

The North Shore Property Owners Association

A YOUNG BUT POWERFUL ORGANIZATION

REVIEW OF 1932

By L. W. Beman

The North Shore Property Owners Association started suddenly like a vigilance committee of the old frontier days. The troubles that made this Association necessary have smoldered for several years. Millions of dollars in property values are at stake, as well as the safety and happiness of home owners and their children.

Up the North Shore of Lake Michigan, from Chicago to Lake Bluff, is a narrow strip of rolling wooded beauty, unexcelled in the middle west. Prominent leaders in Chicagoland were early attracted by its scenic grandeur, and had built wonderful homes and gardens there.

They had not only preserved the natural beauty of the roads, but have planted many more trees. The present generation see a canopy of wonderful maple, elm, oak, ash, and hickory on these curved roads along the bluffs and through many ravines. These old trees are a living monument to the great love for natural beauty of our forefathers.

The children of these famous pioneers have carried on the work of building beauty into their homes and estates for two generations.

Because the natural beauty has been preserved and the entire section is practically free from factories, noise or smoke, it has attained great fame and value as residential property and has produced high taxes.

The quiet residential character and the safety of the people has in recent years been endangered by the ever-increasing flow of through, high-speed traffic, which is being routed right into the heart of these home districts.

This mistake in routing brings danger, traffic jams, and noise. Children can no longer cross in safety to the beaches, residents have trouble getting out of their drives or onto through streets like Sheridan Road.

Then the property owners suddenly realized plans were being made to straighten out and widen Sheridan Road and other streets. These mistaken plans would destroy much of the beauty and tend to invite more speed and density of traffic. It was proposed for example, to straighten out, widen and grade Hubbard Hill Ravine. Concrete walls were to be substituted for the marvelous natural beauty there.

Local civic organizations up the North Shore were asked to approve of these plans.

Almost immediately, local efforts

were started to block these plans. The Hubbard Woods Improvement Association started an attack, backed by the South Glencoe Improvement Association, the Indian Hill Improvement Association, the Ravinia Civic Association, the Lincoln Civic Association and the Porcupine Club of Highland Park and the North Shore Art League and the Garden Club of Winnetka. Struggles were also going on in many other places, for example, in Wilmette, where the residents of beautiful Michigan Avenue, which overlooks the lake, were asked to sacrifice their trees and front yards in order that an increased stream of traffic could pass their homes.

Many citizens who owned property on Sheridan Road were out notifying their neighbors of the danger. Perhaps the most outstanding example was in Wilmette, where Edgar Crilly, with the help of Henry W. Wales, and others, had talked to the Sheridan Road property owners. Identical petitions were sent to Governor Emmerson from all of these residents of Wilmette, except six who could not be found. The petitions were as follows:

Petition

"To the Governor, State Legislature, and Highway Authorities of the State of Illinois:

"Believing that the use of Sheridan Road as a through highway for both present and prospective traffic is adverse to the interests of the north shore villages, and the frequent street intersections and private drives will prevent this route ever being adequate or safe for modern high-speed traffic, and that a modern automotive highway should be located west of the north shore villages and immediately accessible to such villages in accord with modern highway planning and construction,

I, the undersigned citizen of Winnetka, Illinois, and owner of property, address of which appears under my signature, hereby register my opposition to further changes or developments in Sheridan Road at this time, and express my belief that Illinois State Route 42 and United States Route 41 should be transferred at the earliest practicable date to a more appropriate location west of the corporate limits of the north shore municipalities. For the foregoing reasons and for the further reason that widening or changes in grade would largely destroy its natural beauty which is known and loved throughout Cook and neighboring counties, I am specifically opposed to any such

changes in Sheridan Road through the Hubbard Hill and Ravines Section as would tend to increase the speed and density of through traffic within these settled residential districts. I request that assurances be promptly given that this policy will be carried out."

With all these troubles for the future, the luck of the North Shore suddenly changed and got much worse. Five powerful, through, inter-state truck lines applied for a franchise to run their freight over Sheridan Road and many other streets. The huge freight car trucks, with one or more trailers would roar through these towns on regular schedule, day and night. Some of these companies have already started to operate, and it will take unanimous opposition to fight them, before the Illinois Commerce Commission, where their applications are being passed on.

Plans were also being pushed that would tend to spoil the greatest attraction, that is, the view of Lake Michigan. It was proposed to start building a road in the lake at Evanston and extend this up the north shore to the state line.

It became very obvious that civic organizations or towns working alone could not protect their interests. Since it was a common cause, groups in the principal towns talked of some method of taking united action. Meetings of different groups with different ideas were held.

Finally all of these groups met together as the guests of Edgar Crilly at a luncheon at the Hamilton Club. Representatives of organizations and prominent citizens from Lake Forest, Highland Park, Ravinia, Glencoe, Hubbard Woods, Winnetka, Kenilworth, Wilmette and Evanston were present. After several meetings, a permanent Board of Directors was formed, and it unanimously agreed to incorporate as a "not for profit" organization, under the name of the North Shore Property Owners Association.

Achievements of 1932

Although this organization is only a few months old, it already has a splendid record of achievement.

Prominent men and women of the North Shore have given liberally of their time to help in the work of protecting their homes. Civic organizations have sent in resolutions, indorsing the actions of this Association. A month ago, members started sending in letters of praise, with their 1933 memberships. The principal problems the Asso-

ciation has worked on are as follows:

Truck Cases

Five separate inter-state truck lines have applied to the Illinois Commerce Commission for a franchise to run on Sheridan Road and many other streets. Some have amended their petitions to only run short distances on Sheridan Road. If they are allowed to run on any street, the Commission can almost by the wave of a hand, change them to Sheridan Road, Ridge Road, Green Bay Road, or any other street.

This Association has taken the position that trucks should not be allowed to pass through these towns on any streets, but should be routed around and outside of these towns.

These trucking companies have employed skilled attorneys in some cases, with powerful political connections. They are in the fight to stay.

They have notified the attorneys for this Association that if any case is denied, it will be refiled under the new commission, to be appointed by Governor Horner.

Our attorneys inquired as to why they intended to be so persistent. They replied this is rich territory. The bread and butter of their clients depended on their being able to run through the North Shore. This Association has been represented in every hearing. Each one of these cases has had repeated hearings day after day, and week after week.

The reasons why you should help fight these cases are as follows:

1. Outside trucking service is not needed, as the two railroads, who paid \$121,309.89 in taxes in 1930 to the school and park funds of the North Shore, now amply take care of their simple freight needs. (The trucks will pay no taxes as they own no land.)

2. The North Shore has been trying for a generation to work out the railroad grade separation problem. Now it is proposed to give for nothing the use of the city streets, with no guards at the crossing to five railroads on rubber tires.

3. The vibration of these huge trucks and trailers running at high speed will tear up the pavement for which they pay nothing, and require the expenditure of thousands of dollars in each town for replacement.

4. The noise, smell, vibration, traffic confusion and danger to life

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