

# Driftwood From The Beach

On your next trip down East Road, slow down for a moment and check out the tree-covered spot behind the **Crayton**'s house. This spot was once the site of DA's horse stable and concrete block business. Alden Studebaker, who built many of the early houses here in town, initially made the blocks by hand and used them for building. Later, he moved the plant to a spot located by **Barbara Plampin**'s house. This plant burned down in the Great Dune Acres Fire of 1949. When she's not busy spotting shipwrecks, **Mary Ann Tittle** stays active as the keeper of DA lore and historic facts. Recently, she led Bob and me on a guided tour of DA's concrete block plant ruins and shared that tidbit.



**Bob and Mary Ann at Concrete Block Plant (Okay, I'm no Mr. Richardson behind the camera, but you should have seen the photos that didn't make it into this article.)**

Our interest sparked by the tour, Bob and I decided to visit the Westchester Township History Museum in Chesterton, housed in the former Brown mansion. One big draw for us was that the museum features an exhibit on Flora and William Richardson of Richardson Wildlife Sanctuary fame. The Richardsons lived in Dune Acres before there was such a thing as Dune Acres, building a "shelter" here in 1910. Mr. Richardson was an avid ornithologist and nature photographer. The Richardsons were also members of the Prairie Club of Chicago. From its start as a series of "Saturday Afternoon Walks" in 1908, the Prairie Club moved on to be a force in early efforts to create

a national and state park here in the dunes. Mr. Richardson even had a landmark named after him in the 1920 Rand McNally map titled "Map of Indiana Dunes: The Wonder Region of the Middle West" by Peter S. Goodman.

The museum is beautiful and filled with an impressive array of local history exhibits. Extremely knowledgeable museum volunteers gave us a detailed guided tour. The museum is still in the process of cataloging much of the collection owned by the Richardsons. Thus, many of their items are not yet available for viewing. Some of Mr. Richardson's photos are on display as are pictures of William and Flora as well as a gigantic grandfather clock formerly owned by the Richardsons. Some of the furniture on display there originally belonged to the Morgan family, one of Chesterton's early families. Colonel E. L. Morgan built the log house now owned by the **Stoplors** on Beach Drive for his daughter Eleanor and her husband John Read. The museum is located in Chesterton at 700 W. Porter Ave. behind the Chesterton Middle School. It is open on Wednesday through Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Go see it.

While we were at the museum's gift shop, I purchased a copy of the excellent book ***Dune Acres 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, The History of Dune Acres***—fascinating. It is amazing what a group of people can do when they all pull together. And occasionally in the past, folks in this town needed to do a lot of pulling. I finished the book feeling tremendous gratitude, admiration, and even paranoia. Like the "Perils of Pauline", Dune Acres faced a number of threats almost since its beginning. Thank you to everyone past and present in town who contributed to making DA what it is today.

For DA newbies, DA was here long before the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Park was authorized (1966), founded in the same year as the Indiana Legislature passed a bill creating Indiana Dunes State Park (1923), and established nearly four decades before Bethlehem Steel (or whatever name it is operating under this week) began leveling the dunes to build its mill (1962).

DA was founded by a company headed by William Wirt in 1923, the same year that Highway 12 (the Dunes Highway) was completed. When he wasn't creating the utopia that we now know as home, Mr. Wirt was gaining national fame as the developer of the Gary System of school administration. In December 1922, Mr. Wirt leased a two and a half mile section of land that was to become Dune Acres from a Chicago attorney named Mr. Henry W. Leman, who had owned it since 1894. This lease was later transferred to a development corporation named Dune Acres, Inc., and on September 15, 1923, there was a vote to incorporate as a town. Since this was three years after women gained the right to vote, the wives actually had an official voice in the matter.

Mr. Wirt may have helped found the town, but credit for the actual building belongs to his nephew, Alden Studebaker. Mr. Studebaker built most of the houses constructed in DA prior to 1941 as well as the now-demolished Guesthouse that was located by the Clubhouse. And if you didn't know, our own **Heidi Sullivan** is the granddaughter of Alden Studebaker, who was married to Naomi Chellberg Studebaker (that's Chellberg like in the Chellberg Farm on Mineral Springs Road now operated by the National Park Service). How cool is that! And in those twists of fate that make life all the more interesting, Heidi's husband **John** is the current DA building commissioner in case you haven't been paying attention to town affairs.

