



## Red Oaks County Park

Dog Park: 31353 Dequindre Road  
Golf Course: 29600 John R Road, 248-541-5030  
Nature Center: 30300 Hales Street, 248-585-0100  
Waterpark: 1455 East 13 Mile Road, 248-858-0918  
Youth Soccer Complex: 29601 John R Road



### Park Information

Red Oaks County Park consists of three distinct areas separated by major roadways. The 1.6-mile long park includes a Dog Park and Waterpark on the north side of 13 Mile Road, with the Golf Course, Nature Center/George Suarez Friendship Woods and a Youth Soccer Complex located south of 13 Mile.

Red Oaks' 141 acres are a unique example of repurposing otherwise unusable urban land for recreational use – the Jerry Matthews-designed Red Oaks Golf Course was built atop the George W. Kuhn Drain, a 62-million-gallon underground reservoir and drain system, servicing several surrounding communities. A golf course was a good build option since the surface of the drain could not tolerate substantial weight. Deemed an executive course, Red Oaks offers 9 holes of traditional golf as well as FootGolf.

Nestled in a unique 38-acre oasis of rich natural habitat in the midst of the thriving urban Madison Heights area, Red Oaks Nature Center's 2,400 square-foot log cabin building features seasonal displays and live native animals in a cozy atmosphere. Friendship Woods offers a 1.3-mile paved trail for exploration, including a unique new Storybook Trail. The nature center is currently closed until further notice, due to Covid-19.

Red Oaks Youth Soccer Complex, located across John R Road from the golf course, offers six soccer fields as well as a pavilion, restroom building and a playground.

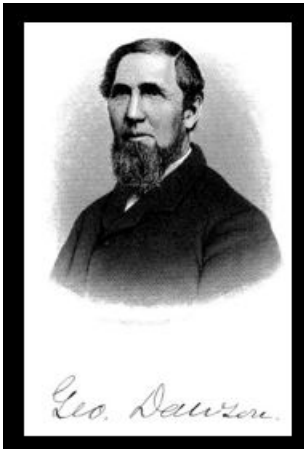
North of 13 Mile Road, Red Oaks Waterpark features Michigan's largest wave-action pool, spiraling triple waterslides, the Soak Station water playground and Spray 'n Play for the littlest splashers. The waterpark is closed in 2020 due to Covid-19.

The parks system's third dog park opened in 2010 at Red Oaks. This 5.2-acre site, accessible from Dequindre Road, offers four fenced enclosures including one for smaller dogs.

### Natural Resources



- Red Oaks is in the Clinton River Watershed and a portion of the park is located above the underground George W. Kuhn Drain (formerly Red Run Drain).
- The wet mesic flatwoods community that covers most of the forested nature center property results in seasonal flooding, including vernal pools.
- Native and non-native shrubs and trees on the north side of the nature center property provide refuge for local and migrating birds, including rare species such as Kirtland's Warbler.
- The park was likely a combination of mixed hardwood swamp, beech-sugar maple forest and wet prairie prior to the 1800s.
- Native swales have been planted at the dog park and golf course to assist with stormwater runoff and provide habitat for native pollinators.
- Some of the natural community types that can currently be identified, and are being restored on the property, include wet mesic flatwoods and mesic southern forest.

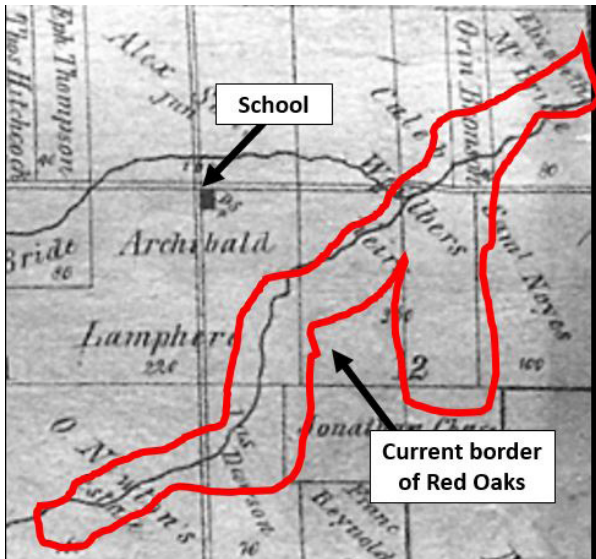


## History

In 1837 George Dawson purchased his first 40 acres of land which eventually became Red Oaks County Park. His son, George Jr., was the editor and later one of the owners of the Detroit Daily Advertiser, one of Michigan's earliest newspapers. From 1839 to 1842 he was also the official printer for the state of Michigan.



In the 1840s Archibald Lamphere bought land that would become part of Red Oaks. Sometime in the 1850s he donated a piece of farm land for a one-room school. Many years later the Lamphere School District in Madison Heights was named after Archibald Lamphere.



Edwin Dawson, grandson of George Dawson, served on the U.S.S. Forest Rose during the Civil War. He was Captain of the forecandle. Normally this meant he would have been in charge of the anchors as well as the head sails. Since the Forest Rose had no sails he was likely just in charge of the anchors!

In 1850 Elizabeth McBride came to the U.S. from Ireland with her five children. She purchased farmland in what is now the northeast region of Red Oaks. Sadly two of her sons, John and Sam, died within days of each other in 1854. They were both around 20 years old. When Elizabeth died in 1876 her son Matthew McBride continued to run the family farm. He also served as a Justice of the Peace in Royal Oak Township.



The Graves of John and Sam McBride  
Royal Oak Cemetery



The Red Run, a river with several tributaries, ran through the land that became Red Oaks when farmers began their purchases beginning in the 1830s. The river is mentioned in many early historical records. However, the river can no longer be seen at Red Oaks –it is underground! The Red Run's south branch was buried in the mid-1930s and the north branch in the late 1960s, becoming part of a storm and sanitary drain system for the fast-growing northern suburbs.