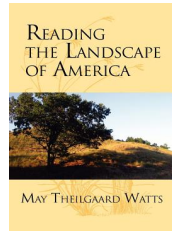




The Illinois Prairie Path Newsletter

June / Summer 2018



Chicago Tribune's Bicentennial Bucket List has Illinois Prairie Path at #3

The Sunday June 2 Travel Section of the *Chicago Tribune* featured "20 must-do experiences in Illinois' great outdoors." In order, their selections were: 1. Garden of the Gods (Shawnee National Forest - Herod); 2. Anderson Japanese Gardens (Rockford); **3. Illinois Prairie Path (Forest Park to the Fox River)** plus 17 others.

THANKS to author Lori Rackl and the *Chicago Tribune* staff for including the Path in this list. A reference was made to the very beginnings of the Path, when May Watts wrote her 1963 letter to the editor. Fifty-five years later, the Path is still an Illinois treasure!

Bike to Work Ride on the Path, Tuesday, June 26



Employees are invited to commute to work on two wheels versus four during Bike to Work Week on June 21-29.

Bike to Work Week is a great opportunity to take advantage of the extensive trail system DuPage

County enjoys, including the Illinois Prairie Path and Great Western Trail. Employees can join DuPage County Chairman Cronin, County Board members and other bicycle enthusiasts as they bike to work on Tuesday, June 26, from Elmhurst to the County campus in Wheaton.

Participants will meet at 7 a.m. at the Illinois Prairie Path and Spring Road in Elmhurst. If you are interested in joining the ride, please contact Sidney Kenyon at Sidney.Kenyon@dupageco.org.

Bike racks are available throughout the DuPage County campus, including on the blue level of the 421 space parking garage and outside the public entrance of the JTK Administration Building. DuPage County has more than 500 miles of bikeways and trails suitable for bicycle travel. The County's website features *DuPage Trails* software that allows bicyclists to map the safest route between two destinations with point-by-point directions. To access the County's *DuPage Trails* app, visit www.dupageco.org/bikeways.

Excerpts from May's Letter:

Dear Editor,

We are human beings. We are able to walk upright on two feet. We need a footpath. Right now there is a chance for Chicago and its suburbs to have a footpath, a long one. The right-of-way of the Aurora electric road lies waiting. If we have courage and foresight, such as made possible the Long Trail in Vermont and the Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia, and the network of public footpaths in Britain, then we can create from this strip a proud resource....

...Look ahead some years into the future. Imagine yourself going for a walk on an autumn day. Choose some part of the famed Illinois footpath...

...That is all in the future, the possible future. Right now the right-of-way lies waiting, and many hands are itching for it. Many bulldozers are drooling.

May Theilgaard Watts
Chicago Tribune
September 25, 1963
Published September 30, 1963

2018 Earth Day Trail Cleanup draws hundreds of volunteers of all ages

from Susan Degnan Vice President, Illinois Prairie Path (c)

Another successful Earth Day Trail Cleanup took place on April 28, with hundreds of volunteers out in full force on the Illinois Prairie Path and the Great Western Trail. Our Path coordinators did a great job taking charge and organizing their crews to make sure that rubbish was removed from their stretch of trail. Individuals of all ages, in clubs, churches, and other organizations participated. **If you or your organization would like to be involved with future cleanups, upkeep, or repairs for the Illinois Prairie Path, please call 630-752-0120.**

Become a member at <http://www.ipp.org/>

WHEATON



GLEN ELLYN



AURORA



ELMHURST



**THANKS
VOLUNTEERS!**

Domtar Celebrates Earth Week with Path history and trail presentations

Domtar's history goes back 170 years. Today, it is the largest integrated manufacturer and marketer of uncoated paper in North America, and second largest in the world.

In April, Domtar's paper converting plant in Addison received an Earth Flag from DuPage County (in partnership with SCARCE) for its sustainability achievements in 2017. (This Earth Flag is proudly displayed on the wall to the right).

