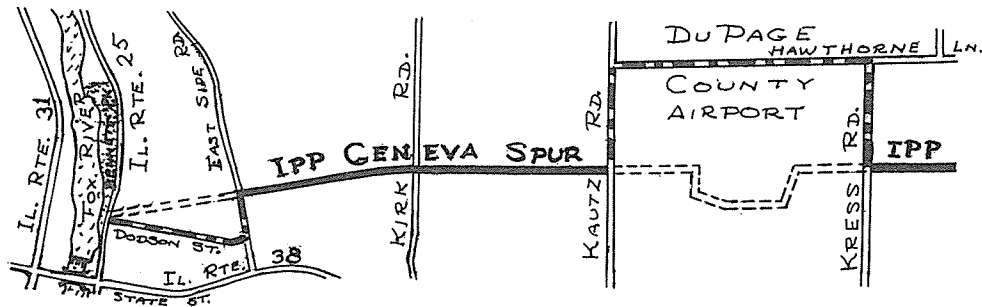


THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SPRING, 1991

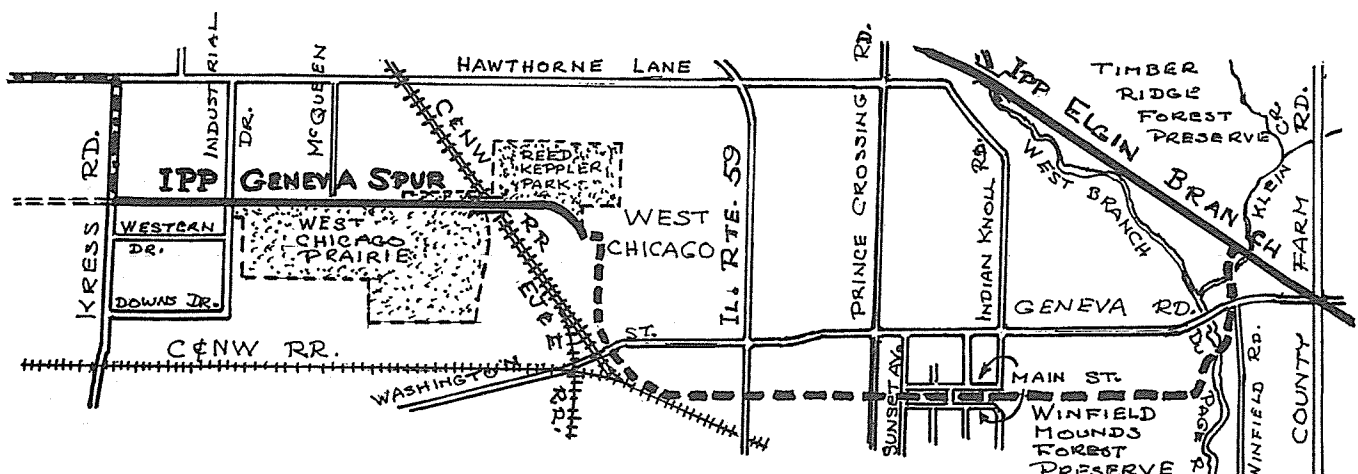


What to look for: the trail on the Geneva Spur

It has always been hard to find this section of the former Chicago, Aurora and Elgin right-of-way. This year the many interruptions, new and old, make the search for the trail an even greater challenge. Breaks in the continuity of the eight-mile-long Geneva Spur include: a three-block detour south of the right-of-way along Dodson Street between Bennett Park and East Side Road in Geneva; a two-mile detour north of the right-of-way on Hawthorne Lane between Kautz Road and Kress Road because of construction at the DuPage Airport; an undecided relocation of the trail on city streets through the center of West Chicago; and the permanent gap east of Winfield Road, where the right-of-way has been sold to developers. This gap will some day be closed by a proposed new trail running north through Winfield Mounds and Timber Ridge Forest Preserves along the West DuPage River and Klein Creek to the Illinois Prairie Path Elgin Branch just west of County Farm Road.

Once found, however, the Geneva Spur section of the Illinois Prairie Path offers many pleasures to the adventuresome traveller: the smooth-flowing Fox River viewed from Bennett Park in Geneva; the oak savannas and flower-carpeted swales of the West Chicago Prairie; the beautiful new bridge near spacious Reed-Keppler Park; West Chicago's historic district at the heart of this famous railroad town; and the peaceful woods and meadows of Winfield Mounds Forest Preserve, which also contain the 1500-year-old site of what is believed to have been a Woodland Indian village near the West Branch of the DuPage River. Deer, fox and beaver are still seen today along the river despite the advance of housing developments and shopping centers.

Good access points to the right-of-way are located at Indian Knoll Road and Lake Drive, Prince Crossing Road, Reed-Keppler Park, MacQueen Road, and Industrial Drive. If you can find the trail, you will surely appreciate its potential and perhaps wish to encourage all the government agencies concerned to make it a reality as soon as possible.

