

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DEC 16 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Orton Park

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1100 Spaight Street

--NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Madison

-- VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

55

COUNTY

Dane

CODE

025

CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY** DISTRICT
 BUILDING(S)
 STRUCTURE
 SITE
 OBJECT**OWNERSHIP** PUBLIC
 PRIVATE
 BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
 IN PROCESS
 BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS** OCCUPIED
 UNOCCUPIED
 WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
 YES: RESTRICTED
 YES: UNRESTRICTED
 NO**PRESENT USE** AGRICULTURE
 COMMERCIAL
 EDUCATIONAL
 ENTERTAINMENT
 GOVERNMENT
 INDUSTRIAL
 MILITARY
 MUSEUM
 PARK
 PRIVATE RESIDENCE
 RELIGIOUS
 SCIENTIFIC
 TRANSPORTATION
 OTHER:**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

City of Madison

STREET & NUMBER

210 Monona Avenue / 704 East Gorham Street

CITY, TOWN

Madison

-- VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 53709

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds, City-County Building

STREET & NUMBER

210 Monona Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53709

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Madison Sixth District Architectural and Historical Survey

DATE

1976

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

City Planning Department, 210 Monona Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53709

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Orton Park, a former cemetery, is a three and one-half acre neighborhood park located eleven blocks east of the square, close to Lake Monona. It comprises all of Block 180 of the original Doty Plat. The tract is gently rolling with about a thirty foot elevation above Lake Monona.

Before it became the village cemetery in 1846, this block was part of an area which was a dense oak and hickory forest with considerable hazelbrush and quail.

In 1879, a writer in the Wisconsin State Journal described it as "...a handsome plat of ground, in full view of Third Lake, and with a little clearing out of brush wood, the erection of seats and the laying out of walks, might be transformed into a park that might be a great source of comfort and pleasure to the denizens of the eastern part of the city."

In style the park mixes the asymmetrical styles of the picturesque and the beautiful. These two landscape styles were derived from the eighteenth century English landscape garden (asymmetrical) tradition, particularly the works of Humphry Repton and Lancelot (Capability) Brown, and from the nineteenth century work of Briton J. C. Loudon. In America Loudon's work was interpreted by Andrew Jackson Downing who identified the two styles in his book A Treatise of the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening etc., 1859. It was Downing who laid down the tenets of the styles: the picturesque was to have clusters of irregular trees such as the larch and the oak; the beautiful would be characterized by well-spread plantings of elm, maple and other soft and graceful trees. While perhaps originally more picturesque in concept, through the maturity of the oaks and hickories, the park now has a spatial feeling of the beautiful.

In this formative period of American landscape architecture, Downing proclaimed that the rural cemetery was a clue to the direction of sophisticated landscape design. In this view he was echoed by Horace W. S. Cleveland who wrote the influential book Landscape Architecture As Applied to the Needs and Wants of the West (1873) and who knew Madison as the designer of the State Capitol grounds and as a lecturer in the City.

Today, Orton Park is a heavily used neighborhood park surrounded by pleasant houses and a center of activity for all ages. A concrete sidewalk cuts diagonally through the park and another walk borders all four adjacent streets. Near the center on the Northwest side is the "bubbler" which has marked the arrival of summer for several generations of Orton Park neighbors. Children's play equipment, a softball area, and a basketball court are present in various locations. Some trees have been lost due to disease and age. Currently a large green papier-mache crocodile and a brown ape, also papier-mache are perched more than half way up oak trees near the Few-Spaight intersection.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

1. It was the First City Park. Until Orton Park was formally opened in 1887, Madison did not have a single local park. Credit for starting the park must be given to John George Ott and other Sixth Ward residents who petitioned the Common Council in 1875 to remove the cemetery and who commenced efforts to raise money and improved the park themselves. In 1883 the park was named after Harlow S. Orton, then Supreme Court Justice and former Madison mayor and in 1887 it officially opened with a band concert and not a little breast-beating.

