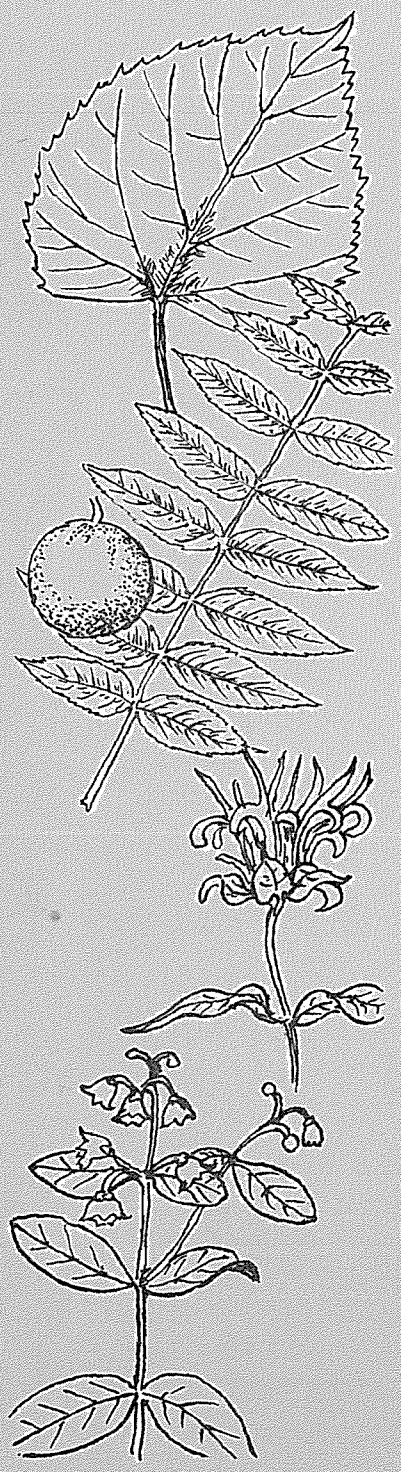
ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER
Summer 1970

WHAT TO SEE

Two hundred years ago this land belonged to the Indians. They knew the plants that grew along their foot-paths, plants that are common along our Path today. To the Indians these trees and flowers were life necessities. You too know which ones are good to eat . . . berries and other fruits and nuts; but could you make a length of rope, a bag or basket, sew a fine seam, or construct a shelter from our path-side plants?



LINDEN OR BASSWOOD. The tough inner bark of young shoots was used for rope, bags and baskets.

WHITE OAK. Acorns were cracked, washed for several days, dried, ground into meal. Mixed with bear grease and baked, they were a staple food.

BLACK WALNUT. The nuts were an important food. The hulls were boiled to make a sun-fast, dark brown dye. It did not need to be "fixed".

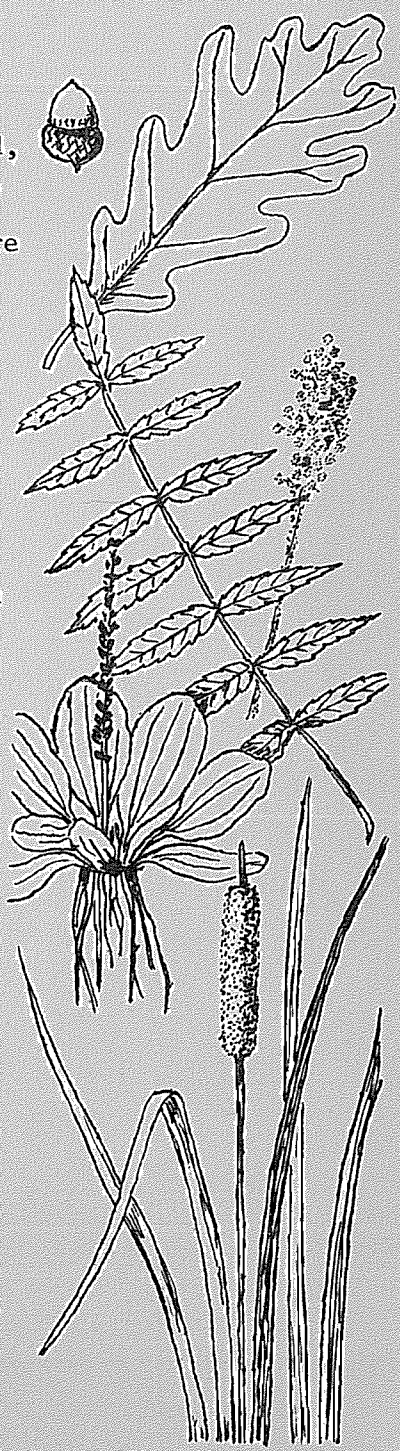
STAGHORN SUMAC. The seeds were used for "Indian lemonade". Sweetened with maple syrup and boiled, they made a hot drink too.