The Sullivans are not the only family in town with ties that go way back. The **Rearicks**, for example, can trace their history back to another one of the town's founders, Harry Hall. Harry's wife Anne Hall (Anne—not Annie, as in Woody Allen fame) named the town. The Halls lived at 4 Shore Drive next door to Colonel Arthur Melton who built a home at 6 Shore Drive. Mr. Melton planned the city of Gary before moving on to lay out the streets in DA.

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Warning: The following content contains a great deal of historical information and may not be appropriate for all audiences. Some readers may find it utterly boring or highly addictive. Reader discretion is required.  
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And if that history wasn't enough for you, here's more. French fur traders are believed to have frequented this area as early as 1650. Robert LaSalle, the famous explorer, passed

through the area on his travels. Fur trading with the Indians was big business back then. Rivers and lakes were extremely important as sources of drinking water (duh), food (fish, mollusks), items for trade (guess where beaver live), and transportation—these guys used canoe power or foot power. The French traders built trading posts/forts around the Great Lakes area and would have passed by—by land or by sea—as would a number of Indian tribes. Talk about the Crossroads of America!

Another early celebrity, Father Jacques Marquette, traveled past what would become Dune Acres in his canoe in 1675. After preaching to a crowd of around 1,500 Indians near present-day Ottawa, IL, he became gravely ill and attempted to return to his home at the mission of St. Ignace near Michilimackinac (present-day Mackinaw City, MI). Traveling from Ottawa by river and reaching Lake Michigan at what would become Chicago, his party canoed along the southern and eastern shore of Lake Michigan and would have needed to stop along the way for the dying man to rest. Who says he couldn't have stopped here?

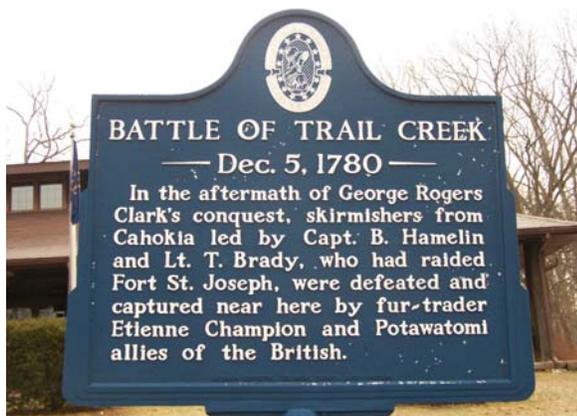
This area also played a part in the American Revolutionary War—and you thought all that Founding Fathers type stuff only happened on the East Coast. A detachment of 16 American men from Cahokia (south of St. Louis on the Mississippi) traveled to Fort St. Joseph near present-day Niles, MI and attacked it while the Indians who lived there were away on a winter hunt. They grabbed everything not red hot or nailed down at the fort—at least 50 bales of goods and furs—as well as some prisoners and hotfooted it back on the “Route of Chicagou,” riding along the beach shore. (The beach was used for a long time as a trail.) According to a January 8, 1781 letter written by Major Arent Schuyler De Peyster, the British commander at Michilimackinac (try saying that three times fast), this group was pursued “as far as the Petite Fort, a days Journey beyond the Riviere Du Chemin” (Trail Creek in Michigan City) and they battled on December 5, 1780. This battle was the only battle of the American Revolution that was fought in Northwest Indiana.

Like most things in life, there is some controversy surrounding exactly “where” that battle took place (at the fort or merely nearby) and even “where” the fort was located. No archeological ruins have been located. Since this was before the invention of the GPS, the location descriptions that we have are approximate rather than precise. The name of the fort adds to the confusion. The French had

more than one “little fort” in the Great Lakes area. Further, many early maps that we have are rather crude and written in French. Since this happened before there were green highway markers, rivers were frequently referred to by several names (Dunes Creek, Fort Creek, Fort’s Creek, Stick River, and Riviere du Bois were all names given to Dunes Creek, for example, and those names don’t even include Indian names for the creek).

