

History of Cresco Parks – (Part 1) (Presumably written by Gene Aberg in the late 1980's or early 1990's.)

The early history of the Cresco parks is quite sketchy as in the early days of Cresco, most projects which took place were completed by public spirited individuals and private donations and were completed with only passing notice.

What is known as Beadle Park was platted out from the original plat of Beadle, Edgerton, and Strong. It was only listed as public ground and was used for many purposes. In 1870 Beadle Park was known as Polliwog Lake. The reason for this was that the land to the north and west was continuously inundated with water. The original railroad tracks ran beside Polliwog Lake. Around the year 1911 a group of public minded citizens began the task of cleaning out the area and draining it. In 1918, during the war activity, a bandstand was hastily constructed by funds that were contributed, and a centerpiece was erected for the fountain. It was not until 1926 that a public restroom was built, and it is the one that exists to this date. On July 4, 1985 a Milwaukee Railroad train was moved into the area. This was completed by public donations which were spearheaded by the Cresco Fire Department. As Cresco had lost all railroad transportation, it was a fitting place for it to be placed being it is only 250 feet of the original tracks. The park was appropriately named after the founder of Cresco, Augustus Beadle.

What is now known as Kessel Park was originally the Beadle Estate. Augustus Beadle planted many varieties of trees in this area. It is thought that many of the evergreens that still exist were planted by Mr. Beadle. What became known as the Kessel Lodge was previously the Beadle home. The home belonged to John Beadle and after the death of Augustus Beadle was sold to Dr. George Kessel. From 1902 until 1910 it served as the Cresco Hospital. In 1913 the land to the east of the home was given to the City of Cresco in conjunction with the building of a library from Carnegie Funds. The City of Cresco purchased the land known as the Park Hotel where the library sits today. The home was given to the City of Cresco in 1929 also by Dr. Kessel.

It was in this period of 1928-1929 that the first Park Board was established to oversee the park areas. These individuals were elected. In 1930 a restroom facility with water and sewer was erected. The road from 8th Avenue was extended through Kessel Park to 7th Avenue. This park was also appropriately named after this benevolent man, Dr. George Kessel.

The land where the outdoor swimming pool sat on was given to the City in 1934. The need for a swimming pool was well recognized as early as 1927, and after 24 years it was constructed and opened May 30, 1951.

In 1951 Mr. Dave Evans donated the land to the City which is now known as Evans Park. He realized the need for a park in this area of Cresco. Soon after, bleachers were erected and in 1958 the south 445 feet were purchased from Lloyd Fenske by the Cresco Park Board. The restroom was then erected and a tennis court was completed in 1977 with a matching grant from the State of Iowa. This park is also appropriately named for Mr. Evans.

The present day East Park was originally the Wastewater Treatment Plant. A new plant was completed in 1971 and the Cresco Park Board asked the City Council for access to this land to develop a park in this area. This would give the City of Cresco a park in every ward in Cresco. The actual construction of this park was begun in 1978 with grading being completed in 1979. Immediately a ball diamond was constructed and restroom facilities were constructed which was done by another matching grant from the State of Iowa. The two shelters were paid for from memorial funds from Bob Davies and Maurice Jones. Mr. Jones also left \$5000 of his estate to be used in this park for capital improvements. The trees on the west of the park were donated from memorial funds from former Councilman F.L. "Bud" Klinge.

The area that is now an indoor skating rink was originally the trickling filter for the wastewater plant. In 1980 the inside was cemented and sound board was placed on the ceiling. The park was given no specific name although through word of mouth, it became known as East Park. This name remained permanent.

It is my intension to add to the original history that was written and to keep the history and timeline current to any additions made as time goes by. Updates will be made approximately yearly and will appear in **RED**.

