

Sunlight Park was platted in 1919 by the Cady Land Company after about two years of preparation during which the “old Cleven farm” was purchased, and surveys and preliminary work completed. The original sales office was in the Cleven farmhouse. The Schwalbe farm (St. Mary’s Blvd) was to the north and the Schumerth farm (Briar Ln. and Roselawn) was to the south. The original plat was located and designed in 1917 by Leonard Smith, a professor of city and town planning at the University of Wisconsin. The platted area was approximately 90 acres and ran from the Fox River to the street car line on Webster Ave. The two north and south streets were St. Francis Drive and Marquette Boulevard (later to become Arrowhead Drive). Three cross streets were Crescent Drive, Langlade Road and Park Drive. The plat was long and narrow in the style of the old French “long lots”. For example, in Green Bay east of the Fox river, the French long lots usually ran from the Fox to the East river and were quite narrow. The Plat was described as being divided by the “Concrete Road”, now Riverside Drive. So it went from the river to the concrete road and from the concrete road to the street car line. In 1919, concrete roads were a key improvement worth highlighting since they allowed for smooth, mud and dust free travel by automobiles. About 200 lots were platted and offered for sale, 25 at a time.

Key selling points were the parks and amenities. A June 1919 article advertises “six fairly large combination parks and playgrounds besides seven small parks. You will find places for sand piles and wading pools.” In July 1932 another article states “The playgrounds are ready for use now. They are large enough to accommodate all the population of Sunlight Park even when it is built up solidly. They are roomy enough for ten to twelve tennis courts.” The ad goes on to say that Sunset Park has 700 feet of frontage on the river for residents and a community boathouse could be built if desired. There was also a plan to establish parkland along both sides of Riverside Drive to contain over 1200 shrubs. The land we currently call Sunlight Park was originally named Central Park and contained a ravine running from north to south, crossed by Marquette Blvd and later by St. Francis Drive. There was also a street named Orchard Lane planned to border Central Park on the west side that was never constructed. The plat also calls for a “private park” running behind the lots fronting Arrowhead and St. Francis and between Crescent Drive and Webster Ave. This never happened and the park was evidently absorbed into the existing lots.

In order to attract upscale buyers, Cady advertised the park as a “restricted district” to provide security against several things deemed risky to home values. Such things as bill boards, factories, warehouses, barns and chicken coops were not allowed. Not so different from some of our zoning and building codes today. Some provisions were uniquely described as “Homes to be absolutely modern and must cost a certain amount” (in other documents the cost was required to be at least \$8,000) or “No buildings can be moved onto any lot”. The bill board restriction was worded as follows: “Bill boards are prohibited, thus doing away with one common eyesore”. It looks like we are fighting the same bill board battle 100 years later.

The language in Cady’s early advertisements is typical for the period and sounds a bit strange today. For example a June 28, 1919 ad states “Take Notice of a Mighty Important Fact: Almost every lot in Sunlight Park faces a park.” Also, “Are You Gifted with Foresight? A dream and a vision of a group of beautiful

homes amid ideal surroundings is about to be realized. We are going to give the man with vision and foresight a chance to help make Sunlight Park the wonder spot of this part of Wisconsin." Cady's ads contain several references to men as decision makers and dealers but not many references to women, another sign of the times 100 years ago. (The 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote wasn't ratified until 1920) Another ad from 1932 states "It is so planned that if you build a home there your life will be more pleasant, more restful and more orderly. Everything has been done that human ingenuity can devise to make this an ideal place to live".

As it turns out the first home wasn't built and occupied till 1932. A quote from the Sunlight Park News states "Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hume have the distinction of being the first inhabitants of Sunlight Park. They moved into their new residence a few days ago" (from Press Gazette article dated July 23, 1932.) There were delays in getting services such as water, sanitary sewer, gas and electricity, etc. The same article states "For the past several weeks there have been approximately 35 men laying water mains in Sunlight Park from Webster Avenue to Monroe Avenue." The hundreds of elm trees planted along the roadways, however, had been growing for 13 years. During the next 5 years, a few houses were built, including the Roger Minahan and Robert Minahan family homes.

It wasn't until about 1949 that the next significant building activity took place, after the extension of sewer and water mains on St. Francis Drive. A Press Gazette article also states, in 1950, that "the elms are fully established." No one knew at the time that the elms would all be gone in the next few decades. From the first home until the early 1950's the Cady organization's ads continued to list the names of prominent families that built homes in Sunlight Park. The Sunlight Park News states in August of 1937 "Mr. and Mrs. Roger Minahan have moved into their new home on the corner of St. Francis Drive and Langlade Road. Dr. and Mrs. E. M. Jordan have started the erection of a colonial home on Marquette Blvd. and Langlade Road." The December 29, 1938 ad states "Among the residents there you will find Dr. and Mrs. W. A. Killins, Mr. and Mrs. Ward Gage, Dr. and Mrs. Karl Icks, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Tennies and others." As late as 1952 articles featured prominent names and their companies such as Henry Dehn of Dehn's Ice cream, Jim Buchaman of Northern Paper mills, Ralph Reed of Standard Oil, and many others. Times have changed. It's doubtful, given today's privacy and security issues, that current owners would allow this kind of publicity.

Over the years many of the original lots have been split, joined or added to adjacent lots so there now are fewer, larger parcels. The original 200 lots have now become about 100 parcels. The original plat, however, is still used in current legal descriptions of property. In other words legal descriptions are written as combinations of whole lots and parts of lots laid out in the 1919 plat. Each parcel's abstract or transaction history recorded at the Brown County Register of Deeds begins with the 1919 purchase by Cady Land Company.