

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

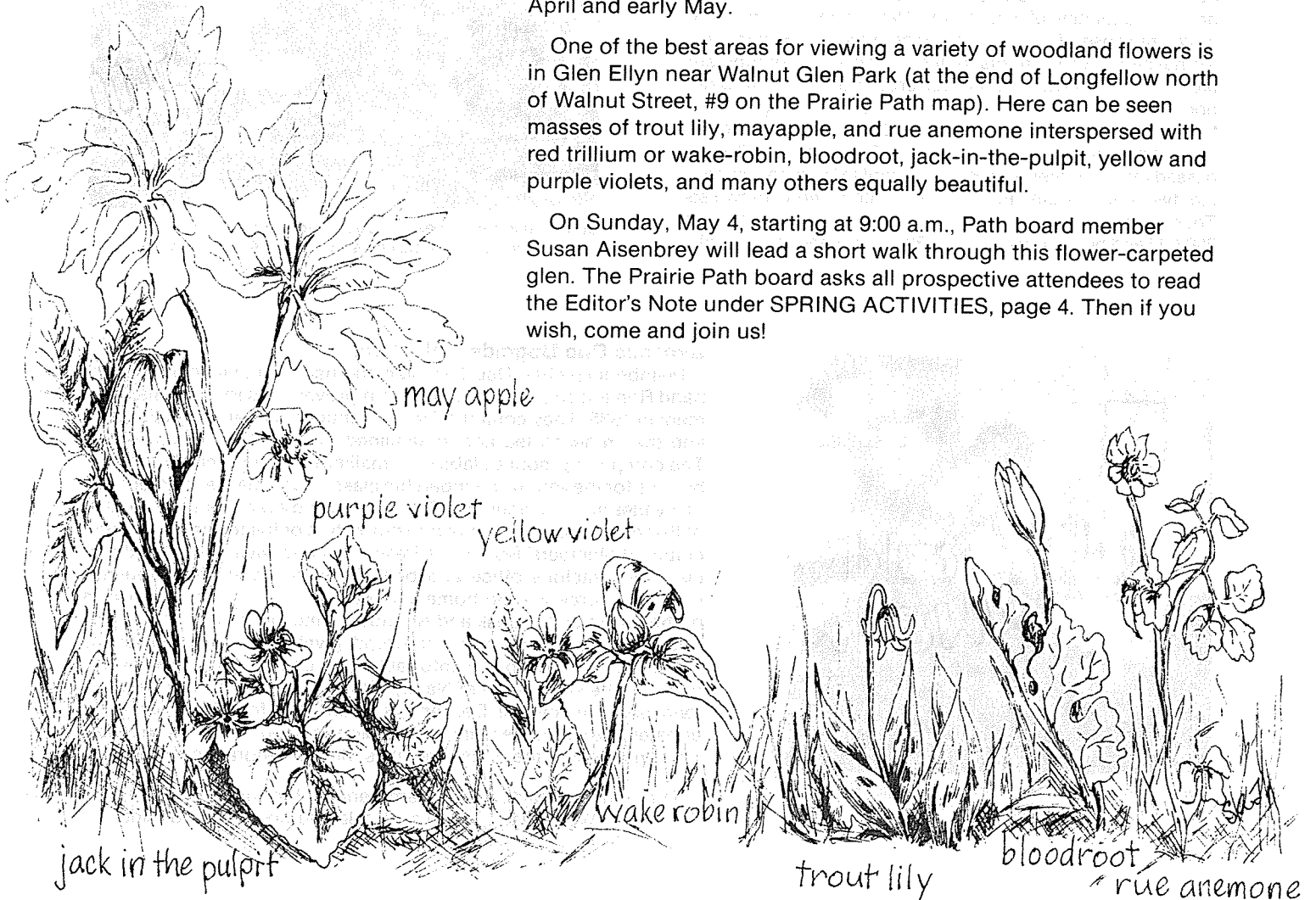
SPRING 1986

WHAT TO LOOK FOR - Woodland wildflowers

Spring is the season for wildflowers in the deciduous woods along the Prairie Path. These plants must bloom quickly and set seed, generally by the end of May, before the oaks and maples leaf out and form a dense shade. Therefore, the best time to see them is late April and early May.

One of the best areas for viewing a variety of woodland flowers is in Glen Ellyn near Walnut Glen Park (at the end of Longfellow north of Walnut Street, #9 on the Prairie Path map). Here can be seen masses of trout lily, mayapple, and rue anemone interspersed with red trillium or wake-robin, bloodroot, jack-in-the-pulpit, yellow and purple violets, and many others equally beautiful.

On Sunday, May 4, starting at 9:00 a.m., Path board member Susan Aisenbrey will lead a short walk through this flower-carpeted glen. The Prairie Path board asks all prospective attendees to read the Editor's Note under SPRING ACTIVITIES, page 4. Then if you wish, come and join us!



