

McLean County Museum of History

Moraine View State Recreation Area Collection

Processed by
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Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1941 to 1985
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	

Brief History

In the early 1940s, LeRoy citizens began advocating for the construction of an artificial lake in close proximity to their town. Pro-lake interests — led by the LeRoy Sportsmen’s Club, the local American Legion, the LeRoy Kiwanis and others — contended that such a project would boost the local economy by bringing hunters, picnickers, hikers, horseback riders, and boaters into the area.

In July 1941, the Roosevelt Administration’s Works Progress Administration signed off on a proposed lake, to be located just east of LeRoy in Empire Township. Because funding for the project had to come partly from local sources, it was decided that LeRoy and Empire Township residents must approve the creation of a park district and elect board members before they could vote on a \$30,000 bond issue. The first election was held December 16, 1941. In LeRoy, voters backed the lake project by a nearly two-to-one margin, while those in the township leaned the other way, saying “no” by a closely contested vote of 104 to 83. Passage depended on a majority in both districts so the township vote canceled out the overall 139 majority.

In 1958, the state approved the establishment of a park and construction of a corresponding lake, now sited north of LeRoy in Dawson Township. This lake — with its southern edge 2½ miles north of LeRoy and its northern edge 1½ miles south of Ellsworth — was created by impounding the upper reaches of the north fork of Salt Creek. The planned park was first known as the McLean County Conservation Area, while the lake was simply called McLean County Lake. In the end, the county selected Dawson, for Dawson Township and its namesake John Dawson, one of the first Euro-American pioneers to the area. The suggestion of Dawson Lake came from Frances Wagers, a longtime resident of the area

Before much work could begin on the new lake, the state had to clear title of 900 to 1,000 acres of privately owned farmland and timber. Landholders included Minnie Bane, A.M. Campbell, Frank Wahlstrom, Frank Virgiel and others. In the fall of 1975, the state renamed the surrounding parkland Moraine View State Park. In 1995 the state park was re-designated a state recreation area, so today it’s officially known as Moraine View State Recreation Area.

[precised from Bill Kemp, “A Page From Our Past: Moraine View Park opened in 1959,” *The Pantagraph*, January 5, 2020.]

Scope

This collection includes newspaper clippings from 1941 through 1985, plus manuscript histories of Dawson Lake and of the LeRoy Sportsmen’s Club.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: History

- 1.1 Contains "History of Dawson Lake" by Frances Wagers, 1972, typescript, 31pp.
- 1.2 Letter from Department of Conservation in response to Frances Wagers' request for information about Dawson Lake, February 22, 1972.
- 1.3 Bill Kemp, "A Page From Our Past: Moraine View Park opened in 1959," *The Pantagraph*, January 5, 2020

Folder 2: Newspaper clippings

Note: Newspaper clippings are probably *The LeRoy Journal*

- 2.1 "Lake Prospects Are Good, But Sponsor Is Needed!" August 1, 1941.
- 2.2 "Survey and Estimate to Be Made for Lake, August 8, 1941.
- 2.3 "State Engineer to Look Over Lake Sites Here," August 29, 1941.
- 2.4 "Lake Enthusiasts Inspired by State Engineer's ...," September 12, 1941.
- 2.5 "Group Appointed to Get Options for Lake Project," September 19, 1941.
- 2.6 "Residents Petition for Park District Election," October 10, 1941.
- 2.7 "Preliminary Survey by Engineer for Lake Here Now Under Way," undated.
- 2.8 "Details for Park District Election Being Worked Out," October 31, 1941.
- 2.9 "Special Election Date Set for December 16," November 21, 1941.
- 2.10 "A Review of Events Leading Up to Park District Election," "November 28, 1941.
- 2.11 "No Financial Issue in 'Park District' Election on Dec. 16," December 5, 1941.
- 2.12 "A Statement in regard to the Park District Election," December 5, 1941.
- 2.13 "Special Election for Park District Is Next Tuesday," December 12, 1941.
- 2.14 "Specimen Ballot," December 12, 1941.
- 2.15 "Lake Sites Are Being Surveyed: Engineers' Fee Over Subscribed," August 11, 1980.

Folder 3: The LeRoy Sportsmen's Club

- 3.1 "The LeRoy Sportsmen's Club" by Francis Wagers, 1985, typescript, 9pp.
- 3.2 Draft of The LeRoy Sportsmen's Club, handwritten, 14pp.
- 3.3 Notes and drafts for The LeRoy Sportsmen's Club, handwritten, several pages.
- 3.4 Letter from John Warren, Department of Conservation, with information about the McLean County Sportsmen's Club, March 19, 1973.
- 3.5 "Sportsmen's Club Is Total Loss in Blaze Last Week," source unknown, July 15, 1960.
- 3.6 "More on Sportsman Club," *The LeRoy Journal*, November 21, 1985.
- 3.7 "LeRoy Sportsmen's Club celebrates 50th anniversary," November 14, 1985.

Loose

Scrapbook – Contains newspaper clippings from October 1959 to January 1977 relating to construction of lake and state park. Red boards, 10" x 12" with string binding, pages in fragile condition.

Scrapbook – Contains plat map and newspaper clippings from 1970s relating to Moraine View Park. Loose pages contained within green boards with gold lettering, 11” x 13”, pages in fragile condition.

Unbound pages (12” x 14”) from scrapbook (front board missing) of newspaper clippings from *The LeRoy Journal* from 1960s, includes obituaries of LeRoy residents.