



Photos courtesy of Juliette DePorre Zaranek

The first edition of this chronology was compiled and written by Bruce Bockstanz and Suzanne Kent for the 50th anniversary of Lake Front Park, Aug. 2, 1997.

This 2013 edition is the work of Bruce Bockstanz, Suzanne Kent, and Juliette DePorre Zaranek.

Mr. Bockstanz passed away before the completion of this chronology. This work is dedicated to his memory.



A continuation of this chronology (1961 to present) is in production and will be available soon on the city website: [www.gpwmi.us](http://www.gpwmi.us)

Photos, unless otherwise noted, are courtesy of the Grosse Pointe Woods Historical Commission.

# A Chronology of *Lake Front Park*

## The Early Years 1946 to 1960



This is the story of how Grosse Pointe Woods, the largest but the only landlocked city of the Grosse Pointes, came to acquire and develop its beautiful Lake Front Park.

Thanks to the visionary leadership and planning of the early elected officials and community leaders, residents have this outstanding recreational facility to enjoy today.

### **Grosse Pointe Woods Historical Commission**

**In 1946**, a master plan was created for the Village of Grosse Pointe Woods.\* This plan determined the need for park lands for the growing community of 6,610 residents. Population projections were 20,000 in 20 years.

City engineers asked the Michigan Department of Health for comments on placing a public bathing beach along the shores of Lake St. Clair. Authorities advised that the water near the Edsel and Eleanor Ford property was less polluted than at other nearby Lake St. Clair beaches.

Eleanor Clay Ford offered the Village of Grosse Pointe Woods an option to purchase approximately 43 acres with about 600 feet fronting on the lake.

Voters approved a \$72,000 bond issue; \$60,000 to purchase the land from the Eleanor Clay Ford Estate for use as a municipal park and \$12,000 for improvements, taxes, and other expenses.

**On March 10, 1947**, voters approved the acquisition of 43.7 acres from Eleanor Clay Ford for \$60,000. The acquisition was approved by 962 affirmative against 460 negative votes. A land contract was signed on March 14, 1947.



**On February 26, 1948**, the Village of Grosse Pointe Woods took title to the property. Swimming began in Lake St. Clair in the late 1940s.

\* The Village of Grosse Pointe Woods was incorporated as the City of Grosse Pointe Woods in 1950.

The original swimming pool with a sand bottom was built in 1950. The 300-foot, saucer-shaped pool had a 2 million gallon capacity. The depth of the pool graduated from the sand beach to 9-1/2 feet at the springboards. About 120,000 people participated in the recreational activities offered by the park during the summer of 1950.

Construction began on the original bathhouse in October 1950. The cost was \$38,999. The bathhouse consisted of shower accommodations and locker space for 500 people.



**In December 1950**, an adjacent 10.92-acre parcel of land was acquired from the Ford property, bringing the park to its present size of approximately 54 acres.

**In August 1951**, a motorbus was donated by the local Kiwanis Club to shuttle residents to and from the park. Recreational facilities consisted of sandboxes, kiddie swings, teeter-totters, slides, swings, a baseball diamond, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, and water polo. The park also contained 76 large picnic tables, 43 barbecue stoves or pits, and a 300-car parking lot.

**In June 1955**, floodlights were installed at the gatehouse and pool. Approximately 142,000 people participated in the recreational activities offered by the park from July 1, 1955, to June 30, 1956.

A concrete bottom was added to the swimming pool in 1956 and, in 1957, a filter plant for the pool was built.



The Milk River was dredged and boat wells were constructed in May 1957.

**In 1958**, an automobile bridge over the Milk River was constructed in the center of the park, and the parking lot at the pool was paved.

A boat-launching ramp was built in 1959. By 1960 the baseball diamond was relocated to Chesquiere Park.

