

Our Times

Spring 2002

The People, History, and Culture of Logan County, Illinois

volume 7 issue 1



Let's Play

Parks, Park Districts, and the Out-of-Doors

The old recreation center on Clinton Street in Lincoln was a “haven of safety,” says Don Vinson.

When Don went to high school in the fifties, the Lincoln high school was located on Broadway Street. Twice—after basketball games against Springfield and Pekin—he remembers gathering with a group of friends on the school’s front steps to make snowballs and pile them up. As the visiting team’s fans left the building, they were met by “a barrage of snowballs.”

“They’d want to retaliate, of course,” Don remembers, “and we’d be gone!” Gone—running back up the stairs, into the school, across the gym floor (in their wet street shoes), and out the back door—to jump into their parked cars and drive to the Rec, “where we were safe,” says Don.

That may not have been the kind of safety community leaders had in mind, but one of the purposes of a recreation center *is* to provide a safe place—where all

the energy and lightheartedness of youth can be channeled into harmless and worthwhile activities.

Grownups need recreation, too. That often means enjoying the out-of-doors: attending a family reunion at Memorial Park, setting up lawn chairs for a band concert at Latham Park, or even just strolling a tree-lined street.

Frequently, recreation centers and parks come together in park districts, as they did in Lincoln and Mt. Pulaski.

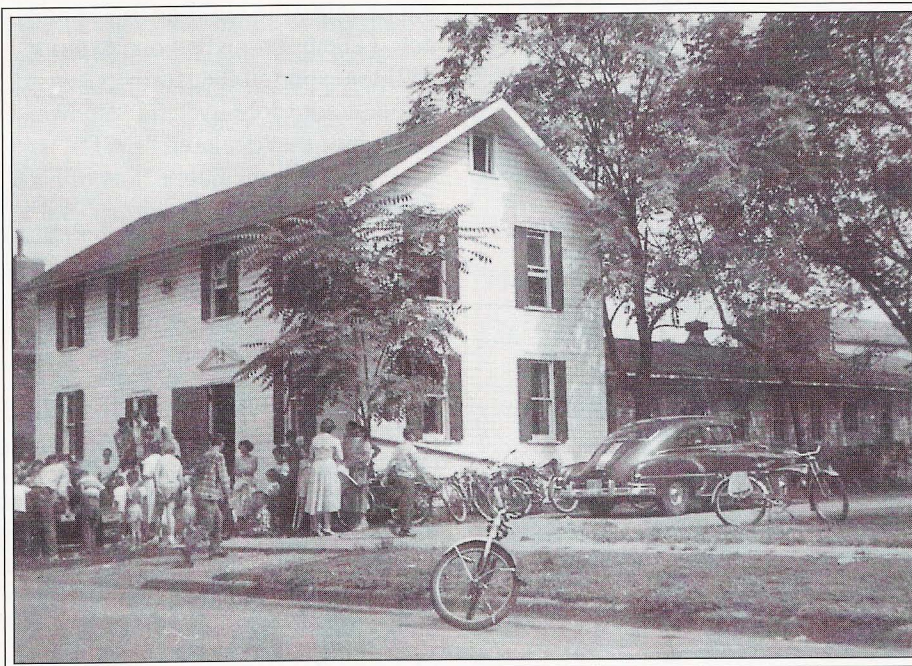
“The Rec”

Lincoln’s recreation center had its beginnings in a most unlikely place—a former tavern called Coonhound Johnny’s.

Amid concerns about underage drinking and juvenile delinquency, and following a survey of community needs, the Community Recreational Association was chartered in July of 1944.

The organization—which included representatives of civic and educational groups—held dances at the Lincoln high school and Lincoln College gymnasiums.

In 1945, the Association hired Winfield Bates to head up a summer



“The Rec” on Clinton Street in Lincoln. Lincoln, Illinois: A Pictorial History.

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Publisher's Notes

The Beason-Chestnut Park is an untilled oasis in the broad lap of prairie farmland south of Beason. The 57 acres of pond, grass, and trees straddle Salt Creek and are bordered with picnic tables. It is a great place to fish with the kids, and one of my favorite parks in the county.

I describe it reluctantly, because those who have discovered it are sure it is a secret spot. I suspect it was the last campground of the last Kickapoo chief to inhabit these parts. His spirit looms over it yet.

Madigan State Park is where we drive at twilight in early winter to see the deer pawing for fodder. Kickapoo Park is where we gather on summer eves to eat fried chicken under the pavilion and chase each other through the woods. Latham Park is where we sit on lawn chairs around the bandstand and listen to concerts, pretending it is 1910 and John Phillip Sousa is due to perform next, just before someone serves ice cream. Scully Park sprays our senses with green freshness when we walk toward our car parked on its perimeter after a matinee at

Lincoln Cinema. Memorial Park is where we watch balding men slap the leather centers of their ball gloves, spit on the ground, hunch down with their hands on their knees, and call out, "Hey batter, batter, batter," just as they have done since they were boys.

