

prairie dock

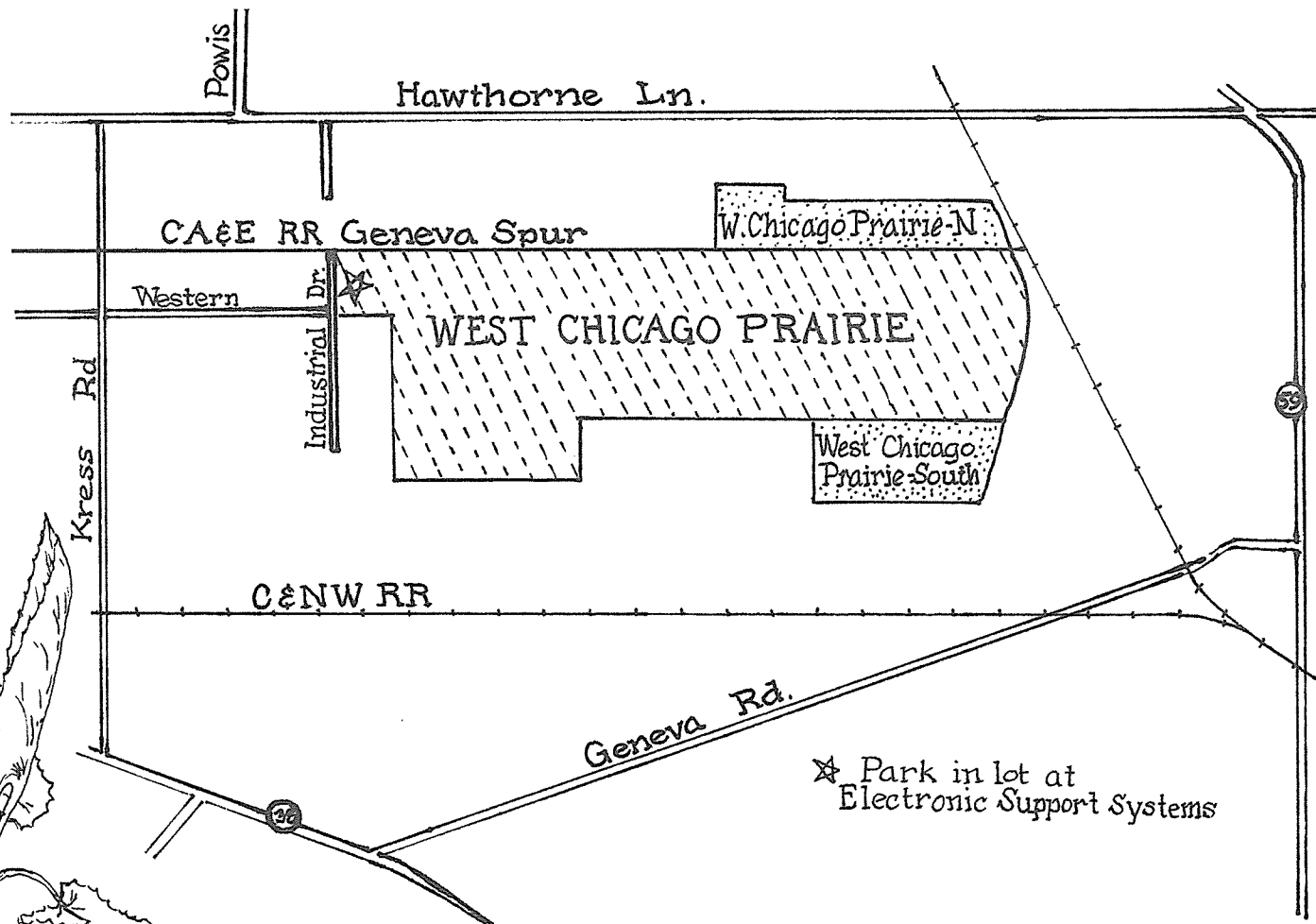
THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

FALL 1986

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: The West Chicago Prairie

Little native prairie remains along most of the Illinois Prairie Path. The plow, the bulldozer, and alien weeds and trees have generally destroyed the rich soils and crowded out the prairie plants. Only a few tiny patches struggle to survive on the three main branches of the Path. However, alongside the Geneva Spur of the old CA&E Railway there still thrives one big, beautiful REAL tallgrass prairie gracing the rolling landscape of rural West Chicago and enchanting the senses with its myriad colors, scents and sounds. This is now protected as the West Chicago Prairie Forest Preserve and is bordered along its northern edge by the CA&E Geneva Spur, owned by Commonwealth Edison and soon to be leased to DuPage County as a part of the Prairie Path trail network. See the map below for the exact location of the prairie.

