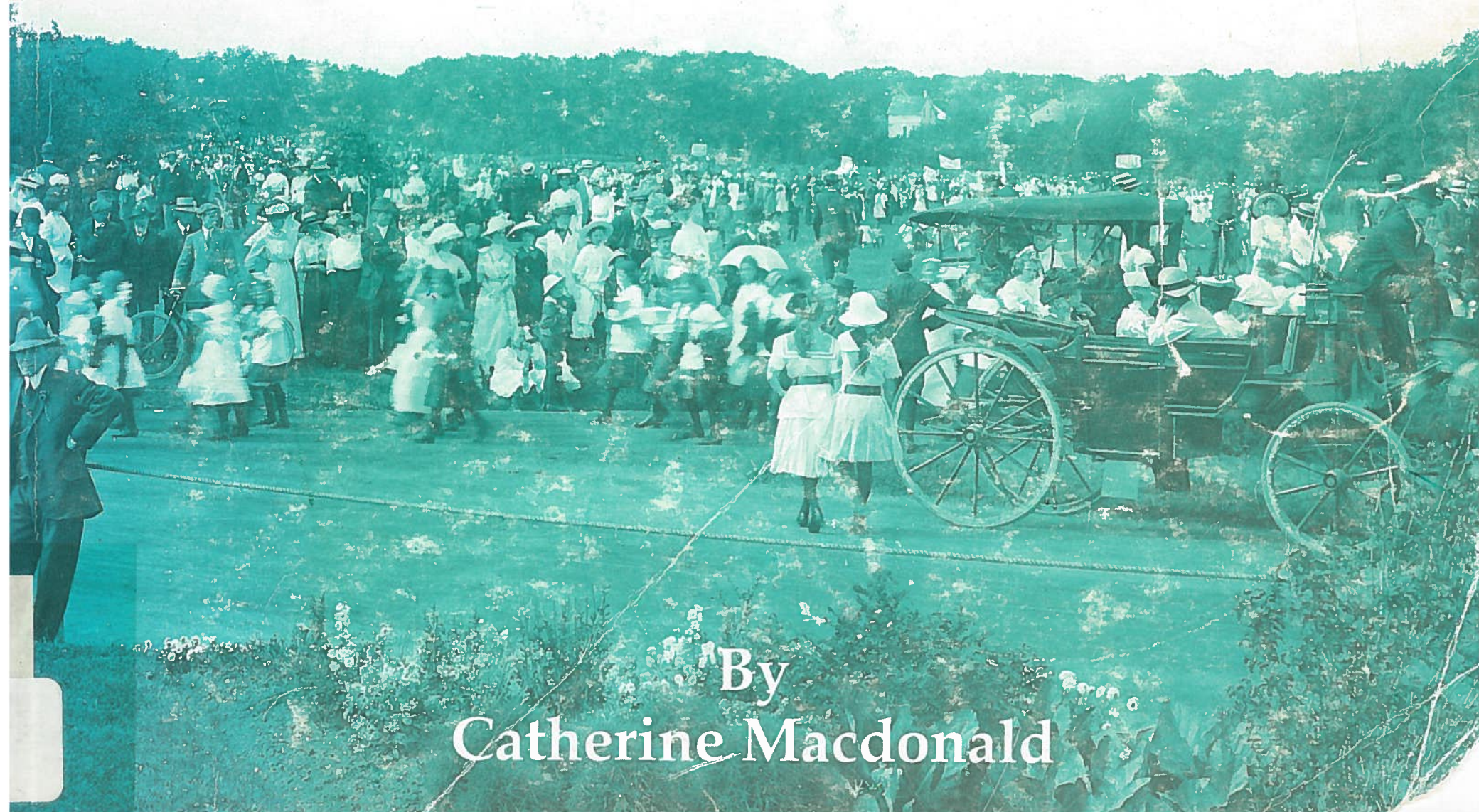


A CITY AT LEISURE

An Illustrated History of Parks and Recreation Services in Winnipeg



By
Catherine Macdonald

**A CITY AT LEISURE:
AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF
PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES
IN WINNIPEG
1893-1993**

**BY
CATHERINE MACDONALD**



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Cover Photo:

Playground sports day at Assiniboine Park c. 1910. WPRD.



GREETINGS FROM THE MAYOR

City leaders of some 100 years ago are to be acknowledged for recognizing that recreation and parks are an integral part of the social fabric of a GREAT CITY. The Winnipeg Women's Labour Council and the Winnipeg City Council advocated the establishment of the Parks and Recreation Department in 1893. Their decision set the stage for the development of the comprehensive parks and recreation system which is enjoyed by all City of Winnipeg residents today.

Through the foresight and continuing hard work of volunteers, elected officials, and employees the City of Winnipeg is acknowledged as a leader in the development of beautiful parks, innovative facilities and a full complement of recreation programs and services.

The Parks and Recreation Department can be proud of its 100 year history of contributing to the quality of life for all Winnipeggers. I look forward to the department's ongoing endeavours in maintaining Winnipeg as a healthy and vibrant city.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Susan A. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

HER WORSHIP, THE MAYOR OF WINNIPEG,
SUSAN A. THOMPSON

GREETINGS FROM THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT GENERAL MANAGER

Indeed, 1993 was a very special year for both the Parks and Recreation Department and for the citizens of Winnipeg. Our city is one of the first in Canada to celebrate 100 years of providing quality recreation programs, facilities and parks.

In commemoration of this special year the department formed an Anniversary Committee to plan and organize various activities and events. Through it's efforts the department's history and development were highlighted and chronicled throughout 1993.

Since its inception, the department has focused its service delivery on the community. This neighbourhood-based strategy has enabled every citizen of Winnipeg to reap directly the personal, social, environmental and economic benefits that are derived through the provision of parks and recreation services.

The department's mission statement reflects it's commitment to all Winnipeggers, to the satisfaction of their leisure needs and to the protection of the natural environment. It is through partnership with community groups and volunteers, that the Parks and Recreation Department continues to play a vital role in helping citizens lead balanced lives, achieve their full potential and gain life satisfaction.

This written and pictorial history depicting the department's first 100 years captures the contributions it has made to the citizens of Winnipeg and to the city at large.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J.R. Hreno', written over a horizontal line.

J.R. HRENO
GENERAL MANAGER
PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

GREETINGS FROM THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Who could ever imagine that so much could happen over 100 years. No one told us...but we certainly became quick learners. The department has a rich heritage of providing services and programs to city residents. This heritage is captured in this written and pictorial history of the department, which was written by Catherine MacDonald. It was co-ordinated by the History & Archives Sub-Committee, chaired by Carol Walaschuk and Ingi Ingaldson and with dedicated input by committee members Gunter Schoch, Jim Sesak and Bob Jones.

You will read with interest, how the department celebrated it's 100th anniversary as the committee's initiatives are highlighted at the end of the book. It is appropriate at this time to acknowledge the hundreds of hours contributed by volunteers who brought the anniversary celebrations to life through various activities and events. The initial committee set the framework for the 100th anniversary celebrations and was comprised of: Doug Ross (Chair), Shirley Blaikie, Ashley Langridge, Wendy Mackie, Gerald Mirecki, Ron O'Donovan, Bruce Richards, Gunter Schoch, Gary Solar and W.J.(Jim) Swail (General Manager).

Early in 1992, an organizing committee was formed to organize a wide range of activities and events. As co-chairs we were fortunate to have a dedicated and enthusiastic planning committee comprised of: Gary Swanson – Program; Claudia Engel Boyce & Barbara Maughan – Promotions; Phil Hay – Resources; Klaus Burlakow & Laurelyn Neilson (MPRA rep.) – Education; Carol Walaschuk & Ingi Ingaldson – Archives/History; Alice Ivanyshyn & Glenda Kebalo – Chronicle 100; Herb Rowe – CUPE Representative; and special support from Margaret Barbour, Wally

Remple, Bill Hanna and Glenda Kebalo – our infamous minute-taker. These individuals and the scores more they recruited to make the many events happen, did a fabulous job and for that we thank them wholeheartedly.

We would like also to acknowledge the support of City Council, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Winnipeg Association of Public Service Officers. In addition we would like to thank the Province of Manitoba, Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship for the financial assistance it provided towards this book.

There are many memories and legacies left with the department and the citizens of Winnipeg from the year of celebration. Notable among these are the Winnipeg Parks Rose, the department logo and this written and pictorial history book. In it readers will find an accurate and entertaining account of the department's first 100 years, augmented with hundreds of photographs. The spirit of the 100th Anniversary Celebrations will carry the department and the citizens of Winnipeg forward through the next 100 years.

WE ALL LOOK FORWARD WITH ANTICIPATION TO 1994
AND BEYOND!


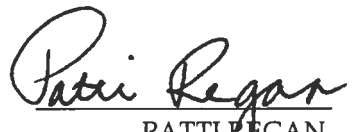
	
GERALD MIRECKI	PATTI REGAN
CO-CHAIR	CO-CHAIR
100TH ANNIVERSARY ORGANIZING COMMITTEE	

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This book was commissioned by the City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department as part of the celebrations honouring the centennial of Winnipeg municipal parks and recreation services in 1993. As I searched for research material and answers to many questions, staff members of the department always made me feel welcome and were unfailingly helpful. I never found the answers to all of my questions but I do want to thank everyone in the department who helped me along the way. Special thanks must go to Carol Walaschuk, Chair of the Centennial Committee's History Sub-committee, whose enthusiasm for the project often raised my spirits when I felt overwhelmed by the task. Ingi Ingaldson of the History Sub-committee, who co-chaired the publication phase with Carol Walaschuk, pushed the book through the final stages with determination. Tom Fred, who took on the task of caring for the department's photographic archives, went out of his way to identify and file photographs to make my job easier. Dave Harrison took on the mammoth challenge of doing the layout and desktopping. Former staff members were no less helpful. Gunter Schoch shared knowledge gleaned from more than 30 years of work in the Winnipeg parks and recreation field. Margaret Barbour gave a wide-ranging oral history interview on her years working in the Recreation Branch and on her husband's pioneering work in establishing the public recreation program in Winnipeg.

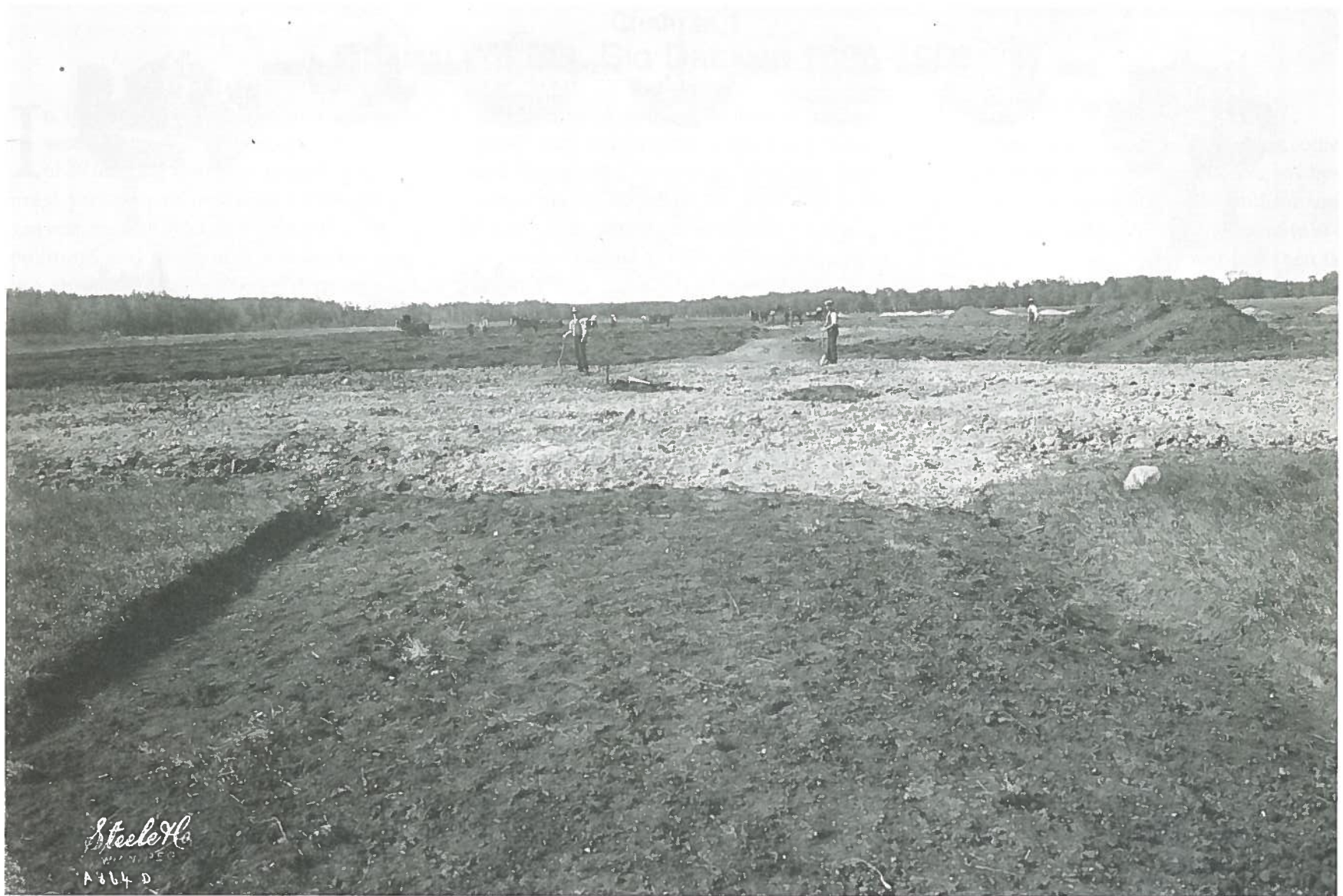
I must also thank the archivists, records managers and librarians who shared both their collections and their expertise. Thanks to: Mary Jambor and Gladys Watson of the City of Winnipeg Archives; Debora Prokopchuk and Michael Moosberger of the University of Manitoba Archives; Sheila Miller of the Legislative Library; Elizabeth Blight of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba; and Thora Cooke of the Western Canada Pictorial Index.

Paul Panton's editing and proofreading skills as well as his research legwork have made this a much better manuscript than would otherwise have been the case. Gerald Friesen made time in an already crowded schedule to read an earlier draft of this manuscript and to offer both encouragement and sound editorial advice. Sharon Segal managed the publication process smoothly and edited the manuscript with sensitivity and skill.

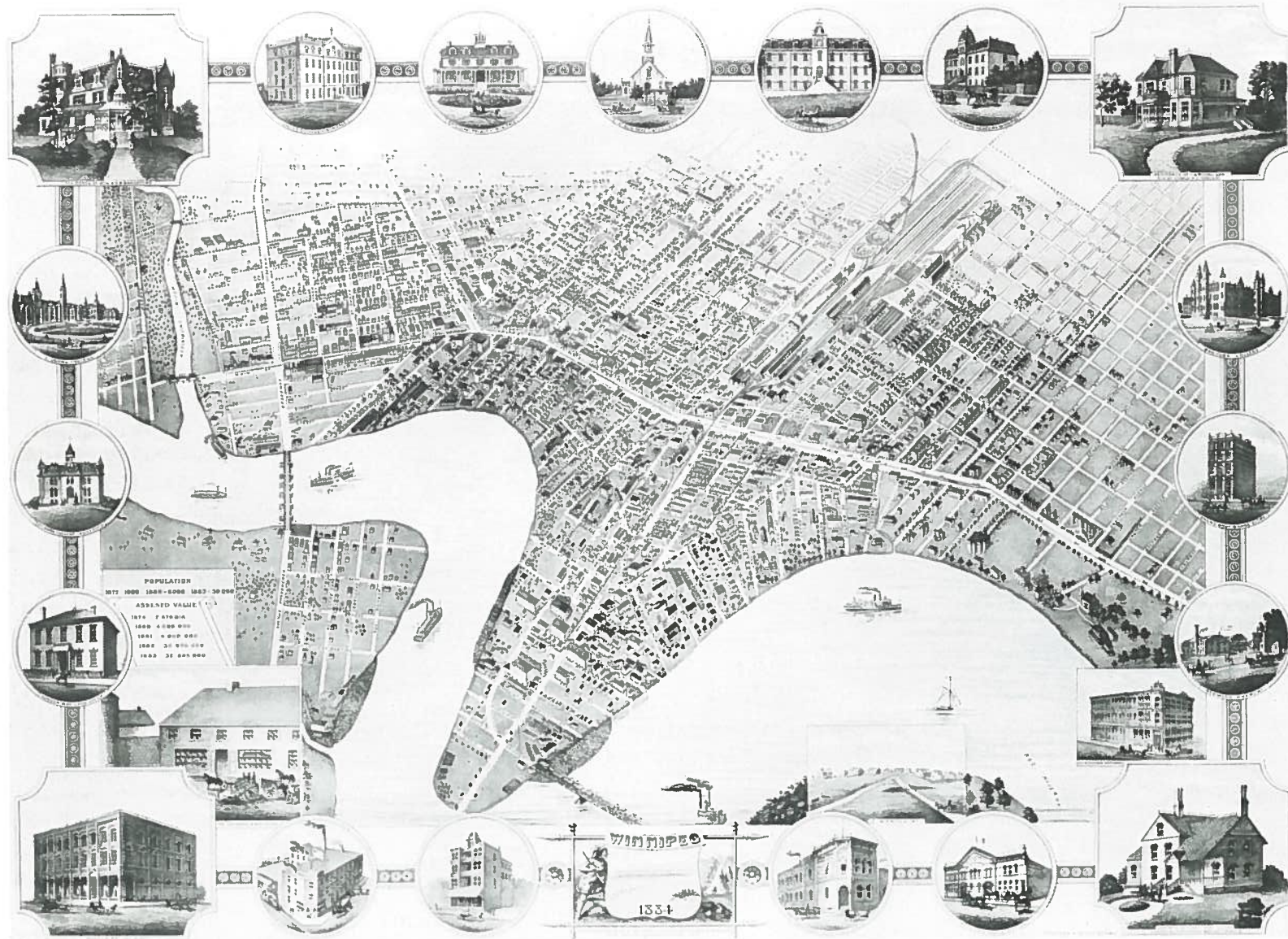
It is difficult to make a headlong run through 100 years of history without making errors and leaving out some developments. I take responsibility for these deficiencies as a small price for the enjoyment of spending some two years immersed in the parks and recreation history of Winnipeg.

Catherine Macdonald

PART I
LAYING THE GROUNDWORK
1892-1914



Winnipeg Parks Board workers clear and level land for roadways at the Assiniboine Park site, c. 1905. WPRD.



W. G. Fonseca's 1884 "Bird's Eye View". A brilliant piece of advertising, the map featured romanticized images of Winnipeg's past together with equally romanticized depictions of its 1884 commercial vitality. PAM, Map collection, N6251.

CHAPTER 1

SMALL TOWN, BIG DREAMS 1893-1903

In 1884 the Winnipeg realtor W. G. Fonseca published a “bird’s eye view” map of Winnipeg that was intended to impress prospective investors.¹ With its engraved medallions depicting Winnipeg buildings and its toy-like steamboats puffing smoke, Fonseca’s map reveals a lot about the personality of Winnipeg at the threshold of the railway era. First of all, there is a brief nod to the romance of the plains with the map title emblazoned on a chevron and flanked by an improbably bonnetted Indian to the left and teepees to the right. The chevron shows a mirage-like city beckoning on the horizon. Superimposed on the spot now occupied by Elmwood, there is an engraving of the village of Winnipeg as it was 1871. So much for the heroic past. Everything else about the map depicts the Winnipeg of steamboats, railways, sumptuous retail establishments, colleges, prancing carriage horses, go-ahead newspapers and busy factories.

A curmudgeon might have pointed out that the buildings, as depicted, were much larger and more imposing than the real things. Manitoba College loomed out of its medallion and dwarfed the carriage in the foreground. McKeachie’s Palace Stables

looked grand enough to house human rather than equine inhabitants. The population figures, too, were larger than life. Fonseca’s map claimed 30,000 inhabitants of Winnipeg in 1883. A more clear-headed estimate has placed the 1884 population at 17,000.²

This was not just advertising; it was a kind of fever dream. Fonseca and his colleagues on the Winnipeg Board of Trade had big plans for their city, dreams that were more real to them than the prosaic actuality of muddy streets and unpainted shacks. Soon, very soon, Winnipeg would come into its own as a great North American metropolis, bursting with economic might. It was a dream made all the more vivid by the frequent disappointments of the previous 14 years. The bubble was due to burst again in 1886, with Fonseca himself suffering serious losses. However, by 1890, the surviving businessmen had regained their feet, their ranks augmented by ambitious young men from the east who had experienced neither the painfully slow growth of the 1870s nor the nightmarish busts of 1882 and 1886. With Winnipeg established as the wholesale centre of the west, the dream again seemed achingly close to fulfilment.

The Public Parks Movement

It was then, in the early 1890s, that some of Winnipeg’s most prominent citizens began to talk about setting aside land for use as public parks. Exactly why the move to establish public parks happened just then is hard to pinpoint. It was not as if there was no park land available in and around the city at that time. In 1890 Winnipeg parks fell into two classes. First there was vacant green space that had simply come to be used for park or recreational purposes because it was free and not being used for any other purpose. For example, on the Fonseca map an oval ring appears just north of the present-day Manitoba Legislative Building on the spot now occupied by Memorial Park. Owned by the Manitoba government, this land was known as “the driving park”, a place where the well-to-do could show off their carriages and exercise their horses on a Sunday afternoon.

Secondly, there were park areas owned by individuals or companies and run as commercial ventures. One such area was Dufferin Park, about which little is now known, occupying two full blocks south of the CPR tracks on the Fonseca map. It may have been used as a playing field for

lacrosse, soccer or cricket. Winnipeg's favourite recreational areas of the day were Elm Park and River Park. Located south of the then developed area of the city and taking advantage of a meandering loop of the Red River, Elm Park offered a variety of recreational experiences to those who rode across to it on the ferry or, later, walked across the pontoon bridge. In a forest of native elm trees there was a midway featuring the very latest in games and amusements. Complete with tooting whistle, the merry-go-round featured a centrepiece depicting eight landscapes painted in oils, around which its prancing horses revolved. From there visitors could swing on the new automatic swings (no pusher necessary), play quoits or croquet, try their luck at the shooting gallery or coconut throwing game, or see moving pictures in the kinetoscope and photograph tent. The sounds of the midway had to fight it out with the strains of brass or bagpipe music coming from the bandstand some distance away. Quieter pleasures were available too, since trails had been cut in the deep elm forest where people could walk by the river or ride that new-fangled contraption, the bicycle. One of the chief pleasures of the natural - as opposed to the man-made - section of Elm Park was that visitors encountered a forest of mature trees quite different from the young saplings then lining city streets.³

Not far away from Elm Park, on the north shore of the river meander, was River Park. In 1890, it was the less developed of the two parks, a shadow of the full-fledged amusement park it later became. Here there was a street railway loop for the Fort Rouge streetcar, a key ingredient to the success of both Elm Park and River Park. Albert William Austin had started the street railway in Winnipeg in 1882 and the Fort Rouge line, travelling down Osborne Street, was completed sometime in the late 1880s. Austin had realized that by extending his Fort Rouge line a mile or two south of the city limits and acquiring the two wooded properties on the meander, he could establish commercial parks that would be fed by his streetcars. There was another reason for building a line on the outskirts of town. Austin wanted to convert his horse-drawn cars to an electric street railway but the city fathers distrusted the new technology and refused to allow him to run an electric tram in the city proper. By building the Fort Rouge line out to Elm and River parks, he was reducing his risk both in opening the parks and introducing the new technology in a way that was likely to gain favour with the public.⁴ As it turned out, both the parks and the electric trams became very popular.

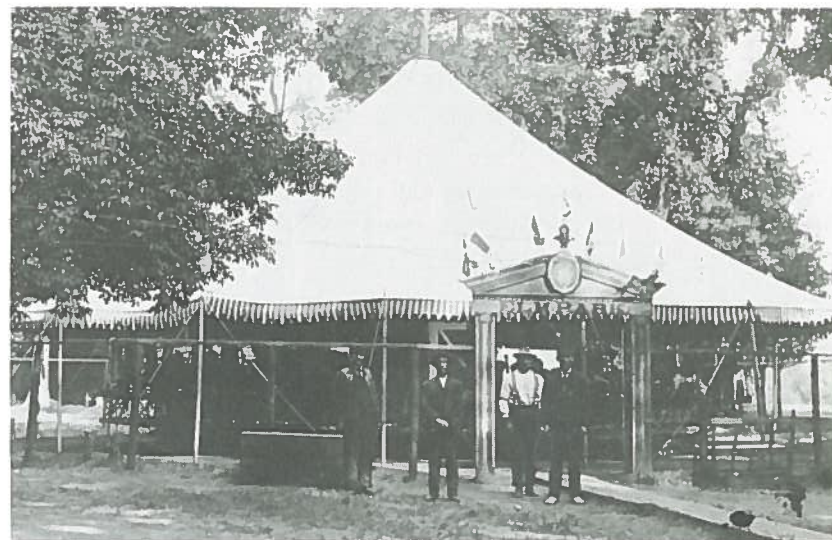
However, to the reform-minded citizens of Winnipeg, the existing parks had signifi-

cant drawbacks. Spaces like the driving park would cease to be available once the owner of the land decided to use the property for another purpose. Commercial amusement parks charged entrance fees and fees for the games and rides, not to mention the streetcar fare required to get to them. In other words, these parks effectively excluded poor people. Another problem was that Elm Park and River Park were accessible only on weekday evenings and Saturdays but not on Sundays since, at this time, there was no street railway service on Sundays. As a result, railway and factory workers, who worked long hours and had only Sundays off, were seldom able to use the parks.

The Protestant church people so prominent in the civic reform movements of the time were disturbed by the kinds of entertainment offered in amusement parks. In their view, games of chance, unsupervised dances and giddy rides exposed young people to dangerous temptations. The amusement park owners, realizing that their ventures were vulnerable to assaults from the pulpit, banned the sale of liquor in their parks and strove to reassure the church-going public that only wholesome fun was on tap there. In 1895, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that the Elm Park pavilion had originally been built for dancing but that public dances had been discontinued because,

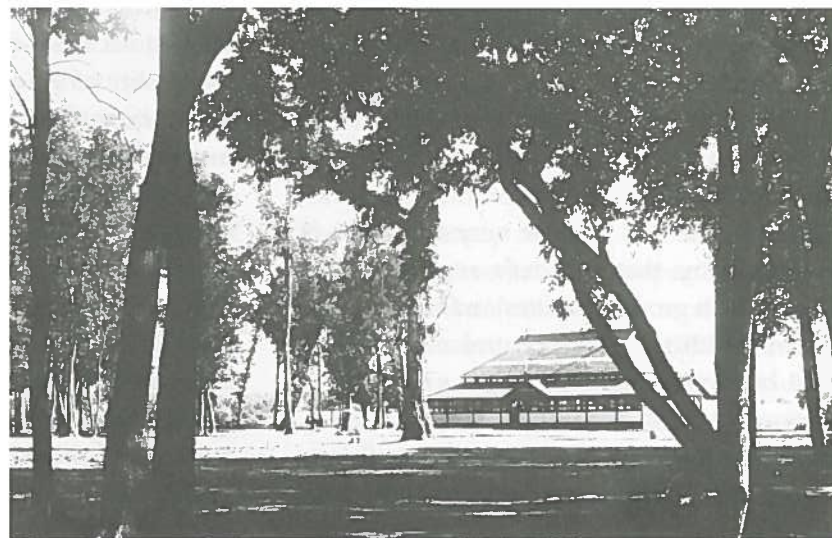


Above: Pontoon bridge to Elm Park, with park entrance in the background amidst a forest of mature elm trees, c. 1900. PAM N10323.



Above right: The merry-go-round at Elm Park, c. 1905. PAM N10330.

Right: Pavilion at Elm Park, July 1, 1890. The dances that were held in the pavilion during the 1890s had to be discontinued because the owners feared that reports of rowdy behaviour at the dances would endanger the park's reputation as a place of wholesome amusements. PAM N10322.





Tenement house on Jarvis Street, c. 1909. The centre of the city, especially the streets adjacent to the CPR yards, quickly became crowded with housing for railway workers after 1884. PAM.



Another view of Jarvis Street between Main and King, c. 1908. The poor drainage and sanitation, crowding and general squalor of the streets adjacent to the railway yards alarmed middle class reformers. PAM.

"...they threatened last year to lower the tone of the place by becoming offensively popular."⁵

Proponents of public parks wanted to establish parks and green spaces that were quite different from the commercial parks. These people had become very conscious of the problems that had been engendered by the feverish growth of cities and their accompanying industries. The central areas of cities had become congested, their green space consumed by the requirements of factories, retail and wholesale operations, streets, transport, sewers, street lighting and all the other apparatus necessary to serve large con-

centrated populations. The result was a significant decline in what would now be called the quality of life of the average city dweller, particularly that of working people and the poor. The more affluent could buy relief from these conditions. By the early 1890s, the élite of Winnipeg had begun to build large houses on even larger lots in the Hudson's Bay Reserve south of Broadway, in Armstrong Point and across the Assiniboine River in Fort Rouge. In the summers, they could escape to their rambling cottages at Lake of the Woods or Victoria Beach. Progressive opinion in Winnipeg began to see that the solution adopted in American cities

during previous decades would have to be put in motion in Winnipeg soon if the opportunity was not to be lost. That solution was to use the mechanism of city government to purchase park lands for public use, free of charge, and supported by taxpayers' dollars.

Simple altruism and a sense of fair play encouraged members of the middle class to support public parks. But so did the fear of public disorder. Discontented poor people with no place to go in their leisure hours could be dangerous to the public peace. In addition, the neighbourhoods north of the CPR tracks had very poor sanitation, drainage and sewer services, which posed a

public health threat. The provision of public parks became part of a larger effort by civic reformers to improve housing and sanitation and reduce the threat of infectious disease. Perhaps this is why there were numerous references to disease, decay and claustrophobia in the park literature of the period. Parks and green spaces, the antidote to these woes, were described as the "lungs of the city", squares and gardens as "breathing places" in which sunlight and fresh air would banish contagion. Public parks were to be places of bodily and spiritual regeneration to counteract the unhealthy and spiritually draining effects of the city.

There was, too, the simple fact that the value of properties adjacent to well-kept park land would very likely increase. This brought a smile to the faces of the many real estate entrepreneurs on City Council. The parks movement was sufficiently advanced in American cities and in the cities of eastern Canada by the 1890s to make this prediction a virtual certainty. Winnipeg had come to a stage of development, these men said, when the frontier mentality had to be set aside. Beautification of streets and the acquisition of parks, ornamental squares and driveways would enhance property values and attract investment to the city.

George Carruthers and the Public Parks Act

All of these motives - the economic value of beautification, the need for fair access to recreation and the need to counter the deleterious effects of urbanization on the working classes - came together in the person of George Carruthers. Then the alderman for Ward 6, Carruthers spearheaded the move by Winnipeg City Council to press the provincial government for legislation that would permit all municipalities in Manitoba to create parks boards and acquire, improve and maintain public parks. With his partner J. H. Brock, Carruthers had built up a successful fire insurance business in Winnipeg and owned a large brick house on Colony Street at the western edge of the city.

Had Carruthers stuck with Brock, who went on to found the Great West Life Assurance Company, he might be better known today. As it is, only a few assorted facts are known about him. He voted Conservative, was a vestryman of the Anglican Church and was a member of the Manitoba Club. He was first elected as an alderman in 1885 and served two more terms in 1892-94 and 1900-01. Sparse though they may be, these facts identify Carruthers as a member of the elite group of Winnipeg businessmen who dominated Winnipeg City Council from 1874 to the First World War.⁶ He would have shared



George F. Carruthers who, as an alderman in 1893, pushed for legislation to allow Manitoba cities, towns and municipalities to acquire and maintain land for public parks. PAM N1013.

the boosterism of Fonseca and seen parks as public investments in Winnipeg's, and very likely his own, future. And, as alderman of Ward 6, the area north of the CPR tracks, he would have been well aware of the lack of green space in that part of town. Elm Park and River Park, as well as being expensive and inaccessible during the times when working families might wish to use them,

were a long street car ride away for Carruthers' constituents. Ward 6 was then dominated by railway workers largely from Britain and Ontario. Augmented by Icelanders, Swedes and Germans, the number of these workers was increasing and their neighbourhoods were becoming crowded and depressing. Public parks would provide these areas with space for recreation to soothe the tensions then building up between the increasingly working class north end of Winnipeg and the more affluent south end.

Clearly, the provincial government, as the legislating authority for all Manitoba municipalities, was receptive to the notion of public parks. The path of the legislation through the various stages was quick. Apparently George Carruthers wrote the first draft of the Manitoba Public Parks Act. If this is so, Carruthers leaned very heavily on the Ontario Public Parks Act, passed by the Ontario Legislature in 1883⁷, which was a virtual blueprint for the Manitoba Act.⁸ Passed by the Manitoba Legislature on April 20, 1892, the Manitoba Public Parks Act enabled municipalities, on petition of a certain number of citizens, to establish public parks boards. These boards would be given the right to purchase, hold, maintain, improve, regulate and sell park land, with ownership of the land vested in the city or municipality. As in the Ontario Act, the public parks

boards in cities the size of Winnipeg were to be, ostensibly, arms length bodies in relation to City Council. They were to be composed of a mixture of council members and "citizen members", that is, citizens not elected to council but appointed to the board by City Council. Significantly, the membership of the board was to consist of the mayor, the chair of the council finance committee, the chair of the council works committee plus six citizen members. The citizen members, in other words, held the balance of power. Although this was to be a political bone of contention in succeeding years, the Ontario Act was even more citizen-oriented with only the mayor representing the council and the rest of the board consisting of six citizen members.

The Manitoba Public Parks Act, therefore, created a public parks board with a degree of independence from City Council. From the distance of 100 years, it is difficult to know what was in the minds of the framers of this legislation. During this period, allegations of "wardism" were frequently hurled at Winnipeg City Council by civic reformers. Aldermen were said to be fiercely protective of their own ward's interests at the expense of the interests of the city as a whole. Perhaps the citizen members of the parks board were intended to counteract this "wardism" since they would have no ward

turf to protect. In any case, the relative independence of the board is the most striking aspect of the legislation, a feature which was to have both positive and negative effects on the board's work in the future. As for conflicts of interest among board members, the Act expressly forbade parks board members, including aldermen, from being "pecuniarily interested, directly or indirectly, in any contract or work relating to the park or park property."⁹ There were also some curbs on the power of the boards. There was a set limit to the acreage of land that a board could purchase - 600 acres in the case of a city the size of Winnipeg and 400 acres for cities with a population of less than 25,000. Cities could, however, acquire land above this acreage limit by gift. The act stipulated that the annual levy for parks board purposes was not to exceed one-half mill on the dollar on the assessed value of all rateable and personal property.

Getting Started

With the enabling legislation in place, Carruthers wasted no time in collecting the 300 signatures needed to petition the Winnipeg City Council to put a by-law before the electorate for the creation of a Winnipeg parks board. This by-law, put to the voters in December of 1892, was passed by a large majority.

At the first meeting of the Winnipeg Public Parks Board, on February 1, 1893, the prominent brewer E. L. Drewery was elected as chairman by his fellow board members. Drewery, a citizen member, began a tradition that was seldom broken during the ensuing long history of the board, that of electing a citizen rather than a council member to the chairmanship. Drewery remained on the board for the next six years, the first five as chairman and the last as an ordinary member.

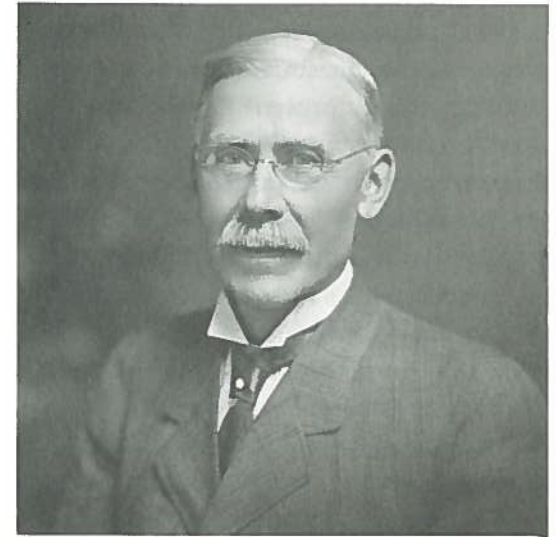
The plans of the first board were precise. As laid out by Drewery in the board's 1893 annual report, it would establish, "...small urban Parks, ornamental squares, or breathing places, throughout the City, and also a large suburban or outside Park, as a means of enjoyment and recreation."¹⁰ Because available property inside the city was quickly being bought up and was escalating in price, the board's first priority was to acquire land for the small urban parks. Every section of the city was to be provided with one of these parks, none of which was to be nearer than one-half mile nor further away than a mile from each other.

To locate small urban parks throughout the city was an unusual plan for a Canadian city of the time, one that, for example, was not then being pursued in Ontario. Ontario cities tended to concentrate on acquiring one

large "city" park, whether this had a central or a suburban location.¹¹ Drewery and his board seem to have been following a different model with their plan for a system or network of parks, which was similar to what was happening in American cities like Chicago and Boston.

Another reason for concentrating on smaller sites, rather than on securing land for the large "outside" park, was provided by the economic climate. In 1893, Winnipeg and the wider North Atlantic economy was again experiencing an economic downturn. Since the Manitoba Public Parks Act provided for the raising of capital for park purchases via the sale of debentures to the public, it was very likely that the recession limited debenture sales. As it turned out, the debentures issued to cover the purchase of small park sites in 1893 and 1894 proved difficult to sell.

