

THE Riding Club **OF** Barrington Hills

Story by BARBARA L. BENSON | Photo by APRIL GRAVES

One of the longest-standing and possibly most unique riding clubs in the United States celebrates 80 years of equestrian excellence, land preservation, and the pure enjoyment of sharing beautiful open spaces with fellow riders.



JANE CLEMENT, PRESIDENT OF THE RIDING CLUB OF BARRINGTON HILLS, PAUSES WITH HER HORSE REMINGTON AT GALLOPING HILL IN BARRINGTON HILLS.

“Will is to grace as the horse is to the rider.”

– ST. AUGUSTINE

On a crisp and sunny fall Sunday morning, riders gather at the epicenter of their equestrian world, the Riding Center of Barrington Hills on Bateman Road. Soon, they will hack out onto the miles of groomed bridle paths or trails that wind through both public and private lands in this Northwest Suburb only 35 miles from Chicago.

While their horses and riding are their passion, it is neither by accident or haphazardness that they will walk and trot over these long-established paths, maintained through dedication and hands-on work by the members of one of the oldest riding clubs in America. This year, the Riding Club of Barrington Hills celebrates its 80th year, and current president Jane Clement continues a distinguished tradition of stewardship that has contributed to preserving Barrington Hills as one of the foremost centers of equestrian activities in the country.

“Wherever man has left his footprint in the long ascent from barbarism to civilization he will find the hoof print of the horse beside it.”

–JOHN MOORE

That horses would come to shape the distinctive character of the Barrington area was due to a twist of fate, and the enterprise of one man, Sanford Peck, a local realtor, and member of an early Barrington family. The Village of Barrington, founded in 1854 as the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad laid tracks northwestward from Chicago, was no different from most other communities throughout the United States in that the first settlers arrived by horse-drawn wagons, the horse fulfilling one of its many roles throughout history in the service of man.

Becoming the center of commerce for the surrounding countryside, it is not surprising that an advertising bill for the Village of Barrington, circa



Lloyd Kitson and a companion ride in a doctor's buggy on Ela Street in downtown Barrington at a time when horse-drawn transportation afforded social calls and driving for pleasure.

(Photo: George Froelich, Jr., 1905)

1872, besides extolling the natural advantages of the village's location and its thriving business environment, would list four wagon makers, two of them additionally as carriage and wagon painters; five blacksmiths; two harness makers, and two livery stables. These numbers would decline as the 20th century approached, but still, when the first rural mail delivery routes began in 1904, it was by horse-drawn vans. Commerce from the countryside by horse-drawn vehicles would continue well into the 20th century. And in fact, the horse would never leave Barrington.

In the early 20th century, many grain and dairy farms and cheese factories that surrounded the Village of Barrington became unprofitable and went up for sale or auction. Another factor was the expansion of the Barrington Public School to include a full high school, offering a more advanced education. Young folks could stay in school rather than return to the land after learning the basics.

Possibly this gave Sanford Peck the impetus to open a real estate office in the Railway Exchange Building in Chicago in the early 20th century. The building was headquarters for many successful railroad entrepreneurs and Peck evidently had an ear to the ground that some among them wanted to find country properties for themselves and their families. Peck must have been very persuasive, because certainly the outpost that was then Barrington had none of the cachet that was associated with the North Shore.

A story told by Sanford Peck's grandson, Don Shroeder, also a respected Barrington realtor, was that his grandfather made arrangements for his clients to come out to Barrington on the train, where he would pick them up at the station in one of the few horseless carriages that were then in town. Peck would drive them at breakneck speed along dirt and gravel country roads to show them the various farms that were for sale. According to the family story, the clients were so relieved to get back to town from their whirlwind tour that they signed on the dotted line!

“In riding a horse we borrow freedom.”

–HELEN THOMPSON

Who were they, this new wave of pioneers coming to the Barrington countryside, to create a lifestyle partly derived from traditions that were quintessentially British, providing recreation, sport, and social activity in a quintessentially American way, unaffected, through meritocracy rather than inherited aristocratic privilege.

Harry Stillson Hart was the president of Rodgers Ballast Car Company founded by his father, and bought his Barrington property in 1907. The *Barrington Review* reported in 1915 that the Harts were moving from Chicago that summer to their magnificent new residence “Hartwood” on County Line Road. George Van Hagen, a founder and eventually president of the Standard Forgings Company, and his wife Mary Wakefield Van Hagen bought their 300-acre property in 1908, farther west from the Harts on County Line Road. They built an elegant mansion, Wakefield Farm, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Spencer Otis, president of the National Boiler Washing Machine Company, would begin purchasing local farms in 1907, eventually owning 2,000 acres. Sanford Peck's notes concerning these sales were donated to the Barrington Historical Society by his grandson Don Shroeder. Hawthorne Hill, now Rosewood, on Brinker Road, was to be Otis' architectural contribution to the Barrington countryside. These three were shortly joined on their own significant properties by James R. Cardwell, Herbert Bell, and William

The May 23, 1937 Chicago Sunday Tribune ran a series on “urban agriculturists” with this

from the Barrington article: “Chicagoland's growing back-to-the-farm movement—for both pleasure and profit—developed earlier and has continued with greater impetus in the Barrington district than in perhaps any other suburban area. ... A survey just completed by the Tribune disclosed 126 farm properties, averaging 111 acres, have been bought during the last four years. ... According to Wyatt & Coons, there is practically no land that amounts to anything that can be bought in the Barrington area for less than \$150 an acre. ...With less land available in the Barrington area, prices have been kept slightly higher than in most of the other suburban districts and the result is the development of a larger proportion of luxury loving prospective farmers whose social activities in many cases overbalance the agricultural.”

J. Klingenberg, (not related to Barrington's late historian Bill Klingenberg) among others. In fact, the buying of large land parcels for country estates and gentlemen's farms by well-known and successful Chicagoans would continue into the 1930s, as documented in a *Chicago Sunday Tribune* article from May 1937.

