



The Fight For Volk's Woods, A Pioneer's Kind Of Forest

By MARGARET MILLER

More than a century ago, when the first white settlers came to southeastern Michigan, they may have noted a lovely tract of beech-maple woodland just east of the land now occupied by Schoolcraft Community College.

Pioneer children may have scrambled through these dense woods and gathered some of the many wildflowers to be found there.

Before them, Indians living here may have stopped to drink from the stream winding through the woods.

Then, of course, woods and streams were commonplace. Not so in the Observerland we know.

BUT THIS TRACT of woods still stands — probably minus a few maple trees, but otherwise largely untouched by the suburbia that has grown up around it.

Its mighty beech trees tower three hundred feet or more, wildflowers abound in the spring, and birds and small animals, in varieties rarely seen in this locale, make their homes there.

A campaign to keep the woods this way is gathering momentum.

But the price tag is high — perhaps more than \$400,000. That was the figure mentioned by an associate of Dearborn builder Frank J. Volk. Volk purchased the property several years ago and has since put it in the names of his four children. The plan is to build apartments.

Hoping for a different end to the woods' saga is a group that organized early in June and has dubbed itself the "Save Volk's Woods Committee."

Its members include Mrs. William Lindhout and Mrs. Robert B. King, two Livonia women who met through their mutual love for the woodland; Roger Sutherland and Grover Niergarth, of the Schoolcraft biology faculty; Paul Kadish, Livonian who is Democratic State Senate nominee from the 14th district; Mrs. Geraldine Joyner, a member of the Livonia Board of Education, and others.

The committee members are aware that their effort is belated so the goal looms high.

SUTHERLAND, explaining Schoolcraft's interest in the woods, said his department had used the area for a living laboratory since SC opened in 1964.

"We had understood that Interstate Highway 296 would eventually take over that area," he said, "so we were grateful to have this area for a short time."



NATURE STUDY — "There are two ways to identify the white ash," Schoolcraft biology teacher tells a group of Livonia Boy Scouts during one of the educational

tours he has conducted through Volk's Woods. (Observer photo)

However, more recently released plans indicate the highway will skim the woods' western border, cutting off only about 60 feet.

About two years ago the tract was rezoned to permit multiple dwellings, and Volk acquired about 30 acres. Subsequently the Livonia Board of Education purchased the 17 acres at the northern end of Volk's property. The site was purchased for possible future school expansion, but at this point there is no plan to build there.

THE BEST HOPE of saving the woods from the ax, committee members have decided, lies in getting the attention of a federal or state agency in position to make a grant or one of the major philanthropic foundations.

Currently contacts are being sought with the Michigan Natural Areas Council, the Michigan Conservation Association, the open spaces program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and such foundations as Ford, Kresge and Rockefeller.

When the committee first met with Volk early in June, the builder said he would hold off definite action until Sept. 1.

With that date approaching, an assessment of the current situation was asked of Bill Poore, an associate speaking for Volk who was out of town.

"The plan to build remains unchanged," Poore said, "though there is no definite date set since the mortgage financing situation is extremely critical."

Asked about the price, he said the land as zoned for apartments should be considered worth about \$320,000 for the 20 acres.

"In addition, there's about \$80,000 in plans and permits," he added, and that doesn't consider the expenses Mr. Volk incurred in negotiations over the rezoning."

SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTS since the committee first organized indicate plenty of moral, if not immediate financial, support for its cause.

The Schoolcraft College Board has gone on record supporting preservation of the wooded area in its present natural state.

The Livonia City Council passed a resolution presented by Councilman Robert D. Bennett calling for study on the part of the mayor, the parks and recreation commission and the planning commission of any role the city might play in preserving the woods.

Livonia School Supt. Rolland Upton is-

sued a statement saying a community the size of Livonia needs "as much land as possible preserved for parks, playgrounds and recreation area," and offering the support of the school system.

The Livonia League of Women Voters urged the City Council to "give every consideration to the possibility of purchasing the area."

IT'S BECAUSE of the relatively undisturbed quality of the wooded area that it is considered so valuable.

Sutherland commented that though other areas in Livonia have been set aside for parks, they cannot be compared to the primitive condition of the Volks woods.

"In places where you put up picnic tables and recreation facilities, you have trees, but you don't have a woods," he explained.

Two naturalists who have visited the woods have voiced their accord in statements that will be part of the information presented agencies being asked for help.

Paul Thompson, Cranbrook Institute staff member and Michigan representative to Nature Conservancy, a national organization, stated:

"A mature beech-maple forest, the climax woodland typical of southern Michigan, it is of particular interest because of the many large tree specimens, especially beech."

