

The Paine Arboretum

Oshkosh

When Nathan Paine, grandson of a pioneer Oshkosh lumberman, began to build his English Tudor home in 1927, he tended to every detail. He was so concerned that construction might damage the roots of a great bur oak in the back of the mansion that he personally saw to the redesign and relocation of the service entry. Until it blew down in 1996, this bur oak was among the outstanding features of the arboretum and gardens that contributed to the estate's tranquil country setting within the city.

Paine built the mansion to house himself and his wife as well as their extensive and important art collection. He planned that on their deaths it would be donated to the city of Oshkosh as an arts and cultural center. Due to delays in construction caused by the Depression and World War II, however, neither he nor his wife ever lived there. After Paine's death in 1947, Jessie Paine oversaw its completion and establishment as one of the first 200 museums in the country to be accredited by the American Association of Museums. In 1978, 30 years after it opened to the public, the Paine Art Center and Arboretum was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as one of the finest examples in the country of an Eng-

lish manor house and grounds. It is now known as the Paine Art Center and Gardens, reflecting the loss of many of the larger trees, but still emphasizing the horticultural value of the many gardens.

New Yorker Bryant Fleming, the first instrument of Nathan Paine's dream, was both architect of the home and the landscape architect. Together, they studied the environment and the demands of the climate and chose a variety of woody ornamentals for their springtime blossoms, fruit-laden boughs or brilliant autumn foliage to be planted on the 14-acre complex. They considered color and texture and shape in achieving a harmonious arrangement. Mark Hopper was the first fulltime manager of the arboretum, followed by John Green. Some of the species still adding such beauty to the grounds are red jade weeping crab, columnar white pine, dawnredwood, European beech, pagoda dogwood, Douglasfir, ginkgo, European bird cherry, Japanese tree lilac, saucer magnolia and Koster blue spruce.