Back in 1921, those six men had dreams beyond a putting green, and were to join forces to purchase 220 acres of land along County Line Road to found their “club in the country”, the Barrington Hills Country Club. George Van Hagen was its first president, H. Stillson Hart, the second, and J.R. Cardwell the third president. It was to be a family oriented club, and would have a golf course that quickly won acclaim for its design.

“All horses deserve at least once in their lives to be loved by a little girl.”

–UNKNOWN

With their growing families now residing in the countryside, it was inevitable that equestrian activities would become part of their daily life. To visit neighbors might be practical in a horse and carriage or a motor car, but it was more pleasant to ride on horseback, or take your pony along the trails that were being cleared from one property to the next. It was easier too, than driving over the still primitive roads that were originally wagon trails of the early settlers. Those well-ridden neighborly paths were the foundation of the remarkable trail system now secured by deeds and easements over private property and the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

From those first estate owning families, perhaps none was to have a more lasting presence on the equestrian life of the Barrington Countryside than James R. Cardwell and his descendants: his daughter Virginia Reinhardt, her daughter Victoria Fitch, and her son Thomas Fitch. Virginia Reinhardt's childhood was idyllic at Oak Knolls Farm, and riding became the passion of her life. She graduated from gymkhanas on her home grounds to where she would become a founding member of the Riding Club of Barrington Hills in 1937 and a charter member of the Fox River Valley Hunt in 1940. Those were the years when equestrian activities which had brought so many families together were formalized into the Riding Club and the Hunt. In addition, 1935 had seen the formation of the Polo Club.

In the early 1930s, Spencer Otis, Sr., the eldest of those first clients of Sanford Peck, had begun to divest himself of his several farms. He, rather than an original settler, William Otis, gave his name to the road that bisected his Hawthorne Farms. Farms on both sides of Otis Road were sold to Orville Caesar, president of the Greyhound Corporation. Caesar acquired a Spencer Otis trademark, his round stucco barns. Spencer Otis, Jr. had attended the University of Illinois Agricultural School, when they were experimenting in building round barns. He persuaded his father to build three of them on his Barrington farms, and the one on Hawley Woods Road was to host the first Gymkhana and Horse Show in 1938.



As early as 1935, the Polo Club was active until 1939, when World War II led to its disbanding. From left: Tony Bateman, Jerry Corbett, Chuck Buckley, Harold Smith, and Deke Bowen.



Orville Caesar bought the Otis properties in 1937, and the Round Barn on Hawley Lake became the Riding Center and the location of the Barrington horse shows. The first Barrington Horse Show was held here in August 1940. There were 36 entries in six classes.

“No hour of life is wasted that is spent in the saddle.”
—WINSTON CHURCHILL

The Meeting Minutes from those early years reveal that the shared passion for horses and horsemanship paired with responsibility to the land created that heritage of stewardship which is still uppermost in the activities of the Riding Club today. Paths had to be maintained. If crossing property where there was livestock, attention had to be paid that gates were closed by riders. Paths had evolved among those first estate neighbors, and expanded by those handshakes, to include some of the farms, often still worked by the second generation of original settlers, who were sometimes bemused that horseback riding could be a solely recreational pursuit.

The Caesar Round Barn became the site for the first Junior Barrington Horse Shows beginning in 1938. In August 1940, the first Barrington Horse Show was held there. It grew in popularity drawing residents and non-residents until it became a three-day event every August. That first Horse Show established a tradition of philanthropy, benefitting the Countryside Fire District, and later Sherman Hospital in Elgin, which opened in 1888, and was then the closest medical facility for the Barrington area.

1940 was a significant year for equestrians in the Barrington countryside.

In addition to the Horse Show, Virginia Cardwell (later Reinhardt) held her annual Gymkhana at Oak Knolls Farm, and many of the Riding Club members who had also been hunting the countryside, joined with others to form the Fox River Valley Hunt.

With two years behind them hunting with American hounds, a remarkable opportunity occurred when it became known that English packs were being reduced because of the Second World War and the resulting feed shortages. Through longtime friendships in the Fox Hunting community, arrangements were made for 13 couple (26) hounds to come from England for the Fox River Valley Hunt. They were from the oldest and most prestigious English hunts, and they came by warship to New York Harbor. Their arrival added another credential to the growing reputation of the Barrington countryside as a center for serious equestrian activity.

To solidify this reputation, letters of opinion were sought from realtors about property values associated with organized equestrian events and the lack of restrictions for private horse ownership. A generally positive response was to spur a remarkable movement beginning in the mid-1920s of would-be country house and estate owners to the countryside all around the Village of Barrington.



A young rider wins his first ribbon at the Barrington Junior Horse Show in 1987, sponsored by the Bit 'n Bridle Club.

*“Whoever said diamonds are a girl’s best friend,
 never met a rider.”*
—UNKNOWN

America was not yet at war, and the Riding Club was to begin a partnership with the Hunt, eventually jointly paying for a man to manage and groom the trails and undertake “paneling”, the job of covering the top of barbed wire fences along routes followed by the Hunt. His work was supplemented by the members as volunteers.

During the Second World War, the Meeting Minutes reveal years of great dedication coping with fluctuating circumstances. Membership would be depleted and yet new property owners and riders would appear on the scene. Where these new residents had existing paths on their properties established by agreement with prior owners, if realtors had not acquainted their clients with these easements, Riding Club members went on diplomatic missions welcoming the newcomers, and inviting their participation in the already strong traditions of the far flung community which stretched through Algonquin, Barrington, Cuba, and Dundee Townships.

Horse shows at the Round Barn, Gymkhanas at the Cardwells’ Oak Knolls Farm, together with social activities did continue during the Second World War. The Fox River Valley Hunt kept a limited schedule, partly because the newly acquired English foxhounds were kenneled in Northbrook at Denison Hull’s for part of the war, and gasoline rationing prevented regular transportation of the hounds to Barrington. The situation improved when Thomas C. White created kennels at his farm on Sutton Road.

