

# UPLAND, VALE *and* GROVE

SEEN FROM A HIGHWAY OF HISTORIC IMPORT

By *MARIAN A. WHITE*

*Author of 'Book of the North Shore' Etc.*



GREEN BAY ROAD, HIGHLAND PARK, ILL.

Chicago

J. HARRISON WHITE

1911



UPLAND, VALE *and* GROVE

*God gave to all men all the earth to love,  
But since man's heart is small,  
Ordains for each one spot shall prove  
Beloved over all.*

KIPLING

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SEEN FROM A HIGHWAY  
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INDIAN TRAIL TREE

*By* MARIAN A. WHITE

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Photo by Benn

"It is the Valley of the Skokie." (Page 9)

# UPLAND, VALE *and* GROVE

SEEN FROM A HIGHWAY  
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WHEN the early French explorers—the Jesuit missionaries—came to that portion of Illinois now designated as Cook and Lake counties, the Miami Indians cherished this particular region, from one to three miles from Lake Michigan, as their hunting grounds. Over this territory have passed some of the most powerful and particularly interesting (from an ethnological significance) Indian nations of the Northwest. These nations, divided into tribes, each with a distinguishing title, were invariably at war one with the other, and by the middle of the eighteenth century all other tribes had been driven from this vicinity by the powerful and aggressive Pottawattomies.

The lovely Valley of the Skokie, to which so many Indian trails have been traced, is filled with mysterious charm. Here, in an environment of forest, where the black, white and red oak, the black walnut, shell-bark hickory, the butternut and cottonwood still thrive in regal magnificence; where the dells are yet rich in hazel and sumac growth, with a scattering of red and white pine, came the Indian in the long, long ago, in pursuit of game.

The caribou and buffalo were hunted in this region, and when the Skokie was more of a stream than it is at present, the beaver was busy at work here, while droves of antelope and deer, and wild turkeys were familiar to the billowy uplands that rise in gentle, fascinating contours, holding within their green expanse the atmosphere of a spacious repose. The Skokie (Indian for "land fire") was then a breeding place for myriads of waterfowl—wild geese, wild swan, duck, pelican and crane—and the white hunter still prizes it as a hunting ground.



Photo by Bemm

"Beyond the marge of the sedges and flags and tall grasses." (Page 9)



We may still find in the woodlands north of Chicago the trail tree, the Indian's signpost, by the way, designating the trail or by-way to his village or some other place of equal interest in his nomadic life. These trails were, for generations, the only highways for missionary-explorer, hunter, trapper and pioneer settler. As the country came more under the influence of the white race, these original by-ways were gradually broadened to a roadway, until the coming of the railroad served to obliterate much of the aboriginal route, as well as to efface most of its traditional Significance.

Such has been the fate of the Green Bay Road, which, to a large extent, covers one of the principal Indian trails between Chicago and Waukegan ("Little Fort"), and to Milwaukee and Green Bay. This was one of the main arteries of travel, and from it diverged other trails, all of which were not only of import to the Indian, but to the pioneer.

So far as can be learned, the designation of "Green Bay Road" was assigned to the old trail, when in 1835, under the supervision of General Scott, U. S. A., it became the first extended and regularly laid-out highway from Chicago northward. It was, as many of the earlier roadways of the State, constructed for military purposes, forming an overland connecting link between the military post at Green Bay and other points.

At this period, that which is now designated the "North Shore" was comparatively a wilderness, beautifully wooded, as most of it is today, and rising in gentle undulations to the north and west, until in the latter direction, and just beyond the Green Bay Road, it merges its undulating richness into the meads and grasslands of the lovely Valley of the Skokie, and in what is now designated Lake County, and within the burgh of Highland Park.

There is little doubt but that the County Line Road between the counties of Cook and Lake is the original site of an old trail. As one alights from either the North Western Railroad at the pretty station of Braeside, or from the Milwaukee Electric Railroad at the County Line Station, he will observe a weird old trail tree, weird, because of its denuded grace, the remnant of a once-picturesque landmark. The writer feels, as others, that even in its present ghostly condition it is worthy of preservation. Looking at this historical landmark from the viewpoint of an artist, one is charmed by its appearance of antiquity, while beneath moonlight it shimmers with a mystical presence, as if holding a secret it would fain impart. Then it becomes something more than a fragment of timber. It is a seer connected with the long ago, when the red man was lord of the soil, and it is revered according to one's intelligent appreciation of that which aids in the traditions of a nation.



