

# 1930s

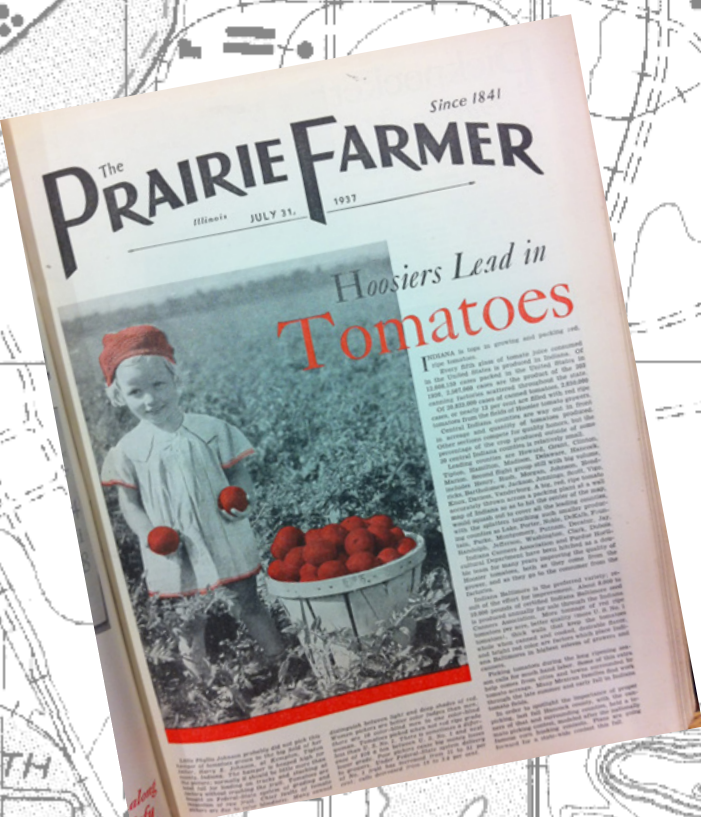
## Republic Steel

1933: Prohibition Ends. Tom Girdler of Republic Steel browses a munitions catalog to increase the stockpile of weapons already at the factory. The police have been hired as a private army with guns and ammunition paid for by Republic Steel.

May 26, 1937: Workers walk off the job at Republic Steel. Union organizers want standardized pay, overtime, and an 8-hour work day. Radical stuff to anti-union die hard Girdler.

May 30, 1937. Memorial Day. Strikers march through a field towards the Republic Steel gate at 118th and Burley and encounter a line of police. The possibility of violence hangs in the air like an incoming storm, but somehow blows over.

July 31, 1937: Tom Girdler studies grenade illustrations in a catalog, feels a little sick, and then reaches for another magazine on his desk: *Prairie Farmer*. He marvels at the different kinds of chickens available for purchase (White Leghorn!) and reads an article about the profitability of wheat in Illinois. He wonders if he may be in the wrong line of work.



# 1940s

## Republic Steel

Republic Steel management and workers support the collaborative war effort to produce the steel objects needed on the front lines of WWII. The shift to a new mode of production seems to jolt some workers out of old ruts and habits; new ideas and questions about the future of the company arise.

Spring, 1944: management approves a worker petition to plant a Victory Garden next to a Republic Steel building on the south end of the site, close to the factory gate. Tom Girdler flips open his March 4 issue of *Prairie Farmer* to an ad for Michael-Leonard seeds; makes a mental note to pick up seeds at the hardware store that evening.