Different researchers have given different locations for this fort. For example, the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a marker by the parking lot at Dunes State Park, claiming that as the site, and it is believed that Mt. Tom at the park is named after Lt. Thomas Brady, an American captured in the battle. Krueger Memorial Park in Michigan City also has a marker describing this battle. Others have suggested that the fort was located at Marquette Park in Miller. In fact, several early French religious artifacts have been found in that area.

In my opinion, Michigan City’s argument doesn’t hold water. While not at the battle himself, Major De Peyster had several of the prisoners (including Lt. Brady) brought to him and he would have been a very credible source. According to his January letter, the battle happened a day’s journey beyond Michigan City. Further, Major De Peyster’s letter makes no mention of an “Etienne Champion.”



**Historical Marker At Krueger Memorial Park in Michigan City**

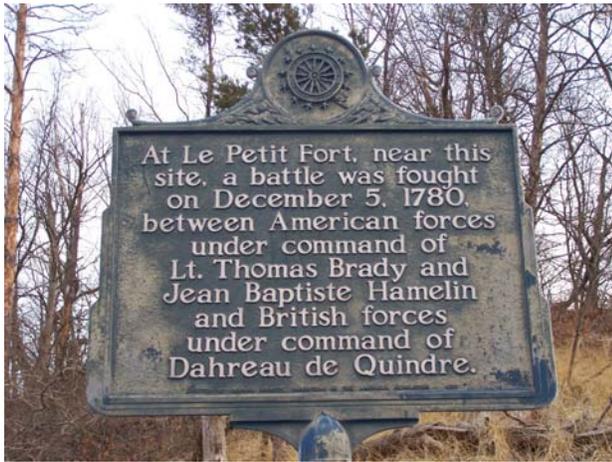
The argument for the Dunes State Park location is much stronger. Spoiled by our modern transportation, a trip from Michigan City to here wouldn’t be much of a journey. But we’re not using weighted-down pack horses like the Americans were. Back in 1780, a day’s ride from Michigan City would have likely put our

American patriots in the Dunes State Park area. It is also most likely that the fort was located by a river that emptied into the lake, which describes Dunes Creek in Dunes State Park.

However, the more I researched this article for *The Beachcomber*, the more I came to question this location. First off, I am quite skeptical of some of the folks who helped spread the Dunes State Park location claim. Some of the early park supporters were real estate promoters with vested interests in the area. They also had what I consider questionable backgrounds. One gentleman was the founder and operator of a horse racing track with illegal gambling here in the dunes in 1912. His brother, another park supporter, was a former mayor who was arrested no less than 14 times in two years on charges of graft and corruption while mayor.

Some other facts that I came across undermine the claim. Lt. James Swearingen, on his way from Fort Detroit to help build Fort Dearborn (which grew into Chicago) traveled past ruins of an “old fort” in the dunes in August 1803. In 1812, General William Hull mentioned the fort on a map in his journal. In 1837, the city named City West, which later failed, was built in the now Dunes State Park along Dunes Creek. No mention was ever made of finding old fort ruins by the builders. If the ruins were still standing as late as 1812, wouldn’t “something” still be there in 1837?

