

DeHart Park Walking Path

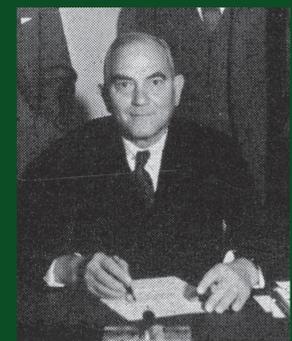
WELCOME to DeHart Park.

Below is a map showing the distance of the walking / jogging trail as well as information about the park's origin and its connection to Maplewood's history. We encourage residents to use our parks to stay healthy, socialize and connect with nature.

While many people were involved with the development of this park over the years, area residents are part of its living history as a public space. Please be responsible stewards of this unique natural and cultural environment and follow local township regulations as you enjoy the facilities.



Who was John DeHart?



John S. DeHart, known as the "Father of Maplewood," served on the Township Committee for 18 years (1919-1937), 16 of those years as Committee Chairman. He guided Maplewood through its period of rapid growth and many of the difficult Depression years. A true visionary, DeHart reorganized and expanded the municipality, instituting zoning, overseeing the construction of the fire and police headquarters and the Town Hall, all centered around Memorial Park, and was a major force behind the construction of the district's new schools. Under his leadership in 1922, the Township officially changed its name to Maplewood.

Look for this plaque in the lobby of town hall presented to DeHart just before his death:

*John S DeHart Jr
Wise and constructive civic leader
True friend and counsellor
To whom this tablet is dedicated
By his fellow citizens in grateful
Appreciation of his devotion
to the Township of Maplewood
December 2, 1937*

Before It Was a Park

The Becker family lived on and farmed this tract of land from the late 1800s until the 1930s. Louis Becker grew strawberries here and his son Norman was known for his pansies and mums displayed at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair and Rockefeller Center. In 1938 Becker sold six of the acres to Maplewood for DeHart Park and donated the greenhouse now behind town hall.

Newark Sunday Call, July 17, 1938. Courtesy of the Newark Public Library



A scenic view of the Becker farm, showing the greenhouses. Arrow points to house which will be retained by Maplewood.

Ballfields, tennis courts, a playground and a shelter house were ready in time for the 1939 season. Maplewood Community Service (the precursor to the Recreation Department) ran intra-mural softball, tennis, tether ball, and shuffleboard games as well as craft-making and pet shows.

A Moment In Time

From *Maplewood News* July 13, 1939:

"On July 5, 1939, the second day of the new DeHart Park, about 150 children turned out to see the Schroder Family Hillbilly Band. Kids painted checker boards at the tables of the Shelter House, and played games like poison ball, safe ball, and stealing the flag, from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m."



The Malowitzes gather their hay. A strange sight for suburban Maplewood, but soon that, too, will pass.

Sansone Field

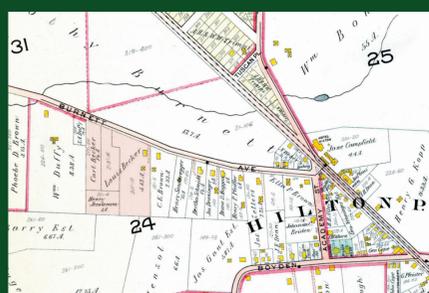
Dan Sansone – Columbia High School Class of 1979 – Dan was a member of the 1978 and 1979 baseball teams that won the Greater Newark Tournament. He was a First Team All-Oranges and All-County selection and a Second Team All-State selection. He continued his career at Seton Hall University.



DANNY SANSONE
Success is never final. Failure is never fatal. It's courage that counts. Champs



Dan passed away in 1992 and in 1993 the Township dedicated *Sansone Field* in his honor.



Source: Oranges & Essex Co. 1904 Plate 26
(Shaded area: approximate location of DeHart Park today)

This project was provided by the Township of Maplewood, with funding and support from the Maplewood Open Space Trust Fund in partnership with the Maplewood Historic Preservation Commission.

