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Résumé de l'article

Les premiers parcs de Winnipeg firent leur apparition vers la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Pour comprendre leur origine, il faut se situer dans le contexte plus large des philosophies sociales qui avaient cours alors en Amérique du Nord. Bien que leur conception et leur fonction aient évolué, les parcs furent établis pour servir les intérêts des promoteurs immobiliers et pour satisfaire aux exigences des réformateurs sociaux. Ils furent donc conçus pour accroître la valeur des terrains et améliorer la qualité de la vie à Winnipeg. Vers le milieu des années vingt, les efforts combinés des entrepreneurs privés et des pouvoirs publics avaient créé un réseau de parcs et d'espaces verts qui répondaient aux besoins et intérêts d'une grande partie de la population de la ville.

# Social Philosophy and the Early Development of Winnipeg's Public Parks\*

Mary Ellen Cavett, H. John Selwood and John C. Lehr

## Résumé/Abstract

*Les premiers parcs de Winnipeg firent leur apparition vers la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Pour comprendre leur origine, il faut se situer dans le contexte plus large des philosophies sociales qui avaient cours alors en Amérique du Nord. Bien que leur conception et leur fonction aient évolué, les parcs furent établis pour servir les intérêts des promoteurs immobiliers et pour satisfaire aux exigences des réformateurs sociaux. Ils furent donc conçus pour accroître la valeur des terrains et améliorer la qualité de la vie à Winnipeg. Vers le milieu des années vingt, les efforts combinés des entrepreneurs privés et des pouvoirs publics avaient créé un réseau de parcs et d'espaces verts qui répondaient aux besoins et intérêts d'une grande partie de la population de la ville.*

*Winnipeg's earliest parks were developed towards the end of the nineteenth century. Their origins are explained in the wider context of social philosophies prevalent in North America at the time. Although there was a shift in emphasis and an evolutionary trend in their functions, parks were established to serve the interests of real estate promoters and to satisfy the demands of social reformers. They were thus designed both to enhance land values and to improve the quality of life in Winnipeg. By the mid-twenties, the joint efforts of private entrepreneurs and public authorities had created a system of parks and green spaces that catered to the diverse needs and interests of a large proportion of Winnipeg society.*

Recreation space has been an integral part of urban centres since the dawn of civilization, yet historians have generally overlooked its importance in meeting what appears to be one of man's fundamental biological needs. The literature on contemporary recreation requirements for urban dwellers is growing rapidly but there is surprisingly little that deals with the evolution of recreation area in our cities. Gold, for example, in *Urban Recreation Planning*, makes only fleeting reference to the development of the Recreation Movement.<sup>1</sup> This paper will go some way towards redressing this situation with regard to the city of Winnipeg, but it will demonstrate that Winnipeg's parks originated as adaptations of much more widespread movements.

Tracing the evolution of urban recreation back to its early origins is well beyond the scope of this paper; the Canadian city is essentially a Victorian artifact and it is from this era that contemporary recreation facilities emerge. Victorian developments in recreation and parks have received some attention from historians, but for the most part they have been of peripheral interest, being discussed in the broader context of town planning or social reform.<sup>2</sup> The most definitive work, Chadwick's *The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, provides useful insight into the development of British, European and North American parks, indicating the

strong links between British and North American landscape design and urban parks planning.<sup>3</sup> He relates how urban recreation space was initially provided for the upper classes, and as urbanization and social reform movements gathered momentum and eventually as living standards improved, facilities were made available for the less wealthy inhabitants. Ultimately, recreation space for even the poorest segments of urban society became a matter of public concern rather than the preoccupation of a few philanthropists. Several other scholars, such as Neumeyer and Neumeyer, Kraus and Soell, have also outlined the history of urban parks in the North American context.<sup>4</sup> Their work shows how this continent's parks and recreation movements evolved in an essentially similar pattern. A definitive study of Canadian parks has yet to be written, but it is evident that parks development in Canada took much of its inspiration from the same underlying forces that shaped European and American cities.

Winnipeg's early parks were certainly developed in accordance with the North American parks movements prevalent during the period. Literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century reveals five diverse but frequently interrelated elements: the commercially oriented parks movement, the City Beautiful Movement, the residential amenity movement, the mass recreation movement and the park-playground movement.

The commercially oriented parks movement was in part a reflection of the growing power and influence of the

\* The assistance of a University of Winnipeg Research Grant is gratefully acknowledged.

city's business élites.<sup>5</sup> Its adherents recognized the material and monetary benefits to be derived from the inclusion of parks in urban areas. The new élites brought principles of business management to local government and pursued civic planning policies designed to enhance the city's attractiveness as a commercial centre.<sup>6</sup> Greenery was perceived as a means of increasing land values and the quality of city life. Thus real estate developers incorporated boulevarded streets and designated land for parks and parkways in their subdivisions, using these features to promote sales. Civic leaders made them the subject of boosterism, convinced by arguments that "visitors to a city are impressed as much by the city's trees as by its buildings, and are influenced by them in deciding if the city is a desirable one in which to live. [As well], trees are an asset, adding to property."<sup>7</sup>

Allied to the commercially oriented parks movement was enthusiasm for the techniques of the City Beautiful Movement, which advocated the beautification of the city and the eradication of urban blight. The visual preferences and cultural ideals of the movement were embodied in the neo-classical monumentality of the "White City" built for the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition. Monumental squares, massive civic centres, large formal gardens, streetscape coherence and the erection of aesthetically pleasing structures were to bring urban rehabilitation in

