

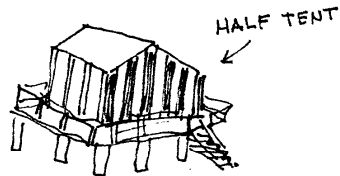
DUNE ACRES HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Occasional Papers, # 2

May, 1990

Early History of Dune Acres

The first two pages of the attached documents are parts of a map of the Indiana Dunes published by Rand McNally in 1920. Page one shows the location of the Dunes on a general map of the area, and indicates the symbols used for roads, trails, and houses. A detailed map of the area which would become Dune Acres a few years later is found on page two. Much of this land was then owned by Henry W. Leman of Chicago. He had bought 414 acres of lakeshore property in 1893 for \$100.00 an acre, and put up a cabin on or near what is now 14 Oak Drive. In 1918, he built a more substantial house near the present Richardson Wildlife Sanctuary on West Road. At about that time, he also allowed other Chicagoans to put up beach shacks on his land. They appear on the map as little black rectangles along the beach. Wade Ray, now living in the Boatman house, has provided a sketch of the tent house his parents had on the beach. The house was washed away in a great storm in 1926.



These summer residents would come by the South Shore to the Mineral Springs station, cross the bog on a primitive county dirt road, then take one of the many wagon roads (shown on the map) through the woods to the beach. From west to east, the landmarks on the map have been very tentatively identified as follows: Mt. Bentley, 8 Summit Drive; Mt. Leman, south of West Road in the Snyder property; Mt. Tim, the Ritchie-Brannan site at 28 West Road; Pettingill Dune, the Clubhouse hill; Hamilton Slide, the blowout at the east beach. Please let us know if you make different identifications, or have further information. (On the map, Mt. Tim is shown as higher than Mt. Leman but according to figures from the National Park Service, Mt. Leman is actually the highest dune on the Indiana shore with an elevation of 770.4 feet above sea level, while Mt. Tim comes in at 745 feet. Figures on the map are feet above lake level.)

Page three shows a plat of the first subdivision of Dune Acres, indicating the lots for which building permits were issued between 1924 and World War II. Construction of the Dunes Highway (Highway 12), begun in 1915 and completed in 1923, opened up the area to more substantial development. William A. Wirt, Superintendent of the Gary Public Schools, and a group of business associates acquired the Leman tract in phases beginning in December, 1922. Dune Acres, Incorporated, was incorporated 15 April, 1923, the Town of Dune Acres on 2 October, 1923, and the plat of the first subdivision recorded 19 March, 1926.

A record of building permits was kept from the time the Town of Dune Acres was organized. The records seem to be fairly complete, though it is known that houses were built by the Rogers (18 Circle Drive) and Whitmans (12 Circle Drive) before 1930, but there are no recorded building permits. A few houses burned or were otherwise removed through the years and the lot has remained

vacant. A permit was issued to William Tackett in January of 1941, but without the lot number recorded. If anyone knows the location of that house, we will add it too the map.

In all, 38 permits for houses were issued through 1941, when the war brought construction to a halt. Up to 1929, about two-thirds of the permits were issued to residents of Gary (where home address was given), and about one-third to Chicagoans. In the Depression years, most permits went to residents of Chicago. Dune Acres was largely a weekend and summer community before World War II, that character accentuated by the Guest House, the Clubhouse, and the golf course. According to the official U. S. Census figures, Dune Acres had 46 residents in 1940 and 86 in 1950.

Note that none of the roads on the plat were named. They remained without official names until about 1960. Why and how names were provided is described by Faith Halley in a taped interview in the archives of the Dune Acres Historical Commission:

"...in 1960 the postal department announced that they would no longer deliver mail here unless we had individual addresses, not just Mounted Route 2 which we had been before. Before that time all the mail was delivered...to two or three points and you went down and picked up your mail at intersections. I think only three points. Before the war, there had been only one... and there were three boxes, one for first class mail and the others for second and third class, and everybody had to go through and sort it out....So the Town Board appointed Hunton Rogers and Jim Halley as a committee to come up with names for the streets. They...decided the main streets should be directions and called roads (East Road, West Road), the drives would be geographical features like Shore and Beach, and the minor roads would be named after flora of various sorts."