One of the most significant landowners to enter the scene in the late 1930s was C.C. Buehler, who founded the Victor Adding Machine Company, and was an original member of the Riding Club. His son Albert C. Buehler,

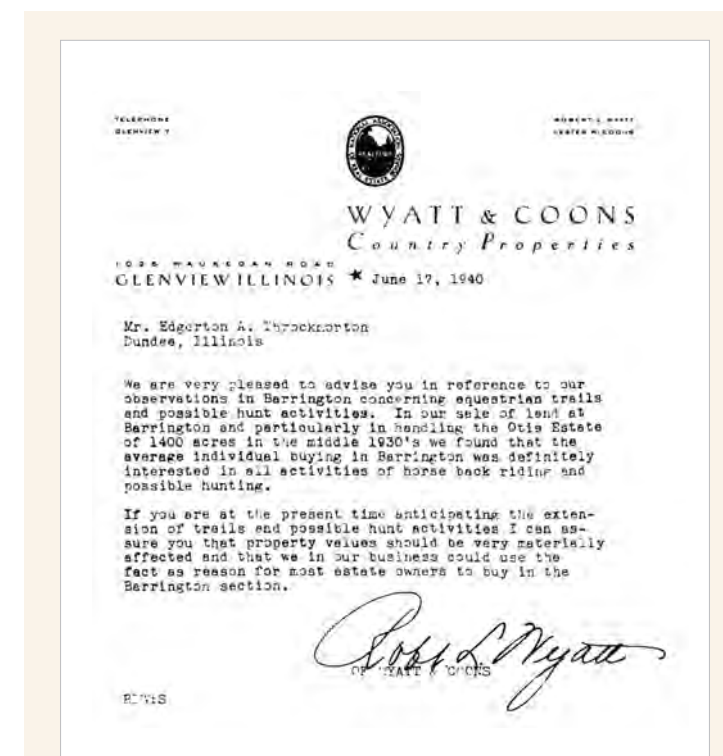
gradually increased his father’s holdings, some from Spencer Otis, from Thomas Howell and other smaller parcels to total over 400 acres, which would become Fernwood Farm, and later William McGinley’s Horizon Farms. A.C. Buehler was also a member of the Riding Club and served on its board of directors for many years. He became famous for his Shetland pony teams, and being the final owner of the incomparable six consecutive time National Congress Champion Shetland pony Curtiss Frisco Pete. Buehler is also said to have had a role in bringing Lippizaners to America, another example of preserving bloodlines, both equine and canine, from the ravages of the War in Europe.

“Keep Calm and Gallop On”

DERIVED FROM A BRITISH WORLD WAR II MANTRA

As America emerged to a time of growth and prosperity after the Second World War, and a dominant leadership role among the victorious nations of the West, the trend began for new and affordable housing beyond deteriorating and crowded cities and their closed-in neighborhoods. Levittown on Long Island was the forerunner of standard, low-cost housing on small lots, and such a development would come to the western part of Fox River Valley Hunt country and the borders of Riding Club trail properties. Strengthened by incorporation with not-for-profit status in 1946, the Riding Club would be called upon to join the efforts to limit the development of an area rich in natural resources.

Large tracts of land on the eastern edge of the Fox River, including Curtiss Farms, were acquired by Leonard Besinger, to build prefabricated homes for veterans and disaffected city dwellers on 60-foot lots. The development was called Meadowdale. Members of the Riding Club and the FRVH watched



Wyatt & Coons was one of three active real estate firms negotiating the deals in the Barrington area in the 1930s and beyond.



This Hunt Ball photo from the 1950s includes several of the Riding Club and Hunt members who helped to secure the land that would become the Village of Barrington Hills. From left: Paul Cook, Harold B. Smith, Paul Jones, S.L. Reinhardt, Robert Engelman, Thomas White, Percy Oliver, Fredrick Gohl, Joshua Derry, John Bennett, Andrew Dallstream, Justin Webster, Dr. Ferdinand Seidler, and George Van Hagen.

daily as the bulldozers claimed 300-year-old oak trees and leveled rolling hills.

Another organization with its beginnings in 1936 was the Countryside Association, loosely organized to handle civic events in the areas west of the Village of Barrington. Together with the FRVH, whose membership largely duplicated that of the Riding Club, the Countryside Association began serious proposals for the incorporation of large sections of land as the Village of Barrington Hills. Already, in 1953, smaller areas in the western part of the "territory" had been incorporated as Middlebury, through the leadership of the Countryside Association.

The need for incorporation and enforceable land use ordinances came not only from the Meadowdale experience, but from the breakup of large estates to sell smaller parcels of land. While many who were buying the smaller

"If any one man may be said to have saved the Barrington Hills area from becoming a speculator's paradise, it was Andrew Dallstream."

SOURCE: BARRINGTON COURIER-REVIEW

parcels wanted an equestrian lifestyle, they needed to be acquainted with the traditions and protocols that prevailed in the countryside. Again, the Riding Club board and membership were back in their diplomatic roles.

According to Victoria Fitch in her book, "Hark Back to Barrington: A

History of the Fox River Valley Hunt", to the organization and incorporation of the Village of Barrington Hills in 1957, credit and leadership must go to a remarkable quintet. Andrew Dallstream, a lawyer who was then secretary of the FVRH and chairman of the Cook County Zoning Board of Appeals; Newton Noble, a long-time resident of Bateman Road who was then president of the Countryside Association; Harold Byron Smith, who was president of Illinois Tool Works, and as noted, a long-time and most respected participant in all the organizations and activities of the countryside; Thomas White, a long-time resident on Sutton Road and Master of Foxhounds from 1954-1958; and Orville Caesar, president of the Greyhound Corporation, and owner of the Round Barn Riding Center and Dorvillee Farms along Otis Road.

