



THE BEACHCOMBER

DUNE ACRES, INDIANA

WWW.DUNEACRES.ORG

August, 2015

Dune Acres: “The Idyllic World Inside” The Miracle along Mineral Springs Road

Driving into Dune Acres in 1950 involved crossing a swamp (later named Cowles Bog), then entering a luxuriant environment of rolling dunes, woodlands, and wildflowers. In the drive from Highway 12 northward to where Mineral Springs Road terminates at Shore Drive and Linden Lane (roughly one mile), one would not see a single home. Richard (“Dick”) Smith, a Dune Acres resident and community leader during the 1950s-70s, describes the experience:

One of the enchantments of Dune Acres was the approach through the swamp and woodlands along Mineral Springs Road, [an approach] that conditions one for the idyllic world inside.

Beginning around 1952, however, clouds threatening changes began to roll over the landscape, changes that would seriously alter the natural and sanctuarial character of the Town.

This story is about how Dune Acres property owners and Town officials came together in the early 1950s to acquire 198 acres of land from two developers -- one from Chicago who owned 150 acres, and the other from Valparaiso who controlled 48. Each planned to develop (or sell to others) their respective properties. This story centers on people who shared an understanding of the uniqueness of the small community and a determination to preserve the essential character of the little village along the Lake.

The Uniqueness of Dune Acres

In the 1950s, coming into the Town was like entering a nature sanctuary. Within the dunes and woodlands, sixty homes housing ninety residents were interspersed along winding roads that meandered through the natural environment. Like today, Dune Acres was strictly a residential community having no stores, industries, professional offices, restaurants or other commercial businesses. Residents overwhelmingly preferred it remain that way: a little known, off-the-main-road natural sanctuary, one removed from industry, pollution, noise, traffic, and crowds.

Developers Are at the Borders

But the clouds of change were descending. The possibility of large housing developments being built immediately south of the Town’s boundaries was real. To appreciate the magnitude of the threat, imagine today coming into Dune Acres and observing on each side of Mineral Springs Road hundreds of homes plated on small lots stretching from south of the present security office to the intersections of Mineral Springs at both West and East Roads. Had these developments taken place, they would have destroyed Dick Smith’s “idyllic world inside.”

Smith chronicled how the threat arose:

Along came a man named Elmore, a Chicagoan who had acquired land on both sides of Mineral Springs Road including all the land southward from the foot of Clubhouse Hill. . . . The south boundary of the Town was an East-West line running through the inter- section of East Road with Mineral Springs Road.

In addition to today’s expansive park-playground area, all lands south of East and West Roads (except for 18 acres north of west Road on its eastern end) lay outside the Town’s boundaries. The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore had not yet been created. Primarily Chicago investors owned the lands south of the Dune Acres East-West southern boundary all the way to Highway 12, including the wetlands. These “outsiders” shared a goal -- to develop, or sell to others, their properties. Mr. Elmore owned 80 acres bordering the east side of Mineral Spring Road and 68 acres on the west. Together the parcels were called “Elmore’s Tract.” Dune Acres residents were worried. As Smith puts it: “The citizens of the Town could not bear the thought that this Elmore tract might be changed from virgin beauty into a housing development.”

Spurred into action, Dune Acres officials analyzed the threat and in time along with residents and

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JULY 4TH CELEBRATION IN A ONE OF A KIND TOWN

This year's Fourth of July Celebration lived up to its reputation! From the beach BBQ and Fireworks on Friday, continuing early on Saturday morning for the Walk/Run to the Parade and onward to the Hot Dog Roast and the Beach games and activities all the way to the Party at the Clubhouse, the day was enjoyed by all!

There are scores of people to thank for the July 4th activities for they take a lot of community effort. But I am quite confident that all who participated or chaired a committee had a good time. Now the hard part; listing all those who helped make the day a success:

The whole weekend could not have happened without the help of our Maintenance guy **Mark Taylor**. He is such an important asset to Dune Acres. Thank you Mark!