Victory Garden Plot



**Vegetable Plants**  
Free 1944 Victory Garden Catalog of hardy field-grown vegetable plants that produce crops three weeks earlier than home grown plants. Tells how to spray, plant and cultivate cabbage, onion, lettuce, beet, broccoli, tomato, potato, eggplant and pepper plants. Write for your catalog today.  
F. D. Fulwood Co., Tifton, Ga.  
**Victory Garden Plants.** Get earlier and better yields with our field-grown vegetable plants. Free 1944 color catalog of cabbage, onion, lettuce, beet, broccoli, cauliflower, potato, eggplant, pepper plants.  
Piedmont Plant Co., Albany, Ga.  
**Frostproof Cabbage and onion plants** now ready. 300 \$1.25, 700 \$2, 1000 \$2.50, 5000 \$10. Prepaid. Get our prices on field grown state certified tomato, pepper, potato, eggplant, cauliflower, and broccoli; growing instructions free. Book your orders early, we will ship everything guaranteed.



400

# 1950s

## Republic Steel

An argument about unequal pay exacerbates racial tensions between some black and white workers, leading to ugly exchanges of words and threats of violence. Concerned about productivity, management tries to find something to bring everyone together.

A picnic is organized near the ongoing Victory Garden site, and a mixed group of home brewers discusses planting unused Republic Steel land with wheat and hops. Management is happy to encourage this peaceful collaboration. As the crop yields increase, space in the factory buildings is transitioned to agricultural use.



# 1960s

## Republic Steel

Ecological awareness, civil rights support, feminism and anti-war sentiment spread, even in unlikely places like a blue collar, midwestern steel plant. Republic Steel workers worry about steel production byproducts contaminating the beer ingredients grown on site, and the potentially unhealthy air quality around the plant.

Soil and air quality tests are conducted; changes are made to production processes to reduce toxins and prevent contaminants from leaching into the soil. Female employees and wives of male workers at the factory propose an entirely new direction for Republic: less steel, and more brewing. They anticipate many new jobs will be created for women who know their way around a farm, or an industrial kitchen and ingredient list.



[400]

# 1970s

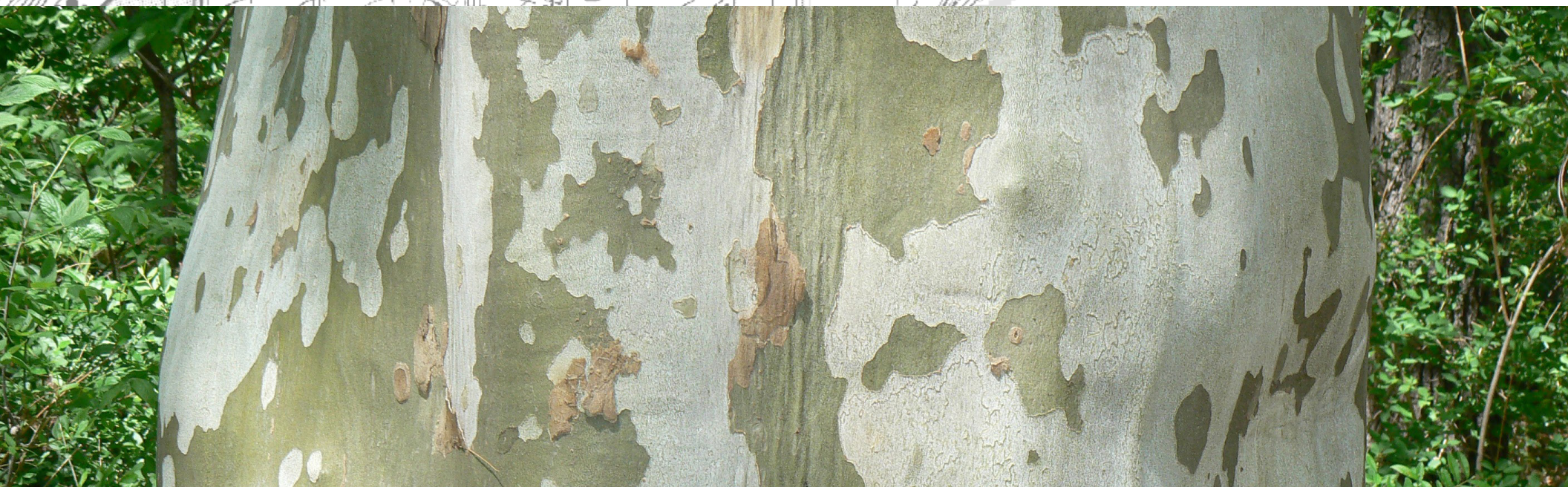
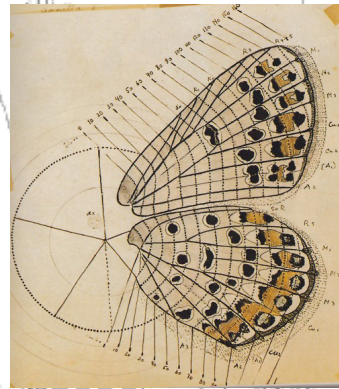
## Butterfly Republic Brewing

