

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM

Name of Building or Site

Common:	Historic:
Yahara River Parkway	Same

Location

Street Address:	Aldermanic District:
501 South Thornton Av Madison, WI 53703	Second & Sixth

Classification

Type of Property:

Site

Zoning District: C, M1, R4, R5, C2	Present Use: Park
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Current Owner of Property

Name(s):

See attached

Street Address:	Telephone Number:
See attached	See attached

Legal Description

Parcel Number:	Legal Description:
See attached	See attached

Condition of Property

Physical Condition:

Good

Altered or Unaltered?	Moved or Original Site?
Altered	Original site

Wall Construction:

Not applicable

**Yahara River Parkway
Owners**

All parcels owned by City of Madison's Parks Division:

City Municipal Building, Suite G100
Madison, WI 53710

Except as follows:

0710-063-1511-5
0710-072-0637-1

Chicago and Northwestern Railroad
1 North Western Center
165 N. Canal Street
Chicago, IL 60606-1551

The following parcels are listed by the City Assessor as being owned by the owners listed, but the lands within the landmark site were actually deeded to the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association in 1903 and subsequently deeded to the City in the 1930s.

0710-072-0705-6

Karolyn Beebe
220 Merry Street
Madison, WI 53704-5259

0710-072-0703-0
0710-072-0704-8

Merry Street Venture
c/o Faircrest Management
4610 University Avenue #104
Madison, WI 53705-2156

0710-072-0701-4

Stephen P. Conlin
1626 Winnebago Street
Madison, WI 53704-5559

Legal Description

**Yahara River Parkway
501 S. Thornton Avenue**

All or parts of the following parcels, described more specifically as:

0709-124-0095-3

That part of the parcel that is south of E. Johnson Street. The entire parcel is described as follows: Section 12, T7N, R9E beginning at a point which is S89°31'W 296.14 feet and S19°04'W 731.44 feet from Northeast corner of the Southeast 1/4 of said Section; thence South 19°4'W 275.5 feet; thence S39°34'W 364.28 feet, thence N53°02'W 430.92 to point of beginning; thence S36°58'W 100 feet to bank of Yahara River; thence N46°40'W 325 Feet; thence N35°51'E 100 feet; thence Southeasterly in a direct line 325 feet more or less to the point of beginning.

0710-063-1501-6

All of the parcel, described as follows: Original plat - that part of Southeasterly 1/4 of Section 12 Southwest 1/4 of Section 6, and Northwest 1/4 of Section 7, lying between Thornton Avenue and Yahara River, Northeast of Blocks 221, 222, 223, known as Yahara Parkway, except part used for widening E. Johnson.

0710-063-1511-5

All lands within 100 feet of the Yahara River on the following described parcel: Section 6, T7N, R10E, railroad lying between E. Johnson Street and Thornton Avenue.

0710-063-0098-4

Part of the parcel, including the following: A parcel of land located in the Southwest 1/4 Southwest 1/4 Section 7, T7N, R10E, described as follows: All that portion of the Soo Line Railroad Company abandoned railroad right-of-way lying Southwesterly of Southwesterly right-of-way line of Chicago and North Western Transportation Railroad right-of-way and lying Northeasterly of the Northeasterly bank of the Yahara River, and lying Northwesterly of the Northwesterly property line of City of Madison owned parcel described as parcel #0710-063-1504-0, and being a strip of land 100 feet wide, extending Northeasterly and Southwesterly between said Chicago and North Western right-of-way line and the waters edge of South Yahara River.

0710-063-1504-0

All lands within 100 feet of the Yahara River on the following described parcel: Farwell Addition beginning at the intersection of the Northeasterly bank of the Yahara River and the Northwesterly line of E. Washington Avenue; thence Northeasterly along Northwesterly line of East Washington Avenue to the Southwesterly line of the Chicago and North Western Railroad right-of-way, thence Northerly along said right-of-way to the Southeasterly line of the former Chicago Milwaukee St. Paul and Pacific Railroad right-of-way; thence southerly along last mentioned right-of-way to the Northeasterly bank of the river; thence Southeasterly along river to point of beginning. Parts of Section 6 & 7, T7N, R10E and Lots 88 and 89 Blocks 276 and 277 Farwells Replat and Addition.

0710-072-0914-3

All of the parcel, described as follows: Original plat, part of vacated Block 240 lying East of Thornton Avenue and part of Block 275 described as follows: Beginning at a point 14.5 feet East of East corner Lot 28; thence West to Yahara River; thence North along River to North line Lot 1; thence East to a point 27 feet East of North corner Lot 1; thence Southeast to point of beginning.

0710-072-0824-4

All of the parcel, described as follows: Part of Farwell Addition beginning on Southeast line of Main Street, 866 feet Southwest of First Street; thence Southwest on Main Street to Yahara River; thence Southeast along Northeast bank of said river to right-of-way of the Chicago and North West Railroad; thence Northwesterly 281 feet to point of beginning; being part of Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 and 30 feet of private roadway as platted in Voss Subdivision.

0710-072-0712-1

All of the parcel, described as follows: Original plat - that part of Northwest 1/4 of Section 7 lying between Thornton Avenue & Yahara River Northeast of Blocks 227, 238, 239, 240 known as Yahara Parkway.

0710-072-0637-1

Part of the land owned by Chicago & North Western Railroad Company in Blocks 274, 275, 276, 285, 283 and 287 Farwell Addition described as follows: All lands between S. Thornton Avenue and a line 65 feet more or less Northeast of the Yahara River.

An unassigned parcel:

Part of Lots 24 through 26, Farwell's Addition described as follows: Commencing at West corner of Lot 7, Block 1, Monona Subdivision; thence approximately Northwesterly along Yahara River bank to Chicago & North Western Railroad Company corridor; thence approximately Northeasterly along Southeast line of said corridor 50 feet; thence approximately Southeasterly, paralleling the Yahara River bank, to point of beginning; known as the Yahara River Parkway.