Now for the Volunteers:

- **Patti and Erika Carstens** for making sure the Firemen were happily fed dinner.
- **Todd Klein** who unbeknownst to anyone manned the BBQ with a 102 fever! Sorry about that Todd.
- Thank you **Tom and Carol Cornwell** who do such a nice job with the Walk/Run. Also thanks to their helpers **Cathy Bomberger, Bette Norris** and others.
- For a mother of 5 with an infant, **Karen Riffle** did another great job organizing the parade!
- Thanks to **Jan Bapst, Jane Dickey, Sharon Tutlewski, Ruth Dyerly** and the **Carstens** ladies for selling tickets, handing out balloons and decorating faces.
- Thanks go to **Howard Silverman** who stood in at the last minute for our injured Revolutionary Mike Swygert in reading the Declaration of Independence. Our Grand Marshall this year was **Bill Nixon** – few deserve that title as much as Bill!! He and wife **Lois** led the parade.



Ruth Dyerly's daughter creates her own costumes and enjoys entertaining at parades.



Howard Silverman reads the Declaration of Independence

August Beach Exercise Schedule Saturday at 10am

- August 8 - Rubber Band Resistance, Bands Provided - at the Clubhouse
- August 15 - Yoga Detox Flow - at the Clubhouse
- August 22 - Mat Pilates - at the Clubhouse
- August 29 - Power Yoga - at the beach, weather permitting, or the Clubhouse

***Remember to bring your mat to each class!**

\$5 per person or \$3 per person if 10 or more show up.

by Sharon Tutlewski

Thanks to the following people who made this issue happen:

Carolyn Mellen
Irene Newman

Mike Swygert
Dana Treister
Sharon Tutlewski

If you would like to contribute a story, photo, poem, art, something from your children or grandchildren, etc,

**The deadline for the next issue is August 31.
Publication date September 3.**

The Celebration continues . . .

What can one say about **Margo and Bob Hartmann** except that they have contributed to this town for decades and continued to as the Masters of the Hot Dog Roast this year! Thank you!!! Thanks also go to **Bill and Sheri Quinn, Mark Bapst, Clarice Gourley, Bev Hubbs** and somewhat new residents **Marla and Dan O'Keefe** - who offered to man the hot grill with Bob!

Kellie Klein ran the beach games...again! Thank you so much. I'm sure the kids had a great time. And the Party! OMG - it was great!! Thanks to **Jenny Carey, Mark Hull, Shirley and Joel Hull, Rachel and Ryan Carey and Lucas Klein** for doing it all!! Set up took a lot of muscle moving the tables to the first floor - thanks to the young men. Rachel was there during all the set up and take down doing whatever was asked of her. Also helping out were **Erika Carstens** and **Paige Pucell** who were waitresses for part of the night. But mostly, thank you **Jenny Carey**. She spent a lot of time planning, making decorations, cooking and getting all the details just right. **Mark Hull** was no slouch either!!! Thank you so much.

Last but not least, thanks to my husband **Lou** who did as much as he could physically to help me. If I have left anyone out, I apologize - it took a whole lot of people to chip in a bit to have such a wonderful holiday - something Dune Acres' residents should take pride in!!

by Carolyn Mellen



Great homemade decorations made by Jenny Carey welcome the guests.



The band The Chicago Kingsnakes perform at the Clubhouse.



Happy Partygoers enjoy being outside at the 4th of July party at the Clubhouse.



