



# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

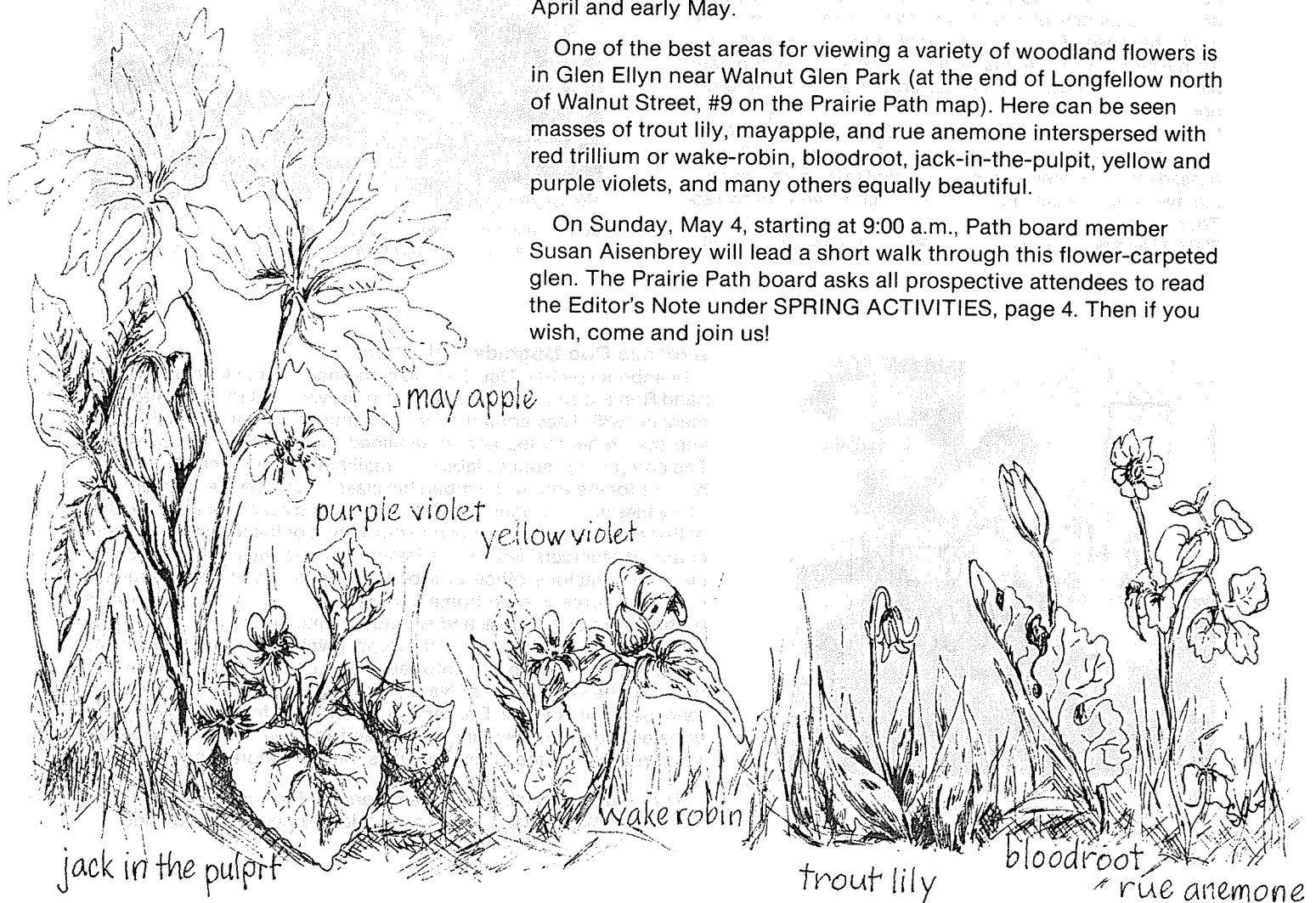
**SPRING 1986**

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR - **Woodland wildflowers**

Spring is the season for wildflowers in the deciduous woods along the Prairie Path. These plants must bloom quickly and set seed, generally by the end of May, before the oaks and maples leaf out and form a dense shade. Therefore, the best time to see them is late April and early May.

One of the best areas for viewing a variety of woodland flowers is in Glen Ellyn near Walnut Glen Park (at the end of Longfellow north of Walnut Street, #9 on the Prairie Path map). Here can be seen masses of trout lily, mayapple, and rue anemone interspersed with red trillium or wake-robin, bloodroot, jack-in-the-pulpit, yellow and purple violets, and many others equally beautiful.

