

OLD

HISTORY OF THE WHEELING PARK DISTRICT

A group of interested citizens petitioned the County Clerk for authorization, to hold an election to create a park district in the village of Wheeling, Cook County, Illinois. This was granted and an election was held in January of 1961, for the purpose to elect five commissioners and the formation of a park district.

The organizational meeting was held January 11th, 1961 at the Village Hall. The terms of each Commissioner was chosen as follows: Theodore C. Scanlon, 6 years, Arthur E. Aronson, 6 years, Ralph F. Neubauer, 4 years, Arthur L. Brown, 4 years, Audrea Duke, 2 years. Mr. Brown was elected President and Roger A. Bjorvik was appointed Attorney Secretary and Treasurer at the salary of \$400.00 for each office per year. There being no monies available, the Board approved to sign a note with the Wheeling Junior Women's Club for the amount of \$200.00 to pay for the election.

On March 16, 1961, Eugene Sackett was hired as a part time Superintendent for the amount of \$1,200.00 per year. In June of 1961 T. Scanlon resigned and was replaced by Mr. Richard Ault.

Inasmuch as there were no funds available, the park district took out Tax Anticipation Warrants in the amounts of \$6,000.00 in July and \$2,000.00 in December. There being no land in the holding of the park district, the programs were held in the various schools and on the playgrounds of School District #21.

Arthur Brown resigned in July 1961 and was replaced by Raymond Hammond the following October. Audrae Duke was then elected President.

In the early part of August 1961, there was quite a lengthy discussion relative to three lots on Nancy Lane which had been deeded over to the Village. The park board approached the Village to request them to relinquish title and turn the land over to the park district. This became a reality in March of 1962. There had been discussions regarding flood control in 1961 but to date nothing had been done.

Mr. Ralph Neubauer resigned in October of 1961 and was replaced by Mr. Donzella in November of that year. It was agreed if the park board desired use of the schools on weekends, the sum of \$2.25 per hour was paid for the custodial services.

1962. The park district's first ice pond was located at Chamber Park. A lease arrangement was made with the Wheeling Community Pool Committee to use the building and grounds. Flooder's were paid \$2.25 per hour and attendants \$1.50 per hour. Recreation help was paid \$1.00 per hour. Victor Baumgart made up the first audit for the fee of \$100.00. In July 1962, the Meadowbrook Women's Club and Alice Lockwood donated their \$100.00 pool bond to the park district.

1963. In May of 1963, the Wheeling Junior Chamber of Commerce approached the park board if they had any land available. If so, the Junior Chamber of Commerce wanted to build a youth building 60 X 100 for the sum of \$18,000.00.

The park district made an inquiry to the Searle property in July and were told the land was available for sale. The parcel contained 76.3 acres @ \$ 3,100.00 per acre totaling \$236,500.00. No action was taken at this time.

In September 1963 Ralph Burke Company was hired to make a study of the community relative to park sites and other needs. Lights were installed at the ice rink located at Chamber Park in August for the amount of \$502.00.

A request was made by the residents in the western part of Wheeling for a park in their area. The park district then leased two lots from the Wheeling Library board.

During the Family Fair in which the park district participated, a poll was taken for the proposed park site known as the "Searle property." The feelings of the residents was then known as the ballots casted showed 132 for, 17 against and 11 spoiled. The Burke study resulted in the following recommendation for proposed park sites: 7 acres in Holland Subdivision, 5 acres South

of Jack London School site and 5 acres adjacent to the Wheeling Community pool.

In September of 1963, the board approved the expenditure of \$600.00 for playground equipment for the Nancy Lane park site known as "Meadowbrook Park." The first piece of park equipment purchased for the park district was a typewriter for the amount of \$50.00. In November of 1963, an agreement was signed between the School District and the Park District relative to the use of School facilities and property.

Arthur Aronson resigned and was replaced by Joseph Harrison in December of 1963.

A question arose relative to the Commonwealth Edison property which runs parallel to the railroad tracks. Through investigation, the park board entered into a lease arrangement for said area running from Dundee Road to Wheeling Road. The amount of \$25.00 per year was paid by the park district for the use of 13.1899 acres.

1964. In March 1964 the park district held an election for a referendum in order to purchase property, the building of a fieldhouse, and to improve some school sites. The breakdown of the improvements and land acquisition are as follows: purchase of the Searle Tract \$236,500.00, the building of a fieldhouse and improvements, \$450,500.00, the North Central Tract improvements known as the Adler property to be purchased for the amount of \$42,000.00, and the South West Tract known as the Miller property to be purchased for \$30,500.00. This resulted in a bond issue in the amount of \$583,000.00. The ballots casted showed 384 yes, 254 no, and 11 spoiled.

