



Studebaker Clubhouse at Bendix Woods County Park

Since it was first built in 1926, the Studebaker Clubhouse has gone through many changes, from living quarters for Studebaker employees, to army barracks, to a private residence and finally as present day county park offices and a nature center.

The building has withstood many changes that reflect St. Joseph County and its rich history.

Enjoy a look at the history of this unique building !

BENDIX WOODS, THE FIRST ST. JOSEPH COUNTY PARK

In 1966, the Bendix Corporation donated 175 acres of land and the Studebaker Clubhouse to the St. Joseph County Parks and Recreation Board. This donation resulted in St. Joseph County's first county park. The clubhouse is used as park offices and a nature center and over four miles of trails have been constructed through woods and fields and around ponds.



Large-flowered trillium at Bendix Woods County Park.

In 1969 approximately 20 acres of land was sold to the County Parks and the park increased to its current size of 195 acres. Within Bendix Woods is a 26-acre state dedicated nature preserve. This preserve offers one of the best spring wildflower displays in northern Indiana.

The park also offers several services to the public. Picnic sites and shelters are available for rental all year-round and a wide variety of interpretive and leisure programs are offered. Interpretive program topics range from maple syrup to pond studies to insects. Leisure program offerings include fall hayrides, cross country skiing and hiking.



CAR SIGN SALUTES LOCAL AVIATION: THE TREES THAT SPELL STUDEBAKER

In 1938 the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) planted the pine trees that spell STUDEBAKER. The design was conceived by two Studebaker engineers Michael de Blumenthal and Mel S. Niemier. The idea behind the sign was that it would serve as a salute to the growing aviation industry in the area.

It took a month and a half to plant 8,259 6-inch seedlings.

Each letter is composed of two rows of white pine forming the border and three inner rows of red pine.

The living sign spans a distance of one-half mile.

Each letter is 200 feet in width and 250 feet in length.



Aerial view of the pine trees that spell STUDEBAKER.

REFLECTIONS IN TIME: THE STUDEBAKER CLUBHOUSE



Studebaker Corporation built the clubhouse in 1926 for its employees.

1926

The Studebaker Clubhouse is built for employee lodging. The West Wing contains a cafeteria; the East Wing a lounge filled with pool tables and leather sofas; and upstairs there are 13 sleeping rooms and a caretaker's apartment. The company believes employees will not want to drive the hazardous winter roads back to South Bend.

1938

The half-mile long pine tree sign spelling STUDEBAKER is planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

1943

The U.S. Army takes over the proving grounds for military testing. The Clubhouse houses Commissioned Army officers.

1947

Studebaker converts the lower level of the Clubhouse into drafting rooms for the Cole-Vail Project. The resulting car design is reportedly the first to use McPherson Struts, a type of shock absorber that provides independent suspension to each wheel.

1961

Sherwood Egbert becomes the new president of the Studebaker Corporation. He renovates the Clubhouse for his private residence.

1966

The proving grounds are sold to Bendix Corporation. They, in turn, donate the Clubhouse and 175 acres of land to the newly formed St. Joseph County Parks and Recreation Board.

1967

The Clubhouse reopens as offices and a Nature Center for St. Joseph County Parks.



Bee Display at Nature Center.

1985

The Studebaker Clubhouse and STUDEBAKER pine tree sign are placed on the National Historic Register.

1987

The STUDEBAKER pine tree sign is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the longest living advertising sign.

1997

The Clubhouse and letters receive local landmark status from the Historic Preservation Commission.



Arched rear entry to Studebaker Clubhouse.

