

Prairie dock



Big Bluestem

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

FALL 1982

What to look for - on a tour of the Prairie Path between Hill Avenue in Wheaton and Prospect Street in Glen Ellyn. This is a thirty minute walk one way and a good example of the Path's varied scenery plus one of it's best prairie remnants. City parking lots are at both ends.

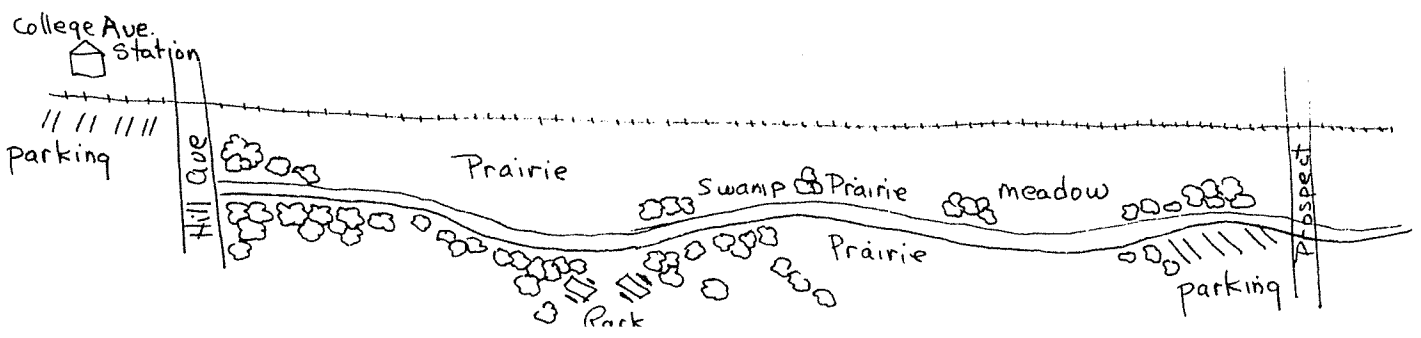
Starting at Hill Avenue and proceeding east the Path is bordered by the usual thicket of box elder, cottonwood, maple, elm and ash trees with burdock, ragweed, and wild grape vines tangled under them. Soon comes an opening to the railroad track where a rich prairie grows as it had for hundreds of years. It is most colorful now in early fall with pink blazing stars, yellow coneflowers, rosinweed and tall prairie dock, white wild quinine and euphorbia and tall big bluestem grass.

Next comes another thicket with sumac, honeysuckle, and soft maple. Thistles, dogbane with its long seed pods, asters, and goldenrod are mixed with woodbine turning red, a park with picnic benches lies on the south side of the Path and through the trees on the north side can be seen the prairie with fine stands of grasses. Here on the edge of the Path is teasel, a tall stickery plant from Europe seen more and more often in DuPage County.

Along the railroad the land drops down and becomes quite a swamp. Then both sides open up and prairie plants pink blazing star and yellow coneflower and rosin weed are seen although Queen Anne's lace and blue wild chicory line the edge of the gravel.

Tall candelabras of mullein and several large fruited crabapples are on the north side of the Path. A grove of silver poplars are on either end of the large meadow created by the train wreck several years ago. A mountain ash with bright orange berries grows by the Glen Storage and the borders of the Path are yellow with goldenrod and blue with asters.

Watch for goldfinches enjoying the thistle seed, robins and blue jays eating the berries and listen to the wrens still singing in the neighborhood yards. Enjoy your walk.



SIERRA CLUB WORKATHON TO IMPROVE PATH

On July 13, Mike Quigley, Conservation Chair, DuPage County Sierra Club, notified the Prairie Path Board that the Path had been selected as the site for a new type of fundraising event called a Workathon. He explained that volunteer workers will solicit contributions from conservation-minded citizens according to the number of hours worked on Path improvements. The Workathon will be held on Saturday and Sunday, September 25 and 26. There will be no rain dates. Participants will be divided into teams of fifteen and will work on projects approved and monitored by the Prairie Path Board.

According to Quigley, the money raised by the Workathon will benefit the re-election campaign of Rep. J. Glenn Schneider, District 41, who has been honored by the Illinois Environmental Council with four consecutive voting awards as one of the best environmental legislators of the year.

Path President Paul Mooring stated that the Board is delighted to have the Sierra Club help in this way to improve the Path for the general public. Only once before in the 16-year history of the Path has a civic or charitable organization offered to work on the Path in connection with a fundraiser, though several have made voluntary financial donations as their way of saying thank-you to our unpaid volunteers. Mooring added that, while the Prairie Path as an Illinois not-for-profit corporation does not endorse political candidates or parties, the Board wishes to commend Rep. Schneider and the Sierra Club for developing such an excellent fundraising plan.

For further information about the Workathon call Mike Quigley, 961-2123, evenings, or Sandi Crews, 653-0907, days.