Shortly after the park was opened another luminous event was held there: "Last evening Orton Park presented a beautiful aspect with the hundreds of Chinese lanterns strung from tree to tree. Long before the park was reached, visitors commented upon the appearance and praised the enterprise of the 6th warders in making such a brilliant display. From 2,000 to 3,000 people gathered under the boughs despite the cool atmosphere and all seemed greatly pleased with the free entertainment provided.

"A prominent gentleman remarked as he stepped into the park, 'The push of these sixth warders is not equalled by the people of any other part of the city. It is barely possible that if they set their minds upon it, it would not rest until they had the capitol out here too'."¹

The creation of the park at this period reflects a spirit of municipal improvement that was strong throughout the United States but particularly in the Midwest and in Madison. Realizing the need for open space in a rapidly urbanizing setting, the City of Chicago had created a park system in 1869. Similarly, Madison's east side, the growing industrial section of the city, manifested a need "to give the lungs a bath of pure sunny air, to give the mind a suggestion of rest from the devouring eagerness and intellectual strife of town life..."²

Six years after the creation of the park, municipal improvement intensified as an influential force in the city with the creation of the Madison Municipal Improvement Association and the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association. The latter organization under the leadership of John Olin, took up the cause of creating parklands and drives for the next three decades. By 1911 when the City Board of Park Commissioners was created there were three more parks created by citizen activism.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Durrie, Daniel Steele, A History of Madison...to July 1874, p. 146
 Minutes of the Village Trustees, (Madison), 1846-56.
Wisconsin State Journal, "Madison Past and Present," 1902
Wisconsin State Journal, numerous articles from 1852

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.5
 QUADRANGLE NAME Madison East, Wis., 1959 (PR 1969 & '74) QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	30,77,5,0	4,77,23,3,0	B	1,6	30,76,1,0	4,77,21,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,6	30,75,4,0	4,77,22,6,5	D	1,6	30,76,9,0	4,77,24,0,0
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of Block 180, original Doty Plat, City of Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Leigh H. Mollenhoff, Member

ORGANIZATION
Madison Landmarks Commission

STREET & NUMBER
1501 Morrison Street

CITY OR TOWN
Madison

DATE
March 1, 1977 (Nov. 16, 1978)

TELEPHONE
608/255-2234

STATE
Wisconsin 53703

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Richard Hermy

TITLE **Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin**

DATE **11/21/78**

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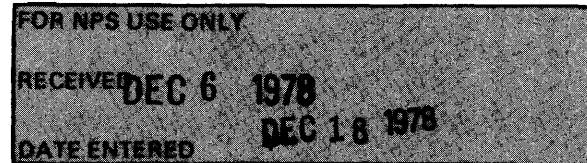
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 ATTEST: *Lucy B. Franklin*
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE **12-18-78**

DATE **12-14-78**

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2. It has been a focal point of neighborhood pride and social life for 90 years. Perhaps no other park in Madison has been defended against so many incursions or out-right attempts to obliterate as Orton. In 1877 the plan was to turn the block into a beer garden, or alternatively, just another residential block. In 1887 a hospital was the cause celebre and in 1924 the construction of a diagonal highway through the park was considered for the convenience of suburban commuters. In each case a spirited and successful defense was made. (See continuation sheets)

Almost from the day the park opened, it has served as a focal point and front yard for neighborhood social life. In the 1880's and early 1890's, regular summer band concerts were held, paid for significantly enough by local residents. During the early years of this century, the Ladies Aid of Pilgrim Church (now the Wil-Mar Center) held frequent and fondly remembered cream sociables on its velvet lawn. More recently the park has served as the site for the neighborhood festival and a weekly farmer's market.

3. It was the Village of Madison Cemetery. Soon after Madison was formally designated a village in 1846, the Trustees purchased Block 180, laid it off into 256 burial lots and viewed this action as a welcomed advance of civilization. As early as 1852 it occurred to the Trustees that a 3.5-acre cemetery would not suffice for a growing village and in 1856 after the city charter went into effect the Common Council selected a new site and began to phase out Block 180.