FIGURE 1. Happyland Park c. 1912

SOURCE: Manitoba Archives

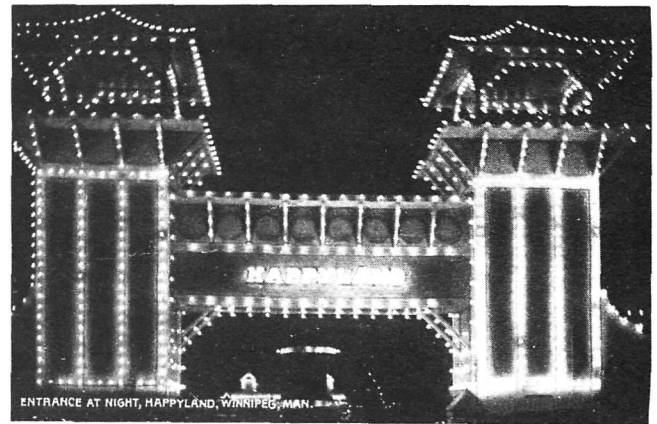
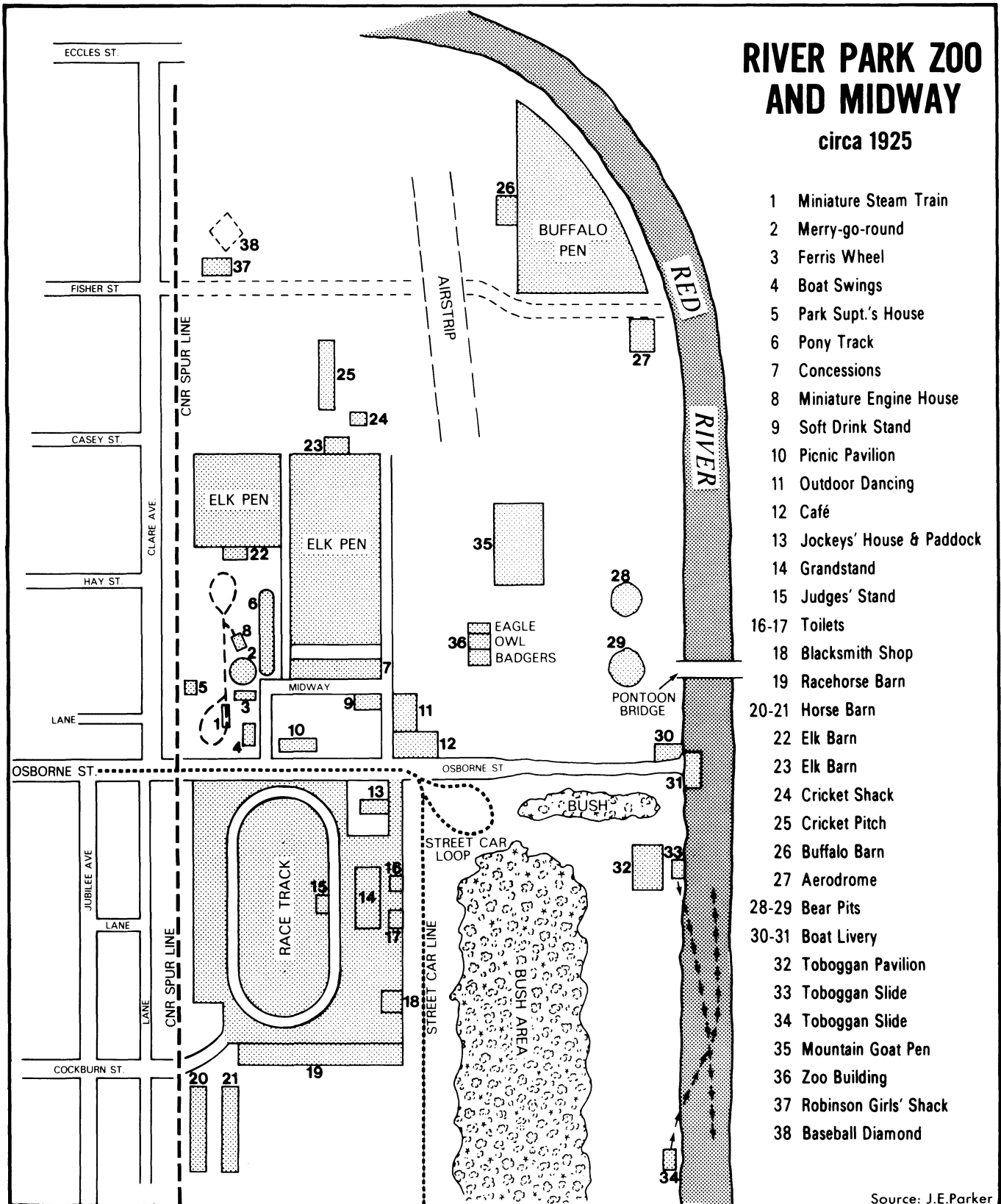


FIGURE 2. Some Fairy Creation. Happyland's electrical illuminations, which made the park seem "like some fairy creation," were a major attraction until its closure in 1914.

SOURCE: Manitoba Archives

an age of disorder and vulgarity.<sup>8</sup> As well, art leagues and municipal art commissions proposed the adornment of cities with statues, memorial arches and elaborate fountains.<sup>9</sup> Many Canadian cities adopted City Beautiful plans, usually with only limited success.<sup>10</sup>

FIGURE 3. River Park. River Park's range of attractions caused it to become the most popular park in Winnipeg in the 1920s.



Source: J.E.Parker

Another aspect of the commercially oriented parks movement was the residential amenity movement which extended the provision of greenery and quasi-rustic atmosphere into the suburbs.<sup>11</sup> Following design concepts drawn from the Garden City movement and the picturesque plans of Frederick Law Olmsted, subdivisions were laid out with winding streets and small parks to attract a wealthier clientele. These elements were seldom made available to the working class despite Olmsted's claim that the provision of open space would as certainly result in:

an increase of material wealth as good harvests or active commerce. And the reason is obvious: all wealth is the result of labor, and everyman's individual wealth is ... increased by the labor of every other in the community.... [Yet] without recuperation and recreation of force, the power of each individual to labor wisely and honestly is soon lost ... [and] the power of each individual to add to the wealth of the community is ... also soon lost.<sup>12</sup>

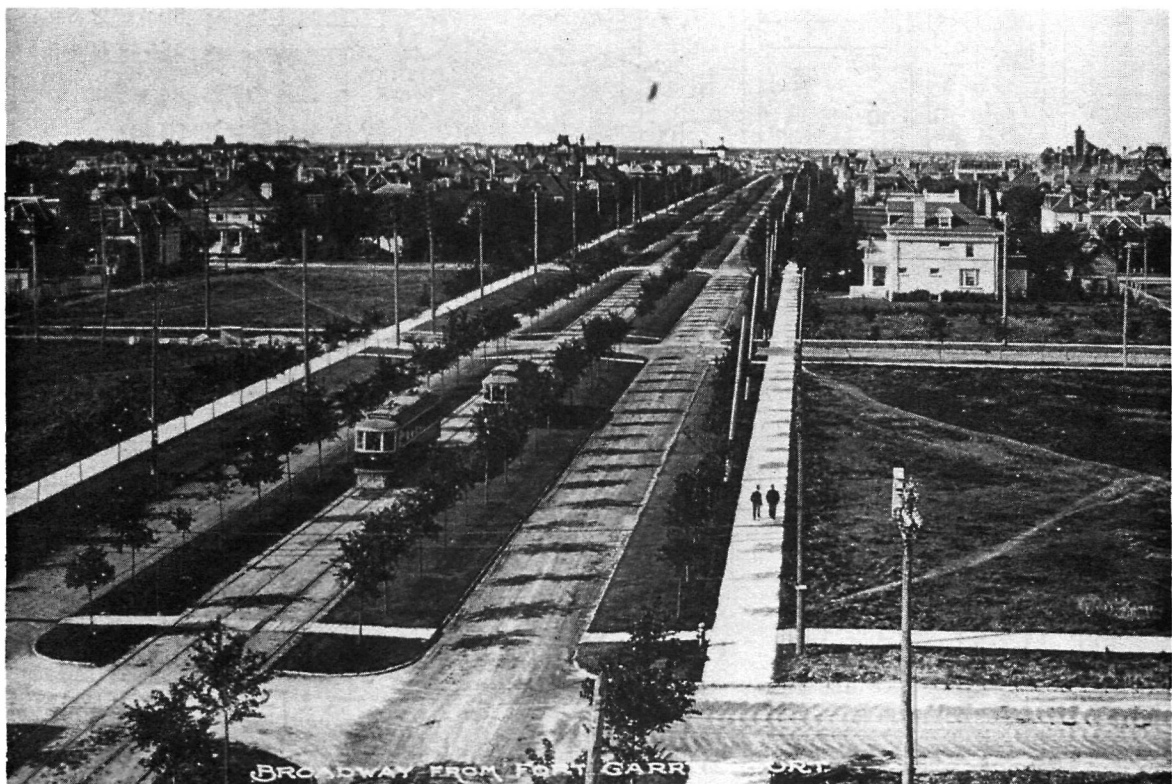
To the businessman, generally unswayed by this argument, the mass recreation movement had greater appeal. This movement was firmly allied to the rise of commercial amusement parks and the availability of cheap and rapid mass transportation. Intended to produce revenue for their developers, these parks incorporated many of the at-

tractions characteristic of popular seaside resorts: midway with shooting galleries, automatic swings, roller-coasters, "hootchy-kootchy" shows, peek shows, boardwalks, pavilions and racetracks. The aim was to entertain rather than uplift, and the urban working class embraced the new parks with enthusiasm – to the profit of their promoters.<sup>13</sup>

