

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1977



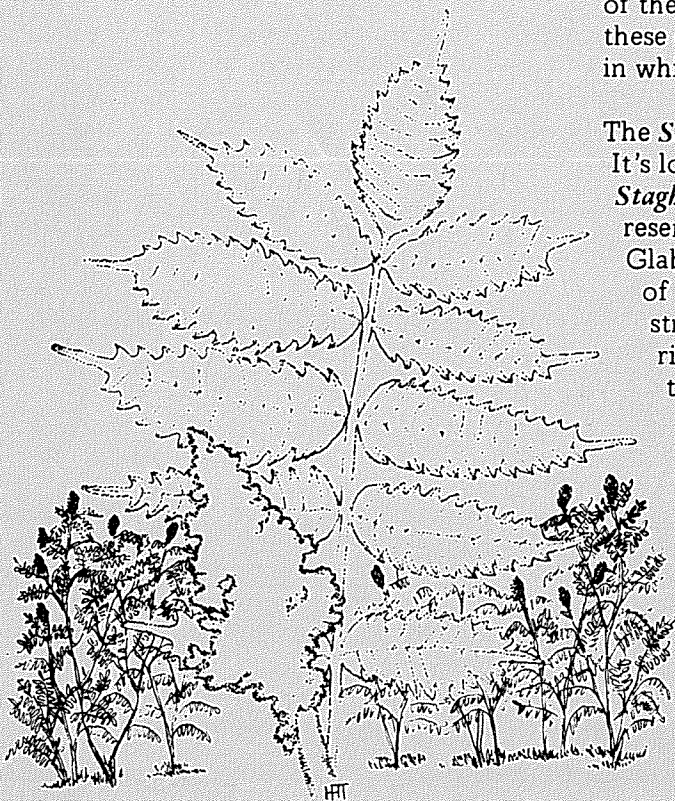
Box Elder

WHAT TO LOOK FOR—

In summer, the Prairie Path has walls and a canopy of green leaves. It is amazing how so many trees can grow in the gravel of a railroad bed. Many are small and bushy because the railroad kept them clipped close to the ground when it was operating; now Commonwealth Edison trims the trees to protect power lines. The most prolific tree is the *Box Elder* (*Acer Negundo*) sometimes called the ash-leaved maple. The shiny leaves are compound—usually in groups of three, sometimes five with the end leaf three lobed. The twigs have a lavender bloom. The seeds are winged and the branches are opposite, similar to the maple. Box Elder is often called the maple's poor relation as the wood is brittle, the leaves not as colorful in the fall, and the sap does not make as sweet a syrup. The female seed bearing trees are the home of the colorful but harmless box elder bug. Toward fall, these gregarious bugs invade houses in search of warm attics in which to spend the winter.

The *Sumac* is well known as the first fall color along the Path. Its long compound leaves turn purple and orange and scarlet. *Staghorn sumac* (*Rhus Typhina*) has very hairy velvety bark resembling a deer's antlers in spring; *Smooth sumac* (*Rhus Glabra*) is much less hairy. The fruit is dark red clusters of berries. When the berries are crushed in water and then strained through several thicknesses of cheesecloth to get rid of the hairs, the result is a refreshing drink which tastes like lemonade. There is a poison sumac but it has white berries so if you stick to red you are safe. Euell Gibbon's book "Stalking the Wild Asparagus" contains a recipe for elderberry jelly using sumac lemonade that is delicious.

Staghorn Sumac



GOOD NEWS:

The extension of the Prairie Path into Cook County has finally become a reality. An Amendment attached to the Illinois Department of Conservation Appropriations bill has been signed by Governor Thompson. This amendment will provide \$350,000 to help with the purchase of the old C.A.&E. right-of-way through Berkley, Hillside, Bellwood and Maywood, an extension of $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the Prairie Path into Cook County. An additional sum of \$250,000 has already been allocated to the project by the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The two grants add up to the asking price for the property. Under the Amendment, the land will be owned by the Department of Conservation, with a lease to the Illinois Prairie Path.