Since the appearance of the cemetery is conjectural at best, one might assume that its current appearance departs from the original. Presumably the headstones were simple--most of the early stones which were moved to Forest Hill were simple slabs--and the landscape itself was probably a rather simple oak opening to the lake. Only one structure was built on the Promenade (now Rutledge Street) between it and the water. Now the park is enclosed by residential development.

¹Wisconsin State Journal, Madison, August 25, 1887 (emphasis added).

²Frederick Law Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," American Social Science Association; Cambridge, Mass: Riverside Press, 1870. (Reprinted in Civilizing American Cities, Sutton ed., MIT, 1971, p. 78.)

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MARCH 6, 1924.

Citizens Protest Cutting Orton Park for Boulevard; Olin, Brandenburg Object

Drive Would Mutilate Tract,
Well Known Men Declare;
Voters Appear Before
Board

PROTESTING against the proposed plan of building a boulevard driveway through Orton park, a large number of property owners and others interested in that recreation spot appeared before the board of public works at the city hall this afternoon. Frank W. Karstens, chairman of the board, was the only member present, Lawrence Franey wintering in Florida, and Frank W. Lucas being out of the city on business.

John M. Olin, founder of the Madison parks system, in a letter to Mayor I. Milo Kittleson, takes a determined stand against cutting up the park with a roadway. He calls attention to the fact that Orton is the only park Madison had for a long number of years. Mr. Olin argues that it is not necessary to build the driveway for the accommodation of traffic on the ground that more accidents occur on good straight roads than on curved highways. He takes the position that curved streets prevent reckless driving.

"Parks Too Precious"

O. D. Brandenburg, who is vitally interested in the parks and drives, also opposed the proposed improvement in a communication to The State Journal. He maintains that parks are too precious for the public to permit of their abuse in even the slightest particular. Mr. Olin and Mr. Brandenburg are not residents in the area affected by the proposed cut.

John T. Gay, a candidate for alderman in the third ward, promises that if elected he will fight any attempt to build a driveway through the park.

Mr. Olin's letter follows.

"Dear Mr. Kittleson:

"I want to put in my protest against the plan as published of cutting up Orton park. To carry out this suggestion to me would practically destroy this park for any park purposes. I sincerely hope you will take a stand against permitting this sacrilegious use or rather abuse of this beautiful little park. It is very well located for the use of citizens of Madison. The only argument given for the proposition to cut it up is the alleged necessity of changing the line of one of the main streets of the city. The argument used does not commend itself in my judgment. It is to be remembered that this small park is the only park Madison had for a long number of years and was the only park she had at the time we started out to do something in the way of securing and beautifying parks within the city limits. Instead of making out streets and driveways through the parks more easily traveled by the automobiles we should consider the other side of the proposition. It is a fact that more accidents occur on our perfectly good straight highways than occur where the highway is curved which prevents reckless driving of the automobilists. We have already given way too much both as to our streets and as to our drives to accommodate the automobile."

Mr. Brandenburg's letter to the editor of The Journal follows:

"A street through Orton park! What sane citizen possibly can endorse a proposition so absurd? What's the reason? To avoid "dangerous turns." If that's a valid reason, then logically

