

## Annandale City Park on Pleasant Lake

The Annandale area is known as the “Heart of the Lakes,” and the City Park on Pleasant Lake has always been at the heart of Annandale, a hub of summertime activity.

Softball tournaments have been held in the park since Annandale has had a park, though the original field was north of its current location with an occasional home run landing in the lake. A large grandstand [PHOTO] was located just south of the field until the 1940s. The high school football team played their games on a 90 yard field in the park until the current field was built in the 1970s. The missing 10 yards were compensated by all kick-offs from the 25 yard line instead of the 35, and if it did not get run back for a touchdown, then the ball was moved ten yards back to make the 100 yard total distance for a touchdown.

The pavilion [PHOTO] has been a cornerstone of the park for over a century. Originally built in 1903, it was renovated in the 1990s by the Lions Club when they raised the building and added a lower floor with kitchen and bathrooms. The pavilion has always been a community gathering place. In earlier years it has housed roller-skating, community theater, summer dances, bingo, and a Haunted House for Halloween. Today the pavilion is busier than ever. It hosts the July 4<sup>th</sup> Pork Chop Dinner, triathlon registration, Concerts in the Park when it rains, and is rented out often for graduations, weddings, and other events. The abundance of amenities in the park has made the pavilion a popular site for family reunions.

Civic organizations have supported City Park since the beginning. The Annandale Improvement Club minutes recorded adding steps up to the pavilion walk in 1903, planting flowers in the park in 1905 (as they continue to do today,) and planting shade trees in 1945. In addition to the major renovation to the pavilion in the 1990s, the Lions Club also constructed the picnic shelter in 1977 and replaced the timber playground in 2006. The Annandale Community Team (ACT) reopened the Beach House in 2010 staffed with equipment check-out and activities, and they commissioned the 19’ steel Breeze Gate sculpture, installed in 2011.

One interesting part of the park’s history, quite foreign to most of us, is the ice harvesting industry on Pleasant Lake [PHOTO]. When the ice was between 24 and 28 inches thick, usually sometime in January, huge 22” x 28” blocks of ice were cut and hauled to an ice house to be stored in layers of sawdust. If there was a lot of snow, the lake had to be plowed off so the ice depth would increase faster. One ice house was located just south of the current Bath House by the beach, and Brown’s Creamery had another ice house. Throughout the year the huge blocks were cut into smaller pieces and sold.

Louis Larson had the Ice Harvesting business on Pleasant Lake from the 1920s to the 1950s. His daughter, Aileen (Larson) Lundeen wrote about his business for her 2005 presentation to the Annandale History Club:

*The first cut was made with a gas driven motor with a large circular saw attached. This would cut only part way through. There was a guide on the ski of the machine to measure the width of the next row to be cut. There would be crosscuts, too. The rest of the cuts had to be done by hand with a long blade saw. A channel was made to float each 400 pound cake of ice to a ramp that led up to the platform. A pulley system was set up with a large ice tong on the end of a rope. Two or three cakes could be pulled up at a time. The pulley was activated by one team of horses that pulled at command. The platform was the height of the sleigh waiting for its load as the ice came up to the platform.*

*Mother was part of the ice business, too. They had a little shed by the side of the garage that Dad would stock with smaller cakes of ice. There was a small scale where the ice was weighed. It was Mother's job to sell ice from this shed to fishermen, who would come and buy ice to keep their fish cold until they got home, or for their ice boxes at their cabins. Each purchase was maybe 25 cents, but it was something (back then, 25 cents bought a pound of hamburger).*

The ice was used for refreshments during the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration and of course to cool residents' ice boxes before electric refrigerators became commonplace. Ice Harvesting on Pleasant Lake continued until the 1960s.

Some activities have taken place in the park since nearly the beginning such as softball tournaments and the July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration with a carnival and fireworks. The annual Soo Line Picnic took place in the park from 1923 to 1957 when special trains brought in Soo Line employees. Coronation of the Annandale Ambassadors (Miss Annandale and Princesses) has been in the park since the 1950s, and Red Cross swim lessons and life guard training took place on the beach 1970s-1990s. Winter activities have included an ice skating rink cleared, enclosed, flooded and lit as early as 1923; and a Kids Fishing Contest sponsored by the Commercial Club starting in the 1958 and then by the Conservation Club in more recent years. The Triathlon started in 1986 and the 104' fishing dock was installed in 1989.

Other additions to the park this century include the Boat Parade since 2001, the Concerts in the Park since 2005, and several memorial benches facing the lake. In 2010 the beach was named Dunton Beach in 2010 in honor of Ed "Tubber" Dunton (1895-1976), a leading citizen who contributed time and money improving the beach in the 1960s.

We're fortunate the early organizers of our city had the foresight to set aside these 7 acres on the shore of Pleasant Lake for our City Park. It has always been an integral part of Annandale's community life.

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Photos: Thanks to Dewey Gunnarson for the use of his pavilion photo and to Judy Ferrell for her photo of Ice Harvesting on Pleasant Lake.

Pavilion



Dewey Gunnarson picture

Grand Stand



post card

Ice Harvesting



Judy Ferrell picture