Inside at the Clubhouse party

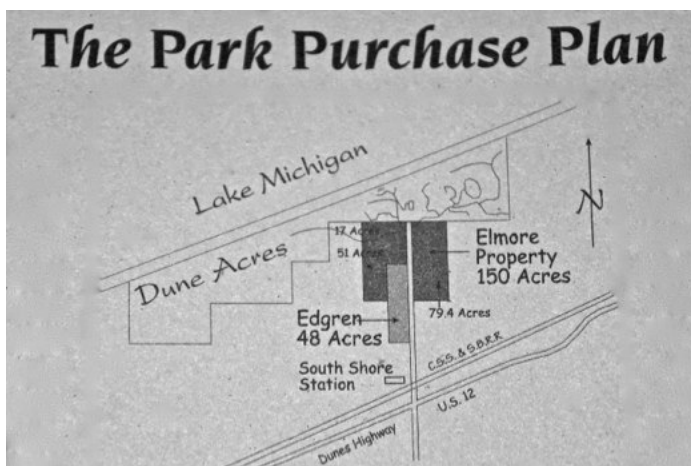
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property owners came up with an acceptable plan to purchase Elmore's 148 acres. (Mr. Elmore had indicated that in lieu of developing, he would sell the land for \$50,000 (equivalent to \$460,000 in 2015 dollars)). Regrettably, the Town had no viable ways do so. It was precluded from using its bonding power as Indiana law limited a municipality's issuance of bonds to no more than 2% of its total assessed valuation. Dune Acres selling bonds to raise \$50,000 would far exceed this State-imposed limit.

Park Purchase Plan: Town Property Owners Buy the Land

Over several weeks, Town officials and citizens poured over various plans to raise the money. Five were submitted to the Town Board, then consisting of Burgess Snyder, Leo Johnston and Lloyd Steers. The Board chose one called "The Park Purchase Plan," described by Smith as "simple and painful." The plan required each homeowner to contribute a pre-determined, specific pro-rata amount based on a ratio of the assessed valuation of one's property to the estimated \$50,000 cost of purchase -- Elmore's asking price. If successful in raising the money and acquiring Elmore's Tract, Dune Acres property owners agreed to deed the land to the Town on condition it hold it as parkland in perpetuity, never to be further subdivided.



The Board appointed a committee chaired by Dick Smith to implement the plan. The other members were Chester Bronski, Leonard Conklin, James Martin, Robert Grainey, Harold Miles, and L. T. Roundtree. The group immediately went to work and obtained the assessed valuation from the Porter County Assessor of each real estate parcel in the Town. It then calculated under the pro-rata assessment formula the amount each property owner needed to pledge to meet a revised goal of \$45,000 (\$5,000 lower than the asking price

because the committee felt Elmore would accept a lesser amount). Over a several-month period, committee members met with individual property owners to explain, persuade, and hopefully receive a pledge from each. After the pledges were collected and the total amount tabulated, Chairman Smith summarized the results:

The response was extraordinary. For many of the donors, meeting their pledges meant considerable sacrifice. Over 90% of the homeowners pledged and contributed their full shares, averaging \$710 per household. In today's dollars that's equivalent to \$6,400 per household. Many of the contributors went to banks and took out long-term personal loans to come up with their cash contributions. All pledges were paid in full.

The total of the collected pledges was \$42,000 -- \$3,000 below the committee's \$45,000 goal. Stepping up, Burgess Snyder and Jim Martin promised to make up the \$3,000 difference if needed. Subsequently, Smith, Leo Johnston and Leonard Conklin went to Elmore's Chicago office and made an offer of \$42,000. The Dune Acres contingent was relieved when Mr. Elmore accepted. The deal was executed on May 12, 1953. The fact that an astonishing 90% of the Town's property owners made and fulfilled their pledges evidenced a shared determination to preserve the uniqueness of Dune Acres and prevent a large-scale housing development at its front door.

Another Housing Development Threatens the Town

Within two months after resolution of the Elmore matter, a new threat arose, one that if it materialized would also negatively impact Dune Acres and change its essential character. Smith described what happened following acquisition of the Elmore property: "News of substantial real estate transfers always spreads like a grass fire in a high wind."

In the summer of 1953, a Valparaiso businessman and land speculator, Mr. Edgren, approached the Town Board. He controlled 48 acres on the west side of Mineral Springs Road consisting of 24 acres north of today's Security Office, and 24 south. The northern parcel was contiguous to a segment of Elmore's land that Dune Acres had acquired two months earlier. Edgren told Dune Acres officials that he intended to develop the 48 acres, though he was willing to sell the acreage to the Town for \$9,500. Smith noted that a purchase by Dune Acres would avert outside development, and added that Edgren's tract "contained many excellent

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building sites.” Everything was fine except for one thing: Dune Acres didn’t have the money.

