

# Cambridge City Indiana

1836 - 2011



175th Anniversary

## Commemorative Book

2011



# In Case You Missed It

P. A. Cohen [paciascc@aol.com](mailto:paciascc@aol.com) is (was?) selling this book for \$10. She was at Soozie's and the Reunion Breakfast with the 600 she had printed and they were going like hotcakes. Patty has given me permission to reproduce a few portions of the book for your enjoyment. Believe me; I am not going to reproduce the whole book. I will pick out one more piece and quit (this is the second one). If you would like a copy (if there are any left), please contact Patty. The following piece caught me by complete surprise. I knew nothing about Will Creitz or why the park was named for him. As before, I have made some comments in brown plus I have added some pictures that are not in the book. If you have occasion to meet Patty (I can't call her just P.A.), let her know how appreciative you are of her work. Also, she didn't do it in a vacuum; I am reproducing page 3, all of these people are deserving of a big thank you for a job well done!



Back row left to right: Doug Arthur, Jill King, Richard Amick, Leah Huddleson, Betsy Davis, David Lundquist.  
Front row left to right: Amy Ervin, Patty Hersberger, P.A. (Patty) Cohen, Norma Bersch.

Following is a list of people who submitted articles or pictures, or worked with the layout and design of the book.

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## Creitz Park

*Revised 6/26/2015*

The story of Will Creitz and his namesake park is the story of a local man - husband, businessman, lover of nature, and his vision for a community park in the town in which he was raised. The first public hint of Creitz's plan for a park came in the Cambridge City Tribune of April 25, 1907: "A proposition will soon be made to the town trustees whereby Cambridge City can acquire a desirable site for a public park. This important matter has long been neglected - in fact land should have been acquired years ago when there was much of natural forest, hill and dale, springs and water courses, fitted by nature for such purposes as the wants of the human family at this time. In this instance there is everything to gain and we believe the town trustees should give the matter due consideration. For if Cambridge City needs anything, it is a public park."

Although no opposition to a park could be found in Town Board minutes, a May 16, 1907 article in the Tribune indicated

probable opposition to the plan: "The opportunity to secure a convenient public park ought not to be thrown aside. Cambridge City has neglected this important matter so long that many of the beauty spots are no longer available."

Will Creitz persisted, proposing he would "procure and convey or cause to be conveyed . . . the Bond - Frohnapfel and Cokefair land" to the town for a park. Creitz made an initial donation of \$500 toward the purchase and the Town agreed to assume a mortgage of \$775. By March of 1908, the new town park was a done deal. The Tribune announced the news to the public: "One of the best steps toward the future prosperity and happiness of the citizens of Cambridge City was taken by the town trustees Monday evening in which they accepted W. A. Creitz's proposition and purchased ground for a public park. . . The object at present is to convert it into a natural woodland. It has a number of fine trees now growing, including many young



ones that will soon be of good size. The site includes the river and dam and reaches over and unites with Vandalia. In the years to come, when the trees and lawn get in presentable shape, Cambridge City would not part with it for any consideration. No town in all the land has a tract of ground so convenient for all purposes and few better suited for a park. Hats off to Billy Creitz and all honor to the board of trustees."

\$500 is no big deal; however, the value of \$1 in 1907 was \$24.21 against 2010 dollars or \$12,104.58. \$750 was \$18,156.86 or \$30,261.44 total. Considering that this was farm land and not urban land, this was a big deal. The information was retrieved from <http://mykindred.com/cloud/TX/Document/s/dollar/>, calculated by me, and is very approximate. (\$0.153 in 2010 would have been worth \$3.704 in 1907.)



*Early photo of Creitz Park*

Creitz himself began work on the park immediately. The area was rough and full of brambles. The Tribune reported on Creitz's efforts in an article of April 23, 1908: "Mr. Creitz has done much work in planting trees and thinning out trees in the park that will show results in days to come. It is going to require time to make this available, and the

citizens of Cambridge City owe much to Mr. Creitz for his energy and interest in this important matter. No other citizen is giving so freely of his time and money to make this a joy for the generations yet to come. Let us all lend a hand." Creitz planted as many as 388 trees in the years 1908 and 1909.