0710-072-0711-3

All of the parcel described as follows: That part of Lot 7, Block 1 Monona Subdivision, not assessed to others beginning 294 feet Southwest from Merry Street to Yahara River, deeded to Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association in 1903.

An unassigned parcel.

The South 50 feet more or less of Lot 6, Block 1, Monona Subdivision, know as the Yahara River Parkway.

0710-072-0705-6

Part of Lot 5, Block 1, Monona Subdivision described as follows: A strip of land 50 feet in width off from the Southerly end of said lot, the Southerly line of said strip of land being the northerly bank of the Yahara River deeded to the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association in 1903 (delineated on official map by a dashed line).

0710-072-0704-8

Part of Lots 3 and 4 Block 1 Monona Subdivision described as follows: A strip of land 50 feet in width off from the southerly end of said lots, the southerly line of said strip of land being the northerly bank of the Yahara River deeded to Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association in 1903 (delineated on official map by a dashed line).

0710-072-0703-0

Part of Lot 2, Block 1, Monona subdivision described as follows: Beginning at a point on the Westerly line of Lot 2, 40 feet from the edge of the bank of the Yahara river; running thence Southwesterly along the Westerly line of Lot 2 to said river; thence along the edge of the bank of the said river to the westerly line of Lot 1; thence along said line 40 feet; thence approximately northwesterly to the point of beginning; deeded to Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association in 1903.

0710-072-0701-4

Part of Lot 1, Block 1, Monona Subdivision described as follows: Beginning at a point on the Westerly line of Lot 1, 40 feet from the edge of the bank of the Yahara River, thence Southwesterly along the Westerly line of Lot 1 to said river; thence along the edge of the bank of said river to the Westerly line of the Former Chicago Milwaukee St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company, which is the Easterly line of Lot 1, Block 1; thence along said line to a point opposite a point 3 feet Southerly from the present abutments at the end of the bridge of said railway company; thence Northwesterly to the point of beginning, deeded to the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association in 1903.

0710-072-0540-6

Part of the parcel in: Farwells Addition lands not platted lying in city limits Section 7, T7N, R10E right-of-way in Northeast 1/4 of Northwest 1/4 of said Section bounded by Winnebago Street on the East, Thornton Avenue on the South, and Wilson Street and the Easterly line of Lot 1, Block 1 Monona Subdivision on the West.

0710-072-3302-7

All of the parcel described as follows: Section 7, T7N R10E, part of the North 1/2 bounded by Riverside Drive, Rutledge Street, Yahara River and Winnebago Street.

0710-072-3301-9

All of the parcel described as follows: Original Plat - that part of the North 1/2 Section 7 T7N, R10E bounded by Rutledge Street, Thornton Avenue, Winnebago Street and Yahara River.

0710-072-2224-4

All of the parcel described as follows: Original plat, that part of the North 1/2 Section 7 T7N R10E bounded by Lake Monona, Thornton Avenue, Rutledge Street, Yahara River and Lot 20 McCormick Replat.

0710-071-0801-4

All lands within 50 feet of the Yahara River bank in the parcel described in its entirety as follows: First Addition to Riverside Park, all of Block 2, Groveland, all of Blocks 12 and 13, Replat of Block 7 and Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Block 8, Original Plat of Lake Park Subdivision and all of Block 3 used for park and all of Block 4, Kraft Replat, Lot 5, Block 8.

The landmark site includes all adjacent street right-of-way and all bridges crossing the Yahara River from and including E. Johnson Street south to Lake Monona.

Describe Original and Present Physical Appearance and Construction

The Yahara River Parkway (Parkway) was constructed between 1903 and 1906. When construction on the parkway began, it was at the eastern edge of the city. At that time, there was very little development east of the Yahara River. In fact, the only buildings on the east bank of the river were those of the Hausmann Brewing Company, which was located on the shore of Lake Mendota. On the west side of the Parkway, there was some industrial development between Williamson Street and East Washington Avenue, but very few buildings near the area north of East Washington Avenue, or south of Williamson Street. In addition, Tenney Park had been constructed at the north end of the river. The construction of Tenney Park and the Yahara River Parkway created very desirable residential neighborhoods north of East Washington Avenue and south of Williamson Street. Many homes were built in these areas between about 1905 and 1930, while industrial development continued in the corridor between East Washington Avenue and Williamson Street.¹

The Yahara River Parkway was design by O.C. Simonds in 1903, and completed in 1906. It is an excellent and intact example of the Prairie School of landscape architecture.

The parkway includes 16.4 acres, composed of a strip approximately 50' wide along the banks of the Yahara River. Simonds plan, as drawn in 1906, shows a narrow, meandering path (perhaps dirt or gravel) along each bank, and irregular, natural-appearing plantings of trees and shrubs. Simonds' plant list was mostly made up of native species, including various types of maples, viburnum, lindens, dogwood, oaks and elms.² Currently, there are few paths, and the plantings are not quite as dense as is laid out in Simonds' plan, although they are mostly in the same locations. However, the plantings remain irregular and naturalistic, and include many of the native species Simonds listed.

There are 9 contributing structures and 4 noncontributing structures in the Yahara River Parkway. All of the contributing structures are bridges. The two Chicago & Northwestern Railroad Bridges are the oldest on the parkway. One is located just south of E. Main Street, the other, just north of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad bridge between East Johnson Street and East Washington Avenue. Built in 1900, they are identical (except that the northernmost bridge is double width) stock steel bridges

¹Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Madison, (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Publishing Company, 1902, 1908 and 1959).

