

place the landscaping low and flat to capture the essence of Lake Michigan and also to be reminiscent of the Illinois prairies. From Simonds Avenue on the west, eastward to the Lake, was to be the prairie section, the entire area surrounded by perimeter plantings, many of which were chosen to be the same as found at Illinois Beach State Park in Lake County. On the hill, the site of the present Meadow, he planned to place a large Council Ring, similar to those favored by Jensen, but it was never constructed. The Caldwell Plan was never fully implemented. He was also involved in the Lily Pool project at the north end of the Lincoln Park Zoo, an area known to generations of birders as The Zoo Rookery. Shortly following completion of these projects, Caldwell took a job as Professor of Landscape Architecture at Illinois Institute of Technology, a position he held until his death in 1999.

The Cold War: Gun Sites and Missile Sites

Montrose Point became an immediate success with millions of late Depression and WW II Chicagoans and their guests. The first contact birders found was Montrose Harbor, which became a favorite spot for rare ducks and gulls, especially the winter birds. Vegetation was still sparse on the Point, and most of the area was mowed repeatedly for picnic use. Some of the debris from the project became the underpinning for Cricket Hill, which was an anomaly to those who favored the Caldwell Plan. At this time, parks nationwide were being increasingly utilized for recreation and team sports. Landscaping in those park areas became unimportant.

By 1950 it had become obvious that the U.S. would have problems with the Soviet Union, and the wartime search for German submarines turned to a Cold War search for Russian aircraft. Under the terms of the National Security Act a new state of war-readiness began to appear. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in 1949, the Russians staged their first atomic bomb explosions the same time and, a year later, the Korean War began.

Congress appropriated money to ring large American cities with military defense systems, and the civilian population began building atomic shelters. Schools ran mock-atom-bombing exercises, where students lay on the floor under their desks. The first military base designed to protect large American cities was located in Maryland in 1953 centered on Washington. New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles soon became incorporated into that system. In 1955, the U.S. Army leased lakefront land in Chicago at Wolf Lake, Jackson Park, and Montrose Point-Belmont for the development of military defense sites. The first deployment consisted of anti-aircraft batteries, where

soldiers searched the sky for incoming Russian aircraft. There were a number of guns on Montrose Point, and also on top of some of the higher buildings in Hyde Park.

The Montrose area was gradually encircled by a cyclone fence. Some 300 Army men were assigned, and barracks, mess halls, and supporting facilities were installed. Sentries and canine patrol guarded the areas. Col. Robert McCormick of the Chicago Tribune opposed leasing of park land to the Army and referred to these facilities as military slums. By 1956 the gun-site batteries began to be replaced by Nike Ajax missiles, and radar and control equipment began to appear at Montrose Point. The actual missiles (3) were placed in bunkers on the south peninsula of Belmont Harbor, but all control personnel and equipment were located on Montrose Point.

A 1964 aerial photograph of the site shows ... honeysuckle bushes covering about half of the barracks windows. It is this row of honeysuckle bushes that still forms the basic features of what we today call The Magic Hedge.

For over a decade, the Nike military site at Montrose remained fairly stable, allowing trees and some shrubs to develop more fully. Previously mowed areas were left unmowed. Montrose Hill, the highest point above Lake Michigan at Montrose, 24 feet, became a setting for all types of strangely shaped equipment, which today we take for granted.

The Magic Hedge Appears

By the peak of the Nike missile sites in the nation, there were 23 installations in the Chicago-northwestern Indiana area. Hoosier birders will remember the one located in Porter County near the good birding turf along the lower outwash plains of the Valparaiso Moraine. Those Chicago birders who were around then will certainly remember the installations at Skokie Lagoons, Montrose Point-Belmont, Jackson Park (occupied now by the golf driving range and Bobolink Meadow), in Burnham Park (along the lakefront between 26th and 31st streets where birders now walk), at the north end of Wolf Lake (just south of Eggers Woods), and near McGinnis Slough near Orland Park. Other sites were at Addison, Arlington Heights, near Baker's Lake at Barrington, and along the Cal-Sag Channel in Alsip.

At Montrose Point, the U.S. Army had two barracks for enlisted personnel (officers lived off-base), forming an L shape. One ran in an east-west direction