In spite of this financial problem - the first of many - the board's first decade was an eventful one in which the groundwork was laid for the system of neighbourhood parks. During its first two years, the board was preoccupied with acquiring park sites. It was a hands-on business, as board members toured the available properties with the city surveyor in tow. By June 7, 1893, they had decided on three properties.¹² First was the old Balfour estate on the south bank of the Assiniboine River in Fort Rouge, purchased



E.L. Drewery, the Winnipeg brewing magnate who was elected Chairman of the first Winnipeg Parks Board in 1893 and led the board through its first five years. WPRD.

for \$16,500 and named Assiniboine Park. (In 1905 it was renamed Fort Rouge Park. At that time the board had decided to name the new suburban park Assiniboine Park and thus had to choose a new name for the neighbourhood park). The next purchase was ten acres of property north of the city centre in the parish of St. John, adjoining St. John's College. This was bought from the Anglican Church for \$15,000 and was the first parcel of land acquired for the present day St. John's Park. The Hudson's Bay Company had been asked to choose which of its considerable properties in the Hudson's Bay Reserve would be available for park pur-

poses. The land selected by the company, and offered to the board at a rather steep \$20,000, became present day Central Park. There are indications that the company did better than the board on this deal. The Central Park site was, as the board later put it, "...very low and in some parts swampy for the larger part of the summer. Part of the area surface was of 'gumbo', a quality of earth that resists cultivation more than any other class."¹³

The sale of these properties was finalized by the end of 1893, but the board had had to offer a combination of cash and debentures at five percent interest to the vendors. In early 1894, the board bought a property called Victoria Gardens south of Point Douglas on the west bank of the Red River for \$11,000 and renamed it Victoria Park.¹⁴ It was a nice site, but the fact that the CPR transfer track ran along the river bank - limiting park pleasure seekers access to the water and boaters access to the park - was a significant drawback.

Because it was felt that the city would expand westward from its then settled limit around Colony Street, six acres of land in St. James parish were purchased by the board for \$6,000 and called St. James Park. This was the board's first purchase in advance of city development. Park sites in Ward 3, which was south of the CPR tracks and west of the

then commercial centre of Winnipeg on Main Street, proved to be difficult to come by. A deputation appeared before the board to petition for a park there. After advertising in the local newspapers for offers, the board finally secured almost four acres south of Notre Dame Avenue two blocks west of Maryland Street for \$4,500.

Ironically, the first park site on which the board had received an offer of sale was Dufferin Park, the already existing privately owned park.¹⁵ Negotiations for this site which would complete the network of neighbourhood parks, proved to be the most difficult. Eventually, the board used its powers of expropriation for part of the land in 1897 but never did acquire all of the land that had comprised the old Dufferin Park.¹⁶ Dufferin Park still exists on a site bounded by Gwendoline and Gunnel streets, and Logan and Alexander avenues.

The board also purchased two acres north of the CPR tracks and several blocks west of Main Street for Selkirk Park, a companion piece for Dufferin Park since the two properties were the same size and shape. Then, in 1900, the Hudson's Bay Company donated the land on which the only remaining part of Upper Fort Garry stood. The Parks Board made the Fort Garry gateway the focal point of its new park and named it Fort Garry Gateway Park.



D. D. England, the Winnipeg Park's Board's first head gardener. During his tenure with the board England was accused of various misdeeds and finally left the job under a cloud in 1907. WPRD

These nine neighbourhood parks - St. John's, Fort Rouge, Central, Victoria, Dufferin, Selkirk, Notre Dame, St. James and Fort Garry - comprising about 33 acres in total, became the nucleus of the Winnipeg public park system. Their design and improvement occupied the first ten years of the board's life. Board sub-committees on landscape gardening, parks, finance and boulevards directed the work of a small perma-

ment staff. As head gardener, the board hired D. D. England, about whom little is now known and whose relationship with the board was to be a stormy one. By 1903 the board had three permanent year-round employees - the board secretary, the head gardener and one teamster.¹⁷ The rest of the employees were seasonal: six caretakers assigned to the larger parks for seven months of the year and casual labourers who worked during the growing season. England supervised the "outside" staff as the parks were gradually cleared, drained and filled, fenced and planted.

It is clear that England took an interest in his work and that he took every opportunity to better inform himself on parks matters. It is also clear that he had a liberal interpretation of his responsibilities and something of an eye for the main chance. The minutes are decorously worded, but in October of 1897 the board received several charges against England that it could not ignore. He was accused, "...of being pecuniarily interested in work for private parties...", of selling plants belonging to the board and getting house plants from the board nursery at Fort Rouge Park for his own use. Though most of the letters were unsigned and the accusations were not well documented, the board found that England's conduct had been careless and "extremely injudicious." He was warned that

should better documented charges be received in future, he would be fired immediately.¹⁸ England survived to fight another day, but the minutes reveal at least two more complaints. By the time he left the board's employ in 1907, again under a cloud, he had seriously undermined the board's credibility with the community.

Securing the Large "Outside" Park

In order to acquire the urban parks, the board had had to spend close to \$80,000. As a result the outside or suburban park that was part of the first board's plan had to wait until a significant part of this debt was retired. It was not until 1901 that the large outside park was again discussed seriously. In December of 1902, Winnipeggers approved a \$50,000 money by-law for the purpose of acquiring land for the outside park. By this time, the city had grown significantly and was on the brink of its most prosperous decade ever. But the question of where to locate the park was not an easy one. There was a consensus that the site ought to be on one of the rivers for aesthetic reasons and to make it accessible to boating traffic. This limited the board's options considerably and made the whole issue of a location for the park something of a political football. As if the board did not have enough problems, in

August of 1903 City Council decided that perhaps the new suburban park should also be the new site of the annual Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition. The Exhibition Board, which found its then permanent site north of the CPR tracks in the west end of the city unsatisfactory, dithered for a month or two while the Parks Board waited on them.

In the meantime, the Parks Board had invited the citizenry to comment on these matters and make their wishes known. The local press was only too happy to oblige and prospective sites were boosted by one paper and derided by another. *Town Topics*, Winnipeg's society paper, decided that Nugent's Point, the riverbank property now known as Wildwood Park in Fort Garry would be ideal, even going so far as to publish idyllic pictures. Too far away for most Winnipeggers, said *The Voice*, the local labour paper. Nonsense, replied "the Lounger", the *Town Topics* editorial writer, "...the electric cars, once they get outside the city, will run at high speed and a mile or two more or less will make no material difference in point of time taken to reach the park, and the longer ride, as a matter of fact, will be preferred by most people."¹⁹ The Lounger had weighed the advantages of prospective Assiniboine River sites and rejected them because of the impossibility of reaching them by boat.

Meanwhile, presumably because it was



John Smith's farm, c. 1890. It was located on part of the land south of the Assiniboine River which the Winnipeg Parks Board acquired in May 1904 as the site for its "large outside park", known today as Assiniboine Park. PAM N15653.

cheaper, the Parks Board itself was seriously considering a site even further south than Nugent's Point, on the east bank of the Red River in the municipality of St. Vital. The St. Boniface and St. Vital city councils were canvassed by the board regarding what tax arrangements they would request should the outside park be located in their municipalities. Special talks were also underway

with the Street Railway Company. In the end, the pendulum swung back in favour of an Assiniboine River site, on the land then occupied by the Munroe Pure Milk Company, a dairying operation. At \$39,903 the 290 acres of land was expensive, but within the stipulated price range, and featured native forest and vegetation on the terraced banks of the river as well as a small island in the river itself. Most of the acreage was native prairie which had been altered, of course, by the farming and dairying of the previous owners. The completion of the sale in May of 1904 secured the much sought after large suburban park, fulfilled the vision of the founding board members and formed a fitting conclusion to the first ten years of the board's work.



CHAPTER 2

BOOM TIMES 1904-1914

In 1904 Winnipeg was entering a decade of feverish growth that was to please the most avid of its boosters. In addition to being the railway and wholesale capital of the west, the city had been able to get a decent start in manufacturing and financial services. The muddy town had finally grown into its promotional slogans, "Gateway to the West" and "the Chicago of the North". This brief decade of spectacular growth was to leave its stamp on the city, giving it a shape and character that it retains to this day. Like most modern industrial cities, Winnipeg, in its boom era, had both geographic and social divisions that were strongly marked. It was divided by its rivers into three distinct geographical units and crudely bisected by the CPR tracks. Though Winnipeggers could travel through the city at will, language, race, ethnicity and especially class told them where they belonged and where they did not. The comparison of the "two Winnipegs" of that era - exemplified by squalid "New Jerusalem" north of the CPR tracks between Salter and Main streets and affluent Armstrong Point, secluded and exclusive on a meander of the Assiniboine River - has become almost a cliché. This contrast was stark and all too

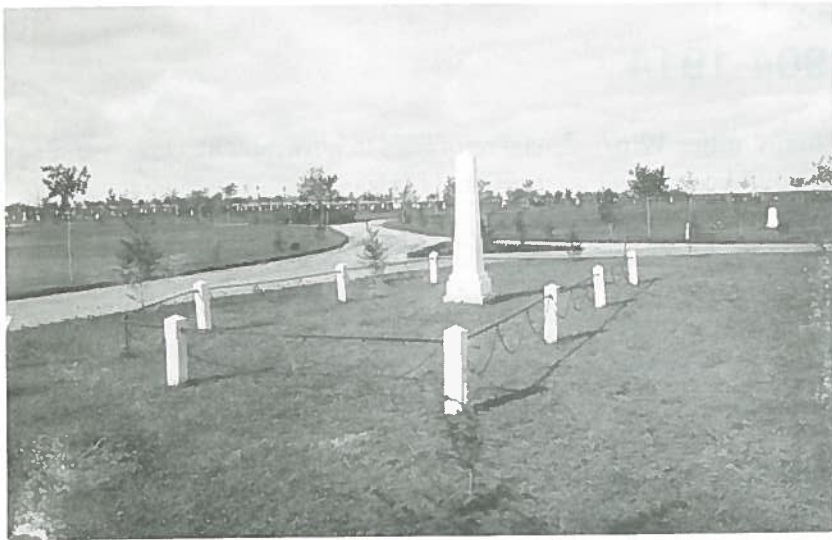
real but there were also many other Winnipegs, many distinct neighbourhoods, rich, poor and in-between, with their own shopping districts, newspapers, athletic clubs, benevolent associations, churches and synagogues. There was, for example, the Icelandic enclave located in the west end close to First Lutheran Church on Victor Avenue. There was St. Boniface, on the east side of the Red River, fighting fiercely to retain its francophone and Roman Catholic identity. There was the tiny black community composed of men who had come north to work as porters on the railway. There was Chinatown, whose cafes and laundries, too, were the stuff of stereotype. There was St. John's, full of English, Scottish and Irish working class families.

In spite of this diversity, the positions of power in business, politics, the churches, the university and polite society were still firmly in the hands of the WASP élite. And all of these institutions viewed with alarm the large number of European and Slavic immigrants who knew nothing of British traditions and law, who did not speak English and whose traditional religious practices reinforced their separateness. Efforts to "Canadianize" these people came to preoccupy so-

cial reformers in government, church and educational circles.

More Responsibilities but not, Necessarily, More Money

This was the context for the Winnipeg Public Parks Board's next era of development. With the changes in its environment, life had become more complex for the board than it had been in the 1890s. Gradually it had acquired new responsibilities, some of which it did not particularly want. City Council, in a far-sighted mood, had acquired land for a municipal cemetery back in 1877. Council had wanted to have a place to bury poor people whose families were unable to pay for burial themselves. For reasons that are lost in the mists of time, the council chose to locate the cemetery, fully three and one-half miles away from the settled part of Winnipeg. Brookside Cemetery, as it was named, became something of an albatross. It was expensive to maintain, hard to get to and visually unappealing. After the Parks Board was formed in 1893, council decided that Brookside was a responsibility that could be handled best by the new board. When Brookside was transferred into its care in 1896, the board accepted with as much grace as it

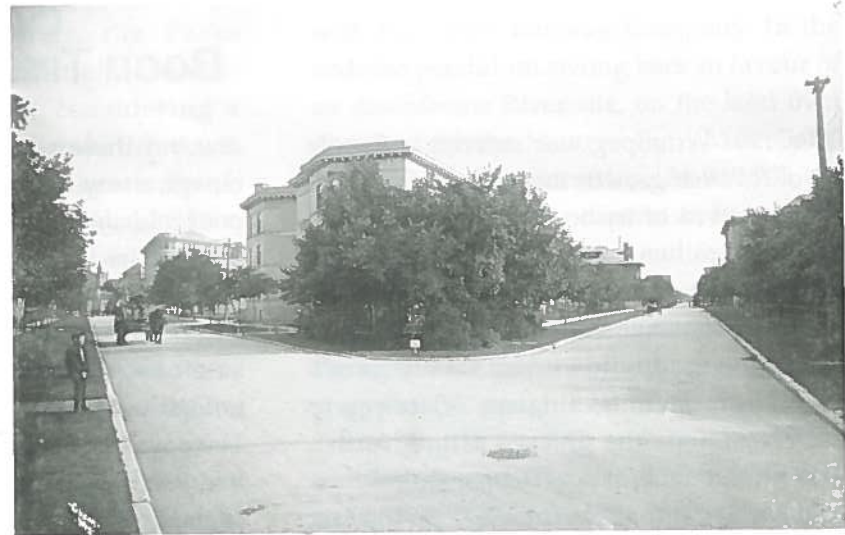


Brookside Cemetery, c. 1910. The Parks Board took over the responsibility for the city's municipal cemetery from City Council in 1896. Located far outside the city limits on a stretch of treeless prairie, the cemetery was hard to get to and depressing to visit during those early years. WPRD.

could muster. Council would, after all, supply separate funding for the upkeep of the cemetery, allow the board to use revenue from the plots for cemetery purposes and improve the road to Brookside. Cemeteries elsewhere, like the beautiful Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Toronto, had become park-like spaces where the public could happily spend a Sunday afternoon. But Brookside, in the middle of the dry bald prairie and far from existing services, was going to require a major effort to beautify. Head gardener England made a start, but the funds supplied by council would only go so far.

This was not the only responsibility that

the board performed, as it were, on behalf of council. Winnipeg had acquired quite a reputation for its treed boulevards. They were an unusual feature in a Canadian city and visitors often remarked on them. During the early years, the Parks Board controlled boulevards only on those streets particularly ceded to the board by council. After 1900, the board assumed control of all boulevards through a complex process which was laid out in the Public Parks Act. First, if a stipulated number of residents on a street wanted a boulevard constructed they had to petition the board. The board would then construct the boulevard, plant trees where appropriate



A downtown street scene, c. 1910, which shows why Winnipeg was then known as "the boulevard city". Note the width of the boulevard, the attractive corner plantings and the "keep off the grass" sign. WPRD.

and bill the council for the cost. Then council would assess the ratepayers on the street for the cost as a local improvement and the board would maintain the boulevards as required.

The board took its responsibility for boulevards very seriously; in fact, it almost became an obsession. These green islands were at constant risk from road making, sewer laying, water main construction and fire hydrant installation. On one occasion the board had to caution the city engineer that, when excavating boulevards for local improvements, he should make sure his men laid planks down on which to dump earth



City Hall square, c. 1910, showing the formal flower beds, the Queen Victoria monument and the Boy with the Boot fountain in the background. The Parks Board was responsible for the maintenance of the grounds around all civic buildings. WPRD.

and clay instead of throwing it directly onto the grass.¹ On another occasion the board asked council to prohibit the driving of cattle and horses on streets with boulevards.² Bipedes were no less dangerous. In 1899 the board employed a constable whose sole duty was to prevent people from walking on the boulevards and damaging trees.

In spite of the board's best efforts, it was evident by 1904 that most downtown treed boulevards were going to have to go. Street widening, damage by foot and vehicular traffic, the need for businesses to have unimpeded loading bays and doors, and the removal of trees at corners to give better sight lines to streetcar and other vehicle drivers had all taken their toll. Little by little, the board replaced trees and grass on downtown streets with the more practical but far less appealing concrete.

Meanwhile, in the older residential districts, the trees had matured sufficiently to present the board with a number of maintenance dilemmas. The elm had been the tree of choice for boulevard planting because of the elegant vase shape of the crown and the fact that native elms were found to be hardier than imported commercial nursery stock.³ However, elms were slow to mature and by 1908 the available stock close to Winnipeg had been depleted. As a result there were occasional experiments with other species. For

example, in 1907 Carolina poplars, a faster growing species, were planted on some streets and various species of ash and maple were tried. But the board never found a tree that it liked as much as the elm and so the elm's disadvantages had to be dealt with. They were particularly prone to the annual infestations of canker worms so familiar to current residents of the city. By 1914, the board was mounting an annual spraying program to combat the pest.⁴

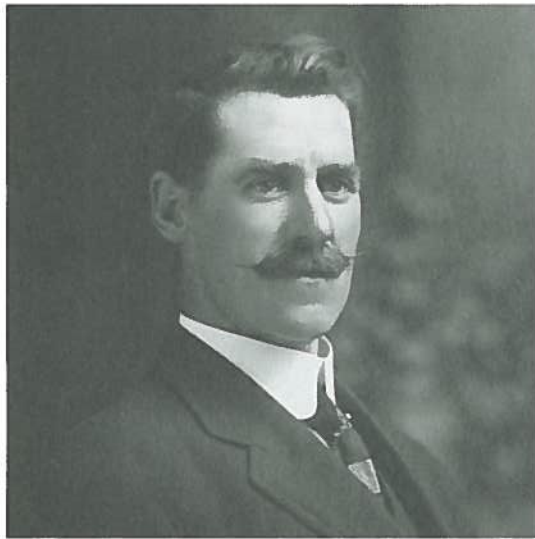
The board had also inherited the care and maintenance of various squares and gardens around civic properties: the grounds of the Carnegie and St. John's libraries in 1905, Alexandra Square near the General Hospital in 1906 and City Hall Square in 1907. Additional funds, on top of the Parks Board levy, were supplied by council for the upkeep of these properties but the board's idea of adequate funding could be quite different from that of council. By 1914, the Winnipeg Public Parks Board was established as the body in charge of all public green areas in the city.

George Champion Becomes Parks Superintendent

Meanwhile, the board was trying both to respond to these new responsibilities and to begin improvements on the new suburban park, which had been named Assiniboine Park.⁵ The neighbourhood parks had all been

designed by local Winnipeg architects. Assiniboine Park was sufficiently important that the board decided to hire the best known landscape architect then practicing in Canada. Frederick G. Todd was fresh from designing a comprehensive park plan for the City of Ottawa, a plan suitable for the nation's capital. He had apprenticed with the great Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of Central Park in New York and the giant figure of park planning and design. It was to implement parts of Olmsted's plan for Mount Royal Park in Montreal that Todd had moved to Montreal from Boston.⁶ The plan Todd provided for Assiniboine Park in 1904⁷ featured Olmstedian curvilinear perimeter roads and walkways, large open lawns, a centrally located pavilion and areas for formal flower gardens. The implementation of this plan was the board's largest undertaking to date. The number of workers would have to be increased. The budget would have to be realigned and the work spread over many years.

England's inadequacies as head gardener became more apparent as the board struggled to maintain its growing responsibilities for urban parks, boulevards and civic properties as well as to improve the new park. When he finally left in 1907, there was a concerted effort to overhaul the board's administrative structure to increase efficiency and eliminate duplication. As parks and



George Champion, whose term as Superintendent of Parks lasted 26 years. He designed some of Winnipeg's best loved parks and laid the foundation for a system of parks serving the whole urban area. WPRD. PAM.

boulevards were the board's main concerns, two superintendencies were created, one for each of these areas. In addition, Brookside Cemetery became a separate department under the superintendency of J. H. Gunn. Robert McFarlane became superintendent of boulevards.

The board lingered carefully over the selection of the parks superintendent. The problems with England had made them doubly determined to hire the best possible man. After advertising in parks publications in Canada and the United States, 40 applications were received. One was from a very promising young man in Toronto named

George Champion who had excellent references, training in horticulture and landscape gardening, and experience in park improvement and maintenance. But could he supervise and administer a whole parks system? Mayor J. H. Ashdown was dispatched to Toronto to interview Champion. The mayor was so impressed with him that he was hired on the spot.⁸

In Champion the board was to find a winning combination of dedicated energy, strong vision, wide-ranging knowledge of horticulture and park design, and simple good taste. He was born in Frampton, Dorsetshire, England and gained his training in horticulture first at Frampton Court, a local private estate, and then at the Royal Gardens at Kew, Surrey.⁹ In 1897 he emigrated to Ontario where he continued in horticultural work. During his 28 year career in Winnipeg Champion had the good fortune to inherit a parks system in its ascendancy but he also presided over its most prolonged period of decline.

Assiniboine Park Begins to Take Shape

It can only be guessed what Champion's thoughts were when he confronted the unrelieved flatness of the Assiniboine Park site. It had been cleared of unwanted trees and fenced, and Charleswood Road had been

rerouted to the south of the site, but it cannot have looked inviting to Champion's English eyes. He was not used to such flatness and even after many years of working in the prairie environment, he still made wistful references to rolling terrain elsewhere and complained mildly of the difficulty in making flat parks visually interesting. After three years of clearing work the features of Todd's design had yet to take shape and the park was not open to the public, although people did drive through it to see how the work was going. During the work season of 1907, Champion's first, the last rubbish and old fences were cleaned off the site, roadways were cut, lawns seeded and trees planted. Pathways were cut through the forest, the larger lawns summer fallowed and a large clearing in front of the proposed pavilion and close to the river, to be known as the "children's meadow", was seeded. In 1908 a pond for ducks and swans was excavated. Designed by Winnipeg architect J. D. Atchison, a two-storey pavilion was built in 1908 featuring a high tower and wide second floor balcony over which vines would later trail. It housed a dance hall, banquet hall, lunch and catering facilities. The tower cleverly concealed a 16,000 gallon water tank and electric engine for pumping water from the river.¹⁰ Until the park was attached to the city water mains following the successful completion of



The first Assiniboine Park Pavilion, c. 1910, viewed from the south. Built in 1908 and designed by Winnipeg architect J. D. Atchison, the building was beautiful but poorly constructed. PAM N4743

the Shoal Lake aqueduct, this tower water tank was the main source of water for the park.

The wide overhanging eaves of the tower and the main roof of the pavilion, the shallow cottage roof and the general feel of the building, with its broad balconies, suggested that Atchison had been influenced by the prairie style of architecture then taking hold in the American midwest. This is not surprising since Atchison got his architectural training in Chicago and clearly kept up with developments there. At a construction cost of \$19,000, the pavilion was built for summer use only and future years would show that the quality

of construction did not match the quality of the design. In 1909, a screened-in annex was added to the pavilion along with an oblong lily basin surrounded by a handsome pergola.

Though much work remained to be done, the park had reached a stage at which the public could enjoy many of its features. The official opening took place on Victoria Day 1909, amid much fanfare. Visitors were able to stroll through the formal gardens at the south-east corner, watch the swans and ducks gliding around the pond, take advantage of the picnic grounds to the west of the pavilion and watch the monkeys in the small zoo.



The pergola and lily basin which connected the Assiniboine Park Pavilion to its annex, c. 1912. WPRD.

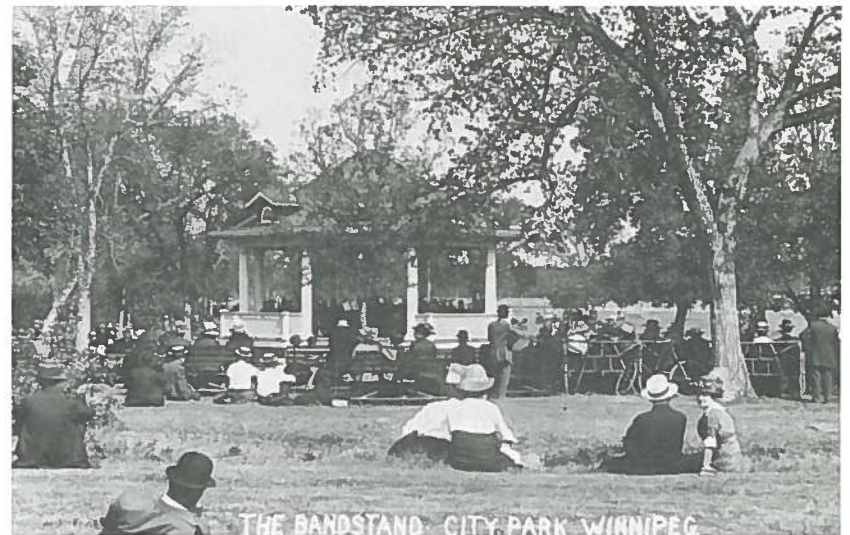
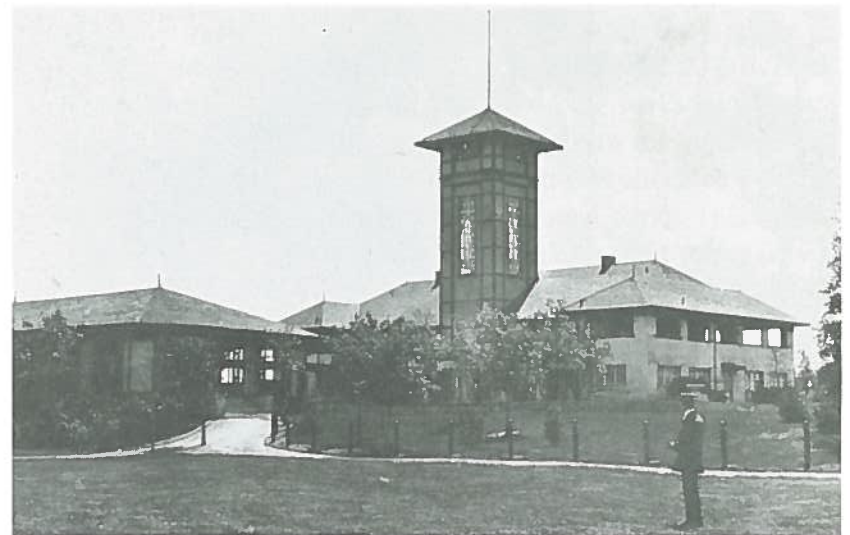
This last amenity was probably not included in Todd's plans for the park. In 1904, the board had been given the opportunity to buy several species of native animals. Without giving the matter much thought, it set aside a place in the north-west area of the park to house these animals. In succeeding years "our modest zoo" as Champion called it, was added to by donations and natural increase. It became very popular with the public in spite of the fact that the board treated it as an afterthought and devoted little planning or money to it. By 1910 the zoo housed a patchwork mix of native and exotic species including swans, prairie wolves, buffalo,



Above: Foot bridge to Assiniboine Park, c. 1912. This "temporary" foot bridge, which was installed every spring and removed before freeze-up in the fall, lasted until a permanent bridge was built in 1932. PAM N53.

Above right: Assiniboine Park Pavilion, c. 1915, viewed from the north-west and showing the pavilion annex built in 1909. PAM.

Right: Bandstand in Assiniboine Park, c. 1911. Band concerts were frequent attractions in Winnipeg parks at the turn of the century. PAM.





Pathway close to the river in Assiniboine Park, c. 1910. Although Frederick Todd's park design called for considerable clearing of existing trees and bush, the river bottom forest was left much as it had always been. WPRD.



John Wilson with his row boat, c. 1915. It was Wilson's job to ferry people back and forth to Assiniboine Park in the spring before the temporary foot bridge had been installed and in the fall after the bridge had been removed. WPRD.

jumping deer, monkeys, angora goats and various pheasants.

In 1911, the park was prepared for two pursuits that would have a long history there. Two cricket pitches were laid out and a charming cricket pavilion, with verandah and balcony, was built. The same year a bandstand, a fixture found in most Winnipeg parks of that era, was installed. During the 1911 season a total of 51 band concerts were held in Assiniboine Park and in some of the urban parks - all underwritten to the tune of \$5,000 by the Parks Board. In 1914, the first unit of Assiniboine Park's proposed "Palm House" or conservatory was built.

During these early years the most vexing problem about Assiniboine Park was how to get to it. Owners of automobiles or bicycles had no problem; indeed, they discovered that getting there was at least half the fun. But for streetcar passengers it was another matter. At the beginning of the 1909 season the streetcar offered service on the hour from Portage Avenue, over the new CNR railway bridge at St. James Street, past the Agricultural College in Tuxedo and into the park.¹¹ It was single track service which meant that only one car could run on it and that the streetcars had to cross the bridge on the same rails as the trains, a fact that made a lot

of people nervous.¹² The board had wanted the street railway to lay double tracks on Godfrey Avenue (now named Academy Road) to the park. But Godfrey Avenue did not extend all the way to the park in 1909 and prospects for extending it were not good for the 1910 season. If visitors could not afford the time to take the streetcar directly to the park, the quickest option was to take the Portage Avenue tram to a point opposite the park. From there a ferry plied between the north bank and the island. A rustic bridge then joined the island to the south bank and the park.¹³ In 1911 several private businesses got together and built a

temporary pedestrian bridge from the north bank of the river to the park and ferry service was discontinued.¹⁴ This temporary bridge, installed every spring and taken down every fall, was to last longer than the board ever planned or wanted. Not until 1932 was a permanent pedestrian bridge built. The scenic drive to the park on the south bank of the Assiniboine River was realized in 1916. Wellington Crescent was connected to the new Assiniboine River Drive which ran alongside the river, through the grounds of the old Agricultural College, to the north-east entrance of the park.¹⁵

The “Second Generation” of Winnipeg Parks

While Assiniboine Park was being developed, the board also had to improve and maintain the neighbourhood parks, which had increased only slightly in number since the first parks were acquired in the early 1890s. What additions there had been were acquired by donation. The first of these was Enderton Park donated to the board in 1902 by the real estate developer Charles H. Enderton who was then preparing his Crescentwood subdivision for sale of lots. Enderton donated the two acre piece of land, at the centre of a beautiful square one block west of Wellington Crescent, on the condition that

the board would dedicate it to park use in perpetuity and improve it as his elite subdivision grew.¹⁶ In other words, he did not want the park lying fallow once his clients had built their rather grand houses around it. The board accepted his offer but apparently not all his conditions. The minute in the board’s records is quite pointed on the matter of just who was controlling the pace of improvement in the new park. The motion runs, “that the gift be accepted and the Park be placed in the same position as the other public Parks under our control and that the same be improved when it is considered necessary by the Board.”¹⁷ Enderton’s donation and that of Pembina and Riverview Parks in 1905 by the Riverside Realty Company showed that Winnipeg real estate developers believed attractive parks would increase the value of adjoining property.¹⁸

The board was glad to have these additions to the urban parks register as the city’s population had grown significantly since the 1890s and parks were lacking, especially in Elmwood and the north-west area of the city. At the same time the effort to improve Assiniboine Park was drawing funds away from the older parks which were deteriorating. Champion began issuing dire warnings to the board that Winnipeg’s park system was not keeping pace with new development and that more money was needed to

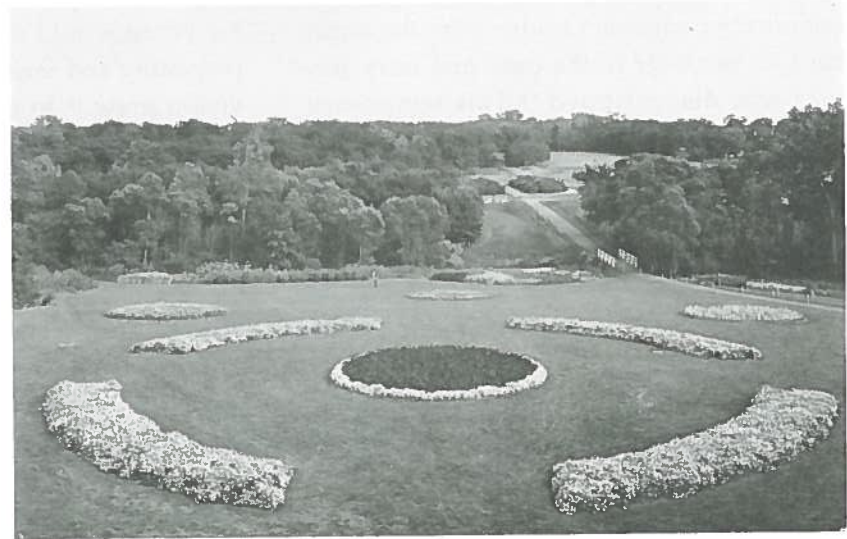
protect the investment already made. In 1909, the then chairman, H. C. Stovel argued that the cap on the parks levy should be raised to one mill on the dollar. That same year, the board was allocated \$150,000 for the purchase of new parks. This second generation of neighbourhood parks was to include some of the prettiest in the system. Elmwood, Weston, King Edward, William Whyte, Logan, C. W. Clark and Machray parks provided badly needed green space in their respective neighbourhoods.

Kildonan Park Becomes the Second Large Suburban Park

The most important addition of this second set of parks, however, was Kildonan Park. Acquired in two parcels in 1909 and 1910, it was to be the second large suburban park in the system. When he arrived in 1907, Champion had urged that a large park north of the city limits be secured as soon as possible as land was selling quickly in that area. At just under 100 acres, Kildonan Park was only one-third the size of Assiniboine Park. But with its slightly undulating terrain, the Lord Selkirk Creek meandering through to the Red River and its beautiful stands of trees, it had the most promising natural setting of any Winnipeg park. Its cost - \$163,819.17 - was a fair illustration of what had happened to land values on the fringe of Winnipeg since the pur-



Bridge across the Lord Selkirk Creek at Kildonan Park, c. 1912. PAM, G. T. Edwards Collection.



Formal gardens at Kildonan Park, c. 1920. The heavily treed site and the rolling land adjacent to the creek gave George Champion some excellent natural features to work with when he designed the park. WPRD.

chase of Assiniboine Park for just under \$40,000 a scant six year's earlier.¹⁹

Kildonan Park's misfortune was that it was acquired too close to the end of the Parks Board's boom era to receive the same kind of cash infusion and attention that had established Assiniboine Park so securely. Champion devised the plan for the park himself and it is hard to tell from the available records whether this was a cost-saving measure or whether the board simply felt that Champion's talents as a park designer matched those of any outside landscape architect. Certainly the plan for Kildonan Park, dated 1911, shows Champion's good taste in

its balance of formal and natural elements, its efficient handling of traffic both on the perimeter of the park and in its internal circulation of roads and walkways.²⁰ The dedication of Bannerman field in the north-west corner to lacrosse, baseball and football showed the increasing importance of sports and recreation in public parks planning that was to mean so much during the next era of parks development. It was Champion's expectation that the construction of the St. Andrew's Lock and Dam at Lockport would substantially increase boating traffic on the Red River. That is why Kildonan Park's plan is more water-oriented than that of Assini-

boine Park. It featured a steamboat wharf, a boathouse and landing for smaller boats, and a riverside walk with scenic lookout.

Just as Champion was putting the final touches on the Kildonan Park plan, the board of the annual Manitoba Exhibition decided that the exhibition had finally outgrown its original grounds in the western end of the city. To Champion's chagrin, in 1913 City Council decided to solve the question of a new location for the exhibition by putting it on a site north of and adjacent to Kildonan Park. Development of the park was slowed while the Olmsted Brothers of Boston devised a plan for the exhibition site. When



The south entrance of the first Kildonan Park Pavilion, n.d. Built in 1915 and designed by G. W. Northwood, Kildonan Park's pavilion was less grand than the pavilion at Assiniboine Park. PAM, T. Burns Collection.



The north entrance to the Kildonan Park Pavilion showing the attractive curved pergola covered with vines, c. 1925. WPRD.

this plan was put before the council, Champion was further chagrined to see that it involved the use of a considerable part of Kildonan Park.²¹ However, by 1914, council had cooled considerably on this plan for the exhibition grounds which meant that the development of Kildonan Park could continue. In 1915 the first two units of a proposed three unit pavilion, designed by G. W. Northwood, were built. Smaller and less grand than the Assiniboine Park pavilion, Kildo-

nan's pavilion featured a central octagonal tower with cupola and a wide pillared portico at the main entrance flanked by two shorter octagonal towers. During the same year the formal gardens were laid out to take advantage of the relief offered by the creek banks and a floating dock was constructed on the river.

By this time, however, the Winnipeg economy had slowed considerably and the war had begun. The board's calls for an in-

crease in the parks levy were falling on deaf ears at City Hall and, little by little, the optimism of Winnipeg's Edwardian boom era was draining away. The city that was to emerge from the war, the 1919 General Strike and the devastating influenza epidemic would face a bewildering set of problems with fewer resources and a definite lack of consensus on how to solve them.



CHAPTER 3

BUILDING THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

In 1903, "The Lounger", *Town Topics* WASPish editorial writer, wrote that "the beautifying of Winnipeg will not come from some vague wishing that somehow the city may be made more attractive, but only by some such organized and persistent movement for civic improvements, led by those who know what is in good taste."¹ The public parks movement was certainly part of this concerted effort towards civic beautification. But if beauty was a civic ideal worth striving for, what was it that Winnipeggers

at the turn of the century considered beautiful in a park and how was this beauty achieved?

Olmsted and the English Landscape Style of Park Design

To an unusual degree, park design and planning in turn-of-the-century North America was dominated by the ideas of one towering figure. This was Frederick Law Olmsted. In 1858 Olmsted had designed Central Park in New York, the ultimate realization of the

urban pleasure ground.² Continuing to design parks throughout the United States, Olmsted spent the rest of the century refining his ideas, changing and adapting them to new circumstances. By 1893, when he designed an island park at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, his influence was, if anything, still in its ascendancy. For Olmsted, the urban park was a refuge from the city around it; it was set apart and in opposition to the noise, hubbub and regimentation of the industrial city. The city



A tranquil moment sitting by the edge of the lily basin at Assiniboine Park, c. 1925. WPRD.