²Plan dated March 7, 1906, on file, Madison Parks Division.

designed by the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio.³ At the request of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association (MPPDA), the railroad raised both bridges in 1903.⁴ Each is a standard through girder bridge with a 75' span. The walls are composed of a series of ten square steel panels, riveted together. The abutments are concrete block. There are also two Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Bridges on the parkway. One is located just north of Williamson Street, the other just north of East Washington Avenue. These are identical standard through girder steel bridges, built in 1904 and designed by the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company of Milwaukee.⁵ Each has concrete abutments. The walls are made up of a series of rectangular steel panels, riveted together. The end panels are curved. The tracks of this line have been removed; both these bridges are now for pedestrians and bicyclists only. While all four of these railroad bridges are technically old enough to contribute to the parkway, they are stock steel bridges, designed with no consideration for aesthetics, and they visually detract from the parkway. Although the MPPDA was highly complimentary of the railroads' willingness to raise/build new bridges, the organization vigorously campaigned against the use of "ugly stock steel bridges," instead promoting "beautiful and utilitarian cement arch" bridges.⁶ Therefore, although they do not contribute to the landscape architectural significance of the Parkway, they do contribute to its historical significance.

The oldest of the automobile bridges on the Yahara River Parkway is the Williamson Street Bridge. Built in 1904,⁷ this steel reinforced concrete arch bridge is classical in style. The arch is ornamented to look like it is a course of smooth-faced stone, with a prominent keystone. The arch and the balustrades are enriched with recessed panels. The Williamson Street Bridge is an excellent local example of a classically-detailed bridge, with excellent integrity. This two lane bridge is the oldest bridge on the parkway, and may be the oldest automobile bridge remaining in the city.

³Date and manufacturer on bridge plate.

⁴Reports of the Officers of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association, (hereafter, MPPDA Reports), 1904, p. 38.

⁵Date and manufacturer on bridge plate.

⁶This fight was carried on throughout the MPPDA's existence. See, for example, MPPDA Reports: 1904, pp. 35-39.

⁷MPPDA Reports: 1905, pp. 28-31.

The Halle Steensland Bridge carries four lanes of automobile traffic over the Yahara on East Washington Avenue. Technically a 1950 reproduction, it was originally designed by Milwaukee architect George B. Ferry, and built in 1905.⁸ The construction of the original bridge was financed by Norwegian Consul Steensland. The Steensland Bridge is a reinforced concrete arch bridge with a rock-faced random limestone ashlar veneer, and is rustic in appearance, with some classical details. At either end of the bridge is a monumental polygonal pier; on the interior of the bridge, there is a stone bench within each pier. Above two of the four benches, there is a bronze plaque reading: "This bridge presented to the City of Madison by Consul Halle Steensland in commemoration of his 50 years residency in the city, 1855-1905." Each bridge balustrade is enriched with a segmental pediment, and below, the bridge arch is highlighted with stone voussoirs. In 1950, the bridge was widened from 60' to 127'. At that time, the original design was reproduced, using the original stones.⁹ Therefore, the Steensland Bridge remains a contributing resource.

The Rutledge Street Bridge was built in 1916.¹⁰ It is a classical style reinforced concrete arch bridge. The arch is enriched with raised concrete panels, and inscribed with the date of construction. The balustrades are composed of paneled concrete piers and turned balusters. The Rutledge Street Bridge was designed by City Engineer John Icke, and carries two lanes of automobile traffic. It is 42' wide, 92' long, and has a layer of earth between the concrete arch and the pavement. The Rutledge Street Bridge is an excellent local example of a classically-detailed concrete arch bridge, an excellent local example of an aesthetically designed bridge, and shows very good integrity.

The East Johnson Street Bridge was built in 1925.¹¹ It is a reinforced concrete arch bridge with a rock-faced random limestone ashlar veneer. The East Johnson Street Bridge combines the rustic look of the rock-faced veneer with classical details, including smooth-faced stone voussoirs emphasizing the arch, and walls with a stone belt course and a series of square piers. It carries four lanes of automobile traffic. The East Johnson Street Bridge is a good local example of an aesthetically designed bridge, a good local example of a rustic/classical style bridge, and retains very good integrity.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Journal of Historic Madison, Incorporated, 1980-81, p. 40.

¹⁰MPPDA Reports: 1917, p. 10.

¹¹Database, Madison Parks Division.

The East Main Street Bridge appears identical to the Rutledge Street Bridge. Although it was built in 1926,¹² ten years after the Rutledge Street Bridge, it appears to have been built according to the same plan. The East Main Street Bridge is a classically-detailed concrete arch bridge, with raised concrete arch panels, and balustrades with paneled piers and turned balusters. It is a two lane automobile bridge. The East Main Street Bridge is an excellent local example of a classically-detailed concrete arch bridge, an excellent local example of an aesthetically designed bridge, and has very good integrity.

There is a group of three steel Trachte Boat Houses, just south of East Johnson Street. The easternmost building was erected c. 1925, and was hailed as "the only [boat house] ever built of steel."¹³ It is a contributing resource in the district. The other two boat houses, which were probably moved on site c.1946,¹⁴ are two of the three noncontributing structures on the Yahara River Parkway. The city of Madison owns all three boat houses, and rents them out to the public. The boat houses do visually detract from the Parkway, but not enough to compromise the integrity of Simonds' design. In 1993, the noncontributing Jenifer Street Pedestrian Bridge was built. This concrete and wood arch bridge is in keeping with the character of the contributing bridges, and does not affect the integrity of the Parkway.

In conclusion, the integrity of the Yahara River Parkway is excellent. The physical form of the original design of the Parkway has been retained. The plantings are in character with that design, although somewhat less dense than originally. The bridges are almost all well-designed, in keeping with the natural, Prairie School design of the Parkway, and show good to excellent integrity.

¹²Date inscribed on bridge.

¹³Trachte Brothers Company, Trachte Portable Steel Garage and Building Catalog, (Madison: Trachte Brothers Company, Incorporated, c. 1925), p. 19.

