



Friends of Thorn Creek Woods

Thorn Creek News

Fall 2018

1958

THORN CREEK WOODS

1978



Formal Dedication
of Thorn Creek Woods
June 4, 1978



Opening of Thorn Creek Nature Center to the public
TCPA, Audubon Society provide attendants.
The old church is 116 years old.

1978

1976

Thorn Creek Woods Joint Management Commission
Agreement establish T.C.W. Plan Committee

1973

Amendment to Illinois House Bill 1046
appropriating 1,500,000. for acquisition of Thorn Creek Woods.

1971

HUD final Statement limiting development
of the woods area by P.F. South Development Corp.



1970

HUD convenes Ad Hoc committee on Thorn Creek Woods chaired by
Northeastern Ill. Planning Committee

GSU EST.

1969

Village of P.F. awarded \$25,000 by U.S. Dept. of Interior to
defray cost of the 10 acres for the Nature Center.

1966

Thorn Creek Preservation Assoc. chartered by the state
P.F. Trustees call for 400 acre Open Space program.

1964

Park Forest Trustees request Federal Open Space grant.
to acquire 13 acres in Monee Township.

1958

Park Forest Trustees adopt Resolution R58-39
supporting extension of the Cook Co. Forest Preserve
Dist. & request the Will Co. Forest Preserve Dist. to
include the Thorn Creek Watershed in its forest
acquisition plans.

EASTERN WILL CO.

Mary Malone



With green streamers flying from the steeple of Thorn Creek Nature Center, the woods was dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve on June 4, 1978.

“Invited they came-hundreds of people. In the bright sun of the amphitheater and shade of the 116 year old former church- now serving its new role as a nature center – they assembled to witness, dedicate and celebrate a dream that had once seemed impossible and was now a reality.

Thorn Creek Woods – 810 acres of prime forest, ravine and meadow- became Thorn Creek Nature Preserve, dedicated to the people of the surrounding communities, the state and the nation”.

Senator Adlai Stevenson said, “The woods will now continue to be a place of beauty and peace in the midst of the harsh environment we have made for ourselves.”

This dedication ceremony, sponsored by TCPA, was their humble way to say thank you to the almost 1200 people who helped in the effort.

A Short History of the Preservation of Thorn Creek Woods By Jim Marzuki written circa 1990

Some years ago, the stereotype of the preservationist was a little old lady in tennis shoes moving about the countryside causing minor demonstrations, trouble and other anti-social behavior. Though not an old lady, Marion Pike, in many ways was such a woman. In her quiet manner she was an activist and perhaps the first person to recognize the need for preserving the tract of land known as Thorn Creek Woods. She carried on a one-woman campaign for preservation, contacting every public agency that could possibly be involved in such an endeavor. Her efforts with these bodies were to no avail. Interest in such a matter was shared only by Park Forest, under the leadership of Bernard Cunningham, who envisioned a greenbelt running around the town. While this represented recognition of saving parts of the woodland, only Pike held the dream of setting aside the entire woods.

She attracted the notice of woods “neighbors” who for years had taken for granted that the trees would always be there. Suddenly aroused by reports of impending development, they decided to meet to see what kind of actions might be taken to prevent destruction of Thorn Creek Woods. Even then, most were not prepared to think in terms of the “whole thing”.

In 1969, the meeting was held in the rear yard of the home of Dan and Joan Harper on Stuenkel Road. This time Marion Pike convinced those assembled that anything short of preserving the entire woods would be a mistake. Among those in attendance were the Harpers, Mary and Steve Brekke, Gene and Sherry Sullivan, Nancy and Max McCrohan, Marvin Harr, Rusty and Joanne Lindert, Gene Schwartz, Mary Lou and Jim Marzuki, and Irving and Alice Smith. These people were to form the nucleus of the Walnut Hill Gang, the original save-the-woods group. Marvin Harr, whose family had owned a sizable piece of the forest, was elected the first Chair.

The Walnut Hill Gang immediately undertook a study of the woods to learn its size, plant composition, geology and ecology. Harr, who had spent much of his youth roaming the territory, was the chief source for much of the information. It soon became apparent that while Marvin held a great deal of knowledge, experts were needed to provide more precise details. Thus began the education of the gang.

