

# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1985

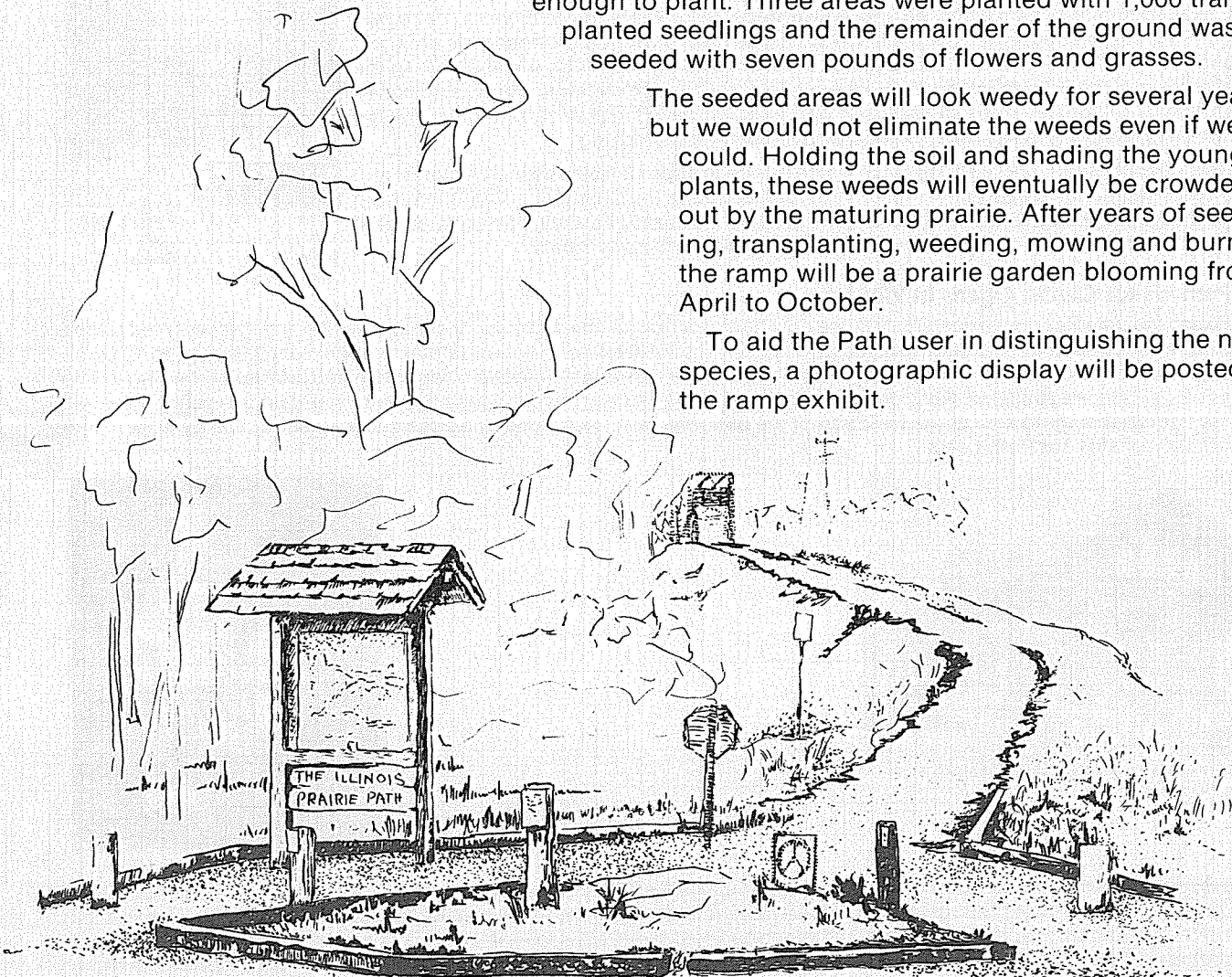
## What to look for: The Volunteer Prairie

Traveling the thirty-plus miles of The Illinois Prairie Path, one is hard-pressed to find the plant community for which the Path was named. Except for a few small prairie remnants, the original prairie is all gone from the Prairie Path, a victim of natural succession from grassland to woodland.