BERGAMOT. It was used as a cure for colds and bronchial infections.

PLANTAIN. The roots were ground and carried in the pockets to ward off snakes!

SPREADING DOGBANE OR INDIAN HEMP. The outer rind of the stem made the fine thread used for beadwork. Very common along the Path.

CATTAIL. The leaves were sewed into mats for shelters. The pulp of the seed heads was used for mattresses for the babies.



WORK OF OUR VOLUNTEERS

We ponder over the problems of pollution. Where, we wonder, did the communities and residents dispose of their trash when the interurban still used this old right-of-way? How would they like the unsightly mess of a ribbon of garbage, grass clippings, and junk that would grow ever higher and wider through the center of the towns if there were no willing volunteers to clean the Path? We have had hundreds of people on the Path this spring working to make it a more pleasant place to walk. Some of the clean-up crews were: *Wayne School, Isaac Walton League, Audubon Society, Scouts of Lombard, Wheaton volunteers, Cadet Troop 212* with leader *Mrs. Hanna* (they also put up a small weather station), *York H.S.* girls, and *Glen Ellyn*. This last was a community project sponsored by *The Coordinated Garden Clubs*; to announce the clean-up, 7,000 leaflets were distributed through the schools.

Spring is the season for planting as well as "house-cleaning" and this year there have been many trees and shrubs set out along the Path. In Wayne, honeysuckle and dogwood were planted by the students of *Wayne School* and *Garfield School of Elgin*.

To heal the scars left by a maintenance crew in Wheaton, *Commonwealth Edison* furnished 75 shrubs. They were set in place by volunteers under the direction of *Virginia Wermine, Dr. Leedy, and Mrs. Headen*. The *village of Glen Ellyn* planted a row of 18 big, beautiful Skyline locusts west of Prospect St. East of Park Blvd., the new *condominium management* has planted several red oaks.

Girls from the *senior seminar of York High School*, students of *Miss Vine* and *Mrs. Snyder*, set out woody plants, furnished by the girls, at Spring Road, Elmhurst. Near Poplar Ave., *Mrs. Mayer* was responsible for the planting of several ash trees.

WALKS

The next scheduled walks will be in September and October. Members will receive a notice giving dates, times, and place of meeting.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Our new members' room at 616 Delles, Wheaton, was officially opened on June 12. Coffee was served to a group of city and county officials and members of The Prairie Path.

Mr. Richard Wilson led the *Sierra Club* on a walk on the Path on May 24.

The Fox River Valley Council B.S.A. presented the Silver Beaver, the highest award given by a local council, to *Charles Peterson*, a member of our Board.

Three guests presented information at our monthly Board meeting on June 2: *Mr. Martellatto* told of the plans being formulated by a very active citizens' group, *The Wheaton Friends of The Prairie Path*. As one project, they expect to have completed a bicycle path from Roosevelt Road to Weisbrook Road by next fall. This will be similar to the stone path being laid down in Elmhurst by the *Jaycees*. *Mrs. Jones* and *Mrs. Mooring* reported on the progress of the *Coordinated Garden Clubs of Glen Ellyn*. A landscape plan for the heart of the village is being prepared for them by *Mr. Tyznik*, landscape architect and superintendent of the Morton Arboretum.

Examiners from the Department of the Interior walked the entire 30 miles of the Path with our president, *William Nemec*, on May 6-7. Their report praised us for what we have accomplished in 6 years, deplored the places where, in their words, we have been "wiped out" by parking lots and roads, and listed in detail the staggering number of tasks still to be done. Two essentials, if we are to qualify for designation as a National Recreation Trail, are an extended lease with the county, to at least 1981, and a guarantee of a clean path. Continued good work by volunteers will get, and keep, The Path clean. We hope all members in DuPage County will let members of The County Board of Supervisors know how they feel about an extended lease.