

The Cambridge Foundation - I A Brief History

Adapted from *Cambridge 1990, Community Resources Guide*

In July 1947, during the village's centennial year, a group of 30 community leaders from the Cambridge area formed the Cambridge Foundation, a non-profit organization. By creating it, those leaders intended to offer ". . . a plan to honor the past, a program to build for the future a greater Cambridge, and a plan of action that will make our home and community a better place in which to live." Each of those leaders contributed \$100; and plans were made to sell \$100 charter memberships in the Foundation to others. In addition, the Foundation's organizers encouraged people to include a contribution to the Foundation in their wills.

The idea of creating the Foundation originated with the late Arthur E. Melster after a local woman died leaving a sum of money to a charity located in another state. She had wanted to give a portion of her estate for the benefit of Cambridge-area residents, but had found no appropriate vehicle by which that might be accomplished. So Melster did the necessary research and came up with the idea of a non-profit foundation. He went on to become the first president of the Foundation, and served in that capacity for over 31 years.

In the fall of 1947 residents of the Cambridge area attended a community meeting in which they listed the types of community improvements they wished to have. The Foundation, guided by a board of directors chosen at that meeting, then selected the particular projects to be financed, as a whole or in part. One of the first projects was in making a number of improvements at Ripley Park, an 18-acre park on Lake Ripley owned by the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, and which had been donated to the Foundation soon after its organization. During the next five years the Foundation spent over \$20,000 in making those improvements.



The Foundation also played a role in the improvements made in the late 1950's to Cambridge's West Side Park, which included the creation of a lagoon that is used as a community ice-skating rink. During that same period the Dane County Park Commission approached the Foundation for assistance in creating a county park along Koshkonong Creek between Cambridge and Rockdale. Foundation representatives persuaded farmers in the projected park area to sell portions of their farm-land for that purpose. By 1960 nearly 300 acres had been acquired, and Cam-Rock County Park was established.

In 1975 the Foundation purchased the land, building, equipment, and supplies of the Cambridge Clinic upon the departure of the then local physician, and was instrumental in bringing another physician to town, who purchased the clinic property.

Other major projects of the Foundation have included funding in 1985 of one-half the cost of the Cambridge Area Fire and Emergency Medical Services Building; funding part of the cost of the Lake Ripley Reclamation Project; and funding the entire cost of the Amundson Community Center, completed in 1990, which houses village offices, a public library, and spacious meeting rooms. The Foundation also contributes annually to the Cambridge Community Library, and to the local public access cable television system.

Funds available to the Foundation increased significantly after the deaths of Alvin R. Amundson in 1976, and of his wife Irene in 1979. Amundson had been a local banker, community leader, and a Foundation director for many years. Her estate went directly to the Foundation; and the bulk of his estate was placed in a trust under which the trust income is to be expended at the direction of the Foundation.

The Cambridge Foundation - II An Appeal

By Donald F. Rumpf, Attorney and current president of the Foundation.

Fifty years ago, in 1947, they had a dream.

"They" were 30 men of the Cambridge community who cared about our community; and the dream became a reality!

Those 30 men were the creators of the Cambridge Foundation. That Foundation became the vehicle by which individuals could thereafter make gifts to our community during their lifetimes, or by their wills after their lifetimes.

Such gifts could be for charitable, municipal, or school purposes in the Cambridge community area (an area which has come to be understood to be the same as the area of the Cambridge School District).

The initial members of the Foundation contributed money to it as a basis for its beginning operations. The first large contribution to the Foundation was from the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of making improvements to a park at Lake Ripley, and assuring that it would be and remain a public park. In retrospect that gift has been one of the finest and the most foresighted for our community.

What if that property had gone into private hands? How else could there be any significant enjoyment of Lake Ripley by the public?

The Foundation is a means and a vehicle for retaining funds and assets in our community, so please consider making **your own tax-deductible donation** to the Foundation, with your instructions on how you want the income from your donation to be used for our community. Yes, it would be a donation that would be fully deductible on your federal income tax return.

Gifts you make to national organizations are fine, but you can receive the same tax benefits by making your donations to the Foundation; and if you do, you can also see, during your lifetime, the benefits to our community from the income of your donation. And, you will have the assurance that the principal of your donation will remain here forever for the benefit of our community.