When all the legalities for incorporation were in place, it remained to collect the necessary 300 resident signatures. This accomplished, and the Articles formalized, the new board then voted for a minimum of 5-acre zoning within the boundaries of the new village, at 28.6 square miles the largest in the United States. Commercial development was also excluded from the village.

In 1957, the Village of Barrington was to solidify the position that it had historically held as the retail, service, and transportation center for the surrounding countryside when communities to the north and south began incorporating, many using the Barrington name. Barrington Hills and Deer Park in 1957 would be followed by Lake Barrington, North Barrington, and South Barrington in 1959. All except Barrington Hills had one-acre zoning

standards. Unincorporated areas remained in Cuba Township, that to this day keep 5-acre zoning under Lake County governance, although not without fighting some controversial development proposals. The northern countryside now has some significant equestrian properties.

While Meadowdale involved enormous destruction of natural resources, to the east, a new threat emerged. In 1966, the Energy Commission, now incorporated in the Energy Department, proposed to acquire large tracts of land south of Spring Lake for a nuclear accelerator. The Forest Preserves of Cook County already owned the large tract of land between Donlea, Sutton, County Like, Bateman, and Algonquin Roads. To the east, south, and west there remained farms and estates, areas with swamp and wetlands, and higher ground with stands of native oaks. Riding paths and hunt country wound through these properties, maintained by the Riding Club and the Hunt. Several hundred acres belonged to Dennison Hull, who had been Master of Foxhounds for 16 years. Through fortuitous relationships, and a growing understanding of conservation issues, the Forest Preserves of Cook County acquired this land parcel by parcel over many years. It is now one of its largest preserves, and an outstanding example of a public/private partnership, thanks in large part to the equestrian community and the now named Barrington Hills Park District, successor of the Countryside Association.



Top Left: Dennison Hull was Master of the Foxhounds for 16 years. He is pictured here in Philadelphia on Sept. 6, 1957. Hull owned several acres that became Forest Preserves land.

Left: In 1949, Thomas C. White, MFH (on right) joins Dennison B. Hull, MFH (center) out with the hounds.

"A dog may be man's best friend, but the horse wrote history."

-UNKNOWN

As the decade of the 1960s began, there were many challenges facing the equestrians. The Orville Caesar properties were sold for residential development, and the Round Barn was demolished. The Barrington Horse Show had become a premier event for exhibitors throughout the Midwest. There was substantial income for the Riding Club and the Hunt, and charitable organizations continued to benefit from this attendance. The Barrington area benefitted economically, as well. Both the Riding Club and the Hunt realized the importance of acquiring a new community riding facility where residents could board their horses; it would be a home for the Hunt, and a location for the Barrington Horse Show.

The Jackson family properties, first settled in 1842, stretched from Bateman, along Sutton to Donlea Road, and formed part of the first Forest Preserve acquisition except for 15 acres at the corner of Bateman and Algonquin Roads. Through the leadership of Virginia Cardwell Reinhardt, in 1960, negotiations were completed with Gracie Jackson's heirs, and the 15 acres were acquired for a new Riding Center. Pleased that neighbors were buying the property, the Jackson estate sold it to the Riding Club for \$28,000.

To finance the purchase, and to build a facility for a community riding center, the Riding Club and the Hunt sold non-interest-bearing bonds for \$500. The Hunt also had to fund moving the hounds' kennels from the Al Moore property on Donlea Road where they were located, and rebuilding them at the new site. Arnold May, a builder from Richmond, constructed the indoor ring for the center, and a shell over the aisle for the stalls. But it was volunteers from both clubs who would complete building the stalls themselves.

Running the Riding Center had fallen to the huntsman hired by Virginia Reinhardt in 1964. Besides all the duties of the hunt, including maintaining the kennels and the hunt country, and hunting the hounds, this Englishman, Arnold Towell, also had to promote the facility for horse shows, polo matches, and pony club activities. The Riding Center was then a complete lesson and boarding facility, all these activities designed to be income producing against the debt incurred by the land acquisition. However, many members never reclaimed their bonds, easing the financial situation.

One of the biggest changes of the late 1960s was the decision of the Hunt to seek new territory. Previously quiet country roads were becoming shortcuts for traffic from fast-developing surrounding communities. Later, this would become an issue for the entire Barrington area. For several years, the Hunt took

THE BARRINGTON AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

An Appreciation by Barbara L. Benson

In those now distant days of the early 1950s, when residents of Barrington's many countryside areas mobilized to protect large open spaces that contained rich natural resources from possible high-density development, they were fortunate to have a few good connections in higher offices, but their organizational support was basically local and private.

Villages surrounding the Village of Barrington were not yet incorporated, that would not come until 1957 and 1959, with the exception of the tiny Village of Middlebury at the western edge of Barrington Hills in 1953.

When the Barrington Area Development Council (BADC) was formed in 1966 with a mission to foster the creation of organizations and programs that would address community needs as the area changed from a rural to a suburban environment, pressure had been increasing from development proposals that would gradually swallow up large tracts of land that were not included in the villages. Those tracts still fell under county zoning, especially in Cook, McHenry, and Lake Counties, and individual villages were coping with annexation requests that would challenge zoning and comprehensive plans established by them at incorporation.

The catalyst, in 1969, when BADC proposed the creation of a Barrington Area Council of Governments came when 7,000 units of housing were being proposed for incorporated and unincorporated parcels in the area. Of these, 1,800 units were proposed for a site of 500 acres that is now South Barrington Lakes. BADC initiated discussions among the several communities as to how they might mutually assist each other with development and quality of life issues and regional planning. Each village had incorporated establishing its own character within its boundaries, and their leaders had to be convinced that there was no intent to undermine their "sovereignty". For instance, South Barrington had been incorporated with 1-2 acre residential zoning and Barrington Hills with minimum 5-acre zoning. North Barrington had areas of 1-5 acre zoning.