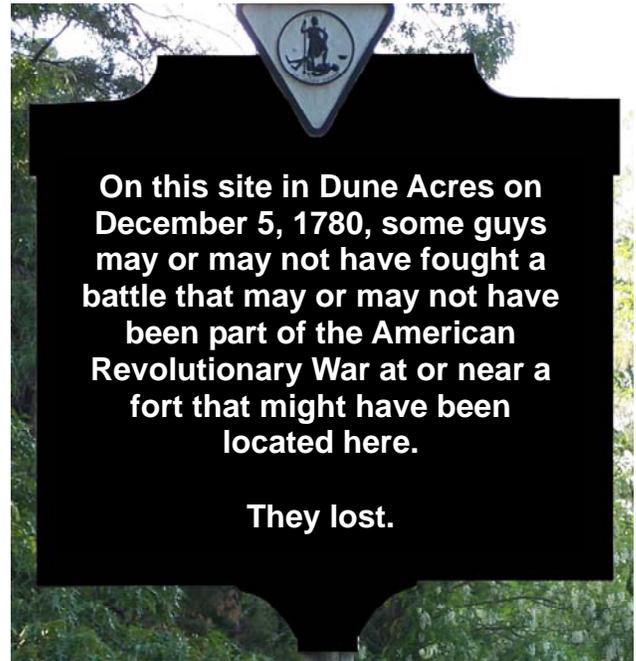
Folks at the National Park Service believe that the fort is/was at Indiana Dunes State Park and offered to mail me some of their research on the matter. Still, I wonder if the real site of the fort wasn’t where the Bailly homestead rests or near the Bailly family cemetery. When Joseph Bailly moved here in 1822, he selected a site that was strategically advantageous (intersection of several Indian trails and a canoe trail). Wouldn’t the fort have also been located at a site that was strategically advantageous or wouldn’t the fort have been among the reasons that the trails were located where they were (that is, for coming and going to the fort)? The folks at the NPS think not and believe that they have poked around the Bailly site enough that they would have found any archeological ruins—yeah, unless the house is sitting on top of them. Keep in mind that the ruins of Fort St. Joseph, which was a much larger and more famous fort, weren’t located until 1998.



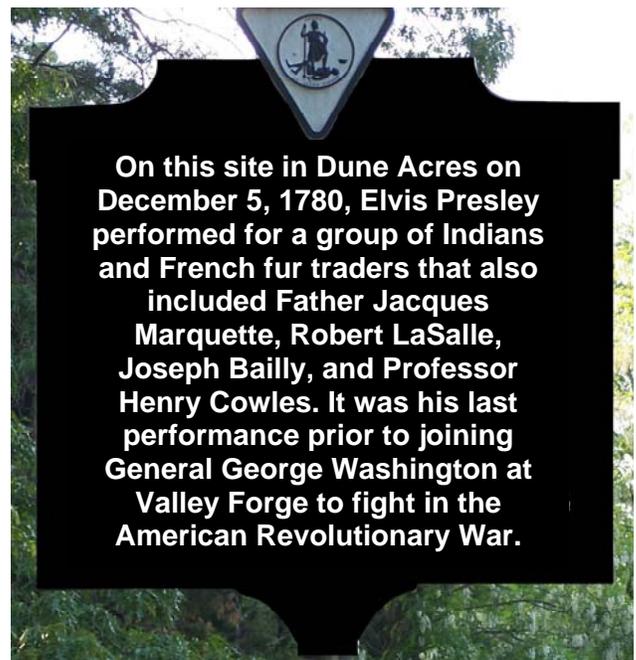
**Historical Marker at Dunes State Park  
They can't all be right.**

Another wild-eyed theory that I would like to track down when I get some time is that perhaps the fort is located where our local "industries" now reside. Instead of using Dunes Creek (which connects to Lake Michigan but not to the Little Calumet River or Salt Creek), it is my understanding that Mr. Bailly used a route to the west of his homestead over by the mills or NIPSCO to connect to Lake Michigan. This was before Burns Ditch was built and drained the surrounding area. I'd like to research a bit on what used to be there. Also, keep in mind that rivers move, with or without the intervention of man—particularly after a flood. In fact, the Little Calumet River and the Grand Calumet River used to be one river and have even changed directions. Anyway, radical that I am, it seems to me the rather inexact descriptions of the location of the little fort battle could apply equally well to Dune Acres as Dunes State Park—particularly if it was fought on the beach. Perhaps we are actually living at the site of this battle. Why don't we put up a marker too?

There's just one hitch with this marker idea. Was it actually a battle? According to De Peyster's letter, he viewed those involved "as robbers and not Prisoners of War, having no Commission that I can learn other than a verbal order". So does this mean that it actually wasn't "the only battle of the American Revolutionary War that was fought in Northwest Indiana" because it didn't really count?



