

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

FALL, 1981



goldenrod

What to look for - prairie wildflowers.

Let us continue our search for native flowers this fall. The prairie grasses have grown tall and are turning a rich red brown. Here we find tall colorful composites lifting their heads above the grass. Stiff goldenrod, *Solidago rigida*, has a flat-top head of bright yellow and rough yellow-green leaves. Blazing star, *Liatris aspera*, has purple-pink flowers that bloom from the top of the stem down. The four silphiums have yellow daisy-like blooms. Cup-plant, *Silphium perfoliatum*, has joined leaves that hold water after rains for thirsty goldfinches. Prairie dock, *Silphium terebinthinaceum*, has huge basal leaves that turn rich brown and last all winter. Rosinweed, *Silphium integrifolium*, has stiff opposite leaves. Compass plant, *Silphium laciniatum*, has large deeply cut leaves. Everyone knows the lovely black-eyed susan, *Rudbeckia hirta*. Many asters bloom in the prairie but the beautiful lavender smooth aster, *Aster laevis*, can be identified by its smooth blue-green leaves.



blazing star



smooth
aster



black-
eyed
susan



cup plant



prairie
dock



rosin
weed



compass
plant

PRAIRIE PATH GOALS FOR THE EIGHTIES

In response to the varied needs and interests of our users, the Board of Directors of The Illinois Prairie Path has adopted the following list of goals for action during the eighties:

1. Correct drainage problems and improve with limestone screenings for bicycling the eighteen miles of Path in the unincorporated areas of DuPage County, including the Elgin and Aurora Branches and the Batavia Spur. Estimated minimum cost at current prices: \$200,000. Regular maintenance including mowing and pruning would cost an additional \$36,000 annually.
2. Provide a separate but parallel trail for horses wherever possible on all sections west of Wheaton.
3. Develop the 4½-mile Cook County section to First Avenue, Maywood, as a first-class bicycle trail. Estimated cost: \$80,000. Seek to promote a connection across the DesPlaines River to the existing Cook County forest preserve trail system and thence north along the river to Wisconsin.
4. Add the Geneva Spur to the Prairie Path system as a trail for hiking, horseback-riding, and the study of native, especially prairie, plants and animals.
5. Have all sections of the Path regularly patrolled by police, either County or municipal, preferably on horseback or on bicycles.
6. Maintain and preserve the various prairie remnants found along the Path.
7. Encourage the Kane County Forest Preserve District and the Fox Valley Park District to extend and improve the Path all the way to the Fox River on the Elgin, Aurora, and Batavia Branches and connect with the Fox Path, the Great Western Trail, and the Virgil L. Gilman Trail.
8. Restore the historic iron Chicago, Aurora and Elgin bridge over the North Western Railroad in Wheaton, adapting it for use as a pedestrian bridge. Add three more spans to cross Front and Wesley Streets and eliminate the hazardous Bridge Street bypass.
9. Other safety-related goals include push-button stoplights at the intersection of Roosevelt and Carlton in Wheaton and grade separations at Mannheim Road in Hillside and at Rte. 59 near Oak Meadows.
10. Promote trails for an energy-conscious and transportation-oriented public at all levels of government. Develop a constituency of trail users and greatly increased Path membership to help achieve these goals.

Editor's Note: To bring the Prairie Path up to accepted standards for a multiple-use trail, the Path needs professional management and adequate funding, preferably under the direction of the DuPage County Forest Preserve District.

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT PAUL MOORING

Please inform your readers that the attack on a young woman walking her dog (in rural West Chicago on July 22nd) did not occur on The Illinois Prairie Path, which is owned by DuPage County and leased to our organization for management as a National Recreation Trail. It did occur on the Geneva Spur of the former Chicago, Aurora, and Elgin Railroad right-of-way, which belongs to the Commonwealth Edison Company and is thus not a part of the Prairie Path or under our control. Furthermore, and I cannot emphasize this fact too strongly, our experience over the past fifteen years proves that such an event would be far less likely if the right-of-way in question were actually a part of the Prairie Path, developed as a trail and used by many people. Indeed, we hope some day

to add the Geneva Spur to the Prairie Path trail system and minimize these problems with the co-operation of Commonwealth Edison Company, the DuPage County Forest Preserve District, and the governments and people of West Chicago and Geneva.

A NICE PLACE TO EAT

Prairie Path users and Elmhurst residents are discovering a new little deli-restaurant hidden away at 489 Spring Road. The Prairie Pantry, owned and operated by Tom Curran and his wife, Diane, opened for business on June 1st, 1981. Hours are Mon. through Sat., 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The menu includes a variety of soft drinks and juices, sandwiches, sausages, cheese, and salads. Overlooking a tree-shaded picnic area in Wild Meadows Trace Park and the Prairie Path to the south, the delightful Prairie Pantry has already become a popular oasis for travelers on the Path.

