

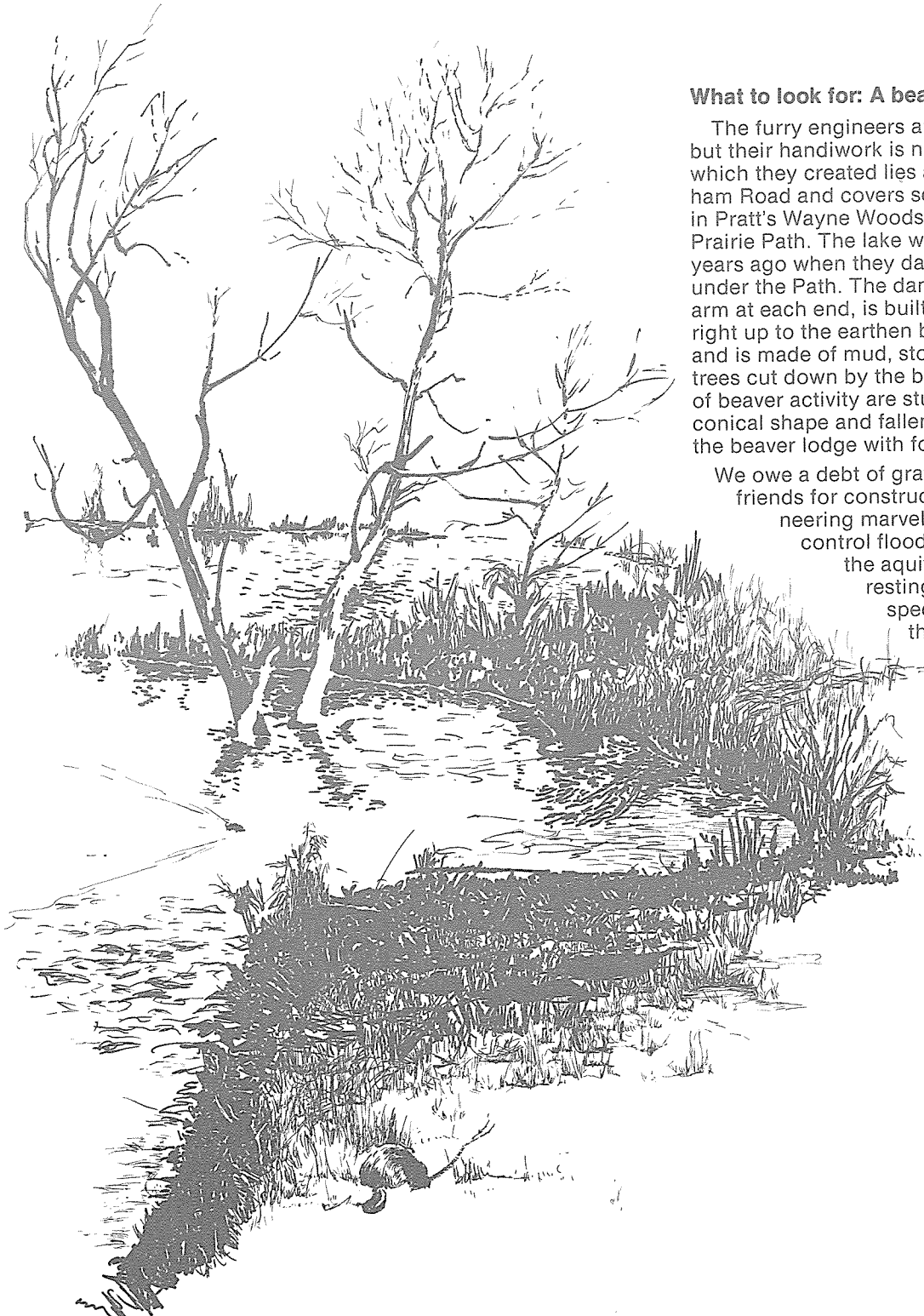
# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

WINTER 1985

## What to look for: A beaver dam

The furry engineers are active at night and hard to see, but their handiwork is not. The beautiful marshy lake which they created lies about one-half mile east of Dunham Road and covers several acres of formerly dry land in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve adjoining the Prairie Path. The lake was made by the beavers about five years ago when they dammed a small stream flowing under the Path. The dam, horseshoe-shaped with a long arm at each end, is built on the south side of the Path right up to the earthen berm. It is two to four feet high and is made of mud, stones, sticks, branches and small trees cut down by the beavers' strong teeth. Other signs of beaver activity are stumps of saplings chewed in a conical shape and fallen trees stripped of bark to stock the beaver lodge with food for the winter.