Dufferin Park, c. 1910. This park and Selkirk Park were almost carbon copies. Exactly the same size and shape, both parks featured walks laid out in an oval around their perimeters with lawns and flower beds in the middle. WPRD.

dweller, forced to live a life detached from the natural rhythms of nature, needed a place to become reconnected with the earth. Olmsted's own major influence in this regard was the English landscape school of design, particularly that of Humphry Repton, which had arisen in reaction to the symmetrical formality of European gardens. A typical Olmsted park featured curvilinear roads and pathways to counteract the grid pattern of city streets, large open lawns fringed by native shrubbery and trees, and artfully placed serpentine-shaped ponds. Buildings were kept to a minimum and designed to blend in rather than dominate the landscape. Every-

thing was arranged so that, when walking or driving through the park, visitors experienced a series of pleasant views across vistas. More intimate experiences were provided by secluded forest walks and formal gardens. The essence of the pleasure ground park was that the park-goer's experience was unstructured. Pleasure was all the more soothing if it was spontaneous, relaxed and not subject to a time-clock or a program of activities.

Winnipeg Park Design in the 1890s

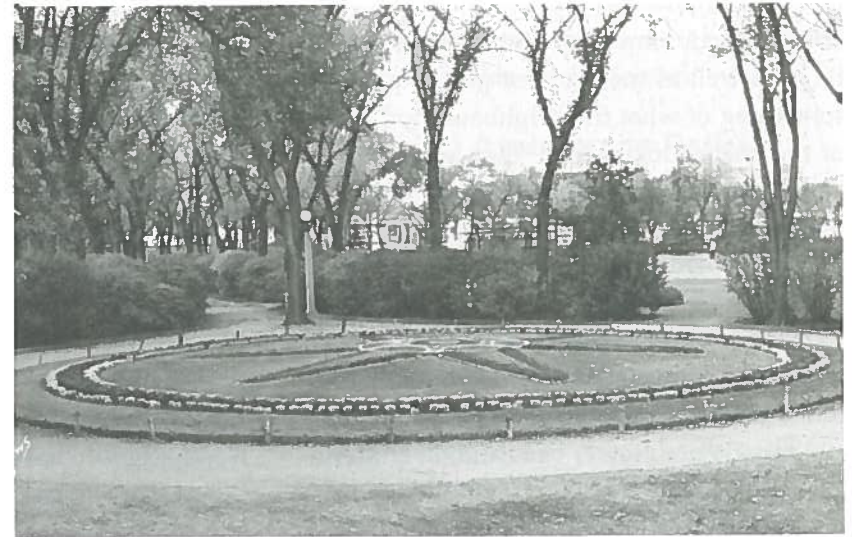
It is hard to tell whether the influence of Olmsted's pleasure grounds could be seen in Winnipeg's public parks in the 1890s. Clearly

the board felt that some expert advice was necessary where park planning and design were concerned. Tenders were received from Winnipeg architects for plans of the first neighbourhood parks in 1894. As a result of these tenders, J. Frank Peters' plans for Central and Selkirk parks were accepted, Henry S. Griffiths' designs for St. John's, Fort Rouge and Victoria parks were approved and Mr. Holroyd was chosen to design Notre Dame and St. James parks.³ City surveyor, J. W. Harris, drew up the plan for Fort Garry Gateway Park, while the designer for Dufferin Park is unknown.⁴

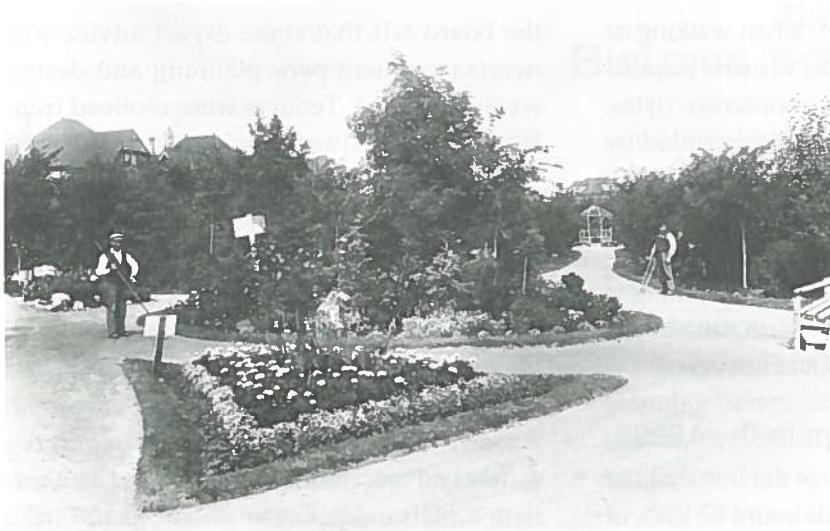
It is unfortunate that these plans have



Central Park, c. 1910. While these secluded walks were charming, they could be dangerous, especially at night. After 1900 the Parks Board installed lights in all neighbourhood parks and cleared shrubs to improve safety. WPRD.



Flower bed featuring a six pointed star at St. John's Park, c. 1920. Although the original 1894 plan for the park has been lost, it is likely that this star bed was an early feature of the park design. WPRD.



Fort Rouge Park, c. 1910. PAM N25.

not survived. However, photographs of that time, as well as more recent plans, do show something of what the neighbourhood parks of the 1890s looked like. They were fenced and usually had trees and shrubs around their perimeters, separating the parks from the streets. Dufferin and Selkirk parks seem to have had virtually identical layouts. A path made a simple oval around their perimeters with park entrances at each end. In the centre of the oval was lawn, some formal ornamental flower beds and, in Dufferin Park, a bandstand.

Photographs of Central Park from about 1905 show a curvilinear cinder pathway around the perimeter of the park. Later pho-

tos, dating from about 1914, show two straight diagonal asphalt pathways stretching across the park to form a giant "X". No other park of the era had this kind of crude straight path which suggests that the crossed paths were a later addition to an existing design. It is known that Central Park was very heavily used and these paths

may have been created as a practical way to direct traffic through the park. Central Park also featured a bandstand at its southern end, which was added in 1905.⁵

Victoria Park was a very attractive park which was popular with people in the central part of the city. The fact that the park was cut off from the Red River by the CPR transfer track was a serious defect however. A 1905 proposal to connect the park with the river by means of a bridge over the tracks never seems to have been implemented.⁶ The board does not appear to have been very committed to the upkeep of Victoria Park and, as a result, it was sold in the early twenties to garner some much needed revenue.⁷

The neighbourhood parks that offered the most scope for design, because of their size and location, were Fort Rouge and St. John's. Though it is hard to believe now, St. John's Park was wild treeless prairie when the board bought the land in 1893. Its transformation was slow and it can only be surmised from photographs what the original design by Henry S. Griffiths may have been like. The current walkway patterns are asymmetrical and focus on a star shaped ornamental flowerbed from which three main paths radiate. This six pointed star appears in some of the earliest photographs of the park and may well have been part of the original layout. There was a bandstand, built in the late 1890s, but its location is now a mystery. The park was still in a primitive state of development when Champion came along. He made several improvements in the design, notably the terracing of the riverbank and the addition of a riverbank walkway.

Fort Rouge Park originally housed the board's first greenhouse and nursery, which took up considerable space. However, as more people settled in the Fort Rouge area, the park became very popular and the board moved its greenhouse and nursery to Notre Dame Park. The original layout of Fort Rouge Park seems to have been quite formal. A 1965 plan shows that, when bisected on a north/south axis, the walks, flower beds and

lawns on one side of the park are mirrored on the other side. The plan also shows the vestiges of a walk down to the riverbank where, in the early days, a boat dock was located. Photographs dating from about 1905 show an open wooden gazebo or shelter that may, in fact, have been the bandstand.⁸

Notre Dame Park inherited the greenhouse and nursery, and with them, its fate as the service centre of the park system. Even after the greenhouses were moved to Assiniboine Park and the nurseries to Windsor Park, Notre Dame Park remained the site for the parks maintenance buildings and garage. These services left little room for green space,

much to the disappointment of neighbourhood residents.

Trees, Shrubs and Flowers of the 1890s

If it is not clear exactly how the earliest parks looked, the kinds of plantings that were chosen for these neighbourhood parks are known since the Parks Board's landscape gardening sub-committee left a record of its purchases from nurseries.⁹ In those early days, commercial nurseries from as far away as Pennsylvania submitted tenders to the board. Wherever possible, however, the board appeared to favour local suppliers. In

1894, Felix Bauer of Middlechurch, for example, won the contract for the supply of evergreens as well as for "native elms".¹⁰ Among the evergreens there were Scotch pines, ponderosa pines and Norway spruce. The choice of deciduous trees was dominated by the American elm but there were also small numbers of a wide variety of other trees including white

ash, basswood, cherry, European larch, linden, maple, weeping birch and weeping willow. The favoured shrubs were several varieties of barberry, Persian lilac, spirea, viburnum and honeysuckle. Hardy varieties of roses were popular as well as centifolia and moss roses. Bleeding hearts, delphiniums and phlox were frequent choices for flower beds.

Quite early on, the board decided that, as much as possible, its own nurseries and greenhouses would provide trees, shrubs, perennials and annual flowering plants for city parks, boulevards and squares. For reasons of economy, floral plantings after the turn of the century seemed to emphasize perennials over annuals, except in formal flower beds where annuals were used strategically to provide colour accents.

Designing Assiniboine Park

That Olmsted's influence extended to western Canada is shown by the fact that the Winnipeg Public Parks Board wrote to Olmsted's Brookline, Massachusetts office, then being run by his sons, asking if they would be interested in designing Assiniboine Park. It was the Olmsted brothers who recommended their former colleague Frederick G. Todd of Montreal.¹¹ What is known of Todd's original design reveals the Olmsted influence in its curvilinear roadways, its broad lawns fringed by trees, the serpentine duck pond,



Nursery at Notre Dame Park, c. 1907. This park became the Parks Board's service and maintenance centre. After the transfer of the nursery to Assiniboine Park, the board's maintenance yards and service building were constructed at Notre Dame Park. WPRD.

the asymmetrical layout of roads and pathways with the pavilion located at a focal point. It is also known that the implementation of Todd's plan was mainly the work of George Champion and that, for practical reasons, some of Todd's recommendations had to be changed. The main entrance to the park, which Todd had intended to be at the mid-point of the east side of the park, had to be moved to the south-east corner. It is likely that this was done at the request of F. W. Heubach, the developer of the elite residential town of Tuxedo Park which was to be located on the park's eastern edge.¹² Todd's entrance would have directed park traffic right through the middle of Tuxedo. The move of

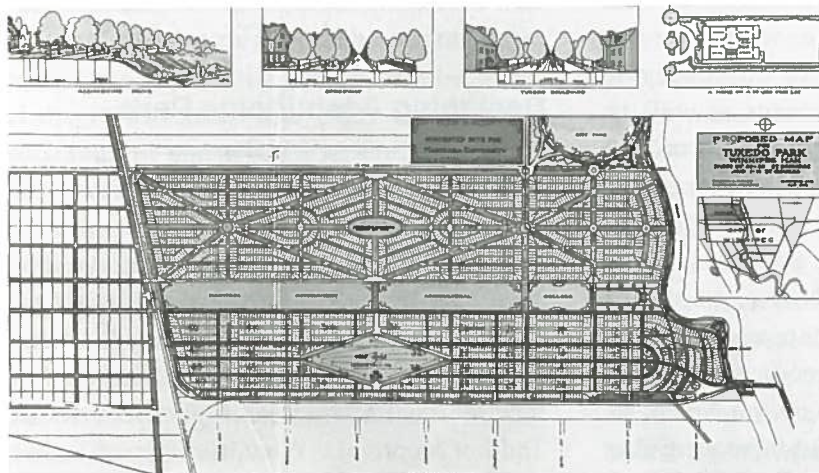
the main entrance to the south-east corner meant changing the plan in order to give this entrance more visual impact. Todd had planned a large lake for this location but to accommodate the entrance the lake was replaced by a formal flower garden with a roadway on either side.¹³

George Champion's Vision for the Winnipeg Parks System

Whether the park in its final form owes more to Champion than to Todd is impossible to tell. What is clear however, is that both Todd and Champion were utilizing the design vocabulary advanced by Olmsted which was then being implemented in many North

American cities. This shared vision was a part of what has been called the "City Beautiful" movement. All over North America, civic reform groups were uniting the park planning principles of Olmsted with the use of new city planning techniques, such as the use of zoning regulations and expropriation, in order to achieve broad-based civic beautification.¹⁴

The clearest formulation of City Beautiful principles in the Winnipeg context is found in Chairman H. Stovel's comments in the Parks Board annual report of 1909.¹⁵ Stovel's report owed a great deal to George Champion's growing acquaintance with parks development elsewhere in North America through his participation in organizations such as the Association of Park Superintendents. Stovel and Champion envisaged not just a series of isolated parks, but a whole park system linked up by scenic drives and parkways. In the dawn of automobile travel, the scenic drive was an extremely popular recreational activity. Champion wanted to ensure that if they chose, Winnipeggers could drive for miles and miles and be treated to a succession of pleasant broad boulevards giving way to parks, giving way to river drives. It was his dream to link the major suburban parks with scenic boulevards and parkways so that people could do a kind of perimeter tour. Assiniboine Park, Brookside Cemetery and Kildonan Park were situated roughly in three corners of Winnipeg. Champion wanted the board to acquire River Park so that the fourth corner of the square could be completed. Wellington Crescent and the later addition of Assiniboine Drive completed one of the vital links in this perimeter tour. Inkster Boulevard was to be another; parkways were to link it to Brookside Cemetery in the north-



Plan of the proposed Tuxedo residential suburb including a section of Assiniboine Park, published by real estate developer F.W. Heubach, c. 1905. This plan shows that Frederick Todd may have intended the main entrance of Assiniboine Park to be at the mid-point of the park's eastern side. PAM N?

west and to Kildonan Park in the north-east. Riverside property was to be acquired by the Parks Board and beautified for public use. Perhaps wisely, Stovel appeared to favour provincial legislation over outright expropriation of river property. "It is to be remembered that the river frontage is not a part of the parks property and legislation would have to be secured in order that the improvements suggested might be worked out"¹⁶ he wrote in the 1908 annual report. He was also in favour of rehabilitating the Old River Road running north along the Red River through the historic parishes of Kildonan, St. Andrew's and St. Clement's.

Creating a civic centre or focal point was another City Beautiful tenet. Winnipeg in 1910 had no such focal point. Its public buildings were dispersed throughout the downtown and while Portage and Main had become a kind of symbolic centre of the city, it was not possible to create any green space there. Since the provincial government needed to build a new Legislative Building and had early acquired large blocks of land on the western edge of the Hudson's Bay Reserve, the creation of the new Legislative Building presented the city with an opportunity to create a civic centre around it. The plan as it evolved between the city and the province, in which Champion was an enthusiastic participant, involved creating a broad

public mall on a north/south axis with lawns, sculptures, fountains and roadways. The new Legislative Building would anchor the southern end of this mall and the proposed new City Hall would sit at its northern end. In the end, World War One and hard economic times meant that only the Legislative Building and a much curtailed mall were salvaged from this vision.

Present day Winnipeggers will be astonished at Champion's breadth of vision. It was a matter of real pain for him that during his tenure as Parks Superintendent, he was only able to accomplish a tiny part of this dream. But his design proved to be durable and significant aspects of his vision were achieved long after his retirement in 1935 including the completion of St. Vital Park in the south-east of the city, the rehabilitation of the Old River Road under the ARC Agreement of the early 1980s and The Forks development of the late 1980s and 1990s.



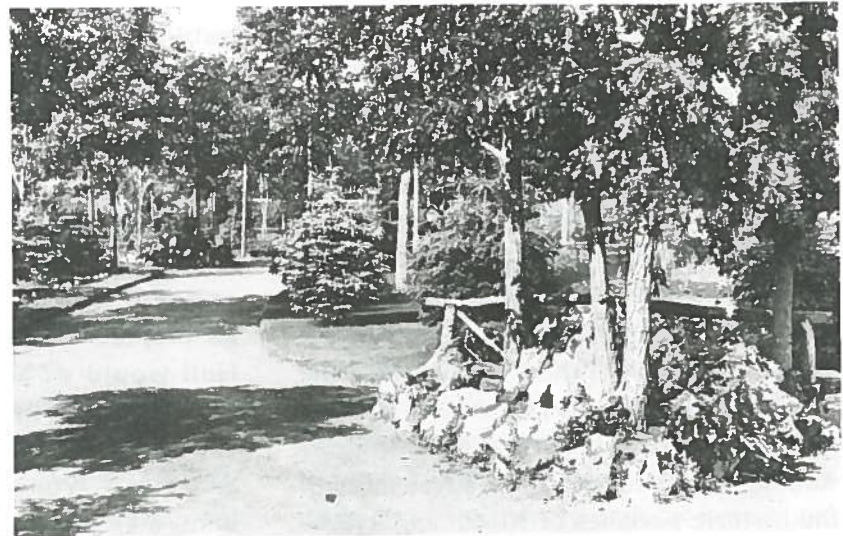
Central Park, c. 1910. George Champion tried to create a rural ambiance in public parks. Pathways were unpaved and spread with cinders. Benches were made of rough wood with the bark left intact. WPRD.

Parks as Havens from Commerce

If Champion had a clear idea about the spatial layout of his parks system, he also had definite views about what ought to go on in his parks. These ideas place him squarely in the civic reform camp of the early 20th century. Champion was adamant that amusements of a commercial nature would never sully the tranquility of public parks. As he said about the merry-go-rounds in 1908, "...nothing tend (sic) to detract from the beauty, or lower the tone, of a Park, more than things of this kind, which are entirely at variance, with all things that a Park should be."¹⁷ Public parks were for communing



A path leading down to the river at St. John's Park, c. 1909. An edging of rough stones emphasized the curves of the path. PAM N12995.



Fort Rouge Park, c. 1900. These little "traffic islands" at the points where pathways met were a common feature of public parks at the turn of the century. The rough rocks piled up artfully to look as if they had been there forever were meant to suggest a natural landscape. PAM.

with nature in a quiet and reflective way and for families to picnic together or enjoy scenic walks and drives. The small design touches that Champion provided indicate something about the rural feeling that he tried to create for park pleasure-seekers. Rustic benches and foot bridges of rough wood with the bark left intact suggest a rural experience. Triangular islands of trees and shrubbery directed traffic where walkways divided. These islands would often be composed of both deciduous and evergreen trees along with artfully piled pieces of stone. The pathways themselves might be edged with stone. The ambiance he strived to create was that of

a walk in some quiet country place.

Music was also considered appropriate for a public park. Although the board had experimented with giant phonographs and loudspeakers, Chairman Stovel favoured live band concerts, even on Sundays. Some people, he said, would not approve of Sunday concerts but he believed they were a virtual necessity. "It would be a great gain if the crowd of young men who roam up and down Portage avenue and Main street could be carried from these streets on Sundays to the park where properly supervised concerts were given."¹⁸ None of the programs for these concerts have survived but since mili-

tary and pipe bands predominated in Winnipeg at that time, it is likely that they provided staple fare. For example, the 1914 season of band concerts featured the 79th Cameron Highlanders Band, the 100th Grenadiers Band, the 106th Winnipeg Light Infantry Band, the Citizen's Band and the Winnipeg Highland Cadet's Pipe Band. In that season, the board had allocated \$5,000 for music and had not been able to spend the full allocation.¹⁹ Reading was another pastime of which Champion heartily approved. He suggested that a branch of the city library could be located in the pavilion of Assiniboine Park during the summer months. In

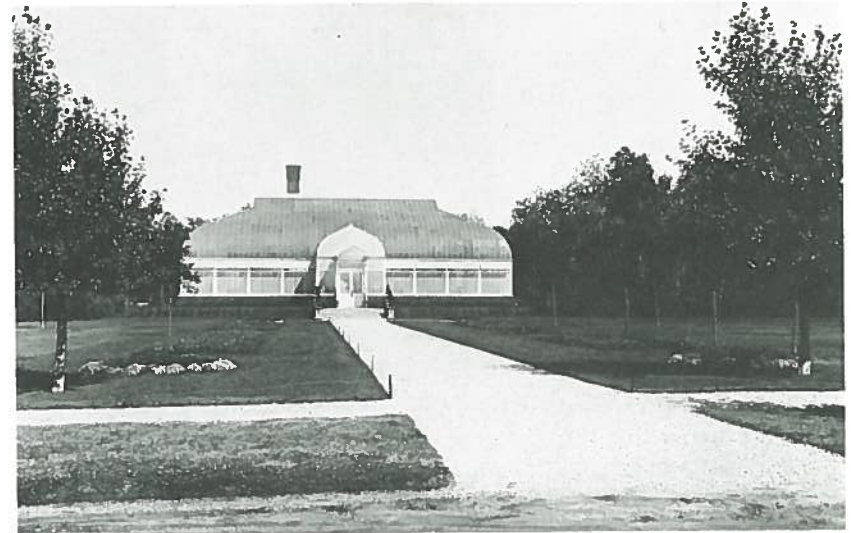
this same vein, he thought that parks should have an educational thrust. A wild flower garden was planned for Assiniboine Park that would include as many species native to Manitoba as possible. Here children could learn about the natural history of their province. The new conservatory, too, would offer Winnipeggers an opportunity to learn about exotic plants. Champion approved of art galleries and museums, but was not particularly keen on placing such cultural institutions in an existing park. Elsewhere zoos were considered educational and cultural amenities, but Champion never seemed to see the Assiniboine Park Zoo in that light. He never gave priority to its development and during his tenure, it remained an ill-housed collection which he referred to as "our modest zoo".

Sports Fields Make Their Appearance in Winnipeg Parks

If Champion's personal preference was for the more passive pursuits of walking, reading, picnicking and nature study in the public parks, right from the beginning of his tenure he was pushed to accommodate a growing variety of games, sports and active

recreational uses. To his credit, he saw a need for these activities and, after some initial reluctance, decided that the Parks Board ought to have a role in providing them. By 1914 there were cricket pitches, football fields, baseball diamonds and a playground in Assiniboine Park and the board had acquired Sargent Park as a sports ground. However, Champion did not think that these fa-

cilities had to be located in parks. He was particularly worried that the pressures on the board to place playing fields and playgrounds in neighbourhood parks would result in the destruction of these areas as passive green spaces. Swimming baths and gymnasiums, he thought, might best be accommodated in the new collegiate institutes or in "community centres" then being experimented with in the United States.²⁰ By 1909



The first conservatory at Assiniboine Park, c. 1915. Designed by Lord & Burnham, the superstructure was of steel and the glazing of heavy ground glass. It was heated with low pressure steam. When it was first constructed in 1914, it was called the "Palm House" since the major exhibit consisted of palm trees and other tropical plants. PAM N4747.

it was clear that the provision of recreation services could not be accomplished by the Parks Board alone. The School Board, the new city and provincial social welfare agencies and the churches all had an interest and a stake in providing these services. It was to take several decades for these institutions to work out ways to provide the recreational services that the people of Winnipeg were increasingly demanding.



PART II

HOLDING ON

1914-1945



A game of hockey on one of the Parks Board's supervised hockey rinks, c. 1925. WPRD.

CHAPTER 4

KEEPING THEM OFF THE STREETS 1908-1919

While the Parks Board was building up a system of public parks for Winnipeg, a parallel movement for recreation services was gaining momentum. Initially, the Parks Board did not provide these services. Then in 1919, when the Winnipeg Playgrounds Commission died, the Parks Board inherited its vibrant playground and recreation program.

The Origins of the Playground Movement

In 1907, the then Chairman of the Winnipeg Public Parks Board, R. D. Waugh, described the playgrounds he had read about in the United States: "Small areas of land are fitted up with a graded system of healthful and instructive amusement paraphernalia. Skilled instructors of the highest moral character care for the children, assisting them and guiding them in their play as a school teacher would in their studies."¹ Waugh had been trying, without success, to persuade the City Council to expand the Parks Board budget so that it could acquire and equip these playgrounds. Though playgrounds are taken for granted now, when they were first proposed public playgrounds were considered a controversial experiment, an experiment that

the city fathers resisted as long as they possibly could.

The playground movement in the United States, like the public parks movement with which it was associated, developed as a response to urban congestion and poverty.² In the poorer sections of North American cities, children were increasingly the victims of abuse, neglect and malnourishment. Poor children, many of whom came from immigrant families, were exposed to dangerous influences as they roamed the streets unsupervised. Public schools could not be used to counteract these influences because many poor children did not attend school. Middle class reformers felt that urban poverty had weakened family structures so much that other institutions had to step in to perform the functions that many poor families had, seemingly, abandoned. The fledgling science of child psychology, which had determined that children use play as a means of learning, seemed to offer a solution. Play, which in earnest Christian homes of an earlier period had been somewhat suspect, now was seen as a purposeful activity. The reformers felt that by directing a child's play in order to inculcate values of orderliness, cleanliness, teamwork and fairness, the child's future as

a productive member of society would be assured. These ideas found a receptive audience since they gave an attractive modern veneer to the child-rearing wisdom of the 19th century. Here, after all, was a scientific explanation for the adage, "as the twig is bent, so the tree grows."

After the turn of the century, provision of supervised recreational opportunities for poor children became an important aspect of the Canadian institutional response to urban decay. Protestant churches in Canada began to erect "missions" that provided a number of social welfare services to the urban poor in addition to religious ministrations. The oldest of these in Winnipeg was All Peoples Mission, inaugurated by the Methodist Church in 1893. By 1920, this small mission had been transformed into a social and recreational facility housing a swimming pool, gymnasium, sewing room and classrooms in addition to its chapel. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) flourished as one of the main proponents of "muscular Christianity", the cheerful wedding of sport and spirituality. New churches built after the turn of the century featured gymnasiums as a matter of course and recreation became a powerful new vehicle for encouraging



A folk dancing class at Aberdeen School, c. 1920. Prior to 1909 school classes such as this one provided the only supervised recreational opportunities available to inner city children. WCPI.

church attendance on the part of the young.

Government agencies had also begun to deal with abandoned and abused children. In Manitoba, the office of the Provincial Superintendent of Neglected Children, headed by F. J. Billiarde, was in place by 1907. Billiarde who, as part of his duties, cultivated relationships with the various church, school and charitable agencies which dealt with the Winnipeg poor, was a strong proponent of playgrounds for children. Prominent among these agencies were two associations of middle class women, the Manitoba Branch of the Canadian Council of Women and the Mother's Association. These women's groups were just launching themselves into the

agencies and women's groups - were in a position to put pressure on the main institution that dealt with the young: the schools. As a result, a network of individuals from these institutions became a kind of lobby group seeking to provide playgrounds for the inner city of Winnipeg.³

Getting the Playgrounds Commission Up and Running

By 1907 it was becoming clear to this group that no private agency could provide playgrounds for poor children in congested neighbourhoods. Since City Council had refused R. D. Waugh's request that the Parks Board acquire and equip playgrounds and

world outside the home by championing causes related to the traditional nurturing role of women. The Canadian Council of Women, in particular, was aware of the development of the playground movement in the United States and became a key supporter of the movement in Canada. All these groups - church, government, charitable

since a by-law for provision of playgrounds by the city had been defeated in 1907, the playground enthusiasts had to take action on their own. They convened a mass meeting at City Hall on May 29, 1908 with representatives from all interested groups in attendance including Mayor J. H. Ashdown, who was elected to chair the meeting. Ashdown, mindful that ratepayers had defeated the playground by-law the previous year, discouraged the meeting from asking the city to fund playgrounds directly. A voluntary association was needed, he said, and once that association was on a firm footing, the city might take it over.⁴ Ashdown felt that a single playground could be equipped for \$300 (which was half of what F. J. Billiarde had recommended to the meeting as a reasonable sum). The meeting ended by doing two things: striking a committee to report on the need for playgrounds in Winnipeg; and endorsing the plan of the Mother's Association to establish a model playground to demonstrate the usefulness of the concept. The meeting also formed itself into a permanent committee called the Committee on Public Playgrounds for Winnipeg, on which the Winnipeg Public Parks Board was to have representation.

The model playground, which the Mother's Association ran on the grounds of the Central School during the summer of 1908,



A school playground in action, c. 1920. WCPI.

seems to have done more to impress the city fathers than speeches or petitions. Funded by volunteer subscriptions of about \$800 - much gleaned from the membership of the Manitoba Branch of the Canadian Council of Women - the average daily attendance at this playground was 250.⁵ Based on this experience, the Mothers Association made three recommendations to the Committee on Public Playgrounds for Winnipeg that were to influence subsequent playground planning. First, they recommended that the city run a permanent system of playgrounds under supervision which would include playgrounds, skating rinks and public baths. Secondly, these grounds and facilities were to be con-

trolled by a group of citizens working in conjunction with the Parks Board and the School Board. The third recommendation was to invite the field secretary of the Playground Association of America, which had been formed in 1906, to speak in Winnipeg.⁶

There was still the question of what kind of body should administer playgrounds.

Other cities had various arrangements, but none, so far as the Winnipeg committee could determine, gave control to a voluntary association. Dr. Curtis of the Playground Association of America favoured an appointed commission. As this seemed the best plan to the committee, a carefully orchestrated campaign was mounted to encourage the City Council to create a playgrounds commission. The climax of this lobbying effort was to be a visit to Winnipeg by Lee F. Hanmer, field secretary of the Playground Association of America on April 5 and 6, 1909. Hanmer was to meet with city officials, tour the city, address a luncheon at the Canadian Club and speak at a triumphal mass meeting in the

evening. As a result of the enthusiasm stirred up by this visit, the Committee on Public Playgrounds reorganized itself into the Playgrounds Association of Winnipeg, a chapter of the Playground Association of America. T. Mayne Daly, then a juvenile court judge and formerly a federal cabinet minister, was chosen to head the new association.⁷ Emblazoned on the letterhead of the Association was the proud motto, "...A square deal for the child - a fair chance to all children to develop physical, mental and moral efficiency through the agent of normal and supervised play...Civic provided and maintained playgrounds are a civic investment yielding dividends in good citizenship."⁸ Daly's presence signified that the playground movement had now gained support even in conservative circles of opinion. City Hall could not resist the momentum and a Playgrounds Commission was duly appointed by City Council in May of 1909.⁹ Chaired by Daly, the commission was composed of representatives from the City Council, the Board of Control, the Parks Board and the School Board. There was also to be "a lady member", Harriet S. Dick of the Mother's Association.

One of the commission's first acts was to hire A. M. Peterson of Cleveland to be playground supervisor for the summer of 1909. The need for playgrounds was found to be most acute in the north-central part of the

city. During that first summer seven playgrounds were set up on school grounds in that area, at Aberdeen, Strathcona, Norquay, Victoria and Albert, Wellington, Mulvey and Gladstone schools.¹⁰ In 1910, another five playgrounds were added financed by an additional city grant of \$8,000. The city continued to increase its support to the commission and a permanent recreation commissioner, A. R. Morrison, was hired in 1912. By 1920, there were 20 playgrounds in operation on school grounds.¹¹

Recreation Programs of the Playgrounds Commission

Until 1912, the scheme was a summer-time phenomenon, with the playgrounds opening in July and August during the school holiday period. Then, in a move that was to bring considerable fun to Winnipeg children, in December of 1912, the Playgrounds Commission began to provide skating rinks for inner city children. There were three rinks flooded during that winter, all in the north-central section of the city and all equipped with toboggan slides as well. When it was found that children could only hang over the boards and watch because they had no skates or boots, the commission appealed for donations of equipment.¹²

During its first years, the Playgrounds Commission steadily increased its program-

ming and its use of trained staff. Early playground directors had been imported from the YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts.¹³ Once Morrison was hired as permanent recreation commissioner, however, staff could be trained locally. For summer playgrounds, the commission tried to ensure that each playground

was provided with one male and one female playground director. These directors would be selected in April and would report for work in mid-June. They were upper year high school and university students, as a general rule, who were given a two-day training session at the new Kelvin High School gymnasium. Morrison would then select the best candidates for the available jobs. Judging by surnames alone, the directors in the first years were quite a WASPy lot. By the end of the First World War, however, names like Israel, Shefer, Osowsky, Van Tausk, Bernstein and Sharino appeared side by side with the Browns, Lamonts, Hattons and Richmonds. In a move that was progres-



A rhythmic movement demonstration at the Old Exhibition Grounds arena, c. 1910. WPRD.

sive for its time, the commission seems to have made a definite effort to make the ethnic mix of the playground directors more like that of their charges.¹⁴

What went on at these playgrounds? For older children there were games: football, baseball, volleyball, basketball and quoits plus special swimming excursions to the new Cornish and Pritchard swimming baths. Toddlers and younger children played under the supervision of women directors on the various swings, teeter-totters, slides, sand boxes, flying rings and climbing ropes.¹⁵ Boys' and girls' activities were kept separate and were designed to reinforce the different roles that the children were expected to fulfil

in later life. For boys, aggressive sports were offered to encourage "keen but friendly competition" while teamwork and precision were cultivated through gymnastics and military drills. For girls there were baseball, volleyball and basketball but also folk dancing and various kinds of movement drills designed to instil grace and poise. Similarly, at the skating rinks in winter there would be hockey for boys and "fancy skating" for girls. Each playground had its own competitions in the various sports and activities. Then, at the end of the summer there would be a grand inter-playground competition at which each playground would vie for the grand aggregate banner signifying the best all-round performance. Starting in 1913, Aberdeen playground won the banner and defended it against all comers for the next eight years.

All these activities emphasized teamwork. The commission was always conscious that individual competitive spirit might work against the values of team loyalty and co-operation. When the *Winnipeg Tribune* offered to give prizes for speed skating and fancy skating the commission rejected the paper's offer with regret because the effect would have been to encourage the individual rather than the group.¹⁶ The women members of the commission in particular - women like Harriet Dick, Arvella Begley,

Mrs. Hample and Mrs. Moorcroft - wanted the emphasis to be placed on activities that promoted teamwork.¹⁷

The watchword of the commission, and of recreation philosophy of that era generally, was "efficiency". It is a word that sounds strange to contemporary ears when applied to children's recreation. "Efficiency" in 1917 meant the smooth working of the team, like a machine, with each individual fulfilling his or her role for the greater good of the whole. At the end of each playground season, children would compete in efficiency tests to chart their improvement over the season. From the standpoint of current recreational philosophy, the efficiency of 1917 encouraged conformism and an exaggerated respect for authority. However, these qualities were exactly what civic reformers of 1917 thought poor children required to counteract the anarchic disorder of their home environment. They did not need to stand apart from their society; they needed to fit in and know their place. They were encouraged to think positively about their role in society and were to be insulated from any reminder of their less fortunate status. When, in 1916, playground children, who were admitted free to the Pritchard Baths, swam alongside paying children, a fight broke out between the playground swimmers, who had a time limit, and the paying swimmers who could

swim for as long as they liked. "...The result was that remarks were passed by the more fortunate one (sic), calculated to destroy the efficiency and discipline aimed at by the commission."¹⁸ The commission decided that during the times that playground swimmers were at the pool, no paying children would be admitted.

Once the outdoor activities of the playground and skating rink were well established, the commission decided to begin indoor "social centre work" which involved folk dancing and physical culture classes at least one evening per week in designated schools during the winter months.¹⁹ These classes were not designed for children currently attending school but rather for older children who were employed in stores and factories.²⁰ As with most recreational developments, this one originated in the United States. In order to keep informed on developments there, the playground commissioner was made a regular member of the Social Center Bureau of New York City.²¹ By December of 1914, social centre classes had been inaugurated at Cecil Rhodes, Wellington and Lord Selkirk schools.²² To meet the heavy demand for these activities, the commission soon offered classes two nights per week.

Encouraging Amateur Sports Organizations

When A. R. Morrison was hired as recreation commissioner in 1912, the commission decided to expand its service. Beyond supervised playgrounds and skating rinks exclusively for the use of children, there was also a need for co-ordination among the large number of amateur athletic associations and leagues in the city. These leagues and associations catered to adults as well as children. They included commercial associations such as the Winnipeg Commercial Athletic League and the Winnipeg Electric Railway Athletic Association, single sport associations such as

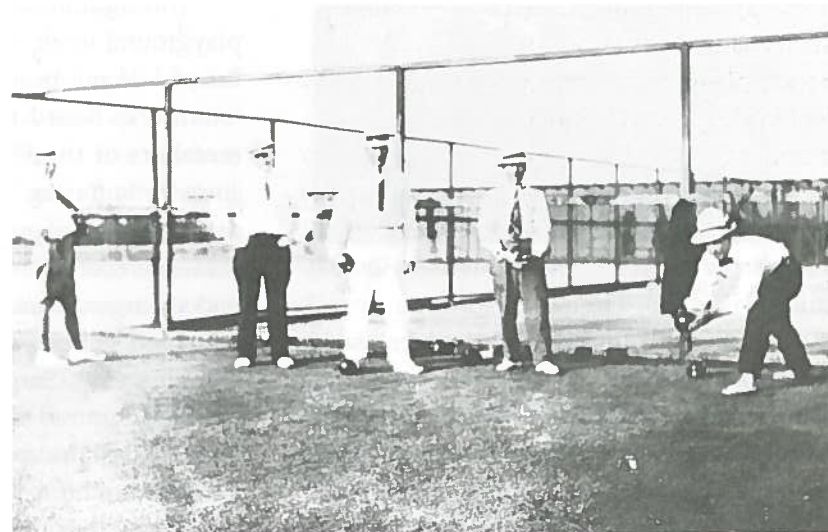
the Winnipeg Cricket Association and the Manitoba Football Association and numerous hockey leagues differentiated by age, skill level or place of work. Morrison's job was to work with these groups, "...to encourage the promotion of good clean amateur athletic sport of all descriptions throughout the City by acting in an advisory capacity wherever and whenever his services might be useful and were desired."²³ He was to do this "without regard to office hours". It seems Morrison took this directive seriously for by 1916, he was either an advisor or an executive member of no less than 15 sports organizations. This work fell well within the philosophical per-

spective of the commission since participation in sports was felt to be a healthful and character-building activity. Playing such vigorous sports as lacrosse, football or hockey encouraged boys to develop "manliness", the distilled essence of Canadian male virtue. Sports historian Morris Mott has defined this quality as, "...not only physical vitality and courage, but also decisiveness, clear-headedness, loyalty, determination, discipline, a sense of charity, and especially the moral strength that ensured that courage would be used in the service of God and of Right."²⁴

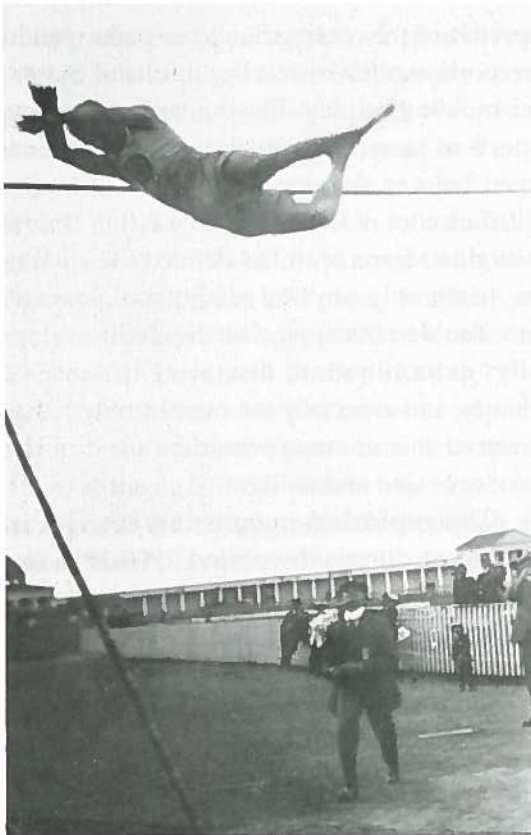
The explosion in sporting activity in Winnipeg during the period 1900-1914 can



Members of the Canadian Northern Railway Lacrosse Club, August 1912. During the period 1900-1914 the Winnipeg amateur sporting scene bloomed. Businesses found that sponsoring commercial sports leagues was good for staff morale. PAM, E.P. O'Dowda Collection, N7914.