The boulevards are parks. I walk my dog, Barney, up and down the Lincoln Avenue boulevard, past budding crabapples in the spring, under starry skies on still summer nights, within Lincoln's golden autumn glory, and through the bright white snow in wintertime. And if Barney could read, he would respond to that sappy sentence with a little doggy barf.

Then there is the Rec. My daughter Becky was pictured in the *Courier* teaching a youngster to swim at the Rec when she was in high school. It's one of my favorite photographs. Does anyone have more fun or accumulate more lifelong memories than high school kids who work at swimming pools in the summer?

I remember the blow of a whistle and the "Ready, go!" and the swooshing swirl of strong arms churning water up and down the 50-meter aluminum pool at the Archie Harris Swim Camp in the '70s. Biddy basketball, gymnastics, volleyball, square dancing, ceramics, bluegrass festivals, political fundraisers, YMCA fun days, annual meetings, campaign forums, golf range, archery—the Rec has come a long way since it was a swimming pool, a greenhouse, and a pool table.

Have you ever sat on the bleachers in the middle of the ball diamonds at the Rec, surrounded by baseball games out of every corner of your eye?

Many good people have contributed to what the Rec is today, and some of them are featured in this issue of *Our Times*. The Rec is simply one of the best things about Lincoln. **SR**

(Continued from page 1)

program, including a softball league. Meanwhile, members and local teenagers had been keeping their eyes open for a building that could be used as a recreation center.

They got their chance when the abandoned Coonhound Johnny's tavern north of Lincoln needed to be moved to make room for the widening of Route 66.

Teenagers were excited about moving the tavern and turning it into a

teenage hangout. "We were just sure it would work," says Mary Lou Mills Fink.

Mary Redus Gayle was in high school at the time, and she remembers that the former tavern was "quite rickety." Not only that, but she and her friends were nonplussed to find "piles and piles of moldy sugar" inside the building. Her parents said it was probably left over from bootlegging during Prohibition.

The Association bought the tavern, and in November of 1945, it was moved in two sections to a vacant lot owned by the city of Lincoln at 408 Clinton Street, across from Washington (now Scully) Park and just west of Washington School. The site was the former location of the streetcar barns and is now part of the Don Shay Parking Plaza.

It was a community effort. Private citizens and businesses advanced funds for the tavern's purchase and renovation; Lincoln Kiwanis and Rotary club members cleared the site of city brick and tile stored there; local bricklayers built the foundations; and Roy Weaver, Harry Augspurger, and Harry Goodman worked many cold evenings installing the furnace.

Teenagers did their share, too, including painting the building inside and out. (The building had one exterior wall that sported the words "Coonhound Johnny" and "Budweiser" and a roof that declared "EATS"). Mary Gayle remembers "lots of hard work—almost every Saturday" for a "long, long time."

One evening, as about 40 of the kids gathered to help clean up, they named their new gathering place "The Rec."

Mrs. John (Lucile) Green, art instructor at Lincoln College, Mrs. Thomas (Violet) Scully, and Mrs. Albert (Grace) Heitmann supervised the decorating of the interior, including a mural painted by teens of activities like dancing, football, Coke dates, basketball, track, and swimming.

Mary Gayle remembers painting musical notes on one wall. She thinks her

father, Robert, who was an artist, may have helped design the murals.

The Rec had its grand opening in September of 1946. It was governed by an adult board of directors and a youth board. Membership dues were \$1.00 for six months, and Henry Fallek was hired as recreational director. The center was open for teens on Friday and Saturday nights and occasionally during the week.

The Rec was a little two-story white building, with a long one-story dance floor that stretched out behind it.

Georgia Brown Vinson remembers a lobby with a Ping-Pong table and snack bar where kids could buy candy bars and bottles of Coke or orange and grape pop.

Betty Derrickson McKinlay says Tom Tiffany and the other boys played pool, while some people enjoyed table games. She remembers "a lot of fun dancing there on weekends" in the late forties.

At the north end of the dance floor, groups like Harry Ryan's orchestra, Harold Scott's band, or the Darrel Last combo played in the little bandstand area once or twice a month.

Dressed in plaid skirts, sweaters, bobby sox, and saddle shoes, the girls sat on the right side of the ballroom. Boys sat on the left, and more dancing took place when it was "girls' choice," says Georgia Vinson.

Lincoln had three movie theaters in the early fifties: the Grand, the Lincoln, and the Vogue. The Lincoln and the Vogue were close enough that after a show, "you could hoof right over to the Rec," says Georgia.

When there was no band present, the kids danced to music from the jukebox—popular groups like the Platters, Chuck Barry, and Buddy Holly. When there were no kids present, other groups used the building.

Other activities of the recreation association the summer of 1946 included horseshoes at Washington Park; tennis tournaments; adult and youth softball; and a supervised play-

ground program at Central, Jefferson, and Monroe schools. Children played games and did crafts like making coasters from pressed cork. Each group spent one day every week at Lincoln Lakes.