Photo by Bemmler

"The clear, deep, but reed-embowered waters." (Page 9)

Westward from this old landmark lies a country of fairest undulations. On the right are the remains of an old orchard, once a portion of the pioneer farm garden; to the left, a lovely grove, and now the feet, not softly moccasined as those that patted down the original trail, are firmly planted on the historic Green Bay Road, which, to use the words of an undisputed authority on the trails of the Indian, Mr. Albert F. Scharf, "chassés in and out, yet always maintains its importance as a highway of significance." We shall presently return to this point of intersection, and have something more to say of this highway in its present impressiveness.

Meanwhile, still following the westward trail, which is now a good country road—graveled, and defining the boundary lines of Cook and Lake counties—one is imbued with a sense of the road assuming a downward slope, and for reason. Presently the road pushes the trees aside, and there is consciousness of vast air space and distances fraught with a tranquillity and harmony suggestive of the poet's declaration: "God made the country." It is the Valley of the Skokie. Note the gentle contours of its billowy slopes, as with wave-like semblance they catch each vagrant line and curve and sweep toward yon crested hillocks and knolls which fold themselves in the blue-curtained horizon. Evening finds them swathed in crimson and gold, even as the robe of the sun-god himself.

Southwest, beyond the marge of the sedges and flags and tall grasses, sprinkled o'er with jewels of wild flower growth, which closely border the stream itself, the harvest is being reaped, while northeast from our point of vantage on the steel and cement bridge, spanning the clear, deep, but reed-embowerèd waters, Lake County is smiling in a shimmer of July haze. Now a bit of open prairie, with waving grasses, and then the ripple-like contour of the uplands, whose shadowy groves lift skyward and receive a benediction of light that enhances their loveliness. It is an atmosphere impregnated with romance, and no great stretch of imagination is required to picture the long ago—the Indian hunter fleeing as the wind across that bit of open; or with canoe, paddling the waters, happy in the thought that the swiftly-speeding, yet true-sighted arrow from his taut bow will bring down the coveted game.

How much we have gained, my Red Brother, by thy vagrant ways of life! Thou didst not hack and hew the forests, prey upon bird and beast for the sole purpose of destruction! Skins for clothing and hides for shelter, with flesh for food, and feathers as distinguishing insignia among thy kind! Surely thy wants were few. With such musings the old highway of travel—the Green Bay Road—is again beneath our feet.



Photo by Bennin

"Broad, sweeping undulations of groves and emerald meadows." (Page 11)

This highway, from rim to rim of the present roadbed, is now of macadam with a top dressing of tarvia. Farther northward cement walks with beautifully shaded parkways impress one with the fact that here the spirit of enterprise and up-to-dateness has seized upon the old trail in that immediate locality. But before reaching the latter, it is worth while to note a few of the landmarks of note, for west of the highway there still remain a few of the farmhouses which followed immediately after the log-cabin period. These have extensive acreages, but no longer under the free, full cultivation of a quarter of a century ago, when this highway first attracted the interest of the writer of this work.

But it is no fairy tale, this story of the farmer in the locality in question disposing of land at from four to five thousand dollars per acre today, which but yesterday either he or his father acquired for one hundred and fifty dollars per acre or less. Such acreages are now being used as sites for country seats.

Facing about to the southwest is one of these magnificent country homes nearing completion. Its environment of broad, sweeping undulations of groves and emerald meadows reaching toward the lovely valley is an inspiration to the manipulator of the camera. There is a kingly tree caught in the view. This oak bears impress of a century or more of growth. Alas! why have not trees speech? In a measure they have. Yet, it is tantalizing that one cannot successfully interview this monarch of the Uplands. It has felt the sod vibrate to the swift, onward rush of the unshodden hoofs of the Indian ponies as their riders, with knees closely pressed to heaving flanks, urged them in the direction of the chase. It has also been a silent witness to the red man's undoing.

Yonder, just in the vicinity of the Ravinia railway station, is a mound of historic interest. It is one of the few Indian mounds to receive attention in this vicinity. Exploration revealed its use as a sepulchre of cremation. Who shall write its story and connect it with that of other mounds discovered and undiscovered in this particular region? For in our haste toward empire-building we are walking recklessly over history, and trampling down tradition, both of which are important assets toward the fostering of Art by a nation.