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Edgerton A. Throckmorton, MFH, and Virginia Cardwell, Honorary Secretary of the FRVH.

its activities to the still wide open farmlands around Richmond, Ill. The caravans of hounds and horses would leave Barrington in the early morning to return exhausted in the late afternoon.

Even as the leaders of the various equestrian activities coped with the pressures of the increasing suburbanization around the Barrington area, at the same time the late 1960s and 1970s were a time when often several generations in families enjoyed many activities of horsemanship together. Few other places in the country offered horseback riding and showmanship, the Hunt, the Pony Club, the Polo events, carriage riding, Horse Shows, and Hunter Trials. To behold the horse galloping in all its magnificence, or grazing in peaceful pastures, there was the purchase by Richard Duchossois, owner of the Arlington International Racecourse, of the several hundred acre Siragusa property, stretching northwest from the corner of Ridge and County Line Roads, to be known as Hill 'n Dale Farm. Add to this the acquisition by William McGinley of Fernwood Farm, which with other properties became Horizon Farms. Here too, passersby along Sutton Road could see equine excellence as riders rode the training track with its small viewing stand. Rather than fading into history, the equine presence and all of the equestrian activities became synonymous with the village's name.

A telling report, in conjunction with the Village of Barrington Hills Comprehensive Plan in 1995, included information that since 1957, more building permits were issued for stables for personal use than tennis courts, swimming pools, or other outdoor recreational structures!

"When God wanted to create the horse, he said to the South Wind, 'I want to make a creature of you, condense.' And the Wind condensed."

—UNKNOWN

That there was this strength of membership in the equestrian community was to be tested in 1972, when the roof of the Riding Center collapsed under heavy snows. The Riding Club and Hunt members undertook the repairs themselves, but basic upkeep, with the necessary insurance and taxes, were exceeding anticipated revenues. The auction block loomed for this iconic center for equestrians, whose membership now extended beyond Barrington Hills to

surrounding communities, especially the north countryside.

Owen Fairweather, long-time Hunt and Riding Club member, undertook to arrange the transfer of the Center to the Countryside Park District, which removed it from the tax rolls forever. This came with controversy and well-attended meetings, but when conditions were established that placed the Park District in control of operations, the transfer was agreed to. This meant that individuals could use the center, the stalls, and the ring on a free will basis, but all organized activities such as shows and trials had to be held under contract to the Park District. However, maintenance of the trail system, some 150 miles through public and private lands would remain with the Riding Club and the Hunt, as it does to this day.

In the 1970s, the Barrington area, as a whole, became one of the most conservation focused communities in the country. The Barrington Area Development Council, formed in 1966, seeing the pressure for high-density development on still existing large acreage properties including farmland, fostered the creation of two key organizations: one governmental, the Barrington Area Council of Governments, the other private, Citizens for Conservation.

BACOG, at its first meeting on April 25, 1970, brought together the presidents of six local communities: the Village of Barrington, the Village of Barrington Hills, the Village of North Barrington, the Village of South Barrington, the Village of Deer Park, and Tower Lakes. Later joined by Lake Barrington, and more recently Barrington and Cuba Townships, BACOG has been responsible for developing area comprehensive plans that have solidified the Barrington character as a regional oasis to uniquely blend the conservation of natural resources with responsible residential and business development.

The Citizens for Conservation mission of "Saving Living Space for Living Things" and the remarkable environmental knowledge of its leaders and members added strength to the preservation of the semi-rural lifestyle created by that group of "new" settlers, who were rattled and bumped along the rutted roads by Sanford Peck in the early 20th century.

Along with the pleasure in their horses and horsemanship found among residents of Barrington Hills, and those members of the Riding Club who are non-residents, the need for vigilance and stewardship over a countryside increasingly segmented by improved roads and heavy traffic has never ceased. The importance of the trail system was formally supported in 1995 with the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Barrington Hills, which contained a section devoted to "Trails and Pathways". The importance of maintaining the equestrian trails was emphasized: "It is recommended that this system of trails and pathways be preserved and enhanced, and that it remain a permanent asset of the community. The Village itself should participate in this process by requiring that all subdivision developers consider existing and potential equestrian trails relative to their property, and by encouraging private and public efforts to expand the system in a safe and sensitive manner."

In the 1990s, after two decades since the building of the Riding Center on Bateman Road and its subsequent transfer to the Countryside Park District, the Center had been maintained almost exclusively by their own work, among the members in four of the key founding groups of the organized equestrian community: Riding Club of Barrington Hills; the Fox River Valley Pony Club; the Fox River Valley Hunt; and the Carriage Society. After 1994, the Barrington Horse Show had been taken over by private interests. The last Fox River Valley Hunt-sponsored Horse Show raised over \$35,000 for Hospice of Northeastern Illinois (now JourneyCare), attesting to the support for, and interest in participation in the Horse Shows.

A 1994 *Chicago Tribune* article by Lisa Newman was headlined: Barrington Hills—A Way of Life Riding Off into Sunset. Those interviewed conveyed a sense of nostalgia for the days before the traffic from surrounding high-density development took the winding village roads as a shortcut, and there was less sectioning off of larger properties into smaller parcels; a time when wildlife was more prolific and moved freely through the public and private lands. But on the other hand, here is a 28.6 square mile village, across four counties, amid prairies and wetlands and woodlands, with thousands of acres of forest preserve land. A Village without commercial zoning, and that except for a couple of developments on the Village borders which had access to sewer and water lines, a village that well into the 21st century has rigidly upheld

But most of the villages did come together. In 1969, state enabling legislation, the Intergovernmental Relations Act, provided a legal basis for the formation of COGs or Councils of Government. The members of the Council were to be village presidents or mayors, with a rotating chairmanship. The first meeting, as noted in the Cover Story, was on April 25, 1970, with the Villages of Barrington, Barrington Hills, South Barrington, North Barrington, Deer Park, and Tower Lakes as the initial members. Later Lake Barrington joined permanently, Inverness participated for a time, and now Barrington and Cuba Townships are members of the Council.