Leo Johnston, a real estate expert and a member of the Town Board, suggested a way to make both the Town and Edgren get what they wanted. Johnston pointed out that 18 acres of the former Elmore land that the Town had acquired by gift from the residents, was located North of the West Road and West of Mineral Springs Road. Johnston suggested that the Town change the zoning of these 18 acres from park to residential; then subdivide the acreage into four parcels, each one to be used only for a single-family dwelling. Then, Johnston suggested, the Town could raise the \$9,500 by selling the 18 acres parcels for that amount. The Board and property owners agreed.

Dick Smith did not, however, support Leo Johnston’s plan. In obtaining pledges to buy the Elmore Tract, Smith had promised property owners that none of the property would be subdivided but would always remain Town parkland. Though Smith recognized the viability of the Johnston plan, he “would not,” as Mary Ann Tittle recalls, “be part of this.”

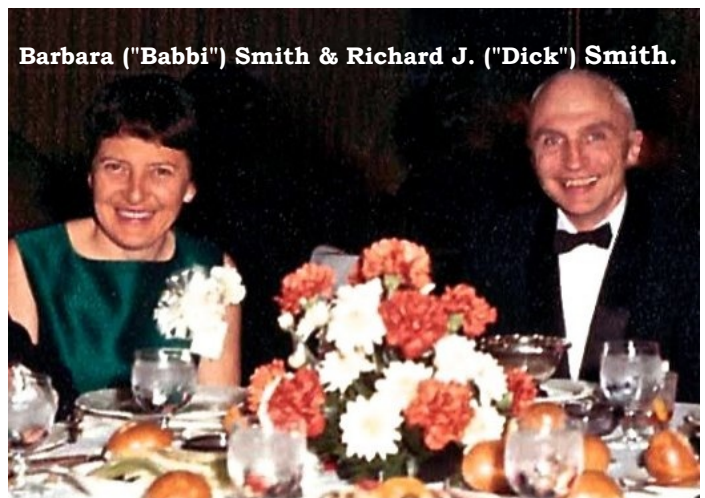
Yes, it was a step back from Town’s earlier promise never to develop any of the Elmore land, but under the circumstances, most residents were willing to support the trade-off, believing it was in the best interests of the Town to so. Subsequently, Dune Acres sold to private purchasers the 18 acres, enabling the Town to purchase Edgren’s 48 acres with the \$9,500 proceeds. Like the earlier transaction, the Board and property owners agreed that the newly 48 acres purchased from Edgren be used as parkland in perpetuity.

Significance of The Events

Though Dune Acres had stopped two potentially large developments, many other benefits resulted as well. The Town added 198 acres within its borders: 180 acres exclusively zoned parkland and 18 acres zoned residential. Moreover, consider what Dune Acres effectively paid for these 198 acres. Nothing! Property owners contributed the entire \$42,000 purchase price of the Elmore property. And though the Town paid \$9,500 to purchase the Edgren acreage, it was a wash because Dune Acres sold 18 acres that had cost nothing for it to obtain, being part of the Elmore Tract that property owners had previously gifted to the Town.

This story ends with a passage from The History of Dune Acres, 75th Anniversary Celebration, by James Newman and Margaret Doyle, that captures the essence of the events:

The character of Dune Acres [in 1998] is revealed by the unspoiled, wooded entrance to the town on Mineral Springs, where the first view of human habitation is of the tennis courts and playground. All of this we owe to the residents in 1953 whose community spirit and financial sacrifice made it possible. Like the social program and the “every resident a fire-fighter” custom, the park purchase plan brought all the residents into active participation in and responsibility for the community. In this crucial postwar period of growth, these activities maintained and strengthened the community life of Dune Acres.



Barbara ("Babbi") Smith & Richard J. ("Dick") Smith.

