



# Neighborhood



## News



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### COLUMBIA CREEK PARK

#### 30th Anniversary

##### FROM PASTURE TO PARK

The development started in 1956 as a project of the Aurelius Garden Club. The 40 acre parcel was purchased by the township for gravel.

Gravel was supplied free to use by residents for their own use in the township. Gravel was used by the Ingham County Road Commission to make and maintain roads in the township. By using our gravel, road cost to the township were less.

The balance of the property was rented for pasture to township residents. It made ideal pasture because of the continuous flowing of Columbia Creek. When the Garden Club was organized, a project was needed to create interest in the club. Members agreed that the front ten acres would make a park for the people of Aurelius to enjoy. The Township Board gave the club permission to establish a permanent park but no funds were forthcoming.

The Garden Club had no funds, only the desire to make a park. In as much as Columbia Creek flowed through the proposed park it seemed only fitting that the name of Columbia Creek be given this new venture.

Drinking water was needed and two members decided to make a hand driven well. After working for several weeks with no success a professional well driller took over the job and hit a flowing well. People from surrounding area come with jugs for water from the well. It has a high mineral content and is very healthful. It flows today with as much vigor as when it was first driven. An early attraction of the park was driving your car or truck through the stream. This of course could only be done when the creek was at low ebb. Never the less it was fun to take your kids and your junk through the water on your way to the "DUMP". Two members volunteered to make a foot bridge. the same bridge stands today having withstood floods and time, however reinforcements have been made at either end of the bridge.

Area lumber companies furnished lumber for the first three picnic tables and members of the Garden Club built and maintained them. A fireplace was made from an old kitchen stove top and several stone fire pits were made at the same time.

An old fashioned rope swing was made with a ride out over the water. Dutch Elm disease destroyed the tree so the swing became history. A short time later used playground equipment donated by the Ingham County Road Commission and placed on the hill, where it remains today used by three generations.

In the fall of 1955 toilets were donated to the Park. While they are a necessary evil, they seem to be more than that in this case. They have been the source of trouble more than anything else over the years. Some Halloween pranksters tipped them over nearly demolishing them. The first winter someone blasted two holes through the rear walls with a shot gun.

Electricity was made available and a sign donated by Yexia Woodworking Shop. A ball diamond seemed a necessity and it was made in the Southeast corner of the park and is still used today.

The tables, playground, stoves and ball field were centered in the front near the well and a vast area at the back remained undeveloped. A work bee was organized, a small tractor plowed the furrows followed by members, friends and neighbors working one day, 2000 pine plantings were hand planted by the volunteers. Some spading, some dropping, and some stomping. IT WAS A LONG DAY. Due to a gentle rain the following day, we had a very high survival rate.

The same year the Aurelius 4-H Club and their leaders with extra manpower planted 500 red and white pine seedlings. These were planted on the East side of the roadway leading to the "DUMP". These trees now reach nearly 30 feet in height and a thick carpet of needles cushion ones footsteps when walking through the pines. To finalize the Aurelius Garden Club contribution to the park, a shelter was built by men in the neighborhood. The Town Board became interested in maintaining the park. They also planted a hedge row and numerous deciduous trees for a bird sanctuary at the back of the property. Recently land adjoining the park was purchased to enlarge the park. Much work has been done and it has greatly improved the beauty of the park. Township monies are used to maintain the park. Aurelius Township is fortunate to have a park, as many of the other townships in the County, do not have a natural site for a beautiful rural park.



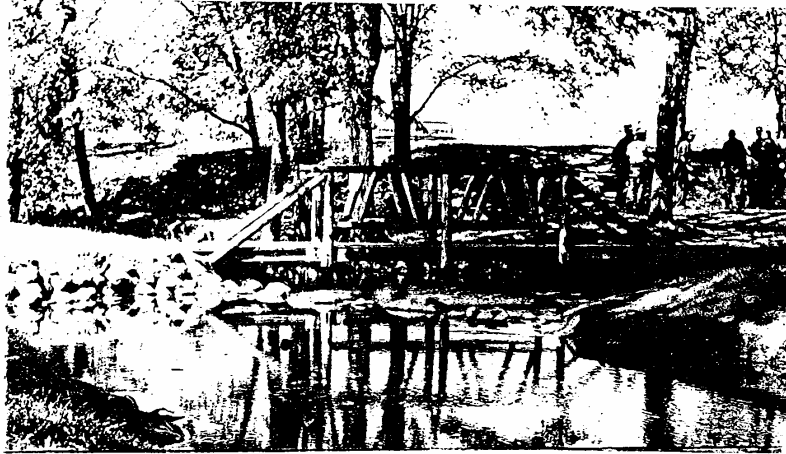
Early Columbia Creek Park Picture

# Thru The Garden Gate

THE FEDERATED GARDEN CLUBS OF MICHIGAN  
Member National Council of State Garden Clubs, Incorporated

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*Columbia Creek Park, Eaton Rapids, the "Pride and Joy" of the Aurelius Garden Club.*

## HOW COLUMBIA CREEK GREW

We started with a pasture lot  
Tall trees the hillsides dot  
It had a gurgling brook  
And its' grasses the cattle took.  
Now a park we've made;  
You'll find a place where children wade,  
A rustic bridge for scenic pleasure,  
A playground for fun and merry measure,  
A thrilling "over the water" swing,  
And tables to hold all the food you bring,  
Stoves and firewood for the weenies you roast  
Or perhaps it's marshmallows you'd rather toast.  
Water comes from the flowing well  
Deep in the earth and clear as a bell.  
There's a diamond for that great American game  
Men and boys, the appeal is the same.  
Maybe it's horseshoes you'd like to throw  
Ring the stake--three in a row.  
Tiny pines growing on the hill  
and wildflowers the lowlands fill.  
It's a lovely place for idle days,  
The same old hillside where the cattle did graze.  
We've found that dreams are made from toil and sweat  
A park from 10 acres is really hard to get.  
We're proud of what we've done  
And hope you'll come and join the fun.  
From old minutes of the Aurelius Garden Club