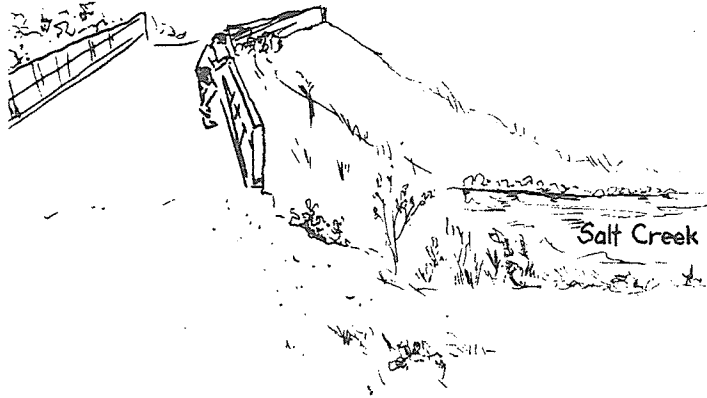


# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER



## What to look for: a railroad prairie remnant in Elmhurst.

Question: "What is the oldest living thing in Elmhurst?"

Answer: "It's a patch of prairie running between Salt Creek and Spring Road, known as the Elmhurst Great Western Prairie."

This enticing bit of information, which may surprise some local residents, appears in a brochure recently published by the Elmhurst Park District. The park district owns and manages the Great Western Prairie and also manages the adjoining DuPage County-owned Elmhurst section of the Illinois Prairie Path. The brochure explains that the native grassland ecosystem with its complex mixture of plants, insects, birds and mammals, all well-adapted to withstand harsh extremes of temperature and moisture, covered the northern two-thirds of Illinois more than 5000 years ago.

Now less than one percent remains in its natural state. This particular remnant survived only because it lay between two railroads and could not be used by incoming settlers for any other purpose.

A Prairie Management Advisory Commission helps the park district maintain the prairie as a living museum by organizing regular cleanups, burns (in conjunction with the Elmhurst Fire Department) and cutting to control woody growth, as well as seed collection and planting of seedlings to propagate desirable species. The volunteers have been led for more than fourteen years by Keith Olson, teacher at York High School and former Illinois Prairie Path board member.

The Elmhurst Prairie is best viewed from the entrances at Berkley Avenue.

Be sure to look at the new display cases, which contain information not only about the Illinois Prairie Path, but also about the native plants and the programs for prairie maintenance.



# PATH NEEDS LAND NORTH OF OLD COUNTY COURTHOUSE

**N**ow that the new DuPage County Courthouse has opened at the complex on County Farm Road, the members of The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors are asking when we will receive an answer to this letter dated March 11, 1991 from President Paul Mooring to Michael Formento, Chairman of the DuPage County Board Judiciary Committee:

"The members of the board of directors of The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation have asked me to write to you in response to your call for citizen input regarding the future uses of the DuPage County Courthouse property. As you know, the 1070-foot-long section of the Illinois Prairie Path between Washington Street and Cross Street in Wheaton, just north of the county courthouse, is located on the Chicago and North Western Railroad right-of-way. Although, to the best of our knowledge, no agreement has ever formalized this arrangement, the railroad management has not objected to the Prairie Path's use of its property for more than



*Parked cars (left), a row of trees, sloping ground, and a railroad (right) make for a very narrow trail at the old county courthouse.*

twenty-five years. This use has not harmed the railroad and it has greatly benefitted the Path. Our board of directors feels, however,

that the IPP should not continue forever taking advantage of the railroad's generosity, especially at this location where DuPage County owns almost the whole block south of, and adjoining, the railroad property. Therefore, we urge that DuPage County relocate the trail a few feet to the south and reestablish it on a strip of land at least ten feet wide on what is now the northern end of the county-owned courthouse parking lot. We envision a beautifully-landscaped area that both city and county can be proud of. We think it would be appropriate to include this relocation in your general plan for the courthouse."

This is our last chance to make the Illinois Prairie Path legally continuous in this section because the courthouse property may soon be sold to some outside agency with no interest in trails. We urge our members and friends to contact their county board representatives and ask them to include in the deed an easement for a trail at the north end of the parking lot.