**Possible DA Historical Marker  
Can't go wrong, it's factually correct.**



**Or Why Not Shoot For The Moon?**

Now here's another radical thing for you to think about. How many times have you read that Joseph Bailly was the first white settler in these parts? Like 400 billion times (or at least I have). If Mr. Bailly was the first when he appeared in 1822, how did the two graves marked died 1811 and died 1816 appear in the Bailly family cemetery and who buried them?

And lest you believe that these were sort of “drive by” burials—unknown travelers that died while passing by—their names were Isaac and Rhoda Shellinger (one source gives “Schellinger”), indicating a family connection. And the difference in dates—1811 and 1816—indicates that these individuals were not just passing through. Turns out that Mr. Bailly’s “family cemetery” existed before he took up residence and possibly was also used by the Potawatomi, since there are other unidentified prehistoric bones there. “Prehistoric” doesn’t necessarily mean the “dinosaur era”. The term refers to ages before written records. It is generally believed that the Potawatomi and other tribes before them lived here seasonally—part time like some of our current residents.

Although the Bailly home is located fairly close to Highway 20, the cemetery is located a fair distance from the house, right off Highway 12. If you look south from Highway 12 near the green Mittal sign (and no, they don’t make Barbie dolls—that’s Mattel), you can see the cemetery on a hill overlooking the road. There is a barricaded road/trail that leads by the site, which represents the original entrance to the Bailly homestead from the old Indian trail.



**The Bailly Cemetery  
Can you say garlic mustard?  
It’s thick up here.**

When I described the little fort battle as the only one fought in Northwest Indiana, I was not being truly accurate. In 1780, there was no state of Indiana. After the French and Indian War ended in 1763, the French lost Canada and her territory east of the Mississippi to England and the British controlled the Great Lakes region. The American Revolution changed that ownership designation.

What we now call home was a part of the Northwest Territory, which was established by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Indian Boundary Road in Chesterton is a remnant of the original Northwest Ordinance boundary line, which marked the northern boundary of what would later be known as the state of Indiana. When Indiana became a state in 1816, that northern boundary was moved north to its current location. So why was the line drawn where it was originally--probably because it made a good reference point. The northern boundary was drawn horizontally from the southernmost point of Lake Michigan, which is over in Lake County.

Without that change, we would all be living in Dune Acres, Michigan right now. In fact, when Mr. Bailly moved here (or rather “squatted”), he thought he was living in Michigan (talk about being clueless) since the area had not yet been surveyed or sold to private individuals. And we could have been living in Dune Acres, Virginia (doesn’t that sound very “genteel?”). During the 1780s, Virginia and some of the other original states surrendered their claims to western lands—like our present Indiana.

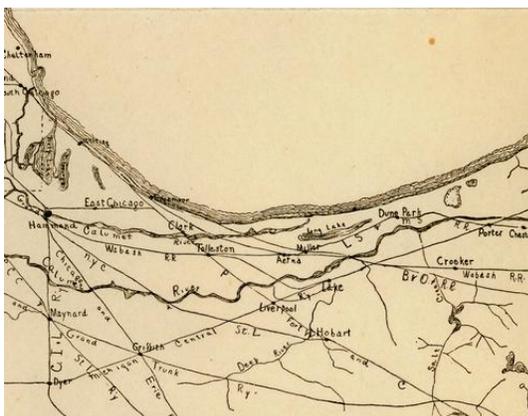
Indiana was largely settled from the Ohio River Valley upward. In 1816 when Indiana became a state, various Indian tribes still held about two-thirds of the land and Northwest Indiana was a very isolated place. These lands were eventually stripped from the Indians under a series of treaties. The 1826 Treaty of Mississinewa with the Potawatomi Indians transferred ownership of our piece of heaven to the U.S. Government. The southern boundary described in this treaty, which ran along the original Northwest Ordinance boundary line, was known as the “Indian Boundary Line” (Indian Boundary Road again).

