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FOREST PRESERVE PLANS TO DEMOLISH HISTORIC DUPAGE HOUSE IN CHURCHILL WOODS

The DuPage County Forest Preserve Commission has voted to demolish the buildings this year. Efforts are being made by the descendants of Robert and Ada McKee and Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation to save, restore and re-adapt the buildings for modern use.

The original DuPage County Forest Preserve headquarters and residence are located within unincorporated Glen Ellyn, east of the Village, on the south side St. Charles Road in the Churchill Woods Forest Preserve. Built in 1936, the compound consists of a Colonial Revival limestone residence with almost symmetrical wings to the east and west. A small, stone well house and a separate guardhouse lie to the east of the main structure. Native oaks and shagbark hickory surround the property. The buildings were erected through a cooperative effort of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and the Works Progress Administration, under the direction of Robert L. McKee, the Forest Preserve's first superintendent. McKee lived in the house until 1960.

Serving the county for 30 years, Robert McKee was responsible for the acquisition and preservation of thousands of acres of open land for the Forest Preserve. An early environmentalist, McKee worked on reforestation of Preserve land, as well as battling water pollution and Dutch Elm disease. Making use of unemployed workers during the great Depression, he set about creating picnic areas, roads and parking lots within the preserves, offering his wife Ada's homemade soup in exchange for a day's work. He also used WPA and CCC workers for a number of projects, including the headquarters at Churchill and the restoration of Graue Mill near Hinsdale, an eight year project which he completed in 1943. McKee Marsh in Blackwell Forest Preserve in Warrenville is named after him.

The two-story Colonial Revival house has a side-gabled roof, broken with three arched, wall dormers on both the front and back. The centered front door is flanked by fluted pilasters with dentil molding along the doorframe cornice. The rear french doors are topped with a fan pediment. A screened porch is attached at the back. All windows are double-hung multi-panes, with six above-six below configuration. All windows, doors, hardware and light fixtures are original, including some storm doors and storm windows. The house has copper gutters, some of which have been painted. The stone and grout are in excellent condition; however, the wood trim is in need of scraping and painting, with more deterioration around the front door.

The interior has hardwood floors, plaster walls and two fireplaces. These appear to be in good condition, for the most part. However, due to the poor condition of the roof, it is highly likely that there has been damage. The house has been unheated for some time.

The other two buildings on the property, the small well house and the guard residence, appear to have been painted recently. However, the stone work on the well house is in need of tuck-pointing. The buildings, which are currently unoccupied, are being used for storage.