April 22, 1970: the first Earth Day is celebrated by the planting of a memorial tree grove responding to the diagonal line of South Burley Avenue. This site accumulated meaning for Republic workers over the years as the labor movement progressed, and stories from 1937 were shared. London Planetree trees are selected for their gloriously colorful bark and effective shade.

Management sees the writing on the economic wall, and Republic's steel operations cease. The large blast furnaces and re-usable components on the north end of the factory site are disassembled and shipped to a steel mill in Asia, and a few buildings are removed. Workers and management meet, and decide to formally establish a new company: Butterfly Republic Brewing. (In acknowledgement of the "butterfly effect" that workers trace to the non-violent encounter of 1937)

**Blast Furnaces  
and Buildings  
Removed**

**London Planetree  
Memorial Grove**



400'

# 1980s

## Butterfly Republic Brewing

The 50 year anniversary of the averted violence of 1937 is celebrated with the planting of a mix of native prairie plants in the field to the north east of the London planetree grove. A conservation organization organizes the effort, and also installs a curved path through the prairie to mark the resonating impact of the peaceful striking workers.

As a symbolic gesture, this path starts at 113th Street and S. Green Bay Ave., near the former site of Sam's Place, a tavern/dance hall where the strikers organized before marching towards the Republic Steel factory gate. Sam's Place is long gone, but the path through the prairie leads neighborhood residents to a new location for a cold drink: Butterfly Republic Brewing.

At the close of the decade, a wildlife preserve is created from 45 acres of unused land in the southwest portion of the site.

