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Spring

13

ABOVE A dairy farm until the mid 1980s, Deerpath Farm has also been a country retreat since the 1930s.

PHOTO CREDIT: DEERPETH FARM

## Deerpath Farm: A Special Place Preserved

by Stephen Christy, Land Consultant and Linda Gardner Phillips, Deerpath Farm

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**Q:** Where is Lake Forest Open Lands Association's largest conservation easement? **A:** At Deerpath Farm, just west of Lake Forest along Route 60.

At the 200-acre Deerpath Farm, you'll find some of Lake Forest Open Lands' finest wetlands – and many of our finest views, too. Its trails traverse impressive terrain, including prairie, savanna and woodlands.

Deerpath Farm's interesting history illustrates how thoughtful development can help a native landscape to prosper. Created 12,000 years ago by glaciers, it originally flourished as a mix of pristine ecosystems tended by Native Americans. The environment changed in the 1840s when homesteaders cleared the land for agriculture. They logged the timber and added fences for livestock grazing. During the drainage mania of the early 1900s, drain tiles

and the newly straightened creek began speeding water offsite.

In the 1920s, Lake Forest resident Edward Bennett purchased the property. An architect and city planner, Bennett co-authored the 1909 *Plan of Chicago* with Daniel Burnham. In 1932, he gave Deerpath Farm to his son, Edward "Ted" Bennett Jr., also a Lake Forest resident and distinguished architect.

Few today remember Ted's significant contributions to Lake County and Lake Forest Open Lands. From 1960 to 1970 he chaired the Lake County Regional Planning Commission, and before that, was director of the Chicago Regional Planning Commission. A Lake Forest Open Lands' board member, he and his wife Kay donated 13 acres to our Shaw Prairie holdings,

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**Deerpath Farm: A Special Place Preserved**

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and later, a crucial conservation easement nearby.

By the mid-1950s, Deerpath Farm lay in the main line of sprawl between Lake Forest and Vernon Hills. Ted helped organize the Libertyville Countryside Association (1955), and co-founded the Village of Mettawa (1959), which introduced rural zoning. In the 1980s, Ted envisioned Deerpath Farm as a conservation development and created initial designs with his architect stepson, Frederick "Rick" Phillips.

After Ted's death, Rick (with his wife Linda, and brother David), continued this dream by working with Lake Forest Open Lands. The outcome? Today's 140-acre nature preserve, overlooked by 40 homesites. Lake Forest Open Lands holds and manages the preserve's conservation easement.

Deerpath Farm's distinctive architecture emerges from careful guidelines that protect nature, and our enjoyment of it. Even more impressive is the beauty of the preserved prairie, savanna, wetlands and woodlands – and the ample wildlife and birds they attract. This is



PHOTO CREDIT: JACOB LITTLE

Rick and Linda Gardner Phillips of Deerpath Farm.

one of the finest conservation developments that Lake Forest Open Lands has been involved with. Take a moment and visit the several miles of trails. If you enjoy the tranquility, homesites are still available. ■

*Deerpath Farm is located on Route 60, just over the tollway and directly across from W. W. Grainger. Turn onto Bennett Road, park by the trails on the interior road (Farwell Drive) and start walking. You'll be glad you did!*