This is something that we should have been taught as youngsters. Will Creitz was an extremely important man in the Cambridge City history. Today, I am keenly interested in history. While in school, I probably would not have listened but it should have been presented anyway.



*Early Creitz Park photo with young trees*

What happened to the \$775 mortgage? Apparently it went unpaid. Town Board minutes of February 6, 1914 indicated that an anonymous donor gave the \$775, through Mr. Creitz, to the Town Board in payment for the mortgage. The minutes read, "President Mosbaugh tendered to the town the sum of \$775 which he received through Mr. W. A. Creitz for an unknown donor to pay the indebtedness created by the original purchase of the 23 acres of park ground. Mr. Gray made motion that the Board accept for the town the very generous donation and that the clerk give

proper receipt for same . . . Mr. Anstill made motion that the Board tender through Mr. Creitz to the unknown donor its thanks..." The anonymous donor was none other than Will Creitz himself: A Cambridge City Tribune article of April 29, 1909 reported on the first month's progress: "Persons who have had interest enough to visit the park the past few pretty days are much taken with the change that Mr. Creitz has wrought out of the tangled wildwood. The brush has been cleaned out and raked into low swales or else burned. The best trees have been permitted to stand . . . They comprise many native varieties and, in addition to those planted on the east side of the river, will in time make a pretty forest. Go see the park any time and particularly when the 'green gits back in the trees.'"

The Tribune frequently ran articles reporting on progress and attempted to persuade townspeople to contribute to the park efforts. One of the first articles referred to Creitz's monetary donation toward the park purchase: "Said one of the best citizens of Cambridge City, last Monday, 'I want a tree planted in the park each for myself, my wife, and my father and my mother. If one man has faith enough in its future to put up \$500 for the benefit of the town, I can certainly afford to give one dollar.'" Another article of encouragement appeared in the Tribune April 15, 1909: "Friday April 30 has been designated by Gov. Marshall as Arbor Day in Indiana and it is hoped that every citizen of Cambridge City will take this one day and furnish a tree for the park." More fervent pleading for the park appeared November 11, 1909: "Have you not planted a tree in the park? Are you

not interested in having a beautiful natural grove of trees at your door - not further away than your children? Twenty years will give to Cambridge City the most perfect collection of native forest trees in the State, if the present system is carried forward." Numerous notations of tree plantings by citizens and groups appear in the Tribune in the succeeding years, including the planting of trees in 1919 to honor the "Jackson township boys who made the supreme sacrifice in the world war." Those soldiers were Leroy Trout, James R. Sherwood, Luther DeBruler, Hugh W. Personette, Lawrence Bertsch, Frederick Sharpe, Daniel O'Connell Kelley, and Lawrence Shafler.



*Early Creitz Park photo*

The Tribune also reported of setbacks and vandalism in the park, as in an article of June 28, 1908: "Boys who use the river in the park grounds for bathing must conduct themselves in an orderly and honorable manner, or Supt. Creitz will exclude them from the grounds. Several fine trees have recently been killed or badly injured by boys who go there to bathe. This will not be tolerated and Mr. Creitz says that if any tree or property is disturbed in the future they will be kept out of the park." The Tribune of February 25, 1909 noted more setbacks:

"Some people have taken the liberty to drive into the park on both sides of the river and have not cared where they went. Several trees planted last summer were run over and badly injured. Mr. Creitz will catch some fellow in the act one of these days and let him wrestle with the law. Boys have cut off the tags on all the trees and for this they will be punished if it is possible to learn who they are."

The following photograph is in the new library close to the history room in the hallway across from the restrooms.



*William A Creitz "Uncle Will".*

Many years passed and Creitz's work continued with little hype until 1925, when the park was given an official name by the Town Council. The name was first proposed in a Cambridge City Tribune article of April 30, 1925: "The man who had a vision some years ago, put forth his efforts to plant acres of trees, spent his evenings and early mornings working to bring to life the real

picture he had seen. No one has spent one twentieth of his spare time on this ground that this one has, and if this man would come out and tell what he really did, we would learn that he paid for it and gave it to the community. Why not call it 'Creitz Park?'"