Careful background material, after many false starts, was developed along with a film by Jim Marzuki, to present to various public agencies. Experts with fine scientific backgrounds and doctoral degree such as Marjorie Carlson of Northwestern, Robert Betz of Northeastern Illinois, Ray Schulenburg and George Ware of the Morton Arboretum, Leslie Hayes of St. Anne, Edward Olson of

NIPC (Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission), John Chambers, Ted Andrews and Jon Mendelson of Governors State, Joel Hedgepeth of Oregon State and William Beecher of the Chicago Academy of Science were asked to examine the woods and make reports of significant plant communities present. All responded to the request and their assessments (later confirmed by others such as R.L. Evers and L.J. Stannard of the Illinois Natural History Survey) became the scientific basis for the preservation effort.

Armed with the film and reams of written reports, the organization which had been rechristened the Thorn Creek Woods Preservation Association (TCPA), made their first foray into the public arena before the Will County Board. It was apparent to the TCPA that despite their considerable research data, now considered gospel by members, public bodies were going to be difficult to convince given the nature of so called “progress” that development promised. Nevertheless the group continued to pressure the Board while moving out on other fronts aimed at local communities, school districts, state and federal government and their agencies. The effort was to convince these entities to support this eminently sensible plan.

This effort to gain support from influential individuals and organizations caused the TCPA to organize “task force” groups responsible for presentations seeking support before governmental,



environmental and service groups. In fact, TCPA would appear before anyone who would listen. One of the early pledges of support came from the Open Lands Project headed by the respected Gunnar Peterson who assigned one of his brightest staff members, Rutherford Platt, to give almost full-time service to the group. This gave the TCPA immediate [credibility] among conservationists throughout the state.

While all this was moving forward, contact was made with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and the [Illinois] Department of Conservation. When Nature Preserves sent field staff to the site, they weren't at all impressed. They looked beyond the lush foliage for endangered species such as the Bald Eagle and found none. Their negative position caused the TCPA to embark in a new direction—to change the concept of “Nature Preserve” to be more inclusive. Not only did the Nature Preserves [Commission's] ideas change, but Mary Lou Marzuki became its chair after appointment by Governor Thompson.

TCPA did gain reexamination of the area by the Nature Preserves [Commission] with John Schwegman and Max Hutchinson doing the field work. In this survey many areas of the woods did gain recognition and many rare and endangered species were identified such as the yellow trout lily, abundant in the woods. [Illinois Department of] Conservation was then advised that preservation and acquisition was desirable.

Members of the TCPA now refined their focus and established a system which included a public relations program that produced reams of publicity; a contact system that developed relationships with all manner of individuals and groups; and, an intelligence effort that produced information from all levels of government and the private corporations in the development of the “new community”.

Representative John Houlihan was enlisted to carry the effort to the State Legislature along with Jack Walker in the Senate. Their actions were amplified by House Speaker W. Robert Blair and Lieutenant Governor Paul Simon. Houlihan introduced and passed a 3 million dollar appropriation through the House but it stalled in the Senate. In the end, Blair caused an appropriation to be set aside for the [Illinois] Conservation Department to acquire portions of the woods in an unusual intergovernmental agreement with the villages [Park Forest and Park Forest South] and [Will] County.

The actions in the State Legislature and in Will County, which had passed a Forest Preserve Bond Issue, caused the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) to set up an ad-hoc committee to “negotiate” between woods people and the developer Lewis Manilow. Charles “Jay”

Klaus, who became TCPA Chair after a fiery speech at the first annual meeting, led the forces for preservation. Among the groups represented were HUD, [Illinois] Department of Transportation, [Illinois] Department of Conservation, Park Forest, Park Forest South (now University Park), Will County Forest Preserve District and the Morton Arboretum. The committee met often, but little progress was being made.

About this time, a side issue cropped up which distracted from the main issues being discussed. The Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) made a proposal that the long projected South Suburban Freeway should go through the middle of the woods. This represented a movement of the line which at one time had been projected right through Park Forest and Chicago Heights. A brief timeout had to be taken to oppose that short sighted idea.

Because of the extensive contact system developed by the TCPA, an invitation from the Defenders of the Fox was extended to TCPA representatives to meet with nationally known attorney Victor Yanacohen. Yanacohen had produced, among his many environmental victories, the ban on DDT. The Defenders were busy at the time fighting a freeway proposed along the Fox River.