As the “white man” continued to move north, relations with the Indians became strained at times. For example, the Battle of Tippecanoe happened in 1811 and the infamous Fort Dearborn massacre, where a group of Indians slaughtered many of the inhabitants as they attempted to escape to Fort Wayne happened in 1812. Most of the Potawatomi Indians were removed from the state in a forced “Trail of Death” march in 1838—not a bright point in Indiana history.

Things began to change. Fur trader Joseph Bailly moved into the neighborhood in 1822. In 1833, the Jesse Morgan family moved into the area, establishing a stage house on the Chicago-Detroit Road, which was built in 1833.

In 1852, the railroads moved in—there went the neighborhood. Increased transportation and industry began to transform the region. In 1889 Standard Oil began building a refinery in Whiting, in 1901 Inland Steel began building mills in East Chicago, and in 1906 U.S. Steel began building in Gary.

With the expansion of railroads across Northwest Indiana, it was only a matter of time before the Windy City folks took an interest in our Hoosier dunes. In 1890, the University of Chicago was founded with money from the Rockefeller family, and soon university professors from Hyde Park were tramping around here. Henry Cowles took a shine to the “Tamarack Swamp” we now call Cowles Bog (which isn’t really a bog), publishing the first of his famous studies in 1899. (He didn’t spend all his Indiana time in later years in the muck. Professor Cowles later spoke at a two-week seminar conducted at the Dune Acres Clubhouse. He wasn’t the only notable to pass the Clubhouse door. Famous Chicago landscape expert Jens Jensen and well-known dunes artist Frank Dudley also spoke there in 1938 at a meeting sponsored by the Friends of Our Native Landscape.) In 1903, William Harper, the head of the U of C approached the University’s trustees about purchasing 1,150 acres of land in the dunes to be used as an outdoor laboratory but was turned down. In 1908, the Prairie Club kicked off its series of “Saturday Afternoon Walks” that often were held in the dunes and later built a clubhouse where members could stay overnight in what would become Dunes State Park.



**Cowles' map of our world**

A few years later, the Federal government entered the picture. A Senate resolution, adopted September 7, 1916 and introduced by Indiana Senator Thomas Taggart (Democratic power broker and French Lick Springs

promoter) instructed the Department of the Interior to investigate “the advisability of the securing, by purchase or otherwise, all that portion of the counties of Lake, Laporte, and Porter, in the State of Indiana, bordering upon Lake Michigan, and commonly known as the ‘Sand dunes,’ with a view that such lands be created a national park.” The department was also charged with ascertaining the cost of acquiring the sand dunes for national park purposes and the probable cost of maintaining the area as a national park.

Gathering together approximately 400 individuals from the Prairie Club and other groups in favor of the park, Stephen T. Mather from the Department of the Interior held a meeting in Chicago on October 30, 1916 and later submitted his proposal for a Sand Dunes National Park to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. Among the 42 folks besides Mr. Mather who spoke in favor of the park were Professor Cowles; Mr. Leman; Mr. John Bowers, owner of Mt. Tom; Mr. Jensen, Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck & Co.; Lorado Taft, sculptor and father of Emily Taft (who later married future Illinois Senator Paul Douglas); various Chicago-area historians and professors as well as Mr. William H. Cox, who spoke on behalf of the Potawatomi Indians.

I am not sure that Mr. Mather knew what he was getting when he invited Mr. Cox to speak. According to Mr. Cox, the Potawatomi Indians “claim ownership of all the accretions, all the filled-in lands, and all the sand dunes, outside of any cession ever made to the United States by the Indian tribes, since the United States relinquished all claims to the Indians, on all lands northwest of the river Ohio, east of the Mississippi, and eastwardly to the boundary line agreed on between Great Britain and the United States, in their peace treaty of 1783. The Indians have never parted with their right to this land—no tribe of Indians...Now, the Government, which never bought that land of the Indians, refuses to buy that portion of the lake shore, but proposes to allow railroads to go to work and appropriate it, and permit anybody and everybody to take the Indians’ land, and occupy it, and get the full benefit of it...the Indians are in favor of this park, providing that the title is procured as the law provides, from the rightful owners of the property.”

