

## The City Gravel Pit



**Municipal Crusher Plant  
Medford, Wisconsin 1923  
Photo By Duke Studio  
(Taylor County Historical Society)**

The places where children now enjoy playground equipment and hope for an improved ball field was at one time a gravel pit. A melting glacier had left large boulders and many smaller rocks at the edge of the river. These were the source of construction material for many of Medford's early street improvements. The city purchased a stone crusher in May of 1922 and it was working by mid September. The gravel it produced was hauled away from where the ball field is now located. The operation provided employment for numbers of local men.

Native Americans and early settlers got water from springs in the area. The city dug one of its wells nearby and the building for that well is still there. A stream of water ran from the hill to the river. People enjoyed fishing at the place where the stream entered the river. The water table has since changed significantly.

A butternut tree from which people collected many nuts grew in the area. Children picked wild strawberries and gathered wild bittersweet growing nearby. Pussy willows were abundant in the moist environment. The hill next to the gravel pit was cleared of rocks and trees and children enjoyed sledding and skiing down that hill. Part of that location was since replanted with evergreens.

The City Dump was located just east of the gravel pit along what is now Centennial Avenue. Boys enjoyed shooting the rats that infested the garbage. It was possible to find discarded toys that could be repaired and scrap metal that could be used or sold. One boy who searched the dump became seriously ill, possibly because some of the refuse came from the hospital that regularly took its garbage there. People mistakenly believed that the river would flush the refuse away and all would be well.

In the late 1870's, the newspapers still published accounts of Indian ceremonials that occurred around the springs. Where today numerous school buses travel along Billings Ave. just

west of the ballpark, the news in earlier times described wagon accidents and runaway horses resulting from travel on a steep hill and a narrow roadway. As people watch or participate in sports near that location today, it seems hard to imagine the changes that have taken place.

### Sources Used

Photo of Stone Crusher – Taylor County Historical Society

Ray Blakesley Film

A promotional film about Medford commissioned by Medford merchants of that time and local footage taken by Ray Blakesley, a local theater owner.

00-28-33 - 00-29-23                      Stone crusher and crew-----

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FIX FRONT STREET NOW.

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1903-July 24 – Star News  
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Stone crusher laid up for repairs

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1922 - May 4 – Star News  
City buys stone crusher - Put north of city

1922 - September 14, Vol. XLVII, No. 23.  
City stone crusher working