FOURTH OF JULY FLOAT

This year for the first time The Illinois Prairie Path had a float in a Fourth of July parade. The theme of Glen Ellyn's parade was made to order for the Path: "A Salute to America's Volunteers". Accordingly, signs on the front and sides of the float read "The Illinois Prairie Path, VOLUNTEERS since 1966, Building a Trail for PEOPLE". The float, designed by Jean Mooring, was a mini-trail on wheels (Phil Hodge's Subaru pickup). A slipcover of green burlap covered the car, with a two-foot-wide path of oatmeal-colored monk's cloth running front to back over the top of the car. A box elder tree grew out of the right window and a daylily plant mimicked a shrub on the left front fender. A cardinal perched on the antenna and a baby rabbit sat under the bush while colorful if fake flowers sprouted here and there from the burlap. In the back of the pickup volunteers Bob Hargis, Jean Mooring, and Lisa Hodge were busily building the trail—nailing a Prairie Path sign to a tall wooden post, shovelling limestone screenings onto the trail, and sawing wooden timbers for steps on the tailgate. Following on foot were two Girl Scouts with plastic bags picking up trash and behind them a multitude of Path users: a birdwatcher (Paul Mooring), a man walking his dog (James Linhart of Lombard and Buffy, his big, beautiful collie), a jogger (marathon runner and professional calligrapher Susan Terwedow, who also made the signs for the float), several bike riders including Board member John Kacich and Glenbard West biology teacher and prairie buff George Zahrobky, and finally the six members of the Wayne Township Prairie Path Mounted Patrol in full uniform, followed by two young clowns with a pooper-scooper. Said Jean later, "It was fun; we got so much applause maybe we should do it again next year!"

MAY WATTS WOULD BE PLEASED

The Prairie Path Board has received the following letter, written to Helen Turner, Path Co-Founder, now living in North Carolina. Helen sent it to Liz Holmes, longtime Path Corresponding Secretary, who lives in Wisconsin; and Liz passed it along to us. The letter, dated April 25, 1982, is from Erica Watts, daughter of May Theilgaard Watts, who originated the idea of the Prairie Path. She writes:

Dear Helen,

Last Sunday I went to visit a friend in Wheaton and we had a good time birding in Cantigny. Then we walked part of the Prairie Path. You will be pleased to know that it was really lovely—no litter and a good smooth gravel surface for the bicycles. There were an amazing number of people on the path enjoying our first really spring-like day. I'm glad that long cold winter is over. . .

This letter warms our hearts and we thank Ricky Watts for writing it and Helen and Liz for sharing it with us. It is fitting that Mrs. Watts' daughter should be one of the many who now can enjoy the Path which was her mother's dream.

“HAPPY-GO-LUCKERS” EXPLORE TRAIL

Seventeen women Prairie Path fans from central DuPage County have developed a remarkable routine for enjoying the Path year round. Every Saturday morning during the summer, rain or shine, several of the group gather at the home of one of their members, usually Esther Edwards of Wheaton, and then sally forth for a hike on the Path, including a stop for breakfast along the way. In the winter the plan is the same but the time is later and the stop is for lunch. These adventure-loving women have hiked most sections of the Path and have worked out some favorite routes. Recommended hikes and convenient restaurants include these round trips:

Kenyon Road to Elgin. Eat at Tower Restaurant.

Prince Crossing or Army Trail Road to Rte. 59. St. Andrews Country Club.

Lincoln to Glen Ellyn. Breakfast at Tiffany's, Track 29, or Glen Oak Restaurant.

Arbor to Herrick Road or Winfield Road through St. James Farm to Herrick Road. Butterfield Rd. to Arrowhead Country Club.

Winfield Road to Rte. 59 or Eola Road to Rte. 59. Oakwood Castle Restaurant.

The group hopes to have a more complete list available for distribution to dedicated Path users later this fall.

REPORTS ON SPRING ACTIVITIES

The bird walk on May 15, led by Paul Mooring, at Pratts Wayne Woods, produced sightings of two yellow-headed blackbirds which are very rare in DuPage County. Other species seen included bobolinks, a yellow-throated vireo, northern orioles, and a scarlet tanager. The fifteen participants also enjoyed a good view of the new beaver dam on the Prairie Path right-of-way north of Powis Road. The dam had created a large shallow lake in the adjacent forest preserve—a wonderful habitat for marsh birds. Returning to the parking lot, the group took a short cut and all waded through a small stream. Very refreshing on a hot day!

Six bicyclists, four of whom were Board members, turned out for the May 22 bike ride to inspect the Batavia Spur. Though the skies were cloudy, no rain fell and everyone had a good time. Noted with appreciation along the way were the curb cuts at Center Street, done the previous week by the Wheaton Public Works Department. Other improvements appeared in Warrenville, where the newly-formed Warrenville Jaycees were in the process of filling low spots and grading the approach to the bridge over the West Branch of the DuPage River as the six passed by.

On the negative side we must report that the Aurora Branch is temporarily cut by an industrial access road under construction between Diehl Road and Frontenac, forcing a detour along Diehl. It is even more disappointing to observe that the Batavia Spur in Kane County between Butterfield Road and Kirk Road, surfaced only last year by the Kane County Forest Preserve District, is now closed until a title settlement can be reached with the adjoining landowner. The man has emphasized his claim by bulldozing eleven trenches and felling five large trees across the new trail.