ADDENDUM

Town Annexations and coming of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Prevent Further Development outside Town Limits

A Dune Acres Plan Commission and a Board of Zoning Appeals were established in 1951. By the mid-1950s, residential, commercial and industrial growth was surging in Northwest Indiana. Though the Elmore and Edgren threats were resolved, Town officials became increasingly concerned over what might be developed on the remaining hundreds of acres of privately owned land south of the Town’s borders. Historians Newman and Doyle:

[T]he whole Calumet area was booming. On either side of Mineral Springs Road were wetlands and woods that could be exploited for commercial or industrial purposes.

The Plan Commission hired Dennis O’Harrow (Director of the American Society of Planning Officials who lived in Chicago) to learn if, and how, Dune Acres might zone all the land south to Highway 12 for single-family dwellings. O’Harrow’s answer was simple: single-use zoning would never be approved by a court as the law required multiple-use zoning that includes both

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commercial and industrial areas, information Dune Acres officials were not pleased to learn. Moreover, O'Harrow emphasized, if the Town did not annex the land, hodge-podge development including industrial would happen anyway; it was only a matter of time. The wetlands would not be excluded. Town officials were reminded that areas of Chicago arose from swamplands after being drained and covered with landfill (including sand from the Indiana Dunes).

The outlook was dire. Dune Acres had but one choice as town historians Newman and Doyle explain:

O'Harrow recommended the Town annex the lands, zone them in a way to get legal approval and set standards for commercial and industrial development that Dune Acres could abide. This is in fact what was done.

In 1969, Dune Acres adopted a Master Plan that included zones for commercial and industrial enterprises. But, as Newman and Doyle point out:

Over time, this plan could have brought substantial changes to Dune Acres. But the Town was saved by the march of events. When the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore was established, those areas were included in the new National Park.

Happily, for we who live in Dune Acres today, driving, cycling or walking into Town along Mineral Springs Road remain refreshing and uplifting experience, leaving behind a fast-paced world and entering an "idyllic world inside." Dune Acres property owners, residents and Town officials of the 1950's deserve our gratitude and, yes, even the United States Congress that later established the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, for protecting our southern flank. Putting this all together, this story might be renamed: "The Miracle on Mineral Springs Road —It Remains as it Was"

Sources:

Post-War Dune Acres, James Newman and Margaret Doyle, Dune Acres Historical Commission, Occasional Paper # 8 (April 1977), located in Dune Acres Archives.

Email Correspondence with Mary Ann Tittle, former Town resident, member of the Dune Acres Historical Commission, and documentarian of the historical origins of Dune Acres' homes.

The Park Purchase Plan by Richard J. Smith, a 4-page typed report plus a one-page map; located in the Dune Acres historical archives (undated though referred to in other sources as being written by Mr. Smith in the early 1970s).

The History of Dune Acres, 75th Anniversary Celebration, by James Newman and Margaret Doyle, a 38-page booklet, privately printed by the Dune Acres Historical Commission (1998) in Dune Acres Archives.

The United States Inflation Calculator, accessed on July 21, 2015 at: www.usinflationcalculator.com

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Mary Baim, Weaver



Irene Newman, Jewelry



Rita Jackson, Sculptor

**25% of sales
proceeds to DACIF**

**Sunday, August 23; 10 am-4 pm
Dune Acres Town Hall**

Bring your friends!

Art Institute sculptor CHARLES RAY's Dune Acres

The first major exhibition of the provocative sculptures of Los Angeles-based sculptor Charles Ray since 1998 is on view through October 4 at the Art Institute of Chicago, mostly on the second floor of the Modern Wing. The nineteen sculptures are mostly figurative and representational, but there is always more there than is immediately evident to the eye... If you go, be sure to read the wall labels carefully, and here is a link to more information, and photos: <http://www.artic.edu/charles-ray-sculpture-1997-2014>

BUT even the wall labels will not reveal the Dune Acres Connection! The artist lives in L.A. now, but he was raised mostly in the northern suburbs of Chicago, and his parents rented a series of homes on the East side of Dune Acres. I had the opportunity to meet Charlie when he was in Chicago for the installation and opening of the show, and his eyes brightened noticeably when I mentioned Dune Acres.