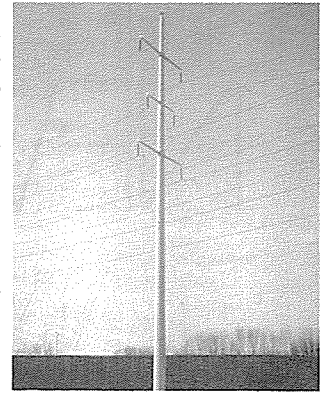


Com Ed To Transmit More Power to Wheaton

Commonwealth Edison Company has announced plans to add new high-tension 138-kilovolt transmission lines to its existing 34-kilovolt lines along the Illinois Prairie Path on the Aurora Branch. This additional power is made necessary by all the new developments in Wheaton and along the I-88 and Butterfield Road corridors. The new lines will extend from the Com Ed peaking station at Eola Road in rural Aurora some seven miles to Orchard Road in Wheaton. The existing wood poles will be replaced by taller steel poles two feet in diameter at the base, 75 to 85 feet high depending on terrain, and spaced 300 to 600 feet apart. The poles will have clean contemporary lines and will be light grey in color to blend with the sky. The company is doing surveying now and will begin soil borings in March. Installation will begin in April and be completed by May. One larger substation will replace two smaller ones near Water Tower Court, Wheaton.

According to Brian Willemsen, area manager, the electromagnetic fields resulting from the increased voltages will be minimized by spacing the six high-power lines closer together and farther from the ground with the frequencies 1/3 cycle out of phase so that the fields do not reinforce each other. This configuration is more efficient and may also minimize any possible biological effects.

Editor's Note: A booklet written for the general public, called "Electric and Magnetic Fields from 60 Hertz Electric Power: What do we know about possible health risks?", is available for \$3.50 from the Department of Engineering and Public Policy, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213. Contact: Dr. Granger Morgan, (412) 268-2672.



Late model Com Ed steel pole on I-355 right-of-way near St. Charles Road.



Liz and Sam Holmes with May Watts enjoy an Illinois Prairie Path outing at Warrentville Grove Forest Preserve, October 3, 1966.

Holmeses Return

Sam and Liz Holmes have moved back to DuPage County from their home in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. They are now in residence at Beacon Hill in Lombard. All their Illinois Prairie Path friends remember well their pioneering work for the Path. As two members of the original twelve-member Prairie Path board of directors, they helped May Theilgaard Watts and Helen Turner lay the foundation for the trail we all enjoy today. Sam was the Path's first attorney and Liz was the corresponding secretary, who kept everyone informed of Path developments. In 1979, before their retirement in Wisconsin, they collaborated on a light-hearted history of the Path's early days, given in the form of a talk at the Mill Race Inn in Geneva. They called it "The Illinois Prairie Path —

Trials and Triumphs". It tells an inspiring story of what volunteers can accomplish in a good cause. (Copies are available for \$5.00 from the office in Wheaton.)

The Holmeses have returned just in time for one more triumph, climaxing almost twenty-eight years of work by the Illinois Prairie Path volunteers: official recognition by DuPage County of our trail's name and logo. We have been assured that this will happen SOON. Welcome back, Liz and Sam, and take a bow!

Zigzagging along the Geneva Spur

The map on the first page shows what can happen to a railroad right-of-way that has been abandoned for more than fifty years. Although the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin ceased operations on the Geneva Spur in 1937, most of the right-of-way between the West Branch of the DuPage River in Winfield and the Fox River in Geneva has remained in the possession of Commonwealth Edison Company and has been kept open for use by various utilities. Much of the right-of-way has also been surfaced for trail use by the Kane County Forest Preserve District and the DuPage County Division of Transportation. There are, however, four major problem areas:

1. The 3-block section in Geneva between Bennett Park and East Side Road. The adjacent homeowners claim that Commonwealth Edison does not have the right to lease this property to the Kane County Forest Preserve District for trail purposes. The matter is currently in the courts and a decision is expected soon. Path users now detour south around this section on Dodson Street, marked as a bike route.

2. The 1-mile section in rural West Chicago which bisects the DuPage Airport property between Kautz and Kress Roads. The new north-south runways will require Commonwealth Edison to relocate a 2000-foot section of 34-kV lines approximately 700 feet to the south. The lines will be encased in oil-filled pipe for cooling and buried at a depth of 6 to 8 feet. The Airport Authority will then rebuild the Prairie Path on Com Ed's relocated right-of-way according to standards set by the DPCDOT, which leases the property from Com Ed. A golf course will adjoin this section of the Path some day. The relocated Path should



IPP Geneva Spur detour around DuPage Airport project.

be open for use by the end of August. In the meantime Path users must detour north to Hawthorne Lane. Another potential problem is the proposed relocation of the former Great Western Railroad, now a Chicago and North Western spur line running through the airport property, to the south along Kautz Road. This will result in a new at-grade railroad crossing on the Path and will require a crossing permit.

3. The 1 1/2-mile section through the West Chicago central business district, where the original trolley line was laid on city streets. The city council has not agreed on a marked bike route so Path users are free to find their own way. The closest approximation to the old CA&E route is Main Street to Fremont to Grand Lake Blvd.; then jog west to the alley beside the public works department; north to Elmwood and west to the IPP right-of-way.

