

**A Look at the Founding Fathers of Kane County's Fox River Trail  
as We Know It Today**

**By Heather Fiala, Yorkville**

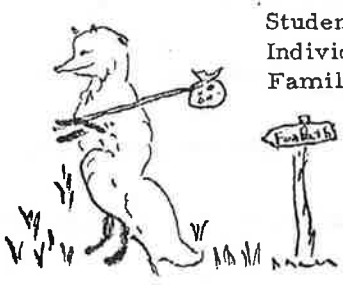
***"The Fox Path, a meadow-woods trail, will bring the beauty and solitude of nature  
to persons who walk or bike in the open space along the Fox River."***

***(Fox Path Association, 1970)***

Today, Kane County's Fox River Trail has become a gift that has benefited hundreds of thousands of people through the years and has been replicated throughout our nation.

It all began in 1969 when John K. Langum requited two friends, Richard K. Woodruff and Gayl Edwards, to begin planning a public trail. Leroy Fehl joined the trio soon-thereafter and became the board's construction "Trail Boss." In 1970 the dream became a reality with the acquisition of the abandoned Northwestern Railroad right-of-way through Campbell Woods in Elgin.

In this effort towards preserving and enjoying our natural environment we need substantial membership support. Our membership categories are:



Student	\$1.00
Individual	\$2.00
Family	\$3.00

Organization	\$25.00
Contributing	\$25.00 and up

The Fox Path Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 165  
Algonquin, Illinois 60120

Incorporated on March 13, 1970, The Fox Path Association received permission from the Chicago and Northwestern Railway to use its abandoned right-of-way along the east bank of the Fox River to build a 10-mile-long public trail between Elgin and

Algonquin. They purchased liability insurance and also received permission from the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation and many other property owners along the way to use their undeveloped lands. They called it "Fox Path." It was the Fox Path's success in recruiting hundreds of volunteers to build the trail's first 10-mile leg, coupled with its plan to begin construction on a 5-mile extension using the old third-rail right-of-way between Elgin and Aurora, that inspired the Kane County Forest Preserve Commission to adopt the project and put its considerable resources behind what has become Kane County's 39-mile Fox River Trail.

In November 1971, Phil Elfstrom, the Commissions' future president and the trail's future champion, heard John Langum speak about land-use planning and the trail project at a conference sponsored by the Defenders of the Fox River, titled "The Fox River and Its People". John's presentation began with a challenge: "...we are all gathered together in a common bond and common inspiration of wanting to restore and preserve the wondrous natural beauty of our Fox River and the area about it. We are here because we are concerned and interested in this matter. The real question is: What are we going to do about it?"

John K. Langum was born in 1913 in Montana. He grew up to be a distinguished economist and a devoted environmentalist. As a child, John adored nature and as an adult, he gave his time freely to all the communities he lived in and the people he met. John graduated from high school at the age of 15 and earned a PhD in economics from the University of Minnesota. In the 1930's he held teaching positions at the University of California, Northwestern University in Chicago, and the University of Chicago. In 1941 he became Vice President at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, where he served

for ten years and later became a businessperson with an office on La Salle Street in Chicago, and served as chairman on the boards of several mutual fund corporations. In addition to John's collegiate and corporate jobs, he also served as president of the Lake Michigan Federation, as a director of Citizens for a Better Environment, as a trustee of the Illinois Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. He was also a life member of The Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and The Nature Conservancy. He was also a founder of the Friends of the Fox River.

John's hobby was the study of land-use planning, and he was a great student. Through his personal research he learned that preserving abandoned railroad land along public waterways would help restore environmental quality and community health, and would best serve watershed communities as public nature trails.

John passed away in 1998 at the age of 84. He is considered the "father" of Kane County's Fox River Trail. His vision inspired many other communities along the river, throughout the Fox River watershed, and our nation to build public trails to help safeguard nature and bring enjoyment to their residents.