¹⁴Bill Bauer, Madison Parks Division, Interview December 7, 1993.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM

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CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Map Code</u>
C&NW Bridge	1900	No. 2
raised	1903	
C&NW Bridge	1900	No. 3
raised	1903	
CM&StP Bridge	1904	No. 4
CM&StP Bridge	1904	No. 5
Williamson Street Bridge	1904	No. 6
Halle Steensland Bridge	1905	No. 7
expanded	1950	
Rutledge Street Bridge	1916	No. 8
East Johnson Street Bridge	1925	No. 9
East Main Street Bridge	1926	No. 10
Boat House	c.1946	No. 13

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Boat House	c.1946	No. 11
Boat House	c.1946	No. 12
Jenifer Street Pedestrian Bridge	1993	No. 14

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
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Original Owner:	Original Use:
Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association	Park
Landscape Architect:	Style:
O.C. Simonds	Prairie Style
Dates of Construction:	Indigenous Materials:
1903-06	Many native plants

Bibliographic References:

Gelbloom, Mara. "Ossian Simonds: Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening," The Prairie School Review, XII: 5-18, 1975.

Mollenhoff, David V. Madison: A History of the Formative Years. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1982.

Newton, Norman T. Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1971.

Rankin, Katherine H. Unpublished report of the Intensive Survey of the Historic Resources of Madison, no date.

Reports of the Officers of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association. (MPPDA Reports) 1902 through 1929.

Form Prepared by

Name and Title: Elizabeth L. Miller
Preservation Research Assistant

Organization Represented: City of Madison
Planning and Development

Address: 215 Martin L. King Blvd Telephone Number:
Madison, WI 53707 266-6552

Date Nomination was Prepared: September, 1994

Significance of the Nominated Property

The Yahara River Parkway is eligible to be listed as a Madison Landmark because it meets criteria 1, 3 and 4 of the Landmarks and Landmarks Sites Designation Criteria (see Madison Ordinances Sec. 33.01(4)(a)). Specifically, the Parkway "exemplif[ies] or reflect[s] the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the . . . community" for the following reasons. First, it is associated with, and had a great affect upon, the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association (MPPDA), an important voluntary organization that changed the physical development and environmental character of Madison. In addition, the development of the Yahara River Parkway, together with Tenney Park, triggered an era of incredible park philanthropy in Madison. The Yahara River Parkway was also the first river parkway in Madison, and the first park funded with public subscriptions rather than large gifts from a few donors. It "embod[ies] the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of . . . style . . ." as an outstanding and intact local example of Prairie School landscape design, and it is "representative of the notable work of a master . . . whose individual genius influence[d] his age" because it is a fine design by Chicago landscape architect Ossian Cole Simonds.

Historical Context

By the late nineteenth century, after years of haphazard expansion, many American cities were overcrowded, unsanitary, poorly laid out, and lacking in parks. Architects, landscape architects and the civic-minded began to look for ways to make the urban environment more humane. Since designing Central Park in New York City with Calvert Vaux in 1858, America's premier landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, had been promoting the design of cities, with particular attention to parks, as an answer to this problem. In 1890, he was asked to make suggestions regarding the upcoming World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Olmsted seized the opportunity and urged the fair's organizers to create a layout that emphasized harmony, and unified buildings and grounds. Under the direction of Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, who was influenced by eastern architects (notably Richard Morris Hunt), it was resolved to design the fair's buildings in the classical style. Meanwhile, the layout of the fairgrounds was designed by Olmsted's assistant, Henry S. Codman, along with Burnham and John W. Root. The result was the "Great White City," composed of spacious boulevards with imposing classical buildings of uniform height and with white exterior finishes. The unity of the grounds was enhanced by placing utility lines underground, and through the use of painting, sculpture, and water elements, such as lagoons and fountains. This demonstration, and subsequent ones at later fairs, showed what a city could look like if it were planned according to

aesthetic principles. All over the country, citizens were inspired, sparking the City Beautiful movement. City planning commissions were appointed, and classical buildings built to house museums, libraries, art galleries, courthouses and other public governmental and cultural institutions.¹⁴ That the primary legacy of the World Columbian Exposition was the nationwide adoption of classical style was a disappointment to Olmsted.¹⁵ However, the Exposition did create new interest in public parks. In Madison, this movement was led by the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association (MPPDA, see discussion under Historical Significance).

When construction on the Yahara River Parkway began in June, 1903, the river and its banks were marshy, and had been frequently used for dumping dead horses, cats and dogs.¹⁶ Many residents of Madison were eager to see the river transformed from a nuisance to an asset. In addition to the cash gifts cited above, 56 teamsters agreed to donate two loads of crushed stone (for fill) each.¹⁷ The MPPDA also received gifts of land for the project, including nearly all of the eastern bank of the river. The largest parcel was a 100' wide strip 1,650' long given by the Hausmann Brewing Company. Hausmann owned the only buildings on the east bank of the Yahara, at Lake Mendota. The property they gave ran from their complex south to the northernmost railroad bridge.¹⁸ A few parcels on the eastern bank of the Yahara were never acquired. Two parcels are privately owned. Two are public open spaces, but are not technically a part of the Parkway. One of these is Burr Jones Field at 1818 East Washington Avenue, a playground donated by Jones in 1903.¹⁹ The other is Yahara Place Park, which begins south of the Rutledge Street Bridge and runs along the shore of Lake Monona four blocks to Dunning Street. It was acquired for the city through the efforts of the Madison Parks Foundation, in three sections, between 1921 and 1931.²⁰ In addition, the ownership of

¹⁴Leland M. Roth, A Concise History of American Architecture, (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 213-14.

¹⁵Albert Fein, Frederick Law Olmsted and the American Environmental Tradition, (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1972), p. 66.

¹⁶Wisconsin State Journal, (hereafter, WSJ), January 12, 1903.

¹⁷MPPDA Reports: 1903, p. 27.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 27-30.

¹⁹MPPDA Reports: 1904, pp. 51-52.

²⁰Madison Parks Division Park Inventory, p. 193.

the railroad rights-of-way have been retained by the railroads. On the banks of the Yahara, these properties are all undeveloped, preserving the views and the feeling of the Parkway the full length of the river.