Wow, that had to be an awkward moment! Mr. Mather recovered by showing the audience a cactus that had been gathered at the dunes

(apparently before the idea of “taking only memories” from the dunes was popularized) and quickly adjourned the meeting. Mr. Cox’s claim had some background. In 1913, the U.S. government purchased 12,000 acres of land for the Potawatomi in Wisconsin and another 3,400 acres in Michigan to settle old claims. That awkward moment aside, those in attendance strongly backed Mr. Mather’s plan. And why not, opponents of the plan were largely not invited.

(Just for the record, the Potawatomi tribe wasn’t the earliest known group in these parts. They didn’t show up on the scene until after the so-called Beaver Wars between the Indians which pushed various tribes out of their traditional stomping grounds. The Miami people were here before them and before that, well, it gets a little more sketchy.)

Mr. Mather’s plan was radical in its time—something that he made very clear. Previously, the national parks that had been created by Congress had been carved out of the public domain, and in only a very few instances had private holdings in a national park been purchased for park purposes. Mr. Mather proposed creating a park of around 9,000 to 13,000 acres that would stretch from the small town of “Millers” (short for Miller’s Station) in Lake County to the west side of Michigan City, a section about 25 miles in length and 1 mile in width. This land would need to be purchased from the current landowners at a cost that he estimated at \$1.8 million to \$2.6 million. He proposed staffing the park with three full-time employees, adding a few temporary rangers during the summer, and operating it on an annual budget of no more than \$15,000—that’s a good one.

Sand Dunes National Park never happened. With the start of World War I, Congress was not supportive of spending for a national park. It wasn’t until 1961 with Cape Cod National Seashore that Congress “purchased” a park from private interests. Mr. Mather suffered a mental breakdown in January 1917 in Washington during a national parks conference at which he planned to pursue his Sand Dunes National Park idea, sidelining him for 18 months. Supporter Senator Taggart lost his bid for election to the Senate in 1916. Further, not all the folks in Indiana were behind Mr. Mather’s idea. Mr. Arthur Bowser, owner and editor of the Chesterton Tribune, was a big opponent of the plan as were a number of Porter County business leaders. Mr. Mather’s park would have included all of Porter County’s

lakefront, cutting off the potential for industrial development there and representing a loss of tax revenue. Some Indiana folks didn’t like the idea of being what they referred to as a playground for Chicagoans. Others suspected that U. S. Steel was behind the idea to keep competitors out of its market. It was a huge cost advantage for a steel mill to be located on Lake Michigan.

On a great many levels, I am glad that we have Dunes State Park and the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore instead of heavy industry. The drive along Highway 12 between Highway 149 and Ogden Dunes is horrifying. However, selfish creature that I am, I can’t say that I am completely sad that Mr. Mather wasn’t successful in relation to the extent of land that he wished to acquire. I love living here! Further, I think that DA does an extraordinary job of taking care of the place. I’m also not sad that Mr. Mather failed to become the administrator of this proposed national park. In Mr. Mather’s own words in 1916, “The Parks that have been created in later years, however, contain within their boundaries considerable private holdings which have been a source of great annoyance to us, and they have especially been a hindrance to our administration of these parks.” The “us” in his sentence referring to the National Park Service. Based on those comments, I don’t think that Mr. Mather would have taken kindly to DA.

Happily, the push for a park didn’t stop there. It merely shifted to the state level and a scaled back state park in the dunes was authorized in 1923. Approximately, 2,000 acres were purchased for the new park. The chairman of U.S. Steel donated \$250,000 toward the effort and Mr. Rosenwald donated \$50,000. Mr. Bowers sold his land at a below-market price and the Prairie Club sold their dunes holdings to the new park at cost. Instead of the 25 miles proposed by Mr. Mather, the original plans for the state park included 8 miles of shoreline. However, cost pressures made park planners reconsider. Learning that the planners of the state park were scaling back, Mr. Wirt entered the picture in 1922, leasing some of the western land originally planned for the park from Mr. Leman and going on to build DA.

