

Growing Up Grand: Familiar Places

1960 Terrace Avenue (1913-1917)

This was the house in which Ford and his mother lived from 1913 to 1917. The street name was changed to Prospect in 1920.



716 Madison Avenue (1917-1922)

The Fords lived in this home when “Junior” began attending Madison Elementary School. The home was less than two blocks north of school. In this 1923 photograph, Gerald R. Ford, Jr. (on the left), Carl Engel, Tom Ford, and an unidentified boy pose with their pioneer wagon after winning first prize in the Boys Day Parade. The photograph was taken in the 700 block of Madison, SE.



St. Mark's Episcopal Church (1920s-1930s)

Dorothy and Gerald Ford, Sr. attended St. Mark's Episcopal Church in downtown Grand Rapids for part of their married life. Because of Dorothy's divorce, the church wouldn't allow them to become members. However, they attended regularly. The Church is located at Division Avenue and Pearl Street.



Madison Elementary School (1918-1922; 1923-1925)

"Junior" Ford spent all but one of his elementary years attending Madison Elementary School where he had memories of playing in a gravel playground behind the school, and going home dirty, scraped, and tattered. Another memory he recounted years later was the Firehouse near the school. He recalled. *"...the station house doors would swing open, and the teams of horses would come charging out. The sight was spectacular."*

Later in life, Gerald Ford said, *"There are two kinds of education you get in this world. One you get from others, and another you give yourself."* Family, community, and the Grand Rapids Public Schools, beginning at Madison Elementary School, were key sources for the education President Ford received from others.

630 Rosewood Avenue (1922-1923)

The Ford family purchased this house and lived there until 1923, when they lost the home to foreclosure.



East Elementary School (1922-1923)

Gerald Ford, Jr. attended East elementary School, in East Grand Rapids, MI, for one year.



649 Union Avenue (1923-1930)

In 1923, the bank foreclosed on the Rosewood Avenue house when Ford, Sr. suffered financial setbacks. Dorothy and Gerald Ford moved their family to a rented house at 649 Union Avenue, SE. “Junior” Ford had fond memories of living in this home. In his autobiography Ford recalled some of those memories. *“The house was large and clean and we boys all had chores to do. Between six and six-thirty every morning, I had to remove the ashes from the furnace and put in the day’s supply of coal. Every night, I banked the furnace before going to bed. During the summer I cut the lawn and often had to clean out the garage. All of us had to make our own beds and take turns cleaning up the kitchen and washing the dishes after every meal. No one complained – chores were a matter-of-fact part of everyday life.”* Gerald Ford and his three younger half-brothers began learning the values of hard work and responsibility when they were young. They were also normal boys who enjoyed having fun. *“In the mid 1920s, Grand Rapids was known as a strait-laced, highly conservative town . . . Almost everyone attended church and a strict moral code was scrupulously observed. Like many youngsters my age, I was tempted to defy convention. In the rear of our rented property on Union Avenue stood a two-story garage which resembled a barn. There, a group of us established a social club. We learned to play penny-ante poker and other games. It was a great hideaway because my parents wouldn’t climb the ladder to get to the second floor – or so I thought. My stepfather, however, knew better. He caught us red-handed several times and reprimanded us severely.”*

Trinity Methodist Church (1924-1930)

While United States presidents have a long history of involvement with the Boy Scouts of America, Gerald Ford is the only Eagle Scout to become Vice President and President.

“Junior” Ford joined Boy Scout Troop #15 at Trinity Methodist Church when he was eleven years old. In 1927 he earned the rank of Eagle Scout. *“One of the proudest moments of my life came in the Court of Honor when I was awarded the Eagle Scout badge . . . The three great principles which Scouting provides – self-discipline, teamwork, and moral and patriotic values – are the basic building blocks of leadership.”* As an Eagle Scout, Gerald Ford was selected to serve on Mackinac Island, Michigan with the Governor’s Eagle Scout Guard of Honor.

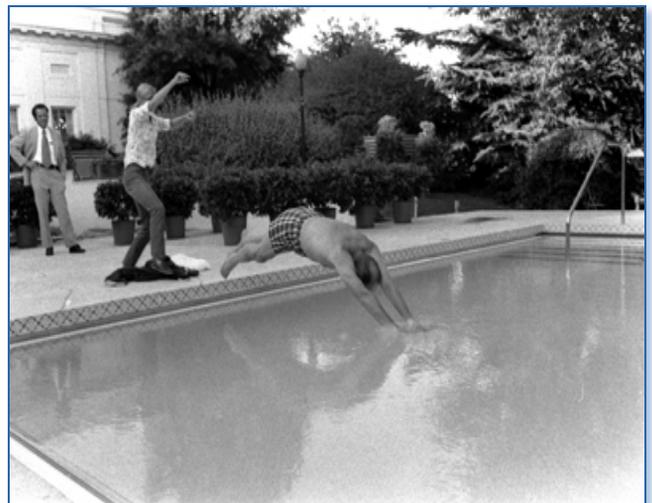
Troop #15, later renamed Troop #215, was established in 1918 and is still active and associated with Trinity United Methodist Church. It includes boys who are 4th generation scouts as well as boys who have gone on to become astronauts, mayors, congressmen, and, of course, President of the United States. More than 90 boys from Troop #215 have earned the rank of Eagle Scout.

