

Huntington Hills Center Entrance – Hammer, Grog, and Hat Club

A Short History

For 30 years, residents of Huntington Hills swam in Trimble Lake on the edge of Durand Eastman Park and played tennis on 2 privately-owned tennis courts. The Trimble's court was made of clay and the Angle's court was made of gravel. In the 1950s, two events occurred that made the residents decide that it would be advantageous to have a pool built for the Center Entrance home owners. The first was an unusually large amount of algae on the lake (pond), and the second was a decision by the County Parks Dept and DEC to remove the dam on the pond in order to increase the flow of water into the next lake and, eventually, into Lake Ontario.

Thirteen home owners in Center Entrance and the Hodges on Wisner Road contributed about \$1300 each to have J.D. Whiting build a gunnite pool and to have the Angle's tennis court made into a hard surface with raised edges so it could be flooded for ice skating in winter. The name of the club was determined by taking the first letter of the surname of each of the original members, thus; Hammer, Grog, and Hat Club:

H all	G ould	H odges
A ngle	R usling	A llen
M cFarland	O gden	T uthill
M iller	G olan	
E lwood		
R odgers		

Mrs Trimble and Mrs Angle were honorary members of the HGH.

Counting the immediate members of each family in the HGH, there were 56 people who might be swimming simultaneously, of whom 31 were children. All but the Millers had children at home, so the pool and court were heavily utilized by them and also by the parents. Dr Miller was the only person (in his eighties) who regularly swam well into November.

Huntington Hills Center Entrance already had established Special Events on holidays, so the pool and tennis court became part of those community activities for several decades. On the Saturday of Fourth of July weekend, there were relay races, three-legged races, swimming races, diving competitions, and cannonball

demonstrations involving both children and their parents. On Memorial Day there was a parents vs children softball game with Miss Diemer as the umpire behind the pitcher's mound. The land sports were all done on the ball field next to the pool and court before it became petitioned off when Betty Angle sold her original house to the Rohrers. On Labor Day weekend, there were Round Robin tennis competitions using the HGH court and the Trimble's court, and parents and children were teamed with each other. The neighborhood thrived because of these common places to go and the special activities they stimulated.

There were not too many rules for use of the pool and tennis court except to keep the facilities locked when not in use, not allow children under 15 to swim without adult supervision, pick up things after you have used to pool and court for picnics or meetings, bring no glass inside the pool, allow no dogs inside the pool or court enclosures, and notify members if you wish to have a party (usually graduation or birthday) at the pool and court (members can still be there). The tennis court could not be monopolized by a few people, so if anyone was waiting to play, the current players had to play 4 more games and then turn it over to the others. Very often, the people waiting just played with the ones who were already playing and rotated in and out with anyone else who was waiting to play (very much like darts in English pubs).

To keep the costs of maintaining the pool at a reasonable level, members of HGH each took a week's duty to clean the pool, cut the grass, pick up any trash around the court and pool, add chemicals as needed, and check to be sure trash was emptied during the summer. Each spring and fall, the members opened and closed the pool, often letting out the water and scrubbing the surfaces to keep them clean. The pool furniture was made up of extra lawn furniture donated by the members and chaise lounges and chairs that came from redeeming S&H Green Stamps books that members donated. The pool and court fences were covered in vines, mostly grape vines, that were trimmed yearly or whenever we started losing too many tennis balls. Annual dues covered insurance, chemicals, some routine maintenance and hiring a child to mow the lawn regularly, so they ran between \$50 and \$100 for the first few decades of the HGH's existence.

Several of us have discussed what some of the things were that made our childhoods in Huntington Hills so special. Certainly the setting and the presence of the woods, having many other children our own age and having a mix of 3 generations, all of whom welcomed us to their homes and taught us things, gave us nature's beauty, plenty of playmates, and a feeling of security. Having the Hammer, Grog, and Hat Club facilities meant that we always had things to do, and

that we played with our parents as well as each other. The parents had a common place to go for social occasions if they wished to do so, and anyone who might crave a little interaction with others could usually find a friend at the pool.