

Mystery Photo #13

If you are a frequent hiker at Havenwoods, you have probably stumbled upon or stumbled over your share of concrete! There are old sidewalks, building remains, curbs, sewer tiles, and at least two flagpole foundations.

Last season's mystery photo featured one of these flagpole foundations. To find the concrete structure, set your GPS unit to N 43° 07.740' W 87° 58.118' or go to the northeast corner of the road surrounding the parking lot and then bushwhack east about 55 feet.



When you find the old flagpole foundation, look west. Imagine that you are standing next to the flagpole shown in the photo below. Then close your eyes and imagine the three-story concrete prison buildings directly in front of you. The year is 1917. The Milwaukee County House of Corrections has just opened for business. Inmates, officers, and visitors stream past you as you stand next to the crisp, new flag. Food produced on the prison farm ships out. Supplies are unloaded. It is a busy place.

Fast forward to 1941. It is a few days after Pearl Harbor. The Department of Justice and Immigration Service has just pulled up to the front door. They have rounded up German American citizens,

declaring them "persons of enemy birth or descent." The citizens will be detained here for several months, unable to contact family or friends. It is a secret place.

Now travel to 1945. The US Army has seized the buildings from the County to use as a "Little Leavenworth." Stand at attention as Army vehicles line the roadway in front of you. They carry soldiers sent here to serve time for absence without leave, desertion, and disobedience. As the war winds down, German prisoners of war will join them. It is a secure place.

Jump forward to 1950, the start of the Cold War. You see the secret plans for a Nike missile base delivered. The construction equipment rumbles past. One day, the missiles arrive. It is hard to keep the secret. It is an anxious place.

In 1969, you turn to look around. The Army Reserve no longer needs these buildings or this land. They take down the flag and leave. The buildings are abandoned. It doesn't take long before a steady stream of neighborhood kids find the weak spots in the old buildings. You hear them laughing as they run down the long halls of the cellblocks. It is a dangerous place.

Before you know it, it is 1974. A long line of bulldozers and wrecking machines pull up the drive past the flagpole. When they leave, the land looks forsaken. The buildings are gone: the flagpole is gone. Time will pass slowly now. You should sit down to rest. While you rest, the grass will grow, looking unkempt at first. Eventually some insects, birds, and small mammals arrive. One day, the roadway is removed. A few days later, volunteers plant trees and shrubs nearby. A nature center starts to take shape to the west. It is a wild place.