On April 17, 1951, Lincoln voters approved an ordinance creating a tax-supported city recreation department. That September, William G. Jasinek became full-time superintendent of recreation. He was followed by Willis "Bud" Baker, Robert Stearns, and Sam Hill.

In 1953, Mrs. C. (Norma) Woods, president of the Community Recreational Association, presented the key to the Rec to Mayor Alois M. Feldman. Its job completed, the Association was dissolved.

More Fun

A popular activity that began at the old Rec and continued for many years was the Twelfth Night celebration. Don Vinson remembers that high school juniors and seniors drove city dump trucks around town, picking up discarded Christmas trees, which were later burned in a huge bonfire in the field across from the old high school. A dance followed at the Rec; refreshments

included a big white sheet cake.

One year, Don was standing next to Kenny Bradley when Kenny bit into a piece of cake and said "Yeow!" He had found the little ring that made him king of the party; the girl who found the other trinket was the queen.

When summer came, young people served as playground directors.

In about 1961, Ruby Thompson Aughenbaugh [Jacobson Paice] followed Maxine Werschey as secretary and assistant to Superintendent of Recreation Sam Hill. Playground directors she remembers are Bernie LaValle, Dick Zielinski, Jerry Dehner, Johnny Guzzardo, Lenny and George Janet, and Roger Webster. Playground programs continued until the early seventies.

Jerry Dehner worked summers at the Rec from the age of 15 through college. Those days include his "fondest memories," he says: being outdoors and around youngsters who seemed to look up to him and enjoy the activities.

Dragging ball diamonds wasn't quite as much fun: using a rake on a wet diamond or dragging a piece of fence around behind a car—a job that was dry and "dustier than all get out and hot." ■



Fourth annual bicycle parade and rodeo, July 22, 1960. Lincoln Daily Courier. Carolyn Hill directed day camp that year at Lincoln Memorial Park.

Lincoln Park District

In 1961, Lincoln voters approved the formation of a park district that encompassed the city of Lincoln. The new park district had the power to levy taxes to care both for the parks within its boundaries and Memorial Park, the old Chautauqua grounds acquired by the city in 1960.

The Lincoln Park District was a separate entity from the city, although its boundaries were the same. Its first directors—elected when the district was created—were Arthur Gimbel, Weldon “Pete” Frantz, James Stewart, Richard Becker, and Richard Funk. Art Gimbel was the first president.

Harry “Hap” Jacobson had been superintendent of the Lincoln Recreation Department, and Ruby Aughenbaugh had been the secretary. When the Park District and Recreation Department merged in 1966, they had the same jobs, but they worked for the Park District.

In 1965, by an eight-vote margin, Park District voters approved a \$600,000 bond issue for a new recreation center. Located on Primm Road next to the high school, the Lincoln Community Center opened in 1967 and included a youth room, card room, offices, kitchen, ceramics room, ballroom, and Olympic-sized outdoor swimming pool. It had no gymnasium, says Dick Funk, because there were gyms at the schools and Odd Fellows. In 1974, a greenhouse was built from funds that included money Art Gimbel had given.

Ceramics

The Community Center has seen many activities: card playing, ballroom and square dancing, judo lessons, Easter egg hunts, Halloween and Fourth of July parties, classes in painting and baton twirling, summer bands—and ceramics.

As early as 1953, 72 people enrolled in a ceramics painting class sponsored by Stetson China and the city recreation department at the old Rec. A few years later, Ruby Aughenbaugh began teaching ceramics, and the Rec eventually



Lincoln Community Center groundbreaking. From left to right, unknown, Marian Miller [Cassens], Frank Misselhorn, Ruby Aughenbaugh, Jim Stewart, Dick Becker, Art Gimbel (with shovel), Ed Malerich, Dick Funk, Hap Jacobson, Pete Frantz. Courtesy Pete Frantz.

Memorial Park

In 1942, the Crippled Children’s Trust of the Lincoln Elks Lodge #914 bought the former Chautauqua grounds west of Lincoln for \$5,000 to use as a convalescent home site.

When that project was located elsewhere, area residents wanted to save the oak-tree-filled tract from development and use it as a park. But attempts to pass a referendum for a park district that could buy the land were repeatedly defeated.

Finally, Lincoln Mayor Edward Spellman appointed a city park planning commission with Richard Becker as chairman. In 1958, the Lincoln recreation board and the commission persuaded the Elks trustees to give the commission an option to buy the land for \$25,000.

Norma Woods suggested the tax problem be solved by raising the money by subscription—then giving the park to the city.

At a buffet supper donated by Frank Krotz and held at the Woman’s Club building, Dr. Raymond Dooley turned over the \$10,000 left from the 1953 Lincoln Centennial, and Mrs. Woods reported \$9,000 in pledges raised by the Lincoln Woman’s Club. After a successful fundraising drive, the land was deeded to the city of Lincoln in February of 1960.