On the west bank of the river, there was a little used thoroughfare, called Water Street, between Tenney Park and Williamson Street. The MPPDA proposed that this street be abandoned, and a new street (Thornton Avenue, named in honor of Anna and Mary Thornton, benefactors of Tenney Park) be created about 50' back from river.²³ Many of the property owners along Water Street donated a 50' strip for the new street. The Fauerbach Brewing Company also donated its land on the west bank of the river south of Williamson Street. The remainder of the Parkway was purchased from property owners, although one lot was obtained through condemnation.²⁴ By 1904, the MPPDA had acquired most of the land that is now a part of the Parkway.

Two companies dredged and filled the Yahara: N.J. Johnson of Oconomowoc, and Clarke and Thomas of Madison.²⁵ This work was begun in June, 1903, and substantially completed by 1905, when the river opened for use.²⁶ In 1903, the two bridges of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad were raised at a cost of \$30,300.²⁷ Both bridges had been constructed by the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1900.²⁸ The first lock at the Mendota outlet to the Yahara was built in 1903 at a cost of \$6,430. Designed by University of Wisconsin engineering professor W.D. Taylor, the lock was 12' wide and 60' long.²⁹ In the spring of 1904, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad removed its old bridges and built two new ones at a cost of \$16,500.³⁰ These bridges are identical, and were built by the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company of

²³MPPDA Reports: 1904, p. 31.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 33-34.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 28-29.

²⁶MPPDA Reports: 1906, p. 31.

²⁷MPPDA Reports: 1904, p. 38.

²⁸Inscribed on bridge plate.

²⁹MPPDA Reports: 1904, p. 30.

³⁰Ibid., p. 38.

Milwaukee.²⁹ In 1904, the concrete arch Williamson Street bridge was constructed for \$6,042.³⁰ The Common Council had debated for a year over whether to put up a stock steel truss bridge, or to bow to the MPPDA's concern for aesthetics, and build a more expensive, but more attractive, concrete arch bridge at Williamson Street.³¹ Meanwhile, the old Williamson Street steel truss bridge was moved temporarily to East Johnson Street.³² On November 29, 1904, Norwegian Consul Halle Steensland offered \$8,000 in commemoration of his 50 years in Madison for the construction of a bridge at East Washington Avenue. Noted Milwaukee architect George B. Ferry designed the steel reinforced concrete arched bridge, giving it a rock-faced limestone veneer.³³ When the lowest construction bid came in at \$10,000, Steensland immediately donated another \$2,000. The Steensland Bridge was completed in 1905.³⁴ The Reports of the Officers of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association for 1906 includes a plan of Tenney Park and the Yahara River Parkway by O.C. Simonds dated March 7, 1906. This plan shows the property included in the Yahara River Parkway almost as it is today. The total cost for the acquisition and development of the Parkway, not including the Williamson Street or Steensland Bridges, was \$83,005.65 as of April, 1906. Of this amount, the city had contributed only \$4,266.14. The rest had been financed through gifts to the MPPDA, and by the railroads.³⁵ Planting of the Parkway was begun in spring of 1906, and carried out according to plans by Simonds.³⁶

Although the Yahara River Parkway was complete by 1906, the MPPDA and, later, the Madison Parks Division, continued to improve it. Almost as soon as the Parkway opened, damage of the river banks by passing motor boats became a problem. The earliest solution was probably to line the banks with large rocks. Since at least the

²⁹Inscription on bridge plate.

³⁰MPPDA Reports: 1905, p. 27.

³¹MPPDA Reports: 1904, p. 37.

³²MPPDA Reports: 1905, p. 31.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 28-31.

³⁴MPPDA Reports: 1906, pp. 33-34.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁶*Ibid.*

1940s, rip-rap has been used.³⁸ In 1916, the Rutledge Street Bridge, designed by City Engineer John Icke, was built at a cost of \$10,497.³⁹ The stone veneered East Johnson Street Bridge replaced the old steel truss bridge in 1925.⁴⁰ The East Main Street Bridge was built in 1926 and is identical to the Rutledge Street Bridge.⁴¹ Two of the three Trachte steel boat houses at 1801 East Johnson Street are thought to be World War II surplus buildings, moved on site c.1946.⁴² The easternmost building was erected c. 1925. The Steensland Bridge was widened in 1950, and the original design of its walls reproduced using the original stones.⁴³ A pedestrian bridge was built at Jenifer Street in 1993.

Historical Significance

The Yahara River Parkway is historically significant for its association with the MPPDA, as the first river parkway in Madison, and as the first Madison park funded with public subscriptions rather than through large gifts from a few donors.

The MPPDA was the most influential voluntary organization in Madison's history. From its founding in 1894, until it dissolved in 1938, this organization transformed Madison from a city with one 3-1/2 acre public park, to one with a wealth of parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, beaches and open space. In fact, the MPPDA was instrumental in securing almost all the parks created in Madison during that organization's 44 years.⁴⁴ The MPPDA also set high aesthetic standards, hiring the most talented landscape architects of the era to design these public improvements, most notably Ossian Cole Simonds and John Nolen. The MPPDA's efforts changed the physical development and environmental character of Madison, and set a precedent for the support of parks as an integral part of the fabric of the city, which continues today.

³⁸Mike Daley, Madison Engineering Department, interview February 11, 1994.

³⁹MPPDA Reports: 1917, p. 10.

⁴⁰Database, Madison Parks Division.

⁴¹Date inscribed on bridge.

⁴²Bauer.

⁴³Journal of Historic Madison, Incorporated.

⁴⁴Katherine H. Rankin, unpublished report of the Intensive Survey of Historic Resources of Madison, no date.

