

Following Governor Lowden's death in 1943, the Legislature appropriated \$25,000 toward the cost of a memorial. Anticipating the adoption of the park idea as a memorial, the citizens of Oregon and vicinity raised an additional \$13,000 by public subscription and the Division of Parks and Memorials made an allotment of \$12,000 toward the park. Authorized by the Sixty-third General Assembly as a memorial, the 247 acres became a park in 1945.

As a state park the area has acquired roads, trails, picnic, camping and recreational areas. Much work has been done by the young men of the State Youth Commission Forestry Camp which is housed in the remodeled Heckman House. The natural wonders and beauty of the park are easy of access by good foot trails. Three of the trails are named Black Hawk, Taft and Heckman. As one of the most beautiful sites along the Rock River, the park is growing in popularity.

In August 1951 an area of 66 acres, which was the site of the artists' colony, was transferred to Northern Illinois University of DeKalb which is using the location as a year around field campus for its natural science courses in an outdoor education program for teachers.

The university has repaired a number of buildings, principally the camp house now known as Poley Hall, the Taft House which had been the Taft residence and the Charles Francis Browne House which is now a dormitory. Much of the material for this work came from tearing down unusable houses.



The Taft House Is the Campus Library

Write to the Division of Parks and Memorials, 100 State Office Building, Springfield, for further information concerning Illinois Parks and Memorials.

Seventy-five State Parks and Memorials are of easy access from every part of the State. Lodges and cabins are an important feature of Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, White Pines Forest and Giant City State Parks. Reservations should be made with lodge managers.

Issued by

STATE OF ILLINOIS

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The Forestry Camp Uses the Heckman Home



Lovely Rock River Valley Seen from Statue



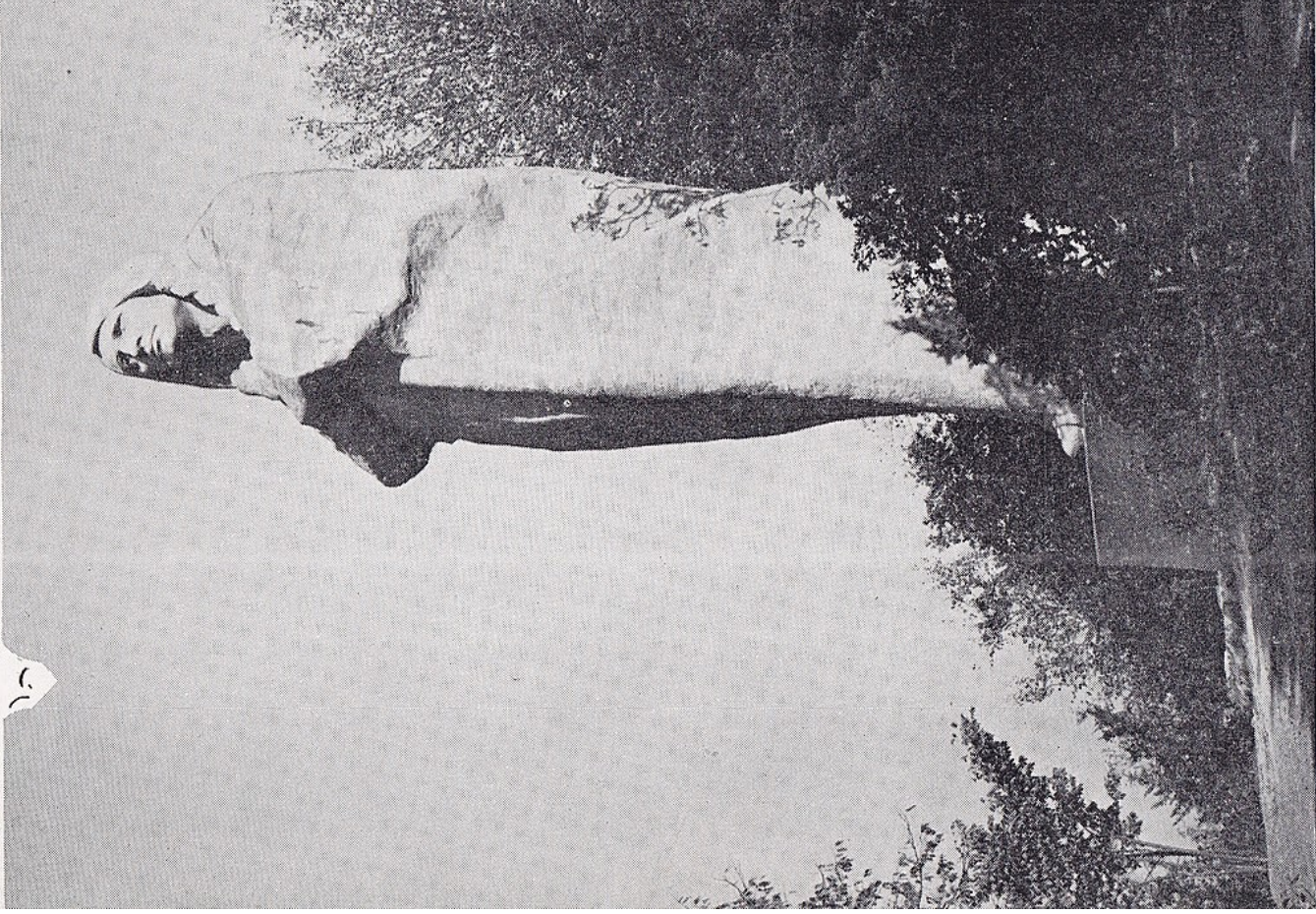
LOWDEN MEMORIAL STATE PARK



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Lowden Memorial State Park on the Rock River north of Oregon and Route 64 is not only a memorial to the World War I governor of Illinois, but to Wallace Heckman, who owned this area and made possible the famous artist colony located here, to Lorado Taft and the other outstanding members of the colony, and finally the Indian whose memory is perpetuated in Taft's "Black Hawk" statue.