Although private entrepreneurs and the business elite did much to promote park development, their activities were generally frowned upon by the social reformers. Although genteel reformers supported the improvement of civic aesthetics and parks to ameliorate the drabness of industrial towns and cities, others directed their attention to the more immediate needs of the urban poor, supporting charities, church missions and schools. Some citizens, however, rudely dismissed these efforts. In the words of Thomas Adams: "it has been well said that the saloon is the poor man's meeting place [yet] ... the counter attraction that the reformer offers is often the basement of a church or school.... Cold comfort for a working man looking for recreation and an opportunity to meet his fellow workers in a social way."<sup>14</sup> Thus, to many, urban parks and playground provided an effective alternative vehicle for improving social mores and urban life. Through recreation and relaxation the physical and mental health of urban dwellers could only improve.

**FIGURE 4. Broadway Avenue.** Broadway Avenue looking west, c. 1905, showed the mark of the move to "green" Winnipeg.

SOURCE: Manitoba Archives



It was these sentiments that led to the final element of the parks movement – the park-playground movement. Parks and playgrounds were often referred to as the “lungs” of a city, and their sanitary advantages were stressed. To reformers, a park fulfilled two distinctive and important purposes: “affording relief from urban conditions ... [and] providing an opportunity for a man ... to see and to think things which the city excludes.”<sup>15</sup> Physical activity was perceived as an essential complementary element to recreation by proponents of the park-playground movement. Many reformers considered participation in sports and games essential to any child’s development into a morally secure adult. Through physical activity and team sport the child would develop the strength and stamina for survival in the city and would learn:

self-restraint, self-control, self-sacrifice, loyalty to his team or club, the value of organization, self-respect, truthfulness and obedience.... [In contrast, by] playing in the streets ... they learn – drunkenness, bad language, disobedience and general lawlessness.... Many a child has in this way picked up evil habits which ever after warped and distorted its moral character.<sup>16</sup>

It was also thought that the social and moral attributes imparted to the children in parks and playgrounds could be similarly fostered in adults. These green havens would “contribute to the pleasure and health of urban population more than any other recreative feature, and furnish the most necessary and available antidote to the artificiality, confusion, and feverishness of life in cities.”<sup>17</sup>

The development of urban parks was inspired by various motives. To some, parks signified direct pecuniary gain through enhanced property values or revenue from amusement parks, or indirect gain through increased business prospects. The social reformers did not hesitate to extol the commercial benefits of parks, seeing this as a means of achieving their more altruistic objectives. They hoped to provide a more aesthetically pleasing, more spiritually uplifting and physically healthier environment for all classes. Winnipeg’s park development was influenced by all these diverse but interrelated philosophies.

The city of Winnipeg did not formally create a parks board until the early 1890s. Before then, Winnipeg’s size scarcely merited civic preoccupation with the establishment of a park system. Nevertheless, the private sector had recognized the potential benefits of park development and people were beginning to speak of the need for civic initiatives. In Winnipeg, land for parks was designated initially during the first minor real estate boom of the 1870s.<sup>18</sup> Even at this early date private developers obviously recognized the potential benefits of parks in enhancing land values. The earliest of these parks disappeared during the frenetic real estate boom of the 1880s when the temptation to sell land must have been overwhelming.

The assignment of land for park development in subdivisions continued, but after the establishment of the Public Parks Board owners tended to sell the designated park spaces to the city. Several sites, however, were sold or donated to the city by Winnipeg’s commercial elite and became permanent city parks; for example, two plots of land were donated to the Parks Board by the Riverside Realty Company in 1908. Later developed into Riverview and Pembina Parks, both were incorporated into plans for the area so as to make the parks readily accessible to residents of the neighbourhood.<sup>19</sup>

The private sector, however, did maintain commercial amusement parks both before and for a considerable period after the Parks Board was established. Privately owned amusement parks such as River Park, Elm Park, Happyland and Hyland Park provided a wide range of attractions. River Park, for example, which charged no entrance fee, boasted a roller-coaster, a skating rink, an “Electric Riding Gallery from the World’s Fair Exhibition,” a small children’s zoo, a racing track and a baseball stadium. Like Elm Park, River Park was operated strictly according to temperance principles.<sup>20</sup>

In 1895 a fee of twenty-five cents was levied for entry to Elm Park, which catered to the less athletic elements of the population. It was founded by James Austin, owner of the Winnipeg Street Railway Company, who believed that “the area would become a popular picnic and amusement centre. Moreover, the novelty of riding on an electric car would be a further inducement to Winnipeggers to patronize the new line.”<sup>21</sup> A merry-go-round, a dance pavilion large enough to hold eight hundred people, automatic swings, a shooting gallery, bandstand and restaurant made the park “an afternoon and evening resort for all classes, offering to the meditatively inclined a solitude, to the weary the rest; to the businessman a change; to the old, peace; to the young enjoyment....”<sup>22</sup>

In early 1892, the topic of public park development was first broached in the annual report of the city engineer, where it was argued that the city’s 32,000 people needed a civic park system.<sup>23</sup> Drawing upon the example of Minneapolis, he further claimed that:

The policy in all civilized countries [is] to reserve large areas of land where the citizens of all classes can escape from the noise and smoke of the crowded streets for pure air and recreation.... [Recently] the people of this country began to realize the fact that the cities were becoming solid masses of masonry [sic], and the single houses surrounded by open grounds and gardens were disappearing and were being replaced by solid blocks of brick and stone, and that no provisions were being made for lungs for the cities.<sup>24</sup>

The need for parks, generally recognized and supported by



TABLE I  
The Development of Winnipeg's Park System, 1893-1913

Name	Date of Acquisition	Cost	Acreage
Fort Rouge Park	1893	\$ 16,531.20	4.85
Central Park	1893	20,000.00	3.5
St. John's Park	1893	20,500.00	10.5
Victoria Park	1893	11,016.00	1.66
Selkirk Park	1894	3,801.65	2.0
Dufferin Park	1894	8,377.88	2.0
Notre Dame Park	1894	4,500.00	3.8
St. James Park	1894	6,002.78	6.0
Assiniboine Park	1904	—	290.0
Weston Park	1909	8,777.04	1.84
King Edward Park	1909	10,858.59	6.2
Elmwood Park	1909	23,268.59	6.51
Machray Park	1909	11,391.32	3.6
Kildonan Park	1910	163,800.00	98.5
Sargent Park	1911	160,480.15	19.3
Kitchener Park	1911	—	30.0

