



Prairie Club of Chicago (IL) (Images of America)

Cathy Jean Maloney

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Originally formed in 1908, as an outgrowth of the Playground Association of Chicago, the Prairie Club was incorporated as a separate entity in 1911. Embodying the typical reform mentality of the Progressive era, the club emphasized outdoor recreation and preservation, and sponsored walking trips around Chicago's countryside. Captured here in over 200 vintage photographs are the footsteps of the Prairie Club as they built a constituency for exploring and preserving the forests and fields surrounding the Windy City.

Like many large American cities in the early 1900s, Chicago's industrialization and waves of immigration spawned crowded, unhealthy urban conditions. The Prairie Club turned to nature for relief from these societal ills. From its first outing on Saturday, April 18, 1908, around Mount Forest District near Willow Springs, members sponsored hikes and outdoor activities from Palos and Tinley, through Hinsdale and Downers Grove, and up to the North Shore. With each of these walks, public support grew for what ultimately became victorious efforts to establish the forest preserves, Indiana Dunes, and other nature spots around the burgeoning cityscape.

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