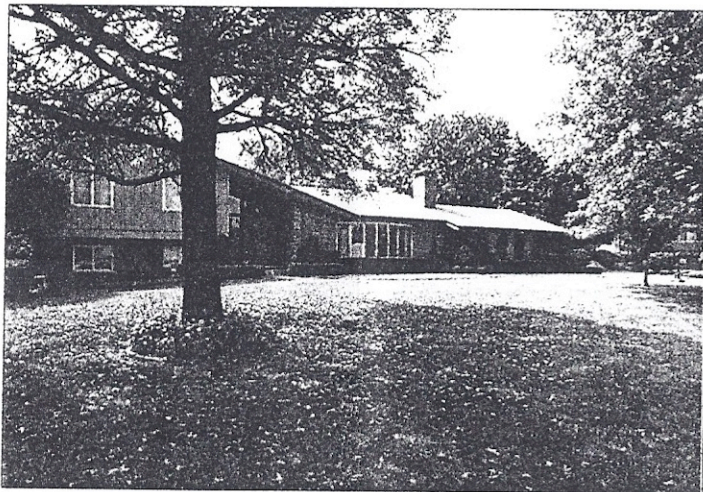


NEIGHBORHOODS



Curbless, winding roads give Plum Grove Estates its rural character.

Daily Herald Photo/Mark Welsh

Plum Grove Estates a plum of a place to hang your hat

By BETH GORR
Daily Herald Correspondent

The adage that you "can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear" could never be applied to the delightful community of Plum Grove Estates in unincorporated Palatine Township.

Although its beginnings were not as a "sow's ear," but as a hog farm along the northern border of Salt Creek, Plum Grove Estates today can be seen as an example of the best in suburban development.

Tucked away on winding roads that meander through deep woods in an area bounded by Route 62 on the south, Route 53 on the east, Meacham Road on the west, and Brookdale to the north, the 262 custom-built homes of Plum Grove Estates are a vivid reminder of how far this neighborhood has evolved from its humble beginnings.

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■ Price range: \$275,000 to \$600,000

■ Age of homes: 40 to 45 years old

■ Schools: Willow Bend Elementary and Plum Grove Junior High schools in Palatine Township Elementary District 15 and Fremd High School in Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211

PLUM GROVE: A plum of a place

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"There is a wonderful rural ambience to Plum Grove Estates that is typified by the century-old oaks and rare shagbark hickory trees, the gently rolling terrain, and the winding creek that runs through the subdivision," says 36-year resident William Huley. "In fact, the community still has the old cow bridge that spans the northern border of Salt Creek.

"The neighborhood was gradually built in four sections, or units as they were called at the time, by Herb Anderson as a speculative venture beginning in the 1950s," he said. All of the lots were a half acre, and the neighborhood had to have its own sanitary-sewer system because it was really out in the middle of nowhere at that time. O'Hare Airport was just being built then and, of course, the major highways such as Route 53 didn't exist.

"The original builders sought to keep as much of the rural character of the area as possible," Huley continues. "This is why the roads within the subdivision are narrow, curbless, and winding. Even today, people who are more accustomed to subdivisions laid out in the grid pattern often get lost driving through here.

"One day my wife and I were walking down the street and we noticed that the same car passed us quite a few times. Finally, the driver stopped and said, 'This is a beautiful neighborhood but I can't get out. Where are the exits?' The residents love the layout because there is very little traffic. The area is perfect for undisturbed biking, jogging and for early morning walks."

Six stone pillared entryway gates, landscaped and maintained by the neighborhood association, do help the uninitiated find their way to and through Plum Grove Estates. To maintain the neighborhood's country character, most home sites are served by underground electric power and utility lines. The natural look of the area is further enhanced by a small lake that is the site of the homeowners association's annual fishing derby, as well as by the abundant wildlife that enjoys calling this community home.

"The homes of Plum Grove Estates are as individual as the builders who designed them," says Lynn Habich of Century 21 Advisors Inc. in Arlington Heights. "The exterior styles run the gamut from traditional two-story residences, to ranch and split-level designs. Many of them are four or more bedrooms with two or more baths with exteriors of wood, brick, or stone. Because of the great variety of homes there the area appeals to a wide range of buyers including young families, singles and empty-nesters.

"It is an extremely friendly neighborhood," Habich says. "Newcomers are warmly welcomed. Everyone is ready to help a neighbor. The residents of this area seem to have captured the feeling of a caring community that isn't often found in communities of the 1990s."

Residents are members of the homeowners association for an annual fee of \$150. The association is responsible for maintaining and enhancing the entrance gates with 5,800 summer flowers and 10,000 miniature lights over the Christmas holidays. The association also organizes a variety of social events for residents throughout the year.

The Plum Grove Club, a semi-private facility adjacent to the neighborhood, that was recently acquired by the Rolling Meadows Park District, offers membership to homeowners. The club has an Olympic-sized pool, tennis courts, a soccer field, a shaded hillside picnic area, and a multipurpose clubhouse.

"When Plum Grove Estates was first built back in the 1950s," Huley says "it received national attention as well as a prestigious architectural award for its distinctive upscale homes. Even today, this community retains a reputation as a regional oasis of elegance and country charm. One of the Japanese automakers recently used a street here as the background for one of their television commercials. I guess that they felt, as I do, that it would be hard to find as beautiful a neighborhood anywhere else."