

## Markle Park Has Long & Storied History

The story of Markle Park began in 1921 when the quarrying of limestone was discontinued at what was then known as the Markle Quarry. The quarry, located south of downtown Markle on SR 3 next to the Wabash River, was filled with water and soon became a popular swimming hole for area children.

Mr. Ed Youse, a Markle businessman and owner of the quarry and adjacent farm gave the land to his daughter Hildreth, who sold the land to Ross Zimmerlee in late 1949. But Mr. Zimmerlee made it known that he would not continue allowing area kids to swim in the quarry free of charge.

In order to save the swimming hole and the recreational opportunities the area might make available, the Markle Fish & Game Club bought the 10.6-acre tract of land, which included the five acres of quarry water, in April of 1950. The total cost of the land came to \$4,100.

The Fish & Game Club immediately formed Planning, Finance & Construction Committees and determined they would need to raise a minimum of \$8,500 for the real estate and a lighted softball diamond, to be built in time for the 1951 season. An initial community solicitation raised \$10,600. Those funds paid for the land, the light diamond, a concession stand, restrooms and a driveway.

- 1952** – Little League baseball comes to Markle and a children's playground was built.

- 1953** – A beach area was constructed at the quarry, Pony League baseball was begun and a storage building was constructed at the softball diamond.

- 1954** – The swim building was constructed, the beach was sanded and the grassy area was seeded. The operation of the pool was organized and officially opened on July 3. An additional 30 acres of land adjacent to the park was purchased and plans for picnic grounds, a Boy Scout camp, tennis courts and natural river areas were made.

- 1955** – The Boy Scout camp was named Camp Lehman, after scoutmaster Ernest Lehman. An annual horse show that lasted for several years was started.

- 1956** – The picnic area was developed an annual Water Carnival was begun.

- 1957** – The Scout Troop began construction of their cabin.

- 1958** – Swim classes were becoming popular. The Scout cabin was dedicated on June 8.

- 1959** – The Markle Minor League was formed. The park was saved from

a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project that would help flooding of the Wabash River. The project was moved further south, away from the park.

- 1960** – Two slides were constructed at the swimming pool.
- 1961** – A well and pump were installed to help control the water level of the pool. The Scout Troop added a kitchen, a furnace, restrooms and storage to their cabin.
- 1962** – New waterline and P.A. system was installed at the pool.
- 1964** – The flood control construction was started and SR 3 was raised, allowing for a new entrance to the park. Eight more acres of land was purchased from Foster Jones, bringing the park's total size to just less than 50 acres.
- 1965** – Markle Progress Day was started on Labor Day weekend and the last one was held in 1971.
- 1966** – An Internal Revenue Service lawsuit forced the park to incorporate and take the legal name of "Markle Fish & Game Club Park, Inc."
- 1967** – A picnic pavilion was built and 90 trees were planted throughout the park. Construction of tennis courts at the park was begun.
- 1968** – Tennis lessons were offered.
- 1969** – The Men's Tennis League was formed.
- 1970** – A second ball diamond was constructed near the back of the park and the driveway was extended to it. The swimming area was improved with a chain link fence and a sidewalk running west from the beach house.
- 1971** – The tennis courts were lighted, bleachers were constructed at the back diamond, and a shelter was added in the picnic area.
- 1972** – A three-year project of replacing the siding of the Scout Cabin with Bedford stone was completed. The playground was improved with a new chain link fence and a merry-go-round.
- 1974** – The Markle Girls Youth Softball League was formed. A new scoreboard was installed at the softball diamond.
- 1975** – Approximately 60 trees were planted.
- 1976** – The Markle Park Foundation Fund was planned.
- 1978** – The Markle Park Foundation Fund was officially established.
- 1979** – New restrooms, an outfield fence and a sidewalk were constructed at the softball diamond.

In subsequent years, the Markle Fish & Game Club Park has added a basketball court next to the two tennis courts, horseshoe pits, restrooms and lights for the Minor League diamond and more children's playground equipment near the picnic shelters among other improvements.

Any information you have about this history would be welcome.