STOPLIGHTS NEEDED AT ROOSEVELT ROAD

Wheaton residents are concerned about the safety of Prairie Path users, school children, other pedestrians and bicycle riders crossing heavily-traveled Roosevelt Road in the vicinity of Carlton Ave. A petition signed by 120 Wheaton citizens was presented to Mayor Barger and the City Council recently by Bonnie Melvin, Delles Road, requesting the installation of push-button stoplights at the Carlton intersection. Several accidents involving pedestrians or bicycle riders have occurred along that stretch of Roosevelt Road since 1977, and a boy was killed in June, 1981, crossing at Delles.

In response to the petition, City Engineer Richard Murzyn sent a letter to the Illinois Department of Transportation requesting an opinion on the proposal. IDOT replied that a traffic count including pedestrians and bicyclists should be conducted by Wheaton to determine if such lights are warranted. The cost of the lights could be \$60,000 to \$80,000, paid 50% by the State and 50% by the City. Maintenance would be paid 2/3 by the State and 1/3 by the City.

The members of the Board of Directors of The Illinois Prairie Path voted unanimously at their August meeting to support the Wheaton residents in their quest for the stoplights. If one life is saved, it will be worth the cost, the Board believes.

IMPROVEMENT AT JEWELL ROAD

On June 15th the long-awaited Prairie Path reconstruction at Jewell Road was completed. Where formerly this 1000-foot section of Path was a riverbed during heavy rains, a base of 350 tons of 3-inch crushed rock was laid and topped with 150 tons of limestone screenings. Total cost to the Prairie Path treasury to eliminate this drainage problem: \$4,367.10.

The project did not go as easily as last year's North Avenue job, according to Jean Mooring, who supervised the work on behalf of the Board. The weather was hot and humid following heavy rains; the drivers of the semi trucks, backing in because the right-of-way is so narrow, could not use their rear-view mirrors among the low-hanging tree branches and so kept driving off the Path into the mud, whereupon David Harvel, the power shovel operator, had to push them out; one truck even broke down and had to be repaired while a tow truck stood by; and finally, the last truck to drive in accidentally uprooted our steel barrier, concrete base and all. Dave Harvel came to the rescue once again with his trusty power shovel and expertly replaced it.

A few days later the Moorings, together with daughter Margaret and a friend, spent several more hours smoothing the rough spots with rakes and shovels. They also received compliments from grateful Path users, most of whom were surprised to learn that this improvement was paid for by Prairie Path members' dues, not tax dollars.

FALL ACTIVITIES

- Sunday, Sept. 13 - Bike Ride to Brookfield Zoo. Meet at 9:00 a.m., Prairie Path at York Road, Elmhurst. Bring lunch and drink for 5-hour, 38-mile ride. Leader: Kevin Zahora, 485-3516.
- Saturday, Sept. 26 and Sunday, Oct. 4 - Work Days, to build Prairie Path steps at bridge abutment in Wheaton. Meet at 9:00 a.m., intersection of Wesley, Front, Western and Bridge Streets. Bring picks, shovels, rakes, saws; also lunch and drink. Leader: Paul Mooring, 469-4289.
- Sunday, Sept. 27 - Flea Market and Antique Sale. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Villa Park Historical Society headquarters in old Chicago, Aurora and Elgin station at Villa Avenue and the Prairie Path in Villa Park. For information call 941-1676.
- Sunday, Oct. 11 - Hike in Cook County. Meet at 9:30 a.m., York Road and the Path in Elmhurst. This will be a 6-mile round trip to Addison Creek and "The Catacombs" in Bellwood. Bring lunch and drink. Leader: Dick Wilson, 299-7882.
- Tuesday, Oct. 27 - Spook Walk Fundraiser. Meet at 6:30 p.m., Montclair and the Path in Glen Ellyn, for a scary supervised Family Spook Walk on the Prairie Path. (Rain date, Oct. 28) Fee, \$1.00 each; IPP members free. Leader: Dick Deibold, 469-6465.
- Sunday, Nov. 1 - Annual Meeting. 2:00 p.m., Thornhill Building, Morton Arboretum. After business meeting, election of Board members and annual progress report, members and friends will enjoy a nostalgic slide show trip on the "Great Third Rail". Our jovial conductor will be Steve Hyett, president of the C. A. and E. Historical Society. All aboard!

- Jean Mooring, Editor -

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