Lawn Bowling at Sargent Park, c. 1920. PAM, G.T. Edwards Collection.



A high-jumper in action at the Old Exhibition Grounds sports field, c. 1912. WPRD.

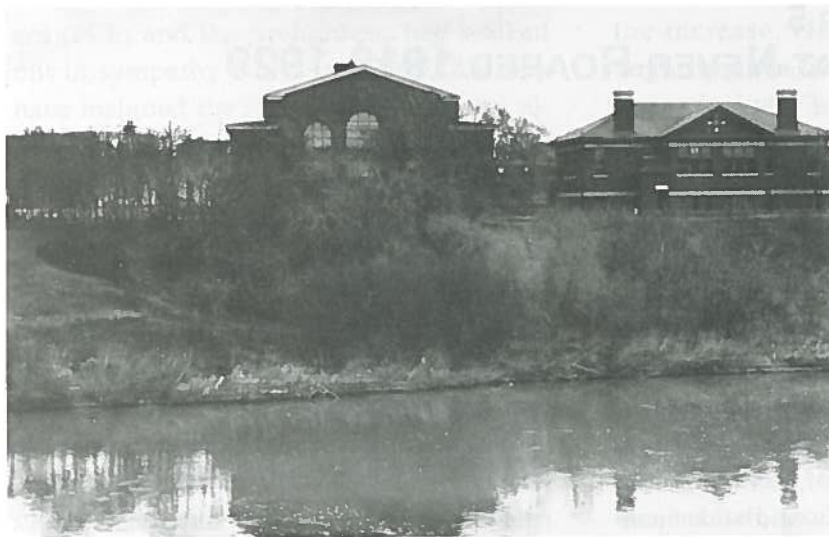
be accounted for, in part, by the increase in the city's population which grew from about 40,000 in 1900 to about 150,000 in 1914. There was also a moderate increase in leisure time due to decreased hours of work.²⁵ Whatever the cause, too many organizations were chasing too few public facilities and there was a general need for co-ordination among the

agencies that provided the facilities and support, that is, the Parks Board, the Playgrounds Commission and the associations that used these services. It was this facilitating role that the recreation commissioner was expected to fulfil. In practical terms it meant anything from adjudicating disputes between associations to helping leagues acquire specialized equipment, from awarding the prizes at the year-end banquet to providing meeting space for league executives in the Playgrounds Commission offices.

Parks Board Recreational Facilities

Throughout the period of expansion in playground work, the Winnipeg Public Parks Board had not been idle in recreational matters. Parks Board representatives had been members of the Playgrounds Commission since its founding. But the Parks Board had, during the same period, also substantially increased recreational facilities in Winnipeg parks. Sargent Park had become the jewel of the board's efforts in the sporting realm. Acquired in 1911, Sargent Park offered football, baseball, tennis, track and field, and lawn bowling facilities as well as an open air swimming pool with a shower and changing shelter. To give the northern part of the city access to sports facilities, the board had been given permission to use the Old Exhibition Grounds

in 1907. Here it laid out two football fields, a baseball diamond and two tennis courts with changing rooms. In addition to this, the board had developed baseball, football and tennis facilities in Kildonan, Assiniboine and several urban parks. Lawn bowling greens could be found in some of the urban parks, including St. John's, Cornish and St. James. Assiniboine Park became the headquarters for cricket in Winnipeg, but cricket pitches were located in St. James Park as well. Two indoor public baths, as swimming pools were then called, had been built by the city following passage of a special by-law in 1909.²⁶ The Cornish Baths were built in Cornish Park on the north bank of the Assiniboine River adjacent to the Maryland Bridge. This was former city water works land that had been turned over to the Parks Board in 1908. The second public swimming facility was the Pritchard Baths, built in 1912 and located on the corner of Pritchard Avenue and Charles Street.²⁷ The system seemed to be working well: the recreation commissioner coordinated the users of the facilities; the Parks Board arranged liaison between the commissioner and the Playgrounds Commission, and maintained the facilities. However, austerities imposed by the First World War effectively put an end to the expansion of facilities and the board was forced into a holding action.

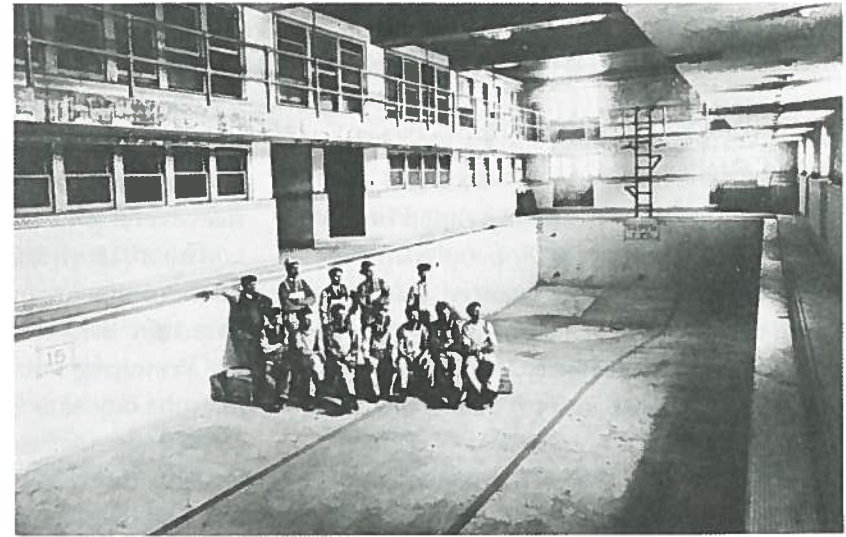


The Cornish Swimming Baths (on the left), c. 1915. Built c. 1909, the Cornish Baths was the first public swimming pool constructed in Winnipeg. PAM N7391.

The Sudden Death of the Playgrounds Commission

By 1918, the provision of playground, skating and social centre work was straining the resources of the Playgrounds Commission. The commission's work between 1909 and 1918 had grown appreciably and a mood of expansionary confidence had attended each new development. This expansion was all the more striking because it took place against a backdrop of economic decline generally and a contraction of other city services, notably those of the Parks Board. During the period 1909 to 1917, the Playgrounds Commission's budget went from

\$4,000 to \$22,000. However, during the fateful year of 1919, reality finally caught up with the commission. After what seemed like a minor tussle with the Board of Control, which had asked that the commission reduce its estimates to \$20,000, the City Council, in effect, abolished the Playgrounds Commission. A council by-law declared that the Parks Board would also act as the Playgrounds Commission and would take over all the commission's functions.²⁸ This move seems to have been part of City Council's continuing effort to reduce expenditures and increase efficiency as a result of the wartime depression. No doubt the council felt that, to an



Workers posing for a photograph in the just completed Pritchard Swimming Baths, 1912. The Pritchard Baths provided bathing and swimming facilities for the north end of Winnipeg. PAM N4861.

extent, the roles of the Playgrounds Commission and the Parks Board overlapped. In any case, the Parks Board inherited the recreation commissioner, A. R. Morrison, plus part of the Playgrounds Commission's budget. There is no question, however, that the sudden death of the Playgrounds Commission brought to an end the first burst of activity in Winnipeg public recreational services. Starting in 1919, the Parks Board had to juggle its now dual responsibilities for parks and recreation during a period when resources were not adequate for either responsibility.



CHAPTER 5

THE STRIKE AND THE TWENTIES THAT NEVER ROARED 1919-1929

The Flu and the Prelude to the Strike

When the war finally ended in November of 1918, people in Winnipeg simply wanted things to return to the way they had been in 1914. After four years of austerity, shortages, civil unrest at home and worry for sons, brothers and husbands in the trenches, "normalcy" could not come too soon. Suddenly, people felt they could start thinking about the future. Parks Superintendent George Champion began to dream again of riverside parkways and of the many necessary improvements to Winnipeg parks and boulevards that had been left in abeyance because of the war. Winnipeg boulevards had received no top dressing since 1914 and no tree pruning had been undertaken. The pavilion at Assiniboine Park was shabby, out of date, and dangerous. Brookside Cemetery needed a new chapel and mortuary. Many improvements were needed in Kildonan Park to complete Champion's design. A thorough study of parks and recreation needed to be made. It was not just that parks work had been in suspended animation, he said; ground had actually been lost because "...stagnation in Park matters, as in

many others, usually spells retrogression."¹ Champion was in a mood to roll up his sleeves and get to work.

As 1918 slid silently into 1919, it is doubtful that anyone in Winnipeg was prepared for the year that awaited them. For the Winnipeg Public Parks Board, no less than the city as a whole, the reverberations of 1919 were to be felt for decades to come. During the latter part of 1918, the city watched the spread of the world-wide Spanish influenza epidemic with alarm. The Playgrounds Commission closed its skating rinks in December of 1918 at the same time that theatres and other public meeting places shut their doors. The board had to ask the medical examiner whether there would be any danger in storing the bodies of those who had died of influenza in the morgue at Brookside Cemetery until spring.² In defiance of all tradition, Sunday funerals were

allowed at Brookside in order to keep pace with the mounting death toll.

Then, in April of 1919, just as the epidemic was easing, labour troubles began. Ironically, at that point the board believed that the labour conflicts experienced the previous year were over. In the spring of 1918 the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), whose members worked in the city's hydroelectric plant, among other places, had gone on strike for a higher wage settlement. By May of 1918, all civic workers, except the Federation of Civic Employ-



Parks Board workers pause for a photograph while constructing a building at the board's work yards in Notre Dame Park, c. 1919. PAM, G.T. Edwards Collection.

ees (FCE) and the firefighters, had walked out in sympathy with the IBEW. This may have included the Parks Board workers, although the Parks Board minutes for 1918 make no mention of the fact.³ Workers had had no increase in wages since the beginning of the war and inflation had forced them into a confrontational mood. Management, if the Parks Board was anything to go by, was in no mood for concessions either. Champion and the board were adamant that wages and working conditions of board employees were fair, given the circumstances, and that workers had few legitimate grievances. An incident recorded in the Parks Board minutes of 1918 shows something of the tactics that were being used by city employers to discourage dissent. In January of 1918 certain employees had asked for an increase in wages. A committee looked into the issue and concluded that "the duties performed by the men do not warrant higher wages". The only solution to the difficulty, said the committee, was to reduce the number of men employed, increase the duties of the remainder and give an increase in pay. As a result, two men were fired. According to the board, this would not be a hardship for the dismissed men because neither had children to support and work elsewhere was plentiful.⁴ The minutes do not say whether the two men were among those who had asked for

the increase. Nevertheless, the message ought to have been clear to those who remained: if you want to keep your job, remember who is in control and keep quiet.

The Strike

Like many city departments, the permanent Parks Board staff was still quite small in 1919. Park caretakers, of whom there were 16, were the most numerous category. These caretakers, and the four boulevard foremen, were employed only during the seven-month working season. The rest of the permanent staff, (excluding the office staff) - the boulevard overseer, three constables, two teamsters, two parks foremen, one animal caretaker, one gardener, one florist, one cemetery caretaker, one mechanic, one storekeeper and one timekeeper - totalled 15 altogether.⁵ These workers, like the superintendent, the stenographer and the board secretary, were employed year round. In addition, the board employed a large number of casual day labourers

who were hired as required during the growing season and laid off in the fall. Any special construction jobs in the parks were carried out by these day labourers, rather than tendered out to private companies. It was Champion's view that the board saved a lot of money by not tendering work out, since day labourers could be paid less than contractor's workers and the board did not have to pay the contractor's profit margin. Permanent workers had one day off in seven and all board employees with one year's service were entitled to one week's holiday with pay.⁶

The General Strike in May of 1919 began



Speaker addressing the crowd in Victoria Park during the General Strike of 1919. The strike leaders' use of the park as a venue for morale-boosting meetings was not appreciated by the majority of Parks Board members. PAM, Foote Collection, N2750.

when the building trades and metal trades workers walked out. By May 15, 24,000 workers, many of whom did not belong to a union, had joined the strike, effectively shutting down the industrial life of the city.⁷ For the Parks Board, the timing of the strike could not have been worse; May was the month when the board did intensive work in order to ready Winnipeg parks for their opening at the end of the month. Records that would document the union membership of Parks Board employees have not survived. However, it is clear that enough employees had walked out to seriously hamper, if not curtail altogether, the board's spring preparations. On June 4, a request to the board from the General Hospital to plant trees on the hospital grounds had to be turned down because, as the decorously worded minutes put it, "...due to the advanced season and the labor conditions prevailing it was inadvisable to do the work this year...".⁸ The Parks Board members, still dominated by businessmen, must have been grinding their teeth as they watched the strike leaders conducting rallies and public meetings in Winnipeg's public parks, particularly in Victoria Park. This park, located on the west bank of the Red River south of Point Douglas and bounded by Pacific Avenue and Amy Street, was favoured by strikers because of its downtown location. Photographer L. B.

Foote caught the flavour of these rallies as speakers used the vine covered arbour of the Victoria Park bandstand to address vast crowds of workers.

Conflict on the Streets and Conflict in the Boardroom

But something else that was to have far-reaching implications for the board had also taken place, its significance drowned out by the labour crisis. During the war, the board had felt helpless as the Board of Control and City Council repeatedly lowered its estimates and held it to a budget that severely limited parks work. The composition of the board, with a minority of aldermen members, was felt to be part of the problem. Perhaps the Parks Board would have more influence with council if it had more aldermen members. A move to amend the Parks Board Act accordingly was defeated by council in 1918. But as Parks Board member and alderman George Fisher said, "...there was nevertheless a strong sentiment in favour of bringing the administration of the Board's affairs more directly under the control of Council."⁹ A motion to submit a scheme to council to accomplish this was unanimously passed by the board,¹⁰ and as a result the Parks Board Act was amended in 1919. The amendment increased the council complement to a total of eight, including the mayor, leaving the cit-



Arthur W. Puttee, editor of the labour newspaper The Voice, was appointed to the Parks Board in 1919 due to the influence of labour aldermen on City Council. Surprisingly, Puttee did not support the 1919 General Strike. His election to the Parks Board chairmanship for 1920-21 could be seen as a reward for that stand. WPRD.

izen members at six.¹¹ During the several calamities that occurred during 1919, the change in the board structure passed by without much notice.

Something else that must, at the very least, have added spice to Parks Board meetings at this time was the increasing contingent of labour aldermen and left wing citizen members on the board. Andrew Scobie, soon to become a supporter of the new One Big Union (OBU), had been appointed a citizen member of the board in 1918. Arthur W. Puttee, former labour member of parliament and

editor of the labour paper *The Voice*, found himself appointed to the Parks Board in February of 1919. Then in April, as a result of the amendments to the Act, labour aldermen A. A. Heaps and E. Robinson became Parks Board members along with three other aldermen.¹² But what could have been a formidable labour block on the board was scuttled when Arthur Puttee, surprisingly, did not support the General Strike. As a result, Puttee was the only one of these members who regularly attended Parks Board meetings during the strike and its aftermath. Heaps, in particular, had other things on his mind. He was arrested as a strike leader in June. So the pro-strike members never had an impact on the board's voting patterns, but they did make their influence felt.

This was most evident when, after the strike had been crushed, a matter of great symbolic and practical importance to supporters of the strike came before the board in July of 1919. James Law of the Winnipeg Defence Committee made a formal request to the board that his committee be allowed to use Victoria Park as a public meeting place. The committee had been created after the defeat of the strike in order to support the leaders who had been charged and to raise funds for their legal defence.¹³ In spite of the labour members, the board was still dominated by businessmen like F. W. Drewery who had

been bitterly opposed to the strike. After the arrest of the strike leaders in June, the board had passed a motion authorizing the Chief of Police to take whatever actions necessary to enforce the Parks Act and board by-laws in Winnipeg parks. As the by-laws gave the board wide latitude in preventing "disorderly behaviour", the police could then break up the kind of large public meetings that had so effectively kept up the morale of the strikers.¹⁴

Now the Defence Committee wanted the matter settled once and for all. Could public meetings be held in Winnipeg's public parks? The board did not immediately refuse the request; outright refusal might have sparked a riot during a time when the city was returning to a kind of jittery normalcy. Instead, it was decided that the Defence Committee could meet in the park, pending a re-evaluation of the status of Victoria Park itself and of board policy on public meetings there. That decision came down in October



Victoria Park, c. 1900. Although it was very attractive and well used, the fact that the CPR back-up track ran along the park's section of the river bank was considered a serious flaw. The striker's use of it during the 1919 General Strike put the last nail in Victoria Park's coffin. The park was sold to Winnipeg Hydro in 1924 and became the site of Hydro's Amy Street Steam Plant. PAM N11900.

when the board moved that: "during the pleasure of the Board, public speaking and public meetings be permitted in this property..."¹⁵ But the catch was that a formal application would be required which would include the speakers' names and the purpose of the meeting. The Parks Board by-laws entitled the board to clamp down on disorderly activity after it had occurred.¹⁶ By the new ruling, the board set itself up as the vetting authority on what subjects and speakers would be permissible in public parks.

The controversy seems to have put another nail in the coffin of Victoria Park. Since

1916, the board had been trying to sell it.¹⁷ The property was finally disposed of in two lots in 1923 and 1924, when it was sold to City Hydro and used as the site of Hydro's Amy Street Steam Plant. The money realized from the sale allowed the board to buy a new riverside property, Norquay Park, in north Point Douglas. The revenue also made possible the purchase of Windsor Park Golf Club.¹⁸ Clearly the board felt it had got the best out of the deal. Although Norquay Park was only blocks away from Victoria Park, the loss of Victoria was a symbolic defeat for strike supporters.

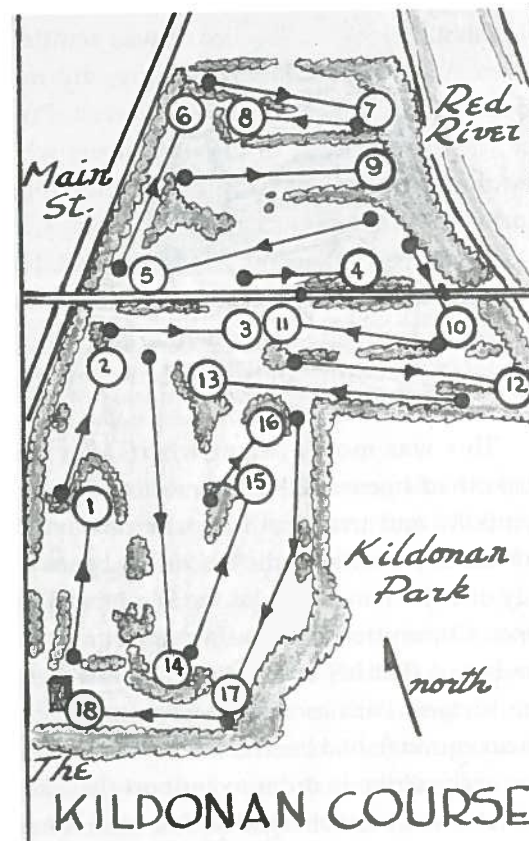
At the end of the strike, the board also had to deal with its own workers. A harsh solution was at hand which had been applied to all other civic workers. All regular employees of the board who went out on strike, or who worked on a strike permit or who were members of the Civic Employee's Federation at the time of the strike, were required to sign an agreement. The workers called this agreement "the slave pact". By signing it they agreed not to belong to any union or association that had a sympathetic strike agreement with any other union. They also agreed to abide by the regulations and directives of the Parks Board and to refrain from supporting, favouring or taking part in a sympathetic strike. Any breach of this agreement would result in immediate dismissal.¹⁹

Golf Courses and Brookside Cemetery in the Twenties

So it was that the Parks Board lumbered into the twenties carrying the baggage of 1919: the strike, the additional work caused by the demise of the Playgrounds Commission, and the changed composition of the board. Predictably, the twenties were not entirely smooth sailing. In economic terms, there was more money to go around but nothing like the prosperous days before 1914. Meanwhile the city kept growing, though at a slower pace than before the war. Demands for recreational services continued to increase and new sections of the city demanded park land.

No sooner had the board celebrated the raising of the parks levy mill rate to three-quarters of a mill in 1920, than the increase was eaten up by post-war inflation. Salary increases made up the lion's share: an average increase of 50.3 percent per employee, comparing their 1914 wage to their wage in 1920.²⁰ Curiously, Champion and the office staff did not receive commensurate increases; their increases during the same period averaged around 20 percent. The big loser was the recreation supervisor, A. R. Morrison. His increase over 1914 was only 8.3 percent, placing his salary well behind that of the board's secretary, J. H. Blackwood.

However, the decade did see the debut of a new recreational service. After four years of trying to construct decent fairways and greens during adverse weather conditions, the board was finally able to open its first municipal golf course, Kildonan Golf Course.



The layout of Kildonan Golf Course, which was opened by the Parks Board in 1921. A railway line, the Bergen cut-off, ran through the middle of the course but this was cleverly incorporated into the design. WPRD.



Above and above right: Two views showing the ground preparation and seeding of Windsor Park Golf Course, c. 1924. WPRD.

Right: Teeing off at the Kildonan Golf Course, c. 1930. WPRD.





Finalists in the annual municipal golf course championship at Kildonan Golf Course in 1928 make a snappily dressed foursome. WPRD.

It was situated on the land north of Kildonan Park that had first been set aside as the new site for the annual exhibition. That grand scheme having fallen through, it became possible to satisfy the many demands that the board get into the golf business. It was easy to see why the demand was so strong. Several private courses had operated in Winnipeg before World War One. However, these tended to be exclusive clubs like the St. Charles where people of modest means would not be welcome even if they were able to pay the hefty \$750 initial membership fee.²¹ Champion much preferred to have a golf course next door to Kildonan Park rather than the noisy and smelly exhibition, and be-

ter. With neither play nor significant improvement possible, Champion proposed a novel solution: a flock of sheep would be pastured on the golf course to keep weeds down and save mowing costs. J. H. Braden was duly authorized to bring his flock to the half-completed golf course.²²

It was not until June of 1921 that Kildonan Golf Course, complete with its new clubhouse, was officially opened.²³ However, it proved to be a great success and the board's annual reports throughout the twenties record the winners of the various men's and ladies' trophies, including trophies for driving and putting. Champion's own photograph albums contain pictures of the proud

sides, he was a keen golfer himself. The 18 hole course was laid out in 1916 by James McDiarmid, enthusiastic golfer and member of the Parks Board. The greens and fairways were sown with grass in October of that year. But in 1917, due to bad weather, the turf did not thrive, and the course was far from ready for play. The next year was no bet-

winners: the men in their baggy plus fours and cloth caps and the women with their shingled hair, long sweaters and golfing skirts. Securing a municipal course on the north side of the city, however, did not entirely meet the demand for reasonably priced golf. The golfing needs of south Winnipeggers were met in 1924 when the Parks Board acquired the land and facilities of the partially completed Windsor Park Golf Club from the Municipality of St. Vital. The course, which was laid out on both sides of the Seine River, was opened for play in 1925. The new clubhouse was designed by James McDiarmid and the 18 hole course was declared to be "...one of the prettiest and sportiest in North America."²⁴ A much needed by-product of Windsor Park's acquisition was the new nursery the board was able to establish there. The nurseries at Assiniboine Park and Notre Dame Park were then discontinued.

For Brookside Cemetery, the decade of the 1920s brought few improvements. Although a new mortuary and chapel were needed, there always seemed to be a more pressing requirement that took precedence. Realizing that the cemetery costs would be progressive, in that graves would need to be cared for beyond the time when new interments would yield revenue, the City Council passed a by-law to establish a perpetual care

fund and raised the rates of interment in 1929.²⁵ Sadly, the military burial ground had to be developed considerably during the war years. The improvements to this plot, including uniform grave stones and the erection of a large memorial cross, were carried out under the auspices of the Imperial War Graves Commission.²⁶ By 1921, Champion could report that the trees and shrubs had matured enough so that the cemetery was no longer the bare prairie that old-timers remembered. There was still no direct streetcar service, however, and the board was forced to run a special motor bus on Sundays between the end of the streetcar line on Notre Dame Avenue and the cemetery. As a consequence,

relatively few Winnipeggers experienced the attractive layout and maturing plantings that Champion had designed.

Recreation Programming During the Twenties

Once the strike was settled, the board had to decide how it was going to go about doing the work that had previously been done by the Playgrounds Commission. It had begun to install playgrounds in parks prior to the war so the technical aspects of playground installation were familiar territory. The playgrounds run by the Playgrounds Commission had been located almost exclusively on school grounds and the

board saw an opportunity to off-load responsibility for them. However, the School Board declined the hot potato and the Parks Board was forced to do the best it could. Effectively, A. R. Morrison continued to run his playground program during the twenties much in the way he had done before, though with a reduced budget. Recreation work was administered by a standing committee of the board to which Morrison reported.

The war had brought with it social changes that had repercussions for recreation work. One of these was the discovery of the teenager, or "teen ager" as the term looked when it was first coined. A significant degree of post-war unemployment among teenagers



Baron Byng of Vimy and other dignitaries at the unveiling of the Cross of Sacrifice at Brookside Cemetery, October 8, 1922. WPRD.



A Parks Board supervised skating rink, c. 1925. WPRD.

had left them at loose ends and liable to get into trouble. Men returning from the front, desperate for work, had displaced these older children from their jobs in factories, retail stores and offices. Compulsory school attendance, too, meant that children were staying in school longer. Naturally, the thought of sexual fraternization among teenagers struck fear into the hearts of parents, educators and recreation specialists. Recreation for teenagers, therefore, maintained the separation of the sexes where possible or allowed them to mix only under close supervision. Dancing was available at a number of private and commercial dance halls like the one at Winnipeg Beach. Champion thought the board should start providing "properly supervised" dances at Kildonan and Assiniboine Parks as an alternative, but this was never done.²⁷

Expansion of sports grounds and skating rinks would involve teenagers in healthful character-building pursuits. However, the decade of the twenties was a problematic one for sports facilities. Champion had wanted to inaugurate skating rinks on the rivers opposite parks with river frontage. In 1918 he applied to the harbour commissioner for skating rink privileges opposite Fort Rouge Park.²⁸ However, owners of commercial skating rinks downtown objected to the board horning in on their business. In spite

of the fact that the board's stated policy was to provide free skating for children throughout the city, Champion backed down from the Fort Rouge rink where, he said, "...private enterprise is now, to some extent, meeting the Public need."²⁹ In 1921 the board operated 20 supervised rinks with shelters, mostly on School Board land. Lack of money prevented the board from supplying many more supervised rinks than had been provided by the Playgrounds Commission. As a compromise, the board began, in co-operation with community groups, to flood rinks on vacant lots. The board supplied the flooding and maintenance of the ice surface while the neighbourhood took responsibility for supervision. Warming shacks were not provided by the board for these rinks but community groups occasionally constructed them while the board looked the other way. Though initially regarded as a stop-gap solution, these vacant lot rinks, or community rinks as the board called them, were extremely popular and their number increased until, by the end of the decade, vacant lot rinks outnumbered the board's supervised rinks by 43 to 29.³⁰ Several generations of Winnipeg children took their first uncertain skating strokes on these vacant lot rinks. Boys practiced their wrist shots there and got their first taste of competitive hockey by participating in the league run by the board and sponsored by

the Junior Section of the Winnipeg Board of Trade. The rinks, like playgrounds, were also the catalyst for a significant degree of neighbourhood organization. In many cases the community associations that were organized in order to secure the vacant lot rinks for the neighbourhood and supervise them once flooded, became the nucleus of the community clubs that were to figure largely in Winnipeg's next recreation boom era.

The continuing question mark over the Old Exhibition Grounds during the twenties caused the board much concern. City Council had transferred responsibility for this site north of the CPR tracks to the board in 1907 and the board had begun to redevelop it as an athletic ground to serve north Winnipeg. However, several times during the 1920s the council threatened to begin running the exhibition on the site once again. This actually happened in 1926 and the continuing uncertainty prevented the board from making permanent improvements. There was added irritation in 1922 when, over Champion's objections, the board was asked to open a temporary motor tourist camp on the site in order to accommodate the growing number of people travelling by car and needing camping facilities.³¹ Champion complained that mixing tourist camps with recreation for teenagers was not healthy and that the campsite was fast becoming an eyesore. Nev-



Wading Pool at St. John's Park, c. 1925. PAM N12993.

ertheless, the temporary tourist camp remained on the Old Exhibition site until 1932 when it was felt that enough inexpensive motel facilities had been opened to supply the need. At the end of the twenties, the ultimate fate of the Old Exhibition site was still unresolved.

In general, during the twenties the board was unable to maintain the momentum of the war years in recreation programming for playgrounds and schools. The number of playground directors had to be cut back and a significant loss occurred in 1925 when the "indoor play" program, as the evening classes held in schools were then known, was discontinued due to lack of funds.³² On

a positive note, a feature of enduring popularity started to appear in Winnipeg parks during the twenties. Wading pools, a much cheaper alternative to swimming pools, began to be seen as a necessary feature in playgrounds. The wading pools made their debut just in time for the scorching summers of the 1930s.

Boulevards and Parks in the Twenties

Boulevard construction, in contrast to other aspects of parks work, continued throughout the decade. Indeed, trees on the older boulevards were now mature enough that Parks Board construction crews faced daily confrontations with their City Hydro counterparts, who thought that trees interfering with overhead wires and street lighting should simply be cut down. Champion could hardly contain his outrage. He accused City Hydro of taking the easy way out. "They know how to solve their problem without having the trees mutilated or the appearance of the street ruined, and the Board owes it to

the citizens to see that the aesthetic is not sacrificed to utility. Trees are not grown in a day and citizens who have paid for these trees and for their care and who have watched their growth from year to year with great pride will look to this Board to protect their interests."³³ The ensuing negotiations resembled United Nations peace talks. In the end, the matter was resolved by the board offering to prune offending trees whenever City Hydro or any other utility company requested this.

Mosquitoes had always been a nuisance that seriously hampered the enjoyment of Winnipeg park enthusiasts. But apart from the use of smudge fires and the like, Winnipeggers had had no alternative but to swat and bear it. During the twenties, however, science and a remarkable character named Dr. Harry M. Speechly came to the rescue. Speechly, a medical doctor, coroner and stalwart of the Manitoba Natural History Society, had a special grievance against mosquitoes. His English-born wife had once been stung so badly that she was forced to spend three days in bed. In 1927, Speechly persuaded the Manitoba Natural History Society to spearhead a mosquito control campaign for the Greater Winnipeg area.³⁴ Assisted by the federal government, the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Public Parks Board, Speechly's group identified the several species of mosquito in question and



St. Vital Park, c. 1935. At the end of the twenties the Winnipeg Parks Board acquired land for both Wildewood Park in Fort Garry and St. Vital Park. WPRD.

recommended a course of action. During the summer of 1927 workers sprayed used crank case oil on puddles and wetland areas within a radius of two miles of the city centre and a like radius around suburban parks and golf courses.³⁵ Though grandly named the Greater Winnipeg Mosquito Abatement Campaign, there was almost no money for this venture. The first season's work was funded by a tag day, using the slogan, "two bits kills a million."³⁶ Although the Junior Section of the Board of Trade underwrote part of the expense, the operation ground to a halt in the middle of the 1928 season, one of the worst on record for mosquitoes. The fortunes of the anti-mosquito campaign were

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to fluctuate along with its funding until 1961 when the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg Parks and Protection Division finally gave it a home and secure funding.

The most significant developments in the Winnipeg parks system during the twenties involved acquisition of several major new park sites from the suburban mu-

nicipalities. For some time, Champion had realized that any new park land acquisition, particularly riverside land, was going to have to take place outside the boundaries of the City of Winnipeg. In his view a significant degree of co-ordination and co-operation would have to exist between Winnipeg and the suburban municipalities if a parks system that served the whole urban area was to be achieved. As a means of achieving co-ordinated park planning, he urged that the Town Planning Commission, another casualty of the war, should be resurrected. Early in the decade, he had strongly urged the board to acquire the River Park site.³⁷ It was the last large area of riverside land available

within the city limits. Unfortunately there was no money available for such a major purchase in the shifting financial winds of the twenties. On the other hand, the suburban municipalities had neither the resources nor the expertise to develop large tracts of park land. By the end of the decade several mutually beneficial deals were worked out between the Winnipeg Parks Board and the municipalities that allowed the latter to have access to park lands at no cost to themselves. In the age of the car and the streetcar, Winnipeggers would be able to enjoy these parks just as much as suburbanites.

The transfer of a parcel of land between Portage Avenue and the Assiniboine River across from Assiniboine Park allowed the board to construct a fitting entrance to the park at one of its main access points, the "temporary" footbridge. The Assiniboine Park extension, as this parcel of land was called, was transferred to the Winnipeg Parks Board from the City of St. James in 1929 on the proviso that the land be used as park land in perpetuity and that a permanent footbridge be built. A similar deal had been worked out between the board and the Town of Tuxedo in 1928 concerning the parcel of riverside land running along the south bank of the Assiniboine River from the western city limits to the eastern boundary of Assiniboine Park. This parkway, called



Above: The "Informal Garden" at Assiniboine Park not long after it was first created, c. 1928. Renamed the "English Garden", it became one of the park's best-loved features. PAM, P. McAdam Collection.



Above right: The annual Chrysanthemum Show at the Assiniboine Park Conservatory, c. 1930. For flower enthusiasts this show, with its bursts of colour, enlivened Winnipeg's grey November. WPRD.

Right: The Assiniboine Park Conservatory, c. 1920 The north and south wings were added to the main building in 1917, allowing more space for exhibits. WPRD.





The remains of the Assiniboine Park Pavilion following the fire that destroyed the building on May 27, 1929. WPRD.

Assiniboine Drive, was linked on its eastern boundary with Riverside Park which ran from Kenaston Boulevard to the western city limits at Edgeland Boulevard.

A significant coup in this series of suburban agreements provided Champion with the large suburban park in the south end of the city that he had so earnestly sought. At 110 acres, the St. Vital land was slightly larger than Kildonan Park. Champion felt it was some of the best land for park purposes in Manitoba.³⁸ Under the agreement, the City of St. Vital demanded \$16,000 to cover the cost of grading and gravel for St. Vital Road and

River Road from St. Mary's Road to the north-east boundary of the park. In addition to this, the board was required to pay an annual fee of \$500 to cover the Winnipeg share in maintaining these roads. Work on St. Vital Park, as the new park was to be called, was set to begin in the 1930 season.

Assiniboine and Kildonan Parks in the Twenties

As for the other two suburban parks, the twenties were a decade of relative quiescence. Although the Kildonan Park pavilion still required another unit for completion, this was not done. Some valuable facilities like new washrooms, a concrete footbridge, a new bandstand and a pergola were added. The park was attached to the new city water supply provided by the completion of the Shoal Lake Aqueduct in 1919. At Assiniboine Park north and south wings had been added to the main section of the conservatory in 1917, allowing the staff to mount flower shows and

special events. In the early 1920s the annual Chrysanthemum Show began its reign as one of the most popular Winnipeg attractions in the fall.³⁹ Champion wrung his hands over the dilapidated pavilion, which was badly out of date and would require major renovation. In 1923, the board decided that the pavilion annex could not be salvaged. It was torn down and the pergola extended to fill the gap. The completion of the English Garden in 1928 added a popular attraction to the park.

Then an incident of almost melodramatic foreboding topped off a difficult decade for the Parks Board. On May 27, 1929, the Assiniboine Park pavilion burned to the ground.⁴⁰ If the insurance money had not been so woefully inadequate, George Champion himself could have been suspected of lighting the match. It was a beautiful building but almost from the first it had required major repairs on an annual basis. Trying to forget that the \$13,000 dollars of insurance money amounted to less than half of what it had cost to build the pavilion in 1908, the board decided to plunge ahead with a new structure. The fire offered an opportunity to start afresh and build a pavilion to suit modern tastes and needs. The board faced the new decade with characteristic hope for better times.



