A Unique Natural Environment and National Historic Landmark

When Illinois became a state in 1818, its population consisted largely of Native Americans, French fur trappers and explorers. Following sweeping climatic change and periodic fires over several thousand years, these forests gave way to prairies. In the midst of the prairies were formed.

The Grove is as rich in flora and fauna as it is in history. A Visitors Guide is available at the Interpretive Center and grounds are open during the summer Tu, Th, Sa & Su, 11 am-3 pm.

The Grove has partnered projects with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Chicago Wilderness and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Glenview Park District. Enjoy your visit!
Walkways & Trails
Take a self-guided tour on more than two miles of tiled trails that wind their way through open grasslands, groves of shade-holding oak trees and wetland sloughs, providing a natural habitat for an abundance of plants and animals, some of which are endangered or threatened species.

Follow the wooden walkway that bridges the pond in front of the Interpretive Center for a closer look at a wetlands ecosystem. In summer, green duckweed covers the surface of the pond, which is laced with the shadows of black willows and cottonwoods. Wetland communities support special vegetation adapted to life in wet soil and are important for flood control, improved water quality and wildlife habitat.

When Illinois was a wilderness, The Grove was an island of timber in a sea of tall grass and wildflowers. The natural area that makes up most of The Grove is known as an oak-hickory savanna, or woodland, with a relatively open canopy that favors an understory of shrubs and wildflowers.

The trail in front of the Kennicott House leads to a high-quality meadow, or tall grass prairie. The prairie is an extremely diverse ecosystem; one square meter of soil contains deposits of plant species. Big bluestem, the trademark grass of the tallgrass prairie, dominates the vegetation. The grasses' extensive root systems anchor the soil to prevent erosion, while the soils soak up rainwater like a sponge. Forbs are the wildflowers of the prairie. Two-shades of these plants are actually found underground in very extensive root systems.

Settlement Times
Native American Village & Log Cabin
The Native American Longhouse is a man-made, bark-covered structure containing fur-covered books, a fox pit, antlers and other artifacts. A replica of a Native American Tipi stands nearby. A member of Native American tribes, most notably the Potawatomi, were living in this region at the time of the Kennicott’s arrival.

Robert Kennicott’s name has been given to a mountain in Siberia and to a glacier, river, town and mountain pass, lake, shale formation, town and a mountain in Alaska. As a noted horticulturist, editor of the Prairie Farmer, Illinois’ oldest farm magazine, and a crusader for improved higher education, it was at The Grove that Dr. Kennicott established an extensive nursery in 1842. Several sons followed Dr. John in the nursery business, and their descendants still operate Kennicott Wholesale Florist today.

The Kennicott House
Dr. John and Mary Kennicott and their children lived in a log cabin after they moved to The Grove from New Orleans in 1836. In 1856, Dr. John built this majestic Gothic Revival House, visible from Milwaukee Ave., for his growing family of seven children. Sons included Charles, Robert, Amasa, Bruno and Flint, and daughters Alice and Cora. Known in his time as “The Old Doctor,” Dr. John was a pioneer practicing physician, a noted horticulturist, editor of the Prairie Farmer Magazine, Illinois’ oldest farm magazine, and a crusader for improved higher education. It was at The Grove that Dr. Kennicott broadened the skills of his students to ensure a high quality meadow, or tall grass prairie. The prairie is an extremely diverse ecosystem; one square meter of soil contains deposits of plant species. Big bluestem, the trademark grass of the tallgrass prairie, dominates the vegetation. The grasses’ extensive root systems anchor the soil to prevent erosion, while the soils soak up rainwater like a sponge. Forbs are the wildflowers of the prairie. Two-shades of these plants are actually found underground in very extensive root systems.

Robert Kennicott’s Displays
Many of the Interpretive Center’s exhibits reflect the life, natural history interests and collections of Robert Kennicott (1825-1866), Illinois’ first naturalist. Robert accomplished much during his short 40-year life, including founding of The Chicago Academy of Sciences and contributing to the collection of the Smithsonian Institution. His most noteworthy achievement was the exploration of Russian America that provided information instrumental in the U.S. purchase of Alaska from Russia. Several items of clothing Robert wore during his three separate expeditions in the 1850s and 60s are displayed on the walls.

Robert Kennicott received little formal education; he was allowed to roam The Grove’s property, recording and studying the plants and animals. He developed a reputation for clear descriptions and accurate observations of nature. While at The Grove, Robert identified the rare Kirkland’s snail, which he named for his mentor scientist, Jared Kirtland.

