

EST. 1956

# Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING  
MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2013

## Mortimer Park

*If you have (or had) kids who attended Country Meadows or Woodlawn School, recall the crop of woods to the left of the entrance drive. Did you know those trees hide a secret?*

By Aaron Underwood · Long Grove Historical Society



**PLATE I** The stone foundation ruins of an 1850s farm, tucked into the woods beside the Country Meadows / Woodlawn entrance drive.

**I**n those woods rests the ruins of an 1850's farm. The land in question was originally claimed in the 1840's by Nathaniel Taft, though nothing has been found to indicate he ever lived there. The earliest date of known occupation appears to have been 1853.

The Ela Township plats of the 1870's and the early 1900's show the site occupied by the Hodgkins family, and the 1939 obituary of Mortimer Hodgkins fills in some details.

### FROM THE OBITUARY OF MORTIMER HODGKINS · 1939

*Mr. Hodgkins was born April 11, 1850, in a cabin on the Henry Smith farm, Vernon township. His parents came from New York state to Lake county in a prairie schooner. At the age of three, Mortimer moved with his parents to Ela township, where he later followed the farming occupation.*

I've taken to referring to the site as *Mortimer Park* — a nod to its historical occupant. And because somehow that name catches the spirit of the place better than "Hodgkins Park," or "those old stones in front of Woodlawn."

# Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING  
MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2013

## What, if anything, *should* become of it?

The ruins aren't currently being saved or preserved. The Historical Society has been approached by a couple of different people over the past year seeking information and with an interest in seeing the site better preserved. Some quick brainstorming of possibilities:

- Make it last.*** A bit of drainage work and some tuck-pointing would be a start.
- Make it personal.*** Perhaps a plaque describing what happened to the people who used to live here.
- Make it about water.*** One of the more interesting features is an old well – perhaps an educational plaque about how people used to get water and how it differs (or is the same) today.
- Make it about construction.*** How the home was built is obviously very different than today – perhaps a plaque about stone foundations and a visualization of what it used to look like.
- Make it about a sense of place.*** It's somewhat hard to describe, but there's an eerie, contemplative tranquility sitting amongst these ruins. Perhaps some sitting areas would be nice.

### ***How do you vote on Mortimer Park?***

Long Grove's history mostly exists through its residents' volunteer efforts to preserve it. People vote with their time and money – spending it on things they'd like to see maintained and saved, and ignoring things where they deem it acceptable to let something slip into the past.

To vote *yes*, send an email to [admin@LongGroveHistory.org](mailto:admin@LongGroveHistory.org) and volunteer to join a "Mortimer Park Exploratory Committee" to investigate what could be done with the site. To vote *no*, simply enjoy it now while you can.

READ ON / THE ARCHIVE

 Find more Long Grove yarns in the newsletter section of our website – [LONGGROVEHISTORY.ORG](http://LONGGROVEHISTORY.ORG)