The new park was named Lincoln Memorial Park. Art Gimbel, chairman of the city park committee, headed up a series of work days. “They had whole crews of people going out there raking and doing manual labor just to keep the place cleaned up,” says Pete Frantz.

Voters approved creation of the Lincoln Park District in 1961, and the city of Lincoln deeded Memorial Park to the Park District in 1962. It was annexed by the city in 1977. ■

had two kilns of its own. At the new center, Ruby was followed by Marya "Scotty" Shay Hinman, who began teaching classes in 1970. Sue Loesche Hanger was her assistant.

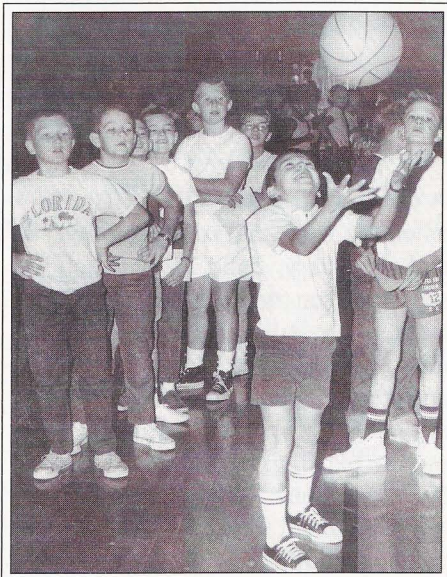
"It's been a fun job," Scotty says. "People have made some great friendships."

In the early days, says Scotty, about all that was available in greenware were ashtrays, flower pots, and vases. These days, the greenware is "just wonderful," and some of her students are experimenting with freehand painting on their pieces.

It's satisfying for Scotty to see people make something useful at a fraction of the retail cost—for example, a Lennox lamp might cost \$400, while the unfinished greenware for a similar lamp costs only \$8.00.

Every summer, when Scotty teaches a week of ceramics to children, she asks them how hot they bake their cookies. "Their eyes always get real big," she says, when she says she fires the greenware at 1,850 degrees.

One of Scotty's most interesting students was a blind man, Peter Arndt, who came with his wife, Tina, and his guide dog. Peter couldn't see to clean the mold lines and imperfec-



Donnie Babbs tries out for biddy basketball. Lincoln Daily Courier, Oct. 31, 1967.

tions from his greenware, so he used his hands. To Scotty's amazement, he cleaned greenware better than anyone else did. Now Scotty tells her classes, "Let your fingers tell you if it's clean enough."

More Memories

Ruby Jacobson Paice remembers that when the new recreation center was built, the ballroom was practically full during the teenage dances on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday nights. College student and chaperone Lenny Janet used to put cotton in his ears to shut out the loud music.

Lifeguards at the swimming pool taught Ruby's son, Rob Aughenbaugh, how to swim, giving him a nickel every time he swam across the pool. Swimmers lined up to buy candy bars, potato chips, and hot dogs at the snack bar, which was run by Ruby's mother, Ola Thompson. Ruby's daughter Carol [Halsey] helped her grandmother; her daughter Cheryl [Boggs] worked as secretary.

In 1970, Dick Franklin followed Hap Jacobson as director of the Park District.

When Jim Fleshman was director from 1973 to 1977, the swimming pool "had great crowds," he says, and a Red Cross swimming program that was well attended. Memorial Park was used a lot by the Boy and Girl Scouts and for family picnics. "We would reserve shelters beginning on a particular date, and we would have people lined up," Jim remembers. When the Park District put in a lighted ball diamond, it "changed the whole environment of the park" and made it more of a recreational area.

Jim was followed as director by Mike Schneider and Bill Hoagland. Chuck Lindstrom was director from 1983 until 1995. When Chuck became director, the Park District had spent two years of anticipated warrants, the taxing arrangement with the city had deteriorated, and the Park District was \$180,000 in debt. During Chuck's tenure, the District was able to make arrangements with the city and levy some additional, much-needed taxes.

In 1988, the Park District used capital improvement bonds to open an indoor sports complex with basketball/volleyball courts, a racquetball court, a walking-jogging track, golf ball driving net, and weight training and fitness areas. Dallas Jacob has been coming in at 5:00 a.m. to open the back desk ever since. A second building opened in 1991, with tennis courts and an aerobics room.

The Park District has always charged a small entry fee for the complex. "Many people don't understand why they had to pay \$1.00 to get into a building that [the public] built," says Chuck, but the additional revenue helped the Park District operate and maintain facilities "and get out of the financial hole."

Chuck says he likes to "build things" and points to the shelter and two lighted ball diamonds at Memorial Park, two softball and one baseball field on the Primm Road property, the toboggan hill at Memorial Park, and the gymnastics floor in the aerobics room that employees installed themselves.

The greenhouse where Art Gimbel had grown plants for the parks was taken down, however; it had fallen into disrepair. "We had more baseball players, I guess, than we did horticulturists," says Dick Funk.