Beadle Park: A World War I mine was placed in the park, (date unknown), as a memorial dedicated to Cresco's five admirals: Frank Lowery, Arthur Moen, Michael Malanaphy, Wallis Petersen and George Peckham. The log cabin was brought to the park in 1964. It was donated by Don and Joan Carolan. Extensive renovation was done to the log cabin in 2011 with local donations and grants. A Centennial Time Capsule was buried in front of the log cabin during the 1966 Cresco Centennial celebration. It will be dug up during the 150 year Cresco celebration in 2016. The Norman Borlaug Statue was placed in the park in 1971 to commemorate Cresco native Dr. Borlaug, recipient of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize, Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 and the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007. The sculptor, Karen Laub Novak, grew up in Cresco. In 2014 a bronze statue called "Little Picasso" was placed in memory of Karen Laub Novak donated by the Gretchen M. Laub & Michael J. Novak families. The Sycamore tree by the picnic shelter, also known as the "Space Tree" was presented to the City in 1990 by Maurice Kramer. The seeds for the tree were flown aboard the US Space Shuttle Atlantis in 1988. In 1994 a new playground complex was installed, and then in 2004 the horse swings were replaced with some new equipment. The Welcome to Cresco sign was installed on the SE corner in 2002. The park picnic shelter was moved to East Park by the concession stand in 2008 and the next year a larger shelter was constructed. The bronze statue, "Two Boys on a Tire Swing" was placed in the park in 2010. It was donated by Alum-Line & the Gooder families. (Don & Rosie, Mike & Rachel and Gary & Sara)

Kessel Park: In 1997 a new playground complex was installed. A new backstop at the ball field was installed in 2002. Basketball hoops were replaced in 2006. The City and hospital teamed up to pave a driveway in 2013 north of the Lodge parking lot. Two pieces of outdoor fitness equipment was installed in 2013.

Kessel Lodge: The old Kessel Lodge house was razed in the fall of 2006 to make way for a new community center which opened in September of 2008. The name remained the same. Funds were raised to add on to the new lodge to accommodate the senior dining center known as the Cresco Mealsite which opened in July of 2009. The next few years improvements were made which include additional cabinets (2009) acoustic panels, an entrance windbreak (2010), paved driveway and sidewalk (2011). In 2013 a Kessel Lodge sign and bronze statue "Boy & Girl Jumping Rope" were erected. It was donated by the Cresco Chamber & CIDC and citizens of the Cresco community. In 2015 there were two Eagle Scout projects done. One was an outdoor charcoal grill done by Adam Jensen. The other was a pair of beanbag board sets done by Casey Ollendieck.

Evan's Park: In 1995 a new playground complex was installed and the tennis courts were resurfaced with blacktop. From 2004-2010 many additions were made to the ball field. These additions include; a shelter over the west bleachers (2004), fencing (2005), new electronic scoreboard along with new dugout benches (2009) and a new concession stand and bleachers (2010). In 2009 a larger picnic shelter was constructed. The tennis courts were resurfaced and some fencing was replaced in 2014. A pair of beanbag board sets was done as an Eagle Scout project by Casey Ollendieck in 2015.

East Park: In 1994 new ball field lights were installed. In 1997 the park was expanded to the east to the 8th St. E road. Chuck Malek and Ray Reicks donated the land now known as the Malek-Reicks addition to East Park. In 2002 a new ice rink warming house was constructed. In 2003 a new playground complex was installed. In 2006 a picnic shelter was constructed which replaced a volleyball court. In 2008 there were two Eagle Scout projects done. One was a renovation of the ball field dugouts done by Travis Weinacht. The other was a 9-hole disc golf course done by Alex Holmstrom. The bronze statue, "Baseball Player" was placed in the park in 2010 in memory of LaVern "Butch" Buttjer, a volunteer in Cresco recreation for many years. A new electronic scoreboard was installed in 2012. Two pair of beanbag board sets was done as an Eagle Scout project by Casey Ollendieck in 2015.

Balk Park: In 2000 the Louie Balk family donated the land to the City which is now known as Balk Park. The Prairie Springs Recreational Trails Committee raised funds to develop the park as a trailhead for the bike trail which was completed about 2005.

Fitness Center: In 1993 the junior high & elementary public school moved to its current location and the City acquired the land. The Cresco community began raising funds for an indoor pool and wellness facility. The razing of the old buildings began the next year with the exception of the gymnasium. The new facility now known as the Cresco Fitness Center/Thomson Pool opened in December of 1997. The facility was put under the Park and Recreation Department. The outdoor Cresco Pool closed for good in August that year. The bronze statue, "Three Children Playing with Ball" was placed near the front entrance in 2005. It was donated by Maxine & Karl Krause and Ronda & Jarry Hughes.

Park Board: In 1994 the board was expanded from 3 members to 5 members due to the addition of the Fitness Center. The City Council passed a resolution to have the Park Board members appointed by the Council for 3 year terms beginning in 2012. Previous to that they were elected for 6 year terms.