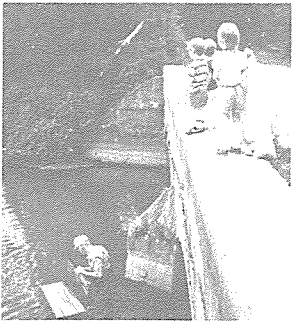
We owe a debt of gratitude to our invisible beaver friends for constructing not only the dam, an engineering marvel, but also the lake, which helps to control flooding downstream and recharges the aquifer, provides nesting habitat and a resting area during migration for many species of water birds, and beautifies the Prairie Path. The dam and lake can teach us much about the rewards of hard work and living in harmony with the rest of the natural world.



## Annual Meeting Celebrates Prairie Path Twentieth Anniversary

"'Rails to trails' is an idea whose time has come," said David M. Eubanks, principal speaker at the Prairie Path annual meeting on November 3 at the DuPage County Historical Museum in Wheaton. Eubanks is program coordinator for the Open Lands Project in Chicago. Under the direction of the late Gunnar Peterson Open Lands provided expert help and guidance to the Path in its earliest years. Now Open Lands is working on other projects including the Illinois-Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, the beautification of the Chicago River, and the development of the Old Plank Road Trail from Park Forest to Joliet along the abandoned Penn Central right-of-way. Said Eubanks, "When May Theilgaard Watts and her small group of trail lovers formally established The Illinois Prairie Path as an organization whose purpose was to convert an abandoned railroad right-of-way into a recreational trail for the public to use, it was a truly revolutionary idea. But that was in 1965, twenty years ago, and now there are trails like the Prairie Path in every part of the country. You really started something!"

Other speakers included Tom Merrion and Brent Coulter of the DuPage County Highway Department, standing in for County Board Chairman Jack Knuepfer who had to leave early, and that energetic trail promoter Philip Elfstrom, genial president of the Kane County Forest Preserve Commission. All described new trail segments planned or under construction which will link the Prairie Path to the Fox River Trail and eventually to many other trails in the Chicago metropolitan area, including those along the I and M Canal and the shores of Lake Michigan. "Within ten years," predicted Elfstrom, "northeastern Illinois will have the finest system of interconnected recreational trails in the entire country!"



*Mooring grandchildren watch Paul drag bench from river.*

Path President Paul Mooring presented his annual slide show illustrating the successes and setbacks of the past year. The show gave the seventy-five attendees a good idea of the truly staggering amount of work that goes into maintaining an urban trail. Greatest applause was won by Mooring himself when he was shown hauling a new bench out of the West DuPage River where vandals had dumped it, and then triumphantly replacing it, this time in 500 pounds of concrete.

The short business meeting included reports from treasurer Joan Hamill (see page 4) and from membership chair Dee Tevonian, who announced a current total of 1537 members and \$28,079.03 in dues and donations received during the year. Nancy Becker presented the report of the nominating committee. Renominated were Joan Hamill, John Kacich, Paul Mooring and Dick Wilson. New nominees were Jon Duerr, St. Charles, Kane County Forest Preserve District Assistant Superintendent for landscape design and land use planning, and life member and past board member of the Illinois Audubon Society; and James Mackay, Wheaton, graduate of Southern Illinois University, professional engineer with Webster, McGrath and Carlson, and avid cross-country bicyclist. They replace beloved longtime board member Gunnar Anderson, Dundee, who is retiring from the board but will continue to give us the benefit of his advice and counsel as a member of the Kane County Committee; and enthusiastic horseman Jerry Martin, Bartlett, who is leaving the board for other pursuits. The nominees were elected by acclamation.

At the close of the afternoon's program, MC Bob Hargis invited everyone to have a piece of the birthday cake which was shaped like a Prairie Path sign with the green logo on a background of white frosting. Jean Mooring ordered the cake from Carney's Bakery in Wheaton and also provided the "Rails To Trails" arrangement consisting of dried prairie plant materials on a base made of a three-part wood and iron insulator assembly from the old CA&E third rail. Dee Tevonian donated the delicious apple cider, another Prairie Path tradition, and Nancy Becker and Lynn Dostal brought other goodies.

## Prairie Path Granted Tax Exemption in Cook County

On September 14 Governor Thompson signed (with an amendatory veto of two technical errors) H.B. 47, introduced in the House by Representative Ted Leverenz of Maywood and co-sponsored by Senator Greg Zito of Melrose Park. The new law exempts the Prairie Path from having to pay property taxes on the state-owned 4½-mile proposed extension to First Avenue, Maywood. The way is now clear at last for the Prairie Path to sign a lease with the Illinois Department of Conservation and begin development of the Cook County section.



*Presenting IEC award to Rep. Ted Leverenz (second from right) are Len Chabala, Valerie Spale and Paul Mooring.*

In this year's regular session of the General Assembly Rep. Leverenz also introduced legislation for natural areas acquisition including ten acres for the Wolf Road Prairie in Westchester. For these positive environmental actions the Illinois Environmental Council awarded Rep. Leverenz a Certificate of Appreciation on October 19 at its annual meeting in Urbana. The award was later presented to Leverenz in his Maywood office by Path President Paul Mooring and Len Chabala, chairman of the Cook County Committee, and by Valerie Spale, executive director of the Save the Prairie Society.