	Date of Donation	Donor	Acreage
Fort Garry Gateway	1898	Hudson's Bay Company	.6
Enderton Park	1903	Charles H. Enderton	2.0
Pembina Park	1908	Riverview Realty Company	2.95
Riverview Park	1908	Riverview Realty Company	2.16
Clark Park	1909	—	1.51
Seven Oaks Park	1913	Colin Inkster	2.53

	Date of Transfer	Acreage
Alexandra Square	1906	4.0
Exhibition Grounds	1907	36.5
Cornish Park	1909	1.3
Logan Park	1909	3.1
Midwinter Park	1909	.3

SOURCES: *Annual Report of the Winnipeg Board of Parks and Recreation* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Board of Parks and Recreation, 1962), pp.39-49. City of Winnipeg Park Commission, Folio 430 (June 18, 1902). *Park and Recreation Scenes, Winnipeg, Canada* (Winnipeg: Public Parks Board, 1939).

the business élite and the politicians, became a rallying cry for social reformers. Winnipeg's society magazine *Town Topics* editorialized that

unless parks were established and speedily, half the inhabitants would quickly die of asphyxiation for want of "breathing spaces," capital would forsake the town on account of its forbidding aspect, and the babies, heaven bless them, would perish miserably for lack of room in which to exercise their chubby limbs and expand their developing lungs.<sup>25</sup>

In January 1893, the Public Parks Board was established and given a mandate to establish parks in the crowded city core, an area in which land prices were rising rapidly. By the end of 1893, the board had established four small parks, two in the centre of the city, one along the Assiniboine River and one along the Red River in the suburbs. In 1894 the board purchased a further four small suburban parks, and by 1913 it had acquired over twenty urban and suburban parks (see Table 1).<sup>26</sup>

There was no common agreement as to the role of the newly formed board. Many Winnipeggers, influenced by

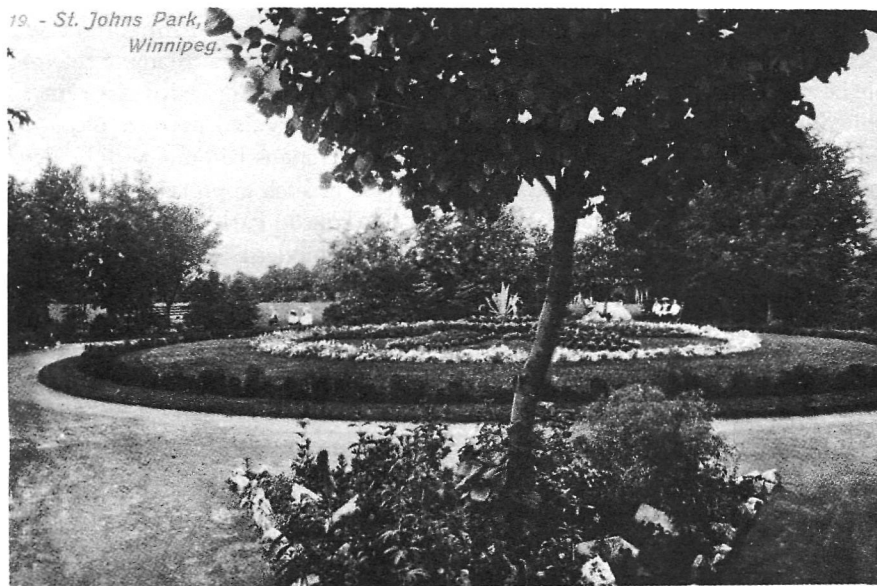


FIGURE 5. St. John's Park, c. 1905. Parks within the built-up area were often formal in layout as was St. John's Park, c. 1905.

SOURCE: Manitoba Archives

FIGURE 6. Elm Park bicycle path, c. 1900. The cycling craze of the 1890s led to the provision of cycle paths in many of Winnipeg's public and private parks.

SOURCE: Western Canada Pictorial Index,  
University of Winnipeg



the *City Beautiful* philosophy, believed that it should devote its energies to improving the aesthetics of the city and so petitioned for the establishment of parks, boulevards, parkways and large formal gardens.<sup>27</sup> Others argued for the establishment of playgrounds along with organized sports, clubs and activities.<sup>28</sup> Although some citizens viewed public parks as necessary, others promoted private parks, amusement parks and entertainment areas.<sup>29</sup> Thus, despite the importance of the Public Parks Board, citizen pressure groups and private entrepreneurs played a significant role in shaping the selection and distribution of parks in Winnipeg.

The Parks Board and its advisers were enthusiastic about the ideas of Frederick Law Olmsted, whose picturesque landscape principles of massing trees and shrubs, open lawns, natural curvilinear walks were frequently used in the layout of Winnipeg parks, boulevards and parks. These techniques were especially evident in Assiniboine Park, purchased in 1904, and Kildonan Park, established in 1910. Assiniboine Park, located along the Assiniboine River, then well beyond the limits of the city, was set up as a large suburban park "for future use as recreation and picnic grounds for the rapidly growing city ... with its boating, bathing, recreation fields ... and motor drive-ways, its huge open spaces, rolling meadows and lovely landscape ... [as] the favorite resort of the wearied citizen."<sup>30</sup> Kildonan Park was located nearly one mile north of the city limits along the Red River in a naturally beautiful site with "rank vegetation ... acres of breast high ferns, and the huge masses of grape vine and bittersweet hanging from the tree tops, suggest[ive of] the tropics rather than rigorous Manitoba."<sup>31</sup> To complement the site, numerous



driveways and bridges were built to transform the park into a showplace. These two suburban parks were designed “to place within the reach of the people of a city the enjoyment of such a measure as is practicable of pleasing rural scenery ... that is broad and natural and beautiful.”<sup>32</sup> Two other suburban parks, Fort Garry Park and St. Vital Park, were added in the southern sector of the city along the Red River after World War I.

