



***HARK BACK  
TO  
BARRINGTON***

*Fifty Years  
with the  
Fox River Valley Hunt*

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*written by*

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*and*

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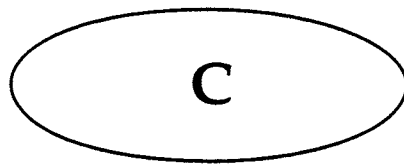
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## PREFACE

*The mask of a red fox peered out of the autumn foilage and gazed down into the valley below. There was movement between the trees and then the fox saw the spotted ponies, as three Indians rode slowly by. They were Potawatomi, Miami and Fox, all part of the Winnebago. The year was 1837 and these were some of the last of the tribes along the Fox Valley before they moved west beyond the Mississippi. White settlers were beginning to arrive.*

*One hundred years later, in 1937, the descendants of that old fox awoke early one day to hear the baying of hounds and the sound of the horn. It was the birth of the Hail Weston Hounds (later the Fox River Valley Hunt) and that's where our story begins.*

George Van Hagen

# Introduction

## 1990



**B**rown leaves rattle in the frosty crispness of the damp, December air. The sun has partially rewarmed the frozen earth, making the footing tricky for what may be one of the last hunts of the Fox River Valley's 1990 season.

Pulling into Horizon Farm for the 1:30 p.m. meet, it appears that a field of 20 or so riders have assembled. They are engaged in hearty congratulations on each other's respective grit and fortitude for appearing on such a cold, gray afternoon. Scarlet coats, usually presented against a golden backdrop of maples and oaks, now stand out vividly against the stark, December landscape. Guests, some of whom have never fox hunted before, courteously but nervously greet the Masters and staff, wondering what lies ahead.

The hounds, fit and keen, are anxious to be on their way. Gathered around the huntsman's horse, they impatiently wait for the Master's nod to the huntsman, indicating that it's finally time to move off. After what seems an interminable wait for the hounds, the huntsman finally gives that short, quick blow on the horn announcing the beginning of the hunt.

Approaching their first covert, the huntsman holds the hounds up while the whippers-in, the people selected to assist him, ride forward to appointed positions of observation. He casts the hounds toward the covert, and in their excitement and exuberance, they joyfully rocket forward. The huntsman groans, knowing they need more time to blow off steam before getting down to serious work. As the hounds enter this initial covert they surprise a coyote who has been sunning himself at the edge of the trees. Casually he lopes out the opposite end heading south toward Route 62, then turns west and trots across Sutton Road into a sizeable woods. A whip quickly informs the huntsman via his two-way radio.

Hounds are sensing the line out from the profusion of nature's smells, and there comes a mellow note, then another and another as the pack begins to speak. Led by the field master, the followers carefully canter along the edge of an alfalfa field to stay with hounds who are now quickening their pace. The horses are fresh, some becoming a handful while straining to be first. As the hounds stream across Sutton Road exactly where the coyote crossed and follow it into the woods, the field gallops up and jumps a chicken coop to keep up with the pack. Flying the fence, everyone lands, skidding across the road that takes them to the twisting trail crossing at Spring Creek.

Hounds are heard in the distance fairly singing to their line. The coyote heads to the marshy area, which he knows will ruin his scent and slow

the pack. As the staff and field approach this marsh, they see the last hound bolting across Route 62 heading south. Winging and singing, they are seen flying across the picked corn field of Rolling Oaks Farm.

The first of many instant decisions must be made: being unable to ride through the marsh, is it faster to get to the hounds by taking the trail off to the west, or to take the trail back east to Sutton Road? The Master makes the decision to take the road and then to gallop south across Route 62.

As the field approaches former Master Tom White's driveway, the Masters and staff see him standing there frantically pointing across the road. They pull their steaming horses up on the slippery pavement, while White relates that the pack just passed his property on the heels of a coyote and is heading to the Hennebury place. The huntsman questioningly looks to the Masters, for that's an old name which he is not familiar with. Spurring on to resume the chase, he is told that that's Rolling Oaks land, a name he knows.

Galloping through the low-lying corn fields the heavy going causes the horses to blow, preventing the riders from hearing the distant pack. They are forced to pull up and stop at a driveway to listen. The Masters are interrupted by several guests politely saying that their horses are not fit enough for this kind of day and that they intend to return to the meet. Although their courtesy is correct, at this moment listening is the utmost importance. The field by now has thinned considerably.

The huntsman's radio crackles, and a whip reports, "They're all across the road and still running." Those remaining in the field make a dash for Route 68 and head down the shoulder going west. The traffic slows and drivers gape as horses and riders make their way to the main trail that takes them to the south country. At the intersection of Penny and Healy Roads a car has stopped, and a woman is standing beside it. As the Masters and staff pull up for a breather, she tells them, "A coyote and your dogs are going through Pond Gate Farm." The huntsman excitedly asks her in which direction they're headed. "West," she replies. Once again, the checks aren't long enough and the hounds aren't slowing, so the horses are asked again to push on. The huntsman and followers now see hounds streaming west through the picked bean field of Pond Gate Farm. This field, lying on high ground with good drainage, allows easy galloping for the leg-weary horses.

