Village Landmarks First Midcentury Modern Home

The year 2019 concluded with the Village Council voting unanimously to landmark the first Midcentury Modern home in Downers Grove. The home was designed and built by architect John Wendell in 1964 on the meadow of General Ducat’s property in Denburn Woods.

The home was built for John and Doris Mochel, who lived in the house with their three daughters and one son. John Mochel was the third-generation owner of Mochel Hardware, a long-time fixture on Main Street. Many features of the home were ahead of their time, including one bathroom containing a double vanity, a laundry room on the same level as the garage (as opposed to the typical basement location), a 2 ½ car heated garage, custom retractable window screens, and an intercom system.

At the urging of the Mochels, the fifth owners of this split-level house, Louise and Peter Trucano, applied for landmark status. The house has exterior features that are typical of Midcentury Modern homes that include a low-sloped gabled roof with deep overhang, vertical wood siding, and casement windows. There are clerestory windows on both the front and rear facades to bring in natural light.

The John and Doris Mochel House, circa 1964.
Photograph by Louise Trucano.

Vertical wood siding & casement windows, typical of Midcentury Modern homes.
Photograph by Irene Hogstrom

Rear elevation, facing east, with original brick fireplace.
Photograph taken in spring 2019

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” — Chief Seattle

In This Issue:

Page 1:
Village Landmarks
First Midcentury
Modern Home

Page 2:
PDHA Directors
Lyman Woods
Wildflower Walk
PDHA and CRTI
Working to Protect
Urban Forest

Page 3:
COVID-19 and the
Great Outdoors
Little Sprouts Nature
Immersion Program
Highland Avenue
Adopt-A-Highway
CLEAN-UP DAYS

By Irene Hogstrom
Lyman Woods Wildflower Walk

We hope you can join naturalist Lance Herning for a wildflower walk in the Lyman Woods Nature Preserve on Saturday morning, May 2nd. Please visit our website PDHA.org, both to learn if this popular outing will actually be possible in early May this year and, if it is, to register for the event.

— By Gordon Goodman

PDHA and CRTI Working to Protect Urban Forest

The Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) is a partnership of organizations and agencies from across the seven-county Chicago metropolitan region working to build a healthier, more diverse regional forest by 2050. CRTI’s mission is to study the area’s tree population, as well as to built public appreciation of the value of our trees, and promote measures to ensure and improve the extent and health of our urban forest. Key leadership is provided by the Morton Arboretum and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

To pursue CRTI’s mission, it is important to have good information about the area’s tree canopy. In 2010, CRTI (with partner agencies) conducted an extensive study of the Chicago area tree canopy that produced results on a county-by-county and town-by-town basis. Downers Grove is above average with 33% of the town covered by tree canopy, compared to 26% for DuPage County as a whole. PDHA is working with DG village officials and CRTI leaders at the Morton Arboretum to help promote a larger and more diverse canopy by 2050.

In late 2019, the Village bolstered protection of parkway trees during construction projects. The updated ordinance provides for additional consultation and inspections pertaining to work, such as trenching or auguring for utility connections, that might damage parkway trees, including special provisions for protection of larger, “legacy” trees (18” and above diameter). It also increased fines for damage or destruction of parkway trees. These protections are a sign of Downers Grove’s commitment to protection of its tree canopy – but their effect is limited to the publicly owned trees in the parkways (between the sidewalk and the street).

PDHA continues working to protect and expand our community’s tree canopy, including the efforts to promote protection of trees on private property.

For more information on CRTI and the tree survey, see chicagorti.org.

— By Ken Lerner
COVID-19 and the Great Outdoors

A visit to a local park or forest preserve can be a nice break from the routine of “sheltering in place” during the COVID-19 emergency. A brisk walk or run can be a good way to get your steps in. For a more leisurely, contemplative approach, try the Japanese art of “forest bathing,” essentially deeply taking in your forest surroundings.

Please visit npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/07/17/536676954/forest-bathing-a-retreat-to-nature-can-boost-immunity-and-mood or perhaps consult Wikipedia under “Nature Therapy” to learn more about this relaxing way to appreciate our woodlands. Local outdoor recreation areas are generally open for hiking, walking and running, with some exceptions.

Downers Grove Park District —

All Park District facilities and programs are temporarily closed. Parks remain open for walking, jogging, and hiking. Areas designed for group activities such as playgrounds, courts and sports fields are off limits.

Information and updates at dgparks.org/news/DISTRICTCLOSED

DuPage County Forest Preserves —

The preserves are open including parking lots, trails, and off-leash dog areas. Buildings and restrooms are closed.

At some facilities, the buildings are closed but grounds and surrounding areas are open: Fullersburg Woods Nature Education Center, Mayslake Peabody Estate, and St. James Farm.

Information and updates at dupageforest.org/coronavirus – By Ken Lerner

Little Sprouts Nature Immersion Program

PDHA has a long tradition of supporting elementary school District 58’s “Little Sprouts” nature immersion program for first graders at Lyman Woods. This program is now evolving as the district adopts the state of Illinois’ updated standards and guidelines for life sciences education.

The length of the Lyman Woods visit for each school group is to be expanded to a full-day experience. Students will have more time to engage in hands-on exploration of plant and animal life. The field experience is to be bracketed by introductory materials and after-visit projects in the classroom. Classroom activities are to include problem-solving challenges, follow-up lessons, and sessions that put the field learning into practice as group projects.

PDHA is pleased to see this expansion of the nature immersion program for first graders, which should allow more activities and a deeper exploration of the woods. Even though the current medical emergency is likely to delay scheduling pilot tests for the new program, it is to be hoped the expanded program can be in place some time during the 2020-2021 school year. We intend to continue our support for the program and to seek its expansion to more senior grades, as well as to encourage participation by other local schools outside District 58.

— By Chris Saricks & Ken Lerner
Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance Spring 2020 Newsletter

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.”

― Chief Seattle

Check our website www.PDHA.org for more details.

Please join Pierce Downer’s Heritage Alliance or renew your membership now as we work for protection of the natural and cultural heritage of Downers Grove.

Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance
P.O. Box 422, Downers Grove, IL 60515

Yes, I want to begin/renew my membership in Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance.

Name(s): ____________________________________________

Street Address: ___________________________ Telephone: ___________________________

City, State, Zip: ___________________________ Email Address: ___________________________

Contribution: $ _____ (Employer matching contribution?) ______/We can also volunteer some time.

A tax-deductible contribution of $10 or more will help the Alliance defray expenses, but is not required for membership.

Your email address will allow us to keep you informed of future events.

Help us save trees & receive a full color digital version of this Newsletter electronically by sending us your e-mail address at Info@PDHA.org!