The park area was purchased in 1898 by Wallace Heckman, who was a distinguished Chicago attorney and for many years business manager of the University of Chicago. As fellow students at Hillsdale College in Southern Michigan, Mr. and Mrs. Heckman developed a great love of the out-of-doors and for those who through their artistry were able to pass on this appreciation of beauty to others.

The Heckmans, as patrons of the arts, invited a group of Chicago artists to use the site and assisted in providing a number of cabins. The colony was called the "Eagle's Nest" from a tall, gaunt dead cedar tree clinging to the high river bank upon which the eagles once nested. The tree, with its bare outstretched limbs, was the inspiration which prompted Margaret Fuller, well known poet of the Concord Group, to write her famous poem, "Ganymede to His Eagle."

The artists' colony grew in popularity and was in existence nearly 50 years. Among the members of the original group were Artists Ralph Clarkson, Charles Francis Browne and Oliver Dennet Grover; Writers Hamlin Garland, Henry B. Fuller and Horace Spencer Fiske; Architects Irving K. and Allen B. Pond; Sculptors Lorado



Remains of "The Eagle's Nest" Tree

Taft and Nellie Walker; Organist Clarence Dickinson and Secretary of the University of Chicago, James Spencer Dickerson.

Lorado Taft was the moving spirit behind the colony, and although he died in 1936, the colony flourished until 1942 when the last of the artists and their families left.

The outstanding feature of the park is the gigantic monolithic reinforced concrete idealized figure of an American Indian standing several hundred feet above the gently flowing Rock River.

Frank O. Lowden presided at the ceremonies dedicating the figure on July 1, 1911. At this time Mr. Taft told how the figure came into being. "It happened in this way: Every evening as these shadows turn blue we walk here on the bluff. We have always been very faithful in going to Mr. Heckman's house several times a day, paying gayly our tribute of homage and affection, and we have always stopped at this point to rest and enjoy the view. As we stand here we involuntarily fold our arms and the pose of that of my Indian—restful, reverent. It came over me that generations of men have done the same thing right here. And so the figure grew out of the attitude, as we stood and looked on these beautiful scenes.

"About four years ago I saw some men erecting a reinforced concrete chimney at the Art Institute, and the thought came to me, as I watched them, that by using a plaster mold instead of the cylindrical forms, I could make a 'reinforced concrete' Indian.

"I think I was a little foolhardy or I never should have begun it, and I am sure I never could have carried it

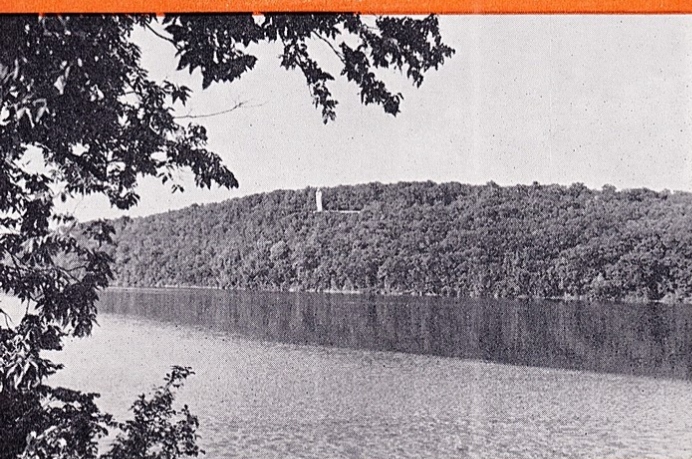
through alone. Good fortune sent to my aid John G. Prasuhn, a young sculptor of the Chicago Art Institute, and who knew all about cement. He became interested in my project and undertook the enlargement and the cement work. Of the latter I knew nothing and depended absolutely upon him. Thus my share in the work was practically limited to the six-foot model. Mr. Prasuhn occupied himself with the details, and ever since our Colossus was started has put in most of his time here, often working nights as well as days. . . . The statue is a memorial to Mr. Prasuhn, as well as to the Indian."

The statue is 43 feet and four inches high resting on a base approximately six feet high. Reinforced with iron rods, the statue is hollow and varies in thickness from eight inches to three feet. The interior is accessible through a locked door in the base. The out-weathering surface is three inches thick and is composed of cement, pink granite chips and screenings poured simultaneously with the cement.

Assistance in material and labor came from the Portland Cement Association, cement was given by the Universal Atlas Company and Governor Lowden is believed to have given \$5,000 towards the cost. The figure is reputed to be the second largest concrete monolithic statue in the world (the largest is in South America). The weight of the statue is estimated to be 100 tons.

The public, with a sure sense of fitness, gave the figure the name "Black Hawk." Following the war named after him, Black Hawk said: "Rock River was a beautiful country. I liked my towns, my corn-fields, and the home of my people. I fought for it—it is now yours—keep it, as we did."

The Statue Looms Large from Route 2



A Delightfully Pleasant Park Road