As the pack speeds on, a feeling of *deja vu* comes over one of the Masters. The scene ahead has evoked shadowy recollections of the past when ancestors of this pack led the chase through these very fields.

The bean field is bordered on the west by a stout woven-wire fence, which hounds must scramble over and under to continue their pursuit to the west. As the weary group pulls up to ponder this obstacle, the hounds are gone, heading for the gravel pits off in the distance. As a hasty solution to this problem, the huntsman throws his coat over this fence for a focal point to jump. Safely over, the riders silently and thankfully recall the adage, "If you get a good horse, he will always take care of you." Clearing this fence jogs the memory. Former huntsman Arnold Towell jumped this very fence back in 1966 when his hounds were slipping away from him, too.

Can the muscles hold up under this constant galloping? Will the pack ever slow their pace? A road! Will the borium hold up on leg-weary hunters? These are some of the thoughts racing through an anxious mind.

A cement mixer grinds to a stop beside the small group that has come to a check on Penny Road near Flint Creek Farm. The driver yells out that "the dogs just went through the pits to 68." Knowing the gravel pits were impossible to get through on horses, the three remaining riders and the huntsman were compelled to race back along Bateman Road to beat the pack to Route 68. Rounding the corner of the two roads, the group sees that the contest is lost and the pack is safely across the highway. Again, the followers must gallop up the shoulder to the power lines where there is access to the country extending north.

On the highest hill under the power lines north of Route 68, the huntsman pulls his tired horse to a stop and directs the followers to look. Below them, in a vast rolling alfalfa field, the hounds are running shoulder-to-shoulder but not gaining on their tired adversary. And there, off to the right appears a fresh, bounding coyote ready to spell his waning partner by leading the pack into the woods that border the community of Meadowdale. Wordlessly, the four gallop on. Holding a tired horse together while galloping downhill recalls, again, memories of earlier hunts for one of the Masters. Here, on Midget Mountain, images of former packs running this same field flood the mind.

As they pulled up on the old tractor road of the Rieke Farm at the north end of this great woods, the group was afforded their last glimpse of the fresh, leggy coyote as he bounded toward the vacant farm buildings. The dense underbrush and briars from which he had just emerged, slowed the pack enough to put the followers in front of them for the first time this day.

The moment had now arrived to bring this chase to a close. Dusk would be their guide home. The hounds reluctantly returned to gather around the huntsman's horse and receive their praise.

Finding silence more comforting than conversation during their twilight hack home, the riders find time to indulge in reflection. Filled with gratitude for these precious days in the field, their memories cast back to Denison B. Hull and Edgerton A. Throckmorton, those two farsighted men, who, in the late 1930s, founded the Fox River Valley Hunt.

They, and the Masters who followed, have dedicated themselves to a legacy of fox hunting that has spanned generations. Since the hunt's inception, they have built upon that foundation, which provided a sense of spirit rooted in simplicity, in natural beauty, in community, and in respect for the land. These elements have contributed to an environment of peace that can only be found through the enjoyment of horses and hounds.

## Barrington A Historical Perspective



When, in the fall of 1834, William Van Orsdal and Jesse F. Miller first came into the territory that is now Barrington Township in northeastern Illinois, some 500 Potawatomes were living in the groves along the Spring Creek. Beside the Native Americans, these pioneers from New York State found a soil of "rich prairie loam" and "numerous springs of good water." The land was almost three-quarters prairie with some small groves of timber or savannas. So recorded A.T. Andreas in a *History of Cook County*, published in 1884.

Another account of the Barrington area was given in 1831 by Mrs. John Kinzie, wife of the government agent to the Native Americans at Fort Winnebago. She described a journey through what was later called Cuba Township in rapturous terms: "The trees, which near the lake had, owing to the coldness and tardiness of the season, presented the pale yellow appearance of unfledged goslings, were here bursting into full leaf. The ground was carpeted with flowers — we could not bear to have them crushed by the felling of a tree and the pitching of our tent among them. The birds sent forth their sweetest notes in the warm, lingering sunlight, and the opening buds of the young hickory and sassafras filled the air with perfume."

Into this environment, the first settlers, journeying mostly from the New England states, came by horse and wagon in the late 1830s. Purchased by the federal government from the Native Americans, who were the only permanent inhabitants until then, the land was finally surveyed and available to purchase through the government land offices in 1840. Until they could take title to their land, the settlers were often known as "squatters."

After 1840, in the territory that is now the Barrington area, the settlement came steadily: in Barrington and Cuba townships, in the eastern sections of Kane and McHenry counties, and in the westernmost sections of Ela and Palatine townships. While people from New England predominated in the first wave of settlement, these Yankees were soon joined by families who came directly from Europe through eastern and southern ports of entry and across country to Chicago and its environs. Thus, Millers and Hawleys, Watermans, Kingsleys, Kelseys, and Applebees were joined by Creets and Kitsons, by Churches and Catlows, together with Landwers, Lageschultes, Riekes, Plagges, and later Schwemms and Klingenberges, among many others.