For how many centuries the red man occupied this territory no one is bold enough to declare with certainty, but his wigwam occupied just such sites as those upon which are now seen some of the most charming of country homes. In fact, it is a site par excellence for this particular form of home-building, and lucky is the Chicago man who appreciates the advantages of dwelling remote from, yet con-

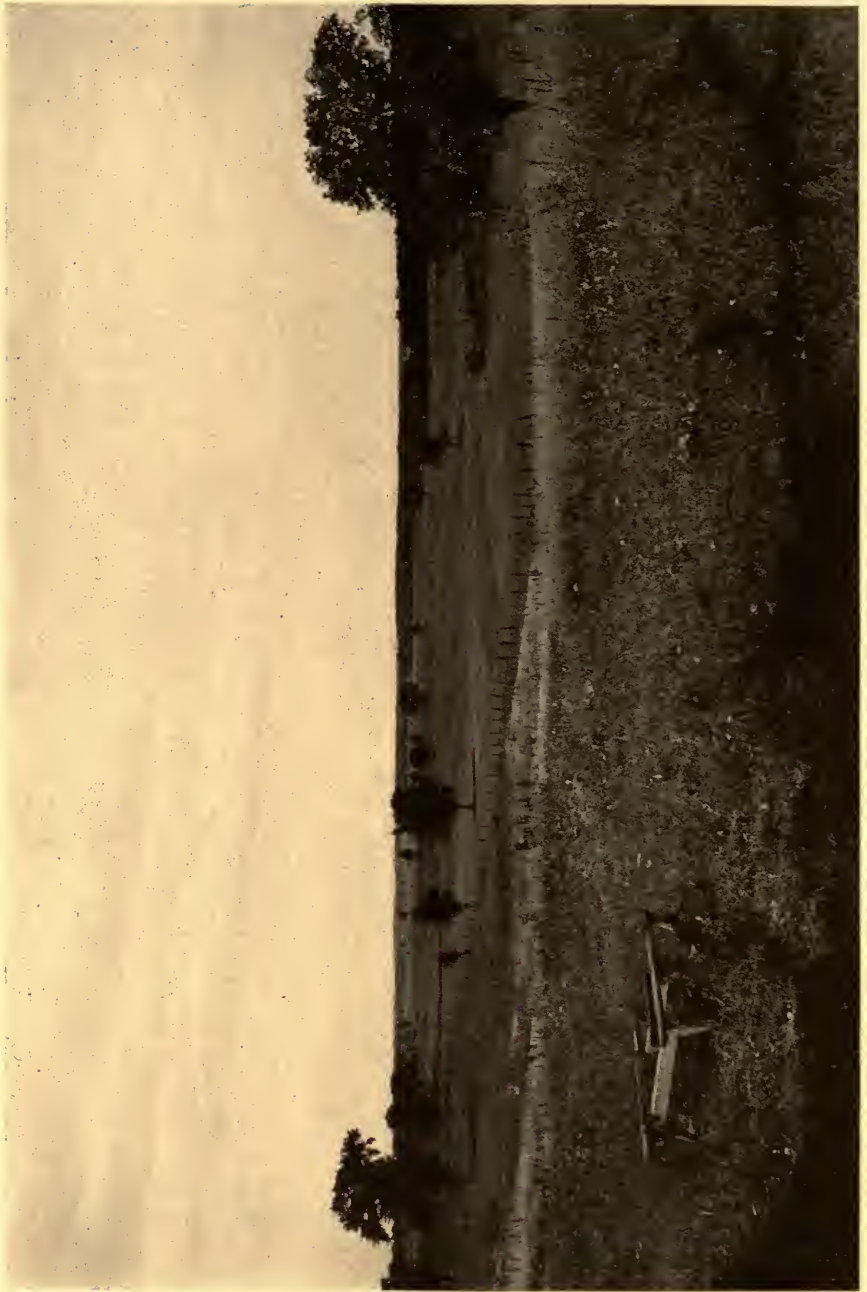


Photo by Benm

"Such acreages are now being used as sites for country seats." (Page 11)

venient to the city itself, in a neighborhood combining all that is desirable in landscape beauty and transportation facilities.

“Bob-o-link Knolls!” Repeat it over, then you become aware of its poetic charm, its musical rhythm! And you recall, if familiar with the poet’s writings, Bryant’s

Merrily swinging on brier and weed,  
Near to the nest of his little dame,  
Over the mountain side or mead,  
Robert of Lincoln telling his name;  
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
Spink, spank, spink;  
Snug and safe in that nest of ours,  
Hidden among the summer flowers,  
Chee, chee, chee.