Gertrude Conklin remembers a subsequent town meeting where residents of each street sat in a group and considered the proposed name. One owner on Crest preferred Hillcrest, but it was pointed out that "Hillcrest Drive, Dune Acres" was too long to go on a Marshall Field's chargeplate! "Crest" was adopted, leaving "Hill" available for its present day location.

Dune Acres was laid out by Colonel A. P. Melton, the town planner of the city of Gary, and we have him to thank for the winding roads and preservation of wooded areas and blowouts. Most of the houses built before World War II were the log cabins (constructed by Henry Studebaker) but there were also the Palm Beach, Mizener style Spanish stuccos with red tile roofs. The Commission hopes to make an architectural survey as one of its projects.

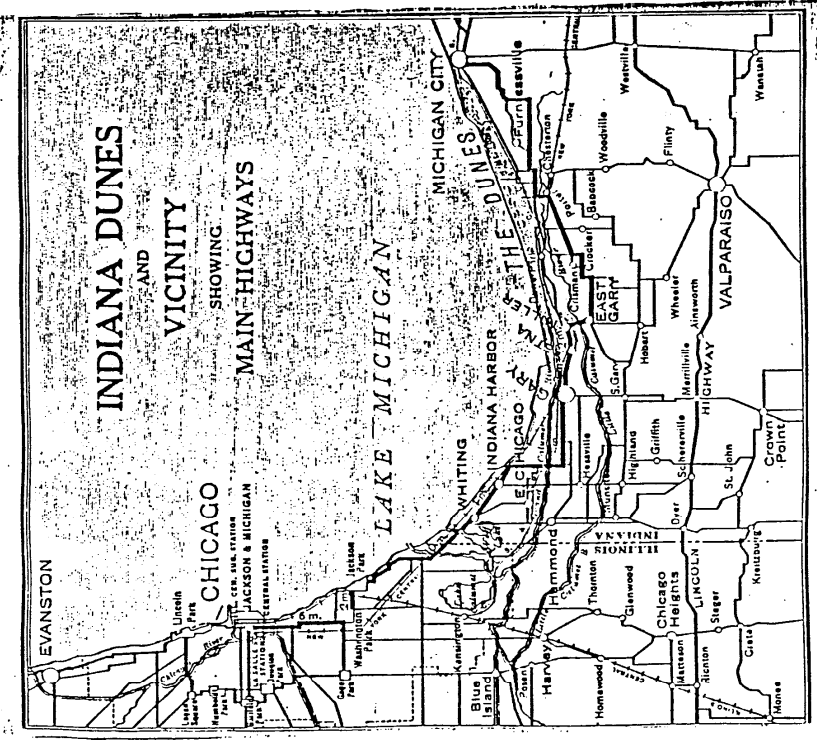
Materials for this paper have been drawn from the William A. Wirt papers in the Calumet Regional Archives, Indiana University Northwest, the Westchester Library local history files, taped interviews with Faith Halley and Elizabeth Rogers, and conversations with Wade Ray, Beegee Snyder and Ray Tittle.



This snapshot, taken sometime in the 1920's by Art Johnson (former Town marshal), shows a beach cottage located on what is now the Conklin property, 21 Crest Drive. There were many of these "beach shacks" located all along the lakeshore -- some on the dunes, some actually on the beach. With the establishment of the Indiana Dunes State Park and the general development of the region, these shacks were gradually destroyed or removed. The only trace of this particular one that remained when the Conklins built in 1965-66 was a small concrete well.

INDIANA MAPS
 (20)
 Indiana Dunes

Page 1



RAND McNALLY

MAP OF INDIANA DUNES

THE WONDER REGION OF THE MIDDLE WEST

By P. S. GOODMAN
 MEMBER OF THE PRAIRIE CLUB

THE DATA UPON WHICH THIS MAP IS BASED IS FROM THE OFFICIAL SURVEY, THE UNITED STATES SOIL MAP OF PORTER COUNTY, AND FROM ORIGINAL SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR.