"Historically, this forest is a living museum portraying the type of woodland the early settlers and explorers encountered in many areas throughout southern Michigan. Their scarceness today warrants the preservation of these last few remaining stands in this section of the state."

"Ecologically, this woodland is a well-equipped outdoor laboratory that possesses many of the features needed today to teach, and instruct both students and citizens in the fundamentals of the science of ecology."

AND FROM Dr. James R. Wells, also on the Cranbrook staff and chairman of the Michigan Natural Areas Council:

"Where else could we go to view a portion of the Detroit area as it was before white man arrived?"

"It is unfortunate that no one discovered this woods before now, but we find many conservation issues being carried out today on a crash basis. I hope these efforts will not have been for only short-lived results."

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I-69 Next In Billboard Crackdown

LANSING

One of Michigan's newest stretches of freeway is the target of the State's second move against illegal billboards.

Atty. Gen. Frank J. Kelley and State Highway Director Henrik E. Stafseth announced that the owners of 40 signs on a 1 1/2-mile stretch of I-69 in Calhoun County had been served with formal notices to remove the signs within 30 days. Otherwise, they said, the state will take them down at the owners' expense.

The freeway segment, running from I-94 near Marshall south of Tekonsha, was opened to traffic in 1969 and all signs have gone up since then.

STAFSETH ESTIMATED that there are several hundred illegal billboards along the 1,400 miles of Michigan's freeway system.

The crackdown was ordered under a 1966 law which regulates all outdoor advertising in Michigan. It bars signs within 660 feet of the right-of-way of an interstate or primary highway, with certain exceptions for business and commercial areas.

World Relief

World Medical Relief, supported by the United Foundation through the annual Torch Drive, distributes donated hospital equipment, supplies and drugs both locally and throughout the world.

Registration On Sept. 4 At Madonna College

Registration for the fall semester at Madonna College will take place Friday, Sept. 4, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, and from 7 to 8 p.m. Regular classes will begin Sept. 9 and conclude with the final examination week beginning Dec. 16.

A number of late afternoon and evening courses have been scheduled for the benefit of part-time and adult students. In-service teachers will find the course on Innovative Issues in Education of special interest. It will be offered on Tuesday afternoons, 4:15-6:10 p.m., from Sept. 15 to Dec. 22. The course will consider the non-graded program in schools with emphasis on flexible and modular scheduling. Sister M. Ennals, assistant superintendent of elementary education in the Archdiocese of Detroit, will conduct the course.

Classes will be held at St. Casimir school, 3301 23rd St., Detroit.

A COURSE in Sex Education will be given on Wednesday evenings, from 7:00 p.m. on the Madonna campus in Livonia. Lectures will be presented by specialists in sexual growth and maturation, mental health and drugs in relation to sex, teenage courtship, theory of love, abortion and birth control, marriage, sex education in schools.

Other late afternoon or evening courses include the following: Afro-American History (MW 4:30-6), Art Teacher's Institute (M 6:30-10), Workshop in Learning Disabilities (Th 6-8), Group Dynamics and Discussion Techniques (TTW 7-8:30), Developmental Reading (M 7-9:30).

Three theology courses will be offered this semester in the late afternoons or evenings. They are: The Church (MW 8:30-10), Catechesis (MW 4:5-7:10).

Problem of God (TTW 4:5-7:10).

These courses may be applied to the bachelor's degree or to a Religious Education Certificate offered by the College.

To help in-service teachers meet certification requirements, Madonna College is also offering directed teaching to both elementary and secondary teachers who have graduated from out-of-state institutions. Arrangements for student teaching on-the-job will be on an individual basis in cooperation with the school principal. A personal interview with the academic dean is essential prior to registration.

High school seniors will be accepted into several courses in theology, psychology and history. With the approval of their school systems these courses may be used to fulfill high school requirements in religion and social studies and upon entrance into college may be applied to the degree.

Details on fall courses may be obtained by calling 125-8000.

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CIRCULATION DATA

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NEWSPAPER	Current Press Run	CAC Audit Sept. 1969
LIVONIA OBSERVER	29,500	28,208
REDFORD OBSERVER	20,500	19,266
WESTLAND OBSERVER	10,200	10,200
SOUTHFIELD NEWS & OBSERVER	19,500	15,900
FARMINGTON ENTERPRISE & OBSERVER	15,200	14,465
GARDEN CITY OBSERVER	11,500	11,007
PLYMOUTH MAIL & OBSERVER	10,200	9,586
WEEKLY EDITION, WEDNESDAY NEW EDITION, February 1970. Not included in 1970 CAC Audit.		
Total Wednesday	116,600	108,576
Weekend	94,900	87,365

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