

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

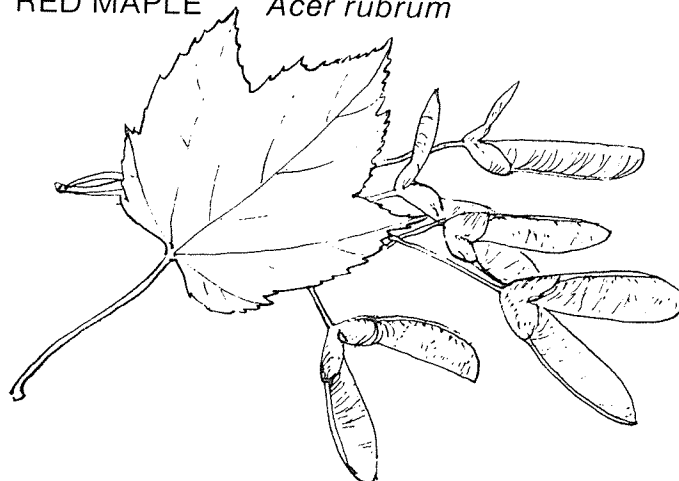
SPRING 1984

What to look for...red maples

The red maple is easy to see even in the winter because of its fat red buds on opposite branching limbs. By March the promise of spring swells the buds and the tree is among the first to bloom. The most conspicuous feature of the showier male flowers is the long scarlet stamens. The pedals and sepals scarcely count. Unlike the sugar or yellow maple, which doesn't develop its seeds till almost fall, the scarlet maple has clusters of long stemmed "keys", or samaras a month after flowering. The early leaves are reddish and the leaf stems stay red all summer. In fall the tree turns crimson or wine red.

The red maple likes a lot of moisture and in the wild seeks out ravines and valleys, but it will grow almost anywhere. The wood is softer than the sugar maple and does not produce as sweet a sugar sap nor grow as tall. But in late winter the tinge of red against the grey sky, like the song of the cardinal, lifts our hearts by its assurance of warmer weather to come.

RED MAPLE *Acer rubrum*



PATH FAME IS SPREADING

The February, 1984, issue of *Bicycle Sport* magazine published by Wizard Publications, Torrance, California, has a splendid feature article on the Prairie Path called "Keeping History Alive". Author Robert McQuilkin faithfully captures the down-home folksy atmosphere of the Path, and his lively writing and enticing photography will make even the most lethargic reader want to hop on a bike and experience the old-fashioned delights of the trail. This article is so compelling that the Prairie Path office has already received over 100 requests for information from all over the United States, and they are still coming in. There is even one from a planning consultant in Calgary, Alberta, working on a feasibility study for a similar pathway system in the Canadian Rockies!

The magazine is on sale at some local bookshops for \$2.50 and may also be obtained by writing to *Bicycle Sport*, P. O. Box 315, Mount Morris, Illinois 61054.

"DAVEA BRIDGE AND IRON WORKS" SEEKS ANOTHER PROJECT

Al Barczak, welding instructor at DAVEA, DuPage Area Vocational Education Authority, reports that his students are eager to tackle another major welding project after successful completion of the three new spans for the Prairie Path bridge in Wheaton. The Cor-Ten steel bridge is so well built, says Barczak, that it actually exceeds the tolerances and specifications set by industry. All students involved in the project met the welding certification requirements established by the American Welding Society Bridge Certification Code. "Involvement in an endeavor of this type is the best training a student can get," he says. In addition, the Prairie Path saved at least \$20,000 in labor costs, thanks to DAVEA students.

The members of the Prairie Path Board of Directors enthusiastically support the welding students in their search for a new project. In fact, we have one in mind: a bridge for Path users over Taylor Avenue in Glen Ellyn to eliminate a steep hill and dangerous street crossing. Path members and friends should bring this need to the attention of the Glen Ellyn Village Board, who would have to provide the funding. Estimated cost for a steel bridge similar to the new Wheaton spans is \$50,000. DAVEA participation would bring the cost down substantially.

STOPLIGHT AT ROOSEVELT

Grateful Prairie Path users have been calling and writing to us about new stoplights, which became operational on December 27, on the Path at the intersection of Roosevelt Road and Carlton Avenue in Wheaton. According to John Schwarz of the Illinois Department of Transportation Bureau of Traffic this is now a fully signalized intersection for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic; and the lights are synchronized by means of an interconnecting cable with those at West Street, Main Street, and Naperville Road to facilitate traffic flow along Roosevelt. Thorne Electric Company was the contractor for the \$48,000 project to be paid for as follows: 85% Federal; 10% State; and 5% Wheaton. The Illinois Department of Transportation will also pay two thirds of maintenance costs and Wheaton, one third. Schwarz explained that the Bureau of Traffic made a study of the intersection and found that signals were warranted because of vehicular and pedestrian traffic volume, accident statistics, and the need for safer vehicular access to Roosevelt from Carlton.