Here are some of the projects financed in whole or in part by the Foundation, and the respective amounts contributed:

Community Fire Commission	\$225,000
Community schools	168,000
Amundson Community Center	901,000
Village projects & Center maintenance	219,000
Rockdale Village Building	12,500
Townships	20,000
Boy & Girl Scouts	10,000
Oakland Conservation Club	7,100
London Community Center & London Bridges	13,500
Cambridge Library	27,000
Miscellaneous charitable & other groups	22,000
Ripley Park	25,000

Total \$1,650,100

Yes, those dollars not only stayed in the Cambridge community, but in most cases they were dollars that would otherwise have come from the pockets of taxpayers!

Members of the Foundation devote numerous donated hours in caring for Ripley Park, the schools, and the village, with only one thing in mind: Keeping the Cambridge Community as a wonderful place to live!

Members of the Foundation wish to remind you that every penny you donate to the Foundation stays in the Cambridge community forever, and will go to make the community a better place to call home, whether your home here is year-around, or for the summer months.

The Foundation cannot make gifts to individuals. To be eligible for a grant one must be a school, a municipality, or an entity qualified as a charitable organization by the Internal Revenue Service. If you have any questions please feel free to write to the Foundation at P. O. Box 1, Cambridge, WI 53523.

The good that the Foundation has done for our community, and its benefits to local taxpayers, becomes obvious from the following few examples of the many gifts and bequests to the Foundation, and the use to which they were put:

1. A bequest of money under the will of Martha Johnson, in memory of the Johnson family, was used to purchase the Cambridge Clinic property. It was the basis for securing and keeping a physician in our community.
2. Five acres of land in the Town of Oakland was secured for the use of Scouting in our community, for as long as there is an active Scout troop in our community.
3. Alvin R. Amundson, an avid believer in the Cambridge community, created the A. R. Amundson Charitable Trust under his last will and testament. Income from trust investments must be spent every year, and the Foundation distributes that income. That income provided most of the funds to construct the Fire Department building, one of the finest in the State of Wisconsin for a

community of our size. And the Amundson Community Center stands as a memorial to Alvin and Irene Amundson, since \$900,000 of its construction costs came from the Amundson Charitable Trust.

4. There have been numerous donations to the Foundation, ranging in size from \$5 to \$10,000, left under wills, and by direct donations and memorial gifts. Those funds are used for tree planting programs, Lake Ripley Park improvements, and for other projects that benefit our community.

5. The latest large gift to the Foundation consisted of a home on Lake Ripley and 3,000 shares of the common stock of an Illinois utility. That gift from the Prante-Hoven family is to be used for needs at Lake Ripley, and/or for the Cambridge schools.

During its life the Foundation has functioned for one purpose only: "To better the Cambridge community." Members of the Foundation are not paid; and they all serve and act in all capacities without charge. (Actually, each member of the Board of Directors is required to contribute \$20 annually to help to pay insurance costs.)

Here are the names of the original 30 members of the Foundation:

Alvin R. Amundson
Karl K. Amundson
Willard M. Anderson
Ernest Behrens
Gunerius E. Bilstad
Herbert Birk
Gordon W. Crump
E. W. Davidson
Gordon T. Dingleline
Einar Evenson
Earl Heberlein
Arthur M. Iverson
J. Lester Jarlsberg
Harlan A. Kampstad
Ludvig A. Kravik
Allen T. Lee

Harry G. May
Arthur E. Melster
Harvey A. Melster
Earl H. Munson
Orlando H. Perry
Lawrence C. Porter
Don Prescott
George Prochnow
Leslie H. Punsel
Oscar H. Severson
Jeruel H. Simonsen
William B. Solyom
George L. Wahl
Garvin J. Wallace

With three exceptions, all of these men have passed on. Still with us are J. Lester Jarlsberg, George Prochnow, and Leslie H. Punsel.

They will all be remembered for their foresight, public spiritedness, and courage in creating the Cambridge Foundation.



Foundation funds for the West Side Park
L to R: Ed Swain, Grant Bilstad, Neal Smithback, Dr. Karl Amundson, Don Rumpf, Art Melster, A. R. Amundson
Photo: Jeffrey Wrolstad