Until 1854, the settlers mostly went to towns along the Fox River or toward Des Plaines for trading purposes. In that year, the Illinois and Wisconsin Railway, forerunner to the Chicago & North Western Railway, was extended in a northwesterly direction from Deer Grove near Palatine to the Wisconsin border. A depot was established at the Lake/Cook county line. First called Barrington Station, the depot was located in Barrington Township. The new village at this location was platted out and the lots sold



by the railroad. It encompassed 40 acres on the Cook County side. The depot, a small frame building, was moved up the line on a flatcar from Deer Grove, the earlier settlement at Dundee and Ela roads. The second building to come up the line was James Creet's house. That was relocated on East Station Street at the southeast corner of Cook Street. Creet built his blacksmith shop next door, to the west. It was one of the first businesses and the first blacksmith shop in the new village. In 1863, with a village population of about 300, a vote was taken in favor of incorporation, and a law was passed by the State Legislature in 1865 incorporating the town of Barrington Station.

As the town grew, it became the trading and business center for the surrounding countryside. The promise of a town at Barrington Center, where Algonquin and Dundee roads converge, was quickly lost with the emergence of the new community some three miles farther east. Cattle, milk, cheese, and grain were shipped to markets in Chicago from Barrington Station. A small stockyard was located at the station, and the last recorded cattle drive through town was in 1926, just before Main Street was paved.

In 1884, Andreas wrote that the now renamed Village of Barrington contained "one cheese factory, one feed and planing mill, one flouring mill, three blacksmith and wagon shops, two tin shops, one marble cutter, two drug stores, seven general stores, two hotels, three saloons, the post office and about 800 inhabitants."

In 1898, the village first obtained some of the amenities of modern living. That year, the telephone, electricity, and a water main were installed in Barrington. An imposing brick two-story village hall with a belltower was built to replace the old frame shack that had previously been the meeting place for the village fathers (with a detention cell below it), and a volunteer fire department was formed.

The Village of Barrington was a community established by the railroad and sustained in great part by the farming community around it. In the early 20th Century, events occurred that have had a lasting influence on the development of the entire area and on the attitudes and motivations of those elected officials who would bear the responsibility for guiding that development.

In 1907, Spencer Otis, a successful entrepreneur in railroad equipment, came to Barrington and purchased six of the pioneer farms south and west of town — in all, about 2,000 acres. He built a beautiful house, "Hawthorne Hill," and each of the farms was put to a special use. Soon, H. Stillson Hart, a man of similar background, purchased several hundred acres in Cuba Township and also built a house, which he named "Hartwood." Further west of Barrington, along County Line Road, George Van Hagen bought more than 300 acres and built a country house on his Wakefield Farm.

These men were followed by many others, who, in the '20s, '30s and '40s, sought a lifestyle centered around the pursuit of farming, horses, the hunt, dog trials, and the activities of country clubs, which they organized. Until 1940, however, hunting usually meant shooting, and for old-time residents, trapping. There were several game preserves, the best known

probably being that belonging to Dr. Paul Magnuson at Pond Gate Farm on Penny Road. He was granted the first Illinois Department of Conservation tags under a new law that allowed privately raised game to be shot at any time. The introduction of pheasant and other game birds to the countryside is attributed to Henry Miller, in the early years of the century. Their subsequent breeding and proliferation in the wild probably caused the disappearance of the native prairie chickens from the area.

Some of these country estate owners commuted daily into Chicago via the Chicago & North Western Railway, along with the growing number of residents from the village. It was this reliable access through the railroad that prompted the Jewel Tea Company to relocate to Barrington. In 1930, it became one of the first major corporations to move out of the city. Jewel purchased the Kampert Farm, and in addition to building their art deco-style headquarters, they developed Jewel Park, one of the first planned residential areas in the country.

The changes that came after World War II, as the system of expressways was extended around Chicago, made more remote communities into feasible commuter destinations. Then many of the remaining old farming families and some of the other landowners began to respond to a demand for residential development from families willing to travel that extra mile to live in greener surroundings. Thus, as the number of residents increased in both the village and the surrounding countryside, the call also came for controlling growth. In 1957, the Village of Barrington Hills and Deer Park were incorporated, followed in 1959 by the villages of North Barrington, South Barrington and Lake Barrington. The villages shared a commonality of purpose, but each village developed its own guidelines and zoning for protecting open space, woods, wetlands, and marshes.

In the Village of Barrington, the human scale of the original town has been preserved. A special character has evolved through the coexistence of buildings that are representative of each era of the town's growth, from the 1850s on.

Those early settlers and their descendants, each in their time, have contributed much to the community. So have those who came later and in more felicitous (comfortable) circumstances. Their names can be found on buildings and in parks, as well as on highways and byways around Barrington. They all helped to preserve an environment that was ideally suited to the founding of the Fox River Valley Hunt. Through their enthusiasm, good neighborly relations, and vigilance, they have assured its survival towards the 21st Century.

*Contributed by Barbara L. Benson.*