

# Traveling the Jane Addams Trail

*The Jane Addams Trail is a journey through time...rich with stories. Follow the lettered posts as you discover this beautiful Trail.*

- A. Illinois/Wisconsin State Line.** At the time Illinois became the 21st state in 1818, the northern border was redrawn to extend it northward from the southern tip of Lake Michigan. Reorganization of counties created Stephenson County in 1837 and Wisconsin became the 30<sup>th</sup> state in 1837. The Jane Addams Trail meets Wisconsin's Badger Trail at the state border. North, the trail takes you to Madison, Wisconsin. South, the trail takes you to just north of Freeport. When completed, it will take you to downtown Freeport where it will connect eastward to Rockford via the Pecatonica Prairie Path, also under development.
- B. Flora/Fauna.** Most of the plants along the trail are seasonal and create an ever-changing landscape. Twenty-seven species of trees, 120 species of herbaceous plants, and 25 species of woody shrubs have been identified including many maple and oak species, wild current and raspberry, trillium, phlox and many other wild flowers. Wild animals often seen and heard include ground squirrels, groundhogs, muskrats, squirrels, rabbits, deer, raccoons, badgers, songbirds, pheasants, hawks, eagles, owls, turkey, waterfowl, herons, egrets and cranes.
- C. Richland Creek.** Flowing from a wellspring on the northeast outskirts of Monroe, Wisconsin, Richland Creek is joined by several tributaries along its route, flowing into the Pecatonica River just south of the Cedarville area. First used by

native Americans as a trapping and fishing area, the creek later became a millstream for settlers beginning in the 1820s, and is currently used for irrigation, watershed, and wildlife habitat. The creek parallels the Jane Addams Trail from north of Orangeville to south of Cedarville.

- D. Old State Route 26 Overpass.** The concrete bridge is the longest bridge in Illinois to cross a railroad line (the current Jane Addams Trail) and a creek, while curving and slanting up (or down) hill - all at the same time. Initially completed in 1928 with the opening of the first Illinois Route 26 bypass, the bridge is still in use.
- E. Richland Creek Trailhead.** (Parking, water, restrooms, shelter on site, service station and restaurants nearby.) John H. Curtiss built a mill along Richland Creek in 1833, which lay idle after his death in 1843. In 1846, John Bower purchased the mill plus an additional 240 adjacent acres. In 1851, he hired the Stephenson County surveyor to plat the new town, and named it Orangeville. The Richland Creek Trailhead, near the site of this first mill, hosts summer band concerts as well as a seasonal Saturday Farmers Market. A short walk east from the trailhead takes you to the downtown which offers restaurants and a grocery.
- F. Orangeville Wetlands.** Although seemingly small, these wetlands play host to many different populations of wildlife. Created as a mitigation area for the Illinois Route 26 bypass constructed in the early 2000s, the wetlands area has seen tremendous growth in wildlife, both in numbers and variety. In addition to the Canada geese, the area has become the summer home of blue herons, red-winged blackbirds, sandhill cranes, egrets, and more.
- G. Brush Creek Golf Course.** Currently a nine-hole course, Brush Creek has brought a new

source of entertainment to the Orangeville area. This hilly, challenging course provides vistas that are worth the price of admission by themselves.

- H. Butterfly Farm.** Wander through 82 acres of tall grass prairie, woodlands and wetlands owned by the Jane Addamsland Park Foundation. Visit the western edge of the property to find the marker commemorating Annette Yonke and Gerald Estes for the ecological restoration of this preserve and their generous gift of it to the Foundation. (Please respect the private residence on the property.)
- I. The Illinois Central Railroad.** In 1887 the Illinois Central ran a line north from Freeport to Madison, Wisconsin. The line ran through Scioto Mills, Red Oak, Buena Vista and Orangeville. The Jane Addams Trail is built on this "Madison Branch" route.
- J. Buena Vista Bridge Cut.** Note the Galena dolomite seen here at this trailside exposure. Unlike Platteville dolomite further north on the trail (near "D"), in which the rock tends to break apart in thin slabs often referred to as "flagstone", the Galena formation reflects thicker and blockier layers. The Galena also contains a lot of chert (also called flint), which is rare in the Platteville dolomite. The chert can be seen as layers or pods of white or light gray material within the tan or brown dolomite. Chert is a very hard mineral which was prized by Native Americans as an excellent material for making arrowheads, spear points, and other tools.
- K. Wohlford Woods.** This five-acre wooded property was homesteaded by Thomas Wohlford under the Homestead Act. The property was given to the Jane Addamsland Park Foundation in the early 1970s by two of Thomas Wohlford's great granddaughters.