CHAPTER 6

MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION 1930-1945

The Optimism of 1930

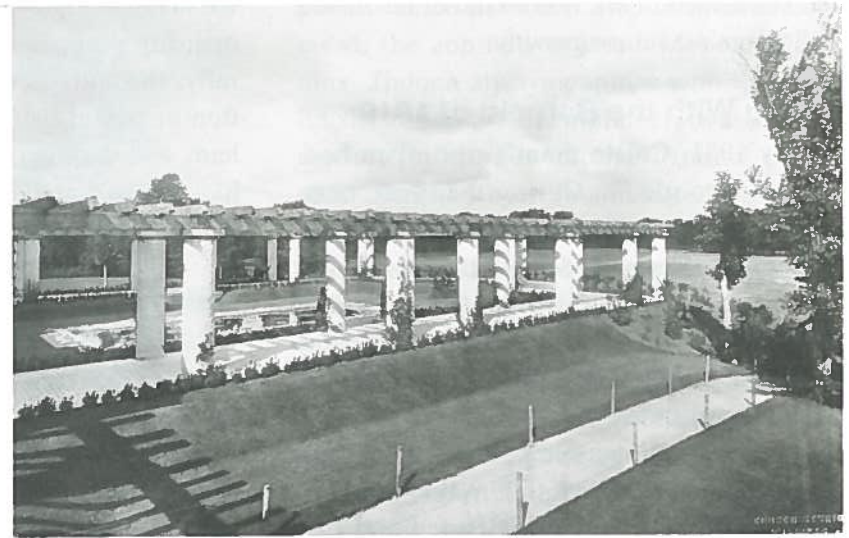
Parks Board Chairman Herbert Cottingham began his breezy annual report for 1930 by saying, "I feel that we are now coming to the end of the depression and will soon be entering an era of great prosperity for the City of Winnipeg."¹ Though the Winnipeg economy had followed the world trend after the stock market crash of 1929, the members of the Parks Board, like everyone else, had reason to feel that the economy would bounce back as it had done before. In

fact the decade had started off on a positive note. The new Assiniboine Park pavilion, designed by the architectural firm of Northwood and Chivers, was completed in the spring of 1930. The architects chose to imitate certain elements of early English architecture and gave the building mock Tudor half-timbering, a bell tower and a roof line reminiscent of thatching. While this gave the pavilion a fanciful quality, the building was less architecturally adventurous than the first pavilion had been. This did not seem to

bother Winnipeggers and over time the pavilion has become a well-beloved landmark. Happily, the pergola and lily basin had escaped damage in the fire and were incorporated into the new design, with the pergola extended along the east and west sides of the building.² Unlike its predecessor, this structure was built to last. Its foundation sat on piles driven down to bedrock, and its frame was a mixture of steel and timber, heavily insulated and fireproof. It was built to accommodate steam heat if required in the



The new pavilion at Assiniboine Park, c. 1935. Completed in 1930, it was designed by the local architectural firm Northwood and Chivers. The new building was more fanciful than its predecessor and was designed to suggest the English countryside. WPRD.



Pergola and lily basin behind the Assiniboine Park Pavilion, c. 1935. These decorative features were all that remained of the original pavilion. When the new building was constructed, the pergola was extended around its east and west sides. WPRD.

future.³ The board, well satisfied, thought it would last a century.

Nineteen-thirty also saw the completion of the last of the several agreements made between the Winnipeg Parks Board and the suburban municipalities which had begun at the end of the twenties. This one, the board felt, would provide park space in the southern part of the city well into the future. The land in question, then called Wildewood Park, had first been looked at by the Parks Board during the search for a suburban park that had culminated in the purchase of Assiniboine Park. Though the Municipality of Fort Garry was still mostly rural in character, Wildewood Park was a kind of insurance policy against future growth.

Living With the Bargain of 1919

By 1931, Cottingham's optimism had darkened to gloom. During that year, over his objections, the board had voted to return 20 percent of its parks levy to the city, which was in desperate straits.⁴ Cottingham felt that something was badly wrong. During the twenties, the board had had its estimates cut back several times and seemed to have real difficulty in getting a sympathetic ear at City Council. It became clear to him that the 1919 deal struck between City Council and the Parks Board had been a bargain with the devil. It had not, in any way, worked out to

the advantage of the board. Having a majority of council representatives on the Parks Board was supposed to have increased the board's influence at City Hall. In Cottingham's view, the reverse had happened. Instead of being the independent body envisaged by the first Public Parks Act, the Winnipeg Public Parks Board had become a sub-committee of City Council. According to Cottingham, it was impossible for aldermen members of the board to be "wholly Parks Board minded".⁵ Cottingham had no real power except the soap box provided by the chairmanship. He urged the board to ask council to amend the legislation and return the board composition to the citizen member majority prescribed in the 1892 Act. Naturally, the aldermen members had no intention of passing such a resolution. Cottingham, and the citizen chairmen who followed him, found that they had to live with the bargain of 1919, like it or not.

Making Do With Much Less

The fierce financial pressures on the city's budget throughout the 1930s and into the years of World War Two meant that any service that was not considered absolutely essential fell under the budget-cutter's knife. During each year of the depression, the board's estimates were cut by a margin of ten to 20 percent. At the same time as council

was cutting the board's yearly estimates, the assessed value of real property, on which the parks levy was based, was declining. That meant that the parks levy cap of three-quarters of a mill, the maximum figure that the board could ask for, was declining. In 1938, the provincial legislature amended the Parks Act in order to give City Council the discretion to disregard the mill rate specified in the Act and allot the Parks Board only what council thought it could spare in a given year.⁶ In 1931, the parks levy amounted to \$236,500. By 1941 it had fallen to \$155,500, a decline of nearly one-third.⁷ Throughout this period, the board continued to pay its annual contributions to retire the debenture issues for the 1910 park purchases and the construction of the new Assiniboine Park pavilion.

The board had very few options. Throughout the depression, it simply tried to maintain parks and playgrounds as best it could. However, there was one windfall benefit that accrued from the grim circumstances. Governments at all levels were stung into action by the alarming number of people, particularly young men, who were unemployed. It was decided that the unemployed would be put to work on various public works projects in order to earn their "relief" wages. Parks systems all over the country became the beneficiaries of this gov-

ernment initiative. Relief workers completed several improvements to Winnipeg parks that had long been kept on hold. Finally in 1931 a permanent footbridge was built over the Assiniboine River to Assiniboine Park, allowing the board to fulfil its commitment to the City of St. James. Gangs of relief workers cleared brush at St. Vital and Wildewood parks and excavated the earth for the serpentine-shaped lake that Champion had designed for St. Vital. Old foundations and debris were cleared from the Old Exhibition Grounds and a spectator stand was built at Sargent Park. Relief workers also did extensive repairs and renovations to the Sargent Park outdoor swimming pool.

It is undoubtedly true that the Winnipeg public park system derived some lasting benefits from the unemployment relief programs of the depression. However, the writer James Gray was not the only person who worked on a relief gang to testify that the circumstances of relief work were bitterly demeaning to the unemployed. Without any choice in the matter they were forced to do work that was designed, in many cases, simply to keep them occupied and out of trouble. Often the ultimate value of the work was so negligible as to be laughable. Gray described his work on a boulevard gang picking dandelions by hand off the boulevards of the wealthy in River Heights.

Champion Retires and the Zoo Gets Some Attention

Meanwhile, a kind of changing of the guard was taking place on the Parks Board's staff, as supervisors of many year's standing were retiring. The most significant of these changes involved the retirement of Parks Superintendent George Champion on October 2, 1935. After a career of 28 years, Champion was both nostalgic and full of regrets in his final annual report to the board. "Ideas and opportunities have been plentiful," he said, "but the means to translate them into reality have been unattain-



F.T.G. White, who succeeded George Champion as Parks Superintendent in 1936. White had joined the Parks Board staff in 1907 and was Superintendent of Assiniboine Park prior to Champion's retirement. WPRD.

able."⁸ Champion's replacement, who filled the job in an acting capacity for a year, was F. T. G. White. Born in Scotland, Frank White had joined the Winnipeg Public Parks Board staff in 1907 and was named superintendent of Assiniboine Park in 1918. White was thus a Parks Board insider who knew the system intimately. There is a strong sense of continuity from the Champion years to the White years. In one respect, White differed from Champion, however. White took more interest in the plight of the Assiniboine Park Zoo than had his predecessor.

Never was a zoo more in need of a supporter. Since its rather slapdash establishment, the zoo had evolved without planning. Though always popular with the public, the zoo in the Champion era was always the last priority for funding. Animal enclosures that had been intended to be temporary in 1908 were still in use in 1938. A glass house that had housed the steam engine the Countess of Dufferin was moved to the zoo in 1912 for temporary use as an animal shelter. Though completely inappropriate for this purpose, it was still there at the end of the thirties.⁹ Things started to look up when the Shriners began taking an interest in the zoo. When the Khartoum Shriners donated a young lioness in 1935, a young lion in 1936 and some monkeys in 1937, the public



Lion at the zoo, 1947. When the Shriners donated a lioness and a male lion in 1935 and 1936, the increased public attention helped the Parks Board too begin planning to modernize the zoo. WPRD.

swarmed to see them.¹⁰ White remarked that he thought Winnipeg now had the nucleus of a real zoo. The public attention and the desire on the part of the board to keep the good opinion of the Shriners both helped to persuade City Council to part with money to build a permanent animal enclosure in



Ernest Thompson Seton feeding a porcupine at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, c. 1925. PAM, P. McAdam Collection.

1938. This permanent enclosure, which housed the lions as well as several other animals and birds, was designed by Parks Board employees and built of reinforced concrete.¹¹

Swimming, Skating and Playgrounds During the Thirties

During the early thirties, attendance at playgrounds increased dramatically as families were not leaving town on holidays during the summers. But in 1932, the board was forced to decrease the number of supervisors and playground attendance fell dramatically. It was conclusive evidence that children would not take an interest in playgrounds unless proper leadership and direction was provided.¹²

The swimming program went through some changes during the depression. In 1930 the Cornish Swimming Baths closed and a new pool, the Sherbrook Pool, on Sherbrook Street between Portage and Ellice avenues was built to replace it. Sherbrook Pool, like its predecessor, had both swimming and bathing facilities for those who might not have access to bathtubs. Present day swimmers at Sherbrook Pool may be shocked to learn that when it was built in 1931, it was "the largest and finest in Western Canada."¹³ The Sherbrook and Pritchard pools, the only public indoor pools in the city, had been administered directly by City Council, through the council committee on libraries and swimming pools. The Parks Board had direct responsibility for the outdoor pool at Sargent Park because of its location on a Parks Board property. In 1933, City Council asked the

board to take over direct responsibility for the Pritchard and Sherbrook pools as well.¹⁴ The most significant development in the swimming program was that the emphasis began to be placed on formal swimming lessons for playground children, rather than free swimming as in the past. This was partly made possible by the *Winnipeg Tribune* newspaper which sponsored these swimming lessons.

The board kept up its skating rink programs. The high point came in 1935 when the flooding crew serviced 22 supervised rinks, 72 community rinks and 39 private rinks. This last category of rink received flooding services at cost.¹⁵ After 1935, the number of rinks serviced by the board declined severely.

In 1938 the Winnipeg School Board took over supervision of playgrounds on school lands, leaving the Parks Board to supervise the nine playgrounds situated in parks. Although the School Board brought a fresh spirit to playground supervision, the necessity of transferring the work to the School Board was demoralizing for the Parks Board. After their initial hesitation in taking on the work of the Playgrounds Commission in 1919, the members of the Parks Board now considered that recreation work was their job and no one else's. The playground program suffered another blow when the Winnipeg

School Board was forced to discontinue supervised playgrounds on school property in 1941. In 1942, authority for school playgrounds was returned to the Parks Board. But without the funds to run them, the Parks Board was unable to re-open the school playgrounds.

Planning for a Post-War World

After more than a decade of accommodating City Hall and, by and large, keeping within the meagre budgets apportioned to it, members of the Parks Board were losing patience. The onset of World War Two had also brought new problems: lack of manpower and lack of materials. The board found itself caught between a tight-fisted council on one hand and a public clamouring for increased services on the other. In 1941, the Parks Board Chairman, C. H. McFadyen, decided to go directly to the public via a radio broadcast on CJRC. Like his predecessor ten years before, McFadyen thought that the aldermen members of the board should not have a majority. He believed that council members and citizen members should have parity at eight members each.¹⁶ The script of McFadyen's talk reveals that it was not great radio material. But it was a fact-studded plea for understanding of the board's financial situation. As but one example, McFadyen pointed out that the City Council grant for playgrounds work in 1941

was a mere \$6,000. "You citizens will appreciate what little real playground work throughout the City can be done with \$6,000 and so when you see playgrounds that are playgrounds in name only, you will realize improvement cannot be expected until additional grants are made. All such expenditures are a matter of taxes, or a reduction in other necessary services."¹⁷ Parks, according to McFadyen, were very much enjoyed by Winnipeggers. But work on St. Vital and Wildewood parks had effectively ceased and both these parks had had to be closed to the public. Wildewood Park had been a bad bargain in the first place since it was not really required by Winnipeggers and furthermore, it tended to get flooded in the spring. McFadyen urged that Wildewood be transferred back to the Municipality of Fort Garry. Referring to the neighbourhood parks, he said: "Our small parks, some so very beautiful, are seldom made use of - indeed in many cases not a dozen people a day go into them. The automobile is the cause of this great falling off from twenty years ago."¹⁸ In addition, after many years of neglect the small parks were showing signs of serious deterioration. There had been virtually no boulevard construction and maintenance of existing boulevards had been spotty. The hot summers of the 1930s had taken their toll.

The World War Two years did bring some



Flooding at Wildewood Park, April 1942. Had it not been for the depression and Wildewood's tendency to flood, the area might now be park land instead of the suburban housing development it became after World War Two. WPRD.

positive developments, however. If budgets were still tight, they were not as tight as during the depths of the depression. In 1942, the city finally acquired the riverside portion of the old River Park site, which the board now called Churchill Park. In 1945 the problem-ridden Wildewood Park site was transferred back to the Municipality of Fort Garry. The board's annual Citizen's Inspection tour, which had been initiated during the twenties to allow

Winnipeggers to see how the Parks Board levy was being spent, continued to be very popular, with 400 attending in 1941. In 1944, the Swift Canadian Company donated a parcel of riverside land in Elmwood for park purposes. The site had been the location of Swift's packing plant.

By the end of 1944, people were daring to imagine what life after the war might be like. Would there be enough housing for the re-

turned men and women? Would there be enough jobs? What if the conditions of the depression returned? Parks Board members knew how to deal with bitter austerity; in fact they had been on a diet of gruel for so long that they were almost afraid to taste richer food. This was not the best frame of mind with which to face the future.



PART III
THE LONG SUMMER
1946 - 1960



Sand lot baseball at Earl Grey Community Club, c. 1952. WPRD.

CHAPTER 7

CHARLES BARBOUR COMES TO TOWN

The Parks Board Versus the *Tribune*

The *Winnipeg Tribune* editorial of September 15, 1945 declared: "Under the Parks Board recreation in Winnipeg is rapidly getting nowhere."¹ The *Tribune* was not only echoing the opinion of a significant number of Winnipeggers but, unfortunately, describing reality. Public recreation in Winnipeg was in a shambles in 1945. The school playgrounds had not been opened since 1942. The Parks Board playgrounds were run with a skeleton staff. Community clubs, which had struggled into existence to provide supervised sports programming for neighbourhood children, received no public support apart from rink flooding and caretaking services during the winter season, if they were lucky. If the clubs had buildings at all, they were likely to be boxcar shelters bought cheaply from the railway and plunked down beside rinks. The land on which the rinks and shelters sat was usually owned by someone else and the clubs could find themselves turfed out at the whim of the owner. More often than not, the community rinks had no shelter at all and children would change into their skates on splintered benches out in the open. In summer, boys

changed into what baseball, football or lacrosse gear they had, at the field. They would leave the field after a game gritty, sweaty and unshowered, a fact of little concern to them but somewhat offensive to the people who shared a streetcar seat with them.

Often parent volunteers would run small sports programs from the neighbourhood school. The schools, which could have provided recreational facilities to the communities after school hours, were antiquated, crowded and, for recreational purposes, poorly designed. Auditoriums and gymnasiums situated on the third floors of buildings could not be used for basketball or volleyball because the floors had not been built to withstand the stress and the ceilings were too low. Many schools were without gymnasiums at all. During the winter months school hallways became running tracks and dodge ball courts. School grounds were often poorly drained, resembling inland seas in spring. Few school yards had paved areas which would have been usable even in wet weather.²

The *Tribune*, having decided to be the champion of an expanded recreational program in Winnipeg, showed no quarter to the Parks Board. In a series of editorials, the pa-

per characterized the board as a bunch of gardeners, out of touch with recreational thinking and out of sympathy with an expanded program. The board was "...worse than a flop. It is a hindrance because so much that lies within a comprehensive recreation program such as outlined by the Council of Social Agencies, is far outside the experience and even the understanding of the Parks Board."³ With considerable glee, the editorial writer outlined the reasons why the board might be resisting increases in recreational services. No fewer than three of the citizen members, including the former chairman C. H. McFadyen, were directors and major shareholders in commercial rinks and baseball clubs. Stretching out these revelations over several columns, the paper published the lists of officers of the Amphitheatre Skating Rink, the Olympic Skating Rink, the Winnipeg Maroons Baseball Club and Western Recreations Ltd. which ran Osborne Stadium.⁴ Benjamin C. Parker, then chairman of the Parks Board, was also on the board of both the Amphitheatre and the Maroons. John T. Boyd was on the board of the Maroons. McFadyen was either president or a board member of all four concerns. The *Tribune* stopped just short of accusing these



Croquet players on a hot summer day at Aberdeen School, c. 1946. WPRD.

men of deliberately sabotaging expanded public recreation services in order to maintain the profitability of their businesses. However, the paper did point out that McFadyen, while chairing the Parks Board, had led the fight against reactivating a separate Recreation Commission. No doubt readers could put two and two together.

Was there a nefarious plot on the part of these members to short-circuit the expansion of public recreation? Certainly it is unlikely that they would have favoured the city-owned indoor rink and sports centre championed by the *Tribune*.⁵ But even if these men were less than enthusiastic, the rest of the board could hardly have been character-

ized as recreational visionaries. The alderman members, who held the majority, included C. E. Simonite, whose stinginess with public dollars had reached legendary proportions. Products of the depression, these men were afraid to spend more money in case the conditions of the depression returned. It must also be said that the permanent staff of the Parks Board, notably Superintendent White, tended to be rooted in the era when parks were the major concern of the board and recreation was a kind of poor sister. All these factors combined resulted in an institution that was not destined to be on the cutting edge of public recreation development.

By 1945 the public was far ahead of the Parks Board in its thinking about recreation. When the board protested that there was no money for services, people were increasingly suspicious that the Parks Board was simply not willing to push the issue of funding at City Council. Clearly the board was out of touch with public sentiment and was not

able or willing to bring creative thinking to bear on recreational issues. Of course, the *Tribune's* main purpose was not to hang McFadyen and the others out to dry. Rather, it supported the creation of a separate Recreation Commission composed of representatives of all concerned agencies including the YMCA, YWCA, YMHA, Winnipeg service clubs, the provincial director of fitness, the School Board, the Parks Board, City Council, and the Trades and Labour Council. Significantly, while the *Tribune's* proposed commission was to report directly to City Council, the structure did not give alderman members a majority nor did it include members representing commercial sport. But the paper's dream commission was not to be. In spite of considerable support from social welfare agencies for a separate Recreation Commission, City Council voted to keep public recreation under its own control by reaffirming that the Parks Board had the authority for public recreation in Winnipeg.

When in Doubt, Commission a Study

The *Tribune* campaign had, nonetheless, stirred up a public already aroused about the lack of recreational opportunities in the city. The Parks Board had to do something to appease these demands - or, at least, had to be seen to be doing something. The board in-

When in Doubt, Commission a Study

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structed a three person commission to conduct a broad survey of existing recreation facilities of all kinds and make recommendations.⁶ When this report was tabled in March of 1946, it confirmed in detail the threadbare crazy quilt that was Winnipeg recreation. Perhaps because the three commissioners knew that their recommendations would somehow have to find favour within the conservative milieu of the Parks Board, their report was pragmatic rather than visionary. They presented a blueprint for action that was achievable with a minimum of public dollars. Their chief recommendation, and one which had earlier been voiced by the *Tribune*, was that the board hire a full-time director of recreation who was thoroughly trained and familiar with the latest trends and ideas in public recreation. Modest improvements to the board's existing sports fields at Sargent Park, the Old Exhibition Grounds and other parks were suggested. The commission strongly urged the board to acquire private recreational areas like Carruthers Park and the stadium grounds on south Main Street before these areas were built over. The old theme of lack of playground and park space in the inner city was again raised. However, the main sites of future recreational development were to be the community clubs and schools. In other words, the new recreation director was to take the agencies already ex-

isting in a rudimentary state and build on them. The board was to act in a facilitating role with community clubs, providing strategic financial help to improve facilities and advice on programming. But the main burden of funding, administering and providing programs from community centres was to fall on the shoulders of community centre executives.

The commission stayed well away from philosophical concerns. Readers of the report knew where facilities needed to be improved and the kinds of facilities that were to be built. But there was no overall vision, no sense of the broad public purposes behind recreation programs. There was no hint of the moral passion that had driven the playground movement some 40 years earlier. That movement had been directed mainly at poor children in the inner city who were felt to be most in need of recreational opportunities. By contrast, the 1946 commission's implicit approach was to provide basic recreational facilities city-wide. Though it was already evident that affluent neighbourhoods could build better quality community centre facilities than poorer neighbourhoods, the commission chose not to address these inequities head on.

The common sense of the commission's report appealed to the Parks Board and its recommendations were given wide publicity

thanks to the *Tribune*. The board members found that, even had they wanted to dig in their heels, the momentum of public sentiment in favour of expanded recreation services forced them to act on the commission's recommendations. The recreation director's job was duly advertised across the country.

When Charles Barbour of Montreal came to Winnipeg to be interviewed for the director of recreation position, he doubted that he would be selected. There were two Winnipeg candidates on the short list and it was well known that the city preferred to hire locally wherever possible. But Barbour's enthusiasm and air of confidence must have impressed the Parks Board. He was hired just in time to start up the 1946 summer playground program.

Barbour had all the passion and commitment to recreational ideals that the 1946 commission had lacked. Raised in London, Ontario, he was a natural athlete and had gone to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, on a basketball and baseball scholarship. There he had earned bachelor degrees in Physical Education and Education. When he returned to Canada he became the trainer for the Montreal Maroons Hockey Club and then taught physical education first at Lower Canada College and then with the Protestant School Board of Montreal. Having a family to feed, he spent his summers as the recre-



Charles Barbour (seated on the right), Winnipeg's first recreation director, supervising a playground sports day at Sargent Park, c. 1955. Barbour's enthusiasm and common sense had a lot to do with the success of the recreation program following World War Two. WPRD.

ational director of the Town of Mount Royal, which under his direction developed a highly regarded public recreation program.⁷ The motto of this program, "the family that plays together stays together" was to become a cliché. But at the time it expressed a key concept in Barbour's recreation philosophy. He was serious about involving the whole family in recreation and about providing programming not just in the traditional areas of sports but in handicrafts, hobbies, music, art and drama. In Barbour's dream community centre there would be programs to suit both sexes, all ages, all interests, all colours and all religions. His recreational philosophy

less they had these opportunities. Self expression, too, was to be encouraged through music, art, dance and drama. Exploring individuality was just as important in the Barbour code as being part of a team.

Charles Barbour's reassuring common sense made him the ideal choice for post-war Winnipeg. Beneath the surface of jubilation and relief at the end of the war there was a subtle undercurrent of anxiety. Everything was so unsettled; there were so many people in transit. It was exciting and confusing at the same time. In Winnipeg the old CPR Immigration Sheds had once more been pressed into service to house refugees from Europe.

retained the conviction of an earlier era that recreation for children was a tool for moral improvement. Children involved in his programs would learn the skills of good citizenship. Yet for Barbour, unlike his predecessors, fun was something valuable that was worth having in and of itself; children were meant to have fun and their lives were not complete un-

In these shabby dormitories "DPs", as stateless persons were derisively called, slept on cots beside Jewish orphans who had survived the Nazi concentration camps. Emergency housing projects, like the one on Flora Place that encroached on the playing fields of the Old Exhibition Grounds, sprouted like mushrooms after a rain. Teenagers seemed restless and lost; their recreational choices included hanging around corner stores, smoking and getting into trouble. Barbour radiated a confidence that was a soothing balm. He told Winnipeggers that they could have the recreational programs they so badly wanted if they worked together but they must act decisively. "The time is now," he said, "not a year from now, or the year after that. Children do not wait for slow decisions. They grow up, learn good or bad habits, work and have their being, whether the surroundings are suitable or not. Time and a child's growing does not wait."⁸

Building the Community Centre System 1946-1961

The Parks Board ran its playground programs with a special appropriation for that purpose from City Council. This appropriation had become so meagre that by 1942 it was a third of what the Playgrounds Commission had received in 1919. If the strategy of building up the facilities and programs of



Charles Barbour starts a lacrosse game at Kelvin Community Centre, 1946. PAM, Kelvin Community Club Collection, N13864.

city community centres was to go ahead, both increased operating money and considerable capital funds would be needed. It was fortunate that by 1946 both the public will for increased recreational services and a steadier economy had made this infusion of cash possible. At the civic election of 1946, voters approved a \$500,000 by-law to improve and extend recreational services to all sections of the city.⁹ The board decided to expend this money over a period of three years, and to allocate no more than \$10,000 to any given project. During the next 15 years there were to be three additional money by-laws passed for recreation: \$300,000 in 1954, \$150,000 in 1958 and

\$1,100,000 in 1961.¹⁰ These sums seemed princely compared to previous recreational funding. However, post-war inflation and the board's ambitious plans left barely enough to provide rudimentary community centres in most neighbourhoods in Winnipeg proper.

The money was used to situate community centres on

Parks Board land, to build new clubhouses or renovate existing ones, to improve skating rinks, baseball diamonds, playing fields and playgrounds on community centre land, and to landscape club grounds. Most of these clubhouse buildings were far from luxurious. But they were usable for a wide variety of recreational options and were an immense improvement over the boxcar shelters of the previous generation. By 1960, Winnipeg had 19 community centres located throughout the city, operating year-round and offering a variety of programs for both children and adults. This network of neighbourhood centres was unique in Canada; there were more community centres per capita in Winnipeg

than in any other city in the country.¹¹ Winnipeg clubs were within walking distance for most people in the neighbourhood while in other cities like Vancouver, they tended to be distributed on a regional basis.

Recreational Programs in the Barbour Era

While the physical plants of the community centres were being built up, Charles Barbour set to work to increase and diversify the activities that were to take place in them. The programs he instituted were not a radical change from what had gone before. Indeed, in many cases he reinstated older programs that had fallen by the wayside during the depression and the war. Inter-playground sports leagues and all-playground sports days had not been held since the early 1930s but they became part of the Barbour plan. The Playground Hockey League, which had languished during the war, flourished during the fifties under Barbour's encouragement. Any boy was welcome to play in the playground league regardless of his skill level. The league was sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce which bought equipment for boys who did not have their own. Along with Dr. Tom Casey of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers organization, Barbour introduced a six man football league to the community club system. Because he wanted

to increase the participation of girls in recreation programs, Barbour reinstated the policy of the former Playgrounds Commission of having both a male and a female playground supervisor on each playground. He also hired a supervisor of women's and girl's programs, Margaret Wilson, to work out of his office. Fitness testing again became an important feature of Winnipeg playground life.

Barbour used his connections in the sports and recreation world to best advantage. In order to increase interest in the playground baseball league, he talked several of his friends into coming up to Winnipeg to give a baseball skills workshop.

These particular friends played and coached for the St. Louis Cardinals.¹² By introducing the idea of Little League Baseball to Vince Leah, who took the idea and implemented it, Barbour played a leading role in bringing this form of the game to Winnipeg.

Barbour also brought several new ideas and emphases to Winnipeg recreation. Up until this time recreation for children had been dominated by sports. Barbour wanted to diversify the program so that equal emphasis would be given to each of three key areas: sports; handicrafts and hobbies; and the arts - music, art and drama. Nor were these programs to cater only to children. Under Charles Barbour's direction, the first

recreational programming for adults was started. He was particularly concerned about seniors who tended to have very limited pensions and, as a result, little money for entertainment. In Barbour's view, the community centre could fill a significant need by providing recreational options at little or no cost to seniors.

In neighbourhoods where there was as yet no community centre, Barbour advocated setting up "Activity Centres" in a neighbourhood school. These activity centres would run programs for both children and adults. Barbour also advocated operating boy's and girl's clubs out of schools for inner city neighbourhoods without community centres.



Members of Deer Lodge Community Club playing carpet bowls in their new clubhouse, c. 1946. Deer Lodge Community Club Collection.



Studying ceramics at Sir John Franklin Community Club, 1957. UMA, Tribune Collection.



A "Playtown Council" in action, c. 1955. Each public playground would elect a mayor and councillors who, with the aid of the playground supervisor, would then run the playground for the summer. It is safe to say that real council meetings were not nearly so solemn as this posed picture suggests. WPRD.

Handicraft and hobby programs were given more focus as Barbour thought it important for the children to have the satisfaction of displaying their work and getting some sense of how it compared to the work of others. In 1947, for example, the projects from playground and activity centre crafts programs were displayed in the auditorium of John M. King School. Later, the Hudson's Bay Company displayed selected work from this show in the nine display windows on the Vaughan Street side of the Hudson's Bay store. In 1948, Barbour initiated a Junior Recreation Museum in the basement of the Civic Auditorium building. This became the

central resource for all the crafts and hobby programs run by the board. Children took classes there and summer playground supervisors were trained there in the various crafts that they were to teach the playground children.

When Barbour said that recreation ought to teach children to be good citizens, he meant this in a quite literal way. One of his

most popular innovations was the "Play Town Council". Every playground would elect a mayor and four councillors from among the children. The Mayor of Winnipeg would then invite the Play Town councils to city hall where he would greet the children with great solemnity and present them with their badges of office.¹³ The Play Town mayors and councillors would then be given treats and a tour of the council chambers and the offices of the mayor and aldermen. The Play Town councils, which included the playground director in an advisory capacity, ran the playground, deciding on what programs they would have and when. As well

as being an excellent learning experience for the children, the Play Town councils generated a lot of free publicity for Barbour's work. He could count on the *Free Press* and *Tribune* photographers being on hand as Mayor Coulter and later Mayor Juba shook hands with the diminutive Play Town mayors.

Conflict Inside the Board

The administrator of a program that grew as quickly as the Winnipeg public recreation program did during the ten years following the Second World War could expect to encounter some roadblocks. This was certainly true for Charles Barbour. He had created a lot of change quickly within an institution that had operated in more or less the same fashion for 30 years. In the middle of the 1950s a dispute developed that threatened the further expansion of the program and Barbour's place within it.

In 1950 General Superintendent Frank White retired and White's then assistant, T. R. Hodgson, took over the top job. Unlike White, who had spent virtually his whole career with the board, Hodgson had a more varied background. Raised in the north end of Winnipeg, Hodgson's first encounter with the Parks Board was as a playground supervisor in 1929. After gaining a B.Sc. degree from the University of Manitoba in agron-

omy and agricultural economics, he worked for seven years at the Hardy Plant Nursery and horticultural experimental centre at Dropmore, Manitoba. When the war came, he enlisted in the RCAF as an air observer and was shot down over France. He was captured by the Gestapo and spent a horrific three months in the Buchenwald concentration camp before being transferred to the prisoner of war camp Stalag Luft III. From there he escaped and made his way to the advancing British army lines. Back in Canada, Hodgson spent a year working for the Canadian Vocational Veteran's Training Placement Program. He joined the Parks Board as assistant superintendent in 1947, a year after Barbour's arrival in Winnipeg.¹⁴

Tom Hodgson brought a flinty intelligence, a varied background and new managerial ideas to the board at a time when it was experiencing change. Since he was, himself, part of this change, Hodgson ought to have had a lot in common with Charles Barbour. They were close in age and both realized that the board would have to be shaken out of its depression mentality in order to adapt to its post-war role. But Barbour and his program presented Hodgson with a dilemma. Hodgson was in charge of both of the board's functions, parks and recreation. As a horticulturalist, he was dismayed at the deterioration that had taken place in Win-

nipeg parks during the depression and the war years. Under Barbour, the recreation program had begun to dominate the board's agenda, taking up more and more of its energies, resources and dollars. Winnipeg was preoccupied with playgrounds, community centres and wading pools and was taking its wonderful heritage of green space for granted. During the

1950s, the public voted for three special money by-laws for recreation. There had been no money by-law for parks since 1911. Hodgson watched helplessly as, in 1954, the recreation money by-law passed and the parks money by-law was defeated. As the board struggled to accommodate increases in salaries necessitated by inflation, Charles Barbour slowly added staff to his recreation office. By 1956, he had three senior recreation supervisors working under him and 17 part-time community club janitors. Barbour saw these staff appointments as entirely necessary; Hodgson saw them as empire building. Barbour wanted to spend more public



Parks and Recreation Superintendent T.R. Hodgson (right, without hat) accepts a cheque funding the Arnold Tot-Lot from representatives of the Benevolent Order of Elks, c. 1955. WPRD.

money on community centres; Hodgson wanted to set some limits on the public recreation program.

The conflict between Hodgson and Barbour finally burst into the open in 1956 and they were required to appear in front of the board to air their grievances.¹⁵ The solutions proposed by each were revealing. Hodgson stated that he would solve the problem by bringing in a new recreation director, limiting Barbour's authority to sports and making him report to the new director. For his part, Barbour recommended splitting the board's responsibilities into separate parks and recreation divisions, each totally indepen-

dent of the other and each reporting directly to the board. The board did not adopt either solution (although several years later, the division into parks and recreation branches did happen). The conflict continued to simmer until Hodgson's premature death at the age of 51 in 1962.

This dispute was not bitterly personal; Hodgson and Barbour confined their conflict to the recreation committee room and Barbour, for his part, had a grudging respect for Hodgson.¹⁶ In fact, the conflict may well have occurred regardless of who sat in the general superintendent's or the recreation director's chair. Ever since the Parks Board was landed with the responsibility for playgrounds in 1919, recreation had been considered a secondary responsibility by successive parks boards and by the board's permanent staff, most of whom worked on the parks side of the operation. Buoyed by widespread public support, Barbour's recreation program had certainly taken centre stage during the 1950s. In 1951 the name of the board was changed to the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board in order to reflect this new reality. Undoubtedly, the need to allocate funds to Barbour's program made it difficult to carry out the parks projects of the day like the Assiniboine Park Zoo expansion, the modernization of equipment and the construction of Rainbow Stage in Kildonan Park

- not to mention the routine maintenance of parks, boulevards, cemeteries and golf courses and the beautification of city properties. In the end, it was public support that kept Barbour in his chair and ensured that the public recreation program would be a top priority of the board. The generation of parents that spawned the baby boomers wanted recreational opportunities for their children and were willing to pay for them.

Them That's Got Shall Have, Them That's Not Shall Lose

Questions arising over how the funds were to be allocated to community centres during the 1950s became another cloud over Charles Barbour's usually sunny horizon. And like a prairie thunderstorm, this one could be seen coming for miles. The 1946 recreation report that resulted in Barbour's hiring revealed a disparity in the quality of community centres based on the socio-economic character of their neighbourhoods. Quite simply, affluent neighbourhoods could raise better buildings and mount more programs than poorer neighbourhoods. Faced with this undeniable fact, the board could have chosen to even out these disparities by adopting a policy of allocating more funds to the poorer centres while leaving the more affluent centres to raise a higher proportion of their funding from their communities. But af-

ter the passage of the first recreation by-law for \$500,000 in 1946, the board decided to assess each community club project on its own merits.

Then in 1947, the notoriously parsimonious alderman C. E. Simonite spearheaded a move to lock the Parks Board into "dollar for dollar" funding of community centre projects.¹⁷ Under this system, the community would have to supply half the funds for each project. Citizen members of the board objected. They said that communities like River Heights, where it was possible to raise a lot of money, would get commensurately large amounts of public money while less affluent communities would get less. The policy would have the effect, if anything, of increasing the disparity between clubs. Simonite succeeded in getting these guidelines passed for projects already underway and for those already agreed to by the board. However, at the next meeting which decided on the future funding policy of the board with respect to the balance of the 1946 money, Simonite's plan was softened into a set funding formula.¹⁸ This funding formula stipulated that the board would have to approve the location, plans and specifications for the project and that the board's share would be the equivalent of 50 percent of the cost of materials and 75 percent of the cost of labour (the cost of land was not an issue since the City

bought the land and made it available to community centres). Labour in lieu of cash was to be acceptable and the board retained for itself the right to disregard these guidelines if the project merited special consideration. A cap of \$10,000 was placed on any one project coming before the board.

Several problems arose out of this decision. Communities applying for the balance of the 1946 recreation by-law allocation - some \$208,000 to be spent in 1948 and 1949 - were to be subject to the new funding formula. The 50 percent subsidization of materials sometimes encouraged community groups to skimp on materials in order to lower their budget, choosing inferior quality that might not last. It may be supposed that the ability to substitute labour for cash worked to even out the economic disparities between communities. But in working class neighbourhoods like Elmwood, men worked on shift at physically tiring forms of labour. They were less able to form work parties and often too tired to do the shingling, painting or carpentry that was required. In practice these communities still had difficulty in coming up with their 50 percent share of the cost of materials and either work or cash to cover a 25 percent share of the value of the labour. Although the board retained its ability to override the funding formula, in practice this meant that a lot of lobbying had to be done

by the community to get the support of sufficient board members for a proposal. Many communities that lacked facilities and money also lacked the experience and skill necessary to lobby the Parks Board successfully. The board certainly did supply the total funds for several clubs, earning criticism from the *Winnipeg Tribune* editorial writer, who said that this policy was bound to create bickering and jealousy and that, "people never really appreciate what has been handed to them without any effort on their part."¹⁹

Dogged by complaints from the community, in 1948 the board further defined the allocation of funds by agreeing to some basic criteria for assessing community projects. Eligible projects under these criteria were defined as falling into two categories: those requested by organized community groups and those recommended by the recreation committee for areas where no organized community committee existed. Projects from the community were to be assessed on the basis



Men painting the clubhouse at Isaac Brock Community Centre, c. 1955. WPRD.

of location, needs of the community, evidence of strong community involvement to guarantee viability into the future, resources of club and community, and prospects of the club for meeting the operating costs of the centre in the future.²⁰ For future planning, areas of the city were to be broken down into community centre districts, each with approximately 10,000 residents. The board worked towards providing at least one community centre for each of these districts.