Marcia Haseley Greenslate has been director since 1995. She says the biggest change since she began working with Scotty in ceramics in 1981 is that in those days, the building was open only when something was going on. These days, the back section is open from 5:30 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. every day except Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. Saturdays, it's "overcome with little boys with the junior basketball program." After school, they shoot baskets.

The seniors (over 65) can walk the indoor track faster than she can, Marcia

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Skate & Swim in Mt. Pulaski

Pam Davis says that her memories of meeting her husband, Dave, at the Tomlinson Recreation Center in Mt. Pulaski are “kind of like a fairy tale.”

They met at the indoor pool in 1962, the summer Pam was 15. A student at Elkhart High School, Dave had apparently been “checking me out,” she says, when he saw her skating at the center’s roller rink. In her little skating skirt, with big pompons on her very own skates, she thought she was “big stuff,” she laughs.

Apparently Dave thought so, too, because one day while they were both at the pool, he beckoned her to come over. That was the beginning of a romance centered around the pool and skating rink. When the lights were turned down for moonlight couple skates, “we would hold hands and skate around, and I was in heaven,” she remembers.

After three years of moonlight skating, Pam and Dave were married right out of high school. They’ve been married 38 years, and when Pam drives by the block and sees the vacant spot where the center once stood, she says, “It’s like a piece of my heart was taken out.”

The Tomlinson Trust

The Tomlinson Center was the direct result of the generosity of a bachelor farmer, Clarence Tomlinson, who left his estate—including a 265-acre farm—to Mt. Pulaski Township in 1941.

Former Mt. Pulaski resident Jackie West says Mr. Tomlinson was “kind of a local character.” He had long white hair and was “way ahead of his generation,” says Jackie’s husband, John. The farmer walked from his home two miles east of Mt. Pulaski into town to buy groceries, carrying them home in a gunnysack.

During his lifetime, Mr. Tomlinson gave money to the local Methodist, Christian, and St. John’s churches to help pay for their pipe organs. He donated to the Mt. Pulaski and Lincoln College libraries and was generous to needy families, buying winter clothes for grade-school children.

Mr. Tomlinson often carried around a sack full of candy, which he handed out to the kids. “If he was around and every kid had a bicycle but one,” says Tomlinson trustee Ed Schaffenacker, “he would take that

one uptown and buy a bicycle.”

Mr. Tomlinson created a perpetual trust fund, the income of which was to be spent in Mt. Pulaski Township. Funds were to be used for the community’s social and cultural growth: public libraries, parks, and playgrounds; child welfare work; a public center building; and the development of choral music in the community.

The will was contested and in court for over a year, so some of the early income had to be spent on legal expenses. Money was also spent to get the farm ready for a tenant and to build a monument to Mr. Tomlinson. The trustees took no salary.

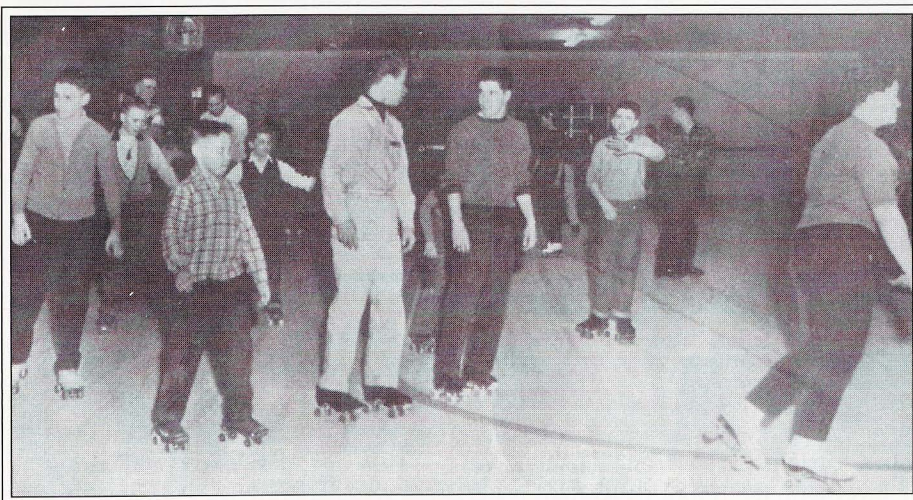
The township got its “public center building” and public park in 1945 after trustees George Rupp, T. A. Scroggin, and Harry J. Wible paid \$7,000 for a block of ground north of the grade school in Mt. Pulaski.

Known as the Beckman block and owned by Carrie Baker, the property included a house, which was turned into a community center—with two rooms for the Girl Scouts, an assembly room, and a kitchen.

Less useful were the barn and out-buildings, old wells, a windmill, wire fences, and a wealth of overgrowth, making it impossible to see from one side of the block to the other.

A crew headed up by Vic DeBoise filled the wells and tamed the trees and shrubbery. John Tendick and his steam engine took out the bigger trees, while Bill Koehler used dynamite to blast out old cottonwood trees and stumps. (A few of the neighboring homes were dusted with dirt during the blasting, but no permanent harm was done.) Many large shade trees remained for a playground and picnic ground.