John Worman, Rutherford Platt and Jim Marzuki met briefly with the famed attorney. His advice, stated simply, was “sue the bastards”- advice he had given to many other groups fighting on behalf of the environment. He then suggested various avenues open to the group for an assault on HUD (U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development).

Rud Platt, who had a law degree among his many accomplishments then developed the strategy for a suit to be filed in Federal court against the developers and HUD. The threat of the court proceedings caused HUD to cave in and they pressured Manilow to make a settlement. The historic meeting to negotiate the settlement took place in the home of Mary and Steve Brekke and lasted well into the early morning hours. The developers agreed to the major boundaries sought by TCPA, except for a small area on the southern part of the woods (now included) that [would have been devoted to homes for] “Captains of Industry”. For all intents and purposes, the battle had been won.

This brief history does not reflect the chronology of the long, slow time period which was begun in 1968 and completed in about 1980. The historic settlement came in 1971 after three years of battle. While many people, for many reasons left direct participation in the effort, Mary Lou Marzuki, Mary Brekke and Nancy McCrohan continued the battle on a daily basis to see that all the parcels, especially those not owned by the developer, were included in the final dedication. [The woods was dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve in June 1978.]

The preservation of Thorn Creek Woods represents a people’s effort with hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of individuals making essential contribution. The list is much too long to be included here, but, suffice it to say that the many small efforts, introduction, contacts and actions by individuals were often key to the eventual preservation.

Editor’s note: The Seasons of Thorn Creek Woods wall display in the nature center foyer lists these wonderful people.



Dr. David Kenney, director of IDOC signed documents dedicating 500 acres as Illinois Nature Preserve. He was joined at the podium by: Dr. Peter Schramm, INPC; William Lipsey, chairman FPDWC; Eugene Schwartz, chair TCPA, and Mayer Singerman, village president PF.

Also at the podium were Jon Mendelson, GSU; Vernon Young, village trustee PFS.

Eugene Schwartz TCPA, told of the long struggle.

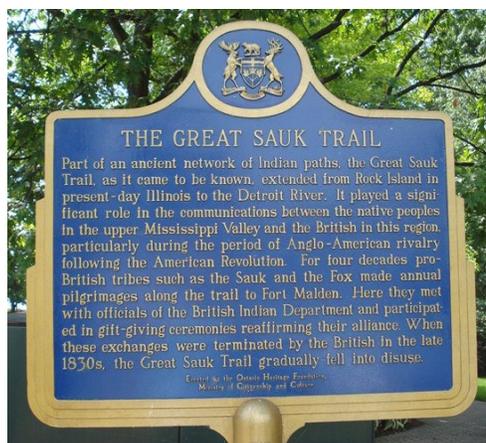
STORIES FROM THE OLD SAUK TRAIL: AN AFTERNOON WITH FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS

The Great Sauk Trail began as a Native American trail running through Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. The trail evolved into a major wagon and stage coach road and the route for countless fugitive slaves seeking their freedom in Canada.

Local historian Larry McClellan has stories to tell about this now-busy thoroughfare on the northern edge of our Thorn Creek Woods.

At our annual gathering of nature lovers which is open to the public, there will be a short Friends meeting, the presentation and refreshments.

Larry McClellan is a founding member of Governors State University, retired professor of sociology and community studies, local pastor, former mayor of University Park and historian. McClellan has co-authored two books on the history of the south suburbs and written hundreds of columns for local newspapers.



Saturday, October 27, 1-3 p.m.
Free. Ages 12-adult. Open to the public.
Freedom Hall, 410 Lakewood Blvd, Park Forest



DRAWING OWLS: ART PROGRAM AT THORN CREEK

Sunday, October 14
1-2 p.m.

All ages. Children younger than age 6 should be accompanied by an adult.