## OUR NEW FORMAT – PROS AND CONS

**S**ome thought it was just fine; some hated it. Most of the approximately ten respondents did at least agree that the three-column layout for the news pages is more readable because one line of type can be read at a glance. They also approved the bolder headlines for the same reason. Jim Lentz of Wheaton wrote, "I like the new format. Bold heading and better spacing makes for easier reading. Keep up the good work." The new front page layout, however, provoked a relative storm of protest, mainly from present and former board members. "I just don't like it," growled Paul Mooring, Glen Ellyn. "To me it looks more ordinary, undistinguished, readily discardable," wrote Liz Holmes, Lombard. Gene Pomerance of Elmhurst complained "You have taken the elegance of the first page away from us" and "the fat black headlines overwhelm the logo at the top of the page." The editor herself thinks the old front page nature note layout, originated by Helen Turner and embellished by Susan Terwedow's hand-drawn illustrations, is indeed a mark of distinction which sets our newsletter apart from all

### BIKE TRAILS THREATENED; PLEASE WRITE THE GOVERNOR

The Chicagoland Bicycle Federation is asking Illinois trail users to write Governor Edgar *today* to request an amendatory veto of a dangerous amendment to a bill now on his desk. He must act before the end of September. The announcement follows:

A last-minute amendment to Illinois Senate Bill 1283, introduced by Rep. Larry Wennlund (R., New Lenox) of Will County will make it virtually impossible for 10 Illinois forest preserve districts (Will, Kane, Kendall, Byron, DeKalb, Champaign, Winnebago, Rock Island, Tazwell, and Piatt Counties) to build new bike trails or acquire any new land without municipal and township consent.

This bill is now sitting on Governor Edgar's desk.

If Edgar signs SB 1283, Will County's Old Plank Road Trail as well as many other proposed trails around Chicago will be dead.

#### What You Can Do:

Write to: Honorable James Edgar  
State House  
Springfield, IL 62706

Urge Edgar to amendatorily veto Amendment 6 of SB 1283. This amendment ties up important trail projects with lengthy municipal and township approvals and makes it easier for individuals to oppose trails that can be used by millions.

For more information: Betsy Otto or Joyce O'Keefe, Openlands Project (312) 427-4256.

others. So it is decided: we modernize with the three-column format for the news pages, and we keep the classic front page.

Now is everybody happy?

# ELMHURST PARK DISTRICT SETS STANDARD FOR SUBURBAN TRAIL MANAGEMENT

**T**wo former railroads equal one long crosstown park in Elmhurst. Since the mid-seventies the Elmhurst Park District has managed as a unit the old Great Western right-of-way (now called Wild Meadows Trace Park) and the adjacent Chicago, Aurora and Elgin right-of-way (Illinois Prairie Path). This arrangement is unique in DuPage County and it is working extremely well, thanks to the cooperation of park district commission, staff and maintenance crews, the City of Elmhurst, especially the fire department, the DuPage County Division of Transportation, owner of the Prairie Path right-of-way, and volunteer citizens' groups, such as People

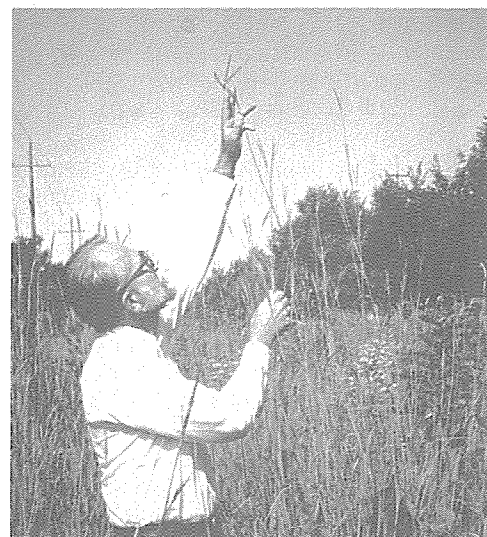


*Flower beds beautify Path at Spring Road.*

for the Elmhurst Parks, whose chairman is Jay Vassallo, and the Prairie Management Advisory Committee, whose originator and unofficial chairman is Keith Olson.

Several years ago the park district drew up a management plan for this long narrow park (2 miles long and 200 feet wide) dividing it into zones for varied activities, both active and passive, such as a fitness course, picnic areas and wooded natural areas, a historic building restored and used for meetings (the old Great Western station at York Road), and an area for conservation education (the prairie restoration west of Spring Road to Salt Creek). According to the plan, the principal street crossings at Spring and York have been beautified with plantings of colorful annuals; and fountains, benches and other amenities have been installed at both of these major Path entrances. Other on-going programs include the planting of trees and shrubs along the Path (a few of these have died because of this summer's terrible drought but they will be replaced as funds become available), the installation of decorative old-fashioned street lights, and of course regular cleanups.

This year, in spite of the drought, the Elmhurst section of the Illinois Prairie Path and Wild Meadows Trace Park have never



*Keith Olson shows off nine-foot prairie dock plant thriving in the drought.*

looked better as the Elmhurst Park District provides an example of successfully integrated management of these two entire rights-of-way. Kudos to: Mick Pope, Director of Parks and Recreation; Steve Plumb, Superintendent of Parks and Planning; Ruth Ward, Assistant to the Superintendent of Planning; and the members of the Elmhurst Park Board. Congratulations to you all and to the citizens of Elmhurst for a truly outstanding effort!