On Sunday, May 4, starting at 9:00 a.m., Path board member Susan Aisenbrey will lead a short walk through this flower-carpeted glen. The Prairie Path board asks all prospective attendees to read the Editor's Note under SPRING ACTIVITIES, page 4. Then if you wish, come and join us!



### Prairie Path Loses Insurance and Lease

On January 17, 1986, members of the Prairie Path board of directors hand-delivered a letter signed by Paul Mooring, President, to Jack Knuepfer, Chairman of the DuPage County Board, stating that the Path's liability insurance expired on the 17th and would not be renewed. The Path would thus be in breach of its lease with DuPage County. Therefore the board had voted in emergency session to cease managing the trail immediately and turn this responsibility over to the County until such time as insurance coverage might be restored or other arrangements might be made. On January 28 the DuPage County Board responded by voting to terminate the Prairie Path lease "by mutual agreement", as recommended by the State's Attorney.

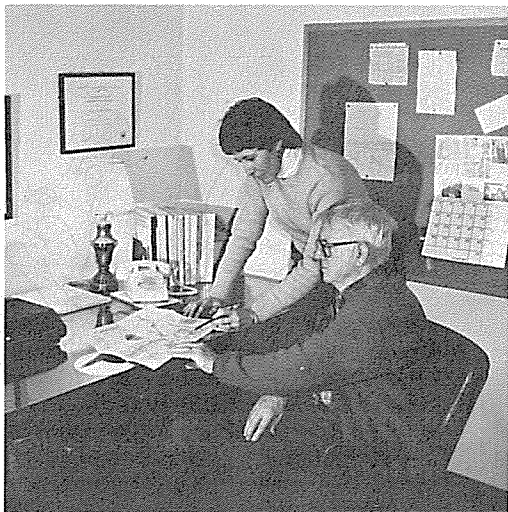
What does all this mean for the Prairie Path? The not-for-profit corporation called The Illinois Prairie Path will continue, according to the terms of its charter, promoting education and conservation for the benefit of the public through its office in Wheaton and its **Newsletter**, and working to establish footpaths and trails. (We are currently negotiating a lease with the Illinois Department of Conservation for 4½ miles of trail in Cook County on State-owned land, where it is remotely possible that the Prairie Path may be covered by State of Illinois self-insurance.) In DuPage County, however, the Prairie Path organization will no longer be recruiting volunteers or paying contractors to maintain the trail, although the hundreds of thousands of walkers, joggers and bicycle riders will continue to use the Path because it is public property. Maintenance will be the exclusive responsibility of the County and the municipalities through which the Path passes until either: 1) The Prairie Path obtains its own liability insurance so that the lease can be reinstated, or 2) DuPage County provides coverage through self-insurance, secures easements where necessary to guarantee continuity, and draws up a new agreement whereby volunteers will work directly for the County on trail maintenance. The Illinois General Assembly and Congress may also have to act to limit insurance carriers' risk so that they can afford to write this type of insurance.

### Results of New Usage Survey

On several days during the month of August, 1985, teams of Prairie Path volunteers or DuPage County Highway Department employees counted Path users passing checkpoints at four different locations along the trail (Ardmore Station, Villa Park; Volunteer Bridge, Wheaton; City Hall, Warrenville; and Geneva Road, Winfield). Many users filled out survey sheets and answered questions about their age group, frequency of use of the Path, preferred mode of travel, purpose of trip, and distance travelled. Suggestions for needed improvements included uneven or bumpy surface, path too narrow, hazardous crossings, standing water, poor signing, and lack of amenities. Heaviest usage was on the main stem between Elmhurst and Wheaton. One beautiful Sunday between 5:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., 1669 users passed the Volunteer Bridge checkpoint in Wheaton, averaging two per minute! Eighty-five percent were bicyclists. These results back up our earlier estimates of at least 200,000 and perhaps as many as 300,000 user-trips annually.



Susan Aisenbrey (seated) and daughter Cathy interview cyclist during usage survey at Ardmore Avenue station.



Dee Tevonian confers with office manager Ray Nelson in refurbished Members' Room.