Well enough bob-o-link knows he is safe in the “Knolls” bordering this historic highway. For this beautiful home, an adaptation from the Elizabethan style of architecture, is erected on one of the most pretentious of the knolls, and commanding a view of an extensive country and the beautiful valley. This country seat has twenty-five acres to its estate, in which the lay of the land suggests that Nature was giving an artistic expression to the whole when she modeled and draped the hillocks and knolls and crests.

To the formal garden, commanding a vista of the valley, is borne in the atmosphere of its stately pergola, the challenge of the “spink, spank, spink” and the “chee, chee, chee,” with a confidence suggested in the lines of the poet that “thieves and robbers” he “need not fear.” But we turn from “Bob-o-link Knolls” with all its enchantment of woodland, its garden rich with bloom and its wonderfully interesting families of bob-o-links and other feathered favorites, and resume our journeyings northward.

Here, where a country home is now located, was formerly the site of the Catholic Mission Church, known as “St. Mary’s of the Woods.” It was raised in the wilderness in 1846, for remember that it was not until 1836 that Lake County assumed any aspect of white settlement. The Indian had not wholly vacated the territory, and by permission of the United States government he still hunted in this locality. So that in the year of the building of this little mission church there must have been comparatively few white settlers. In 1848 it was also used for school purposes, the son (still living) of one of the pioneer settlers, then a lad of nine, receiving his education there.

In 1888, when the writer first saw this picturesque church of logs, it had long since been abandoned, and only the large cross of black walnut, erected nearby, and the graves and headstones in the



Photo by Hemm

"BOB-O-LINK KNOLLS"  
Green Bay Road, Highland Park, Ill. (Page 13)



adjoining churchyard gave intimation of its sacred character. Tradition tells of the huge cross having been made at Gross Point; of its being hauled to its site in 1853 by a team of oxen, and that the good Father Weyinger, the missionary priest who had made the cross, also assisted in its erection, while Father Forthman, the pastor, celebrated mass in the sacred edifice. Something should have been done to preserve these relics of an interesting past. The present owner of the site was not the original purchaser of the land on which the church and cross stood.

Immediately north of this site the Green Bay Road assumes a delightful park-like aspect. Here one recognizes the deft touch of the landscape artist. Trees trimmed to appear at their best—neither overdressed in foliage nor shorn to ugliness. Low-lying shrubs and cunningly snuggled-in groups of flowering plants seem to be quite at home in this company of more aristocratic tree growth. Such glorious elms! They cast their subtile shadows over the roadway, as if sheltering within their gracefully arching boughs the traditions of the old, old trail. A road diverges to the east. There is no trail tree to designate its mission, however. A less picturesque sign announces the fact that it is Lincoln Avenue, named, undoubtedly, in honor of the revered and martyred president by that name.

Diagonally from this beautiful park-like corner, and in a superb setting of lawn and shrub and majestic elms, is one of those institutions which has superseded the "little red schoolhouse" of American pioneer fame. The writer knows of no other schoolhouse site so beautifully located as to spaciousness and exhibiting such reposeful character of architecture as Highland Park's Lincoln school. Surely from such environment must come those who, in the words of Lowell, will say in the not-far-distant future: "Before man made us citizens, great Nature made us men."

Here trends another divergent road, adjacent to the schoolhouse grounds, but west of the Green Bay Road—"Fairview Avenue!" The name must have been an inspiration, for "fair view" it is, as well as "far view." Whether on the site of an Indian trail, the writer has not been able to determine. But accepting as a matter of fact the red man's intelligent distinguishing traits in patting down these remarkable by-ways, it would not be a matter of surprise if Fairview Avenue covers an original trail to desirable game haunts. The sportsman of today would not hesitate to follow its fascinating undulations, environed, as it is, by a growth suggestive of whatever game there may be left to his choice—for the Indian did not bag it all. It was the greed of the pale face that wrought its scarcity.