- L. Red Oak.** (Parking, portable toilet in summer.) When the railroad decided to build a branch off the Madison route extending the line to Dodgeville, Wisconsin, a small town grew up around the railroad activity. It was named Red Oak to reflect a grove of trees near this junction. The original wood piers for the Dodgeville branch line bridge still stand in Richland Creek in the deep woods about a mile northwest of here.
- M. Jane Addams/Cedarville.** (Parking.) In 1835, Dr. Van Valzah of Pennsylvania, heard about the open land of Stephenson County and brought a group from Pennsylvania to settle the area around Cedar Creek. The new town was first called Cedar Creek Mills, then Harrison, and finally Cedarville. John H. Addams purchased the mill in 1844. A friend of Abraham Lincoln, Addams served in the State Senate from 1854 until 1870. The Jane Addams Trail was named in honor of his daughter Jane, the Cedarville native and world-famous humanitarian and social worker who founded Hull House in Chicago and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. She is buried in the Cedarville Cemetery, about one mile east of this location.
- N. Scioto Mills.** The Village of Scioto Mills was founded in 1850 by Levi Wilcoxon and his brothers, Rezin and Thompson. The name Scioto was taken from Scioto County, Ohio, where the brothers previously lived. The village was built around a saw and grist mill built by one of the brothers. In 1887, the Illinois Central Railroad line was completed through Scioto Mills, boosting the economy even more.
- O. Blue Room.** Outdoorsman, land owner, and tavern keeper, John K. Henke operated the "Blue Room" in this old building from 1933 until his passing in 1981. He purchased the first liquor license issued in Stephenson County but sold alcohol during prohibition as well. Forced

by the authorities to add indoor rest rooms in the 1950's, John complied but the commodes had no plumbing and the doors were locked except for inspections. His customers just continued to use the old "two holer" out back.

- P. Parriot Prairie Area.** This area is named after Esther Parriot, John Henke's sister, who gave her and her husband's combined assets to Highland Community College for agricultural scholarships. Esther and her brother John were both extremely frugal and between them owned about 1,000 acres of "pretty good farm land", according to Esther who said: "John's greatest pleasure was in knowing that he had lots of money in the bank. He wore old second hand clothes and never spent much money on his building or automobile. However, on the several occasions that we went to a trap shoot or for a drive, no one else's money was any good. He bought gas and meals and refreshments (but not alcohol) and was happy to be out".
- Q. Ducks' Misery.** Note the Oxbow in the creek at this point. In 1875, Oscar Ennenga, a local resident, celebrated his fifteenth birthday and received a muzzle-loading shotgun for a present. That same day, he drove to "Ducks' Misery" in Scioto Mills and "easily killed fifteen ducks". Imagine the water a little higher with a great wetland area here for ducks - and hunters - in 1875. Restoration is underway using USDA's Wetland Restoration Program (WRP).
- R. Pecatonica River.** The Pecatonica River, a tributary of the Rock River, is 120 miles long. The word "Pecatonica" means "crooked river," although some claim it means "dirty river." A typical Illinois river meandering over flat ground, its wellspring is in the hills of southwest Wisconsin. It flows southward past Freeport, and is joined by the Sugar River in northern Winnebago County, five miles south of the state line. It joins the Rock River at Rockton,

approximately 15 miles north of Rockford. Paddlers are developing the river as a major water trail.

- S. Wes Block Trailhead.** (Parking, restrooms, shelter.) The Wes Block Trail Access is named after Wesley Block, a local community leader and snowmobile enthusiast, who was the first person to officially suggest that this beautiful route should become a recreational trail. With his leadership, the first meetings to discuss a trail were held in 1990. With his continued persistence and the eventual support of countless individuals, organizations and local governments, the trail became a reality in 2002. Unfortunately, Wes did not live to see the trail opened, but his dedication and commitment is memorialized with the naming of the trailhead in his honor.

**For More Information on the Trail and the Area:**

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