September is a good time to admire the prairie in its autumn glory, resplendent in purple and gold. Flowers to look for in September are Prairie Dock (many nine feet tall), Blue Vervain, Nodding Wild Onion, Ironweed, Boneset, Spotted Joe-Pye Weed, Tall Coreopsis, Evening Primrose, Pasture Thistle, Bur Marigold, Bottle Gentian, and several species of sunflowers, goldenrods and asters. Come and see for yourself this magical place!



DuPage County Is Resurfacing Path!

During 1986 the DuPage County Highway Department has been making major improvements on several sections of the Prairie Path. These include pruning, mowing, and resurfacing with limestone screenings, after some preliminary grading as needed. For the seven months ending August 1, Right-of-way Agent Tom Merrion reports expenditures totalling \$115,000 for work primarily on the eighteen miles of trail west of Wheaton. Before the end of the year the main stem between Wheaton and Elmhurst will also be done, he says. The most striking improvements can be seen on the Batavia Spur north of Bilter Road to the Kane County line just south of Butterfield Road and on the Aurora Branch from the EJ&E tracks to the county line. The section southwest of Eola Road had never been surfaced before. Work continues on the Elgin Branch, where unfortunately some newly-surfaced sections have already been severely damaged by horses. (Our advice is to blacktop these sections or to provide separate horse trails.)

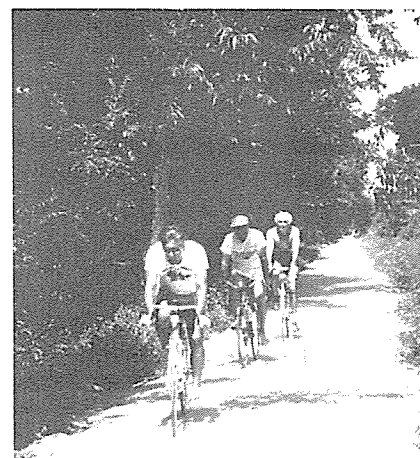
The highway department has allocated to this Prairie Path project a large crew and several pieces of heavy equipment including a road grader, a mowing machine, a chipper, a Layton Box asphalt spreader, adapted for spreading crushed limestone, a roller for compacting the screenings, and five six-wheeler trucks (15-ton capacity). Also working under the supervision of the highway department picking up debris on several sections of the Path were five young people, ages 16 to 21, whose salaries were funded by a consortium of eight DuPage County Ford Dealerships in an amount totalling \$8,000. The federal Job Training Partnership Act matched those funds to pay additional workers to complete backyard cleanup jobs for senior citizens.

The members of the Prairie Path Board of Directors have had considerable experience with this type of construction project and thus can appreciate the effort put forth by the highway department and its employees. We are sure that within two or three years they will bring the Prairie Path up to standard as a first-class bicycle trail. We hope Path members will send some letters of encouragement to the department. Address them to Tom Merrion, Right-of-way Agent, DuPage County Highway Department, 130 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton, IL 60187. Letters may also be sent to another good friend of the Path, Jack T. Knuepfer, Chairman, DuPage County Board, 421 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton, IL 60187.

Report on Prairie Work Days

Board member Larry Sheaffer says that the two prairie work days on June 21 and June 28 were very successful. Nine volunteers worked at one or both of the sites, the North Avenue Prairie and the Wheaton Prairie near Hoffman Park. Using pruning saws and loppers, the volunteers removed many invading woody plants, such as grey dogwood, box elder, elm, buckthorn, sumac, honeysuckle and raspberry bushes. They also picked up litter and junk. Our thanks to: Ron Anderson, Bill and Jean Booth, Bob Hargis, Paul and Jean Mooring, Larry Sheaffer, and Dick and Nancy Wilson.

Although the scheduled work day at Volunteer Prairie south of the bridge in Wheaton was rained out, Larry has been doing regular weeding there during the summer and proudly reports fifty-five species of prairie plants now growing on or near the ramp!