The Depression was probably the first big blow to hit DA. With town finances tight, the town’s golf course was left neglected and eventually abandoned and plans for building a harbor here were cancelled (see the painting at the Clubhouse for an artist’s rendition of early plans for the town). In 1933, the town’s

streetlights were turned off—not a bad thing in my opinion. Dunes State Park may lay claim to a Revolutionary War battle, but some of the later battles fought in DA were possibility more revolutionary—and scarier. For example, the unspoiled entrance between West and East roads to the Guard House that gives DA its character was only saved from outside developers in 1953 when townsfolk jumped in and bought the land themselves.

Keep in mind, that DA was established before the Port of Indiana, the NIPSCO power plant, the Bethlehem Steel Burns Harbor plant, the National Steel (Midwest Steel—now U.S. Steel) plant and the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Park were built. A lot happened to this area in a short time, and DA seemed to be caught in the crosshairs rather frequently. For example, championed by Senator Douglas, a former DA resident, the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Park was authorized by Congress in 1966 after a lengthy battle locally and in Washington. Some of the land for this park was originally part of Dune Acres. In 1967, the South Shore Railroad announced plans to build a freight-switching yard across Mineral Springs Road. And you thought you waited a long time for trains now, try waiting for 12 trains to be switched. Of course, waiting on those trains might have become a moot point. In 1968, the National Park Service revealed that they were considering closing and eliminating Mineral Springs Road, although obviously this never occurred. I didn't live in DA at the time, but I remember the bumper stickers from the battle protesting against the nuclear powered generating plant that NIPSCO wanted to build by Cowles Bog in the 1970s.

In 1977, the Park Superintendent of the National Park Service, James Whitehead announced that the Park Service planned to make a strong effort to acquire the Porter Beach area, all of Dune Acres, all of the land along Highway 20 from Highway 49 east to a road two miles into Pine township and the NIPSCO greenbelt. On the heels of this plan, an amendment was introduced in Congress in 1979 to annex 64 acres and eight houses in the west end of Dune Acres to the National Park. Park planners envisioned building a parking lot at the end of West Road so the public had better access to parklands to the west. Because of efforts by town officials and involved individuals, compromises were reached and this amendment was never included in the final version of the park bill. And all that doesn't begin to touch on what problems were caused

in DA by rising lake levels, dead alewives, deer, and even beavers. Yikes!

From this perspective, some of the issues we face here in town today are thankfully rather small. Let's hope they stay that way. Reviewing this history also underscores some of the things that I love best about this town—we're tough. Early roads in this town were a joke—either washed out or full of holes. Before World War II, mail was only delivered during the summer months and everything was put into one box. Individual house addresses didn't come into being until 1960 when the U.S. Postal Service forced the town to name the streets. I personally love the names East and West Road. Coming from the mouthful world of addresses like "56 East 925 North", I think it's great when people ask me for the "rest of" my address. I liken it to going through life only known as Cher or Madonna.

We're also individualists. People here aren't mindless conformists, blindly following a politically correct party line, having 2.39 children, living in cornrow houses, and driving a SUV, just because that's what the Jones do. We drive them so that we can get up the roads here in winter. Life is too short to be boring. We're certainly not boring--take Mike Culhane's simply wonderful lighted holiday globe(!), the Treister's flamingoes, or Rob Carstens' world-class cache of big-boy "beach toys".

And we take great care of this town, politically, socially, and environmentally. When things were needed, people here stepped in financially and in terms of something rarer—their time. They didn't just build a town, they built a community. They built a place worth treasuring and saving not only for its physical beauty but also for the nature of people that it attracts and the way they respect and care for that community. How many places can you name that when a playground merry-go-around needs to be fixed the locals volunteer their time doing it? Where town individuals provide free tennis lessons to the local children? Where residents band together to put out fires or pull up invasive plants? Where town government (volunteer!) is free of the graft and corruption so rampant in other cities? Amazing! Always remember how special this place really is and how fragile. Be kind to it and protect it. Make it better. And don't let it slip away. You won't find another place like it.

Cheryl Evans  
1/12/06