Charlie's parents Helen and Wade owned the Ray-Vogue College of Design which was on Chicago's Mag Mile. According to Dune Acres historians Mary Ann Tittle, Bev Hubbs, and Bob Hartmann, one home the Ray family rented was "the Boatman house" at 52 Circle Drive which is now "the Pezzuto house". Even before that, Wade's parents – Charlie's grandparents – used to bring Wade and his sister Ruth to the Dune Acres Clubhouse "back in the day" when it still operated as a hotel!

I got to know Helen and Wade through various Dune Acres gatherings, and remember how proud they were when I saw them at the opening of a show of Charlie's earlier work at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 1998, shortly after the MCA moved into the current building. I am told the Rays were active members of the Dune Acres Book Club, as well as many other aspects of the community. People remember Wade setting up his easel at various scenic spots in Dune Acres, attired in a mosquito-netting hat!

So now you know - another local boy makes good!

by Dana Treister



And another local boy makes good!

Jim Gaffigan, who was raised in Dune Acres (see story in July, 2015 Beachcomber) is appearing in his own show on TVLand and is featured on bus shelter billboards in downtown Chicago. This one is located on Chicago Avenue just east of Michigan Avenue.

submitted by Irene Newman



Nature in Motion - Summer Sculpture Show at Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo

When you think of a zoo, you probably think about animals, but Lincoln Park Zoo actually started out in 1868 as a tranquil garden with two swans! While the animal population has grown over the nearly-150-years since then, the gardens have evolved as well – especially over the past decade. A full-time master horticulturalist creates a different palette each season of colors and textures. Additional water features have been added, including several waterfalls - water with motion and soothing sound.

This summer the garden atmosphere is further enhanced by the addition of fifteen large-scale, nature-related sculptures, scattered throughout the gardens and walkways – all part of NATURE IN MOTION, the first-ever such show at the zoo!

I have served on Lincoln Park Zoo's Gardens and Sculpture Committee for many years. The late Charlie Haffner, a Dune Acres West Road neighbor until his death three years ago, was the long-time passionate and devoted chair of the committee. For the past couple of years I have especially enjoyed serving on the Sculpture Selection sub-committee.

A bright red dancer towers over a flock of Chilean flamingos; seven concrete columns near the Gateway Pavilion Visitors' Center reveal their secret spiritual centers only when the viewer circles among them. Sixteen Chicago-area sculptors (one piece was a collaboration between two artists) were selected to share their free-ranging interpretations of the "Nature in Motion" theme, on view through the end of October.

A free sculpture map is available at Gateway Pavilion for a self-guided tour. Enjoy a free docent-led tour any Friday, Saturday or Sunday at 11 a.m. or 3 p.m. – no reservations needed. Or, for a nominal fee you can register via the website <http://www.lpzoosculpture.org> for a special after-hours Wednesday evening tour offered August 12, September 9 and October 14, 6–7:30 p.m. Also check that website for much more information, including pictures of the other thirteen sculptures.

As always, Lincoln Park Zoo is open 365 days of the year, and always free during regular zoo hours - come on down!

by Dana Treister



Enter Dianne's Garden of Delights

Photos by
Mike Swygert



The Fine Print: *The Beachcomber* is published on-line monthly during the summer and periodically during the winter. All information, news, creative contributions, articles, reports, corrections, suggestions, Letters to the Editor, art work, comments and otherwise are welcomed and encouraged. *The Beachcomber* is a grass roots publication not officially affiliated with either the Town of Dune Acres or the Dune Acres Civic Improvement Foundation, Inc. (DACIF). All content is believed to be reasonably accurate and reliable but not "guaranteed!"

Editorial Board: Carolyn Mellen, Irene Newman and Mike Swygert.
Email submissions to inewman680@aol.com. Please use "**Beachcomber**," in the subject line.