Cyclists enjoy newly-surfaced Batavia Spur north of Bilter Road.



Nancy Wilson pulls weeds at Wheaton Prairie.



Paul Mooring, Bill Booth and Dick Wilson hard at work on Wheaton Prairie.



Bill Booth hauled out biggest pile of junk.

West Chicago Prairie Needs a Little Help from Its Friends

Melvorn C. Hoff, president of the West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group, is asking all of us prairie buffs to write our five county board members urging acquisition of two additional choice parcels for the West Chicago Prairie Forest Preserve. They are called West Chicago Prairie - North [abutting the old CA&E Geneva Spur (future Prairie Path) and north of the east end of the forest preserve] and West Chicago Prairie - South (at the southeast corner of the preserve). *See map on front page for exact locations.* These parcels contain wet/mesic prairie, open-water marshes and successional floodplain

forest; and several rare or endangered species of plants are found here. Mel says, "Both parcels provide desirable control of water flowing into the prairie and both would contribute significantly to the overall diversity of floral and animal species on an already outstanding nature preserve. These parcels should be purchased as soon as possible because development is proceeding rapidly in the area." Letters should be sent to Charles R. Vaughn, President of the DuPage County Forest Preserve Commission, and to the commissioners as listed below. Address them to Box 2339, Glen Ellyn, IL 60138.

DISTRICT I	DISTRICT II	DISTRICT III	DISTRICT IV	DISTRICT V
William J. Maio, Jr.	William R. Bates	Norbert R. FencI	Frank H. Bellinger	Harold J. Bollweg
Carole Ann Pankau	Stephen J. Elliot	Ken Moy	Richard A. Carlson	Julius T. Hankinson
Floyd W. Sanford	Mary Guardalabene	Barbara R. Purcell	R. Lloyd Renfro	Mary B. Price
Ray R. Soden	Edward A. Merkel	Pat Trowbridge	Charles R. Vaughn	Robert J. Raymond
Jane N. Spirgel	Judith C. Ross	Frank C. Urban, Jr.	Connie Zimmermann	Mary Lou Walter

Rock Island Trail Gets Green Light

Illinois trailfans are rejoicing. After years of wrangling, the General Assembly has finally approved a bill appropriating funds to the Department of Conservation for completion of the 27-mile Rock Island Trail State Park near Peoria, the first official state trail in Illinois. Governor Thompson has just signed the bill approving the trail funding with \$184,300 allocated for operations and \$500,000 for the first year of development.

The impasse was broken after a series of intense negotiating sessions led to a detailed Memorandum of Understanding signed on June 27 by David Bauman of the Rock Island Trail Property Owners Association, George Burrier of the Friends of the Rock Island Trail, DOC Director Mike Witte, and Governor Thompson. Special thanks should go to Director Witte who played a key role in the successful negotiations and to the Illinois Environmental Council, respected voice of the environmental movement in Springfield, which has provided strong and unwavering support for the Rock Island over the years. Nice work, everyone. We can hardly wait to ride that trail!

Memorial Display Case Installed

On June 21, after obtaining permission from Mayor Vivian Lund, Bob Hargis and Paul Mooring installed a handsome Prairie Path display case on an existing municipal sign structure near the Warrenville city hall (the former CA&E Warrenville station). The special memorial fund used to purchase the display case was donated to the Path by the family and friends of Gayle M. Clark of Naperville, who passed away last year. The 4 by 3 foot case is made of durable anodized aluminum, dark brown in color, and has a single door of lexan with a lock. The case is large enough for a full size 3 by 2 foot Prairie Path map and other information needed by our users. It also holds a small brass memorial plaque.



Bob Hargis and Paul Mooring cut timber to attach new display case to back of Warrenville municipal sign. Display case faces Path.

Within the next few months the board hopes to purchase several similar display cases and install them at strategic points along the Path, including lists of nearby restaurants, food stores, hardware stores, bicycle repair shops, forest preserves, parks, campsites, picnic areas, restrooms, and drinking fountains.

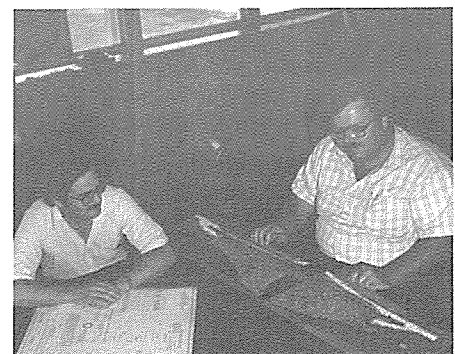
Let's Build Another Bridge!