By then, not surprisingly, the community centres were finding the funding formula and guidelines confusing and even contradictory. As a result of not imposing well-thought-out guidelines right from the

start in 1946, the board, perhaps, deserved the complaints levelled at it. But one reason for the board's seeming reluctance to impose guidelines on the community club system was Barbour's desire for the clubs to retain considerable autonomy. In the 1946 Recreation Report, the clubs themselves had expressed a clear wish for "cooperation without dictation". In other words, they wanted to decide for themselves what kinds of buildings and programs they would have. Barbour approved of this arrangement since he wanted people to feel a sense of responsibility and ownership of their facilities and programs. However, it was also highly desirable to have certain minimum standards city-wide for such areas as physical plant, safety standards, public liability insurance, caretaking and supervised programming. The clubs themselves sometimes resisted moves by the board to institute these standards, however. For example, the board tried in the late 1940s to provide clubs with standard clubhouse plans but found that the communities preferred to use their own designs. The conflict between the desire for local autonomy and the desire for city-wide minimum standards was to be a continuing theme in the board's relations with the community centres. The board's dilemma was to try to promote minimum standards without imposing uniformity. The standard form of agreement be-

tween the board and each centre, developed in 1950, reflects this problem. In order to take into account the individuality of each centre, the clauses of this agreement were so vague as to be almost meaningless. Here, for example, is the clause on funding:

A certain sum of money shall be appropriated from the budget of the Recreation Division to supplement the budget of the Community Centre executive for programs, grounds and building maintenance and services, to provide as far as possible equal assistance to all Centres to provide for the fundamental needs of the Community Centre and protect the capital investment involved in this Community Recreation Service.²¹

Relations between the board and the community centres, as one might expect, were not always smooth. The clubs themselves had created an association in 1945, the Associated Community Clubs of Greater Winnipeg (ACC). This association came together in order to present a group brief to the Parks Board's 1946 Recreation Commis-

sion. By 1947, the ACC had 24 member clubs, several of which were located in the suburban municipalities.²² The association continued to act as the voice of Winnipeg community clubs until the Parks Board created a community clubs advisory committee to advise the board's recreation committee in 1951. The 17 Winnipeg clubs then pulled out of the ACC. It folded for a couple of years but was revived again towards the end of the decade when relations between the clubs and the board hit another low period.

Since the clubs tended to resist standardization and since the funding formula for recreation by-law money did not fully address disparities, the patchwork quilt effect



Square dancing at Crescentwood Community Club, 1957. UMA, Tribune Collection.

that was observed in 1946 was, to some extent, perpetuated into the 1950s. In addition neighbourhoods were experiencing a high rate of growth and change during this period. Facilities that were fine in 1951 were apt to be outgrown by the end of the decade. Many neighbourhoods found themselves having to replace or substantially alter buildings that had been built only in the late 1940s. This meant that the problems of raising money had to be faced all over again by both the board and the community. There continued to be a considerable disparity in facilities and programs from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, particularly between centres in the north end and centres in the south end of the city.

Community Centres Get Programming Assistance

Once the community centres were built or renovated using the capital assistance of the recreation by-law funds, the board hoped that community volunteers would take care of their administration and programming without financial assistance from the board. It seemed too much to expect volunteers to take care of maintenance of the facilities in addition to these tasks. So the board supplied each centre with the services of a janitor, but only for five months of the year. This janitor's main function was to maintain the

skating rinks in winter and the wading pools in summer. Board funds were also supplied for fuel costs of the centre in winter and for liability insurance. But by 1956, it was apparent that volunteers simply could not do all the work of programming, administration, fund-raising and the long-term maintenance of facilities. Clubs in affluent neighbourhoods were able to raise more funds, to draw on expert support and to hire specialists like figure skating or tennis teachers for programs. The River Heights Community Centre even hired its own program director. Clubs in less affluent neighbourhoods had constant difficulties with fund-raising and had to depend on volunteer coaches and activity teachers who often had little training. Without support the small core of volunteers, who usually carried most of the burden of running the centres, became disheartened. Clubs suffered periods of low activity when their volunteers simply ran out of gas.

Barbour knew that the board ought to be supplying program directors to the volunteers if his ambitious plans had any hope of succeeding. Margaret Wilson, who had just returned to Barbour's staff following graduate study in recreation at Indiana University, was assigned to do a detailed case study of three typical community centres from north, central and south Winnipeg.²³ This study of West End Memorial, Kelvin and River Heights commu-



Lorraine Patko, age 9, twirls baton for seniors at Orioles Community Club, 1957. UMA, Tribune Collection.

nity centres described the organization of each club, their physical plants, their revenue sources, expenditures, programs and special events. Surprisingly, this report showed that the buildings of each centre were within a range of value - ranging from the \$18,885.93 for the West End building to \$26,070.84 for the Kelvin club. The disparities between the West

End Club, located on the corner of Arlington Street and McDermott Avenue, and the River Heights Club in the south end were more apparent in matters that affected the long-term operation of the clubs: ability to maintain the buildings, fund-raising, organization of the executives and, especially, ability to provide programs for participants. It became clear that even if the board provided low income communities with a community centre building, these communities would have great difficulty in keeping it running and providing the needed recreation programs. This report and the Greater Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Survey done the same year gave Barbour the detailed data he needed to fight for additional support for community centres. Starting in 1957, each Winnipeg community centre was eventually provided with one full-time caretaker and one full-time program supervisor. This was a boon to tired club volunteers. As Margaret Wilson Barbour has said of the change, "...at least there was a common base, a minimum standard; people could be coaches and managers instead of shovelling snow and looking for baton teachers. They could just be with the kids."²⁴

Better Training Makes Better Recreation Workers

Charles Barbour knew when he came to Winnipeg in 1946 that he could not hope to

carry out his plans without additional trained staff. By that time, especially in the United States, university programs had been developed for professional recreation specialists. Such programs were still thin on the ground in Canada and non-existent on the prairies. As Barbour gradually increased the number of people working for him, he made their professional development a high priority. By 1960 he had five senior recreation supervisors and one community centre supervisor working in his office, 17 junior supervisors working as program directors in community clubs plus the summer playground staff, the winter activity centre staff and the community club janitors. Using his connections in recreational associations, he brought in specialists to do workshops. At the newly formed Faculty of Physical Education at the University of Manitoba, he was instrumental in setting up a certificate program in recreational administration. Playground supervisor candidates attended a six week training course before the summer season began. All staff members were encouraged to belong to the national and regional recreation associations, particularly the Mid-Continent Regional Park and Recreation Conference, of which Barbour was a founding member.

Charles Barbour continued his work as Recreation Director for another ten years, retiring in 1970. After several years alone fol-

lowing the death of his first wife, he had married his colleague, Margaret Wilson. She then left his staff and became the recreation director for the City of West Kildonan. Barbour accomplished many things during these last years ending with a bang by organizing the Community Club Junior Winter Olympics in 1970 as a Manitoba centennial project. He died in 1975 in the midst of a happy and active retirement.

Perhaps Barbour's most enduring legacies, however, were the numerous people - both his staff and volunteers - who caught the contagious bug of his passion for recreation. Not the least of these were several generations of young people who served as playground supervisors during the long, mellow summers of the 1940s and 1950s. Margaret Wilson Barbour could have been speaking for them all when she said, "There was something about being a playground supervisor that you couldn't put into words. But you would never have missed it and what you learned you could carry over into whatever else you did in the future...You learned a code of life that was really important."²⁵



CHAPTER 8

COMMUNITY CLUBS AND HOW THEY GREW

There is no such thing as a typical community centre in Winnipeg. Each centre reflects the neighbourhood in which it is located and each has its own distinctive character. Here are the stories of four community centres that, taken together, give some idea of the diversity of Winnipeg clubs. Representing different areas of the city, these four clubs have longevity in common. Each can date its origins to well before Charles Barbour's arrival in Winnipeg in 1946. In fact, all four clubs have roots going back much further than that, in one case to the First World War. That all have weathered the ups and downs from their glory days in the 1950s to the uncertain 1990s is attributable to countless hours of plain hard work on the part of neighbourhood volunteers.

Sinclair Park Community Centre

Without the Canadian Ukrainian Athletic Club, the Sinclair Park Community Centre would never have seen the light of day.¹ When Charles Barbour was looking for ways to build up the network of community clubs in Winnipeg, he found that the north end already possessed athletic clubs, many of which had emerged from the local ethnic communities. The Canadian Ukrainian Ath-

letic Club (CUAC) was formed in 1926 in order to provide sports programs for children of Ukrainian origin. At first the club was run out of the homes of its executive members and raised money through membership dues and donations from local businesses. Baseball and softball were the first sports in which the club was involved but later hockey, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, bowling, curling and golf were added to the mix.

During the early period of the club's existence, both meeting space and playing facilities were a problem. In 1928 the club was able to establish headquarters at the Ukrainian Reading Association Hall at Flora and MacKenzie. The Old Exhibition Grounds provided the main playing field in the neighbourhood but these fields were heavily used. Nevertheless, CUAC established a name for itself, especially in the Greater Winnipeg Senior Baseball League. The club's

women's softball teams were particularly successful from the time in 1932 when Slaw Rebchuk, soon to be an alderman and Parks Board member, coached the Girls Intermediate Softball team. It was Rebchuk who was instrumental in finding the club a permanent baseball field during his term as president of CUAC in 1937. The City Council had set aside land on the corner of Church and Arlington for a senior high school. Rebchuk got permission from the School Board and council for CUAC to build a baseball diamond and bleachers to be used until such time as



The Canadian Ukrainian Athletic Club (CUAC) executive, c. 1950. Photo courtesy John Shaley.



Sinclair Park Women's Auxiliary planning the annual tea, 1967. UIMA, Tribune Collection.

construction on the school began. Later the Parks Board located a community skating rink adjacent to the baseball diamond and the club brought a boxcar shelter onto the site. Here CUAC members like John Mirus and the Shaley brothers, Nick, Steve, Stan and John, put in long hours coaching, refereeing, maintaining the fields, shovelling

snow off the rinks, fixing equipment and making sure that the kids played fair and had fun. They also made sure that CUAC teams were proud of being Ukrainian, proud of being from the north end and proud of being Canadians.

CUAC was a private sports club but almost from the first it was a very outward looking and community-oriented one. Players did not need to be of Ukrainian background to be on a CUAC team. Living in the neighbourhood and wanting to play ball were all that was needed to ensure a warm welcome. It was as simple as that. As the CUAC Annual Report for 1941 put it, "...the club accepts the co-operation of boys and girls of any racial origin so long as the cause of sport is furthered for the benefit of the physical and mental well being of our future citizens."² These were principles of which Charles Barbour could heartily approve. He wanted to help CUAC form a real community club but the private status of CUAC was a problem. Barbour and CUAC came to a unique agreement. The community centre would be a public entity with a legal status separate from CUAC. However, CUAC would run the community centre for the benefit of the whole neighbourhood. Barbour gave the club permission to call the centre "CUAC Community Club at Sinclair Park" and the baseball bleachers proudly pro-

claimed, "Sinclair Park, home of CUAC". Although CUAC programs drew youngsters of Ukrainian origin from all over the city, something that was against official Parks Board policy, Barbour looked the other way.³

Because the School Board decided to build Sisler High School elsewhere, it became possible for the club to make the Arlington and Church site its permanent home. With the aid of the 1946 recreation by-law money, in 1947 the club was able to build a new clubhouse to the west of the original baseball diamond. The city funds paid for the erection of the building's shell and CUAC volunteers finished the interior. The Ladies Auxiliary of CUAC raised funds to decorate the club and to pay for a public address system. The new clubhouse featured a canteen, assembly hall, dressing rooms and showers. Eventually the Sinclair Park Community Centre would occupy more than one full city block, shaped in a dog's leg pattern to utilize the land adjacent to the Midland Railway tracks. In 1949 a full baseball diamond was constructed to the west of the clubhouse with bleachers that seated 2,000, built with CUAC volunteer labour.

The 1950s and 1960s were good times at Sinclair Park. The annual winter carnival continued to be the event of the winter season, sometimes with as many as 2,000 in attendance. The Senior Girls Softball Team



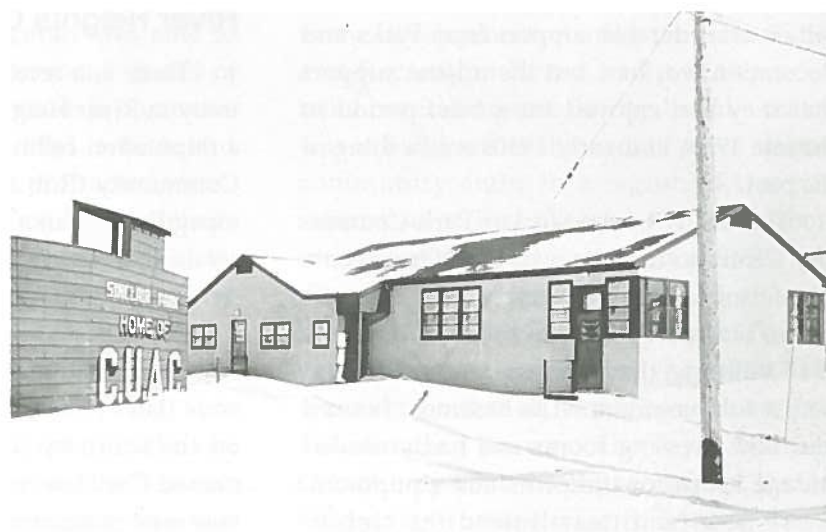
Crowning the Queen at the Sinclair Park Winter Carnival c. 1952. Photo courtesy John Shaley.

won the city championship for a record 17 years from 1957 to 1973 and the Canadian championship in 1965. In fact, the 1965 team and its coaches, John and Stan Shaley, were elected to the Canadian Amateur Softball Hall of Fame in 1991 and made the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame in 1992.

The relationship between CUAC and the Parks Board ran smoothly as long as Charles Barbour remained as City Recreation Director. But by the early 1970s, Barbour had retired and times had changed. The Parks and Recreation department wanted to get younger people from the neighbourhood involved in executive positions at the community centre. The department also wanted to

reduce the role of CUAC to the running of bingos and other fund-raising activities. Stung by what they regarded as the dictatorial attitude of city officials, the CUAC executive severed its ties with Sinclair Park Community Club and CUAC went its own way. Thereafter, Sinclair Park was run by a community executive in the same way as other Winnipeg clubs.

Sinclair Park has weathered the cycle of neighbourhood change relatively well. The Church and Arlington site that Rebchuk secured for the CUAC in 1937 was then on the edge of housing development in the north end. Residential development north and west of the club began around the time of



New Sinclair Park clubhouse built in 1948, with bleachers on the left. Photo courtesy John Shaley

World War Two and boomed following the war. The development of the community centre kept pace with the neighbourhood. By the early 1970s the original residents had raised their families and the population was aging. The club experienced a drop in its volunteer base but younger families were moving in to replace the older inhabitants and the volunteer numbers stabilized again. This was a crucial factor because after 1965 the Parks and Recreation Department began to step back from its on-site commitment to community clubs by withdrawing city-funded program directors and caretakers. Clubs still had a proportion of their operating costs subsidized by the city and could

call on considerable support from Parks and Recreation workers, but the on-site support that they had enjoyed for a brief period in the late 1950s and early 1960s was a thing of the past.

The ability of the Sinclair Park Community Centre to raise its own funds has been a significant factor in its survival. In 1964, the centre was able to build an addition to its 1947 building that featured an auditorium with a full basement.⁴ The basement housed four new dressing rooms and badly needed storage space for uniforms and equipment. These new facilities allowed the club to mount the weekly bingos and hall rentals that have become its main fund-raising activities. Other interior renovations have been undertaken to use the space more efficiently and adapt to new circumstances. The club runs its soccer programs on fields at nearby Robertson School and operates a second canteen there during the summer. Current Sinclair Park Community Centre President Bill Firman says that, to a certain extent, the physical layout limits the programs the club can offer. But it is still managing well with its present buildings and facilities and with a small core of dedicated volunteers. With any luck at all, Sinclair Park Community Centre will be around to witness the year 2,000.

River Heights Community Centre

There is a record of community club activity in River Heights as early as 1919, when a deputation calling itself the River Heights Community Club appeared before the Winnipeg Public Parks Board asking that land be set aside for parks and recreation purposes in the new suburb.⁵ Several years later the City Council did set aside a two block parcel of land bordered on the north by Haskins Avenue (later renamed Grosvenor Avenue) and on the south by Jackson Avenue (later renamed Corydon Avenue). It lay between the lane west of Montrose Street and the lane east of Ash Street. Though these streets had been surveyed, until World War Two this land south of the then developed part of the suburb remained scrub bush and prairie. By 1946, however, the River Heights Community Club had established lawn bowling greens and four tennis courts on the land's north-east corner and a skating rink on the north-west corner.⁶ Just at the time when Charles Barbour arrived in town, the River Heights club was

planning to expand its facilities to include baseball and softball diamonds, more skating rinks, and a swimming pool. The club was able to dovetail its plans with Barbour's and in 1948 a clubhouse was built utilizing a combination of Parks Board funding and community contributions. The 1947 construction of River Heights School next door to the community centre meant that the club could use gymnasium facilities there after school hours. Needing additional space for hockey dressing rooms, two converted boxcars and a small wood frame building were added during the 1950s. In order to provide younger neighbourhood children with skating rinks closer to their homes, the club began running



The first River Heights Community Centre clubhouse built in 1948. WPRD.

additional skating rinks at Montrose and William Osler schools.

In the meantime, the whole southern portion of River Heights had filled up with people and the number of families had jumped from the 1951 total of about 2,400 to about 4,000 in 1961.⁷ By 1961 the club was bursting at the seams and the 1948 clubhouse had been condemned by the Winnipeg Health Department due to a leaking roof and other problems. The centre executive wanted larger facilities to serve the changed neighbourhood. Though the area was an affluent one, the scale of development the club envisioned would require public dollars. Calling on its members' influence and management

expertise, the centre executive was able to persuade the Parks and Recreation Board of the merits of a new clubhouse. In the recreation money by-law of 1961, which had passed council only after protracted wrangling and persistent lobbying by community clubs, especially the River Heights club, \$75,000 was ear-marked for the new River Heights clubhouse. It was the most money ever allocated to a single project by the board.

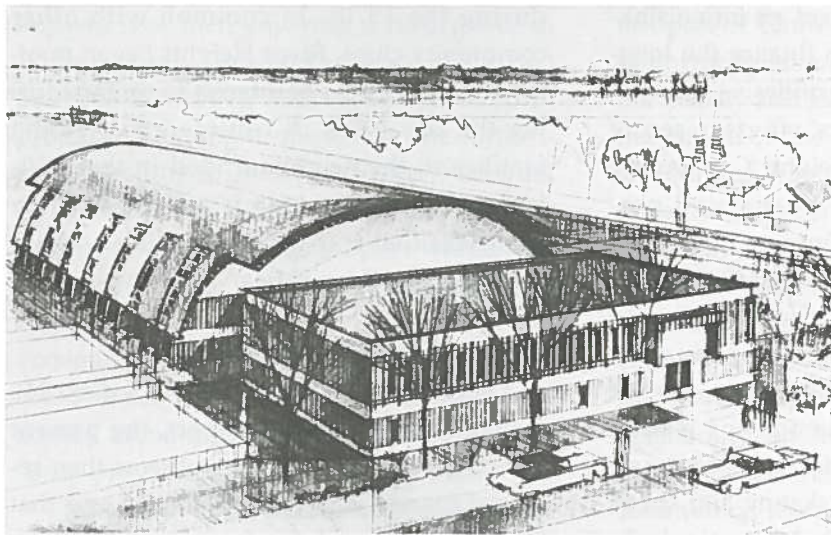
During the winter of 1961-62, the old clubhouse was taken down and the new one built. The club ran its winter programs that year from makeshift headquarters in the basement of Dixon's Pharmacy on Corydon, the

River Heights Public Library on Corydon and neighbourhood schools and churches. The boxcars remained on the site until construction was completed.

Before construction began on the large new two-storey clubhouse, a group of neighbourhood residents decided that an indoor arena would be an attractive addition

to the development. At that time, the Parks and Recreation Board had just begun to build covered arenas. But the board's policy was to build arenas that would serve several community clubs in a region of the city rather than to locate arenas at existing community centres. This, combined with the fact that the River Heights club had already drawn considerable public monies for the new clubhouse, meant that the arena, if it was to be built at all, would have to use private funding sources. The River Heights Community Club executive, headed by Dr. Harry Strawbridge, was convinced that a fund-raising campaign would be successful. The area served by the centre was one of the largest in the city, the economy was buoyant and area residents were relatively affluent. A professional fund-raiser was brought in and a strategic three month campaign featuring a nine day house-to-house canvass was launched. The campaign raised \$110,000 and construction began on the arena in the spring of 1963.

Completed in 1964, the new arena provided facilities for hockey, pleasure skating, speed skating and figure skating. In 1965 another campaign raised money for an artificial ice plant and yet another campaign in 1967 put a concrete floor in the arena. The centre was then able to provide ice time on a year round basis with a short period of down



Architect's drawing of new clubhouse and arena for River Heights Community Centre, 1962. UMA, Winnipeg Tribune Collection.



Official opening of the new River Heights Community Centre, 1963. At this point the arena had not yet been built. It was completed the following year. Photo courtesy Ron O'Donovan.

time for annual maintenance. In 1975 the artificial ice plant was updated and a Zamboni and associated equipment purchased. Operating costs of the arena facility are paid for by the River Heights Community Centre. Occasionally plans surfaced at the club to build a swimming pool or to co-operate in building a curling club as additions to the facilities, but nothing came of these ideas. Unfortunately costs kept escalating through the seventies and into the 1980s. Rather than turn the arena over to the city to run, the club decided to institute user-fees for its arena in order to provide operating revenue. The city did provide money for dressing rooms, offices, and a viewing area adjacent

to the ice surface at a cost of \$90,000 in its 1978 budget. Then the club provided plexi-glass around the hockey rink and heating for the spectator area in 1980 at a cost of \$30,000. Since 1978 the club has employed a full-time general manager, office secretary and an ice maker. It now levies both registration fees and participation fees for its pro-

grams. The participation fees go into a sinking fund which is used to finance the long-term maintenance of the facilities.

As a result of members' efforts to secure superior facilities, River Heights Community Centre was able to offer year round programs not only in sports but in a number of craft and leisure interest areas for participants of all ages. This club was the first to hire its own program director during the 1950s and its ability to maintain paid staff has allowed it to continue offering a wide range of programs even during hard times. The club's hockey, figure skating and speed skating programs have been particularly strong. During the late sixties and early sev-

enties, River Heights, with its large modern auditorium, was one of the most popular venues on the community club youth dance circuit. Organized by the club's Youth Council, these dances drew crowds of teenagers from all over the city who would pay their one dollar entrance fee and dance to the music of bands like the Guess Who, The Monkeys or the Gettysburg Address. As well as providing an excellent training ground for local bands, the dances made a tidy profit for the centre.

River Heights has experienced the same pattern of neighbourhood change as other Winnipeg community centres, with volunteer help peaking in the sixties and falling off during the 1970s. In common with other community clubs, River Heights began to offer more programs of interest to seniors during the late 1980s. A resurgence of young families in the neighbourhood in the 1980s has meant that the club is now sufficiently confident that it is again planning a major expansion for the nineties.

Kelvin Community Centre

According to the Parks Board's 1946 Recreation Commission report, the present site of Kelvin Community club was then reserved for use as a recreation field and that season was used for box lacrosse. Box lacrosse or "boxla" as it was sometimes



Elmwood Pats in action, c. 1935. Elmwood teams seemed to excel in all sports but particularly in lacrosse. PAM, E.P. O'Dowda Collection, N7923.

known, was then enjoying a resurgence in Winnipeg and Elmwood was one of the two or three Winnipeg areas that consistently produced winning teams. Under the enthusiastic coaching of men like Ernie O'Dowda, Elmwood boys learned the basics of the fast-moving, hard-hitting sport which had originated in the Algonquin villages in the eastern St. Lawrence River valley. The box version, unlike its field lacrosse predecessor, could be played either indoors in a standard hockey arena or outdoors in summer in the "box" provided by hockey rink boards.

Interest in boxla played a significant role in the formation of more than one community club in Winnipeg. Residents of the west-

ern part of Elmwood were interested in the opportunity to add baseball and softball to the hockey and lacrosse that was already being played on the site located between Union and Martin avenues and bordered by Kelvin Street on the west (later renamed Henderson Highway) and Brazier Street on the east. They also wanted to have a place in which to hold neighbourhood dances and other kinds of meetings. Although Elmwood was broken into three sections by railway tracks, the neighbourhood, made up largely of the families of railway workers, had a strong sense of community. Its sports teams were sponsored and run by the Elmwood Athletic Association, a vibrant organization that had its ori-



The original boxcar clubhouse at Kelvin Community Centre, 1948. PAM, Kelvin Community Centre Collection, N13861.

gins well before World War Two. Working with people living close to the Kelvin and Union site and with the Elmwood Athletic Association, Charles Barbour encouraged the residents to organize a full community centre. The Kelvin Community Centre was duly formed and in 1948, with the assistance of money from the 1946 recreation by-law, the existing boxcar clubhouse was replaced by a new two-storey facility facing onto Kelvin Street.

The years following the war brought high rates of employment for railway workers yet, despite their long hours of work, area residents dedicated themselves to making the community club a success. Hours of



The new Kelvin Community Centre Clubhouse, 1949. PAM, Kelvin Community Centre Collection, N13863.

volunteer labour in decorating the clubhouse and maintaining the fields and rinks made the Kelvin Community Centre's buildings and facilities among the highest valued of the generation of Winnipeg community centres built between 1946 and 1951. In fact, club members may have put too much focus on maintaining their clubhouse and grounds. A 1957 Parks Board report found that the centre had little money or energy left over from these chores to put into actual programs for neighbourhood children and adults.⁸ The report also noted that sports dominated the programming at Kelvin. This was not surprising given the enthusiasm for sports in Elmwood generally. Once the Parks Board

began paying more of the centre's utilities, providing a year-round janitor and a program director, Kelvin Community Centre found it possible to reach out into more program areas.

The 1950s and early 1960s were Kelvin's golden era. To their laurels in lacrosse, the club added softball and baseball. In 1959 the Kelvin Blues boys' baseball team won the Red River Valley League championship and, in the same year, the girls' midget softball team won the city championship. In a move that was progressive for its time, the club had a midget girls' hockey team in the winter of 1959-60. There was a popular boys' boxing club in the early fifties which used



The 1959-60 Kelvin Community Centre Midget Girls hockey team. PAM, Kelvin Community Club Collection, N13903.

the basement of the new building as a makeshift ring with planks on the floor and gym mats lining the walls. Members of a retired men's club played cards in the clubhouse one night a week. Kelvin's ladies auxiliary raised money by running the canteen and small fund-raising events like the annual Pirates Tea to which all the men came dressed as pirates. A high point of the winter season was the annual winter carnival featuring hockey and figure skating exhibitions, skating races, jam pail curling and other children's games.

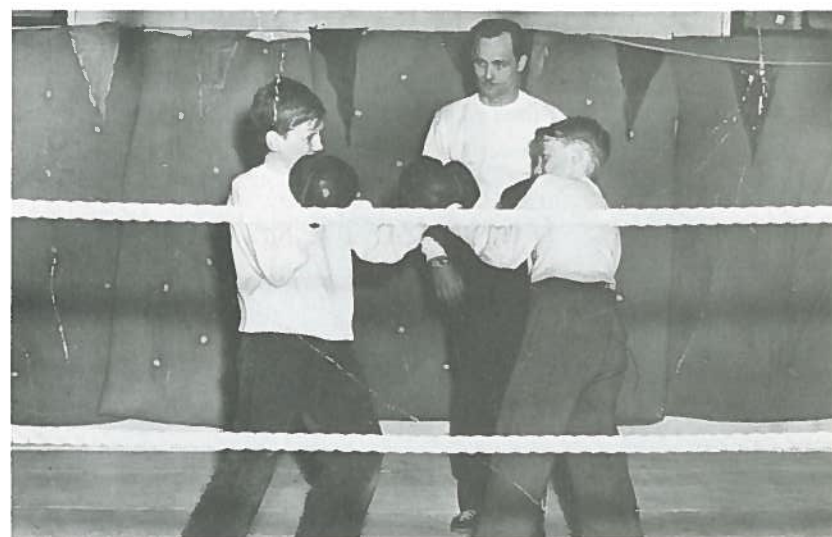
While the 1948 clubhouse was a big improvement on the boxcar that preceded it, the layout of the rooms limited the use that



Above: The annual Pirates Tea at Kelvin Community Centre, 1953. PAM, Kelvin Community Club Collection, N13899.

Above right: The Elmwood Boxing Club working out in the basement of Kelvin Community Centre, 1949. PAM, Kelvin Community Club Collection, N13876.

Right: An evening figure skating class at Kelvin Community Centre, 1952. WPRD.



could be made of the space. In 1964 the front porch was torn off and an addition built onto the front of the building that eased the space problems for a while.⁹ However, by the late seventies changes were becoming apparent in the neighbourhood. The working parents had grown old and their children were buying houses elsewhere. As work declined in the manufacturing and railway sectors and family breakdown became more common, the volunteer base of Kelvin Community Club declined along with the neighbourhood's capacity to support the centre with donations. Single parents on low incomes found it difficult to spare the time to volunteer at the centre even though their children were taking part in programs. Unfortunately this decline occurred at the same time that the Parks and Recreation Department was reducing its on-site support for community centres. Nevertheless, with the city's help, Kelvin was able to build an additional hockey change room and shelter in the late seventies, to do considerable upgrading of its rink facilities in the eighties and to build a storage garage in the early nineties. But without the modern facilities to hold large bingos and without the hall rental revenues that are keeping other centres afloat, Kelvin's fund-raising options remain limited.

In spite of this, good things continue to happen at Kelvin Community Centre. There is

a significant need for children's recreation in particular, as well as programs for single parents and new immigrants. These days at any time in the centre there may be a women's aerobics class, or immigrant women learning English or an Alcoholics Anonymous group. The centre has experimented with team handball and with karate and has one of

the best off-road tracks for radio-controlled cars in the city. A small and dedicated core of volunteers is keeping Kelvin going, starting innovative programs and seeking every available support and fund-raising option to make sure the centre remains a vital part of its west Elmwood neighbourhood. And, yes, lacrosse is still very much alive at Kelvin Community Centre.

Deer Lodge Community Club

Like many Winnipeg community clubs, Deer Lodge Community Centre had its origins in a much older athletic club. The Deer Lodge Athletic Association had fallen into a period of inactivity, perhaps due to the depression, when Tom O'Brien and several



A team of figure skaters about to take part in the annual winter carnival at Deer Lodge Community Club, c. 1948. Deer Lodge Community Club Collection.

other men in the neighbourhood made a concerted effort to resurrect it in 1936. In 1939, the association became incorporated in order "To carry on without pecuniary gain, community recreational and sporting activities, having as their objective the development and betterment of community interests."¹⁰ O'Brien was successful in getting the Municipality of St. James to set aside five acres of land for the association's use. Located on the corner of Linwood Street and Bruce Avenue and occupying land between the lanes of Linwood and Albany streets for one full city block, this land was then officially reserved as recreational land by the St. James City Council. That the land had to be cleared of

scrub testifies to the semi-rural character of the suburb at that time. The association immediately built two skating rinks and imported two boxcars to serve as warming and changing shacks. Sometime later, a new standard oval eight-lap per mile speed skating rink was added.¹¹ Mr. Goodridge served as rink superintendent and also supervised the skate exchange and skate sharpening services. Getting parents to come out to help in supervising the rinks was a perennial problem then as now and Deer Lodge fathers were exhorted, "to make the D.L.A.A. your service club." At the beginning of World War Two, the abandoned clubhouse of the Deer Lodge Golf Club was moved onto the site and some lumber from an old lawn bowling shelter on Overdale Street between Portage and Bruce was also used in the makeshift development.¹² The 1942-43 executive of the Deer Lodge Athletic Association reflected the predominantly middle class flavour of the club's leadership with middle managers from the railways, Eaton's and Westinghouse dominating along with dentists and lawyers.

The war years were hard on recreational associations and the Deer Lodge Association was no exception. In 1942 and 1943 very little happened at the Bruce and Linwood club. In 1944, the association reorganized, aided by an influx of enthusiastic women onto the

board of directors.¹³ The club's goals at that time were to build new facilities in the future to accommodate a kindergarten for young children, a library and the expansion of its existing sporting facilities. Following the war, the club obtained a surplus air force building and moved it onto the site. After a complete cleaning and repainting job, this building served as the new clubhouse.

At this time, the provincial government was actively supporting the formation of community clubs with a "how-to" pamphlet and small grants to clubs. There is no doubt, however, that municipalities like St. James were not in a position to spend the kinds of money on community clubs that the City of Winnipeg did during the fifties and early sixties with its three major recreation by-laws. Suburban clubs like Deer Lodge were left with a lesser degree of support from the municipality and had to raise a higher proportion of their own funding from the surrounding community. Deer Lodge club historian Jack Thompson reports that each year St.



Members of the Deer Lodge Community Club executive tour the neighbourhood in an antique car during the annual membership drive, c. 1950. Deer Lodge Community Club Collection.

James community club received the same amount from the St. James Parks and Recreation Board. In 1963, St. James clubs were granted the princely sum of \$550. The next year, Thompson and several other Deer Lodge executive members persuaded the board to raise the grant to \$750. They were hailed as heroes by the other St. James clubs. In 1965, all the St. James clubs got together and formed the St. James Community Club Council so that the clubs could speak with one voice to the board.

In 1956 the Deer Lodge Athletic Association formally changed its name to the Deer Lodge Community Club, the name it retains to this day. That same year the City of St.



The new Deer Lodge Community Club building, built in 1985. Deer Lodge Community Club Collection.

James was in urgent need of space for building schools in the vicinity of the club. The club entered into an agreement with the St. James School Board to sell the athletic field north of the present clubhouse to the board for a dollar. The school board was then able to build Deer Lodge Junior High School on the property. The agreement between the community club and the school board stipulated that the field was to be used jointly by the school and the club and would be maintained by the club. The same kind of arrangement governs the use of the field across Bruce Street and to the south of the present clubhouse. As a result, the Deer Lodge Community Club is "land poor" compared to

the St. James School Board was able to lease the school to the province and it now houses the Infotech Centre. As a result of its space limitations during the summer, the community club uses the nearby Canadian Legion baseball and softball diamonds and the playing fields at St. James High School.

In the days before the amalgamation of all Winnipeg municipalities, the Deer Lodge Community Club was run entirely with volunteer labour. Buildings were built and maintained by club members using materials and equipment donated by neighbourhood people and businesses. Newsletters were paid for through advertisements from local businesses. After a fresh snowfall, members

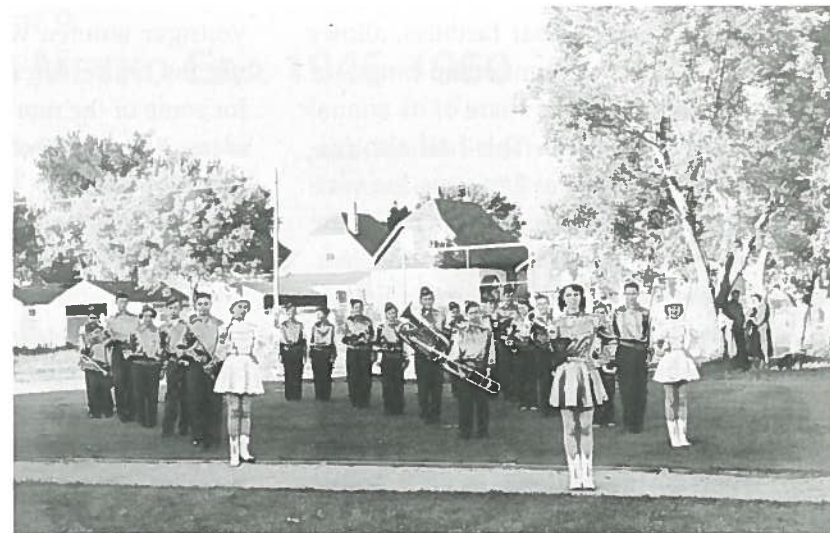
many suburban community centres but the arrangement with the school board has worked out relatively well over the years. Problems only arise when, as sometimes happens, the school board thinks of selling the land. There was a close call during the early 1980s when Deer Lodge Junior High School was no longer needed. Fortunately

would turn out early in the morning to clear the rinks before going to work. Mothers would sew team uniforms and costumes for the winter carnival and take a turn running the canteen.

The Deer Lodge club has been innovative in improving its facilities. During the 1960s, a new dressing room was built between the club's hockey rinks using the labour of inmates from Stoney Mountain Penitentiary on supervised day passes. In 1965, the club was badly in need of more space and a new building was built which connected to the old clubhouse. Two things happened after 1979 to help ensure the future of the centre. First, the former St. James-Assiniboia community centres became subject to the newly amalgamated City of Winnipeg Department of Parks and Recreation and its community centre funding formula. Then Deer Lodge Community Club scored a major coup when its then president Brian Smith managed to get the King Edward Community Improvement Project to adopt the club as its main project. This community development initiative, funded by federal and provincial dollars, resulted in the construction of a brand new clubhouse in 1985 designed by Hamilton Lorimer Architects. This new centre features a large, bright foyer area with a picture window view of the hockey rinks. Spencer Hall, the attractive au-



Above: Figure skaters in action at the Deer Lodge Community Club winter carnival, c. 1955. Deer Lodge Community Club Collection.



Above right: The Deer Lodge Community Club Band, 1954. Deer Lodge Community Club photo collection.

Right: A dominion day horseshoe tournament at Deer Lodge Community Club, c. 1950. Deer Lodge Community Club Collection.



ditorium with complete bar facilities, allows the club to achieve hall rental and bingo income that funds the lion's share of its annual budget of some \$181,000. This hall also features a unique wall mural depicting the various sports and activities that go on in the club throughout the four seasons of the year. This mural was designed by Barbara Endres and executed by the members of the St. James Art Club under Endres' supervision.