On December 22, 1945, voters approved the formation of the Mt. Pulaski Township Park District. First



Roller skating on opening night at the Tomlinson Recreation Building. Mt. Pulaski Times-News, July 13, 1961.

officers were John H. Tendick, president; H. J. Wible, vice president; and board members Francis Myrick, A. W. Schaffenacker, and Clyde Febus.

The Tomlinson Trust had bought the land for the Tomlinson Recreation Center. Now the park board, with a taxing power of 15 cents per \$100 valuation, took over the supervising and financing of Park District activities at the center

Voters had been informed of this plan, the idea being that the Trust could then accumulate enough money to help finance a community center with an indoor pool and roller skating rink.

The Park District held its first summer playground program in 1947. It hosted activities like an annual Halloween frolic and paid for out-of-town swimming lessons. The center had tennis courts and a lighted softball diamond—complete with bleachers and a sound system

Mt. Pulaski's Fourth of July fireworks began at the Tomlinson Recreation Center but were later moved to the city park.

In 1950, the Mt. Pulaski Boy Scouts moved into a new one-room building on the northwest corner of the Tomlinson lot. The Tomlinson Trust had donated \$2,000 to buy materials for the Scout house, and volunteers had built the building. The troop was sponsored by the American Legion, and with a new home to look forward to, had grown from 12 to 60 Scouts. Their scoutmaster was Ed Smith.

Years later, when room was needed to build the indoor swimming pool on the lot, the building was sold to the Mt. Pulaski Township High School.

On September 25, 1952, the old house on the Tomlinson lot, which served as a community center, was destroyed by fire.

After George Rupp and T. A. Scroggins resigned as trustees, they were followed by John Biesemeier and Austin Schaffenacker. Three years later, all three trustees resigned.

Their successors—Orville Downing, Edd Dittus, and Ralph Blackburn—were instrumental in building the indoor swimming pool and skating rink. Harold Ryan was the contractor, but volunteer labor was used to build both buildings.

A fund-raiser—a talent show in which it seemed that the whole town took part—was held at the grade school.

On February 14, 1959, the Tomlinson trustees deeded the Tomlinson Memorial Pool and the uncompleted Tomlinson Recreation Building to the Mount Pulaski Township Park District. The skating rink opened March 25, 1960.

The pool had opened on Sunday, February 1, 1959. Glen H. Rice, a recent graduate of Illinois State Normal, was the first swim and recreation director. That afternoon "scores of youngsters" were soon happily splashing around (*Mt. Pulaski Times-News*, Feb. 5, 1959).

Classes started the next week for Mt. Pulaski grade and high school students, the younger children walking over from the school. By 1961, children at Zion Lutheran, Lake Fork, Cornland, and Beason schools had all taken swimming lessons, with the Park District, the Trust, and the school districts footing the bill.

Pam Davis says she wasn't too excited about swimming lessons during the school day, "because it would mess up my hair for the day. I had a long pageboy. My mom would always make me wear a hat so I didn't catch cold."

Nevertheless, she learned to swim, as did many other Mt. Pulaski children over the years. "We ran through a number of generations there who all knew how to swim," says Jackie West, who filled in as a swimming instructor.

Jackie remembers going to swim meets in the sixties when their daughter, Elizabeth [Holtzman], was in junior high school.

When the pool opened, says Jackie, there was "a surge of people signing up for swimming classes—adults who had never learned to swim."

Carol Manes ran the Center for years, teaching swimming during the school year for children from fourth through eighth grades and giving lessons in the summertime with the help of good swimmers who had taken junior lifesaving.

Working in three feet of water, she'd carry the little fourth-graders around on her hip until they got used to the water. Then she'd teach them to put their heads under and blow bubbles.

You really have to watch children

(Continued on page 9)



Niantic-Harristown High School freshmen enjoy the Tomlinson Memorial Indoor Pool. *Mt. Pulaski Times-News*, July 13, 1961.

Pity Our Beautiful Trees

As early as 1913, in a souvenir book published by the *Courier-Herald* press, Lincoln, Illinois (population 12,000), was referred to as “The Forest City of Illinois”—a tribute to “its wealth of beautiful shade trees and the pretty woodland scenery on all sides.”

Not that its trees hadn't taken some punishment from the fickle Central Illinois weather. The great sleet storm of February 1883 had taken down plenty of trees along with the few telephone and telegraph wires. When another major sleet storm struck on December 17, 1924, many of the giant elms and maples split in two from the ice. That night, with an electrical blackout all over town, people lay in the darkness listening as the ice-laden trees came crashing down.

The “Forest City” was devastated, many of the trees looking like “the stubs of trees left on battlefields, shorn of limbs” (*Lincoln Evening Courier*, Dec. 18, 1924). Superintendent of streets August Feldman estimated that 85% of the city's trees were ruined. Hard maples and younger trees had stood up the best.