At Domtar, sustainability includes the safety and wellness of all employees. IPPc Board members Susan Degnan and Mary Jo Malach provided Path history and trail information to employees from two shifts. **Thanks to Addison Domtar for including the Path in their 2018 Earth Week celebrations.**



Path honors Wheaton Garden Club for its decades of support

In 1974, at the NE intersection of Liberty Drive and West Street, a small patch of land along the Path was designated for a Gardening Demonstration Project. In 1976, the area was named **Founder's Park** as a memorial to May Watts, Path Founder. The Wheaton Garden Club has been a Path advocate and donor for over 50 years. A recent contribution was used to update and modernize the park's main features.

- The **Path's sign** was relocated and painted (see below).
- An old bench was removed. A new **bench** was added and placed closer to the sidewalk.
- The **flagstone walkway** was enlarged and cleaned.
- The Path's native plant specialist, Larry Sheaffer, refreshed the **native plants**.
- The **memorial boulder** with a quote from May Watts remains close to the sidewalk for easy viewing. The inscription reads, "**Paths are defended with spirit by their users.**"



L to R: Susan Degnan (IPPc), Wheaton Garden Club members Roseanne Merrill, President Cheryl Weber, and board member Mary Tupper

The IPP(c) presented the Wheaton Garden Club with a Certificate of Appreciation for all they've done for the Path over so MANY decades!



NEW PATH SUPPORTERS



**Path Photo by Ken McClurg - Geneva Spur -
West Branch of the DuPage River**

Welcome to the Illinois Prairie Path - a unique trail that winds through over 60 miles of rural and urban landscape. **Thanks to the following people and organizations in Illinois and elsewhere who have supported the future of the Path by contributing in the past three months:**

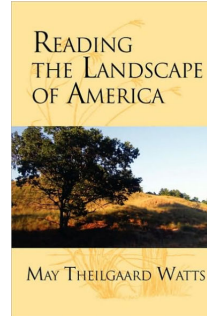
NEW MEMBERS

Eric P. Canada
Hector Chavez
Helen Cogan
David Cwik
Carrie Frech
Jane & Fred Karier
John Martz
Jeanne & Bob McDonald
Srinivas Nainala
Carol Pasquinelli
Jens A. Pedersen
Russell Van Zandt

DONORS

Benefit Impact Fund/United Health Group/Air BNB
Scott Crawford
Debra and Mark Dillon
Jerry & Katherine Jerabek
Clinton Meininger Trust
Jane Moore
Michael Oswald
Marlene Musnicki & Cheryl Schaad
Ronald & Cheryl Richards

May Theilgaard Watts - Path Founder, Storyteller, Historian, Artist



In 1957, May Watts wrote ***Reading the Landscape in America***. In 1975, her original work was published along with new chapters. In 1999, the same book was reissued with a new preface by Bridget Watts, her granddaughter.

May Watts explains the history and changes in a landscape through her personal stories. Each chapter is well-researched and captured in her hand-illustrated line drawings. Also, every chapter includes a list of *Bibliographic Notes*.



In **Chapter 6, Prairie Plowing Match** or *the Making and Breaking of the Tall Grass Sod*, she traces the changes in the Illinois landscape, looking backward in time. She uses a full range of resources, including an exchange between American leaders about the **dense prairies** on the land that eventually became the Midwest region (including Illinois). **EXCERPT:** **"Following, is a comment by Monroe to Thomas Jefferson in 1786 concerning the Northwest Territory:**

A great part of the territory is miserably poor, especially near Lakes Michigan and Erie, and that upon the Mississippi and Illinois consists of extensive plains, which have not had, from appearances, and will not have, a single bush on them for ages. The districts, therefore, within which these fall, will never contain sufficient number of inhabitants to entitle them to membership in the confederacy."

It is a research-based book, as well as a look into the mind and spirit of May Watts as she "talks" about what she's observing and discovering. Her books are sold at the Morton Arboretum and online. This book is also available through inter-library loan.