

## Ervin Park – Tuscola’s Playground

It all started because Nathaniel G. Ervin, known as Grat, and his wife Jenny, were concerned with civic betterment and wanted to be remembered in Tuscola. Throughout his life in Tuscola, Ervin had advocated beautifying Tuscola by planting trees along the streets. It was he who planted all the hard maple trees from Sale Street north on Main Street.

Grat Ervin died during the typhoid epidemic in 1916 after an illness of three weeks. In his will he provided that about twenty acres of land at the north end of Main Street, belonging to him, be given to the city of Tuscola to be used as a public park to be named after him. This was accepted most graciously by the people of the city and by 1918, \$5,000 was raised by taxation to beautify the park.

The city immediately went to work planting trees and shrubbery, additionally two stone light fixtures were placed at the two entrances to the park. During the early 1920’s persons in and around Tuscola patronized the nine-hole practice golf course that occupied the southern half of the park. The course was dispensed with a couple of years later because improved roads made professional courses accessible and more attractive.

In 1939, an amphitheater was added to the north end of Ervin Park, built by WPA labor. In the 40’s and 50’s a festival was held every summer called “Homecoming.” It lasted about a week. It featured a tent for merchant’s displays, a carnival for the children and concerts hosting the big bands of the day – Lawrence Welk, Tiny Hill, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, to name a few. The amphitheater deteriorated and was torn down in the sixties.

A swimming pool was added to the southwest end of the park in 1957, providing a fun place for area residents to cool off on hot summer days and for the Tuscola Torpedoes swim team to practice and hold swim meets. Ervin Park has four ball diamonds that are in use all summer by baseball teams (all ages) and softball teams (all ages). The park also provides tennis courts, basketball courts, soccer fields, a walking track, horseshoe pits, a volleyball court and plenty of playground equipment. A modern playground was built by volunteers in 1995, and makes an attractive addition to the south end of the park. Tuscola’s Fourth of July Celebration is the best part of the summer activities every year. Festivities start in the park early in the day, with ballgames, mud volleyball, 3-on-3 basketball tournament, food vendors, music and is capped off with a spectacular fireworks display at dusk. With two pavilions and ample picnic tables, Ervin Park is the perfect gathering place for the citizens of Tuscola all summer long.



Entrance to Ervin Park - 1922



Pete Helm, was custodian of Ervin Park for many years and was popular with both adults and children in Tuscola and the surrounding area.



**The photo on the left, taken in the 1940's, shows, to the right, the bandstand with bleachers set up for a band concert. To the left the playground area.**  
 Picture courtesy of Pettitt Photo Service



**The photo on the right, taken in 1939, is of the amphitheater in the north end of Ervin Park being built by WPA labor. Many good times were had in this arena during the summer months.**  
 Picture courtesy of Pettitt Photo Service



**Entrance to Ervin Park - 2007**





Dennis Opperman, left, and John Piflum, just two of the many volunteers who constructed the playground in 1995. The Tuscola Woman's Club and Tuscola Rotary Club took up the project in January 1994.

*The News-Gazette, June 12, 1995*

"Prairieland Pride" playground at Ervin Park

## SUMMER FUN IN ERVIN PARK



Children enjoying the swimming pool.

*The Tuscola Journal, July 25, 2006*



Soccer has become one of Tuscola children's favorite pastimes in the Spring and Fall.

*The Tuscola Review, April 18, 2006*



Josh Knight playing Little League Baseball.

*The Tuscola Journal, June 20, 2006*



Mud volleyball tournament on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

*The Tuscola Review, July 11, 2006*



Even our four-legged friends enjoy the park. Matthew Griffith with Mango Margarita.

*The Tuscola Review, July 11, 2006*

## Wimple Park

Wimple Park was dedicated August 31, 1974. The land was part of the Raymond Wimple farm given to the city to create a park. Also, Mr. Wimple gave money for the pavilion, benches and bathrooms. Wimple Park provides a quiet getaway, a beautiful picnic area and the manmade pond is stocked for people who love to fish.

