

6# Picnic Point farmhouse

Nearly 75 years ago, on September 4, 1935, hundreds of people gathered at this spot, drawn by a cloud of smoke that billowed across University Bay. They came to watch as firefighters tried to douse the flames of a disastrous fire as it consumed the Picnic Point farmhouse that once stood just a few feet from here.

The farmhouse was built in the 1860's and along with a barn and outbuildings, served several different farm families who ran dairy operations on the Point and nearby fields.

In 1924, the home was purchased by Madison lumberman Edward Young, as a wedding gift for his new wife. Young spent the next three years converting the simple farmhouse into a fifteen-room country estate.

Here, on Sunday afternoons, Madison's prosperous and well-connected would bring their horses to ride the many bridle paths that wound through Picnic Point. Later they would return to the house for food and drinks, relaxing on the broad porch that looked out across the Bay.

Many of the bridle paths Young developed on the Point are today's popular walking trails. Young also constructed the distinctive stone wall that marks the entrance to Picnic Point. And it was Young who planted the extensive apple orchard just to the east of here—now returned to an open grassy field.

Sadly, the Youngs only lived in the house for about eight years before it was destroyed by the fire. And all that remains of the house is the neatly laid brick walkway that led to the home's side porch—just barely visible on the forest floor before you. See if you can find other evidence that offers hints of a long gone Picnic Point Farm.

For more stories about the cultural and natural history of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve check out our website and interactive map. And be sure to look for other audio tour signposts throughout the Preserve. Enjoy!