The moniker was announced publicly in the May 7, 1925 issue of the Tribune: "By action of the Town Council the public park has been deemed of proper age to acquire a name and, by legal process has been given such a title. You are privileged to speak of it as 'Creitz Park', named in honor of the man who, by his untiring and intelligent effort, made it possible for the citizens to have a beauty spot wherein they can meet for mutual and friendly benefit of undisturbed pleasure, where children can romp and play on green sward unafraid, flat dwellers can find breathing space and all within walking distance. The Legion boys are interested and are working industriously to effect betterment. Churches, lodges, civic bodies are invited to cooperate and if a united effort is made it can be put across. Business and professional men should be interested enough to furnish a substantial bench carrying their name and business. These benches are a very necessary adjunct to the park, where the old people may sit and recount the old times when everybody went to the post office and all drank from the same cup at the town pump and when the hitch rack was the main support of the town 'He Gossips'; Where 'he' can hold 'her' hand and whisper the old, old story. Where all can enjoy an hour of good clean breathing, as Jim Riley says, 'Out where nature is.' Bird lovers can find plenty of specimens to interest them, fishermen can



bait a hook, and wet a line and let all the big ones get away, and those who wish can take a plunge in the glassy waters of the White River. Let's get together and make a place where Cambridge City can point with pride, and future generations can be sheltered and shaded beneath its beautiful forest trees, planted and nurtured by the man whose name it bears **CREITZ PARK.**"

FORMAL OPENING  
-OF-  
**CREITZ PARK**

**JULY** **4th**

The citizens of this entire community are cordially invited and urged to participate. Everything Free!

**BAND CONCERTS**  
Afternoon and evening. Also short talks and vocal numbers on the afternoon program.

**Opening of the Public Swimming Pool**

**IMPORTANT:** This park belongs to the citizens of this community for their enjoyment. Will you be one who will come with your family?

**BRING YOUR SUPPER AND FIRE WORKS**  
And help make this event a success.  
Program Starts at 4.00 and 8.00 p. m.

*Creitz Park Grand Opening advertised in the Tribune*

A formal opening for newly named Creitz Park was planned for July 4, 1925. With the date approaching, work progressed at a fever pitch. Electric lights were installed, flower gardens were planted, a well was dug to supply drinking water, and dozens of tables and benches were added. In anticipation of the opening, the June 25th Tribune issue observed, "What a fine place this will be for this community to get acquainted. The fact that we find fault with people is that we are not acquainted with them."

Also discussed in the same Tribune edition was the construction of a "swimming pool" in the park, created by damming the river: "The American Legion boys here are behind the movement for a swimming pool in the park. The river bed will be cleaned and deepened. The East side of the pool will have a sand beach, and on the West side there will be steps leading down to the water. Two bath houses will be constructed." The pool, 100 feet long and 40 feet wide, was positioned at the approximate location of the swinging bridge. The pool debuted July 4, 1925 at the formal opening of the park. An article of July 30th proclaimed, "There is one thing that is most satisfactory to the swimmers who indulge in bathing at the Creitz Park pool. It is the all important fact that the water is pure, from the fact that the water in the stream is very largely fed by springs. The water has been tested and pronounced absolutely free from any condition of pollution."

I swam in that river and know that the previous statement was not true . . . at least when I was in it. Nevertheless, many of us swam in the waters of the West Fork of the Whitewater River. Another interesting note, the creek that runs by the park was always called 'Poop Creek' because of all of the outhouses that backed up to it; the actual name of the creek is Creitz Creek.

A brief report on the formal park opening appeared in the Tribune: "Quite a number from here attended the dedication exercised in Creitz Park in Cambridge City Saturday afternoon and evening when Independence Day was observed with a

most impressive service. Rev. F. C. McCormick gave a short but splendid address, and Mrs. Ruth Huddleston appeared on the program with readings. The other numbers were provided by Cambridge City citizens with a great many from here playing in the band."

In the weeks and months following the grand opening, the pages of the local paper were filled with front page ads boasting of huge picnics and celebrations to be held in the park, and smaller personal notes of parties and reunions which utilized the park's facilities. One week after the grand opening, the front page of the Cambridge City Tribune heralded welcome to two large gatherings which were to occur in Creitz Park The Masonic lodges of Wayne County annual picnic with an estimated 4000 persons in attendance, and the Hawthorn Odd Fellows lodge of Cincinnati, congregating for "a day's visit in a real park." The Tribune declared a gracious greeting to both groups by offering, "The Park is yours."