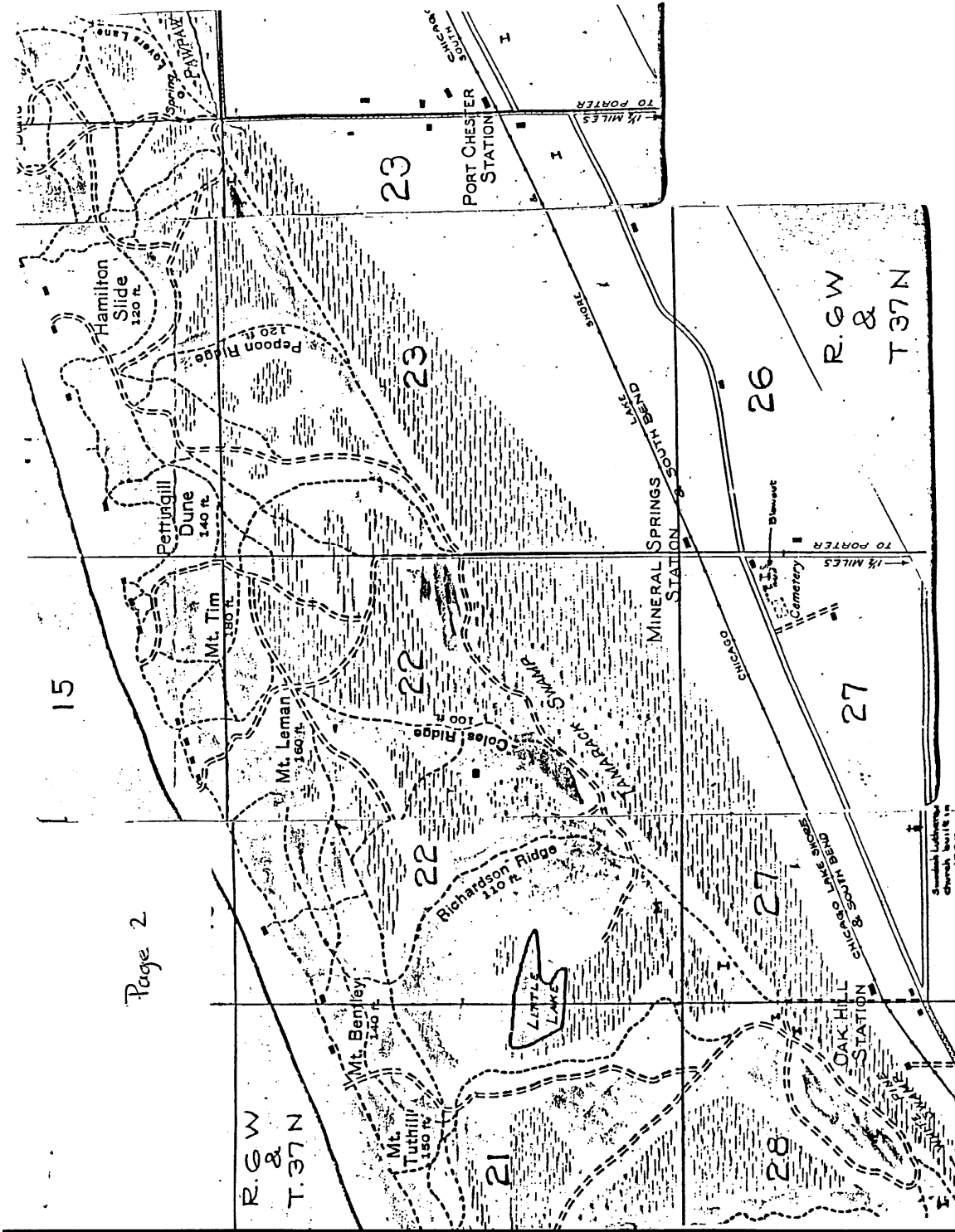
THE DUNES ARE APPROXIMATELY 12 MILES LONG AND 1 1/2 MILE WIDE. FOR CONVENIENCE IN HANDLING, THE MAP IS SHOWN IN THREE SECTIONS.
 SEC. 1. MILLER TO DUNE PARK STATION. SEC. 2. DUNE PARK STATION TO TREMONT. SEC. 3. TREMONT TO MICHIGAN CITY.



- First Class Road
- Second Class Road
- Wagon Trail
- Foot Trail
- Stream Railroad
- Electric Railroad
- Houses
- Streams
- Marsh
- Wooded Marsh or Swamp

Rand McNally & Company, Map of Indiana Dunes
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1920-21



**JUNE ACRES
OWN OF DUNE ACRES, INDIANA
O. CHESTER, INDIANA**

Page 3

BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED 1924-1929
" " " " " " 1930-1941

SYMBOLS