For its remarkable history and an understanding of the BACOG role in the community, visit the local history section on the Barrington Area Library's website or this magazine's 2015 Sesquicentennial Edition. The list of large-scale and varied developments that have been negotiated away from the Barrington area is extraordinary.

BACOG's first Executive Director Donald P. Klein, from 1970 to 1998, who had often talked of the warp and woof of the Barrington area, offered the following thoughts on the organization in a talk in 1997:

"The entire BACOG experience is more than happy fish and contented cows. More than the camp song of some wild-eyed environmentalists—27 years (as it was when he spoke) of tradition and conscience, more than elitism, us against them. We have staked our principles on human scale and sense of place, on good design, we have struggled to achieve some rapport between the built and natural environments. We also know that the issues which infuse this debate and process will not disappear. We are not done—all is not historical perspective. We will not prevail if we are inactive or afraid. We must continue to do the right thing for the right reasons."

Today, 20 years later, under the leadership of Executive Director Janet Agnoletti, BACOG remains active and strong in the purposes for which it was created. Many battles have been won, few lost, and importantly, it must be added that citizen involvement has played a strong role in the outcome of many a threat to the Barrington way of life. Now we have happy horses, many contented birds, and appreciative residents—yet BACOG stands vigilant!

The Riding Club of Barrington Hills ... maintenance of 150 miles of public and private trails attests to the fact that this is no elite circle—but rather a club whose members' sweat equity and gritty hands-on work has kept the trails intact.

that 5-acre zoning minimum, and has continued to maintain the environment in which private recreational horse ownership and organized equestrian activities had its origins almost a century ago.

There have been, and are, circumstances in which the validity of an equestrian lifestyle as a *raison d'être* for some community decision making has been challenged. But it is hard to deny, that in terms of property values, economic prosperity, environmental enlightenment, and conservation, the Village of Barrington Hills and its partnerships with the long-established equestrian groups and their dedication to the land; to the Forest Preserves of Cook County, and the Barrington Hills Park District, standards have been set which beneficially impact the entire Barrington area. The Barrington Hills Planning Commission and the Equestrian Commission together review new plats of subdivision for the presence of trail easements on the relevant properties, another aspect of the partnership the equestrian community has with its neighbors.

Today, the Riding Club of Barrington Hills offers activities and events to the community, many of which only require equine appreciation. Perhaps the most remarked on public participation is in the Barrington Fourth of July Parade. Otherwise, the Sunny Sundays Breakfast is open to non-members. Barn tours are open to the public, with knowledgeable guides. The Riding Club partners with the LeCompte Kalaway Trail Owners Cup Polo Matches. Clinics are conducted at the Riding Center in equine care and horsemanship, recalling the days when Mrs. De Martelly schooled those young riders at the Round Barn. Trail riding has one caveat, a guest must be accompanied by a Riding Club member. However, parking is available at the Riding Center to use the public trails in the Forest Preserve, although a Cook County tag is required. Besides their commitment to maintaining the trails, members also participate in highway clean-up in Barrington Hills, and have recently partnered with Citizens for Conservation in seeding the prairies.

Eighty years ago, when the equestrians of Barrington Hills first formally organized themselves into the Riding Club, there were already indications of change. Much farmland had given way to country estates where man-made lakes and manicured grounds were changing the landscape. The pace of purchasing that farmland was well-documented in that *Sunday Tribune* article. But the equestrians saw a permanence in those first neighborly hoof print paths.

Through a continuity of valuing traditions, and yet making those traditions viable in a world where wars, tragedy, and economic fluctuations might have made a concentrated equine environment obsolete, the Riding Club of Barrington Hills remains strong. Its sense of responsibility to the community in the maintenance of 150 miles of public and private trails attests to the fact that this is no elite circle—but rather a club whose members' sweat equity and gritty hands-on work has kept the trails intact. Many residents are not equestrians, but they still appreciate the environment that the historical strength of the equine community has helped to preserve. The devotion of equestrians is to horses and to the stewardship of a spacious countryside, so that horses and people may continue to enjoy each other's company.

The prairie blows the grasses
And whips the horse's mane,
They travel, horse and rider
Through the sea of amber grain.

Hills roll by, and clouds pass
But steady are the horse's hooves,
Upon the wind blown grass
As they travel, horse and rider.

There is no trail that they follow
No path that can be seen,
There they travel, horse and rider
Upon the endless blowing green.

"Horse and Rider"

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Barbara L. Benson grew up in Kent, England, and later moved to New York. She settled in Barrington and has walked with our history since she first arrived here in 1980.

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Publications: "A Club in the Country—The Story of Barrington Hills Country Club" by Patty Dowd Schmitz; 2007.

"Hark Back to Barrington—Fifty Years with the Fox River Valley Hunt" by Victoria R. Fitch and D. Susan Johnson. Published in 1993 by the Barrington Area Historical Society.

Quintessential Barrington Special Sesquicentennial Edition; 2015.

Common Interests for Common Ground

THE FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY (FPCC) is the largest forest preserve district in the United States. It is also the first forest preserve in the U.S., founded in 1914, though land preservation and recreation activity in and around Chicago dates to 1869 and talk then of forming a park district. While in 1899 Chicago was ranked 30th in the U.S. for parks and recreation—its forward-thinking citizens made a leap to being the first in America to create a forest preserve. Today, Cook County maintains the largest amount of preserved land in the U.S., with a total of 69,400 acres under FPCC management.

JOINT EFFORTS IN LAND MANAGEMENT

FPCC Director of Resource Management John McCabe spoke with *Quintessential Barrington* about the partnership between the FPCC and the Riding Club of Barrington Hills. He says there is "nothing like this partnership anywhere else in Illinois"—that of a riding club caring for the trails and partnering with its district in restoration.

