

*Rich History Shows Deep Community Involvement Through Nearly A Century*

# Glenview Park District Turns 90

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Ninety years after five Glenview park board commissioners took an oath of office for the area's newly-established park district, the Glenview Park District boasts a large and diverse set of facilities and assets.

Established in 1927, the district houses everything from an education center to a working farm; a large and modern Park Center; an ice center; fieldhouses; golf courses; 26 parks; a tennis club; 43 tennis courts; and a lake.

The park district also has a long history of supporting historic landmarks by taking custody and care of places like Wagner Farm, The Grove and Air Station Prairie.

Those first park commis-

sioners in 1927 were led by President Edwin Rugen; former village president Louis Cole; Carl Ladendorf, who would later become Glenview's fire chief; George Diederich; and Frank Biederer, according to Beverly Dawson of the Glenview History Center.

If those names are familiar, it is because Rugen Park, Cole Park, Diederich Park and Ladendorf Park were all named for those first commissioners.

## The District Forms Its Parks

Many of the first parks and facilities created shortly after the park district's founding are still in operation today, some with significant renovations.

The first park created in the park district was Jackman Park



In 1930, the park district moved into the Glenview Civic Center. The historic building still stands and is the current home for the park district administration.

in 1929, followed by Sleepy Hollow Park in 1931.

In 1930, the park district moved into the Glenview Civic Center building, next to where the Glenview Public Library sits today. Built in 1927, the civic center building was home to village government, the first Glenview library and the park district. Recently renovated, the historic building still stands and is the current home for the park district administration.

In the early 1930s, the park district started work on Roosevelt Park -- its third park -- which would later include the first park district pool. Parks officials said the park district purchased the land in 1932, before the Great Depression really took hold. The Depression did stall the park's development, Dawson said, and it was completed as a Works Progress Administration project before opening in 1940.

Roosevelt Park featured tennis courts, softball and baseball fields, shuffleboard and a pool,

which was frozen for ice skating in the winter.

Dawson said the first pool at Roosevelt was circular and featured sand. The pool eventually had to be replaced as the sand wreaked havoc with the pool's filtration system.

## Fore! Golf Swings Into Town

Golf was very popular with the North Shore elite in the 1930s. After Richard Appleyard passed away, his family  
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Children jump from a water feature at the old Roosevelt Park pool, circa 1940s or '50s. (Glenview History Center photos)

# Park District History

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farm at 800 Shermer Rd. was sold and became a series of private, full 18-hole golf clubs. There are records of an early Glenview Chamber of Commerce charity golf outing from the 1930s, Dawson said.

In 1955, the park district purchased what was then the Chesterfield Golf Club, renaming it the Glenview Park Golf Club.

## Frog & Fern Ladies Get To Work

One of the most significant assets of the park district is The Grove National Landmark, which was settled by Dr. John Kennicott in 1836. Kennicott would go on to help found the University of Illinois, and his son Robert Kennicott grew up to become a noted naturalist. Amas Kennicott also returned from the Civil War to live in the Kennicott house.

By the 1970s the Kennicott House had fallen into disrepair and the Redfield Estate, also on the grounds of The Grove, was being rented as a private residence. Around 1973, a group of women that village trustees took to calling "Those damn frog and fern ladies," worked to save The Grove in its natural state, Dawson said. They also adopted the village trustees' insult as their moniker.

After being purchased by the park district, The Grove was designated as a national landmark by the federal government in 1976. Those same Frog and Fern Ladies also worked to save the Air Station Prairie now on Compass Drive in The Glen from development. The park district now has a LEED Platinum interpretive center at the Kent Fuller Air Station Prairie named for Frog and Fern member Tyner.

## Save The Farm

Purchased in 1967 via referendum funds, Wagner Farm is another major park district asset. Officials allowed the family to live there until their deaths, but when last surviving member Rose Wagner died in 1997, the park district was no longer interested in the property.

Activists feared the 18.6-acre site would be developed and



Entrance to Park Center, the **Glenview Park District's** multi-purpose facility on the former site of Naval Air Station Glenview. (Journal photo)

the farm lost. A group called COWS (Citizens Organized for Wagner's)-- which included Glenview's first female village trustee, Norma Morrison-- convened to save the farm.

In 2000, Wagner Farm reopened under park district control as a working farm, which it remains. At one time, the farm boasted the largest 4H club in the state.

## Stars Of The Park District

Since its beginning, ice skating was one of the most popular activities at the park district. Pools, and even softball fields, were flooded and frozen as far back as the 1940s. At one point during the 1970s, 10 outdoor locations were offered for ice skating during the winter.

In 1973, the Glenview Ice Center was built. Still standing and exceeding capacity, park officials are currently considering two plans to build a new ice center at between \$25 and \$30 million.

The park district's crown jewel is the Park Center. After the need for a community center was identified in 1995, the center opened in 2001. Located on former Naval Air Station Glenview land, it contains the senior center, a fitness center, pools, athletic courts, classrooms and activity rooms adjacent to Lake Glenview and Gallery Park. Prior to its opening, senior citizens had met at the old Rugen School building since the 1970s.



The old Rugen School where Glenview seniors met until moving to Park Center in 2001. (Glenview History Center photos)



Glenview Park District camp activities kept kids on the move in the 1950s.