Though Ladies Auxiliaries are a thing of the past at most other Winnipeg community clubs, Deer Lodge still has a very active women's group, composed mainly of

younger women with small children who use the centre. These women are responsible for some of the more innovative fund-raising ideas, like craft shows, that the club has run in recent years. They are typical of the close-knit group of volunteers who run the centre and its programs. When asked what motivates them, men like Don Banks will just shrug their shoulders and say that they could not imagine life without the centre. It has become a big part of their lives and the easy companionship of neighbours working together is, perhaps, the biggest attraction of working at the Deer Lodge Community

Club. Although the club requires an eight year commitment from its members as they slowly make their way through the offices, this does not seem to scare prospective board members away. The club has not experienced the same fall-off in volunteer numbers as have other city clubs. The neighbourhood remains relatively stable through the cycle as families age and are replaced by new families. The housing stock remains affordable for young couples so that the rinks and playing fields of Deer Lodge will be full of active participants for some time to come.



CHAPTER 9

PARKS AT THE DAWN OF THE METRO ERA 1945-1960

It might be imagined that the affluence of the fifties translated into boom times for the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board. However, several factors, not the least of which was the necessity to make up for 15 years of neglect, conspired to make the late forties and fifties an era of modest rather than spectacular progress. The board's work force was the beneficiary of the increasingly powerful civic union and of post-war prosperity. The stringency of the depression and war years meant that wages had a lot of catching up to do. However the large wage increases of the late forties and early fifties - often amounting to between five percent and seven percent in a given year - were offset by the high inflation of the post-war years. Winnipeg's parks continued to give great pleasure during the all-too-brief snowless seasons but St. Vital Park, the last acquired of the three large suburban parks, looked almost the same in 1960 as it had in 1931. From 1957 on, major decisions on parks matters had to wait for the results of the protracted negotiations leading up to a two-tier system of municipal government for Greater Winnipeg. Meanwhile, the board quietly went about its business, introducing some popular innovations in the process, modernizing its

equipment and waiting for the next burst of parks enthusiasm.

Service Clubs Step in to Sponsor Playgrounds

While both community centres and schools had begun incorporating playgrounds into their plans by 1946 as a matter of course, there was still a lack of playground space in the inner city. This was particularly true of junior playgrounds for children aged one to six, by then called "tot-lots". Following the war, Winnipeg's service clubs, their ranks bolstered by returned veterans, were looking around for worthy community projects. Happily for the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board, playground projects appealed to the service clubs. The clubs provided the equipment and money for landscaping, the board acquired the land and provided labour and maintenance. Between 1944 and 1954, the Kiwanis Club sponsored four playgrounds: one on Burnell Street between St. Matthews and Ellice avenues; another at the corner of Logan Avenue and Lizzie Street; one on Sargent Avenue between Home and Simcoe streets; and one on the grounds of what was then St. Paul's College at the corner of Ellice Avenue

and Isabel Street. Not to be outdone, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks financed a total of seven tot-lots between 1952 and 1959. Nor did the service clubs confine their activities to just playgrounds. The Optimist Club gave a large donation to the Broadway Optimist Community Centre in 1950, hence its name. Between them, the Junior League and the Rotary Club helped finance Logan Neighbourhood House, a drop-in centre in the area of the CPR tracks and Notre Dame Avenue, which was established in 1952.

Boulevards Get Some Chemical, Mechanical and Design Assistance

The construction and maintenance of boulevards was one area of the Parks and Recreation Board's work that had been especially neglected since 1930. Few new streets had been constructed during the depression and the board had been unable to maintain existing boulevards to a desirable standard. Many boulevard trees had not been pruned for ten years or more. On older streets, where the trees had been planted only 25 to 30 feet apart, branches had become badly entangled and the trees required thinning out. The municipal nurseries were seriously



A Winnipeg street, c. 1910. On older streets the boulevard trees had been planted only 25 to 30 feet apart. By 1945 these trees had become badly entangled and required thinning by the removal of every second tree. PAM.

understocked. There was a lot of catching up to do.

Fortunately, the end of the war brought a new spirit of optimism as well as improved revenues to city coffers. The board began to try some new methods for pest and weed control that were less labour intensive than the old manual methods. There were "miraculous" new pesticides and herbicides, many the products of wartime research. Starting in 1945, a two year experiment was initiated using 2-4-D to curb dandelions on civic properties, parks and boulevards. In 1947, boulevard crews began to use DDT to cure the annual infestation of canker worms. It worked

so well that the Greater Winnipeg Mosquito Abatement Campaign experimented with the use of fog sprayers charged with DDT later that summer. Both 2-4-D and DDT became the regular means of weed and insect control during the fifties. At that time, few alarms were raised over the long-term effects of their use.

With the metal shortages of the war a thing of the past, the board was able to invest in new equipment. New trucks and digging equipment began to turn up in the work yard. This equipment became increasingly specialized so that by 1959, the construction division was proudly showing off such me-



Parks and Recreation Board worker puts new mower through its paces, c. 1955. WPRD.

chanical helpers as its new motorized tree planter. By 1958 there was little in the way of construction work that the board was not able to do itself except that requiring heavy bulldozers and earth movers. It was more economical to contract out this heavy work as required. In addition, for the first time ever, the board began contracting out some boulevard sodding. Mechanization forced changes in the composition of the parks work force. Fewer unskilled labourers were required but more workers with specific training, such as truck drivers and equipment repairmen, were hired. The overall effect was to keep staffing levels much as they

had been in 1949.¹

Boulevard trees on older streets were thinned by removing every second tree. On newly constructed streets, the trees were planted 40 to 50 feet apart. During the 1950s, largely due to the influence of the board's horticulturalist, Chris Plejdrup, there was more experimentation with the varieties of trees planted on Winnipeg boulevards. In 1957, 115 new trees were planted on Silvia Street in Elmwood and on Oak Street between Fleet and Grant avenues in River Heights. Some of the varieties used were Ohio buckeye, white birch, Scotch pine, chokecherry, Siberian elm, amur lilac, native mountain ash, Toba hawthorn and pyramidal birch.² Previous experiments had been motivated by the perceived shortcomings of the American elm: its lengthy maturation period, tendency towards severe canker worm infestation and susceptibility to disease. That many of these varieties were smaller ornamental trees indicates that the board was doing some hard thinking about the function of boulevard trees. Was it really worth the expense to use large shade trees in boulevard plantings? In addition to its other drawbacks the mature elm's size made it difficult to maintain and downright dangerous during wind storms.³ Different aesthetic effects could be achieved through the use of smaller, more compact trees. Although they

would not produce as much shade, these ornamentals provided more in the way of colour, shape and texture than the elm or the ash. All were quick maturing, unappetizing to the canker worm, and easier to prune and maintain than the elm. By 1960, Dutch Elm disease had been discovered in the elm population in the United States and in Europe, but there was, as yet, little anxiety about it in Canada.

Changes in the design of new subdivisions were affecting the look of boulevards as well. In the suburbs, Wildwood Park and Windsor Park had shown that streets do not have to be laid out in a grid pattern. As far as the City of Winnipeg was concerned, there was less room for experimentation since most streets within the city boundary had already been laid out. The only vacant places left were south River Heights and the northern reaches of the north end close to the West Kildonan boundary at Carruthers Avenue. Showing a renewed sense of adventure, city planners designed a section of Pol-



New machine shop at the Parks and Recreation Board's McGee Street maintenance yards adjacent to Notre Dame Park, c. 1960. WPRD.

son Avenue in the north end and Lanark Avenue in the south end as a series of bays. Polson and Lanark were straight roads and the houses on one side of the street were laid out in the traditional manner. But on the opposite side of the street, houses were built around small bays looping off the main street. In place of a boulevard each bay of houses encircled a small green park which the board maintained as it did boulevards. Since all further housing development took place in the suburbs where it was possible to lay out more complex asymmetrical bays, this particular design was seldom repeated. However, over the years, the Lanark and

Polson bays have become favourite locations for Winnipeg house hunters.

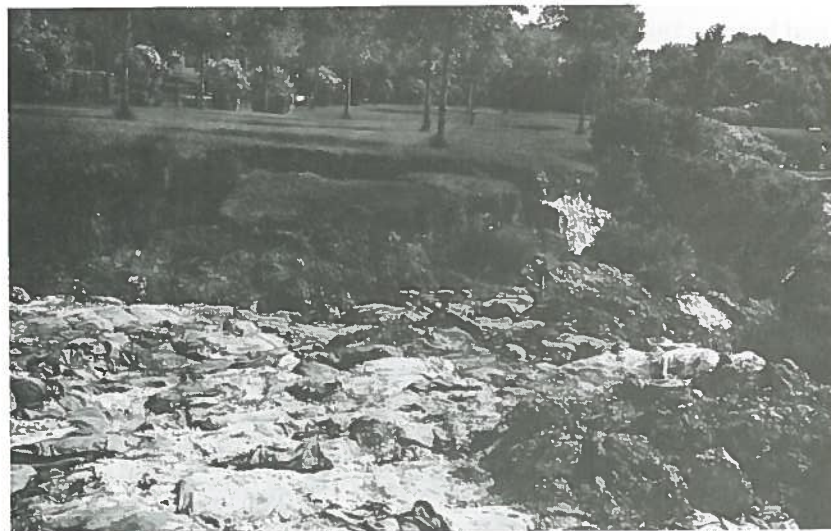
There were also indications of new thinking in other aspects of street design. The board was enlisted to soften the look of bridge approaches, underpasses and community centre sites by the use of perennial plantings, flower beds and shrubs. There was growing support for the idea that aesthetic concerns of this kind were not frills but essential components of the city's quality of life. The board's construction division, which did all of the boulevard sodding, tree planting, flower bed planting and maintenance, changed its name in 1959 to the Landscaping Division, a more modern and descriptive title for its work.

The 1950 Flood Creates Havoc in City Parks

Nature reminded all Winnipeggers of its power in 1950. The effects of a large and late spring run-off combined with heavy spring rains caused the Red River to overflow its banks, inundating large parts of Greater Winnipeg and the whole of the Red River valley to the south. Parks and Recreation Board workers did no spring planting or maintenance that year. All of the board's available employees were diverted to flood work and instead of constructing new boulevards and flower beds, the board's work

crews built dikes and hauled sandbags. At the end of May, the water finally receded and left behind silt, mud and drowned vegetation.

The parks fronting on the Red River were the worst hit. St. John's and Kildonan had extensive damage. At Kildonan, the pavilion had been sitting in five feet of water for over a month. The riverbank was eroded, fences and the bandstand were swept away completely and silt, up to two feet deep, had been deposited on roadways. Many plantings of perennials would have to be replaced. Both Kildonan and Windsor Park golf courses had been under water and required major clean-up and turf re-seeding.



Severe riverbank erosion and sand bag debris at the St. John's Park extension following the 1950 flood. WPRD.



Flood waters at Assiniboine Park, 1950. WPRD

Three feet of water had covered the Windsor Park nursery and there had been significant loss of lilacs, carigana and Russian olive. Pembina Park had been totally submerged. So had St. Vital Park, but since it had remained more or less in its natural state anyway, there was less to be repaired there. Flooding along the Assiniboine River had been less extensive so that Assiniboine Park escaped relatively unscathed. Only riverside paths and roadways had been affected. Considering the extent of the damage, the board coped very well. The Kildonan Park pavilion was repaired and the damaged lawns reseeded in time for the 1951 season. By the summer of 1952, most

of the other repair and clean-up had been completed with the help of a special flood appropriation from the City Council.

Rainbow Stage Comes to Kildonan Park

Since the flood had removed the bandstand from Kildonan Park, the question was: should it be replaced and if so, with what? There was a question mark over all the park bandstands in Winnipeg. Though they had been a popular feature in almost every park earlier in the century, the decrepit bandstands were being removed one by one before they fell down. The board had reinstated band concerts after the war but budgetary pressures had brought them to an end again in 1948. Attempts to mount special concerts with outside sponsorship since then had met with a mixed reception from the public. It seemed that radio, movies, dancing and other forms of entertainment were a stronger drawing card than Sunday afternoon band concerts. The military

bands that had been the staple bandstand fare in a previous era did not play the new kinds of popular music that people heard on the radio. If there was going to be music in Winnipeg parks, it would have to be more varied and cater to modern tastes.

For several years, Vancouver's Theatre Under the Stars had been a popular summer attraction in Stanley Park. In 1951 the board was approached by the Winnipeg Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Civic Music League with a request that a "sound stage" similar to the Vancouver stage be built in Kildonan Park.⁴ The idea was that the stage would provide a venue for local talent to entertain and gain performing experience and that, at the same time, Winnipeg would gain a new tourist-attraction.⁵ The board had confidence that these groups could raise funds to build the theatre so the whole financial burden would not fall on the city. Local architects Smith, Munn, Carter and Katelnikoff were hired to design a stage and work began during the summer of 1952 for a 1953 opening. By 1953 the sound stage was completed and had acquired the name "Rainbow Stage", complete with a brightly-lit rainbow of laminated wood which arched over the stage. The structure itself consisted of a covered stage and dressing rooms with very little in the way of backstage area or wings. Seating for the audience was in an amphithe-



Workers clearing mud and silt off the roadways at Kildonan Park, 1950 WPRD.



A scene from "Hell's a Poppin' in Winnipeg", a Rainbow Stage musical review satirizing people and events in Winnipeg, 1958. WPRD.

atre shape with a slab floor in the centre and wooden bench seating. In 1954, wings were added to the stage and the front exterior was completed and landscaped. While hopes for the theatre were high, the fund-raising campaign had been disappointing. Only \$5,680 was raised of a projected \$15,000. In the end, the board had to contribute over \$12,000 from its capital reserve fund to complete the project.

Rainbow Stage had its official opening on July 7, 1954. An overflow audience of 3,000 attended this opening variety concert at which Eric Wild and his orchestra played and a number of local singers and dancers performed. It was a typical Winnipeg evening. A

experience for the Parks and Recreation Board so an advisory committee of media and musical people was recruited to organize programming for the new venue. No one had any idea what kinds of productions might work. The first few seasons featured a little bit of everything. That first summer, the fare ranged from band concerts to Slavic music and dances, from travelogue movies to a musical comedy. Some events were poorly attended and others almost filled the 2,000 seat capacity of the theatre. As if to deliberately contradict expectations, the two band concerts presented that season were among the best attended events. Three performances had to be cancelled due to rain, in-

dog wandered on stage and numerous small boys climbed trees adjacent to the theatre, hoping to crash the performance. There was sophisticated jazz singing from Maxine Ware and uproarious Ukrainian dancing. Everyone declared the theatre a success and looked forward to future offerings.⁶

Running a theatre was a completely new

introducing an ongoing battle between Rainbow Stage and the elements. During the summer of 1955, the board sponsored "Brigadoon" with full orchestra, chorus and dancers and "Just Married", a three act comedy put on by the Winnipeg Repertory Theatre. That same year, the board used a special capital appropriation of \$30,000 to construct concession stands and lavatories.

Rainbow Stage's money problems were evident from the first. The board covered shortfalls during the first two seasons. In 1956, supporters provided guarantees of over \$17,000, which allowed the season to go ahead. It was felt that the theatre would need some time, perhaps ten years, to get established. That season was an ambitious one: three musicals, a play, and two pop concerts. But every production lost money and one, "Annie Get Your Gun", which was hit by both poor attendance and two rained out evenings, showed how spectacularly the stage could lose money under the wrong combination of circumstances. "Annie" was responsible for over \$8,500 of the more than \$13,000 deficit that the guarantors found themselves covering that year.

Financially things were going wrong, but there was also a great deal going right at Rainbow Stage. Both the "Wizard of Oz" and "Kiss Me Kate" drew good houses and good reviews. Had the season consisted of just

these two productions, the theatre would have come close to breaking even. A warm summer evening at Rainbow Stage was a magical experience for families and especially for children. Winnipeg's vibrant arts and musical scene produced high calibre singers, dancers, and technical talent, even though most were amateurs. Several young Winnipeg singers, actors and directors cut their performing teeth at Rainbow Stage and went on to professional careers: Len Cariou, Joan Karasevich, Edward Evanko and John Hirsch to name a few. For the vast majority of people involved in putting on a show at Rainbow who had day jobs and no professional performing ambitions, the experience was an unforgettable one. They had to be ready for anything. One night during a 1958 run of "The King and I", props mistress Grace Thomson found herself being the third set of legs under the papier maché dragon when the original "legs" took sick.

The Winnipeg Summer Theatre Association (WSTA), as the body that ran productions at Rainbow Stage was by then called, knew that the theatre was filling a need. Not for the last time, they tried to find the winning formula that would guarantee consistently good attendance. The 1957 season was as ambitious as 1956. There were three musicals - "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes", "Can-Can" and "Chu Chin Chow" - and sev-

eral plays, carnival shows and square dancing evenings. The result was a disastrous \$27,000 loss to which the guarantors contributed only \$20,000. The Parks and Recreation Board had to pick up the balance. Grudgingly, J. Wilson, the president of the Summer Theatre Association, admitted that the plays and carnival shows had been duds

and that seat prices were possibly too high. There was no magic formula, he said. "The only answer, or at least the best answer, lies in selecting shows which the public will throng to see, in staging these at a moderate cost and offering them at popular prices."⁷ This was easier said than done, as successive producers at Rainbow Stage have found.

The 1958 season was a make or break season for the new theatre. That year the WSTA functioned independently of the Parks and Recreation Board for the first time. The City Council gave the association a direct grant of \$8,000 and the association paid the Parks and Recreation Board a rental fee of \$4,000. The WSTA's relationship with the



Mayor Stephen Juba confers with his stage alter ego during Rainbow Stage's production of "Hell's a Poppin' in Winnipeg", 1958. WPRD.

board was tightly defined within a rental agreement. The board retained its responsibility for the physical upkeep of the theatre but was no longer responsible for the production end of the operation. With the future of the theatre on the line the summer of 1958 proved to be the most successful yet. Three musicals - "Brigadoon", "Hell's a Poppin' in Winnipeg" and "The King and I" - played to a respectable 50 percent average attendance which resulted in only a slight loss on the season. The well attended "Hell's a Poppin' in Winnipeg" was a variety review satirizing Winnipeg events and people. Directed by John Hirsch and with words and music by Neil Harris, "Hell's a Poppin'" had its share

of production glitches. Several sketches in the review featured prostitutes as leading characters. Neil Harris recalls that several nights before the opening, the girl playing the lead prostitute came to John Hirsch in tears. She said that both her mother and her priest had forbidden her to play a prostitute and that she would have to bow out of the show. Harris and Hirsch found that in prim and proper Winnipeg, finding a new lead hooker on short notice was no easy task. The show did go on, however, and the 1958 season set the pattern for years to come. Rainbow Stage's production team would continue to please its family audience by mounting three musicals a summer. The stage has become a Winnipeg institution whose survival, like every Winnipeg arts institution, has been miraculous considering the odds against it.

The Zoo Gets a Facelift and a Change of Direction

Rainbow Stage had provided a major new attraction for Kildonan Park. The 1950s also saw one of the most popular attractions at Assiniboine Park finally receive the attention it deserved. The push for improvements at the zoo had started during Frank White's superintendency in the 1940s. Tom Hodgson continued to move it along after White's retirement in 1950. Hodgson took care to in-

form himself on zoo matters. He travelled to nine other cities to look at their zoos and talk to staff and curators. Hodgson knew that he would have to build up informed support within the city for a modern zoo. He brought the Calgary Zoo superintendent to Winnipeg to give a Chamber of Commerce-sponsored talk called, "A Progressive Zoo for a Progressive City". He encouraged the formation of a zoological society that he hoped would take on the modernization of the zoo as its major concern and focus. It took until 1956 to get the Manitoba Zoological Society on its feet but considerable interest had been stirred up along the way.

Since its formation in 1905, the zoo had



Finding out what a fawn is all about at Aunt Sally's Farm, c. 1970. WPRD/Travel Manitoba.



Aunt Sally's Farm at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, c. 1970. WPRD.

been thought of purely as a source of recreation and entertainment. Children, in particular, took great delight in watching the animals. Isolated voices over the years had tried to get the board to think of the zoo in a different way. Zoos could be centres of education and research about animals and their habitats. The great zoos of Europe and the United States were museums of the animal kingdom where species were preserved, their habits observed, documented, and interpreted to the public. In addition to their undeniable role as providers of entertainment, zoos were part of the network of universities, museums and research centres that produced knowledge about the natural

world. This was the vision that Hodgson had for the Winnipeg zoo: to transform it from a motley collection of animals indifferently housed to a modern professional zoo. The transformation did not happen overnight but it did happen.

In 1949, White had gathered together "a number of prominent gentlemen" who were interested in promot-

ing improvements to the zoo.⁸ These men included Professor R. K. Stewart-Hay, Dr. A. Savage and Professor R. Glover of the University of Manitoba. Stewart-Hay was a zoologist and Savage was an animal pathologist. The committee also included Gerald Malaher, provincial director of Game and Fisheries and L.T.S. Norris-Elye, curator of the Manitoba Museum. Among other activities, this committee compiled research on the mammals of Manitoba which included 78 species and 30 sub-species plus 12 varieties of upland game birds. In 1950 the board approved a new comprehensive five year plan for improving the zoo. This emphasized the collection of animals indigenous to Manitoba and

outlined needed changes to the facilities and staff. In 1952, John Wallace, an architect with the St. Louis Zoo, agreed to design a master plan for the enlargement of the zoo. That same year, the board negotiated with the Town of Tuxedo for an additional parcel of land in order to accommodate the zoo expansion.⁹ Staffing at the zoo was examined and a classification scheme put in place. Meanwhile the zoo was capitalizing on a new opportunity for publicity. Lion cubs had been born June 7, 1952 and Winnipeg children were hungry to see them and hear about them. An increased appropriation for the zoo that year allowed the lion house to be enlarged and there were new yards for the hoof stock; a great deal of painting and repair work took place as well. The next year R. Sutton, a part-time curator, was hired to supervise the three zoo-keepers. The lion cubs grew too big for the enclosure and were traded to the Seattle Zoo. Their place in the limelight was taken by two polar bear cubs from York Factory. In 1954 the zoo expansion plans were set back by the defeat of the parks by-law and the fact that the new curator had to leave his position. However, the City Council did provide \$50,000 to buy the land for the western extension.

Hodgson continued to seek advice from other zoos. With help from those in Chicago, Seattle and Milwaukee, Winnipeg architects



A model for the new "bar-less" bear enclosure at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, c. 1955. WPRD.

Smith, Carter and Katelnikoff constructed a model showing projected construction and improvements. The plans called for a new "bar-less" bear enclosure, new aviaries and a children's zoo. The bear enclosure was completed in 1956. The new aviaries had to wait until 1958. The space that had been inhabited by the old aviaries was cleared that year for the children's zoo. It was to be called "Aunt Sally's Farm" after Sally Warnock, who was the first secretary of the Winnipeg Humane Society.¹⁰ Aunt Sally's Farm was made possible by a special grant of \$12,000 from City Council and additional funds raised by the Zoological Society of Manitoba. It was opened in 1959 and featured a miniature

train and pony rides. It also gave children the opportunity to see small animals at close range and even to touch and handle them.

In the midst of the construction of Aunt Sally's Farm, Dr. Gunter Voss, former director of the Krefeld Zoo in Germany, was hired as the full-time director of the zoo.

Voss came at a good time. Although he had not been involved in planning for expansion, he could provide badly needed expertise on the implementation of the plans. In 1960, Voss increased the staff of the zoo by four: one head-keeper and three additional zoo-keepers. The total staff, including himself, was now nine. As might be expected, Voss also initiated some changes to the master plan. These included implementing the concept of "zoning" which meant arranging the exhibits to group together animals that were from the same ecological zone.

There was shortly to be a significant change in the zoo's management. With the initiation of the two-tier form of municipal

government in 1960, Assiniboine Park and the Zoo were to be detached from the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board and taken over by the Metropolitan Parks and Protection Division. Voss would carry out the remaining parts of the expansion plans under the banner of Metro.

New Additions to Winnipeg Parks During the Fifties

Although the fifties were not a great decade for parks in the City of Winnipeg, some valuable additions were made to the tally of green space. Kildonan and Assiniboine parks held their own and gained some new amenities like the zoo expansion and Rainbow Stage. In 1952, the English Garden at Assiniboine Park underwent extensive changes which included a redesigned entrance and the placement of the "Boy with the Boot" fountain statue there. The pool and garden over which the "Boy with the Boot" presided was called the International Good Will Garden and was dedicated by the Rotary International Fellowship in 1953.¹¹ The sculptor of the statue is unknown but numerous copies of it, including the Winnipeg statue, were cast in Italy at the end of the 19th century. The Winnipeg statue was given to the city in 1897 by the Young People's Christian Endeavour Society and the Trades and Labor Council to commemorate Queen



The Boy with the Boot in his new position at Assiniboine Park amidst the plantings in the International Goodwill Garden, finished and waiting for the growing season, 1952. WPRD.



The International Goodwill Garden and the English Garden in bloom, c. 1955. WPRD.

Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Prior to being moved to Assiniboine Park, it had stood in front of the old City Hall. After its placement at the entrance to the English Garden, the fountain statue became an integral part of the park, but also an irresistible temptation to pranksters. At least once a year since then the bronze boot has been stolen, leaving the

boy to stare soulfully at his empty hand. The boot almost always turns up again and is easily remounted, but if a new one has to be cast, it now costs almost \$2,000.¹²

As for the English Garden itself, George Champion had originally designed and supervised the planting in 1927 and 1928 and probably had a plan on paper for it. However, successive gardeners had changed it to suit their own tastes. When Assiniboine Park Superintendent Hector Macdonald gave an interview to the *Winnipeg Tribune* in 1959, he was quite adamant that there was no plan for the garden and he reported great difficulty in convincing visiting landscape architects that this was the case. "The idea is contrast, that's all," he said. "...bright, light colors in the distance, darker colors for the rear views. The size of the place, three acres, with the wonderful tree background, softens the whole mass into a pleasing blend. That's all we do."¹³ Though the Edinburgh-trained Macdonald was making a difficult task sound easy, his attitude does suggest that the approach of the board's gardening staff to this garden was based more on horticultural craft and experience than on adherence to a previous design.

European and British trained gardeners had been the mainstay of the board's staff since the beginning and the board relied on their expertise. By the 1950s, it was getting

more difficult to replace retiring gardeners like E. F. Ball, who had, themselves, been able to train the more junior gardeners and labourers. Frank Ball had been with the board since 1920 and retired in 1954. It was he who personally laid out the formal flower beds at City Hall and other civic properties, often incorporating special celebratory elements. In 1953 he had worked out a crown and the initials "ER" in flowers at City Hall to honour Queen Elizabeth's coronation. No Canadian university or training school at that time had programs that produced similarly qualified gardeners. The board had to resort to stopgap measures in order to train staff. One of these was to offer two and-a-half day horticulture workshops for park keepers at the University of Manitoba. One feature of the horticultural life of Winnipeg that happily seemed to resist change, however, was the annual fall chrysanthemum show at the Assiniboine Park conservatory. It was still well attended and was one of those events by which Winnipeggers marked the change of seasons.

Neighbourhood parks languished during the 1950s. Many of their buildings dated back to the turn of the century and were badly in need of replacement. King Edward Park was extended and refurbished. St. Vital Park was used, throughout the decade, as a day camping park but it still had no sewer or water service. Day camping was a valuable service but

it was hardly what George Champion had in mind when he designed the park as a thickly wooded version of the English landscape style park in 1929. The only significant improvement at St. Vital Park during the fifties was the resurfacing of the main road to make it accessible in all weathers. The site of the former Swift Canadian Packing Plant on the banks of the Red River in Elmwood also remained undeveloped even though Swift had donated the land to the city at the end of the war. What remained of the old River Park site, Churchill Drive Park, was partially landscaped. It was hoped that this park might become the site of a demonstration garden and arboretum, but lack of funds prevented this. Sargent Park, which was the site of the Pan American Games trials in 1959, received several improvements as a consequence of the event: new bleachers, dressing rooms, track resurfacing and new fencing. A lot of beautification took place in advance of the Queen's visit to

Winnipeg in 1959. The famous Hudson's Bay Company rent ceremony, during which the Queen received beaver and moose pelts from company officials, took place in Assiniboine Park behind the pavilion in front of a crowd of 15,000. A special dais was constructed for the occasion, which afterwards was available for use as a bandstand. In the first of several successful conversions of former landfill sites, in 1960, the Parks and Recreation Board converted the Saskatchewan Avenue dump into a miniature mountain and called it Westview Park.

Overall, there was a sense of frustration on the parks side of the board's work by the end of the decade. It had finally been possible to regain some of the ground lost during the depression and the war. But while the board was receiving far more money in 1960 than it had in 1945, playing catch up on workers' salaries claimed a large part of the gain and high inflation some more on top of that.

There was a feeling that the board was falling behind again. Beyond a few community clubs and tot-lots, there had been no additions of facilities or park land to the inner city during the whole of the 1950s nor any improvements to the area's existing parks. Conditions there continued to deteriorate. In 1954 Hodgson had pointed out that acceptable town planning standards called for one acre of park space for every 100 inhabitants. Based on this standard, Winnipeg parks were clearly inadequate at one acre for every 215 citizens.¹⁴ It was also clear that any future large additions to park land in greater Winnipeg would take place in the suburban municipalities since the City of Winnipeg was almost completely built up. It was hoped that the new two-tier structure of city government to be initiated in 1960 would result in progress being made on some parks projects that were long overdue.



CHAPTER 10

THE STRUGGLE TO MODERNIZE 1945-1960

As late as 1952, the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board was still using horses in some of its operations. The rather late emergence of the board from the horse-drawn era symbolized its post-war dilemma. It was an institution facing a changed world in 1945 with an administrative structure that had experienced its last big shake-up in 1919. Fifteen years of depression and war had sapped the organization's ability to try new developments and new managerial methods.

When T. R. Hodgson rose to the general superintendency in 1950 the board gained a relatively young leader who had spent a significant part of his career doing other things besides working for the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board. As a result Hodgson had the ability, at least initially, to look at the board and its work from an outsider's perspective. This was in distinct contrast to his predecessor, F.T.G. White, who had been employed by the board from 1907 until his retirement in 1950. Hodgson spent three years as White's assistant starting in 1947, a position which allowed him to get acquainted with every aspect of the board's work while still retaining a certain distance from it. The combination of "inside" and

"outside" knowledge gave Hodgson the appropriate background to assess the way the board went about its various tasks.

It was an administrative structure that only an insider could fully understand. Since its inception in 1893, the Parks Board had had extra responsibilities transferred to its care - Brookside Cemetery, beautification of civic properties, maintenance of swimming pools and the public recreation program. These had simply been tacked onto the board's existing structure in ways that made sense at the time. In the absence of any concerted effort to reorganize for efficiency, the board's structure featured a hodge podge of tiny administrative divisions. The supervisors of most of these divisions reported directly to Hodgson and therefore he spent most of his time actually running the day-to-day operations of the board. Changing times had resulted in the board retaining convoluted lines of authority and organizational anomalies long after the original reason for organizing things that way had changed.

Modernizing the administrative structure of the board was not as easy as modernizing its hardware and equipment. To change the way the board did its job, Hodgson needed to get the members of the board

on side, to overcome the natural fear of change in his employees, to soothe the vanities of managers who feared a loss of status and to overcome the baffling inertia that organizations seem to develop over time. Added to these considerations were the money problems of the board. Administrative modernization costs money and time and the board and its employees were short of both commodities. Not surprisingly, in his 12 years as superintendent, Hodgson attained only some of his goals. There were certainly inhibiting factors beyond his control. Chief among these was the necessity, after 1955, of waiting to see what the new metropolitan form of government for Greater Winnipeg would look like.

Another stumbling block involved Hodgson himself. His philosophy about the role the Parks and Recreation Board ought to fill owed more to the past than to the future. He preferred to view the recreation program as subsidiary to the overall task of the board in creating a diverse network of park and recreation spaces. His own pet projects - Rainbow Stage and the zoo expansion, both of which he forwarded brilliantly - involved placing pleasing new attractions in major parks. As discussed ear-



Harry J. Enns and Nora MacLean in a publicity shot for Rainbow Stage's production of "Chu Chin Chow", 1957. WPRD.

lier, this was a philosophical stance that involved Hodgson in a head-to-head conflict with his recreation director, Charles Barbour. The conflict monopolized energy better spent on other things but, in many ways, it was bound to happen. The board had not reflected at length on its basic mission and purpose for many years. Changes of administrative structure require just this kind of reflection. It was inevitable that differing views would clash during the process. Unfortunately for Hodgson, it was Barbour's view, not his own, that prevailed and their conflict slowed down the administrative modernization that the board so badly needed.

Trimming the Parks and Recreation Board

The first big change had occurred while White was still superintendent and had been imposed by the City Council. A sub-committee of council which was commissioned to examine all of the city's boards and commissions in 1948 recommended that the size of the Parks Board be reduced from 14 to ten in order to streamline decision-making. Alderman C. E. Simonite pointed out that the membership of the Parks Board was only four less than that of City Council itself. It was his view that 14 was an unwieldy number for a board that had mainly administrative rather than political responsibilities. The



The Four Diamonds in concert at Rainbow Stage, 1957. WPRD.

other members of the board protested, vainly, that the board was large because there was a lot of work to do and that most of this work was done through sub-committees. Nevertheless, the change was agreed to by City Council and the relevant section of the Municipal Act was changed by the provincial legislature to require a membership of ten on the board: the mayor, five aldermen members and four citizen members.¹

The reduction in the size of the board seems to have been an expression of the City Council's desire to assert more control over the administration of parks and recreation. It was also part of a movement to modernize the way in which the city ran its business. The

days were long gone when a Parks Board sub-committee could sit hunched over seed catalogues, ordering the nursery stock for that season. The city's operations in every area had simply become too complex for that style of management. Even so, the Parks and Recreation Board resisted delegating responsibilities to its staff. It still decided on much of the minutiae of operating matters. For example, the request for damages submitted by a woman who had accidentally fallen into a newly dug grave at Brookside Cemetery was soberly examined by the whole board. As she requested, the board awarded sufficient money for the woman to buy a new pair of stockings and to have her fur coat cleaned and the sleeve mended. The whole matter involved less than ten dollars. The reduction in size of the board did force an off-loading of some of its responsibilities onto the administrative staff, although, members' workloads did not decrease significantly. As a result, in 1954 all standing committees were abolished and the board began meeting twice per month instead of once.

Middle Management Appears on the Scene

Between 1952 and 1956, Hodgson engineered a number of organizational changes that had the effect of clarifying and streamlining the functions of the board and its staff. A

1953 Woods and Gordon study found that no less than 17 supervisors reported directly to Hodgson and that the existing structure made it difficult to assess the work done against the revenue source for that work.² The staff was reorganized so that there was a middle level of management below the General Superintendent. This reduced the number of area supervisors reporting directly to Hodgson. This reorganization also set up new divisions, each of which was funded by a separate levy or appropriation from City Council. Hodgson also realized that the board might get more public support if people knew more about what it was doing on their behalf. Ominously, he mentioned this in the same breath as a comment about a new medium called television, which, he said, might compete for the recreational time of Winnipeggers. Starting in 1953, he urged a "planned, continuous public relations service" within the administrative structure. In 1954 Hodgson formed a labour/management committee ostensibly as a means of exchanging information and fostering "a sense of belonging" but also, in all likelihood, as a means of defusing workers' discontent before it resulted in collective action.³

Unions Consolidate and Gain Power

The labour/management committee had become a necessity because city unions had

gained considerable power following World War Two. The infamous "slave pact" which all city workers had been forced to sign after the 1919 strike had finally been rescinded in 1931. Then the depression did what the slave pact had done before; it made workers desperately afraid of losing their jobs and inhibited the efforts of unions to organize. At the end of the war, the Federation of Civic Employees (FCE) was active among office workers while the One Big Union (OBU) was the union of choice for most outside workers and labourers. The board's labourers and teamsters belonged to the OBU. The 1947 agreement between it and the board reveals some of the conditions of work for these employees.⁴ Board employees worked 48 hours per week, eight hours per day, Monday to Saturday. In negotiations, the OBU managed to gain some shortening of these hours for grave-diggers at Brookside Cemetery and boulevard employees. These workers would henceforth work only four hours on Saturday. The OBU also won on the issue of seniority lists. The board was to supply a seniority list to the union secretary in January of each year. The board's pay scale showed that there were still few women on staff apart from stenographers and clerks in the office and female playground directors. The traditional inequity in wages between men and women doing the same job was still

there in 1947. A male playground director was paid \$125 per month while a female director was paid \$100 per month.

The OBU, while it had the loyalty of most labourers on the city payroll, was under attack from other unions. In a 1949 certification vote involving all city employees, the FCE won the vote in every employee category.⁵ It had won the right to be the only union representing all eligible city employees and, with that vote, the balance of power shifted considerably. The FCE was then in a position to negotiate major concessions on wages, working conditions and hours of work. In 1951, the union threatened a strike that would, among other things, shut down all electrical service to Greater Winnipeg. At the eleventh hour, Mayor Coulter acceded to the FCE's demands: a 40 hour work week with no loss of pay and a seven and one-half percent wage increase.⁶ It soon became apparent, however, that the FCE would need access to more expertise on its staff than a small independent union could provide. This kind of high-powered expertise could only be provided by a large national union with more resources. Somewhat reluctantly, in 1957 the FCE became local 500 of the National Union of Public Service Employees and braced itself for the upcoming challenges of metropolitan government.⁷

Money Matters

Hodgson experienced growing frustration with Parks and Recreation revenues. The parks and recreation levy, the amount apportioned to the board directly for its work by City Council, made up the largest part of the board's revenues and was used for maintenance and improvement of parks and recreation services. In addition, City Council made direct grants for specific duties under the board's care such as maintenance of Brookside Cemetery, landscaping of city properties, and maintenance of municipal swimming pools. The parks and recreation levy mill rate, which was set by legislation and determined what proportion of assessed taxes would go towards parks and recreation in a given year, had stood at one mill since 1930. Hodgson lobbied hard for it to be raised to one and three-quarter mills. Instead, the clause capping the Parks and Recreation Board's levy via a set mill rate was rescinded in 1951. Theoretically this made it possible for City Council to spend larger amounts of money on parks and recreation. However, given the council's pattern of decision-making under the old system, this was not likely. Even with a set mill rate, when under financial pressure council had frequently apportioned less than one mill to parks and recreation. During the depression, emergency legislation had allowed City Council to spend

less than one mill for parks whenever it thought the situation warranted. Parks and Recreation seemed to be first in line whenever cuts were being considered. Without even an inadequate mill rate as a benchmark for funding decisions, the board was left to battle it out on an annual basis against every other city department for an adequate piece of the funding pie.