McCabe has been with the FPCC since 1990. "Over the years, we've developed relationships with people in the Riding Club of Barrington Hills. I started on the crew when I began with FPCC, and remember working with the volunteers from the Riding Club, as well as Citizens for Conservation at our work sites. Today there are many groups that assist on restoration projects. Many club members join us when we do prescribed burns to offer support and observe," McCabe said. He recently attended a club board meeting.

"The Riding Club does all the maintenance on the trails," McCabe said. "We occasionally assist if needed, such as after a big storm. Otherwise, the club is self-sufficient in maintaining the trails, which includes mowing, brushing back and pruning, and repairing areas that are wet by finding the cause, or rerouting the trails. They also take care of signage so riders don't get lost," he said. He added that the FPCC likes the help. "There is no cost to the district. The public can use the FPCC trails."

Within the municipal limits of Barrington Hills exists 4592.42 acres of FPCC land. There

On Jan. 8, 2012, Justin Pepper of Audubon-Chicago Region (second from left) talks about the importance of the prairie restoration project at the Forest Preserves of Cook County's Steeplechase site.



"The Riding Club of Barrington Hills is a good partner. It's another connection back to how valuable this preserve is. Today, the horse connects us to our past and represents the value of this preserve."

JOHN MCCABE, FPCC DIRECTOR

are 45.7 recognized miles of riding trails in the Spring Creek Preserve, or 4,000-acre Complex, as McCabe calls it, and 16.5 unrecognized, or unofficial trails. The FPCC allows the public to enjoy the trails, as long as the mode of travel is not motorized. In Barrington Hills, outside FPCC land, trails are restricted to Riding Club of Barrington Hills members only, as they pass over private lands. This accounts for the other portion of the 150 miles of riding trails.

AN HISTORIC CONNECTION

Acquiring, restoring, and managing lands for the preservation of public open space for now and the future is part of the FPCC mission statement. McCabe says that the FPCC views the relationship with the Riding Club as an historic connection, or attachment. "The early club riders were part of the founding of the [Spring Creek] Preserve as it helped us drive the acceptance and support for the land to be set aside. This was a bonus for us," he said.

Story by Lisa Stamos.



On Jan. 8, 2012, riders gather before heading to the intended area for seeding, each carrying a colorful seed bag to toss seed from horseback. Others walked the prairie to seed. The project was coordinated by Ginger Underwood and included The Riding Club of Barrington Hills, Citizens for Conservation, Fox River Valley Pony Club, Barrington Hills Park Board, Village Board of Barrington Hills, Audubon-Chicago Region, and Forest Preserve people. About 50 riders attended. From left: Sam Oliver, Ginger Underwood, Mary Beth Holsteen, and Mary Laraia with the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

Riding the Trails

Riding Club of Barrington Hills members can ride up to 150 miles of trails that connect throughout Barrington Hills and the Forest Preserves of Cook County. On the private trails within Village limits, club members wear a tag to show they are members and only members can use the trails across private properties. Tree tags help riders navigate the trails.



Siena Perry sits on Indiana while Eve Perry helps out. Flint Creek can be seen in the background. Photo: April Graves



Mary Beth Holsteen and Lorelei Benkendorf enjoy a trail ride. Photo: Megan West



Barrington Hills property owners Gary and Lisa Gabriel visit with horseback riders Lorelei Benkendorf (left) and Mary Beth Holsteen. Photo: Megan West



Photos: Megan West

Happy Trails

Story by KRISTINA ANDERSON

EARLY JANUARY 2003

IT'S SNOWING HARD, and I'm 8 1/2 months pregnant. We've moved to Barrington Hills. My husband is away on business and I've got to feed the horse and muck the stall. As a former city kid, keeping horses at home is a new experience for me.

I go out to the garage and try to jam my swollen, pregnant feet into my snow boots. I can't get my left foot in. I push, say a not-nice word, and stomp down, hard. That's when I feel a disturbingly warm, squishy *something* under my foot. I scream an even less-nice word as I peer inside the boot and see what had, until seconds ago, been a live mouse. ...Remind me again why I wanted to live in the country?

LATE MAY 2003

It's a lovely, warm, summer's-coming-soon day, the sort of day when a mom with a four-month-old might brave her first-ever trial ride in Barrington Hills, on a neighbor's reliable quarter horse. "Have you done much trail riding?" asks Jane, an American Airlines pilot and skilled horsewoman. "A little," I say, by which I actually mean "none." I've done most of my limited riding in an arena, like so many city dwellers these days. "You're in for a treat," she says. "We'll do the Forest Preserve and Galloping Hill, then cut over to the private trails, and finish up with the Walgreen loop." I have no idea what she's talking about. Galloping? I'm just hoping to stay on the horse and not embarrass myself too badly.

We mount up and saunter out into her backyard—located a scant two miles from what would soon be a strip mall with a Target—and then into the forest. Within seconds, it looks like remote Northern Wisconsin. I can't hear or see any traffic. There are native wildflowers popping up, rolling hills, and big old sheltering oaks. Deer watch us, motionless, from a few feet away. All I hear is the satisfying soft crunch of the horses' bare feet on the twigs along the path.

"Are you ready to trot?" Jane asks when we reach a large field with a trail around the edge. I'm not falling off yet, so I say yes, let's try it. We cover a lot of ground at a comfortable jog, and I get to see a fair amount of Spring Creek Forest Preserve. It's beautiful and peaceful; we see the occasional hiker or another horse and rider, but mostly it's us and the unspoiled landscape. It occurs to me that this is what most of Barrington Hills must have looked like 50 years ago. Or 100, or more. I surprise myself by feeling a quick, nervous pang for my new hometown and its open land; I hope they don't pave paradise and put up a parking lot!

And then we head out of the forest and into the miles of private bridle paths (maintained by and for the Riding Club of Barrington Hills, by generous permission of the landowners) that wind through the Village. We pass an older woman working in her garden as we cross the bridle path through her yard. "Lovely day," she says to us. Jane inquires, "How's your husband doing?" The woman replies, "Oh, much better, thank you. Have a nice ride." She smiles and goes back to work.