The Prairie Path board of directors is now actively promoting a bridge over Taylor Avenue in Glen Ellyn. The need is clear, our users tell us, because of the steep hill on each side of Taylor and the dangerous street crossing at the bottom.

Spurred on by board member James Mackay, who is a professional engineer with Webster, McGrath and Carlson in Wheaton, the board has taken the following actions during the last few months:

1. Provided advice and assistance to Glenbard North student Dave Palazzetti for a special school project which involved making a scale model of the proposed bridge based on the Kane County Forest Preserve District plans for the Peck Road bridge on the Great Western Trail. The completed model is now available for display to give people an idea of what the bridge will look like.
2. Explained the project to Lynn Neuhart, Glen Ellyn public works director, and to Bill McGurr, village engineer, and obtained a letter from Mr. Neuhart approving the basic concept with specific details to be worked out later.
3. Explained the project to staff members of the DuPage County Highway Department, who found no major problems with it and said the county might seek a state matching grant to partially fund construction.
4. Discussed the project with the Glen Ellyn Jaycee board and found them supportive of the plan.

During the winter we will continue to work on engineering design, funding, and publicity in the hope the bridge may become a reality within the next two years.



Tim Dawson, permits engineer, and Tom Merriam, right-of-way agent, DuPage County Highway Department, look over model of Taylor Avenue bridge

Mass Trail Ride/Hike to Promote Tecumseh (Heartland) Trail

The Northeastern Illinois Trail Association (NITA) expects hundreds of cyclists, equestrians and hikers from six states to participate in a trail ride/hike on September 14 along the Des Plaines River between Golf Road in Des Plaines and Madison Street in Maywood. (Madison Street is just two blocks north of the future Prairie Path trailhead at First Avenue, Maywood.)

Governor Thompson, state legislators, and officials from the Cook County Forest Preserve District and the various villages along the route have been invited to publicize the need for a continuous trail system along the Des Plaines River connecting Wisconsin trails to the Illinois-Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. This in turn would complete a major link in the long-planned Tecumseh (or Heartland) Scenic Trail which some day will run from the Canadian border to the tip of Florida and will join the Prairie Path at First Avenue, Maywood.

All Prairie Path members are invited to attend this spectacular event. For information write NITA, 2860 Orange Brace Road, Riverwoods, Illinois 60015, or call 945-9188.

FALL ACTIVITIES, Rain or Shine

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| Saturday, September 13 | Hike at West Chicago Prairie. We may also do some seed-gathering for redistribution on the prairie. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at parking lot of Electronic Support Systems on Industrial Drive. Leader will be Mel Hoff, West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group. For information: Paul and Jean Mooring, 469-4289. |
| Saturday, September 13
Sunday, September 14 | Two-Day Bike Trip Overnight to Kirkland near 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, September 20 | Work Day. Call Dick Wilson, 299-7882 (between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.) |
| Saturday, October 18 | Work Day. Call Dick Wilson, 299-7882 (between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.) |
| Sunday, November 2 | Illinois Prairie Path Annual Meeting. 2:00 p.m., DuPage County Historical Museum, 102 E. Wesley, Wheaton. For information: Bob Hargis, 668-7377. |
| Sunday, November 9 | Hike to Kane County on the Illinois Prairie Path Elgin Branch. Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Army Trail Road Path crossing, about 2 miles west of Rte. 59 in Wayne. We will hike to the CA&E station now housing a model railroad club on Kenyon Road, and return, 9.8 miles for the round trip. Bring lunch and drink. Leader: Dick Wilson, 299-7882. (Call between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.) |

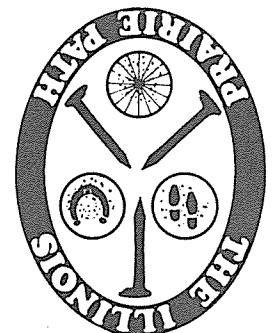
—Jean C. Mooring, Editor—

MEMBERSHIP RATES: Individual \$10; Family \$15; Organization/Supporting \$20; Contributing \$25; Sustaining \$50; Patron \$100; Lifetime \$500

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