**Editor's Note:** The park district always welcomes volunteers. Contact Ruth Ward, 834-2215 or Keith Olson, 834-7357, if you would like to help.

## BOB AND BONNIE HARGIS ARE MOVING DOWNSTATE

**T**he Illinois Prairie Path board of directors announces with deep regret the mid-September departure of two longtime board members, Bob and Bonnie Hargis. Bob has served with distinction as a board member since 1982 and as vice president since 1983. He has been a tireless worker for the Path in many capacities: member and chair of the Projects and Maintenance Committee, organizer of the spring cleanup and annual meeting for many years, and Path liaison to the city government of Wheaton where he lives. An avid cyclist, Bob regularly rides all sections of the Path and reports to the proper authorities any problems needing action. Action usually follows too. Bonnie has been equally valuable to the board, though less visible, as office manager and membership chair. Hers is the friendly voice you hear

when you call the office for information, but fielding all those calls is just one aspect of her vital role. Another is the hundreds of trips she has made to the post office to pick up the mail and all the letters she has then responded to. And there is the indispensable task of sending out the membership renewal letters and keeping the membership list up to date. Bonnie has been doing all this and much more with good-humored dignity and efficiency since 1987. The IPP office has never had a better manager.

The Prairie Path will miss the Hargises, and we wish them well in their new country home near Charleston, Illinois, in Coles County about 45 miles south of Champaign. Maybe they will start a trail of their own down there!



*Bob and Bonnie Hargis two of the Prairie Path's best friends.*

# LOMBARD BEAUTIFIES IPP AT WESTMORE

**O**n July 10 the Village of Lombard put the finishing touches to a multi-jurisdictional landscaping project to improve the entrances to the Illinois Prairie Path on both sides of Westmore Avenue. The village installed a bench and bicycle rack, which had been donated as a memorial by the family of Kurt Zoellner, a young Lombard resident who loved bicycling and the Illinois Prairie Path. Prairie Path Vice President Bob Hargis helped coordinate the project and the IPP board of directors contributed a display case stand, designed and fabricated by Paul Mooring. The DuPage County Division of Transportation had provided major assistance previously when it did the grading and surfacing at the site last year. The planting of many trees, both evergreen and deciduous, as well as shrubs and colorful flowers completed the project (at a



*Bike rack (left rear), bench, plantings, and display case at Westmore, Lombard.*

cost of \$14,800 for plant materials, covered under warranty for one year). This is a splendid example of Lombard Pride in action.

# DUPAGE COUNTY AIRPORT UPDATE

Thanks to the drought this summer the DuPage County Airport Authority is running ahead of schedule with its new drainage system and will have the two new runways ready for use by December. Commonwealth Edison Company has also virtually finished burying its 12- and 34-kilovolt lines on a U-shaped bypass some 1000 feet south of the new runways; the Illinois Prairie Path Geneva Spur will be relocated on this bypass. Although the vegetation on the old IPP right-of-way has been destroyed, new plantings are planned for the bypass route, which will also be enhanced by its proximity to the planned golf course. The Chicago and North Western Railroad is beginning the relocation of its east-west spur line, which now bisects the airport. The new line will connect with the main line out of West Chicago north of Roosevelt Road and will turn north along the east side of Kautz Road, crossing the Prairie Path at grade.

Notwithstanding all this construction activity, a few intrepid Prairie Path users can still be seen bicycling doggedly through the airport along the dusty old pot-holed Geneva Spur (also known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail). Their patience will be rewarded in November when the promised new trail is scheduled for completion, according to Jim Kelleher, spokesman for the airport authority.

Jean C. Mooring, Editor

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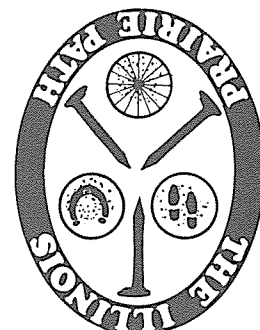


## NEW LOCATION FOR ANNUAL MEETING

Vice President Bob Hargis reports that the DuPage County Historical Museum will no longer be available for The Illinois Prairie Path corporation's annual meeting because it is inconvenient for museum staff to open the building on a Sunday. This year, therefore, the meeting will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 3, in room 1046/48 of the Student Resource Center at College of DuPage. We hope to have as our main speaker the new director of the Illinois Department of Conservation, Brent Manning. Members and friends are invited to come and elect the new members of the board of directors, see the annual slide show, and enjoy good talk and delicious refreshments.

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