The Grove offers nature, history and ecology programs for all ages. School programs include opportunities to live the life of a pioneer, get “hands-on” with plants and animals and experience our fragile ecosystem. Other programs include trail walks, sleepovers and nature talks that can be tailored to the interest of your scout, senior camp or other group.

Evaluating Programing
The educational programs at The Grove have been designed to bring nature to your door. A wide array of interpretive programs for all ages are available, from evening programs to self-guided walks. The Interpretive Center’s exhibits reflect the life, natural history interests and collections of Robert Kennicott (1825-1866), Illinois’ first naturalist. Robert accomplished much during his short 40-year life, including founding of The Chicago Academy of Sciences and contributing to the collection of the Smithsonian Institution. His most noteworthy achievement was the exploration of Russian America that provided information instrumental in the U.S. purchase of Alaska from Russia. Several items of clothing Robert wore during his three separate expeditions in the 1850s and 60s are displayed on the walls.

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Outbuildings
As nurseriesmen and business people, the Kennicott family had a number of sheds and other functional buildings on the grounds. Areas for the repair of wagons, harnesses, and mechanical equipment, a well house, root cellar, laundry wash house and nurseryman’s business house were very likely located near the Kennicott House. The herb shed and chicken coop are reproductions of buildings that would have been typical of the time period.

Kennisott Graves
Dr. John’s son, Robert Kennicott died suddenly in 1866 on a trip to Nome, Alaska. Dr. John’s grandson, Robert Kennicott died in 1930 in Nome. The cemetery is the final resting place of the Kennicott family.

The Grove Schoolhouse
The Grove Schoolhouse was built by the Kennicott family. The school house is a replica of a one-room schoolhouse on Milwaukee Avenue at the Grove in 1853, and Dr. Kennicott announced its completion in the following issue of the Prairie Farmer. The building’s tall windows admitted sunlight to illuminate the students’ schoolbooks and could be opened during the hot summer months. A window well provided heat for the single large room. Students wrote, edited, and published the School Zone, “A Bi-Monthly Magazine Devoted to Education, Literature, and Science.”

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The Redfield Estate
The picturesque house known today as the Redfield Estate first served as the home to descendants of Dr. John Kennicott. Originally called “Windy Pines,” the Tudor-style home was designed and built in 1939 by architect George Grant Elmslie, who had earlier been the chief draftsman of renowned Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. The estate also had a formal rose garden on one side of the house and a natural environment intended to attract wildlife on the other.

In 1932 Louise Redfield, a great granddaughter of Dr. John and Mary Kennicott, moved into the house with her husband Donald Caldonal Peattie. The Peatties were authors who found the house and its surroundings a wonderfully productive environment. Among the works completed during the years they lived in the house was Donald Caldonal Peattie’s 1938 book, A Prairie Grove, and Louise Redfield Peattie’s 1936 book, American Acres, a fictional account of the Kennicott family.

The grounds surrounding the Redfield Estate include an outdoor pavilion, gazebo area, reflecting pool, large lawn, patio and tranquil gardens. The interior of the house features beaded cathedral ceilings, patterned fireplace tiles, and leaded glass windows. The Redfield Estate is available for rental to the public for private parties, weddings and meetings. Call (847) 296-4005 or visit redfieldestate.org for more details.
The Grove
National Historic Landmark
Glenview, Illinois
thegroveglenview.org

The Grove is as rich in flora and fauna as it is in history. A unique ecological and historic site and facility of the Glenview Park District.

Settled by the Kennicotts in 1836, the grove was founded as a place to provide shelter and sustenance for the earliest settlers. After the glaciers retreated from the mid-continent, a vast forest covered the Midwest. Following sweeping climatic change and periodic fires over several thousand years, these forests gave way to prairies. In the midst of the prairies – small remnants of the ancient forests. When Illinois settlers arrived, the groves became the shady refuges for their towns and villages. Today, many of the Illinois groves' ecological attributes are gone forever, but the groves remain – small remnants of the ancient forests.

In 1836, the Kennicott family came to settle in this place. Members of the Peattie and Redfield families have also lived in the house and on the grounds. The pioneering Kennicott family sought to make their mark upon this land, contributing significantly to its development when a small group of ladies inclined towards environmental and historic preservation stepped forward.