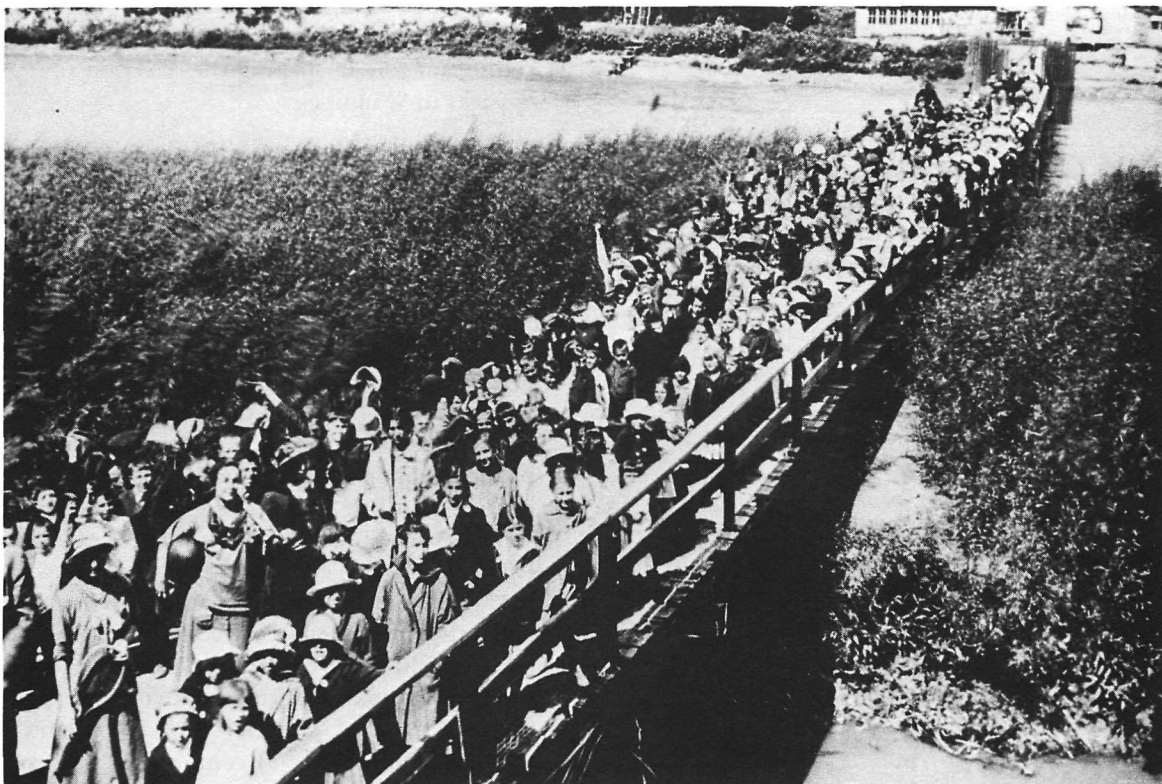
In an attempt to link these and other parks with naturally beautiful sites along the rivers, boulevards were soon planned for city and suburbs. Arthur Stoughten, a local landscape architect, deemed parks and boulevards necessary features “in the places where the multitudes live crowded together [for] beauty is an essential element of sane city life.”<sup>33</sup> Thus landscaping, boulevarding and tree planting were employed to create an attractive cityscape. These programmes were also extended into working-class districts which were “already crowded, and with the rapid growth of the city ... districts which must shortly become filled with teeming thousands of workers.”<sup>34</sup> Whereas by 1900 Winnipeg could boast of 35 miles of paved and boulevarded roads, by 1911 the city had created 105 miles of boulevards and had planted almost 25,000 trees.<sup>35</sup>

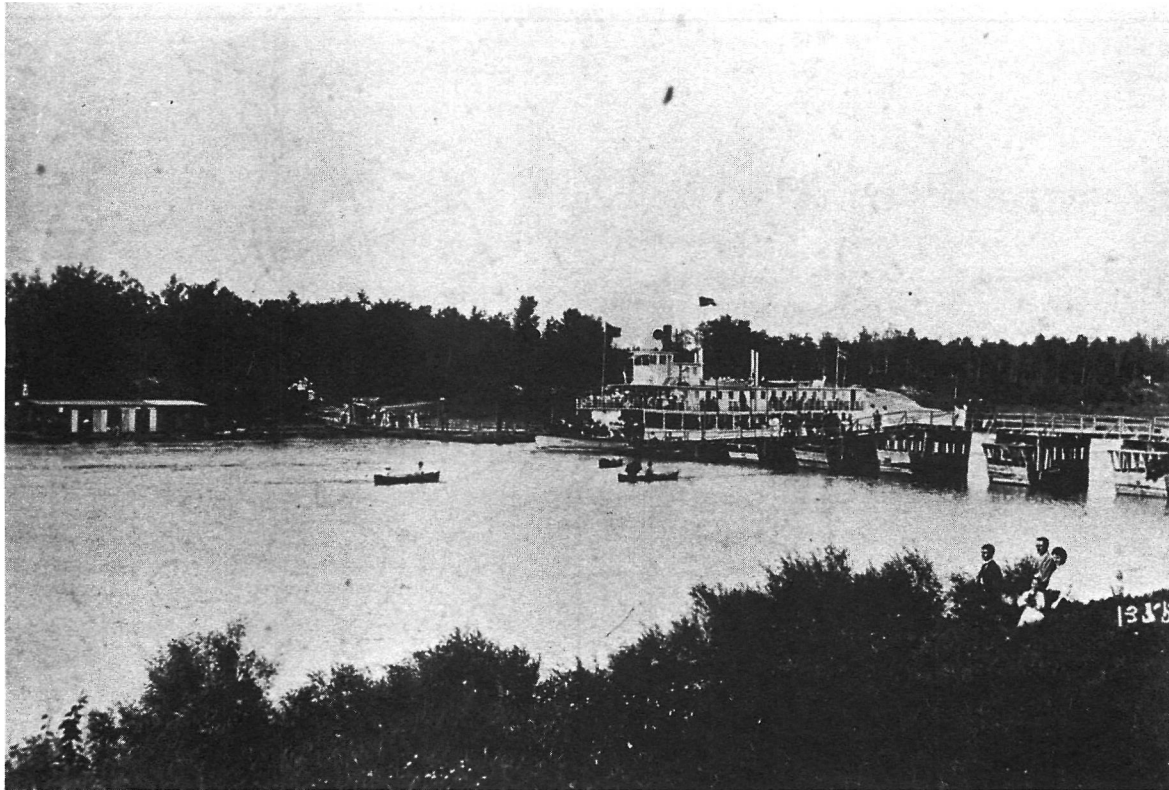
These city-financed parks and boulevards, intended to raise the aesthetic quality of the city, attracted realtors and

their clients. Access to parks was an important selling point in new housing developments. Many of the middle class, desirous of escape from the crowded city centre and anxious to secure the amenity and prestige of park-like settings, moved to subdivisions laid out with boulevards and parks. The success of such approaches to marketing was epitomized in the Tuxedo Park development. Designed in the style of the “modern” town-planning movement to attract the wealthy and the influential – and named for the exclusive New York city suburb – Tuxedo Park incorporated a “harmonius [sic] combination of city and country, dwelling house and garden, with adequate open space for light, health, and the beauty of environment.”<sup>36</sup> Through the use of landscape architecture, allowances for wide roadways and boulevards, strict building codes and generous allotments of park land, Tuxedo Park came to be regarded as “the most beautiful and exclusive district for elaborate home-building in Winnipeg.”<sup>37</sup> The presence of bridle paths, an auto course and speedway, golf course, tennis courts and wading pools – combined with the subdivision’s proximity to Assiniboine Park – added character and prestige to the area. Without the “broad sweep of tree-lined boulevards, the open stretches of green sward and the glint of the river,” it is doubtful that Tuxedo Park would have achieved its elite status.<sup>38</sup>

FIGURE 7. Picnics in the Parks. Public parks were favourite sites for church and school picnics. *En route* to Assiniboine Park in the 1920s.

SOURCE: Manitoba Archives





**FIGURE 8. Recreation on the Rivers.** Winnipeg's two rivers were early the focus of much recreational activity, as this photograph from the turn of century testifies.