Prairie Path Loses Insurance and Lease

On January 17, 1986, members of the Prairie Path board of directors hand-delivered a letter signed by Paul Mooring, President, to Jack Knuepfer, Chairman of the DuPage County Board, stating that the Path's liability insurance expired on the 17th and would not be renewed. The Path would thus be in breach of its lease with DuPage County. Therefore the board had voted in emergency session to cease managing the trail immediately and turn this responsibility over to the County until such time as insurance coverage might be restored or other arrangements might be made. On January 28 the DuPage County Board responded by voting to terminate the Prairie Path lease "by mutual agreement", as recommended by the State's Attorney.

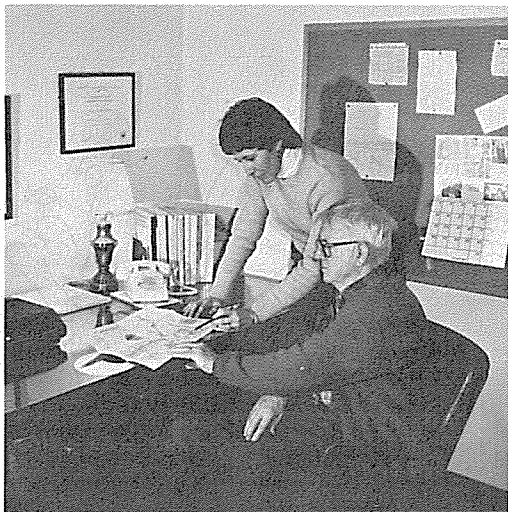
What does all this mean for the Prairie Path? The not-for-profit corporation called The Illinois Prairie Path will continue, according to the terms of its charter, promoting education and conservation for the benefit of the public through its office in Wheaton and its **Newsletter**, and working to establish footpaths and trails. (We are currently negotiating a lease with the Illinois Department of Conservation for 4½ miles of trail in Cook County on State-owned land, where it is remotely possible that the Prairie Path may be covered by State of Illinois self-insurance.) In DuPage County, however, the Prairie Path organization will no longer be recruiting volunteers or paying contractors to maintain the trail, although the hundreds of thousands of walkers, joggers and bicycle riders will continue to use the Path because it is public property. Maintenance will be the exclusive responsibility of the County and the municipalities through which the Path passes until either: 1) The Prairie Path obtains its own liability insurance so that the lease can be reinstated, or 2) DuPage County provides coverage through self-insurance, secures easements where necessary to guarantee continuity, and draws up a new agreement whereby volunteers will work directly for the County on trail maintenance. The Illinois General Assembly and Congress may also have to act to limit insurance carriers' risk so that they can afford to write this type of insurance.

Results of New Usage Survey

On several days during the month of August, 1985, teams of Prairie Path volunteers or DuPage County Highway Department employees counted Path users passing checkpoints at four different locations along the trail (Ardmore Station, Villa Park; Volunteer Bridge, Wheaton; City Hall, Warrenville; and Geneva Road, Winfield). Many users filled out survey sheets and answered questions about their age group, frequency of use of the Path, preferred mode of travel, purpose of trip, and distance travelled. Suggestions for needed improvements included uneven or bumpy surface, path too narrow, hazardous crossings, standing water, poor signing, and lack of amenities. Heaviest usage was on the main stem between Elmhurst and Wheaton. One beautiful Sunday between 5:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., 1669 users passed the Volunteer Bridge checkpoint in Wheaton, averaging two per minute! Eighty-five percent were bicyclists. These results back up our earlier estimates of at least 200,000 and perhaps as many as 300,000 user-trips annually.



Susan Aisenbrey (seated) and daughter Cathy interview cyclist during usage survey at Ardmore Avenue station.



Dee Tevonian confers with office manager Ray Nelson in refurbished Members' Room.

Dynamic Duo Upgrade Path Office

Membership chair Dee Tevonian and her electrical engineer husband Ron accomplished two major improvements for Path management in 1985: They computerized the entire membership mailing list and they redecorated and streamlined the Members' Room office. The computer produces labels for mailings, provides easily accessible files for the various membership classes, and makes maintenance of the files more businesslike. The second and even more spectacular of these achievements is the transformation of the formerly drab and cluttered Members' Room to a freshly-painted, well-lighted and efficient yet gracious office and board meeting room. Nice touches include natural-colored homespun cafe curtains at the windows, a pothos plant on the desk and Audubon prints on the off-white walls. The original oak floor, now uncovered, gives warmth to the room as do the inexpensive but comfortable new chairs, purchased by the board at the suggestion of Nancy Hesler. No more backaches after long board meetings! Dee and Ron and the four Tevonian sons donated the labor, the paint, the curtains, new light fixtures and table tops and most of the other amenities for this decorating miracle.

The grateful Prairie Path board sends a big thank-you to all the Tevonians. We're glad to have such talented people on our side!