Also in 1964 the Nayy presented the park district with a used airplane which was placed on the Meadowbrook park site. Superintendent Sackett was appointed for another year at the amount of \$2,100.00 and \$150.00 car allowance. Mr. Bjorvik was again appointed Attorney at \$600.00 per year, Treasurer at \$750.00 per year and Secretary at \$600.00 per year.

759,500
- 583

176,5

A theatre group known as the Wheeling Park Players requested the park board to sponsor them. This was denied. Husky Park was purchased in June of 1964 for the sum of \$17,000.00 for five acres. In November the park board expended the amount of \$300.00 for the purchase of trees at Meadowbrook Park. The bonds were sold in November to Barcus Kindred at the interest rate of 3.34989%. In February of 1964 Joseph Harrison resigned and was replaced by Mr. Harry Thill in March.

1965. At the April election, Richard Ault and Bernard Erlin were elected for 6 year terms. Lorraine Gueck was appointed Board Secretary to be paid the amount of \$15.00 per meeting. The resignation of Mr. Bjorvik was accepted.

In July of 1964 , the purchase of office equipment was made, a file cabinet \$150.00, a bleacher \$150.00 and an adding machine was purchased in September for \$79.50. The first Ordinance containing Regulations and Restrictions was passed in October of 1964. The first donation given to the park district was received from the J.C. Jills in the amount of \$50.00. In July 1965 the Misdemeanors Ordinance was drawn up and all park help was commissioned park police. In August 1965 Roger Bjorvik relinquished the office of Treasurer and Mr. William F. Blank was appointed at a token salary of \$600.00 per year. The Commonwealth Edison Lease was terminated. Eight park benches were purchased for the sum of \$264.00. An easement 5 feet wide was purchased for a walkway to Husky Park from Anthony Road at the amount of \$1,500.00. A contest was held to name the new park site. Sixty four ballots were cast. Twenty Nine were for the name Heritage Park thus giving the park its name.

1966. In February 1966, an Administration Ordinance was approved. The Wheeling Park District entered into a lease with the Community Pool Corp. to operate the pool for the summer of 1966. Negotiations were started for the North Side Park. In May Charles Gaut was hired as supervisor of buildings and grounds at the salary of \$1,300.00 per year.

The park district installed playground equipment at Mark Twain, Eugene Field, Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman school sites. Eugene Sackett was appointed Recording Secretary. In June 1966 the Park District leased the Chamber Park with the understanding the Chamber would not spend any money. The Park District expended the amount of \$500.00 for black dirt and the leveling out of same. The Family Fair held in September was the first public function to take place at Heritage Park. Ferdinand Arndt was hired September 15, 1966 as the first full time Superintendent of Parks and Recreation.

On Sunday November 23, 1966 Heritage Park was officially dedicated. Ann Egan was hired as part time office secretary. The first park district motorized equipment purchased was an International Truck and tractor. The park district started participation in the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund which is a pension fund for all full time employees or any employee working 600 hours or more.

1967. February 1967, Mr. Gene Hicks and a group of interested citizens presented a drawing of a monument to be erected at the southwest corner of the frontage of Heritage Park, which was approved by the park board. In March specs. were sent out for bids relative to making a manmade lake to be used for recreation programs at Husky Park. The low bidder Milburn Bros. was \$11,542.50. A builder had agreed to donate \$7,000.00 for this project. The Village was opposed to this project and stated they would stop it if the park district decided to go through with it. A flag pole was installed for \$430.00

In April 1967, an election was held and Mrs. Lorraine Lark and Mr. Alf Wilson were elected to the board to fill the offices of Clayton Weider, and Harry Thill. On May 1, 1967, Patricia Hancock was hired as the first full time park secretary. In June Audry Christiansen and Ferdinand Arndt were guests of School District #21 to attend and review the Mott Foundation in Flint Michigan. This was the start of the Torch program.

A tobaggan hill was built in June of 1967 at no cost to the park district. The Drainage District removed the dead trees along the creek at Heritage Park. In the month of July a fee for the use of building and other facilities was adopted. Richard Ault resigned.

Through the good relations with the Village, they consented to sell the park district gasoline at cost.

In September 1967, playground equipment and trees were placed at Heritage Park and Mark Twain School Site. Mr. Robert Ross was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Richard Ault. The Village had a street light installed at the entrance to Heritage Park and Holmes School.

A three inch Homelite pump was purchased in order that the park district could pump water out of the creek for an iceskating rink, at the cost of \$504.00. A fence was installed around the ice rink as there was an admission charged for iceskating. The cost of the fence was \$2,480.00.