Improvements and additions to the park continued. Modern playground equipment was added. In 1947 a new scout cabin was constructed by the local Kiwanis group. The cabin was dedicated in 1947 at a ceremony featuring a former governor - Governor Henry Schricker, a 35 year veteran of scouting. After his address, the Governor pinned advancement awards on scouts Phillip Ohmit, Edwin Longnecker, Billy Jo Fellingner, Tom Clark, Phillip Conyers, Loring McCullough, Charles King, Gene Miller, Frances Bliss, Gerald Matthies, James Brower, and Arvin Lamberson.



*Franklin Scott, Governor Schricker, Lorin McCullough, Gene Miller, Phil Ohmit, Eddie Longnecker, Billy Jo Fellingner*

Note that there is a missing name in the caption. If anyone knows which boy is misidentified or the missing name, I will be happy to correct the caption.

A roller skating rink was constructed in 1948. According to a local newspaper article of July 8, 1948, the rink was the brainchild of Ed and Al Fellingner and Carl Worl. The trio also financed the project. The 60 x 150 ft. rink was constructed so it could be flooded in the winter for ice skating. The rink was lighted for nighttime skating and had a concession stand operated by members of the Psi Iota Xi sorority.

I lived close enough to listen to the music when going to bed in the summer. With the windows open, I listened to the strains of "Lipstick on Your Collar", "To Know Him, Is To Love Him", "Wear My Ring Around Your Neck", "Magic Moments", etc.

In 1959, 7 ½ additional acres were purchased for the park by the local Chamber of Commerce. Soon after, four



anonymous citizens purchased four acres of the former Whitewater Canal bed and this acreage was added to the park, bringing the total to 37 ½ acres.

Horse shows were held in the early days of Creitz Park under the shade of the forest of trees Will Creitz had planted. The Creitz Park horse arena was constructed in 1975 by the Rough Riders 4-H club, made possible by the generous donations of several interested citizens.

Park supporter and nature lover Steve Lemley planted two areas of new trees in the park in the 1980's and early 1990's which serve as a natural habitat for birds and wildlife. In the 1990's, a third baseball diamond was added, along with a new concession stand/restroom facility, major playground improvements, resurfacing of the basketball court, and a new picnic shelter.

The improvements to park facilities and playgrounds have continued in the twenty-first century. Residents have been encouraged to plant trees in the park to preserve the beautiful Creitz Park forest for the next century.

How lucky the Western Wayne community is to have a thirty-seven acre park crowned with hundred-year-old trees and equipped with play-grounds, ball diamonds, a basketball court, volleyball court, picnic shelter houses, a horse arena, a natural amphitheater, a river and creek, and the Swinging Bridge! Countless families and organizations have sponsored events in Creitz Park over the last hundred years: family and school reunions, picnics, baby

and wedding showers, beauty pageants, scores of horse shows, thousands of baseball and softball games, horseshoe tournaments, car shows, Easter egg hunts, club meetings, dinner parties, birthday parties, scouting events, band and orchestra concerts, church services, Sunday schools, movies, bible schools, circuses, and much more. Children have collected leaves from the trees, gathered buckeyes and acorns, waded and splashed in the creek, swum in the river, bounced across the swinging bridge, and spent many joyful hours on the playground. And what would the 4th of July be without Creitz Park? There surely are few - if any in the area whose lives have not been touched and enriched by Will Creitz's generous gift to the community.



*The Swinging Bridge*

The words of the Cambridge City Poet, J. T. Reese,  
speak best of Will Creitz when he said -

*Philanthropist - big hearted soul —  
just call him What you may,*

*The memory of such a man  
will never fade away.*

*He will not need a marble shaft  
to tell his worth or fame,*

*Each growing tree in Creitz's Park  
will speak aloud his name.*



*The skating rink is gone but the memories  
remain*



*The Swinging Bridge is in the background*

There was never a bridge across this portion  
of Creitz "Poop" Creek and it remains as you  
see it but it is closed off with a gate.