JUDGE →

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a diagonal cut should be made through every block in all the city. It simply is no valid reason whatever. Orton park exhibits no really dangerous curves. They all are right-angled, it is true, but there are no obstructions to the view at any point. Easy curves simply promote fast and reckless driving, and such driving should not be encouraged. Here is a little park only a single block in area with streets on four sides. These streets afford abundant space for all the traffic that goes that way, or ever is likely to. Distinctly the park should not be invaded. A street through it simply lessens to that extent its usefulness and its safety to children who play, to others who loiter there. If even the most remotely plausible warrant can be suggested for this projected mutilation the public certainly will welcome it. If the plan has the endorsement of any zoning expert, then, it seems to me, all his other suggestions need careful consideration and prospective revision or rejection. In New York exists an organization, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, one of the finest and most useful of its kind in all the world, which constantly is on guard to oppose encroachment upon city parks. It has other missions, too, as its name implies; but any proposal to cut streets through parks or to implant public buildings in them instantly encounters all the splendid and intelligent force which this worthy organization can exert. Has it come to such a pass that we must organize in Madison to save the parks already established? I have no doubt our Park and Pleasure Drive association will take a hand in this matter before it gets very far. Now and hereafter the parks should not be reduced in any manner, either by gridironing them with "boulevards" and pathways or by the introduction of additional edifices except such as may be of the most positive necessity. Little invasions are certain to lead to larger ones,—and every suggestion of this species of vandalism must be met at the very outset by stout, determined resistance. Parks are altogether too precious for us to permit of their abuse in even the slightest particular.

Mr. Gay issued this statement today:

"In reading the article in The State Journal by my old friend, B. B. Clarke, relative to the proposed driveway through Orton park which I believe he has so thoroughly covered, and as a candidate for alderman of the third ward, I want to say that if I am elected I pledge myself to fight this piece of unwarranted movement

to the best of my ability. Our city has been clamoring for years for more parks and places of recreation for the children where they can be safe from the plush-haired youth whose brain is largely in his feet so that he can step on the gas without regard to the safety of his fellows.

"Do these people who propose to do this think that the good people of this third ward are boobs and numbskulls to sit idly by and see this beautiful little open spot, the recreation ground for our children and wives, be desecrated by the stinking odors of gasoline that will satisfy a few speedsters who have no regard for the feelings of others? If they think that we are going to sit idly by and not put up a fight they are very much mistaken in the inhabitants of the third ward. As a resident of this ward, if I am favored by being its representative, I shall use every means in my power to thwart the dastardly plans. I am making this statement now so that my constituents may know exactly where I stand. I am willing and glad to do all I can for a better Madison and do not think that to deprive our kiddies of this oasis is for Madison's best interest when we are clamoring for more parks at this time. I feel it is unjust, unwise and an insult to the good people of the third ward and the people of Madison generally."

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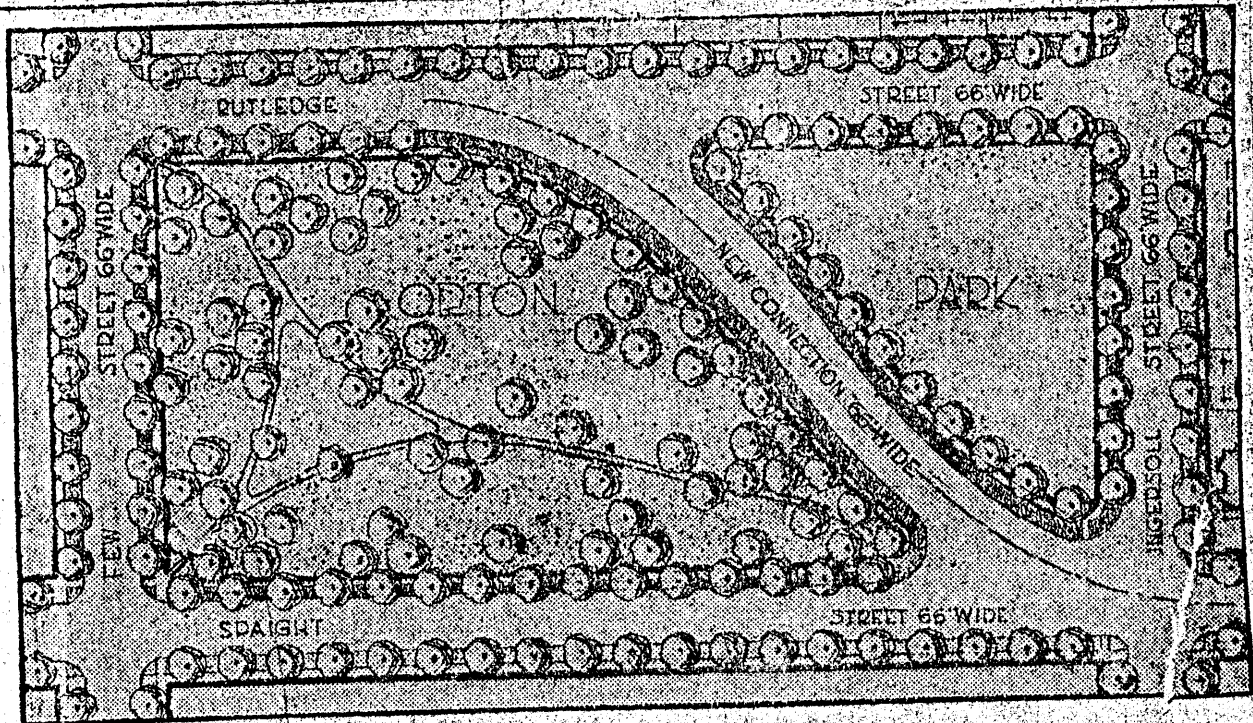
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Proposed Thoroughfare Through Orton Park