Major credit for this achievement is due Representative Ted Leverenz of Maywood, who introduced the Amendment in the House Appropriations Committee and also Senator Mark Rhoads who introduced necessary changes in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Keith Olson, Prairie Path chairman of the Cook County extension, and his committee have worked for months to gain interest and support for this project. Prior to this heroic effort, Phoebe Ryerson, former Prairie Path Board Member, spent several years laying the ground work and making valuable contacts that have lead to this important Path extension.

There is still work to be done. 1. Negotiate with the owners of the right-of-way; 2. Discuss with the villages what is involved in the purchase and lease agreement; 3. Bring the Path up to acceptable standards.

MORE GOOD NEWS:

A grant of \$15,000 from the Joyce Foundation has been received by Prairie Path Treasurer, Mrs. Joan Hamill. This generous sum will be added to the amount collected in the fund drive for Path improvements. These improvements include building a bridge across the West Branch of the DuPage river (completed); completion of surfacing; erection of automobile barriers where needed; grading and surfacing where bad drainage problems exist.

...AND STILL MORE:

A special vote of thanks is due the Able Disposal Co., of West Chicago, who has volunteered to pick up trash at Powis Rd., Army Trail Rd., Smith Rd., and Route 59 where these roads cross the Path.

PROJECTS:

A new sign designating the former Demonstration Area as Founder's Park has been erected by the City of Wheaton. This change is in memory of May Theilgaard Watts, Path Founder. Plans are to fix a bronze plaque to one of the boulders now on that section of the Path. Memorial donations, made by Mrs. Watts' many friends and admirers will go toward the plaque, plantings etc. Right now help would be greatly appreciated to keep shrubbery beds weeded. Volunteers? Call 655-5310.

RESIGNATIONS:

Liz Holmes, Corresponding Secretary and one of the original members of the Prairie Path Board of Directors, is resigning as of November. She and her husband, Sam, have retired to a new home in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. For the past fourteen years Liz has devoted countless hours to a steadily increasing load of mail. She has responded to thousands of requests for information; soothed complainers; encouraged new members. In addition she has supervised the mailing of the Newsletter, membership notices and whatever else was dumped into her capable hands. Liz is one of the few remaining original Board Members and probably knows more about the Prairie Path than anyone. You can believe that for some time to come she will receive long distant cries for help. But she will always be missed.

The Board also regrets the resignation of Gene McArdle who has moved to Chicago. Gene was responsible for implementing the usage survey that has become an important part of Prairie Path records. He also was instrumental in the removal of the two billboards that were an eyesore on the Path and rode herd on other Path abusers. The Board is sorry to lose such an able member.

FALL ACTIVITIES - RAIN OR SHINE:

Saturday, September 24: Bike Ride. 25 miles from Prairie Path Headquarters, 616 Delles, Wheaton, to Wildwood Park in Elmhurst.
Meet at 9:30 A.M. and bring Lunch and Drink.
Leader: Ron Olsen 833-7352

Sunday, October 16: Annual Fall Walks. Both hikes meet at Members Room, 616 Delles, Wheaton.
Long Hike: Meet at 9:00 A.M. Approximately 10 miles.
Short Hike: Meet at 10:00 A.M. Approximately 2 miles.
Bring lunch and drink to both hikes.
Leaders: Dick Wilson 299-7882
Paul Mooring 469-4289
Ann Carlson 355-9210 (short hike)

Saturday, November 12: Work Day. Meet at Geneva Rd. and County Farm Road at 9:00 A.M. Bring lunch, drink and work gloves. Hope to repair washout of Prairie Path near bridge.
Leader: Dick Wilson 299-7882

REMINDER:

It is membership renewal time! Have you misplaced your notice? Or maybe you have just forgotten. Your dues are vital to the existence of the Prairie Path. We hope you will all continue to support the Path and will encourage your friends to do so as well.

Prairie Path patches \$1.00 each

The Illinois Prairie Path - a Guide by Helen Turner. Gives history and geology of the Path and has illustrations of flowers and other interesting vegetation found on the Path. \$1.25