Therefore, when landscaping for the ramp was discussed, native prairie plants seemed the logical choice. Under ideal conditions, establishing a prairie on the ramp would have been chancy, considering the slope and the amount of seed needed. Conditions turned out to be far from ideal; the completed ramp was steeper than planned, and consisted mostly of clay, compacted by the earth movers to the consistency of asphalt. After many hours of back-breaking rototilling and harrowing, the surface was broken enough to plant. Three areas were planted with 1,000 transplanted seedlings and the remainder of the ground was seeded with seven pounds of flowers and grasses.

The seeded areas will look weedy for several years, but we would not eliminate the weeds even if we could. Holding the soil and shading the young plants, these weeds will eventually be crowded out by the maturing prairie. After years of seeding, transplanting, weeding, mowing and burning, the ramp will be a prairie garden blooming from April to October.

To aid the Path user in distinguishing the native species, a photographic display will be posted in the ramp exhibit.



## Railroads and Chocolate — Villa Park Remembers, and Plans its Future

**Leapin' lizards!** the Ovaltine Company is moving out of Villa Park. Thirty years after the demise of the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railway another era is ending for the town the grew up around the company and the railroad. Old-timers in the area have fond memories both of "Little Orphan Annie", the radio show that made Ovaltine a household word throughout the country, and of the "Roaring Elgin's" famous electric Great Third Rail. What child growing up in the '30s didn't send in for an Orphan Annie signet ring or a decoder to decipher the program's secret messages? And what commuter living in the western suburbs of Chicago didn't love the CA&E Cannonball Express, which could make the evening run from the Loop faster than modern cars or trains?



*Good neighbors. Prairie Path winds past historic Ovaltine plant.*

With a shared nostalgia for the railroad and the chocolate factory, the twin foundations of Villa Park, village residents and civic leaders agree on the need to preserve these properties and plan for other but equally important future uses. Thus the Village Board has established the Blue Ribbon Planning Commission to promote redevelopment of the Ovaltine property with a combination of commercial, retail, offices and housing. At the same time the Villa Park Historical Society is seeking to have the whole central business area, including the Ovaltine plant and the CA&E right-of-way, declared a historic district. This would provide tax advantages for development.

The Illinois Prairie Path Board supports wholeheartedly Villa Park's redevelopment effort because the Path, located on the CA&E right-of-way, forms the backbone of the proposed historic district. We urge our friends to donate to the Prairie Path Improvement Organization, which was formed by Villa Park residents in early 1984 to coordinate development and improvement of the Path within the village:

c/o Richard Burgess, President  
516 S. Cornell  
Villa Park, Illinois 60181 (Tel. 530-0991)

Funds will be used to purchase 35 old-fashioned memorial street lights (Individuals or groups may each purchase one and designate it as a memorial with an appropriate plaque for a \$1,000 tax-deductible donation); other donations of money or labor are needed for park benches, tables, skating shelters, native shrubs and flower beds, terracing and reclamation of certain areas for Path use. According to the master plan for the Path drawn up by landscape architect and longtime Villa Park resident Rob Eggers, the memorial lights will be installed along the central section of the Path between the Villa Avenue and Ardmore stations, which is designed for high activity village functions; the east and west ends will be left in their natural state; and the areas around Harvard and east of Villa will be developed for picnicking.

The Prairie Path Board endorses this plan which has been approved also by the Village Board, the Park and Recreation Department, the Environmental Board, the Chamber of Commerce, the DuPage County Highway Department and many service organizations. Only one endorsement is still needed and we can hear it now, loud and clear. "Arf, arf!" says Sandy.



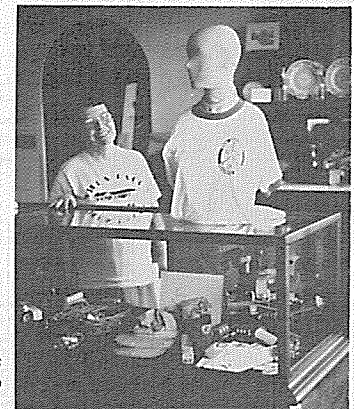
*Example of Villa Park's proposed old-fashioned memorial street lights as seen along Grace Street, Lombard.*

### First Path Visitor Center Opens in Villa Park

Thanks to the Villa Park Historical Society, we now have our first on-the-Path visitor center. The Society has reserved for the Prairie Path a section of its museum, located on the Path at Villa Avenue. Our new center is open from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 on Saturdays and from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sundays from May 1 through October. Information and articles pertaining to The Illinois Prairie Path are available. Restrooms are inside and the Society hopes to install a water fountain this year. There will also be an outdoor seating area at the west end of the building. With these amenities, the museum should be a pleasant and comfortable rest stop for Path users.



