

LAMPLIGHTER SUBDIVISION

Submitted by Gail Ann Briggs, June, 2007



The development of a seventy-eight acre tract of farm ground immediately south of, and bordering on, the village limits of Towanda was begun in 1968 with 37 building lots. The first addition with another 61 building lots was platted in 1971. There are a total of 98 building lots, a tennis court lot and park site with a pond for fishing and swimming. The location, about six miles north and east of Normal and Bloomington, was ideal for those families desiring small community living but close to the shopping and services that Bloomington and Normal offered. By 1977 construction had begun on all but a few lots.

Developer Larry Bielfeldt (Delane, Olive) and family names of six of the other investors are found on the street signs: Bill Hunt (Hunt), Bill Koons (Miriam), Eugene Schaab (Eugene), and Pearl Hayes (Pearl). The property was purchased from Russell (Fincham). The other investor was Clifford Cox. The origin of the name of 'Lamplighter' has not been learned.

Delane Avenue was designed to be the single entrance to the subdivision off the north-south County Road 29 (also identified as 1900 East Road and Towanda-Barnes Road). The original plat allows for the first two north-south streets, Olive and Hunt, to be extended to yet undeveloped property both north and south of the subdivision. Delane intersects the first two streets near the south edge of the subdivision.

The first addition plat provided circle streets both north (Fincham) and south (Miriam) of Delane which comes to a 'T' (Eugene) at the east end of the subdivision. Eugene also allows for extension to undeveloped property north and south of Lamplighter. It intersects a street at the north end (Pearl) that runs west into a circle. Delane can also be extended to undeveloped property to the east.

Building lots are between ½ and 1½ acres, and cost between \$3,000 and \$7,500 in the late 1960's and 1970's. The lots are primarily rectangular except those bordering the narrow Money Creek that ambles through the east end of the subdivision. The subdivision is eight lots wide north to south. All streets in the subdivision are Towanda Township roadways and as such are maintained, including snow removal, by the Township. Wells provide water for between five and eight lots with each group of homeowners responsible for maintaining and repairing them. Each residence has its own septic system.

The subdivision boasts a 2½ acre park site with retention pond, and fenced lot with three asphalt paved tennis courts and basketball area. The recreation venues set the stage for the 1972 organization, under the Corporation Act of the State of Illinois, of the Lamplighter Recreation Association with its purposes 'to promote, engage, construct, and organize and operate recreational facilities' and 'provide reasonable and necessary lighting at the entrance'.

The association, governed by a nine-person board of directors, has voluntary membership with annual dues ranging from \$15 in 1972 to the current \$80 in 2007. The voluntary nature of the subdivision's organization has made the upkeep of the recreational facilities difficult and the political influence minimal. Attempts to change to a mandatory homeowners association have met with significant resistance.

Despite the voluntary membership of generally about 85% of the homeowners, the association's properties have been well maintained. The association provides a lighted entrance sign that welcomes residents and their guests and attractive street signs to provide directions. The tennis courts have been renovated twice and the pond and Money Creek have been dredged. A pavilion provides a meeting place at the park, where playground equipment, park benches and grill allow families a place to relax and picnic when they come to swim, fish or ice skate; or watch the birds and enjoy the landscape.

The pond provides water when needed for the Towanda fire department and the village includes Lamplighter in its contracts for trash hauling. Subdivision residents were instrumental in organizing the Towanda Junior Woman's Club, Lions Club, the Towanda Area Historical Society, and semi-annual garage sales. They serve on the volunteer fire department and in scouting, 4-H, and school organization leadership positions; in planning the annual 4th of July Celebration; and other village and area on-going and special committees.

The original owners who resided in the subdivision prior to 1977 and are continuing to live in Lamplighter in 2007 include: Bob and Gail Ann Briggs, Leslie Clark, Roland and Bernice Gilchrist, Dan and Robin Gould, Dick Hagstrom, Merle and Grace Jackson, Bill and Sandy Keefe, Steve and Ruth Kurtenbach, Virginia Lowery, Bob Malin, Duane and Marilyn Marquis, Rod and Sharon Parker, Denny and Bonnie Redick, Ken and Beryl Risen, Bill and Marty Schoen, Dick and Jan Schulte, Steve Shipley, Greg Strien, and Duane and Sue Sutter.

Other current and former residents who have taken an active role in our community include: Glenn and Dawn Block, Sam and Kay Foster, Mark and Cindy Garretson, Dan and Jamie Jackson, Dick and Barb Jurgens, Dennis and Wilburta Sutter Kirby, Jim and Sandy Krumtinger, Jerry and Clare Lehan, Larry Lowery, Larry and Carol Meier, Dale and Sherry Messer, Rick and Carol Myers, Pat and Paul Pulokas, Larry and Anita Sands, Susie Shipley, and Joe and Maxine Stephens.

In the early years of the subdivision a significant number of the 150-200 students in Towanda Elementary School (part of the McLean County Unit District No. 5) lived in Lamplighter. As the years passed, the children grew older and the complexion of the community changed. But now, as residents move on, the subdivision has been experiencing a renewal. Young families are purchasing homes and the laughter of children can once again be heard on summer evenings as Lamplighter Subdivision continues its evolution in the history of the area.