SOURCE: Manitoba Archives

The impetus for park development was increased by the enthusiasm of advocates of the park-playground movement. In Winnipeg, prominent local physicians and active social reformers fulminated over the enthusiasm for aesthetic improvements at the expense of the needs of the working class:

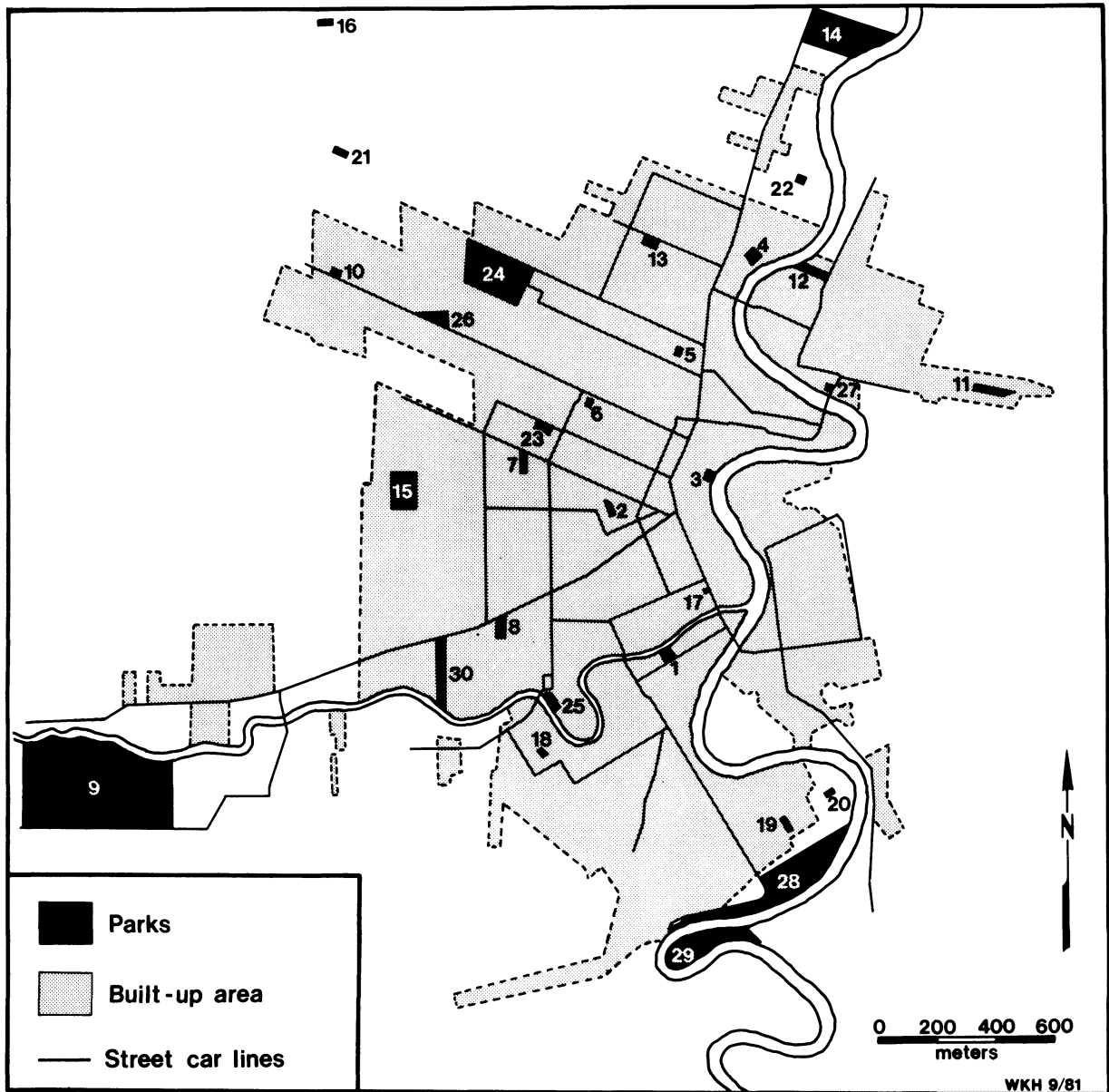
By all means cultivate the aesthetic taste by means of flowers. Bud the boulevards along Broadway on each side of the [streetcar] tracks and on other streets [as] could be adorned with them. [But] there is no need to sacrifice health to aestheticism.... Every available space the city possesses, in as many different parts of it as possible, should be prepared for the children ... to romp and play in ... to fulfil nature's requirement that they should become strong and healthy men and women.<sup>39</sup>

This cry for parks was echoed by those demanding playgrounds and athletic facilities. F.J. Billiardé, superintendent of neglected children in Winnipeg, argued that "as public education is now recognized as a public function for public support, and playgrounds are a necessity for the well-being of children, playgrounds should be on land owned by the city and operated at the city's expense."<sup>40</sup> Despite this appeal for public action, it required the initiative of the Mother's Club, which in 1908 raised \$800 through private subscription to equip the Central

School grounds, before the playground system was inaugurated.<sup>41</sup>

In 1909 city council appointed a commission to establish playgrounds and appropriated \$4,000 to purchase and equip play centres. Initially, seven playgrounds were equipped, but by 1914 the commission had opened twenty playgrounds, several in school courtyards. Many were fully fitted out with steel apparatus, public baths, steel baby swings, sand boxes and swings, all for an outlay of \$58,280.<sup>42</sup> By 1921, the Winnipeg Public Parks Board, which administered playgrounds, had established fifty-nine centres with paid leaders; twenty-six ran exclusively in the summer months and the remaining thirty-three operated year round. The playgrounds were an undoubted success, the average daily attendance during the summer of 1921 was 8,896, and in the winter it averaged 5,949.<sup>43</sup> By 1923, the number of playgrounds under paid supervision had declined to forty-seven, all run in the summertime, but the average daily attendance had reached 14,000, relatively high for a city with a population of 179,087.<sup>44</sup>

The rise in popularity of the playground paralleled the increasing interest in sports and athletic activities among all social classes. Lacrosse, cricket, snowshoeing, hockey and football teams all flourished, and soon Winnipeg was



## WINNIPEG PARKS SYSTEM (c. 1914)

### Purchased Parks

1. Fort Rouge Park
2. Central Park
3. Victoria Park
4. St. John's Park
5. Selkirk Park
6. Dufferin Park
7. Notre Dame Park
8. St. James Park
9. Assiniboine Park
10. Weston Park
11. King Edward Park
12. Elmwood Park
13. Machray Park
14. Kildonan Park
15. Sargent Park
16. Kitchener Park

### Donated Parks

17. Fort Garry Gateway
18. Crescentwood Park
19. Pembina Park
20. Riverview Park
21. Clark Park
22. Seven Oaks Park

### Transferred Parks

23. Alexandra Square
24. Exhibition Grounds
25. Cornish Park
26. Logan Park
27. Midwinter Park

### Private Parks

28. River Park
29. Elm Park
30. Happyland Park

FIGURE 9. Winnipeg's park system, c. 1914.

