

## Mystery Photo #11

To find the pile of bricks, head south from the building on the limestone road. At the first fork in the road, take a left. At the second fork, veer right. When you see evergreens on the left side of the road, head off road toward them. Walk past the pine and search under the large spruce. You should find several small piles of cream-colored bricks.



With this mystery, I may have stumped myself! When I photographed this pile of bricks several months ago, I was sure that I would be able to say with near certainty where the bricks came from. After all, I had old maps and records at my fingertips with plenty of time to do some research! Here is what I've pieced together along with an invitation for you to add your knowledge.

Early settlers in Wisconsin used what was available to build their first homes. As the first farmers in Milwaukee cleared the forest to plant crops, they saved the best logs to build simple log cabins. The Zautke family that settled in the southeast corner of Havenwoods no doubt did the same. As these early farmers became more settled, they replaced or enlarged their first homes. Additions were usually field stone or wood timbers covered with clapboard or bricks. In the 1830s, bricks were becoming a popular choice, and Milwaukee's early brick makers looked to local clays for their raw materials.

The reddish-colored local clays were deposited during and after the time of the glaciers. These clays contain unusually high concentrations of calcium and magnesium, along with the iron that gives them their reddish color. Those early brick makers were probably very surprised the first time they fired bricks made from this clay.

One would assume that if you put red clay into the fire that you would end up with red bricks. But the bricks were not red, they were cream-colored! Somehow, the high concentrations of calcium and magnesium united with the iron and masked the expected red color.

These locally produced bricks were economical and strong. For the next 70 years, creamy bricks were the primary building bricks for churches, homes, and factories in the area. Over time, the predominance of these light-colored bricks gave the city a unique look and a new name—the Cream City.

By the 1900s, concrete and steel became available and the hey-day of brick making in Milwaukee came to an end. But Cream City bricks are strong and durable, and they are still a part of our landscape. And . . . yes, we must get back to this pile that remains here at Havenwoods.

I was sure that I had a letter from the Zautke family, describing the brick farmhouse that was located on or near the location of this pile of old bricks. I can't find it. I searched old maps. During the 1950s, there was non-commissioned officer housing near this site. Would the Army have adapted an old brick farmhouse for this purpose? If so, why just a few bricks left here? Where are the rest of the bricks? Are these bricks from an old outbuilding? Did they fall off the back of a truck as the building rubble was being hauled away? Were they hiding in a brush pile that has long since rotted and disappeared? As I stated, I fear I have raised more questions than I answered. Can you help solve the mystery?

For more information about brick-making at the turn of the century, read the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey bulletin: ***The Clays and Clay Industries of Wisconsin*** by Ernest Robinson Buckley, Ph. D, written in 1901. Available online at <<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/EcoNatRes.WGB7Econ4>>