In December of 1967, there being a need for more recreation programs, the park board held an election on December 19 requesting the taxpayer to approve a tax to be levied for recreation. The vote resulted as 114 yes, and 113 no.

1968 . In January 1968, a piece of property known as Jeanne Terrace was purchased for an ingress and egress to the park. This was purchased for the amount of \$4,500.00. In May, Mr. Keith Vernon was hired as a part time recreation director by an agreement made with School District #21. The parking lot and the walk back to the monument located at Heritage Park was blacktopped, for the sum of \$3,045.00 A light was placed on the west end of the building in order to light the walk over the bridge. A second baseball diamond was installed. Lloyd Hubbard was hired to make a pool survey for the Wheeling Park District.

In August, the Wheeling High Spur Club put up lights for the football field and the park district contributed \$3,000.00 for lights on the tennis courts in order this work could all be done at the same time.

In September 1968, the park district was interested in purchasing the outdoor pool. The firm of McFadsen and Everly was hired to appraise same and present their recommendations to the board, relative to improvements and surrounding buildings. A design for Chamber Park was also presented to the park board.

A broom to be mounted on a tractor was purchased for sweeping the ice rinks at the cost of \$685.00. Ann Egan resigned.

1969. Two sets of bleachers were purchased for the ball diamond at Heritage Park.

The Wheeling Park District having no insignia, held an emblem contest.

The emblem you see the district using was designed by Mary Lang.

In April, 1969 Mr. Eugene Sackett was elected to replace Audrey Christiansen. An offer was made in May for the Chamber Park and after a few meetings the park was purchased for the amount of \$15,000.00 which was to be paid over a 5 year period, also with the understanding that the name would remain Chamber Park.

In June 1969, the park district was interested in the purchase of the outdoor pool and the building of an indoor pool, which would be adjacent to the Wheeling High School. After the preliminaries were worked out, the board agreed to hold a referendum for \$850,000.00. This referendum was held on June 14, 1969 and passed. The Park Board authorized Orput and Orput Associates to make up the working plans.

The park board approved hospitalization insurance for all full time employees, the district to pay same. A new chlorinator had to be purchased in order to open the outdoor pool.

In July 1969, Orput and Orput prepared the specs for bidding on the building and indoor pool. In August the bonds were sold to Hornblower and Weeks, the interest rate being 6.94%.

September, easements were given the Village for Husky and Heritage Park

in order to start work on the retention basins. There were two easements on the high school property for public utilities.

In November 1969, bids were opened on the pool and building. The second low bidder was Ragnar and Olson and upon recommendation of Orput and Orput, they were awarded the bid at \$658,000.00. The outdoor pool was purchased for the amount of \$160,000.00. An ice shelter was built adjacent to the ice rink at Heritage Park which would also be used in the summers for programs.

1970. In January 1970, the Wheeling Historical Society requested the park district to help preserve an old church building which was built in 1865 and place it on one of the park sites. The board agreed to do so but found no funds available. The park district took out a \$20,000.00 loan in order the movers could be paid, a foundation be built and the building be rehabilitated as you see it today. The Presbyterian Youth Group scraped and painted the building and some of the articles were donated. The park district received a bill of sale for \$10.00 from the Historical Society which now made this building a part of the districts holdings.

In February 1970, a garage was donated to the park district by a resident. While in the process of being moved, the second morning it was found to be burnt to the ground. Work on the far west retention basin was finished except for the fine grading and seeding. In March, the board agreed the extreme western part of Heritage Park could be used as a heliport in an extreme emergency only. An easement was granted to Illinois Bell Telephone Company on the south boundary line of Heritage Park.

In June 1970, Mr. Marshall Balling addressed the park board in behalf of the Historical Society to have the park board give consideration to having the Soo Line Depot moved on park property. Request denied.

The Park District employed the services of Illinois Counties Detective Agency as a security measure for park property. Bids were received for the purpose of black topping of the parking lot and road which enters Chamber Park.

The low bid was presented by Harding Paving, the amount of \$5,626.00. The board approved the road and a small parking area in the amount of \$4,556.00. In June, the Northside park was purchased for the amount of \$50,279.73. The wooden light poles were taken down at Chamber Park at no cost to the district. Twenty fir trees were purchased for Chamber Park.

In August 1970, Raymond Kittendorf was hired as Aquatic Director for the new indoor pool. On July 16, 1970, the Misdemeanor and Administrative Ordinance was adopted and ordered to be placed in book form.

In August 1970, Mr. F. Hilman and A. Zale approached the park board to relinquish the J.S. 14 site in their development and agreed to give the park district the amount of \$700.00 each, totaling \$1,500.00. To date no monies have been received. A communication base was set up in the Superintendent's office at the cost of \$509.05 for use of the Illinois Counties Detective Agency.