4. The 2 1/4-mile potential trail section between West Chicago and the IPP Elgin Branch at Klein Creek. One block east of Easton in West Chicago one can find the old right-of-way and follow it 1 1/2 miles to the West Branch of the DuPage River. This section is beautiful but rough and overgrown. Our greatest challenge now is to persuade the DPCDOT and the DuPage County Forest Preserve District to cooperate in surfacing this section and connecting it to the IPP Elgin Branch via a new trail through Winfield Mounds Forest Preserve and Timber Ridge Forest Preserve. This trail will require a bridge over the West DuPage River and another over Klein Creek; it should cross Geneva Road at the Winfield Road stoplight. A \$100,000 OSLAD matching grant has been allocated to the DPCDOT by the Illinois Department of Conservation for the Geneva Spur project. The grant is waiting in Springfield and can be utilized as soon as plans are complete.

Recent Eagle Projects on the Prairie Path

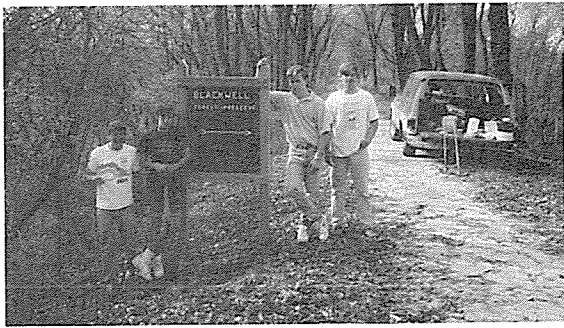
Jim Stewart, new IPP board member and longtime scout leader, sends the following report:

Three Eagle Scout service projects were completed on the Path in 1990 by scouts from Varsity Team 6005 of Geneva. An Eagle service project is the final requirement that a scout must complete before he can earn his Eagle rank, the highest rank in scouting.

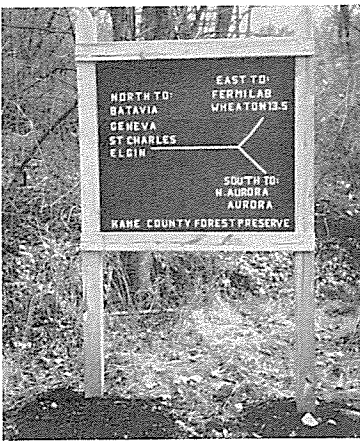
The first project was completed by Nathan Jeppesen of West Chicago. He constructed and erected two signs we have designed to inform users of points of interest along the Path. One was placed at Prince Crossing Road on the Elgin Branch facing west and reads Timber Ridge Forest Preserve. Space is left on the sign for future information. The other sign was placed west of Klein Creek and points the way to a very rustic backdoor trail to Kline Creek Farm. It is a two-sided sign reading "Kline Creek Farm — Old Time Farm Exhibits" with an arrow pointing the way. Unlike the first sign, this one was not installed in concrete because there is a possibility that it will be moved east to County Farm Road when the DPCFPD develops a better connecting trail to Kline Creek Farm from the IPP.

The second project was done by Aaron Blonquist of Batavia, who repaired or replaced five mile markers at various locations along the Elgin Branch and one on the Main Stem in Villa Park. Steel markers were pounded in even with the ground so that the locations can be found easily if the markers are removed again.

The third project was completed by Ben Lehrfeld of St. Charles and was a combination of the two above. A new sign was placed at the head of the side trail leading to Blackwell Forest Preserve to replace the one stolen by vandals. This sign was installed with two concrete building blocks bolted to the legs and two 90-lb. bags of cement poured into each block to prevent the vandalism from occurring again. The marker at Mile 5 on the Aurora Branch, which had been knocked loose during the Warrenville Library construction, was re-



Varsity Team 6005 Eagle Project, Fall 1990. Blackwell sign after installation. (l to r) Brian Richards, Jarrett Blonquist, Ben Lehrfeld and Brad Bound. Ben is project leader.



Sign installed by Varsity Team 6005 scouts at junction of IPP Batavia Spur and Fox River Trail.

re-cemented and the lettering was given a touchup of fresh white paint. We then put road crossing (street) signs at Kirk, Wagner, Raddant and Hart Roads. These are routed pine stained dark brown with white letters. Mile markers were placed at two locations, Mile 12 on the Batavia Spur just west of Hart Road, and Mile 13 on the Aurora Branch just west of Indian Trail in Aurora, completing the mile marker installation on these two trail sections. Some mile markers were touched up also. The crowning achievement is the biggest sign yet, 47 inches wide, at the junction of the Batavia Spur and the Fox River Trail just south of "Funway". This handsome routed sign, firmly set on solid bedrock, lists the names of the major towns to the north, south and east and should help confused Path users find their destinations more easily.

Jim writes, "I am proud of all these young men and the service they have given . . . There are 22 young men in Varsity Team 6005, only five of whom have completed Eagle projects, so we can look forward to many more projects on the Path. This is a win/win situation for all: the Path gets the projects it needs and the

community is served; the young man learns service to that community and can take pride in a job well done."