**Prairie Planting  
& Path**

**Wildlife Preserve**



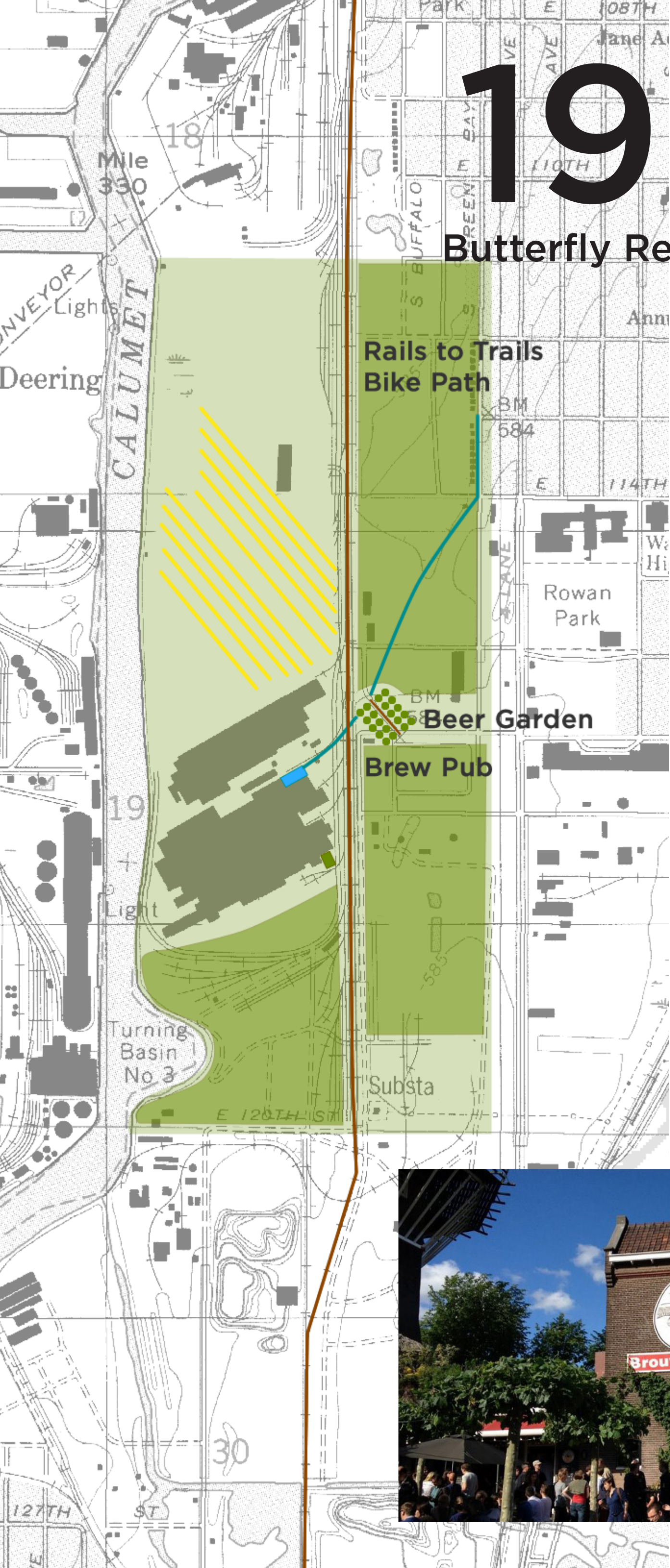
Sam's Place  
Lawrence Jacques Collection



400'

# 1990s

## Butterfly Republic Brewing



The heat wave of 1995 creates a high demand for delicious, cold beverages. Fueled by a sharp increase in beer sales, BRB expands operations to 2,000 barrels a year, creates a brew pub with a vegetarian menu, and builds a beer garden with monumental wooden tables and benches in the shade of the London planetree grove. This beer garden becomes a mecca for craft beer enthusiasts from Chicago, who are now able to reach the site easily on an extension of CTA's green line train and not worry about driving home.

The "Rails to Trails" program converts the old tracks serving the factory into a bike path that leads directly to the beer garden.



# 2000s

## Butterfly Republic Brewing

The local food movement gains traction, and agriculture efforts are expanded at BRB in response to this growing market, including an indoor vertical farm with an adjacent market. An orchard of fruit trees and a grove of sugar maples are planted, beehives are installed, and space in an existing building is converted to honey and maple syrup production.

The historic Victory Garden of 1944 is given a much needed facelift and is re-dedicated on the same day that a new area of 95 community garden plots opens near the memorial beer garden. These 10'x11' raised beds are available to neighborhood gardeners for a nominal yearly fee.

Expanded  
Agriculture

Fruit Tree Orchard

Indoor Vertical Farm

Community  
Garden

Honey & Maple  
Syrup Production





# 2010s

## Butterfly Republic Brewing

The declining population of monarch butterflies makes front page news in science journals and causes a stir amongst the Lepidoptera lovers at the brewery. In honor of its namesake, BRB establishes a butterfly research center and breeding operation in a large area of the building that houses the brewery and brewpub. Several species of *Asclepias* (milkweed) are added to the seed mix used in prairie restoration areas around the site. A small herd of plains bison (a gift from Fermilab) find a new home in the in the wildlife preserve, after a sturdy fence is added.

The best selling brews of 2012? BRB Milkweed Witbier and BRB Bisonberry Stout.