The MPPDA got its start in 1892, when John M. Olin and some of his friends began purchasing lands for the development of pleasure (scenic) drives along Lake Mendota. Olin (1851-1924), an attorney who practiced in Madison for 33 years, also taught in the Law School at the University. He is best known for his work with the MPPDA. The MPPDA was formally organized in 1894 with 26 members. Olin was chosen as president. He would prove a highly effective leader. The MPPDA initially focused on pleasure drives. The organization was very successful in its first five years, establishing over 17 miles of scenic roadways in the Madison area, much of it along Lake Mendota. Membership grew to 400 by 1899, and consisted primarily of Madison's leading business and professional men. They and their families were also the primary beneficiaries of the pleasure drives. The roadways were not accessible to the three-quarters of the population who could not afford to own or rent a horse. Although the MPPDA was highly regarded for what it had accomplished, it was criticized by some as elitist for this reason.⁴⁴

In 1899, the focus of the MPPDA abruptly changed. Several property owners offered to sell 14 acres of land, situated along the west bank of the Yahara River at Lake Mendota, to the city as a park. The owners were asking \$1,500 for the parcel; it was easily worth \$8,000. The MPPDA Board of Directors immediately passed a resolution urging the city to buy and develop the land as a park. Before the city could respond, Daniel K. Tenney came forward with an offer which would change the purpose of the MPPDA, and ultimately, the history of Madison. Tenney was an ardent supporter of the MPPDA, and Madison's best-known conservative activist. He offered to buy the land for \$1,500 and give another \$2,500 for its development as a park. Tenney attached conditions to his gift which challenged both the MPPDA and the city to become involved in the support of in-city public parks. First, he specified that the MPPDA hold the land in trust for the city; second, that the MPPDA develop and maintain the park; and third, that another \$2,500 be raised for the development of the park from other sources.⁴⁵

This offer posed the question: what agency should be responsible for public parks in the city? Olin and the MPPDA Board of Directors sincerely believed that parks were necessary for the health and well-being of all citizens. Further, the city had only one park, the block-long abandoned cemetery known as Orton Park, to serve a population of some 19,000 persons. The city could finance the development and maintenance of parks within city limits through property taxes. The pleasure drives, because they were mostly

⁴⁴Mollenhoff, pp. 232-34.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 324.

located outside the city, could not be supported with taxes. The MPPDA must therefore support the pleasure drives with their own funds, which were all voluntary contributions. Supporting both would financially strap the MPPDA. Olin concluded that the acquisition, development and maintenance of parks in the city should be a municipal responsibility.⁴⁶

However, a majority of the Common Council disagreed with Olin. This may have stemmed in part from the fact that the city was very near the limit of its statutory borrowing power as a result of recent expenditures to set up a water system and a sewage treatment system, as well as having on-going obligations for street maintenance and so on. The MPPDA accepted Tenney's gift and began raising the required \$2,500. The MPPDA also persuaded the Common Council to contribute \$1,500. The Common Council named the park after its primary benefactor, Daniel K. Tenney.⁴⁷ Olin hired Ossian Cole (O.C.) Simonds, a talented landscape architect from Chicago to design the park. It would be the first of many collaborations between Simonds and the MPPDA. Development of Tenney Park began in 1900 and was completed in 1911 (see discussion in landmark nomination for Tenney Park).

Over the next few years, the MPPDA strongly encouraged city officials to develop more parks. The city ignored the MPPDA. Olin, frustrated with the city's inaction, undertook a bold initiative. In January, 1903, Olin presented a plan to a group of Madison's most influential citizens at the home of Senator William F. Vilas. He called for widening (to 50') and deepening the Yahara River between Lakes Mendota and Monona, creating a parkway on both sides, raising the railway bridges across the Yahara so that launches (small boats) could easily pass beneath them, and constructing a lock at the Mendota outlet.⁴⁸ The plan was lauded by the local press. Daniel K. Tenney objected to the plan, primarily on the grounds that wealthy launch owners would be the greatest beneficiaries. Tenney's objections were overridden by a coalition made up of park activists; property owners, who foresaw their real estate rising in value; town boosters; and the growing number of launch owners, most of whom were association members.⁴⁹

Olin pursued the development of the Yahara River Parkway with characteristic vigor. He sent Senator Vilas to convince the

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 326.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 326 and 475.

⁴⁸MPPDA Reports: 1903, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁹Mollenhoff, p. 329.

presidents of the Chicago & Northwestern, and Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroads to raise their four railroad bridges across the Yahara. By the end of January, 1903, both presidents had agreed. In the event that the railroads reneged on their promise, Olin got the Wisconsin Legislature to adopt a bill that would force the railroads to cooperate. Olin also got the endorsement of Madison's Common Council for the project. By April, Olin announced that 482 persons had subscribed \$20,614.60 for the project--over \$5,000 more than the goal--and that nearly all the necessary land had been donated to the city for the project.⁵⁰ Work on the Yahara River Parkway was begun in June, 1903, and completed in 1906.

Aside from its association with the MPPDA, the Yahara River Parkway is important as the city's first river parkway and the first park built with citizen subscriptions, rather than with large gifts from a few donors (the only other is Warner Park, 1939). Of the 482 subscribers, nearly half (227) had contributed \$10 or less.⁵¹ But the Yahara River Parkway has even greater significance because the project "primed the pump" for the golden era of park-oriented philanthropy in Madison. In 1904, William F. Vilas gave the MPPDA \$18,000 to create a park in honor of his son Henry, who had died at a young age. In 1905, Thomas E. Brittingham donated \$8,000 for a park in his own name. These contributions were just the beginning of large additional gifts from Vilas, Brittingham and Tenney. Other large gifts were received from George B. Burrows and A.H. Hollister.⁵² Perhaps more impressive were the small annual gifts of hundreds of citizens of modest means. Between 1902 and 1909, an average of 765 Madisonians, about one household in ten, voluntarily contributed money in support of parks. About 60 percent of all pledges were just \$5. As a result of MPPDA efforts, by 1906 Madison had been changed from a city with only one three-and-a-half acre park and no public water frontage, to a city with 154 acres of park and 4.6 miles of public water frontage, more than most cities in the nation.⁵³

Despite Olin's success in raising funds from the private sector, he continued to believe that in-city parks were a municipal responsibility. Olin and the MPPDA continued to push the city to accept more financial responsibility. In 1905, he persuaded the Common Council to hire a park superintendent to oversee the day-to-

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 329; and MPPDA Reports: 1903, p. 24.

⁵¹MPPDA Reports: 1903, p. 26.

⁵²Mollenhoff, p. 332.