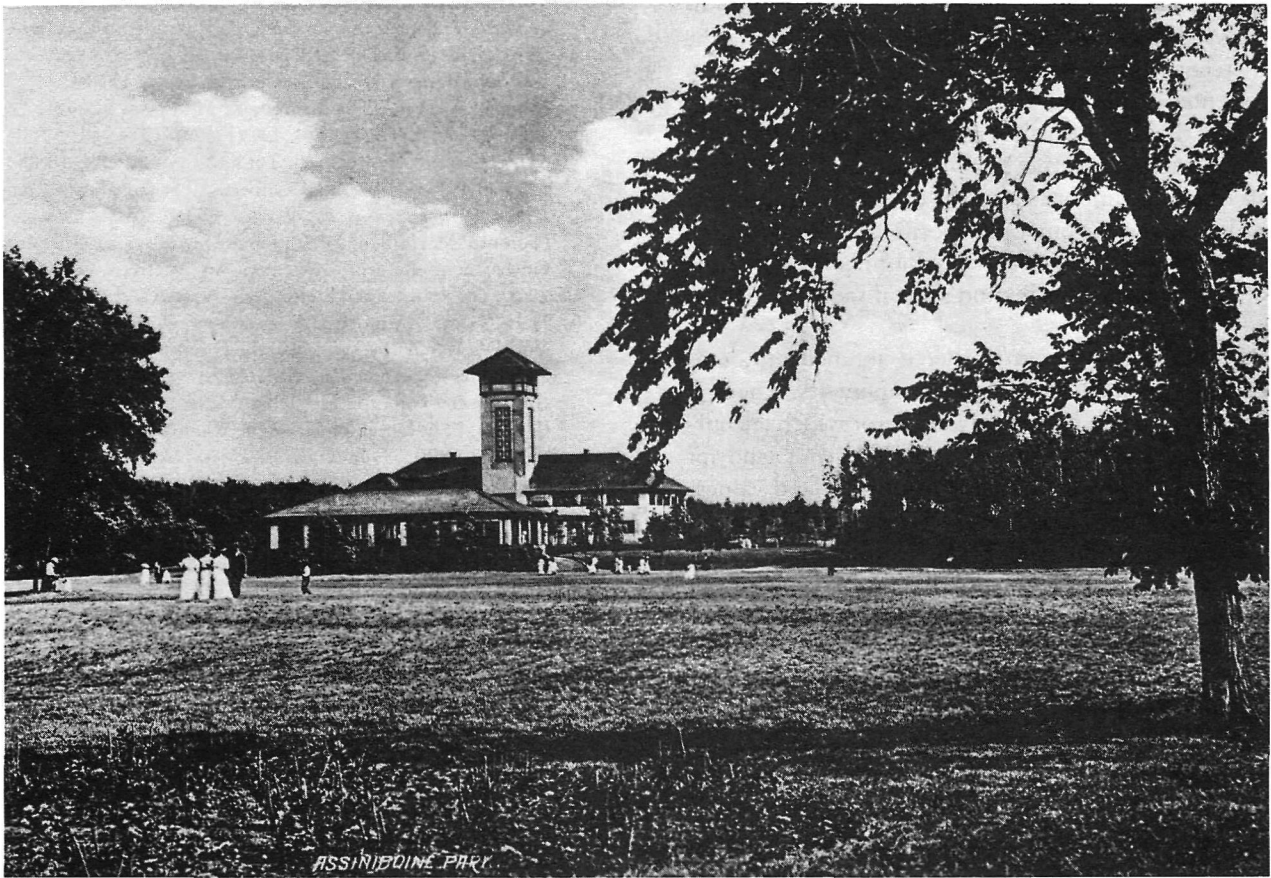


FIGURE 10. Assiniboine Park. Assiniboine Park, opened in 1909, soon became the premier public park in Winnipeg. It shows clearly the influence of Olmsted's ideas upon its designer Frederick Todd.

SOURCE: Manitoba Archives

boosted as the "home of Champions." Imperialistic hyperbole applauded this enthusiasm for physical activity, claiming it to be a

heritage from generations of sturdy ancestors [whose] ... happy combination of muscle and skill won victories. To this inherent love of manly sports is due the splendid achievements of the British arms in every quarter of the globe ... [for] in every case our adversaries lacked the stamina that results from a long course of muscular education in our national sports.<sup>45</sup>

The impact of the various philosophies advocating park development in the city was clearly evident in Winnipeg within two decades. In most cases, the motives underlying park development were a complex mixture of altruism and commercialism, fuelled by the booster mentality endemic throughout the developing North American west. Local pride in the city's achievements was evident in Winnipeg's *Dominion Magazine*.

Winnipeg, at the junction of the winding Red River and the serpentine Assiniboine is the most

lovely and picturesque city in all of Canada. Its avenues and boulevards might have been laid out by Olmsted, the King of landscape gardeners [sic], fringed as they are by sheltering trees, spreading lawns, ferns, flowers and fountains ... it is a poetic city, where in summer the hedgerows are melodius [sic] with birds and running streams dance and sing their way to the big river ... The grass covered prairie has been evolved into an elysium, where the air is salubrious, where nature revels in sylvan loveliness, and the sun shines on the just and the unjust alike.<sup>46</sup>

Not all held such sanguine views of the city, but the improvement in Winnipeg's townscape was considerable. On the west coast the *Victoria Daily Colonist* held up Winnipeg as an example of what could be achieved in the face of environmental adversity: "If so much has been done in Winnipeg where conditions are not favourable, very much more should be accomplished in Victoria..."<sup>47</sup> Despite its patronizing tone, it is evident that the *Colonist* saw the changes effected in Winnipeg's townscape as significant and lasting.



It is clear that the evolution of the early parks system of Winnipeg was largely determined by the social philosophies prevailing in Europe and North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The commercially oriented parks movement, the residential amenity movement, the City Beautiful movement, the mass recreation movement and the park-playground movement were all integral components of the development process. Each had its advocates pursuing specific and often limited goals, but together they constituted a major force in the creation of a parks and recreation system in Winnipeg.

As the parks movement gathered momentum, emphasis shifted between the various components. The first initiatives were taken by the private sector which encouraged park development merely by designating land for parks in subdivisions in the hope of raising land values. Subsequently, park lands were actively developed and promoted on a commercial basis by individual entrepreneurs. On a less overtly commercial basis, land developers took a no less significant role when they adopted ideas of landscaping and aesthetic improvement from the residential amenity and City Beautiful movements. This latter group provided strong support to those who pressed for the provision of parks and public amenities by civic governments. The assumption of responsibility for parks development by the public sector culminated in the extension of parks to the poor through the park-playground movement.

In general terms, this process evolved from the uncoordinated efforts of individual entrepreneurs to a more comprehensively structured system with local governmental involvement. Running parallel to this was increasing formalization of recreational activities. Along with increased landscaping went the addition of physical facilities and the eventual introduction of programmed and structured recreational activities. Within the parks movement in Winnipeg the profits were various. Some developers gained financially, the social reformers derived the satisfaction of achievement and the general public benefited from increased recreational opportunities.

#### NOTES

1. Seymour M. Gold, *Urban Recreation Planning* (Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger, 1973).
2. See Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. XLIX (December 1968), pp.381-99; John W. Reys, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965); Mel Scott, *American City Planning since 1890* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969); Walter Van Nus, "The Plan-Makers and the City: Architects, Engineers, Surveyors and Urban Planning in Canada, 1890-1939" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1975).
3. George F. Chadwick, *The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Architectural Press, 1966).