But the little city recovered, and Dick Funk remembers when Logan Street was lined with elm trees—all the way from Keokuk south to where Logan turns and becomes Fifth Street. Driving under the overarching trees was like “going through a tunnel,” he says. For that matter, “every little town in the area was just full of elm trees,” says Dick.

That was to change. In 1945, the *Courier* reported that 300 elm trees had died in Mt. Pulaski in the last four or five years. In June of 1946, Harry Walker, superintendent of streets in Lincoln, reported that 36 dead elm trees on city property had been cut down that year, following the 37 cut down in 1945.

The trees were dying from phloem necrosis or “Dutch Elm” disease, a fungus carried by the elm bark beetle, which fed in the crotches of elm twigs.

In an interview by Sanford Patterson published in the *Courier* in 1975, Gerald “Jerry” Perdue, former foreman of the tree crew for Central Illinois Electric and Gas Company, described the period. People, he said, fell prey to “tree experts,” who put jelly-like blankets around the trunks, cut v-shaped gashes, or bored holes in the bases and inserted pipes to relieve pressure—all to no avail.

Central Illinois Electric and Gas Company employees worked with city crews to remove the dead trees. Using a two-man, six-foot hand saw, it took 45 min-

utes to an hour to cut down the average tree.

“We got our first power saw in 1948,” said Jerry. “It was five feet long and weighed 110 pounds. . . . I believe that's why my arms are so long from lifting that saw” (*Lincoln Courier*, Oct. 23, 1975).

City crews, supervised by August Kavelman, burned brush on the site in an iron-sided trailer, the bottom of which was lined with sand.

In April of 1949—with an estimated 400 dead elms on city property and hundreds more on private lots—Lincoln citizens passed a forestry tax of .05 per cent so the city could remove dead trees and spray uninfected trees with DDT. Elm Park, along the GM&O tracks, was devoid of elms.

Pilot James Malerich sprayed DDT that year. But by 1961, an AP article reported that elms in Illinois were becoming a thing of the past.

As for Elm Park, in 1949, Eagles lodge members removed the stumps and held a dance at the high school gymnasium to raise money for new trees. Fifteen young trees were purchased; florist Carl Hembreiker and his crew planted them in the park.

Violet Scully also donated and maintained trees and shrubs for the little park with the fountain where old people used to sit and “watch the trains come in,” says Dick Funk.

The east side of Elm Park became a municipal parking lot in 1961, creating tension between people who wanted to retain the park and those, like the editor of the *Courier*, who maintained it was “a stinking mess as the starlings took over” (Aug. 16, 1961) and that additional parking would help downtown businesses. The former parking lot is the present location of Neal Tire.

As proof that trees remain important in Lincoln, the city was recently named a Tree City USA. ■



Trees line College Avenue in an earlier Lincoln.

(Continued from page 5, Lincoln Park District)

says. Teenagers come out in the evening to hit balls at the driving range, and any time Marcia is having a bad day, she has only to go out and watch the little kids play tee ball.

Annie Evers manages the pool. It attracts about 300 people a day, not the 600 it used to, but then again, more people have their own pools today. One year, during the hottest part of the summer, anyone who brought a bag of ice got in free.

Adding new activities—like last summer's horseback riding lessons at Ann Liesman's stable—is the job of program director Roy Logan. Janice Kapik is business manager; Christine Logeman is administrative assistant.

More Memories

Frank "Ace" Hinman has recruited umpires and referees ever since he began working for Bill Jasinek. He has worked men and women's softball—slow pitch and fast pitch—basketball, and volleyball.

Frank has seen the Park District change from having no gym or diamonds to being pretty much self-contained. He says, "We used to always have to use somebody else's stuff, and now we have our own."

The Lincoln Baseball Association has worked closely with the Park District. For years, the highlight of the summer for the boys was a trip to a major league game at Wrigley Field or Busch Stadium. Merchants helped finance the trip, which cost about \$2,700 when Pete Andrews was commissioner. The only mishap Pete remembers was having "a heck of a time" finding one boy at the Lincoln Park Zoo: he was watching monkeys.

It was Mickey Martin who talked Harold Boyer into coaching 10- and 11-year-olds. Harold enjoyed watching improvement in little kids like Bessie Townsend's grandson, who came down from Chicago for the summers. The first year, he could hardly catch and throw a ball. The next year, says Harold, "you wouldn't even know it was the same kid." ■

(Continued from page 7, Skate and Swim in Mt. Pulaski)

who are not afraid, says Carol. Lynne Borgerson, for example, "just trotted right in there" and was "so fast." The first day of class, she wanted to jump off the diving board into the deep water. "Okay," said Carol. "So we're teaching her to swim today."

Other children have more fear. "I am a floater," she says, "so I would float on my stomach and make them push me down to the bottom and see me come up again to make them realize you can't stay down." Parents sometimes pass on fear, so they were only allowed in to watch during the last five minutes of class.