Because of complaints about the condition of the horse trail at St. James Farm, the site of the June 12 work day was changed to the farm. Six Board members, Bob Hargis, Phil Hodge, Dan McGrath, Jean and Paul Mooring, and Dick Wilson, plus Nancy Wilson, spent a strenuous morning cutting trees to widen the trail and grubbing out stumps on the section south of Butterfield Road. Three hardy souls, Bob, Jean, and Phil, returned on subsequent weekends to cut more brush and widen the trail north of Butterfield undeterred by such misfortunes as a pouring rain, a broken chain saw, an encounter with the Sheriff's police (we gave them Prairie Path maps and membership application forms), and a nasty saw-inflicted gash on the knee. At least nobody came down with poison ivy. As a result of all this effort on the part of the Prairie Path with the welcome assistance of the Warrenville Horse and Pony Club, the St. James horse trail can now serve as the model for horse trails to be built elsewhere on the Path.

Dick Wilson reports that the June 6 hike on the Elgin Branch in Kane County attracted 20 persons on a beautiful, warm day. All had a chance to see the new crossing at Rte. 25 and to tour the Model Railroad Museum at Kenyon Road.

Larry Sheaffer led the prairie wildflower walk on July 11 at the Wheaton prairie remnants near Hoffman Park. Hundreds of purple coneflower, blue spiderwort, yellow blackeyed susan, white wild quinine and flowering spurge plus budding prairie dock, rattlesnake master, and blazing star made the prairie a colorful tapestry and repaid Larry and his helpers for their four years of restoration work.

The bike ride on July 18, an 18-mile round trip from York Road and the Path in Elmhurst to Glen Ellyn, was led by Dick Diebold. According to all reports, the highlight of the excursion was a tour of the prize-winning garden at the Glen Ellyn home of Dick's father, Richard Deibold, Sr., longtime member of the Villa Park Men's Garden Club.

BOARD CHANGES

The Board has accepted with regret the resignation of Rik Alex, recently transferred to the Tucson office of the U.S. Home Co. We will miss his good advice and helpful spirit as well as his trusty power shovel. Good luck, Rik, and thanks!

Replacing Rik is another horseman, Jerry Martin of West Chicago, ex-farmer and just-retired terminal manager for the New Ulm Freight Lines, who also has experience raising registered Arabian horses. He is currently executive director of the Wayne Township Mounted Patrol.

FALL ACTIVITIES, Rain or shine

- Saturday, Sept. 11 to Sunday, Sept. 12 - **Bike Ride and Overnight Campout.** Meet at 9:00 a.m., Ardmore Ave. station, Villa Park (#7 on map). 60-mile round trip to Fabyan Woods Forest Preserve in Kane County. Return Sunday, 2:00 p.m. Leader: Phil Hodge, 627-7362.
- Saturday, Sept. 25 and Sunday, Sept. 26 - **Sierra Club Workathon.** Call Mike Quigley, 961-2123, evenings; Sandi Crews, 653-0907, days; or Jean Mooring, 469-4289
- Sunday, October 24 - **Fall Hike.** Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Ardmore station, Villa Park. Walk to Lombard Commons and return—5 mile round trip. Bring lunch and beverage. Leader: Dick Wilson, 299-7882.
- Thursday, Oct. 28 (Rain date, Oct. 29) - **Spook Walk Fundraiser.** Second annual scary, supervised family spook walk on the Prairie Path, two blocks. Meet at 7:00 p.m., Montclair Ave. and the Path, Glen Ellyn. Fee: \$1.00 each or \$2.00 per family. Leader: Dick Diebold, 469-6465.
- Sunday, Nov. 7 - **Annual Meeting.** 2:00 p.m. at the DUPAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM, 102 E. Wesley, Wheaton. Our principal speaker will be Jeannette Fitzwilliams, President of the National Trails Council and longtime active member of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and the Virginia Trails Association. Since 1951 this dynamic woman has maintained a ten-mile stretch of the Appalachian Trail in the Shenandoah National Park and for seven years was also the PATC overseer for 35 miles of trail in the Monongahela National Forest. She will speak about challenges facing the trails community and what we can do about it.

PRINCE CROSSING TO RTE. 59 RESURFACING

The Path Board has just completed a major improvement for this year: resurfacing 1.7 miles of trail from 500 ft. east of Prince Crossing to Rte. 59, plus 300 ft. east of Pleasant Hill Road. The work was done by Pete Nelson Trucking of South Elgin. Areas with drainage problems were filled with 3-inch crushed limestone and covered with an intermediate crushed rock, grade 8; then the whole section received a top dressing of limestone screenings. Total cost of \$15,387.65 included 1771.4 tons of stone plus a power shovel with grader blade for four days and a Layton box asphalt spreader for three days. In spite of intermittent heavy rains, dense undergrowth and clouds of mosquitoes the last two days, the project went quite smoothly, according to Jean Mooring, who supervised it for the Board. Only one truck got stuck and it was pulled out by another truck, without having to call for a tow.

— Jean C. Mooring, Editor —

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DATED MATERIAL

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