We head off in yet another direction (how on earth my guide does this without a compass is remarkable to me ... but then she flies jets across the

A City Girl Recalls Her First Trail Ride in Barrington Hills



Kristina Anderson poses with her daughter Amelia at their home in Barrington Hills.

Atlantic for a living, while I sit in meeting rooms with lawyers for a living.) Our horses carry us down a narrow tree-lined path, green above us, and green below. Suddenly, as we round the bend, I am Alice in Wonderland, and above me is a canopy of flowering crabapple trees, their branches entwining above the trail, their pale pink fragrant blossoms floating down onto us as we swish by. It's magical. We're only a few miles from downtown Barrington—but a world away.

"That's the Walgreen house," says Jane. "My son used to play with their son. This loop will curve around and lead us back to my house." I haven't the slightest idea where we are. Somewhere in Barrington Hills, to be sure, for there's no other place like this that I've ever been. We are in a miraculous little part of the world, a place in which those of us who live and work in cities can escape the boardrooms and jets to ride trails with the same animals that carried people across this vast prairie 150 years ago. I now see first-hand how in Barrington Hills, the tradition of neighbors riding to meet neighbors has been kept alive in a unique and very special way. I may not know precisely where I am, but I know I don't want to be anywhere else.

Kristina Anderson lives in Barrington Hills with her husband, David Cook, and daughters Amelia and Kate. She owns and operates Anderson Legal Search, an executive search firm for attorneys.

Riding Club of Barrington Hills Activities

The Riding Club of Barrington Hills offers many opportunities to its club members as well as to the public. Here are just a few of the things that keep the club busy.



RCBH celebrates its 75th Diamond Jubilee. From left: Linda Adair, PK Johnson, Gail Baldwin, and Lynn Topping.

Riding Club members Joan and Robert Abboud, Sr., attend the Fox River Valley & Massbach Hounds 75th anniversary Hunt Ball in 2015. *Photo: Julie Linnekin*



The Riding Club of Barrington Hills President Bill Adair receives an award from then-Village President of Barrington Hills Bob Abboud and then-Trustee Skip Gianopulos in 2013.



Riding Club members participate in Barrington's Fourth of July parade. *Photo: Louis Iacovelli*



Maureen Prettyman (left) and Stephanie Cecola (right) assist Lt. Brett Haller in haltering the horse at the HARPS horse safety and rescue clinic. Both are Riding Club members volunteering their time. Cecola is also on the Equestrian Commission for the Village of Barrington Hills, and a riding trail rep for the NW Sector. *Photo: Paolo Cascio*



In May 2016, the Hooved Animal Rescue and Protection Society (HARPS) hosted a clinic at its facility to train Barrington area police and fire and emergency personnel about helping horses in difficult situations, such as a building fire. Ronda Ewing led the clinic with volunteer helpers from the Riding Club. *Photo: Paolo Cascio*



Members of the Fox River Valley Pony Club get ready to demonstrate quadrilles at the LeCompte Kalaway Trial Owners Polo Cup Matches in 2015 as a pre-game presentation for guests.



Perhaps no one has ridden in Barrington Hills as long as Emily McHugh, who brought the Pony Club to the community.

Fox River Valley Pony Club

THE FOX RIVER VALLEY PONY CLUB offers Barrington's youth and their families a way to connect and learn through its horsemanship programs that are shared across the United States with 10,000 other members. The United States Pony Club, founded in 1954, is based on the model of the Pony Club of Great Britain, and is headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky. Like its international parent organization, the Fox River Valley Pony Club teaches responsible horse care, horsemanship, respect of horses, and proper riding skills. The word "pony" in United States Pony Club does not refer to the type of horse allowed in the club, but instead to the fact that its members are required to be younger than 21 upon the establishment of the club.

"Pony Club is a great way to meet other families and introduce the sport of horse riding and competitions to children," Emily McHugh said. A Barrington Hills Riding Club member and trail rider for 55 years, McHugh was a member of the Middle Tennessee Pony Club in Nashville, where she grew up. When she moved to Barrington Hills in 1962, she brought the idea with her, and two women, Francis Joswick and Ginny Arnold, launched the club with her.

"It's hands-on learning," McHugh says of club programs. "The children learn everything—how to clean a stall, groom their horse, bridle it, and what to do if the horse needs medical attention and help from a vet." Pony Club also helps young equestrians host gymkhanas, learn about polo, perform at polo matches, ride in parades, and the club sponsors the Horse Trials at the Riding Center each June. McHugh started the Horse Trials, a local competition for its first few years, and it took off, attracting competitors to its annual three-day eventing competition from around the Midwest as it grew. Club members also learn about exercising the Spring Creek Bassett hounds, and following them on foot to observe the canines in action.

The Pony Club offers a healthy outdoor activity for children and their families, volunteer opportunities, and maintains our long-standing equestrian tradition here, and across the United States. *Story by Lisa Stamos.*



Pony Club member Clara Schor attends a 2010 Pony Club Camp.



Grace Zachar demonstrates the posting trot at a Pony Club Camp in 2010.

Honoring Equestrian Traditions U

Photography: APRIL GRAVES



Horseback riders are invited to stop by the Millers on a trail ride. From left: Siena Perry on Indiana; PK Johnson on Coco B 4 Chanel; Emily McHugh on Star; Eve Perry rides Orion; and Lorelei Benkendorf is on Guinness.



Siena Perry enjoys a cup of hot cocoa and cookies made by Emily Miller. Trail owner Jamie Miller holds a tray as Eve Perry, Siena's grandmother, keeps an eye on the horses.



Jamie Miller and Emily, her daughter, get the attention of the horses when they see marshmallows sitting on the tray.



Emily McHugh (here with Star) has been riding the trails in Barrington Hills for 55 years.



Riding Club members take a break while riding the trails. From left: Emily McHugh, Lorelei Benkendorf, Siena Perry, PK Johnson, Eve Perry, and Emily Miller.