



"BACK HOME AGAIN IN INDIANA"

## A CELEBRATION OF THE HISTORY OF DUNE ACRES

### LOG HOMES OF THE 1930's

Dune Acres Clubhouse  
25 Ridge Drive- Bette & John Norris  
12 Circle Drive- Catherine Upjohn  
18 Circle Drive- Marti & Tony Belluschi  
22 Circle Drive- Susan & Terry Grimm

#### In Memory

Margaret Doyle of the log home at 26 Circle Drive passed away unexpectedly on October 14, 2000. She had been very special to our community. Among her civic contributions, she served on the Dune Acres Town Council and on the Dune Acres Historical Commission, and she co-authored *The History of Dune Acres* in connection with our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Our deepest condolences go out to her family.

The Town of Dune Acres was incorporated in 1923 with nine persons voting to do so. At that time it was primarily occupied as a summer resort area. By the time World War II started, Dune Acres was well-established, not as an ordinary town or suburb, but still as a summer resort community. Until 1946, mail was delivered only from June 1 until September 15. The years between 1945 and 1960 were a period of transition for Dune Acres as the prewar summer resort grew into a contemporary, mostly year-round municipality. The fact that Dune Acres began in the way it did imprinted characteristics on our town, which have persisted through its history. Dune Acres has always been more than an accumulation of residences, but rather a "colony" in a special sense. A person or family moving to Dune Acres acquired not just a house but a way of life, based on love of natural beauty and on shared recreational social life.

The Dune Acres Clubhouse and an adjacent Guesthouse, constructed on a high dune overlooking Lake Michigan, opened in 1926,

although the Guesthouse was subsequently demolished and only its foundation remains.

The log home at 25 Ridge Drive was probably among one of the first homes in Dune Acres that were built for year-round use. It was built some time in the mid 1920's. The original owner was Mr. Engle, a schoolteacher, who lived there, full time, with his family. Not much is known about the exact date of construction, or of the Engle family. This house had a warm air, solid fuel fired, heating system. The boulders and cobblestones used in the retaining walls were acquired from local farmers who had cleared them from their fields.

A building boom occurred in Dune Acres during the 1930's, when the Circle Drive log homes came into being.

The earliest construction on Circle Drive was in 1931, at 12 Circle Drive. The original owner was Dr. Walter Whitman, a research chemist for Standard Oil Company in Whiting Indiana.

The second log house on Circle Drive was built in 1932 at 18 Circle Drive. The original owner was Dr. T. Hunton Rogers, also a research chemist for Standard Oil Company.

The third log house on Circle Drive was built in 1934, at 22 Circle Drive. The original owner was Dr. Wm. Herbert Bahlke, and he was also a research chemist for Standard Oil Company. It was the only home built solely as a summer home, and for many years had only a dirt floor on the lower level. The skinned aspen pole rafters in this house were hauled from near Ludington, Michigan in a trailer behind a flatbed truck.

These three log houses, in addition to the stone houses at 24 and 46 Circle Drive, also originally owned by employees of Standard Oil Company, were the basis of Circle Drive being known as "Gasoline Alley" by many of the residents at that time.

The fourth and last log house on Circle Drive was at 26 Circle Drive, built in 1937. The original owner was Mr. Jack Knight, an airline pilot for United Airlines. He was a colorful individual who on one occasion during the late 1930's buzzed Dune Acres with a DC-3 airliner.

The log houses, Clubhouse and Guesthouse were built with western cedar logs that were shipped by rail car from Oregon. The rail cars were parked on a railroad siding on the South Shore Railroad at the Dune Acres stop on the west side of Mineral Springs Road. They were then loaded onto wheel sets and pulled behind a truck to the building sites. The logs provided the connection between the wheel sets.

The houses at 12, 18 and 22 Circle Drive required a temporary narrow gage railway built from the base of the slope to the top in order to bring the building materials to the work site. The railway car was pulled up the slope by a cable and pulley system with a truck driven along Circle Drive.

A gin pole was erected on the floor of the partially built houses to pull the logs into place. The gin pole had a pulley and rope system to attach to the logs and a winch was used to pull the rope. The logs were first placed on the floor and shaped manually with an adz to provide a flat mating surface between the logs. The logs were then hoisted into place and spiked together. The joint was packed with oakum, a creosote

soaked loosely woven hemp rope, using a wooden caulking tool and mallet. One man and two man crosscut saws were used to cut the logs to proper length.

The concrete blocks used in the foundations of these early houses were made by hand in a concrete block mold. Initially they were made on the beach using beach gravel from the lakeshore. Later the mold was moved to the open area just west of the house at 17 East Road. Beach gravel was hauled to this site from the lakeshore in a cart pulled by a Fordson tractor. Beach gravel was also used for all of the mortar and a portion of the aggregate in the poured concrete in all of the log houses.

All poured concrete required for construction was mixed on the job-site by a gasoline engine driven concrete mixer located near the upper terminus of the temporary railway. Aggregate and bagged Portland cement was brought to the mixer area via the narrow gauge railway. The mixed concrete was moved to the pour location in wheelbarrows rolling on planks placed on the route.

The flagstone fireplaces, stairways and retaining walls associated with all the Circle Drive log houses were made from limestone quarried near Joliet, Illinois and transported in gondola railcars to the Dune Acres siding. The individual stones were then loaded by hand onto a flatbed truck and hauled to the job-site. Oscar Nelson, a native of Sweden, did the masonry work. His widow still lives in the little white house on US12 just past the Bethlehem Entrance. Three years ago, the Grimm's invited her to their home to see his work, which she had never seen before.

Alden K. Studebaker drew the plans for all of the log houses on Circle Drive, and he was responsible for supervising their construction. He was the nephew of William Wirt, the principal founder of Dune Acres, and the father of Henry and Arthur Studebaker.

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Thank you to the owners of the log homes, who have graciously opened them to us today, and to Henry Studebaker, Arthur Studebaker, Jim Newman, Margaret Doyle and the Dune Acres Historical Commission for their historical perspectives.