Wheaton City Engineer Ken Murzyn said that Wheaton proposed the IDOT study at the request of Bonnie Melvin and other local residents and Prairie Path members, who were concerned about accidents involving children in that area.

The Prairie Path Board of Directors commends the City of Wheaton, IDOT, and the U.S. Department of Transportation for this long-sought improvement at what has been for many years one of the most dangerous intersections on the Path. This is a fine example of intergovernmental cooperation for the public benefit.

PRAIRIE PATH ATTRACTS TOURISTS

We have received the following letter from Norman and Barbara Reeder of Lansing, Michigan:

"As out-of-state members of The Illinois Prairie Path almost from its start, the Reederes are always delighted to get the Newsletter. Congratulations on continuing the distinctive format with those fetching drawings of 'What to look for. . .'

"Our visits to the Path are always enjoyable, even—as once happened—in the rain. Especially appealing are the sections of wilderness-within-suburbia and the prairie restorations. Being ardent bicycle tourists, we like to cover all the bikeable portion at each visit.

"A problem for us has been to find a good place to stay for two or three days. Ideally we would like to put up at a bed and breakfast inn at Wheaton. If such there be, we haven't found it. Second choice would be an economy rate motel not far from Wheaton and no more than two or three miles off the Prairie Path. At such a location we would set out on our bikes rather than bringing them in to Rathje Park by car as we have in the past.

"Are there tourist accommodations at Wheaton or elsewhere convenient to the Path that you could recommend?"

Editor's Reply: Henrietta Tweedie, artist-naturalist who does text and drawings for the first page is pleased that you like her work. Your letter is also welcome proof of our frequent assertion that the Prairie Path attracts tourists to DuPage County and thus provides economic as well as recreational benefits to county residents. Trails are good business as well as great fun and deserve strong public support.

As for your question, we know of only two moderately-priced motels near the Path in the vicinity of Wheaton. They are the Coachlight Motel, 27 W.010 North Avenue, West Chicago (near County Farm Road) and the Du-Wayne Motel, North Avenue, West Chicago (near St. Charles Road). However, we have heard that members of the League of American Wheelmen, a national bicycling organization, open their homes to other members touring the area. For information you may write to them at P. O. Box 988, Baltimore, Maryland 21203. If any of our readers are aware of any inexpensive tourist homes in the Wheaton area, we hope they will write to The Illinois Prairie Path, P.O. Box 1086, Wheaton, Illinois 60189; and we will pass the information along to you.

FAP 431 — CAUSE FOR CONCERN

At the regular monthly meeting on January 3, the Board of Directors of The Illinois Prairie Path voted to monitor closely the environmental impact studies for FAP 431, the proposed north-south tollway which will parallel Rte. 53. We want state and local officials to know of our concern that the highway might cut the main stem of the Path for an indefinite period during construction unless maintenance of Path continuity at all times is specified in the contract. We will also insist upon a bridge for Path users over the highway if it is actually built.

Members and friends of the Prairie Path may wish to attend a public meeting at the Morton Arboretum Visitor Center at 1:00 p.m. on April 14 to find out more about the environmental and economic impacts of this project.

AURORA BRANCH TO BE COMPLETED

The February 6, 1984, issue of *Outdoor Highlights*, published by the Illinois Department of Conservation, contains good news for the Prairie Path. The Department announces that a Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant in the amount of \$24,540 has been awarded to the Fox Valley Park District, Kane County, for acquisition of 10.8 acres that will complete both the public acquisition on the Aurora Branch of The Illinois Prairie Path and the link-up of the Prairie Path and Fox River Trail.

According to Conservation Director David Kenney, LAWCON grants compensate sponsoring agencies for approximately half of project costs. The balance of expenditures will be provided by the agencies themselves. The federal funds, administered in Illinois by the Department of Conservation for the U.S. Department of the Interior, come from off-shore oil leases, federal land-use fees, and the sale of federal property.

Fox Valley Park District Director Chuck Hoscheit invites area bicyclists and trail fans to the official dedication of the recently-completed section of the Fox River Bicycle Trail along the west side of the river. This new 7.5-mile link runs from McCullough Park in Aurora to Fabyan's Forest Preserve in Geneva. Bridges at Illinois Avenue, Aurora, and Fabyan's will connect to other portions at the regional trail system, including the Prairie Path.