⁵³Ibid.

day operation and development of the parks. The superintendent was selected by the MPPDA and worked under its direction, but the city paid his salary. Emil T. Mische, who had worked for Frederick Law Olmsted, was selected. Mische held the post from January 1, 1906 until March 1, 1908. When Mische left Madison for Portland, Oregon, Olin secured the services of John Nolen.⁵⁴ Nolen (1864-1937) was quickly gaining a national reputation as a leader, along with Frederick Law Olmsted, in the new discipline, "city planning." City planners promoted the concept (later called the City Functional) that all the components of urban life should be integrated to make cities not just more beautiful, but more liveable as well. Nolen was under contract to the city part-time from 1908 until 1911. During that time, he redesigned Tenney Park (1908), and produced a thoughtful comprehensive plan of Madison (1910).⁵⁵ But Olin's greatest success in getting the city to shoulder financial responsibility for parks took place in 1909, when Olin finally convinced the Common Council to pass a one-half-mill park tax. This brought much more money for parks. Instituted in 1912, the park tax brought nearly \$50,000 a year between 1912 and 1920, as compared to an average of \$22,000 a year in annual contributions made to the MPPDA during its peak years of 1901-11. After adoption of the park tax, the MPPDA continued to oversee maintenance and development of city parks. Membership and contributions dropped precipitously after 1912, but because the MPPDA's financial responsibility was limited to maintaining the 23 mile pleasure drive system, the organization remained solvent.⁵⁶

During the period 1912-1932, the MPPDA continued to improve existing parks and build playgrounds, golf courses and new parks. Improvements to existing parks included bridges, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, bath houses and boat houses. New parks created during this time included Olin Park (1912), Frank W. Hoyt Park (1924), Glenway Golf Course (1926), James R. Law Park (1927) and Nakoma Park (1931).⁵⁷ On May 8, 1931, the Common Council passed a charter ordinance (Section 3.03 of the General Ordinances of the City of Madison) creating a board of park commissioner to "govern, manage, control, improve and care for all public parks. . ."⁵⁸ On

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 338-341.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 342, 346-49.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 332.

⁵⁷James G. Marshall, "For Pleasure and Play," WSJ, centennial edition, 1939, p. 8.

⁵⁸James G. Marshall, "The Madison Park System: 1892-1937," Journal of Historic Madison, volume 5, 1979-80, p. 15.

April 26, 1933, the newly appointed Board of Park Commissioners assumed their responsibilities. On July 12, 1937, the MPPDA transferred all the property that it had held in trust to the city by quit-claim deed. The MPPDA was dissolved at its final meeting, held July 11, 1938.⁵⁹

It should be noted that there was a second private organization that also contributed to the development of Madison's parks. The Madison Parks Foundation, organized by Michael Olbrich in 1922, established Olbrich Park, Yahara Place Park, and acquired the first parcel of the University of Wisconsin Arboretum.⁶⁰ But, according to noted historian David Mollenhoff, the MPPDA is unparalleled in Madison history "for its persistence, commitment, foresight, selfless public service, and above all else, its achievements."⁶¹ This is evident not only in the large amount of public open space created by the MPPDA but also in its concern for the aesthetics, always hiring the finest designers, such as O.C. Simonds and John Nolen. That the MPPDA was highly successful in establishing parks in Madison is in large part due the efforts of John Myers Olin. Olin served as president from 1894 until 1909, when ill health forced him to retire. As a result of his work, John Olin is recognized as the "father of Madison's park system."⁶²

Landscape Architectural Significance

The Yahara River Parkway is an excellent and intact example of Prairie School design. It is also significant as representative of the work of the founder of the Prairie School of landscape architecture, O.C. Simonds.

Nineteenth century American landscape architecture was dominated by the romantic, picturesque school of design, which sought to imitate nature, with undulating terrain, curving planting beds, and groves of trees which appeared to have sprung up on their own. A romantic landscape design provided a proper setting for picturesque architecture, but as the influence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts and

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁶⁰Rankin, no page numbers.

⁶¹Mollenhoff, p. 338.

⁶²Rankin; "Annual Report of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association: 1925," pp. 7-8; "Business Associates and Lifelong Friends Mourn Passing of John M. Olin," "John M. Olin," and "Death Relieves Lawyer of Long, Painful Illness," WSJ, December 8, 1924; and Proceedings of the Wisconsin State Bar Association, vol. 15, pp. 17-18, 1925.

its classically-inspired architecture took hold, a more formal, architectonic style of landscape design came into being. One of the earliest manifestations of this was Olmsted's design at Biltmore. In 1889, Richard Morris Hunt designed a French-inspired country mansion for George W. Vanderbilt. Olmsted designed the grounds to reflect the mansion itself, with its strong geometric form, in developing the immediate grounds as a rectilinear, formal series of spaces. This is regarded as the beginning of the Country Place Era, and is related to the City Beautiful movement in city planning. As classically-inspired architecture in public, commercial and residential buildings grew in popularity, landscape architecture naturally turned to well-structured spatial order and simple geometry.⁶³ City Beautiful and Country Place design is characterized by clear spatial structure that is crisply geometric and often symmetrical; by a series of rectilinear spaces tied together with a long line of sight; spaces defined or implied with vertical planes using walls and steps; a layout that is formal, organized and simple; a meticulous attention to detail; and a short list of plant materials, usually compact in nature.⁶⁴ This type of design, which borrows from England, France and Italy, became very popular in the Eastern U.S. in the early twentieth century, and was imitated in the Midwest.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, in Chicago, artists and designers, among them architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, were rejecting the resurgence of the classical and the dominance of Easterners, and turning to the prairies for inspiration. In landscape architecture, the Prairie School promoted restoring and recreating regional landscape features, and using local rock materials and native plants in a naturalistic design. As Professor Wilhelm Miller of the University of Illinois, the most vocal proponent of the Prairie School in landscape architecture, exhorted: "study nature and make pictures full of local color."⁶⁶

Jens Jensen has received a great deal of recognition as the leading practitioner of the Prairie School of landscape architecture. His

⁶³Norman T. Newton, Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 345-52, 372-84 and 413-426.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 375, 427-28.