Photo by Benn

“Here one recognizes the deft touch of the landscape artist.” (Page 15)



Photo by Bemm

LINCOLN SCHOOL  
Highland Park, Ill. (Page 15)



Photo by Benn

"Fairview Avenue — the lovely Valley of the Skokie in view." (Page 19)

By and by, as the years roll onward, Fairview Avenue may have tradition other than that of the Indian. For it is a matter of record that this beautiful highway was laid out and paved by the generosity of one of Chicago's leading business men. This man saw its possibilities as a landscape effect—the lovely Valley of the Skokie in view, while the woodlands beyond lift into the blue, and beckon with no uncertain meaning to the creator of country seats. Under the noonday sun it fairly revels in color and scintillates in tremulous distances; in the twilight and the afterglow it languishes in mystic, shadowy repose, while there is borne in on the purpling atmosphere the round, full, tender reiteration of the whip-poor-will's song.

In close proximity is another country seat, its eastern boundary defined by the famous trail. Its groups of shrubbery and wealth of foliage inside the unobtrusive and refined iron fencing, resting on a base of masonry and strengthened by brick pillars with stone capitals, impart an air of seclusion. But the wide-open gates suggest hospitality, as well as an attitude of dignified repose, very appropriate to its environment. There is another very attractive entrance to this beautiful domain of forty acres, and unchallenged we slip through this latter gateway into a world of charm.

Its pathway is as sinuous as that of an old trail. Like the highway beyond, it conceals and reveals, gently dips and as subtly lifts. On either side is a veritable country flower garden in a nook by itself. The familiar perennials as well as most of the old-time annuals are here. And the fragrance of it all! A subtle commingling of sweets that spill their perfume in gentle guise on every zephyr, willing to bear it to each neighboring copse. Passing beneath the grape arbor of white, broadly squared lattice—the finer variety would be out of place in this expanse of lawn and shrub to which it is leading—the home, stately and of dignified architecture, similar to the old manor houses of England, is seen through vistas of waving green.

“Ridgewood!” Another appropriate designation. For the site of the home itself is on a ridge or crest of a group of the fairest-crowned uplands that command an extensive view of the peaceful vale slumbering in a consciousness of reposeful comeliness and grace. A pergola-like archway and a hedge of sweet peas and other free, flowering varieties separate, yet unite, this main upland from a gentle slope that is under cultivation, providing fruits and vegetables in season for the home table. Beyond, far, far beyond, in a south-westerly direction, first up, then down, and again down and up, billow the grove-crested uplands toward the horizon. It is another view of the valley.