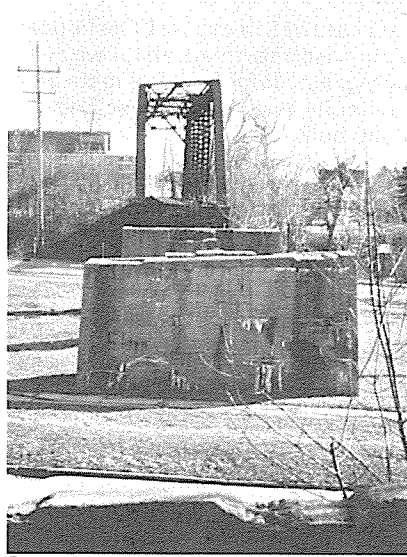
Remember, folks, dedication ceremonies begin at 1:00 p.m., Sunday, May 20, McCullough Park, Aurora. Bring your bikes!

SPRING ACTIVITIES, Rain or Shine

Saturday, April 28	Annual Prairie Path Cleanup in all villages and along entire length of Path. Wear gloves and bring garbage bags. Coordinator: Larry Sheaffer, 665-4408.
Sunday, April 29	Spring Wildflower Walk. Meet at 1:00 p.m. in parking lot at Glen Ellyn's new Walnut Glen Park (north of Walnut at end of Longfellow and 2 blocks east of Bryant). Easy one-mile hike through flower-carpeted woods. Leader: Larry Sheaffer, 665-4408
Sunday, May 6	Horseback Ride. Leisurely ride to Pratt's Wayne Woods and Prince Crossing. Meet at 10:00 a.m., Smith Road and Path. Bring lunch and drink. Leader: Jerry Martin, 927-5382 or 289-1983.
Saturday, May 12	Work Day. Pruning at Smith Road. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Wear gloves and bring saws and pruning shears. Leader: Nancy Hesler, 293-1062
Saturday, May 19	Bird Walk in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in far northwest parking lot. Bring binoculars, bird book, lunch and drink. Leader: Paul Mooring, 469-4289.
Sunday, June 3	Spring Hike. Hike on Batavia Spur (on newly-surfaced section) and along Fox River Bicycle Trail to Island Park in Batavia and return. Ten-mile round trip. Meet at 9:30 a.m. at Bilter Road and the Path. (Butterfield Road to Butterfield development entrance road, called DuPage Parkway. South to Bilter. West ½ mile to Path.) Bring lunch and drink. Leader: Dick Wilson, 299-7882.
Saturday, June 9	Work Day. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Nancy Hesler's, Oak Meadows. For information call Nancy at 293-1062.
Saturday, June 16	Bridge Dedication. Festivities begin at 2:00 p.m., Liberty Street and Path, Wheaton. Coordinator: Phil Hodge, 627-7362.
Saturday, June 23 Sunday, June 24	Two-Day Bike Trip Overnight. Experienced bikers only. Bring own gear. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Nancy Hesler's in Oak Meadows. Leaders: Phil Hodge, 627-7362, and Nancy Hesler, 293-1062.

More Wheaton Bridge Pictures

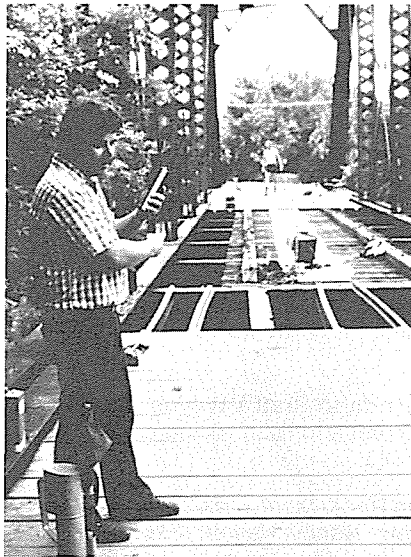
Three years ago...



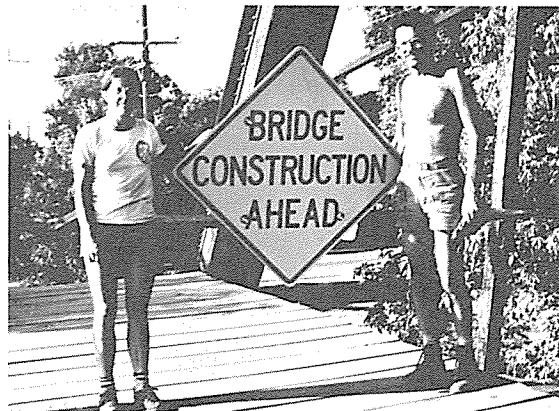
Bridge out. Detour.



Bicyclists struggle up steep and badly eroded north embankment.



Chicago and North Western Railroad flagman with walkie-talkie warns passing trains during decking of old bridge.



First assistant Lucy Ebisch and project director Phil Hodge, professional engineer with Ceco Corp., Oak Brook, check out new deck.



Crane operator Ron Woodward with crane donated by F.J.A. Christiansen Roofing Corp., Carol Stream, pours concrete.



Husband and wife engineering team, Jim and Carol Schumann, remove bolts from concrete forms.