### Dynamic Duo Upgrade Path Office

Membership chair Dee Tevonian and her electrical engineer husband Ron accomplished two major improvements for Path management in 1985: They computerized the entire membership mailing list and they redecorated and streamlined the Members' Room office. The computer produces labels for mailings, provides easily accessible files for the various membership classes, and makes maintenance of the files more businesslike. The second and even more spectacular of these achievements is the transformation of the formerly drab and cluttered Members' Room to a freshly-painted, well-lighted and efficient yet gracious office and board meeting room. Nice touches include natural-colored homespun cafe curtains at the windows, a pothos plant on the desk and Audubon prints on the off-white walls. The original oak floor, now uncovered, gives warmth to the room as do the inexpensive but comfortable new chairs, purchased by the board at the suggestion of Nancy Hesler. No more backaches after long board meetings! Dee and Ron and the four Tevonian sons donated the labor, the paint, the curtains, new light fixtures and table tops and most of the other amenities for this decorating miracle.

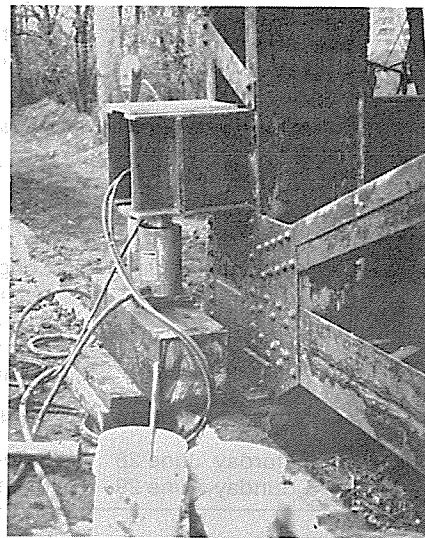
The grateful Prairie Path board sends a big thank-you to all the Tevonians. We're glad to have such talented people on our side!

### North Western Raises Volunteer Bridge

Just before Thanksgiving officials of the Chicago and North Western Railroad informed the Prairie Path board that the railroad needed to raise Volunteer Bridge six inches to allow the safe passage of double-decker container trains. Worried that jacking up the old bridge might damage its structural integrity as well as that of the new truss span connected to its north end, board members discussed the plans with the DuPage County Highway Department and also by long-distance phone with our chief bridge engineer Phil Hodge in Minneapolis. Phil gave his approval as did the County, so the job was done in approximately four days by fifteen members of the highly skilled CNW bridge repair crew. Cost to the railroad was about \$8,000, according to John Van Huis, CNW Bridge Engineer, who signed the warrant guaranteeing that the structural integrity of the bridge had not been lessened and that the welds of the north approach span had not been broken or altered by the raising of the bridge. Path board members monitored the entire project and noted that the workmen made every effort to comply with our suggestions. Phil also personally inspected and approved the completed job (He happened to be passing through the area on his Thanksgiving break).



CNW Bridge Engineer, John Van Huis (left), and crew foreman (in hard hat) explain plan for raising bridge to IPP board members Dee Tevonian, Paul Mooring and Bob Hargis.



Small cylindrical hydraulic jacks in place, ready to raise steel bent (north pier of bridge) so 6-inch-high, 2-foot-square steel bearing blocks can be inserted at ground level.

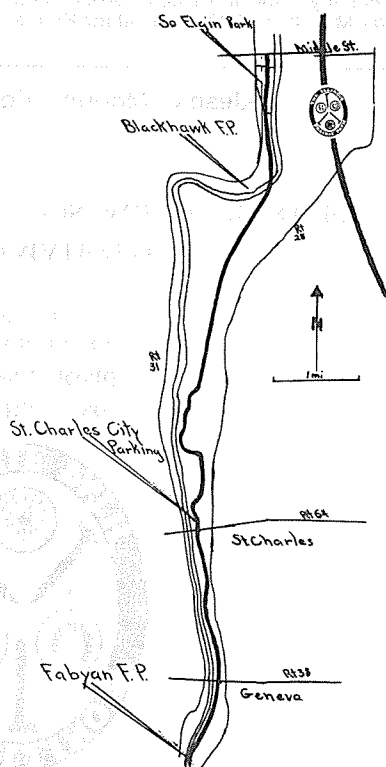
### New Trail in St. Charles

Path board member Jon Duerr, who is also the Kane County Forest Preserve District Assistant Superintendent for landscape design, reports that the St. Charles-to-South Elgin segment of the Fox River Trail will soon be ready for use. The Middle Street link with the Prairie Path is shown on the map. Foreseeable in the near future is the completion of a scenic, circular, off-road trail running from Wheaton to Wayne, Elgin, St. Charles, Geneva and Batavia, then back to Wheaton with only two or three short segments on public streets.