“I can say without hesitation, because of Scouting principles, I know I was a better athlete, I was a better naval officer, I was a better Congressman, and I was a better prepared President.”

YMCA

Gerald Ford and “Junior” both swam at the YMCA, located across the street from the Ryerson Library (the older portion of the main branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library). Junior spent time on the Y’s swim team and was able to participate in the Tri-State (Michigan, Ohio, Indiana) meet in Indiana. While President, Gerald Ford had a swimming pool put in at the White House.

Susan Ford “helps” her father as he dives into the White House pool



Houseman Field (1927-1930)

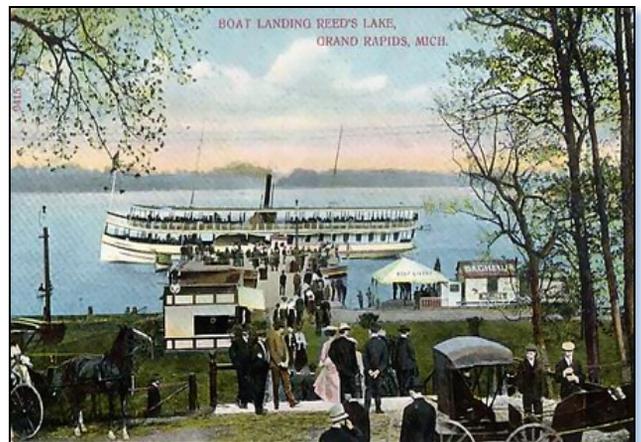
Houseman Field was built in 1908 on land donated by the family of Julius Houseman, Over the course of 100 years, numerous changes have been made including the addition of lights in 1940. Artificial turf replaced grass in 1973 and in 2008 the field and grounds received a major facelift. Houseman Field has been home to numerous high schools, including South High, and Grand Rapids Community College. This was where “Junior” Ford played most of his high school football games

Julius Houseman moved to Grand Rapids in 1852. In addition to his work in the business community, Houseman served in a variety of elected positions. Prior to his election as Mayor of Grand Rapids (1873-1875), he served in the State House of representatives. He went on to serve one term in the United States House of Representatives, from March 1883-March 1885.

Ramona Park (1927-1931)

Ramona Park was built on Reeds Lake, at the end of the streetcar line. It opened in 1897 and remained a popular spot for Grand Rapids residents for almost 60 years. The park had rides, a roller coaster, fun house, miniature train, swimming, boat rides, and more. “Junior” Ford got a job moving food supplies from different eateries around Ramona Park when he was in high school.

Rose’s, a small restaurant, opened adjacent to the park in 1901. The restaurant is remembered for its popcorn by many who grew up in Grand Rapids. When Ramona Park was demolished, the little restaurant remained and was kept in the Rose family for many years.



Ford Paint and Varnish Company (1929 - 1969)

The Ford Paint and Varnish Company was located at the corner of Crosby and Elizabeth Streets in northwest Grand Rapids. Initially, Albert Simpson, of Grand Rapids Wood Furnishing Company, set up the paint and varnish work as a division of that parent company. With Gerald Ford, Sr.'s ability and contacts in sales, and Carl Schumann's skills in chemistry, the venture seemed like a good idea. Later, Simpson decided it would be better for the paint and varnish division to become an independent company. He gave Gerald Ford, Sr. and Carl Schumann the opportunity to raise the money and take it over. The Ford Paint and varnish Company opened in October 1929, the same month as the New York Stock Market crash leading up the Great Depression. The Ford family sold the business in 1969.



Majestic Theatre (1931)

The Majestic Theatre, located at 30 North Division Avenue, opened in November 1903. Twelve year later, in 1915, the Majestic switched from theatre to movies. It continued as a movie theatre for nearly 60 years, with its last movie showing during the summer of 1974. In 1979, the Majestic was converted back to live theatre, becoming the home for Grand Rapids Civic Theatre.

It was during a contest held by the Majestic Theatre that "Junior" Ford was voted the most popular boy in Grand Rapids. He received over 1000 votes. The prize was a trip (young Ford's first of many) to Washington, D.C.

South High School Football Field (1930-1931)

South High School played their home games at Houseman Field, in Grand Rapids' northeast side, until they had a field of their own. Their first home game was against Ottawa Hills in the fall of 1930. "Junior" Ford would graduate from South High in the spring of 1931.



2163 Lake Drive (1930-1933)

The Fords lived on Lake Drive from 1930 to 1933. They probably did not occupy the house that is pictured, but rather the house next door (now demolished).

1011 Santa Cruz Drive (1934-1940)

Dorothy and Gerald Ford, Sr. lived here beginning in 1934.



Grace Episcopal Church (1948-2007)

Gerald Ford, Jr. and Betty Bloomer Warren were married in Grace Episcopal Church on October 15, 1948 and maintained their connections with the Church throughout their lives. Several years after their marriage, the Church moved to its present location at 1815 Hall Street, SE. Gerald Ford's funeral was held at Grace Episcopal Church on January 3, 2007. For an interesting history of Grace Episcopal Church go to:

<http://gracechurchgr.org/index.php>