4. Martin H. and Ester S. Neumeier, *Leisure and Recreation* (New York: Roland Press Company, 1958); Richard Kraus, *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971); Charles E. Doell, *A Brief History of Parks and Recreation in the United States* (Chicago: Athletic Institute, 1954).
5. John C. Weaver, "The Meaning of Municipal Reform: Toronto, 1895," *Ontario History*, Vol. LXVI (June 1974), pp.89-100, and "The Modern City Realized: Toronto Civic Affairs, 1880-1915," in Alan F.J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter, eds., *The Usable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979); James D. Anderson, "The Municipal Government Reform Movement in Western Canada, 1880-1920," in Artibise and Stelter, eds., *Usable Urban Past*.
6. H.H. Gaetz, "Municipal Legislation," *Western Municipal News*, Vol. IV (March 1909), pp.1078-81, reprinted in Jack K. Masson and James D. Anderson, eds., *Emerging Party Politics in Urban Government* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972); J.M.S. Careless, "The Development of the Winnipeg Business Community, 1870-1890," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ser., Vol. VIII (1970), pp.239-54.
7. "Civic Plan for Street Trees," *Canadian Municipal Journal*, Vol. XV (May 1919), p.151.
8. For contemporary accounts of the Chicago Exposition and its varied exhibits, see H.C. Benner, "The Making of the White City," *Scribner's Magazine* (October 1892), pp.399-418; and W. Hamilton Guison, "Foreground and Vista at the Fair," *Scribner's Magazine* (July 1893), pp.29-37.
9. Despite its popularity, the City Beautiful Movement had many critics. The *Chicago Post* was scornful of the massive purchases of statuary by civic authorities: "What is the use of buying \$1,000,000 worth of public works of art annually while our anti-smoke ordinance are violated every hour of the day and our streets are never even half cleaned?" Scott, *American Planning since 1890*, p.79.
10. Van Nus, "The Plan-Makers and the City."
11. The practice of incorporating picturesque and rustic ideals into the house and the suburbs has continued to the present day as a reflection of "remembered nostalgia" for the simpler, less hurried past. David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *Geographical Review*, Vol. LXV (January 1975), pp.4-36.
12. Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, "Preliminary Report to the Commissioners for Laying Out a Park in Brooklyn, New York: Being a Consideration of Circumstances of Site and Other Conditions Affecting the Design of Public Pleasure Grounds," in Albert Fein, ed., *Landscape into Cityscape: Frederick Law Olmsted's Plans for a Greater New York City*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, [1968]), p.100.
13. For an excellent dissertation on the origins and development of that American phenomenon, the amusement park, see John F. Kassen, *Amusing the Millions: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Mill and Wana, 1978); and Robert E. Snow and David E. Wright, "Coney Island: A Case Study in Popular Culture and Technical Change," *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. IX (Spring 1976), pp.960-75.
14. "Public Parks and Playgrounds," *Canadian Municipal Journal*, Vol. XVI (November 1920), p.330.
15. Henry V. Hubbard, "Playgrounds: The Size and Distribution of Playgrounds and Similar Facilities in American Cities," *Construction* (August 1914), pp.321-30.
16. F.J. Billiardé, *Public Playgrounds for Winnipeg Children: A Series of Articles* (Winnipeg: Parliament Buildings, n.d.), pp.5-6.
17. John Nolen, "The Parks and Recreation Facilities in the United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. XXXV (March 1910), p.8.
18. On an 1877 map of the City of Winnipeg there were three parks incorporated into the suburbs: Burrows Park, Victoria Park and Mulligan (Reserve) Park. *McPhillips Brothers' Map*. 1877.

19. City of Winnipeg Archives, City Solicitors Department, folio 660(b), Parks and Playground – Fort Rouge and Crescentwood districts, City Solicitor to City Comptroller, August 8, 1908.
20. *Manitoba Free Press*, May 24, 1895; *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1941; and "Reflections," *Manitoba Free Press*, May 15, 1913.
21. Sharon P. Meen, "Holy Day or Holiday? The Giddy Trolley and the Canadian Sunday, 1880-1914," *Urban History Review*, Vol. IX (June 1980), p. 52.
22. *Manitoba Free Press*, August 31, 1895.
23. Alan F.J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p.130.
24. "Winnipeg Works: Annual Report of Mayor Ruttan, City Engineer," *Manitoba Free Press*, March 4, 1892.
25. Editorial, *Town Topics*, July 30, 1898, p.1.
26. The twenty-nine parks occupied 579.83 acres of land. "Winnipeg, The Garden City," *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 11, 1916; *Park and Recreation Scenes, Winnipeg, Canada* (Winnipeg: Public Parks Board, 1939).
27. See, for example, Arthur Alexander Stoughten, "The City Beautiful: Civic Esthetics," *Dominion* (April 1914), p. 10; and Byrtha L. Bowman, "Winnipeg as a Summer Town," *Dominion* (June 1911), pp.96-98.
28. See H.R. Hadcock, "Athletics and Sports in the West," *Western Sportsman*, Vol. II (October 1906), pp.281-82; John H.R. Bond, "Cricket and Other Sports Considered from a Philosophical Standpoint," *Western Sportsman*, Vol. II (January 1906), pp.14-16; Billiardé, *Public Playgrounds for Winnipeg Children*.
29. *Manitoba Free Press*, August 31, 1895; *Town Talk*, Vol. III (May 23, 1891), p. 17.
30. George Champion, "The Parks and Boulevards of Winnipeg," *Canadian Engineer*, Vol. XX (January 19, 1911), pp. 167-68.
31. Champion, "Parks and Boulevards of Winnipeg," p. 168.
32. Nolen, "Parks and Recreation Facilities in the United States," pp.9-10.
33. Stoughten, "The City Beautiful: Civic Esthetics," p. 10.
34. "Parks and Boulevards: Winnipeg's Main Boulevards," *Dominion* (April 1914), pp.14-15.
35. Ernest A. Blow, "Winnipeg, Capital of Manitoba in 1900: Marvelous Growth of the Metropolis of the Canadian Northwest," *Northwest Magazine Illustrated* (June 1900), pp. 10-20; Champion, "Parks and Boulevards of Winnipeg," p. 170. Not all of the streets were truly boulevards, however; many merely had trees planted on narrow "nature strips, a practice which appears to have started in Winnipeg in the 1880s.
36. F.C. Pickwell, "Tuxedo Park, Winnipeg," *Construction* (September 1926), pp.291-94.
37. "A Residential Suburb of Winnipeg in the Making," *Dominion* (April 1912), pp.135-38. See also "An Interurban Elysium – Beautiful Tuxedo Park: A Sylvan Borough – Winnipeg's Choicest Residential Retreat," *Dominion* (October 1910), pp.20-21,
38. "Residential Suburb of Winnipeg," pp. 135-38.
39. Bond, "Cricket and Other Sports," p. 16.
40. Billiardé, *Public Playgrounds for Winnipeg Children*, p.20.
41. "Playground Work in Winnipeg," *Dominion* (April 1914), p. 17.
42. "Playground Work in Winnipeg," p.17; "Splendid Growth of Playgrounds Movement in Winnipeg," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 19, 1915, p.4.
43. "Playground and Recreation Centre Statistics for 1921," *Playground*, Vol. XV (March 1922), pp.784-85.
44. "Playgrounds and Community Recreation Statistics for 1923," *Playground*, Vol. XVIII (April 1924), p. 52. A complete listing of the playgrounds has yet to be compiled.
45. "Western Sports," *Great West Magazine*, Vol. XIII (December 1898), p.205.
46. "Beautiful Canadian Homes, Number One – Winnipeg's Charming Residential Districts," *Dominion* (November 1910), pp.46-48.
47. *Daily Colonist*, (Victoria), June 2, 1907, as cited by Martin Segger and Douglas Franklyn, *Victoria. a Primer for Regional History in Architecture* (Victoria: Heritage Architectural Guides, 1979), p.27.