In October two sentrys were installed and new wires pulled at the outdoor pool. The church dedication was held October 28, 1970. Pictures were shown relative to the moving of the building.

1971. Tarkington School was a new site for an ice rink. In May the board approved uniforms for all full time maintenance help. A seven gang Thor Park Master mower was purchased from the Mundelein Park District for the sum of \$5,000.00. This equipment sold new for \$11,000.00. There was a great need for this equipment as the acreage for mowing has increased.

In June, it was suggested that the park district map be updated showing the boundaries and to include all annexations. Heritage Parking lot was extended 200 feet. The cost of grading and gravel was not to exceed \$1,600.00.

A request was received from Holmes Jr. High for the park district to install two basketball backstops and two tether ball standards. This request was approved.

In August, a proposal was presented to the board to build a fireplace in the ice shelter at the cost of \$1,578.00. No action was taken. Goal posts for football were placed at Twain, Sanding sites and Heritage Park.

In September 1971 at the close of the swimming season, a fishing event was held at the outdoor pool. This was a huge success. The Drum and Bugle Corp. approached the park board requesting use of Heritage Park for every Tuesday evening, in return they will build an extension on the garage. This was approved to the point that work could not be started until all materials were on site. A television set and antenna was installed to show the blacked out sporting events. The cost of this equipment was \$1,350.00.

In a response to a letter written Tekton Corp. regarding a financial contribution to the park district to develop a park area in the near future, Tekton Corp. presented the park district with a check for \$2,500.00 and with a promise of another \$2,500.00 when their final occupancy permit is issued.

Mr. Mel Lange donated three trees to the park district which were moved and placed at Chamber park. In October 1971, the board approved a flood light to be placed at the entrance of Neptune Pool. An easement was granted to Wicks Corporation to run excess water from their property into the Heritage Park retention basin provided this was approved by the Metropolitan Sanitary District. The park board approved the purchase of material to build a hockey rink to be located on the ball diamond at Heritage Park.

In December, a check was received by the park district in the amount of \$922.66 from a group of students and teacher from Jack London Jr. High School for the purpose of landscaping a garden at Chamber Park. This money was raised through a marathon held by these students.

1972. In January 1972 Mr. Bruce Coleman resigned as Recreation Director and was replaced by Mr. David Phillips.

In 1973 the Village of Wheeling developed plans to construct a well pumping station on the site where the old Village Hall stood. During the periods of 1973 - 1975, the Wheeling Historical Society worked with the Village of Wheeling to try and select another site for the old Village Hall, but the Village of Wheeling did not have available land to relocate this building, and they could not sell it to the Historical Society because a public agency could not sell a building to a private organization such as the Historical Society.

Shortly after the Wheeling Historical Society discovered that they could not purchase the Museum Building, they decided to ask the Wheeling Park District, (being a public Agency) to purchase the building from the Village of Wheeling, and to accept ownership with the understanding that:

- A. The Wheeling Park District could levy a Historical Tax.
- B. Take over the responsibilities of building an addition and relocating the building to Chamber of Commerce Park.
- C. Allowing the Wheeling Historical Society to continue to operate this Facility.

On August 8, 1978, the Wheeling Park District purchased the Museum Building from the Village of Wheeling for a cost of one dollar (\$1.00).

In the Fall of 1977, the Director of Parks of the Wheeling Park District began preparations for the relocation of the Museum. A model of the Museum and addition were built, drawing made representing construction, landscape plans developed and a cost estimate for the relocation and renovation of the building.

In September of 1978, the Museum Building was relocated to Chamber of Commerce Park and placed on the Northwest Corner of the Park. Grant House Razing Company, from Addison, Illinois, was retained to move the building.

In October of 1978 work had begun on the renovation and construction of the new addition and basement for the Museum. Director of Parks, John Piazza acted as General Contractor for this project, to help reduce the total cost of the project.

In August of 1979, all renovation and construction work for the Museum Building had been completed. The total project cost was \$77,668.64.

On March 8, 1979, at a regularly scheduled Wheeling Historical Society Meeting, the membership agreed upon the name submitted by the Wheeling Historical Society Board, The Wheeling Historical Museum.

In April of 1980, at our Arbor Day Celebration, all landscaping around the Museum was installed. This was a community event.

In May of 1980, the Museum Building was dedicated to the residents of Wheeling at a public ceremony.

It was agreed by both the Wheeling Park District and the Wheeling Historical Society that the Museum would be operated by the Wheeling Historical Society and that they would be responsible for the contents of the building.

The Wheeling Historical Museum is presently open to the public on Sundays from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. and for special interest groups during the week by appointment.