Jon writes, "The ever-increasing chain of bicycle paths has a new link for the 1986 season. A beautiful mosaic of forests, river shore and rural homes can be enjoyed as the Fox River Trail - North opens from St. Charles. The Kane County Forest Preserve District and the St. Charles Park District are completing construction on the last mile of the link. This summer bicycle riders will be able to leave their cars in the St. Charles Municipal Parking Lot (two blocks north of Rte. 64) and travel either north or south (The southern route is already in place)."

The new route proceeds north into Pottawatomie Park, thence on Third Avenue for three-quarters of a mile to Norris Woods, a dedicated Nature Preserve managed by the Park District. Here the trail returns to the Fox River along the edge of the magnificent forest. From Norris Woods the path winds its way through private floodplain forest land leased from the Arthur Anderson Company. After a short section on quiet Weber Drive the trail returns to the right-of-way of the old Fox River Trolley Line and descends to the reconstructed trolley bridge at Blackhawk Forest Preserve. Amenities here include parking, toilets, water and picnic facilities. Then the trail runs along the west side of the river to the Trolley Museum in South Elgin and to adjacent South Elgin Park, where parking and toilets are available. Hungry cyclists will find refreshments in the downtown area only a few blocks away.

Jon concludes, "The future holds new links for the trail system in Kane County; and, as in making a chain, these future links of the bicycle trail will make the chain more useful and interesting."



**\*Spring Activities, Rain or Shine**

**\* Editor's Note:** Due to the temporary inability of The Illinois Prairie Path to obtain liability insurance coverage for its volunteers, employees and users, the work days listed below may have to be cancelled. Please call Dick Wilson for information prior to each scheduled work day. Walks and bike rides will be held as planned but participants must provide their own insurance. Cleanups will be the responsibility of the various municipalities and DuPage County. The Elmhurst Park District will manage its prairie burn.

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| Sunday, April 6                                     | <b>Prairie Burn</b> , sponsored by Elmhurst Park District. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at Berkley and Path. For rain date and other information call Margaret Lopez, 834-2215.  |
| Saturday, April 19<br>(or as scheduled by villages) | <b>Annual Prairie Path Cleanup</b> in all villages and along entire length of Path. For information contact your local village administrator or Tom Merrion, DuPage County Highway Department, 665-1155.  |
| Sunday, May 4                                       | <b>Spring Wildflower Walk</b> in the woods. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot at Walnut Glen Park, Glen Ellyn (at the end of Longfellow north of Walnut St., #9 on your Prairie Path map). Leader: Susan Aisenbrey, 833-9856.  |
| Saturday, May 10                                    | <b>Work Day.</b> For information: Dick Wilson, 299-7882.  |
| Saturday, May 24                                    | <b>Bird Walk</b> 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 1                                      | Long and Short <b>Spring Hikes</b> to Lake Ellyn Park, Glen Ellyn; 10 miles and 6 miles respectively for the round trip. Bring picnic lunch and drink. For the long hike meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Villa Park Historical Museum, Villa Avenue and Path (#6 on the IPP map). Leader: Dick Wilson, 299-7882. For the short hike meet at 10:00 a.m. at Lombard Common Park (shown on IPP map). Leader: Susan Aisenbrey, 833-9856. |
| Saturday, June 14                                   | <b>Work Day.</b> For information: Dick Wilson, 299-7882.  |
| Saturday, June 28<br>& Sunday, June 29              | <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.  |

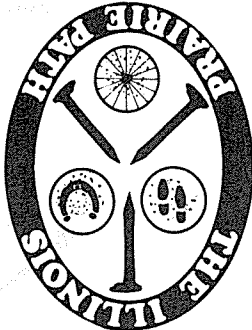
**Prairie Path T-Shirts Now Available**

- Good quality white cotton, short-sleeved, knit shirts. Green trim on neck and sleeves. Prairie Path logo on left front. Sizes: Adults -small, medium, large and extra large. Each \$8.00 - includes postage.
- Prairie Path patches \$1.50 each.
- Trail map \$.50 each.
- The Illinois Prairie Path - A Guide* by Helen Turner. Gives history, geology of Path. Many illustrations of wild flowers, trees, animal tracks seen on the Path. Each \$1.50. For quantities of 10 to 20 \$1.00 each; 20 or more \$.75 each. For any of the above items please send order to Illinois Prairie Path, Box 1086, Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All items also available weekends, May through October, at the Prairie Path Visitor Center in the Villa Park Historical Museum on the Path at Villa Avenue.

—Jean C. Mooring, Editor—

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