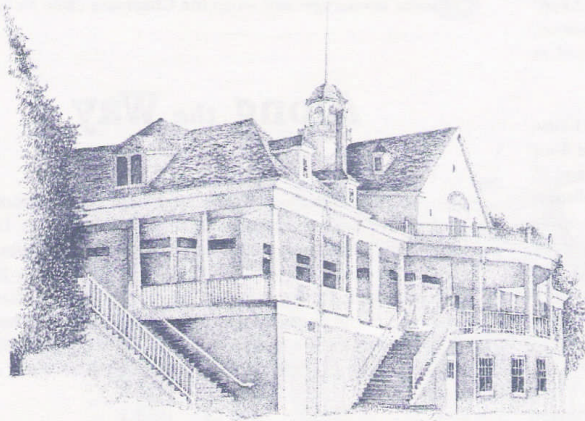


# Lords Park Pavilion



building with glass sides for eagles and buzzards, an electrically lighted band stand, and a shelter house at the Forest Avenue entrance. The first swings, teeters and sandboxes were installed in 1900.

Speaking at the dedication of the pavilion in 1898, George Lord explained the importance of a city park:

“City life is a constant strain upon the nervous system, impairing its force and injuring the health of the people. The park is designed as a public resting place, a place to which the people may resort for pleasure, rest and recreation. From this standpoint, who can estimate its value, or have a just conception of the beauties that may be derived from frequent and prolonged visits to its cool and refreshing retreats?”

**I**n October, 1889, a group of real estate developers purchased the farm of Dr. Joseph Tefft, and offered a fifty-acre parcel of the land, known as Willow Creek Woods, to the City of Elgin to be used as a park. Although the price of \$10,000 was less than cost, Elgin voters turned down the offer in a referendum.

Later, George and Mary Carpenter Lord purchased the land for \$16,000, and presented it to the City of Elgin as a gift, with the agreement that it be used as a city park, and no alcoholic beverages be served on the grounds there.

George P. Lord was a business manager for the Elgin National Watch Company and an investor in dairy farms. He served as mayor of Elgin and president of the Board of Education. A widower at 70 years of age, he married Mary Edwards Carpenter, an affluent widow, in 1889. Childless and devoutly religious, they believed their wealth should be used to enrich the lives of their fellow citizens. Lords Park, Sherman Hospital, the YWCA, Elgin Academy, and Oak Crest Residence are among the Elgin institutions which benefited from their philanthropy.

Using ideas gathered in European travel, George P. Lord supervised development of the new park. By the end of the century, the park had been improved with the addition of two lagoons (formed by damming up Willow Creek), a spacious pavilion, picturesque drives and walks, pits for bears and smaller animals, a large enclosure in the wooded portion for deer, goats, peacocks, and other fancy fowls with a suitable winter quarters to house them, a

Even before the turn of the century, the Chicago Street trolley connected Lords Park with the main business district of Elgin. It was common on Sundays, and on band concert nights, to see extra trolleys running out to Lords Park from downtown to accommodate the huge crowds who flocked to the Park to spend the day or evening.

Lords Park Pavilion is the centerpiece of 409 acres of park. Designed by local architect David E. Postle, it sits on a hill overlooking the nearby lagoons and tree-lined walks, and is considered to be one of the city's most visible landmarks, second only to Old Main.

The original pavilion burned to the ground on September 30, 1897. Within 5 days, the Elgin City Council passed an ordinance unanimously making an appropriation to replace it. By June 18, 1898, a larger pavilion was being dedicated.

The pavilion you see today has stood for 100 years, but not without its problems. The building was closed at one point for safety reasons. And because of the high price to properly restore it, there were those in favor of demolishing it and replacing it with a modern, easy-maintenance parks and recreation building. But in 1990, the City Council decided to do the right thing and preserve the building. And after seeing the results, the whole city can be assured that the \$1 million restoration of Lords Park Pavilion to its former grandeur were well-spent tax dollars. The pavilion was re-dedicated in January of 1993 and is now being safely used and enjoyed again by the citizens of Elgin.