\$5 per person

Registration required by Friday, October 12

Internationally known artist Pat Moore will help young artists draft from nature, studying real owl taxidermy specimens, exploring the basics of realistic drawing, shading and texture. Artists will also learn about America's rich tradition of artists and naturalists like John James Audubon. During the hands-on program, each student will create naturalistic compositions, suitable for framing, while gaining new insights into the nature of art itself. All materials will be provided

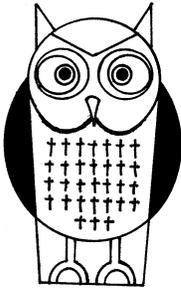
Fall at Thorn Creek Woods

247 Monee Rd, Park Forest
708-747-6320
Thorn_creek@att.net
tcwoods.org

**Nature Center open
Friday & Sunday, noon -4 pm
Trails Open Dawn to Dusk**

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Wednesday Walkers | Wednesday 9 a.m. |
| Garlic for Sale At Park Forest Farmers Market | Saturday September 22 7 am-noon |
| Fall Workday Ages 15+ | Sunday September 16 Noon-3 p.m. |
| September Night Hike All ages | Tuesday September 25 6:30-8:30 pm |
| Know Your Oaks Hike All Ages | Sunday October 7 1-3 p.m. |
| Drawing Owls All Ages \$5/person | Sunday October 14 1-2 p.m. |
| Autumn Night Hike Ages 10+ | Wednesday October 24 6:30-8:30 pm |
| Stories of The Old Sauk Trail Ages 12+ | Saturday October 27 1-3 p.m. |
| Animals in Autumn— For Kids Ages 9-12 | Sunday November 11 1-3 p.m. |
| Story of The Landscape All Ages | Sunday December 2 1-3 p.m. |
| Wild Animal Tracks Ages 4-10 | Saturday December 8 1-3 p.m. |

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Leo and Lois Arms

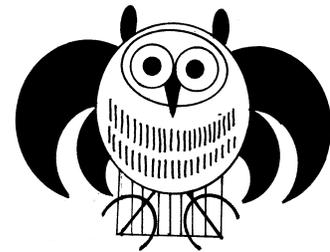
We were all deeply saddened to hear of Leo's passing. And we understand that Lois is residing in a nursing home.

Many of us have known both Leo and Lois since the 1970's and so witnessed their unflinching hard work all these years for the environment and, in particular, for Thorn Creek Woods. For the past few years Leo's particular task, that he took on himself, was to come to the nature center on Fridays to do clean up tasks. It was always a joy to meet up with Leo. Although a quiet man, once engaged in conversation he was so smart and thoughtful. We will miss these times with him.

Through the years, Leo and Lois attended all the nature center programs plus they helped at nature center activities, in recent years with mailing and garlic cleaning.

They are designated in the "Seasons of Thorn Creek Woods Volunteers" as members of the *1960's and 1970's Owls*- *"these wise owls provided the vision, ingenuity, tenacity & plain hard work of the early years."* Those words describe Lois and Leo!

They were early advocates for preservation of these woods helping with everything at the nature center, in the woods and at endless meetings. Their work was vital and much appreciated, here at Thorn Creek and in the south suburbs where they worked tirelessly on preservation and anti-airport efforts.



Parking for Thorn Creek Nature Center

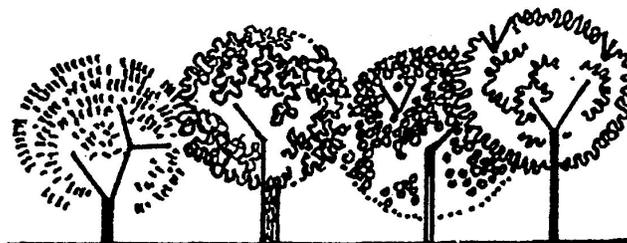
As of fall of 2017 Thorn Creek Nature Center is no longer able to use the parking at the church just north of the nature center for overflow parking for nature center programs. Added to that, the nature center use of the grassy parking across Monee Road at old Camp Pompei for overflow parking has become extremely difficult due to year- round soggy conditions at the entrances.

Thus, the kind and size of programs that the nature center can offer has been severely affected. The 15-car nature center parking lot can still accommodate the many popular hikes and classes. However, parking for the mid-sized programs like our popular music programs cannot be easily and safely accommodated. So, for the foreseeable future we will not be able to hold music programs at Thorn Creek Nature Center.

The Thorn Creek Management Commission was planning to build an overflow parking lot for 20 cars in the old Camp Pompei property. Unfortunately, that will not be possible because the Will County Highway Department does not allow pedestrians crossing Monee Road since it is mid-block and unsafe with poor sightlines. With this setback, the Commission will explore some other alternatives.