*Old CA&E Villa Avenue station is now the Villa Park Historical Society Museum.*



*Dorothy Adams welcomes visitors to the museum gift shop and Prairie Path center.*

Our association with the Villa Park Historical Society began several years ago when former Prairie Path board member Dick Diebold volunteered to direct the restoration of the historic little Ardmore Avenue railroad station, also on the Path in Villa Park. Dick and his small group of craftsmen-volunteers worked for months to renovate this charming building for the benefit of the people of Villa Park. Although the Prairie Path had intended to use the Ardmore station as our visitor center, staffing problems led us eventually to the museum at Villa Avenue instead. This spacious building was also a railway station for the old

Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railway and has been restored to beautiful condition inside and out. Meanwhile the Villa Park Chamber of Commerce is going to make the Ardmore station its new home.

We invite our members and friends to stop in at our new visitor center and to stroll through the museum, open every Sunday year-round from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m., for fascinating glimpses of the village and its people, past, present, and future. The Prairie Path is proud to have a part in these exciting events.

### Thanks, Henri; Welcome, Mark and Jo

**NEWSLETTER** editor Jean Mooring announces with regret the resignation of Henrietta Tweedie as naturalist-writer/illustrator of our front page. Henri has provided the sprightly and informative text illustrated with graceful line drawings for four issues a year since 1976. For her distinguished work she deserves our highest praise; and so we say with love: Take a bow, Henri — you've earned it!

Having begun with the spring, 1985, issue and continuing for a year the husband-and-wife team of Mark and Jo Mayeau is now doing the drawing for the front page. The Mayeaus are talented artists by avocation and longtime friends of the Prairie Path. The commentary about Founders Park in the spring issue was written by Jean Mooring. The Volunteer Prairie story for this summer issue was provided by botanist Larry Sheaffer. Board members will also write the nature notes for fall and winter. Confident that this cooperative approach will work, we extend a warm welcome to the Mayeaus. We're glad to have you with us.

### Glen Ellyn Resurfacing Project

On April 29, 1985, the Prairie Path submitted a bill to the Village of Glen Ellyn in the amount of \$3,000 to be paid out of the Path's Revenue Sharing allocation (\$3,000) for fiscal year 1984, ending April 30. This will cover Glen Ellyn's promised share of the cost of resurfacing the quarter-mile section between Hill Avenue and the East Branch of the DuPage River, including rebuilding the approach ramps on each side of Hill Avenue. Dennis O'Neill, A-1 All American Services, Glen Ellyn, was the contractor who hauled and spread (with the assistance of Jean Mooring and Mike Reusch) 230 tons of two-inch crushed limestone, grade #8, and limestone screenings. Final cost was \$4,150, of which the balance was paid by the Prairie Path. Members' dues and contributions at work!

### County Prunes Trees on Aurora Branch

Beginning Saturday, April 6, for six Saturdays, DuPage County Highway Department crews were out on the Path cutting trees and widening the one-mile section between Orchard Road and Wiesbrook Road to promote visibility and safety. Estimated cost of this first phase of the pruning project is \$4,000. By the end of the year the county hopes to finish opening up the Path to a width of 20 feet and height of 10-12 feet on both the Aurora Branch and the Batavia Spur to the Kane County line. This second phase will be done with the help of young people participating in the federally-funded DuPage Private Industry Council/-Job Training Program, which provides employment for DuPage County youth from economically disadvantaged families.



DuPage County Highway Department crew feeds brush into chipper on Path near Orchard Road, Wheaton.

### Spring Cleanup Reports

Elmhurst, Steve Plumb, Elmhurst Park District Superintendent of Parks and Planning: "The Elmhurst Park District is now responsible for maintaining and cleaning the Path. We are helped by various citizen groups such as the Elmhurst Garden Club and scout troops and by individuals who pick up trash and monitor selected sections. The city and park district cooperated on the recently-completed resurfacing of the Path between the Illinois Central tracks and Salt Creek."

Villa Park, Bob Niemann, Superintendent of Parks: "Park employees cleaned up the Prairie Path throughout the village as usual every April and raked and trimmed trees. It's looking good."

