

Old-Timers Concerned Over Sale of Barnett's Grove, Holiday Sanctuary For Thousands in Old-Fashioned Days

By JOHN DENSON

Barnett's Grove, owned by the F. W. Cook Brewing company and famed for years as a picnic ground, has been sold, the Laughlin company has announced.

"I wonder what they're going to do with it. Back in the old days, when I was young, it was sort of like the swimmin' holes the poems talk about to us. And it was a lovers' paradise too. All the sweethearts used to go on picnics, but this isn't a day of picnics. Not enough 'kick', the youngsters say."

The old-timer settled back into his big chair as he began to talk, and stared into the countless pigeon-holes in his old-fashioned desk. He had been assured that his name wouldn't be used in the paper—and wasn't this a chance to shake the dust from a sweet memory?

Old Timer Hopes for Best

"You know," he continued, "I'd sure hate to see the grove lost as a pleasure park. Years ago thousands and thousands would go there on Saturdays and Sundays and eat their picnic lunches in the shade of the great poplar trees. They're the most beautiful trees I've ever seen. You can't find any like them anywhere near Evansville.

"Why, I've heard a dozen old-timers say that they'd almost rather see the city hall go than those trees. I know a woman who rides by the grove every day and she told me just the other day that she hoped those poplars would always be preserved. And I hope the new owners will do it."

The window of the office was open and across the street someone was singing. It was barely audible but you could hear this:

"In the middle of the night,

"The moon was bright, and by its light,

"I kissed you."

Was Holiday Sanctuary

In a moment it stopped. The old-timer was still talking of the glories of the poplar trees. "There were wonderful moons on the park on the

summer evenings, the bright rays sending tiny shafts of silver through the heavily-leaved trees. Even the sun could hardly intrude on the shade," he said.

"I don't suppose that as many go out to the grove as did in the past. Why many Sundays I've seen two and three thousand people out. Young girls and their beaux talking in some sylvan sanctuary—far from the crowds of picnickers. It was in the rendezvous with beautiful nature at Barnett's, I wouldn't be surprised but that a lot of the romance in Evansville started there.

"Plenty of happy and now, old, couples did most of their wooing and winning in the old grove at the picnic. I don't suppose that there are a hundred people in Evansville who were here 10 years ago that didn't go out to the grove. Every church had its annual picnics there, and scores of organizations. Not as much now, by any means, as then."

There's a mysterious wistfulness that comes when one talks of the past, and many times the old-timer paused to reflect. It was his happy hour, for as it is said "youth does not heed the voice of age as it should."

Community Spirit Aroused

"I'd like to see someone put a lake in the park and make it a permanent park where everyone could go. Maybe, then the canoes for two would attract those who have abandoned it. A year or so ago there were rumors that it would be sold and it affected people who live in the township so much that they planned to buy it and preserve the trees. But this soon died down, and nothing was ever done.

"I'd hate to see it go, but then, this isn't a day of picnics. Not enough 'kick', the youngsters say." Here the old-timer stopped and turned his swivel chair to look out upon a busy street. "No, not enough 'kick' in it now," he repeated, and was silent.

The name of the purchaser was withheld. It is said he is not yet ready to announce plans for the development of the property.