The proposed cut through Orton park is shown in the engineer's sketch above. The boulevard would start at the intersection of Spaight and Ingersoll streets and would end a few hundred feet west of the intersection of Rutledge and Few streets.

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MARCH 7, 1924.

WAYS TO AVERT CUTTING THROUGH PARK SUGGESTED

Citizens Protesting Engineering
Project Appear Before Board
Which Hasn't Power
To Act

BY HENRY NOLL

One hundred men and women crowded the common council chamber of the city hall Thursday afternoon in protest to the proposed plan of building a boulevard driveway through Orton park.

The protest was entered during a hearing by the board of public works

Non-Residents Appear

O. D. Brandenburg, although not a resident of the Orton park district, interposed an objection to the invasion of the park system. He urged that erection of buildings or other encroachments in the parks be never permitted.

W. R. Bagley, a former resident on Rutledge street, charged that it would be a shame to destroy the trees and deprive women and children from using the park. He said that the plan to build the drive must have originated with some one who is not interested in Madison. He contended that traffic does not require building of the driveway.

Speaking as a citizen, Mr. Karstens said he believed in building of good roads and boulevards to connect with the parks and he urged that the question be threshed out before the city planning commission at an early date.

Parker Explains Problem

City Engineer E. E. Parker explained that the idea of building the drive originated with Harland K. Bartholomew, who zoned the city. He declared that no attempt was made to "slip anything over" and that to bring the matter to the attention of the citizens he requested the newspapers to print a picture of the proposed plan. Mr. Parker stated that if the interested citizens do not want a drive through the park some other plan should be proposed in order to relieve traffic conditions in that part of the city. He maintained that it is impossible to build a bridge across the river on Spaight street because the street east of the stream does not line up to handle traffic. He said the only solution would be to build a cut-off across the Soelch tract to the Rutledge street bridge, if the Orton park plan is dropped.

Mr. Nickles urged that immediate steps be taken to acquire part of the Soelch tract before the land is platted by the Milwaukee concern. H. E. Nichols, E. F. Appleby and others also opposed building a drive through the park.

Mr. Gallagher also suggested that steps be taken at once to acquire part of the Soelch tract. He said he has been besieged with calls from laboring people in the sixth ward who pleaded that Orton park be left un-

molested so that their children can continue to use the park as a playground without danger that traffic brings with it.

Mr. Karstens urged the sixth ward residents to take the matter up with their aldermen.

Miles C. Riley objected to the improvement of Woodrow street. Mr. Karstens requested that all objections to street improvements and assessments be filed with the board not later than Saturday.