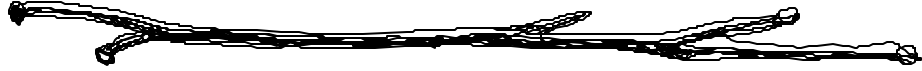




# Friends of the Sangamon Valley



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## Friends Receive First Land Donation

Through the generous donation from a family with strong roots in central Illinois, The Friends of the Sangamon Valley filed the deed for our first land acquisition on September 17 in Menard County. The John Knuppel family, daughters Cynthia Flock and Holly VanderPlaats, have donated 9.7 acres adjacent to Old Salem Chautauqua near Petersburg.

The property consists of floodplain hardwood forest with a 4-acre agricultural field. There is a small stretch of shoreline of the Sangamon River and a small tributary that borders the railroad tracks near Old Salem Chautauqua. There is currently no legal access for visitors.

However, the *Friends* intend to use the sanctuary to help advance restoration projects in the area, especially within Old Salem Chautauqua. For instance, silt dredged from the upcoming Chautauqua wetland restoration project will be placed on the agricultural field. The field will then be reforested with floodplain hardwoods such as bur oak, black walnut, Kentucky coffee tree, and sycamore.

The new preserve is named the John Knuppel Wildlife Sanctuary in honor of the state legislator who played a critical role in initiating Illinois' conservation efforts. Senator Knuppel represented the 44<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> districts in the 77<sup>th</sup> through 81<sup>st</sup> General Assemblies. Senator Knuppel was a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention where he sponsored a proposal for the legislature to create a brand new commission to regulate fish, forest, and wildlife. He went on to chair the Illinois Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Energy for ten years, and controlled all legislation on conservation and agriculture throughout the 1970s.

His connection to Old Salem Chautauqua and surrounding area reaches back to the 1950s when he purchased the historic auditorium and the tract of land that had formerly been the Izaak Walton Club Fish Hatchery, built in 1919 as part of the Chautauqua Park revitaliza-

tion effort.

Senator Knuppel's daughter, Cynthia Flock, wanted to do something good with the property and over a year ago, began to search for a local organization willing to work with her vision of the land. She contacted Carl Becker with The Nature Conservancy who referred her to the *Friends*. She was also aware of Old Salem Chautauqua, and after randomly calling people in this rural Petersburg area, found Joe Fieden, president of the homeowner's association. Having worked with the *Friends* on the wetland restoration, Joe recommended Cynthia contact the *Friends'* Vern LaGesse. "It was meant to be," says Cynthia; and the rest would soon be history.

There will always be a close relationship between

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Senator John Knuppel



Key players in the property negotiations were, from left, The Friends' board member and attorney, Mark Rabin, Verdell Knuppel, Holly VanderPlaats, Old Salem Chautauqua's Joe Fieden, and Friends' Vern LaGesse. Cynthia Flock was unable to attend.