

Arbor Lake To Live Again?

Next week the Grinnell City Council will open bids that have been let for cleaning out Arbor Lake. Apparently the immediate future of Arbor Lake depends on the size of those bids. A specific amount of money has been appropriated for the removal of silt and building of a dam and to be accepted, the bids must be under that amount.

The Arbor Lake project was begun in 1902 when the Grinnell

Soft Water Co. contracted with Isham Randolph, consulting engineer on the Panama Canal and Chief Engineer of the Chicago drainage canal, for designing the Arbor Lake storage reservoir.

The lake thus formed covered approximately 15 acres and was 20 feet deep in some areas. A year later, directors of the Grinnell Outing Club received permission to erect a clubhouse for boating

and special purposes. Hundreds of young trees were set out by public-spirited citizens. Since the trees were set out on Arbor Day, the lake was named Arbor Lake.

Between 1902 and 1920, continuous improvements were made on the lake and recreation area. The Grinnell Commercial Club constructed a new bath house. Grinnell citizens helped construct a bandstand, playground equipment, picnic benches and tables. The lake was stocked with fish, food was supplied and aquatic plants were set out for spawning beds. The lake was drained and cleaned and the moss dredged out. Sand was hauled in for a sand beach.

It was suggested in 1923 that the City of Grinnell purchase the lake property for the Grinnell Water Co., but this did not come about until 1964 when the lake was almost completely drained and devoid of any aquatic life. In the thirties a dance pavillion and roller skating rink were built for Arbor Lake. The park flourished until 1949 when

swimming was banned because of contamination of the water. In 1950 a tank car, full of ammonia burst and the contents escaped into one of the streams feeding the lake, causing the death of most of the aquatic life. From this time on the area declined into the present state of neglect.

In 1969, the Poweshiek County Board of Conservation took a ten-year lease of the Arbor Lake property surrounding the lake, but not the lake itself. In the same agreement, the city contracted to remove the accumulated debris and silt from the lake bed and initiate a continuing program of algae control in order to maintain high water quality for recreational use. That was five years ago.

Meanwhile, the Conservation Commission has been trying to keep the land from becoming completely overrun with the help of organizations such as the Boy Scouts.

Saturday, April 27, Pack 313 of the Grinnell Boy Scouts led by Scout Master Bill Tish spent the afternoon cleaning up the

brush, litter and dead logs at Arbor Lake. The Scouts are anxious for the lake to be restored. Boy Scouts participating on Saturday were Gary Latcham, Jim Hidlebaugh, Brad Alderson, Jeff Hoogenson, Pete Annin, Jim Luth, Dan Luth, Bill Tish, Tom Correll, Larry Burnell, Dwight Dufoe, Doug Dufoe and Dan Clayton. Greg Griewe from Pack 381 also took part. Any organization that would like to help make Arbor Lake a recreation-nature area should contact Roger Reed, Executive Officer of the Poweshiek County Conservation Commission in Montezuma.

If Arbor Lake is rejuvenated, it would provide inexpensive recreation for town within a forty mile radius of Grinnell. It would be a simple, nature park with nature trails, bike trails, swimming, canoeing, fishing and picnicing. One main pavillion is being planned.

The fair weather popularity of Rock Creek, Nyanza and all of the Grinnell-area recreation regions attest to the popularity that Arbor Lake would enjoy if it were allowed to live again.



The dried up lake bed of Arbor Lake is visible in the background of this picture. In the foreground, Scouts from Pack 313 help clean up some of the debris on the land surrounding Arbor Lake.



Two Pack 313 Scouts take on the task of moving some of the larger logs. Below is a map of what the Poweshiek County Con-

servation Commission hopes will become Arbor Lake. Notice the nature trails, pavillion and parking areas.

1974, 1977