into the water behind his family's home at 5646 Lake Mendota Drive and started swimming for Governor's Island. "I wasn't all that tired when I got there, so I turned around and swam home," he said. He entered the ranks of lake swimmers when he climbed back on solid ground about 6:15 that evening after covering a distance of about 10 miles without touching bottom (*WSJ* 9/8/1961) (author interview with David Lewis, 2/10/2010).



Today, R/W (right of way) signposts mark the boundaries of public spaces on street ends, sometimes barely distinguishable from the private lawns on either side.

CT 2/25/2002

Boys rescued after floating on ice

Associated Press

Jacob Musa and James Marlow, both 11, were walking along Lake Mendota when they decided to venture out onto the lake's slim ice shelf.

Both thought it was strong enough

to hold them — and it did.

What they didn't count on is the ice shelf breaking off — and it did.

The boys were adrift on an ice floe about 10 feet in diameter that started floating out toward the lake's center Sunday.

Kristi Austin was looking out toward the lake around 5 p.m. when she saw the boys floating past her window.

"It looked as if Huck Finn was coming across the lake on a raft," Austin said.

She quickly called police, and the Dane County Sheriff's Office dispatched an air boat.

"The ice broke off and the current was taking us out and we didn't know how we were going to get off," Musa said.

Kyle Metzloff was pushing his 9-month-old son Tyler around the neighborhood in a stroller.

"I'm a wind surfer, so I decided to walk down Capital Avenue to the lake

'It looked as if Huck Finn was coming across the lake on a raft.'

Kristi Austin

to see how it looked," Metzloff said. "Then I saw these boys floating by. They were about 100 yards out in the lake and were heading away from shore."

Leaving his son with a neighbor, Metzloff grabbed a kayak from a nearby house and paddled out toward the boys. He rescued Jacob first and then James.

The boys were safely ashore by the time police had arrived.

"I know from wind surfing that the boys couldn't have swum back to shore, even if they wanted to do so," Metzloff said. "The water's too cold, and they couldn't have made it."

Doug Moe

THE TALK



Doug Moe is on vacation. The Talk will return Tuesday.