As a youth, Les Paul performed many times in what is now Cutler Park’s Les Paul Performance Center, 321 Wisconsin Avenue. At about 11 years old, while sitting on an Indian mound in the park he learned about crystal radios from a friend. Les quickly built his own radio.

Les attended Waukesha Junior High School and Waukesha High School. The two buildings are now connected and known as Les Paul Middle School—Central Campus. The historic names are on the buildings. Look for the junior high sign on Maple Avenue and for the high school sign on Grand Avenue.

Les' family moved to 320 St. Paul Avenue when he was two years old. At about 8 years old, Les received his first harmonica from a worker digging a ditch in his neighborhood. The home no longer exists.

Les created his first solid body electric guitar with a 2-foot piece of discarded train rail that he and friends found under the Wisconsin Avenue bridge that crosses the Fox River.

Les' father, George, was part owner of the car dealership, The Polfuss-Hins Motor Co. at 456 W. Main Street. The building is gone.

George Polfuss was proprietor of Waukesha’s Schlitz Hotel, 294 W. Main St. from 1918 to 1919. The building now houses a restaurant and apartments.

Les often rode his bicycle down Main Street. He bought his first microphone at a shop located at Waukesha's Five Points.

To promote his car dealership, George Polfuss drove his car around Waukesha, often with son Lester in the front seat. The rides frequently ended at Goff's Restaurant, 800 Clinton Street, for lemon meringue pie. A restaurant is still on the site.

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Lester William Polsfuss (Les Paul) attended Park Elementary School, which is now an office building at 210 NW Barstow.

Lester was born June 9, 1915, at 109 North Street in an apartment over his father’s repair garage (now Walgreen’s parking lot.)

Les attended Waukesha Junior High School and Waukesha High School. The two buildings are now connected and known as Les Paul Middle School—Central Campus. The historic names are on the buildings. Look for the junior high sign on Maple Avenue and for the high school sign on Grand Avenue.
Look throughout downtown Waukesha for murals about Les Paul and Waukesha.

Although famous for his role in developing the solid body electric guitar, Les Paul also developed and popularized many recording techniques such as: tape delay, reverb, close miking, echo, sound-on-sound and phase shifting, that are used daily by today’s rock stars.

The Wizard of Waukesha performed every Monday to sold out New York crowds until a few months before his death in 2009.

Les’ last name has been spelled several ways, but he never legally changed his name from Lester Polsfuss.

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14 When Les’ father and brother, George and Ralph Polsfuss, bought Waukesha’s Club 400 at 322 Williams Street, they designed the bar in the shape of a guitar, which still can be seen. The Club 400 is where Les and his wife Mary Ford played their guitars together in public for the first time.

15 Les Paul chose to be buried in Waukesha next to his mother at Prairie Home Cemetery, 605 S. Prairie Ave. Les wanted seats for visitors. The memorial includes his biography. Les’ father, stepmother and other relatives are buried in this cemetery.

16 EXHIBIT — The Les Paul House of Sound at Discovery World, 500 N. Harbor Drive, Milwaukee shows Les Paul’s Wisconsin beginnings to his world travels, innovating and experimenting at every stop. Explore creativity, experimentation, historic guitars, inventions, songs and the future to find the Les Paul in you. discoveryworld.org, 414-769-9966

1 As a teen, Les played his acoustic guitar and harmonica at Beekman’s Bar-B-Q, a drive-in restaurant that stood at Hwy 18 & I-94, current site of Goerke’s Corners’ Park & Ride. To earn more tips Les created a way to amplify his voice and harmonica and electrify his guitar. These were major steps.

2 Les Paul Parkway starts at East Moreland Blvd. and Hwy 164 which becomes Hwy 59 as it loops around the east and south sides of Waukesha. Les enjoyed riding on “his” road.

3 EXHIBIT — Artifacts and videos bring Les Paul’s story to life at the Waukesha County Museum, 101 W. Main Street. waukeshacountymuseum.org 262-521-2859

Museum temporarily closed.

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Les Paul
The Wizard of Waukesha

June 9, 1915 — August 12, 2009

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