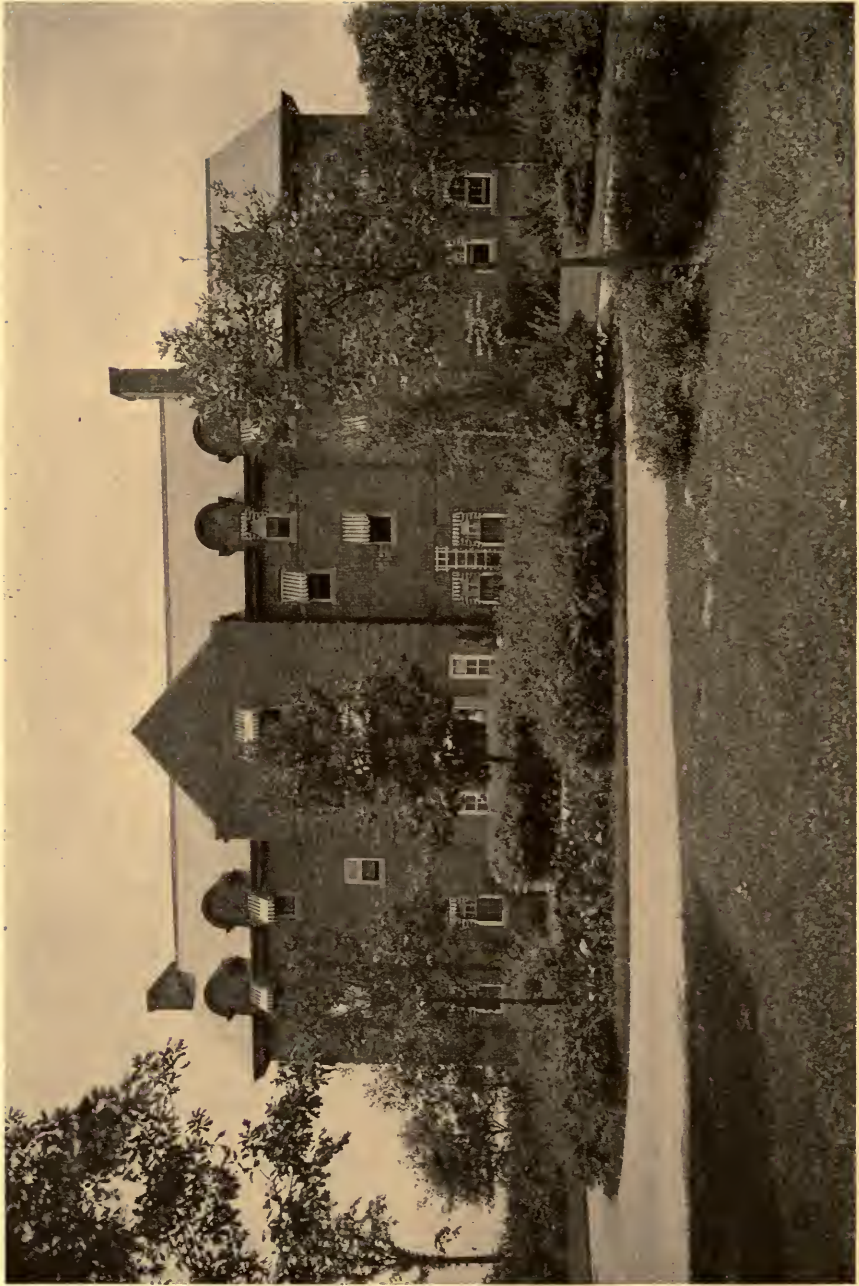


Photo by Bennie

"RIDGEWOOD"  
(East Front)

Green Bay Road, Highland Park, Ill. (Page 20)



Photo by Bemm

"RIDGEWOOD"  
(West Front)

Green Bay Road, Highland Park, Ill. (Page 21)



Photo by Bennie

"Southwest, billow the grove-crested uplands toward the horizon." (Page 19)



Again to the west, and from a vantage point of the home itself, where most of the undergrowth has been cleared, and the trees given opportunity to reach and spread through the most enchanting vistas, the valley again comes into view. A few of the old-time farm buildings are holding a distant slope, while the Skokie glimmers as a thread of silver ingeniously wrought into a bit of tapestry, whereby the varied hues are held in one harmonious whole.

To the northwest and from the same point of view tier after tier of upland and grove, in which many stately landmarks of the original forest appear, greet one with an infinitude of pleasurable surprises, for it never appears exactly the same, although always beautiful, ever inspiring, this Valley of the Skokie. Shadows from cloudland speed across its wake, or the sun gilds its glistening foliage into jeweled splendor, while the winds produce the wave-like motion of the sea, and snow serves but to bring it all nearer and into a closer intimacy. And what unsurpassed charm of grace lies in the etched lines of these wooded crests when every branch and twig stands revealed in the subdued light of winter!

The far-famed Exmoor Golf Club of Highland Park is also located in this valley. Here are one hundred and fifty acres in which upland, vale and grove blend in such refined harmony that one almost hesitates to speak of anything commonplace in the presence of Nature's lovely handiwork. Apart from the physical and mental vigor acquired by the sane use of a golf course—neither overdoing the limit of a healthful fatigue nor taking the exercise as a mere fad—the charm of picturesque distances, of green slopes foliage crowned, losing their contours in the lovely hazy distance, produce an exhilaration of mental attitude that is beneficial.

The portion of the Green Bay Road covered by the writer has an altitude of about one hundred and thirty-five feet above Lake Michigan, which is about a mile east. From the road one may view the eastern portion of Highland Park snuggled between a lordly tree growth, but trending downward toward the bluffs. This is explained by the fact that one is on much higher ground than the city proper.

The writer has endeavored to cull from upland, vale and grove, as well as from its architecture, both past and present, a story of the Green Bay Road, which is here so intimately associated with the traditions of the Valley of the Skokie. It is a vale of untold charm and interest to artist, to poet, and, in fact, to anyone and everyone who feels that there is much worthy of record in just such nooks of our beautiful Western country.

The movement toward settlement, once initiated, was swifter



Photo by Benn

"The Skokie glimmers as a thread of silver ingeniously wrought into a bit of tapestry." (Page 23)

than that of the Atlantic seaboard and adjacent territory. Therefore, much that should have been preserved for historical purposes has been destroyed, and very little, comparatively, has been written on this subject. This fair Illinois has produced statesmen, orators, soldiers, and it will yet give to the country a poet who shall sing of the magnificence of her fast-disappearing prairies, of her red men's trails, as well as of a hundred and one conditions that help to build a nation's history and tradition.