In the meantime, you can look forward to many fine nature center offerings including night hikes, nature hikes, children's programs and nature art programs.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.
Thorn Creek Nature Preserve Management Commission



Be a FRIEND OF THORN CREEK WOODS

___ Membership \$20 ___ Organization & Business \$50 ___ Life Membership \$200

New Member ___ Renewing Member ___

___ I'd like to help as a volunteer at Thorn Creek Nature Center, please call me.

___ I am donating \$ _____ to the **Thorn Creek Woods Capital Fund** for improvements in the Nature Center building & in the Preserve.

In memory of _____ In honor of _____

___ I am donating \$ _____ to the **Jim Marzuki Memorial Fund** - to make a difference in Thorn Creek public programming.

___ I am donating \$ _____ to **Friends** general purposes.

\$ _____ Total Enclosed

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Make checks payable to: FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS, Box 32, Richton Park, IL 60471



Annual Renewal Date is May 1st
Make sure you are up to date!

So What Can You do?

- Help staff Open House 12-4 p.m. on Fridays & Sundays



- Be a Trail Watcher. **Trail Watchers** are our eyes & ears on the trails. Use the blue Trail Watchers forms or email nature center with concerns.

- Join our Fall Workday, September 16
- We also have trail & boardwalk building projects for individuals and for groups like Eagle Scouts
- Bake and/or make soup for our events
- Volunteers to assist at programs & nature hikes
- Donate money for nature preserve projects
- Become a member of Friends.
- Post Thorn Creek events on the Friends Face Book page.
- Share our Nature Education Program Brochure – available on our website & at Nature center—with your clubs, home school group, scouts, seniors group, garden club or school.

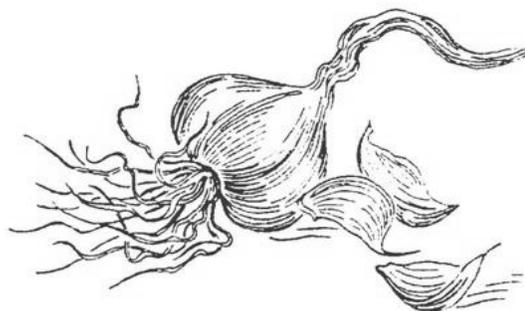
Garlic For Sale – One Day Only

Saturday, September 22

7 a.m. - Noon

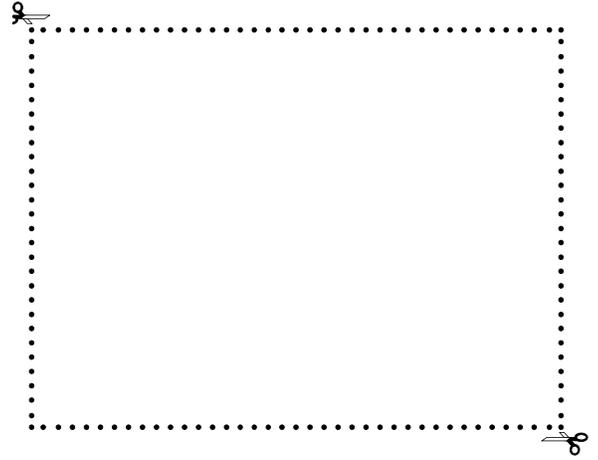
Thorn Creek Nature Center booth
at Park Forest Farmers Market,
152 Main Street, next to Dollar General.

Garlic bulbs of 20 varieties,
all grown at Thorn Creek's Historic Farm,
will be sold for \$2.50 per bulb,
for eating and for planting this fall.
We have garlic to buy and
planting information will be available.



Friends of Thorn Creek Woods
Box 32
Richton Park, IL 60471

Please clip commemorative stamps
& bring to Nature Center for
Audubon Stamps
for Wildlife Habitats



Want to receive
Thorn Creek News
only via email-
then email editor
Judy Dolan
Mendelson at
dolanmendel@aol.com
Thank you-
it helps save on
printing & postage

Renew Now!



Fall Workday
Sunday, September 16
Noon-3 p.m.

Join in sprucing up the nature center,
preserve clean up, and
trimming & maintaining the trails.
Or come help weed and nurture our
Prairie Sampler and butterfly garden.

Ages 15-adult
Registration required
2 days before the program day.

Community groups are welcome!