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*Containing the History of Bradford,
Its People and Surrounding Area
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**Amaquonsippi****Trail Asset to Community**

Boy Scout Troop 78 and their leaders, Robert Lee and Don Dennison, have hiked many different trails in many different states.  With this hiking experience, the idea was born to start a trail in Bradford.  With this area so rich in Indian history, that theme was decided upon for the trail.  After much thought and research and talks with the various land owners, the trail was organized and named Amaquonsippi, which in the Algonquin tongue means "Spoon River".

The trail was officially opened on Friday evening, June 3, 1961, with 213 hikers taking the trail on Saturday and 18 on Sunday.  The opening was marked with an impressive campfire program in the William Tumbleson timber, west of Bradford.  Three Indians in the persons of John Whitney, of Galva, Mike Barnes and Bruce Bennison ignited the fire from torches.

Ray Nissen, scoutmaster of Troop 146, West Jersey, was the master of ceremonies for the evening.  Bob Lee, Bradford scoutmaster, gave the welcome address.  Guest speaker for the occasion was Kenny Davidson, state representative, of Kewanee.  Stated Davidson, "The Amanquonsippi Trail is something for the community and Bradford should well be proud."

When the trail was organized, it was thought that perhaps 500 hikers a year might make the trail.  Soon more and more requests for information were received and more and more reservations came in.  The trail committee soon found it necessary to purchase camping area.  What little profit realized from the hikers was in turn used to purchase more medals and patches.

The trail committee had their eyes on a piece of timber land, which they felt, when cleared would be an ideal spot.  Then the idea was hit upon to not only make this a Scout camp, but a public picnic area and rest park as well.  Certificates were sold for $25.00 each and the "shareholders", so to speak, were generous citizens of the communtiy.  Soon enough money was obtained to purchase the land, thru the generosity of these public minded citizens.  Immediately the land was started to be cleared and through the thoughtfulness of several men donating bull dozing equipment, the clearing was considerably speeded up.

The first improvement built was the latrine.  The scoutmaster, also being a carpenter, donated his labor for that and the next improvement, the Adirondack cabins.  Several boys of the troop and Assistant Scoutmaster Dennison aided in many ways.  The next improvement was the addition of the well.  Water was finally obtained at a depth of 110 feet.  Jerry Wakefield, of Kewanee, sunk the well. Last summer, the picnic shelter was erected.  Art Brazee contracted the work.  Building this shelter was quite a feat for the heavy beams were very hard to manage and the aid of heavy machinery had to be solicited.  Several picnic tables have been built which added to the convenience.  All improvements have been paid for from the trail fund, and all proceeds go back into the fund to be used for the improvements and upkeep of the trail.

Soon the Amaquonsippi Trail found themselves ranking 10th in the nation, according to number of hikers, and last year, moved from 10th to 7th.  There have been hikers from Pennsylvania, California, Missouri, Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa, and Nebraska, as well as the thousands from Illinois.  There is no camping fee for the campers and no trail fee.  If the hiker desires the medal and patch, they may be purchased for $3.00.  Neckerchiefs, slides and jacket patches may also be purchased.  A camp batch is given free to each hiker who purchases the medal and patch who follows the camping rules of the camp.

Each unit arriving is met by the Scoutmaster or assistant.  This entails nearly every weekend. Units begin arriving on Friday evening as early as seven o'clock and others get there about 12:30 a.m.  Each unit is given an orientation before beginning the trail.  Since most of the units leave at or before 6 o'clock, this means getting up on Saturday mornings before that time to get to the trail camp.  Then if hikers arrive Saturday evening to hike Sunday, the whole procedure is gone through again.

There have been as many as five hundred hikers in a weekend and sometimes a bit of a problem arises as to where to put everyone.  Several of the businessmen have stated that the trail has increased their business and the Scouts and their leaders are happy to have accommodations so close to camp.  Nearly everyone hiking enjoys the trail tremendously and plans to return in the future.

When it was first said that perhaps 500 hikers a year would hike the trail, little did anyone realize that 500 hikers would visit in one weekend, but then "Big oaks from little acorns grow."  The success of the trail however can be credited to many people.  First of all, the landowners whose private property the trail goes, secondly, to all those who helped in any way, monetary or labor, thirdly to the boys who work untiringly at maintaining the trail and lastly to all the citizens of the Bradford area who offer a hand of friendship to all visiting hikers.