Photo by Bemm

"To the northwest, tier after tier of upland and grove." (Page 23)



Photo by Benn

EXMOOR GOLF CLUB  
Highland Park, Ill. (Page 23)



Photo by Benn

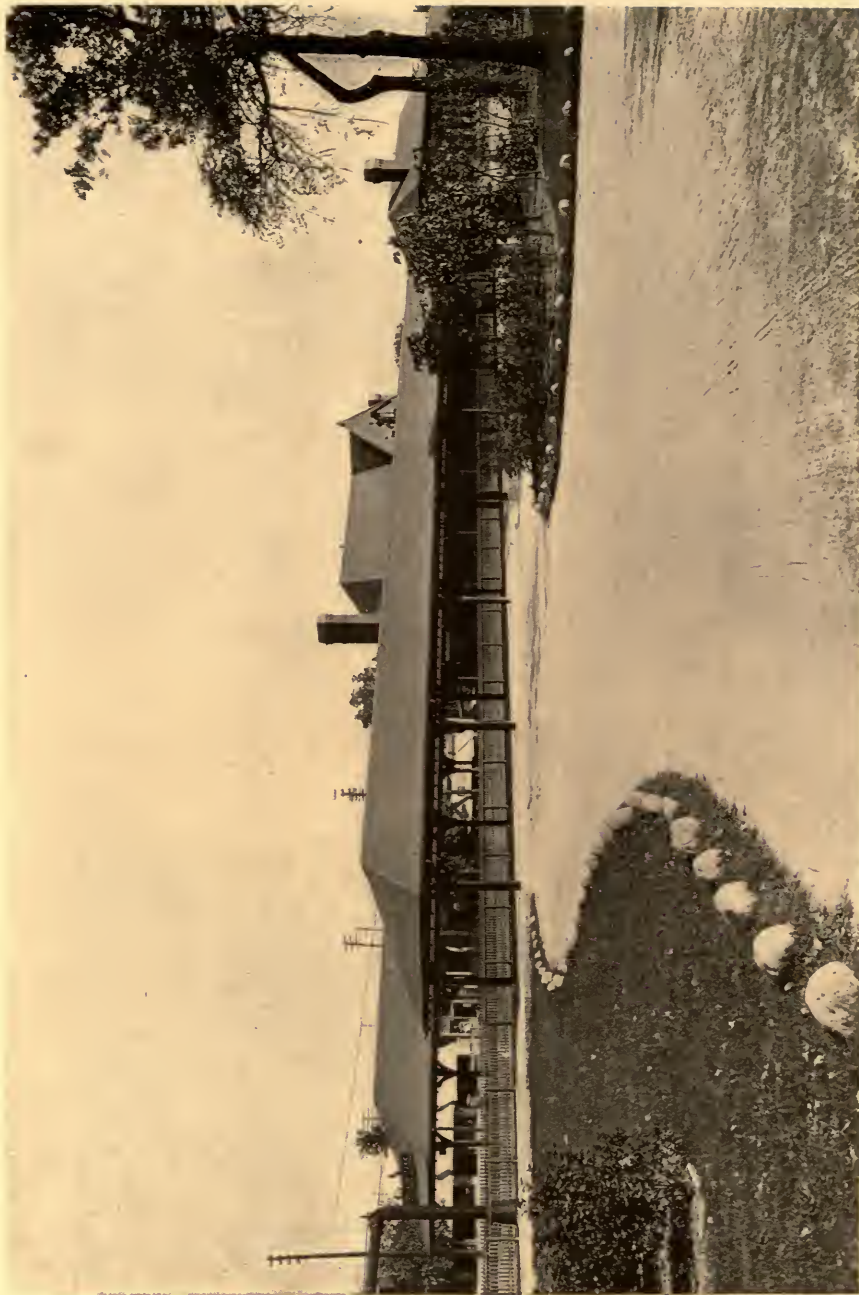
"The charm of picturesque distances, of green slopes, foliage crowned." (Page 23)



NEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
Highland Park, Ill.



THE MORaine  
Highland Park, Ill.



CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY STATION  
Highland Park, Ill. 30 minutes from Chicago



F  
549  
H63  
W55  
1911  
RARE  
BK RM

20 20  
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