⁶⁵Mara Gelbloom, "Ossian Simonds: Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening," The Prairie School Review, vol. XII, 1975, p. 6.

⁶⁶Wilhelm Miller, "Successful American Gardens VII," Country Life in America, September 1, 1911, p. 38.

name is synonymous with the use of hawthorne, flowering dogwood and crabapples to suggest the horizontality of the natural Midwestern landscape. However, Ossian Cole Simonds (1855-1931) was the first to recreate a regional landscape, and the first to use native Midwestern species in a planting plan (including hawthorne, dogwood and crabapples), which he did as early as 1880.⁶⁷ "Thus, the ideas and techniques of the Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening were first expressed in Simonds' work and philosophy..."⁶⁸

Simonds believed that local character should be preserved through the use of indigenous plants, and that they should be arranged for the convenience and safety of people, according to the principles of the Picturesque movement, rather than in the haphazard way they might appear in the wild. The principles of the Picturesque movement, as articulated by Frederick Law Olmsted (a great influence on Simonds), have been summed up as follows: avoid formal design except in very limited areas around buildings; keep open lawns and meadows in large central areas; provide circulation by means of organically curving and wide sweeping roads and paths; and place the principal road so that it will approximately circumscribe the whole area.⁶⁹ Simonds also drew inspiration from local topography, and gave his designs a sculptural quality and a sense of movement, through massing of plants, low, rolling hills and sinuous water elements.⁷⁰ Lagoons were used to symbolize the prairie rivers; meadows symbolized the prairie landscape.⁷¹

Simonds' design for the Yahara River Parkway exemplifies both the Prairie School of landscape architecture, and his work. Simonds' plan for the Yahara River Parkway did not recreate Midwestern topography, but rather, modified the existing prairie river for safe and convenient human use. As he did in Tenney Park, Simonds utilized curving narrow paths and irregular masses of mostly native species on the banks of the Yahara River. As design elements in the landscape, the contributing structures on the parkway, with the exception of the railroad bridges, are all arch bridges. Their designs are in keeping with Simonds' bridge designs for Tenney Park, also a Prairie School plan. At least one bridge, the Halle

⁶⁷Gelbloom, p. 9.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 8.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 17.

are good local examples of aesthetically designed pre-1940 bridges, and good examples of their various styles. The noncontributing Jenifer Street Pedestrian Bridge is also an arch bridge. The four Railroad Bridges are aesthetically out of character with the parkway, although they do contribute to the parkway's history. The Boat Houses visually detract from the parkway. None of these significantly affects the integrity of the Yahara River Parkway. Although there are few paths along the river, and the plantings are less dense, the parkway retains a high degree of integrity. The original physical form is intact, and the plantings and the bridges (with exceptions noted above) are in keeping with Simonds' design.⁷⁴

O.C. Simonds was born in Michigan, and graduated from the University of Michigan in civil engineering in 1878. While there, he studied architecture under William LeBaron Jenney. After Simonds graduated, he worked for Jenney in Chicago. In 1878, Bryan Lathrop, president of the Graceland Cemetery Association, hired Simonds, through Jenney's firm, to lay out an addition to the cemetery. Lathrop saw naturalistic landscape architecture as a fine art, and in his enthusiasm, interested Simonds in landscaping the cemetery. At first, Simonds continued to pursue a career in architecture as well, as part of the firm of Holabird, Simonds and Roche from 1880 to 1883. Before long, Simonds realized that his true calling was landscape architecture, or landscape gardening as he preferred to call it.⁷⁵ By 1880, Simonds was transplanting trees and shrubs from the wild to Graceland Cemetery.⁷⁶ Simonds was appointed superintendent of Graceland Cemetery in 1881, a post in which he served until 1898. His naturalistic designs for the cemetery attracted the attention of Chicago's wealthiest families, who hired him to design similar grounds for their estates. By 1900, Simonds had a thriving consulting practice. In Madison, he had a long association with the MPPDA. His designs for the MPPDA include Vilas Park, Tenney Park, Brittingham Park and the Yahara River Parkway. In the Chicago area he designed the Nichols and Morton Arboretums, the original estates of Lake Forest, and several parks in Winnetka. Simonds also planned the grounds of the University of Maryland, and the University of Iowa (Ames). He was also a founder of the University of Michigan program in landscape architecture (1909), and of the American Association of Landscape Architects (1899).

Norman T. Newton, noted landscape architectural historian, states that Graceland Cemetery, "one of the most remarkable park-like

⁷⁴Plan dated March 7, 1906, on file, Madison Parks Department.

⁷⁵Gelbloom, p. 7.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 9.

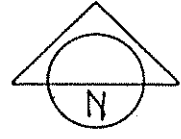
cemeteries of the Western world," is regarded as Simonds' masterpiece.⁷⁷ However, Simonds' designs have not been well studied, and it is difficult to determine where to rank the Yahara River Parkway among them. It is certainly representative of his work.

In conclusion, the Yahara River Parkway is significant for its association with the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association (MPPDA), an important voluntary organization that changed the physical development and environmental character of Madison. In addition, the Yahara River Parkway triggered an era of incredible park philanthropy, a time in which 10 percent of all the households in Madison voluntarily donated money to support public parks, and several wealthy men gave large gifts to create parks in their names (Vilas, Brittingham, Burrows). The Yahara River Parkway was also the first river parkway in Madison, and the first park funded with public subscriptions rather than large gifts from a few donors. In Landscape Architecture, the Yahara River Parkway is an excellent, intact example of Prairie School design. It is also significant as representative of the work of the founder of the Prairie School of landscape architecture, O.C. Simonds.

⁷⁷Newton, p. 391.

TENNEY
PARK

Yahara River Parkway Madison, Dane County, WI



No scale
--- Park Boundary
▨ Contributing
□ Noncontributing