Carol taught junior and senior lifesaving, and many of her students were from Lincoln Christian College. She used her two sons, Steve and Stan, in the senior classes, because they were strong swimmers, and "those little kids could get away from those big guys so fast."

At the time Carol was running the center, hard rock music was becoming popular, and everyone was afraid of drugs. The idea was to keep activity "in our own backyard, so we could watch over it, rather than have kids go somewhere else," she says. If she let the high school kids make their own rules, "of course, they were much stricter than we would have been."

Kids made their own money for dances and hired their own bands. The kids also painted murals on the dull, institutional green walls. Each student had about a five-foot area, which they filled in with color: a peace sign, a motorcycle, an animal or two—whatever their interests were. The kids were usually well behaved, and the center "kept them home," says Carol.

Roger Moore remembers the center as "just kind of a nice place to go for teenagers." He says he was never a very good skater, but he liked watching the girls skate. Many of the kids learned to skate backwards and dance on skates.

When the Tomlinson Recreation Center was dedicated during the Mt. Pulaski Sil-Tennial in 1961, square dancing was a popular activity for adults.

The center was a popular hangout for a long time, but eventually it fell into disrepair. The indoor pool was difficult to maintain, and the hardwood floor of the skating rink buckled. Eventually, the park board closed the center and returned it to the Tomlinson Trust. In 1975, Ed Schaffenacker stepped through the roof over the pool while inspecting it. Rather than try to bring it up to modern regulations, the trustees decided to demolish both it and the roller rink.

Barney Durst and Edd Dittus were the other trustees, and Edd Dittus "had put in a tremendous amount of time and effort getting it built," says Ed Schaffenacker. "He was not in favor of tearing it down. I wasn't either, but there comes a time when public safety comes in." The center was razed in 1979; in 1981, the trustees gave the land to the Mt. Pulaski School District.

The Trust had bought land on the block east of the recreation center. The trustees gave most of it to the Park District for a new outdoor swimming pool, built in 1984, with the help of \$50,000 collected by the Mt. Pulaski Pool Foundation.

The Trust has bought band uniforms and computers for the schools and contributed to ball diamonds, churches, the library, the Mt. Pulaski Ambulance Service, the American Legion, and the historical museum, among others. "We decided to support the Boy Scouts, and we did it in a handsome manner," says former trustee John West. "When they go to a campout, they are the envy of every troop there." Troop 122 has produced quite a few Eagle Scouts.

Over the years, trustees have improved Pulaski the farmland, of which 258 acres remain. Present trustees are Ed Schaffenacker, Jeanette McVey, and Patrick Przykopanski ■

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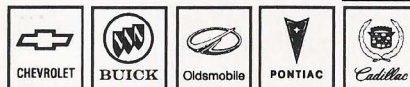
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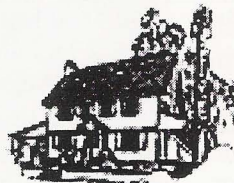
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Thanks, Mrs. Scully

Violet Scully loved trees and flowers. She planted tulips that popped up on the Logan County courthouse lawn every spring and geraniums when the tulips had faded. "She kept us pretty around town," says Dick Funk.

In 1969, Mrs. Scully helped found the Logan County Park & Trails Foundation. Kickapoo Creek Park, which opened in 1973, evolved from 175 acres of virgin timber and farmland that Mrs. Scully purchased and then deeded to the Foundation. Jim Stewart, who managed the Scully lands, used to point out wildlife to the Boy Scouts in the Scully Meadows on that property; Scouts still camp out in the Boy Scout area today. Income from farmland given by Mrs. Scully or left to the organization at her death in 1976 helps finance the care of the park, which boasts a large Osage orange hedgerow, an exercise obstacle course, and a footbridge over Kickapoo Creek that was paid for by the Lincoln Kiwanis and Rotary clubs.

The park is supervised by a board elected from Foundation members. (Olivia Scully, the wife of Violet's son Peter, is a board member.) In addition to its annual meeting—a summer picnic in the park—the organization also holds a bird walk every spring. Margaret Lanterman and Steve Coogan identify the birds by sight or by call. One spring, a colony of goldfinches came through the day of the walk—at least 200, Steve estimated. Another year, so many people signed up that Mark Tebrugge stepped in to guide a second group.

In addition to the over 10,000 trees that have been planted in the park, twelve acres of prairie grasses were planted in 1989, including big bluestem, little bluestem, and Indian grasses. Scully tenants gave present ranger Don Hellman "a lot of flak" when he seeded still more acres. They said, "You mean to say the Scullys make us take care of our weeds, and they're letting you grow weeds here?" But the tall, plumed grasses give visitors a feel for how the prairie used to look.

Former rangers have been Gerald Imlay, Ira Overby, and Bill LaForge. ■

Material for this issue is from the *Courier; A Souvenir Book of Lincoln, Illinois*, 1913, Courier-Herald Press, Lincoln, Illinois; *Mt. Pulaski Times-News*; and the memories of our friends.

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The People, History, and Culture of
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