Lombard, Donna Albue: "We had a small turnout this year. Brownie Troops 712 and 550 and Junior Girl Scout Troop 28 worked, as did my sister-in-law, Marie Albue. The village provided three dumpsters, which were emptied by the regular village contractor."

Glen Ellyn, Jean Mooring: "Best cleanup since the early days, fifteen years ago. Twenty-two adult volunteers turned out (no scout or school groups) plus three village employees with two large dump trucks and a power shovel. In three hours these determined defenders of the Path gathered three truckloads of brush, broken concrete, railroad ties and over forty bags of trash. Paul Mooring with chain saw, assisted by Village Trustee Jim Bourke and two other volunteers, cut up and loaded two huge trees felled by the March ice storm. Many thanks to all for a great job!"

Wheaton and Warrenville, Bob Hargis: "Scouts came through for us again. Four Boy Scout Troops, #s 374, 382, 365, and 364 cleaned the Path in sections from Lincoln to Wesley, Roosevelt to Orchard, Orchard to Wiesbrook, and Wiesbrook to Butterfield respectively. Troop #54 worked from Winfield Road to Williams Road in Warrenville. Girl Scout Troop #877, Lowell School, recruited by Larry Sheaffer, covered the section east of College Avenue. I picked up trash farther west at Ferry, Diehl, Frontenac, Shore and Eola Roads. Total count: 35 bags of trash and two big piles of junk to be hauled away by the County Highway Department and the City of Wheaton."

Wayne, Joan Hamill: "Corky and I handled the cleanup ourselves from Dunham Road to Rte. 64. We rode our bikes and picked up as we went. There was not very much trash. We put our bags in the Prairie Path trash barrels at Army Trail Road for pickup by contractor Able Disposal Co."

### Spring - Summer Activities

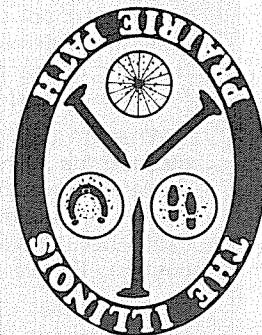
(Rain or Shine)

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| Saturday, June 8                     | <b>Work Day</b> to install signs along trail. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Members' Room, Rathje Park, Roosevelt and Delles, Wheaton. Leaders: Dick Wilson, 299-7882, Nancy Hesler, 293-1062, and Bob Hargis, 668-7377.  |
| Sunday, June 9                       | <b>Hike</b> to Warrenville Grove Forest Preserve. Ten-mile round trip. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Members' Room, Rathje Park, Roosevelt and Delles, Wheaton. Bring lunch and drink. Leader: Dick Wilson, 299-7882.  |
| Saturday, June 15<br>Sunday, June 16 | <b>Two-Day Bike Trip Overnight</b> to Rockford. Experienced bikers only. Bring own gear. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Nancy Hesler's, Oak Meadows. Leader: Nancy Hesler, 293-1062.   |
| Saturday, June 29                    | <b>Hike, Picnic, and Trolley Ride</b> on authentic CA&E electric car at Trolley Museum in South Elgin. We will hike along and explore a new section of the beautiful Fox River Trail. Less than five miles round trip for the hike. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Blackhawk Forest Preserve, Route 31 in Kane County. (Take Ill. Route 64, North Ave., to Route 31, first street west of Fox River in St. Charles, North 5.6 miles to Blackhawk Forest Preserve entrance. East .4 mile to parking lot beside river. Meet at shelter house.)<br><br>Bring lunch and drink, and \$1.50 for the trolley ticket. Leader: Jean Mooring, 469-4289. |
| Saturday, July 13                    | <b>Work Day</b> to build steps opposite entrance to Blackwell Forest Preserve. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in parking lot on Path at Winfield Road south of Butterfield. Bring shovels, hoes, pruning saws. Leader: Paul Mooring, 469-4289.  |
| Saturday, July 20                    | <b>Bike Ride</b> on Great Western Trail. Thirty-four-mile round trip to Sycamore. Swim and return. Meet at 10:00 a.m., LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve (Dean Street west of St. Charles). Bring beverage and swim suit. Leader: Nancy Hesler, 293-1062.  |
| Saturday, August 10                  | <b>Work Day.</b> For information: Dick Wilson, 299-7882  |

— Jean C. Mooring, Editor —

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60189



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