In addition, during the fifties, the board's operating budget had been reduced in order to accommodate high wage settlements. The workers badly needed to keep abreast of inflation but finding the money for this only added to Hodgson's revenue woes. The board's complaints about their shrinking revenues became just one voice among many in the city's bureaucracy. However, the Woods and Gordon Survey of all city departments in 1953 provided some outside corroboration. This survey found that the number and variety of duties that City Council had required the board to perform had steadily increased since 1910 but that the revenues to sustain these tasks had not increased commensurately. To substantiate this claim the board drew up a graph comparing the growth of the parks and recreation levy to the growth of the city budget as a whole since 1905. The line depicting the parks levy limped sideways across the page while the line depicting the entire city budget rushed steeply upward.

The parks levy had progressively declined as a proportion of the city's entire budget. The case that the board could not cope with the demands being made on it with its current funds was well established. Doing something about it was another matter.

Greater Winnipeg versus Multiple Municipal Jurisdictions

Quite apart from its problems with the annual levy, the board required occasional infusions of capital in order to undertake such large projects as the zoo expansion, the improvement of St. Vital Park and the construction of Rainbow Stage. Since these infusions of capital were funded by issuing debentures, voter approval was required. Winnipeg voters had not said yes to a parks money by-law since 1911. Hodgson was hopeful for the parks by-law of 1954, but it went down to defeat as did the 1960 by-law. Quite simply Winnipeg voters were tired of footing the bill for parks which citizens of the suburban municipalities used and enjoyed without paying their share. Of the 1,385 acres of park lands administered by the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board, only 295 were located within the boundary of the City of Winnipeg.⁸ All of the city's major parks, both of its golf courses and its cemetery were located in the suburban municipalities, and all of the major capital pro-

jects of the fifties were centred in these suburban parks. Hodgson realized that the only hope for significant improvements in Winnipeg parks was for parks and recreation services to be, in some way, co-ordinated throughout the Greater Winnipeg area and funded by all the citizens of Greater Winnipeg.

Hodgson was not alone in thinking this way. The necessity of co-ordinating services like bus and streetcar service, water and sewer services and the construction of major roads and bridges across 13 separate municipal jurisdictions had, by 1955, resulted in a city-wide administrative bottleneck. Suburban growth was making improvements and modernization of these services vital. The same factors were causing a bureaucratic and political nightmare for planning, funding and implementing improvements. The juggernaut was making a mockery of attempts to plan the development of the whole urban area of Winnipeg, an endeavour in which the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board had a significant stake.

The idea of planned development for a city had been a strong tenet of the City Beautiful movement of civic reform which had bloomed briefly in Canadian cities during the early part of the 20th century and had just as quickly died away. This brief moment of enthusiasm resulted in Winnipeg City

Council creating the Greater Winnipeg Plan Commission in 1914 which, unfortunately, became inactive after 1920. In 1915, the provincial legislature enacted the Town Planning Act, which enabled municipalities to create their own town planning schemes.⁹ As early as the 1920s, suburban municipalities like East Kildonan and St. James adopted town planning schemes. In the City of Winnipeg, which was exempted from the Town Planning Act, the first zoning by-law was passed in 1928.¹⁰ However, the onset of the depression doused urban growth and with it enthusiasm for city planning.

By the early years of World War Two, the suburbs of Winnipeg had developed to such an extent that mechanisms for co-operation between municipalities had to be worked out. During the early 1940s the provincial cabinet's Committee on Post-War Reconstruction began to encourage the formation of a metropolitan form of government for the whole urban area. City-wide planning was considered to be a key component of any such scheme. In 1943, 11 municipalities agreed to accept the idea of metropolitan planning. They formed and funded the Metropolitan Planning Committee. Six years later in 1949 the Metropolitan Planning Commission of Greater Winnipeg was established by provincial legislation. The task of this body was to prepare a metropolitan

master plan and to provide professional planning advice to member municipalities. While this body did successfully raise the awareness of member municipalities about inter-municipal planning issues - of which park and school land distribution was one - it had no regulatory power and could only advise on matters at the invitation of a municipality. Co-operation between municipalities became difficult when large capital projects like bridges or sewage treatment plants were needed, the cost of which had to be shared. Municipalities successfully resisted measures that would have increased their taxes and as a result needed facilities were not built.

By 1955, the toothlessness of the Metropolitan Planning Commission and other similar bodies had become apparent. What was needed was a means of compelling recalcitrant municipalities to act in the best interests of the whole urban area rather than in their own parochial interests. This could only be done through a form of local government: either a total amalgamation of municipal governments or some form of two-tier government such as that of Metropolitan Toronto. The provincial government set up the Greater Winnipeg Investigating Commission in 1955. The Commission's job was to investigate the feasibility of a two-tier system of local government for Greater Winnipeg on

the Toronto model.¹¹ Hodgson liked the idea of a metropolitan government but he was appalled to find that parks and recreation services were not included in the terms of reference of the Investigating Commission.¹²

He spent the next four years trying to make sure that parks and recreation would become a responsibility of the proposed metropolitan government. He did this partly by persuasion behind the scenes and partly by initiating a study which was co-sponsored by the board and the Welfare Council of Greater Winnipeg and was published in 1957. Although it was called the "Greater Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Survey", this report dealt exclusively with recreation issues. It surveyed recreational facilities, programs, leadership and, most importantly, funding sources throughout Greater Winnipeg. Hodgson's conflict with his recreation director had a great deal to do with this survey. He wanted the limits of the board's obligations with respect to public recreation to be better defined and he hoped that the



Evelyn Anderson as Anna and Rolande Garnier as Lady Thiang in the Rainbow Stage Production of "The King and I", 1958. WCPI.

survey would provide a research basis and rationale for making recreation a shared responsibility in the Greater Winnipeg area.

The survey gratified Hodgson by suggesting that public recreation in Greater Winnipeg ought to be co-ordinated and funded in a metropolitan way. But the philosophy behind the survey leaned far more towards Charles Barbour's views than towards the superintendent's. It urged the Parks and Recreation Board to consider public recreation an equal responsibility with parks instead of a subsidiary responsibility. In fact, the survey described all of the board's functions as recreational. "Today, it is generally accepted that all parks properties



A worker tinkers with the plumbing in the Boy with the Boot's arm prior to installing the fountain statue at its new home in front of the English Garden in Assiniboine Park, 1952. WPRD.

(excepting cemeteries) serve a recreational function whether that function be expressed as rest, relaxation, contemplation or activity. This is the essential assumption on which joint operation is based. It would, therefore seem logical to divide responsibility within a joint operation on a functional rather than a property basis."¹³ The survey went on to suggest a detailed reorganization of the board's staff, grouping areas with the same or similar functions together and further reducing the number of division heads reporting directly to Hodgson. Also, rather pointedly, it recommended that, because the system was in crying need of more professional leadership, Barbour's staff be significantly increased.

Furthermore, it recommended that, in recreational programming matters, Barbour report directly to the board rather than to Hodgson. However, if Hodgson did not win this particular battle, the survey did succeed in getting parks and recreation matters onto the agenda of the Greater Winnipeg Investigating Commission. But he must have had ambivalent feelings when the structure of the metropolitan government was unveiled by the provincial government in 1959. The major parks of Greater Winnipeg were to be a responsibility of the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg. More to the point, maintenance and improvement of these major parks was to be funded by all of the citizens of Greater Winnipeg. Ironically, however, recreation programming was to continue as a purely municipal responsibility.

By the time of Tom Hodgson's untimely death in 1962 at the age of 51, the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board had moved out of the horse-drawn era, but only just. With the first phase of the zoo expansion and Rainbow Stage, Hodgson had succeeded in reinvigorating the two jewels of the Winnipeg park system. He had shepherded the organization through increased mechanization and other changes that had produced a more efficient operation than the one he had inherited. But the internal resistance of the

board to change, the draining conflict with Barbour and the wait for restructuring of Winnipeg's local government conspired to keep the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board from developing into a truly modern bureaucracy. With the advent of the two-tier system of local government, the organizations in charge of parks and recreation services throughout Greater Winnipeg were on

the brink of an era in which change would become the norm. The Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board was going to lose responsibility for its major parks and be left with neighbourhood parks, recreation, swimming pools, athletic fields and civic landscaping. A new entity was going to be created within the Metro structure called the Metropolitan Winnipeg Parks and Protection Division

which would have responsibility for major parks. Municipal parks boards would retain their authority within their jurisdictions. All of this was totally new territory. The separate municipal governments were suddenly faced with the reality of having to give up certain key responsibilities to the Metro Council. It was going to be a bumpy ride.



PART IV
THE SUBURBAN EXPERIENCE
1914 - 1977



Children at the English Garden lily pond in Assiniboine Park, c. 1955. WPRD

CHAPTER 11

PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES IN THE SUBURBAN MUNICIPALITIES 1914-1977

Until now, this book has dealt primarily with parks and recreation services under the jurisdiction of the pre-amalgamation City of Winnipeg. The former municipal structure of Greater Winnipeg, by its end in 1971, consisted of 12 separate and independent municipal governments. Before amalgamation, the City of Winnipeg comprised the downtown business district and a fringe of older residential neighbourhoods. Encircling this central urban area were the suburban municipalities: the cities of St. James-Assiniboia, St. Boniface, East Kildonan, West Kildonan, St. Vital and Transcona; the rural municipalities of Charleswood, North Kildonan, Old Kildonan and Fort Garry; and the Town of Tuxedo. Most of these had evolved from roots in the Red River Settlement era; each had its own history and character. Residents of these municipalities had a sense of identity as Fort Garry citizens or East Kildonan citizens. Although most suburbanites worked, shopped and enjoyed the recreation facilities in Winnipeg, in municipal matters they tended to look on the City of Winnipeg as a kind of domineering older brother. Winnipeg had the largest population and the largest tax base and could afford services on a far larger

scale than the suburbs.

Until the end of World War Two, these municipalities retained a semi-rural character. Large open spaces separated St. James, Fort Garry and West Kildonan from the Winnipeg city limits. The suburbs themselves were punctuated with stretches of scrub and prairie. After the war, however, with the pressing need for more housing, the open spaces were filled with ranch style bungalows, driveways littered with toys, and, of course, schools, parks and community clubs. As befitted their independence, the suburban municipalities provided their own parks and recreation services from their own tax base. They subsidized community clubs and sports facilities as best they could and took whatever natural features their area provided to use as parks. In this they were assisted by the fact that the City of Winnipeg's major parks were actually located outside the city limits in West Kildonan, Tuxedo and St. Vital. Suburban residents of West Kildonan, for example, enjoyed the benefits of Kildonan Park without having to contribute to the upkeep of the park. Since their overall tax burden was lighter than that of the City of Winnipeg, the suburban municipalities liked the situation. The inequity rankled City

of Winnipeg taxpayers, however, and the situation worsened following World War Two when the suburbs were growing rapidly. Winnipeg needed major infrastructure improvements like bridges and new thoroughfares to keep up with this growth.

The only way to achieve planned development of the whole urban area and to have all Greater Winnipeg citizens pay an equal share of the bill was to move to some form of city-wide local government. The first experiment in city-wide governing was the two-tier system inaugurated in 1960. This resulted in the creation of the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg. Under this "Metro" structure, the separate municipal councils were retained but a metropolitan council was placed above them to deal with issues of city-wide concern. The metropolitan area's major parks became a responsibility of the Metropolitan Parks and Protection Division and an equal proportion of tax dollars from every municipality was levied to support major parks. Smaller parks and recreation services remained the responsibility of the municipal parks and recreation boards. Although significant improvements were achieved during the Metro era, the two-tier government system collapsed under the

weight of bickering and suspicion on the part of the member municipalities. The provincial government found that the only solution was to do away with the separate jurisdictions and move to complete amalgamation in 1971. Following amalgamation, the separate municipal parks boards continued to run the parks and recreation programs in their parts of the city until late in 1976 when the separate boards were mothballed. Starting in 1977 parks and recreation services were reorganized into a unified City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department. This story would not be complete without looking at parks and recreation services in the suburban municipalities up to the 1977 reorganization.

St James-Assiniboia

The cart trail that would become Portage Avenue appeared on maps drawn as early as 1858 and the kernels of the neighbourhoods that were amalgamated to become the City of St. James-Assiniboia were strung out on it like beads as it made its way westward. This dusty trail joined the infant settlement at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers with the fur trade era settlements at Headingley, St. Francois Xavier and later Portage La Prairie. Neighbourhoods such as Bruce Park, Bourkevale, Deer Lodge, Sturgeon Creek and Silver Heights bear names that go back to the

time before 1870 when narrow river lot farms stretched back for two miles from the Assiniboine with a further two miles for the "hay allowance". This was the old Red River Parish of St. James and it stretched from Omand's Creek on the east to the present day Sturgeon Road. Two large creeks, Truro Creek and Sturgeon Creek, which in the early days provided fresh water for farmers, gave the otherwise unrelieved prairie some natural interest. As in other parts of the Winnipeg urban area, the survey of land into these narrow river lots, which dated from the early part of the 19th century, initiated a pattern of land ownership which determined that the riverbanks would be privately owned. The only large areas of green space fronting on the river in the St. James-Assiniboia area now are the St. Charles Country Club and the Glendale Golf Club, both private courses. Small green spaces on the river, Bruce Park and Woodhaven Park, were available as park land because they were located at the mouths of the creeks and were

not suitable for cultivation. Ironically, the municipality was able to retain another block of riverside land as park land only by selling it to the City of Winnipeg. This occurred in 1928 when St. James sold the land surrounding the existing right-of-way for the Assiniboine Park footbridge to the City of Winnipeg. Apart from these, the municipality had to content itself with tiny riverside breathing spaces like the one on Parkside Drive just west of the St. James bridge.

The initiation of street railway service in 1905 between Headingley and downtown Winnipeg tied St. James even more closely to its east/west axis.¹ Urban development took place along Portage Avenue and only slowly



Man bicycling on Portage Avenue at Silver Heights, c. 1900, with Sturgeon Creek in the background. PAM N4549.



Women's snowshoe race on the Assiniboine River at Deer Lodge, c. 1910. PAM, E.J. Ransom Collection.

edged its way northward. This meant that there was a large reserve of undeveloped land north of St. James and south of the Rural Municipality of Rosser. It was here that Stevenson Airfield was located in 1927, initiating an era in which the airport, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the aircraft industry were major players in the St. James economy. The air heritage of St. James is commemorated in Woodhaven Park, where, in 1967, a T-33 Jet Trainer aircraft was installed as a monument. This unique memorial commemorates the contributions of three groups: the founders of Stevenson Airport; the service men and women of Canada and the Allied forces who trained in St. James

during World War Two; and the men and women who have staffed Winnipeg International Airport and Air Training Command over the years. During the 1950s, the area of the airport was increased significantly under the ownership of the federal government and zoning regulations were put in place to limit the encroachment of residential development adjacent to airport land. A buffer zone for industrial use was created around the airport. The opportunity for green space and recreational facilities in this zone allowed for the creation of the Assiniboine Golf Club and the St. James Legion Memorial Sports Park south of the airport, and the Highlander Sportsplex on its eastern boundary. Because of these development patterns, a small island of tall grass prairie south-west of the airport remained undeveloped into the late sixties. Encouraged by the Manitoba Naturalists Society, as a provincial centennial project the St. James Parks Board set this land aside as a natural park in 1970.² An interpretive centre was built there in 1975

during World War Two; and the men and women who have staffed Winnipeg International Airport and Air Training Command over the years.

During the 1950s, the area of the airport was increased significantly under the ownership of the federal government and zoning regulations were put in place to limit the encroachment of resi-

and opened in 1976. The Living Prairie Museum, as the park came to be known, added a unique resource to Winnipeg park land. There the complex ecology of the tall grass prairie, by then almost extinct elsewhere, could be preserved and interpreted to the public. It was the first park in the Winnipeg area to be devoted entirely to natural history. The Living Prairie Museum was designed to keep a delicate balance between preserving the habitat and giving park-goers an opportunity to see how the ecology of the tall grass prairie "works".

The Municipality of Assiniboia was incorporated in 1880 and included the whole area of present day St. James-Assiniboia. In 1921 the St. James section became a separate municipality. This same year Brooklands withdrew from Assiniboia and was incorporated as a village. By this time, residential development was mixed in among the dairy farms, market gardens and mink ranches of St. James. The housing boom had been stimulated by a housing grant program initiated by the federal government following World War One.³ During the inter-war years St. James and Brooklands developed as residential suburbs while Assiniboia remained largely rural in character. After World War Two the intensive residential development taking place in St. James spread to Assiniboia as neighbourhoods like Crestview

and Westwood were created. The City of St. James was incorporated in 1956. In 1967 the Town of Brooklands was amalgamated with the City of St. James and in 1968, the Rural Municipality of Assiniboia and the City of St. James amalgamated as the City of St. James-Assiniboia.

In parks and recreation terms, none of the separate municipal entities that eventually became St. James-Assiniboia were well enough developed to create their own parks boards until the 1950s and 1960s. The St. James Parks Board and the Assiniboia Parks Board had each been in existence for several years prior to the amalgamation of St. James and Assiniboia in 1968. The Town of Brooklands, a residential neighbourhood for the most part housing railway workers employed at the neighbouring CPR Weston Yards, had too small a tax base for significant park development. Brooklands did, however, have its own community club by the end of World War Two for which it built a new clubhouse in 1949.⁴

The sixties and seventies were years of activity in these suburbs. Bruce, Woodhaven and Sturgeon Creek Parks were developed. Sturgeon Creek Park became the site of a unique tribute to the pioneer heritage of St. James. A functioning replica of the mill built by the Métis leader Cuthbert Grant was built on the creek just north of Portage Avenue in

1974. The exact location of the original mill is not known, but it was probably close to the mouth of the creek and therefore close to the site of the replica. The mill was built by the Pioneer Citizen's Association of St. James-Assiniboia using a combination of government and private funding. The rest of Sturgeon Creek was developed as a linear

park in the late seventies and early eighties and it is now possible to walk almost the full length of the creek. In 1966, five years after the takeover of large suburban parks by Metro, the Metro Parks and Protection Division set aside a large tract of land between Assiniboia and the Town of Headingley for a prairie recreational park and golf course. Named after long-time alderman John Blumberg, the John Blumberg Park and Golf Course shows what clever design and landscaping can do for a prairie golf course. It was designed by C.E. Robinson of Toronto, one of Canada's foremost golf course architects.

As in the City of Winnipeg, St. James citi-



Woodhaven Park features a unique monument to the aerospace heritage of St. James, a T-33 Jet Trainer aircraft installed in 1967. UMA, Tribune Collection.

zens had begun creating community clubs in earnest after World War Two. By 1957, there were seven clubs in St. James: Deer Lodge, Airways, Border, Bourkevale, Sturgeon Creek, Silver Heights and Woodhaven. These survived on modest annual grants from the St. James Parks Board and raised the rest of their funds themselves. In 1965 the clubs formed the St. James Community Club Council, a body that survives to this day.

The municipality was deficient in playing fields, especially in the eastern portion once available vacant lots had been filled by 1960. As a result, school playing fields, such as those of St. James Collegiate, were heavily used. The creation of the St. James Legion



Grant's Old Mill on Sturgeon Creek, 1977. WPRD.

Memorial Sports Park filled a real need. Like the rest of the city, St. James also lacked both indoor and outdoor swimming pools. The 1961 construction of the St. James branch of the YMCA with its indoor pool partially filled this gap. The building of the St. James Civic Centre in 1966 and the Centennial Pool in 1970 finally gave St. James two municipally-funded indoor pools.

West Kildonan and Old Kildonan

Although West Kildonan and Old Kildonan are now thought of as one unit, the City of West Kildonan and the Rural Municipality of Old Kildonan remained separate until the formation of unicity in 1971. The

Rural Municipality of Old Kildonan took up the largest area of this suburb, being located north of Templeton Avenue and west of McPhillips Street. Old Kildonan contained the heart of the historic Red River parish of Kildonan, the Kildonan Presbyterian Church, where the descendants of Lord Selkirk's settlers had worshipped and had

tried to reproduce a Scottish parish on the Manitoba plains. By the middle of this century the area had acquired a substantial population of Ukrainians and Europeans who were mainly market gardeners and small scale farmers. Perhaps because of this, Old Kildonan stubbornly resisted urbanization and remained as long as possible a quiet village surrounded by farmland. West Kildonan, initially including Old Kildonan, was incorporated as a municipality in 1915. Old Kildonan detached itself from the municipality in 1921. West Kildonan was incorporated as a city in 1961.

West Kildonan, occupying the southernmost part of the area, abutted the City of

Winnipeg boundary at Carruthers Avenue. By 1913, the establishment of the inter-urban street railway line between downtown Winnipeg and the Town of Selkirk encouraged the already existing pattern of urban development along the Red River.⁵ The region's most dominant natural feature was the Red River itself and the acquisition by the City of Winnipeg of land for Kildonan Park from the municipality in 1909 and 1910 provided West Kildonan with a large riverside park. Having access to Kildonan Park, the municipality had little need to provide park facilities elsewhere. Until the development of Garden City in the fifties, the only park spaces maintained by West Kildonan, apart from playgrounds and community clubs, were the Seven Oaks Park fronting on Main Street and the nearby park which was enclosed by Rupertsland Avenue and Colleen and Mac streets. Seven Oaks park features a museum commemorating the 1816 battle of Seven Oaks and the Red River Settlement era in general. The original house, built by John Inkster between 1851 and 1853, forms a part of this museum which is run by volunteers.

The CPR Winnipeg Beach railway line effectively divides the oldest developed part of West Kildonan from the newer part. Development west of this line began during the late fifties when available space in the older section had already been filled. Garden City,



Dignitaries preside at the 1891 unveiling of the monument to the Seven Oaks massacre in what was then the Municipality of Kildonan. PAM N13315.

as its name implies, was developed as a typical fifties suburb and incorporated many of the design ideas being used in most North American suburban developments of the period. Chief among these was the rejection of the old grid style of street layout. Another was the placement of a large shopping plaza with ample parking space in the middle of the development. Yet another was the deliberate incorporation of small park and playground spaces throughout the development instead of setting aside one large neighbourhood park as might have been done earlier in the century.

Kildonan Park provided West Kildonan with many of its recreational resources: play-

ing fields, a picturesque skating pond (1965) and an olympic-sized outdoor swimming pool (1966). Winnipeg's Kildonan Municipal Golf course provided the only golf course within a reasonable distance. The whole suburb was without an indoor swimming pool until the Seven Oaks pool was built in the Maples subdivision in the early 1970s.

The oldest community club in the district was the West Kildonan Memorial Community Centre, located at Salter Street and St. Anthony Avenue across from Victory School. Using volunteer labour a new clubhouse was built there in 1949 after a \$15,000 neighbourhood fund-raising drive.⁶ In 1967 West Kildonan's first arena was built on the West Kil-



John Inkster House, 1958. Located near the Seven Oaks monument, Inkster House and grounds were maintained as a museum and park by the City of West Kildonan. PAM 10604.

donan Memorial club's grounds.⁷ In 1963, further north on Salter at Southall, Margaret Park Community Centre had been built. During the seventies this club was renamed Vince Leah Recreation Centre after the district's favourite amateur sports promoter, coach and reporter who had been a founding member of the club. Garden City Community Centre opened next door to the Garden City Shopping Centre to service the recreational needs of the western part of the suburb. Keeping pace with development, the Maples Community Centre opened in the seventies when the area west of McPhillips Street began to be developed.

Starting in 1949 parks matters in West



Section of a plan of Greater Winnipeg showing north Winnipeg and West Kildonan as they were in 1957. The new suburb of Garden City was just starting to take shape west of the CPR tracks and is noticeable immediately because of its distinctive street layout compared to the prevailing grid pattern. Schools, community centres and parks are marked. Source: "The Greater Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Survey", 1957.



The main gate of Kildonan Park on the left, the Kildonan Golf Course on the right and the Old Kildonan countryside viewed from above, c. 1920. PAM N12146.

Kildonan were run by a Parks and Boulevard Committee of the municipal council. A recreation commission was created in 1963. The City of West Kildonan acquired its first recreation director in 1963 when Margaret Wilson Barbour moved into this part-time position from the City of Winnipeg recreation staff.

North Kildonan and East Kildonan

East Kildonan and North Kildonan began life together as the portion of the Red River parish of Kildonan which was located on the east side of the Red River. In 1925, North Kildonan separated from East Kildonan and became the Municipality of North

Kildonan. East Kildonan, after a stagnant period during the depression, continued to experience urbanization and achieved city status in 1957. The arrangement was almost a mirror image of what had happened on the other side of the Red River with the northern part of the district remaining semi-rural in character until the late 1950s. Ur-

ban development first took place in the area bounded by the Red River on the west, the CPR Lac du Bonnet line on the east, the CPR Bergen cut-off on the north which ran parallel to Springfield Road (tracks since removed) and the City of Winnipeg boundary at Larsen on the south. The urbanization of this part of the suburb was assured when the street railway began to run across the Louise bridge in 1903.⁸ The tram line was gradually extended along East Kildonan Road (later renamed Henderson Highway) and made it possible for people to live in East Kildonan and work in Winnipeg. The boundary between East Kildonan and North Kildonan was set at Oakland Avenue when North Kildonan

broke away from East Kildonan. The 1960 construction of the Disraeli Freeway, which relieved the pressure on the Louise and Redwood Bridges, was a major factor in the growth of East Kildonan as it made access to Winnipeg far quicker and easier. With the exception of Morse Place, which had grown up in the teens and twenties, the area east of the Lac du Bonnet tracks only began to be developed during the sixties. The neighbourhoods of Braeside, Valley Gardens and Oakwood Estates were created there after the older part of the suburb had filled up. Development continued in the former North Kildonan with the extension of the fifties suburb of River East to include Bunn's Creek.

North Kildonan is the oldest settled area east of the Red River. When Kildonan parish was first established by the Selkirk Settlers in 1812, farmers occupied river lot farms on the western side of the river and used the well-treed eastern side as a source of firewood. When the river lots of Kildonan parish began to fill up after 1820, settlers moved across the river and began to farm on the former wood lots. The establishment of a ferry linking the two sides of the parish made the North Kildonan settlement more viable. This ferry crossed the river at present day John Black Avenue on the west bank and reached the eastern bank near present day Whellams Lane. In order to serve the



The Ransom house in North Kildonan, c. 1930. The Rural Municipality of North Kildonan evaded the pressures of urbanization until the 1960s. PAM, E.J. Ransom Collection.

farmers on the eastern side, John Matheson built a gristmill on McLeod Creek sometime after 1825. In 1958 Frank DeGraff, then Superintendent of Public Works for the Municipality of North Kildonan, recovered the millstones that had belonged to the Matheson mill from among some landfill at the north end of Grandview Street. DeGraff hoped that the municipality would be able to use the long neglected millstones as a memorial to the early settlers of the district. This hope was fulfilled when the North Kildonan Parks Board established a small park on Henderson Highway and Edison Avenue in 1965. The granite millstones, which were presumed to have been quarried in Mani-

toba, were mounted in a handsome brick enclosure in Edison Park and dedicated as a memorial to the pioneers of the community.⁹

North Kildonan was able to buck the trend common in other municipalities by retaining a relatively long stretch of riverside as park land. This is Fraser's Grove Park. Most of the grove of

elm and ash trees was originally owned by William Fraser, a second generation Selkirk settler who generously allowed people to picnic on his land. Such promising land for residential development could not long escape subdivision, however, and by the twenties small cottages and houses were being built in the grove. Unluckily for these residents but luckily for the park-goers of East Kildonan, most of the land was sold back to the municipality for back taxes during the depression.¹⁰ The tax base being small in the municipality, however, Fraser's Grove remained undeveloped as a park until the sixties when responsibility for it was transferred to the Metro Parks and Protection Division and play-

ground, skating and cross country skiing facilities were added. With Kildonan Park directly across the river from it, Fraser's Grove Park is a significant asset to the neighbourhood west of Henderson highway. On a summer's night, it is possible to wander down the riverbank paths and listen to the music drifting across from Rainbow Stage.

Bunn's Creek, which runs into the Red River at North Kildonan, remained outside the area of intense urban settlement long enough for its possibilities as a natural park to become appreciated. During the 1970s, the reach of the creek between the CPR Lac du Bonnet line and the river was made into a linear creekside park, Bunn's Creek Parkway and Bunn's Creek Centennial Park. The creek is particularly delightful in winter when park-goers can skate, cross country ski or toboggan there.

Rossmere Golf and Country Club, a private golf club, is now in the middle of the suburb, although when it was first opened, it was on the outskirts. Although Kildonan Municipal Golf Course is just on the other side of the river, it was not easy for East Kildonan residents to get to until the North Kildonan bridge was built in the late 1980s. Residents of East Kildonan were without their own municipal course until the late seventies when the Harbour View golf course was opened on the east side of Lagimodiere

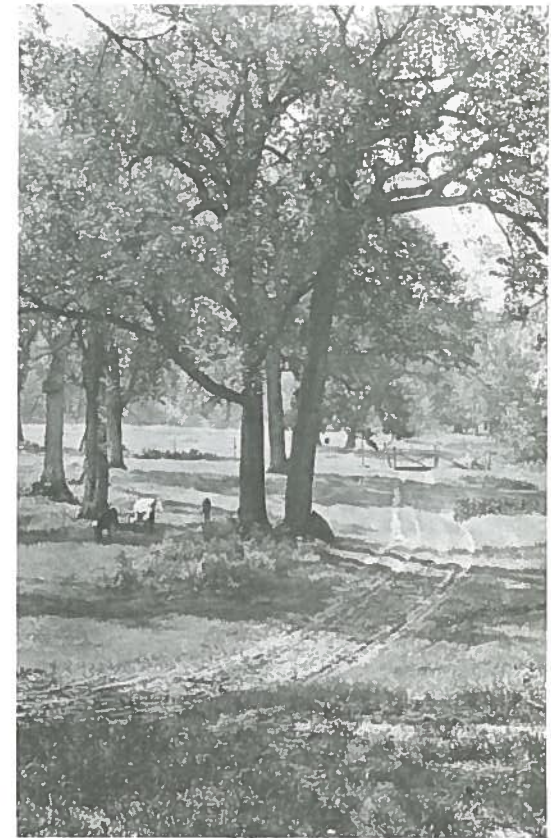
Boulevard.

Both North Kildonan and East Kildonan mounted intensive tree planting and pruning programs on the boulevards of the many new streets created in the suburban housing boom of the sixties and early seventies. The man behind both of these programs was landscape architect Gunter Schoch, who was first employed with the Winnipeg Parks Board after emigrating from Germany in 1955. During the sixties, Schoch's day job was with the Metro Parks and Protection Division but after hours he became the first chairman of the North Kildonan Parks Board in 1962. Over the next five years, more than 18 acres were set aside for parks purposes and 12 park and recreation sites were developed in North Kildonan based on Schoch's designs.

In 1964 the North Kildonan Parks Board initiated a unique experiment in public information about boulevard tree planting. A tree planting display was mounted on Irving Place just west of Henderson Highway. Thirty trees representing 17 species were planted on the boulevard in honour of arbor day. The intention was to create a permanent display of labelled trees suitable for planting in the Winnipeg area. The board had just enacted a by-law restricting the species of trees to be planted on the boulevards of the municipality. The tree display was a clever way

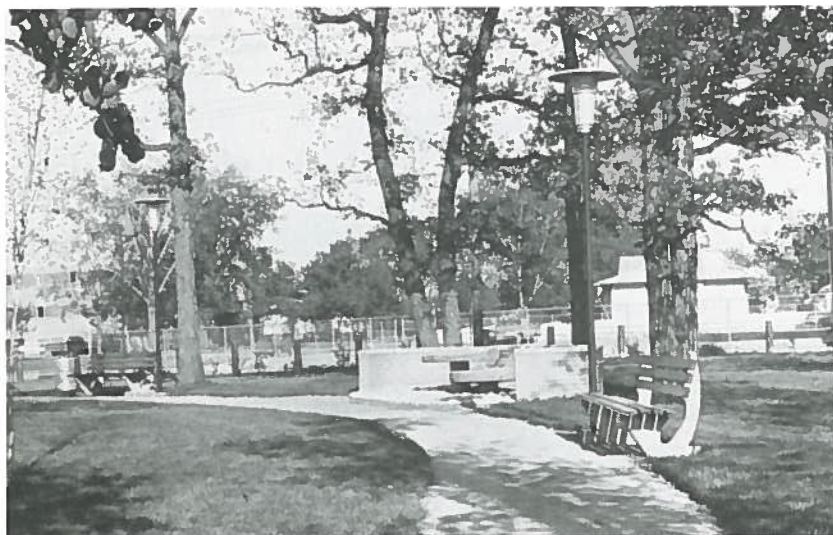
of informing citizens about the designated species and encouraging them to adhere to the by-law.¹¹ After Schoch drew up a Master Tree Plan, the North Kildonan Municipal Council adopted the Boulevard Tree by-law and Arboricultural Specifications which enacted the tree plan into law. Under the by-law the municipality was given sole responsibility for the planting, maintenance and removal of boulevard trees. Each developed street was assigned a particular tree species to be used for boulevard purposes. During the next five years over 3,000 boulevard trees were planted throughout the municipality and a well-organized tree maintenance program was carried out. Following amalgamation in 1972, Schoch continued as City Landscape Architect for the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department but was also named arborist for the new East Kildonan Community. In 1973, the East Kildonan Parks Department established its own nursery at Bunn's Creek Centennial Park into which 500 seedlings were planted for eventual use on boulevards, in parks and at recreation sites.¹² Up to 2,000 boulevard trees were planted annually with funding coming increasingly from the developers of new subdivisions.

The whole suburban area of East Kildonan and North Kildonan was not endowed with abundant recreational facilities. In par-



Fraser's Grove, c. 1920. Originally part of William Fraser's riverlot farm, the Grove became a popular picnicking area early in the century. PAM.

ticular, the southwest portion lacked playing fields, swimming pools and an arena. Area residents had to rely on rather cramped fields at community centres and schools. There was no lack of enthusiasm, however. Bronx Park Community Centre, which began life as the East Kildonan Community Club in



Edison Park in 1966 showing the Matheson grist millstones mounted in an enclosure. This park in North Kildonan is one of the many small parks in Winnipeg in which some aspect of the community's past is celebrated. PAM.



Harbour View Recreational Complex in winter, c. 1978. Kil-Cona Park and Harbour View have provided the citizens of north-east Winnipeg with their own innovative regional park. WPRD.

the 1940s, was deemed to be, "one of the most active community efforts in the Winnipeg area."¹³ In 1945 it had an adult membership of 400 and a junior membership of 200. In 1948, the East Kildonan Club opened an eastern division on Kimberly one block east of Watt Street. Eventually this gained independent life as Melrose Community Club.

The dearth of arenas was remedied when the River East Arena on Donwood Drive was completed in 1972. The next year the opening of the Civic Park recreational facilities in Valley Gardens gave several new recreational options to East Kildonan residents. Included in this development was a

unique artificial ski hill called "Mount Vesuvius" completed in 1974. Since the arena at this development was built on the site of a former municipal incinerator, it was initially called the Incinarena when it was opened in 1972.¹⁴ It was later renamed the Terry Sawchuk Memorial Arena to honour the NHL hockey star who grew up in the district. Close to the arena, the opening of the Elmwood/Kildonan indoor swimming pool finally provided the suburb with another pool in addition to the one at the Elmwood Kildonan YM/YWCA near Melrose Community Centre on Kimberly Avenue.

The need of the north-east area of the

city for a large park to take the pressure off Kildonan Park on the other side of the river was answered with the Kil-Cona Park development which includes the Harbour View Recreation Complex and the Harbour View Golf Course. This unique park was also formerly a city landfill site, which explains how such a large tract of land came to be available. At 411 acres, in fact, Kil-Cona Park became the largest park in the Winnipeg system. Provincial Clean Environment legislation dictated that a new use would have to be found for the site once its usefulness for landfill had been exhausted. The conversion of the land to park and recreational use actu-

ally began while garbage was still being dumped on parts of the site. The golf course and tennis facilities were developed first, starting in the late seventies. Later 50 acres of man-made lakes were excavated and rolling hills, some as much as 50 feet above grade, were formed from the excavated material. A restaurant, changing facilities and a unique viewing tower have been built, all clad in cedar. From a distance the whole effect is of a small fishing village, a reminder of Manitoba's Icelandic heritage. In addition to golf, miniature golf and tennis, park-goers can rent pedal boats and explore the pond. In winter they can skate on the pond or ski the cross country ski trails.¹⁵

Transcona

Until quite recently, Transcona was geographically separate from the urban area of Winnipeg. Now, with considerable housing development in the north-east quadrant of the city, the gap has almost closed. Nevertheless, Transcona retains the air of the independent railway town it once was.

The town grew up around the Grand Trunk Pacific and National Transcontinental repair shops that were established in 1909. In 1911 Transcona was incorporated as a town and by 1912 the population had grown to more than 2,000.¹⁶ Ambitious plans were made for Transcona, which was to become

the hub of a large railway service area. A connection to the hydroelectric transmission line from the City of Winnipeg power plant at Pointe du Bois gave Transcona a significant amenity that would not be available to most rural areas of Manitoba for another 30 years. It was predicted that many more industries would locate in Transcona as a

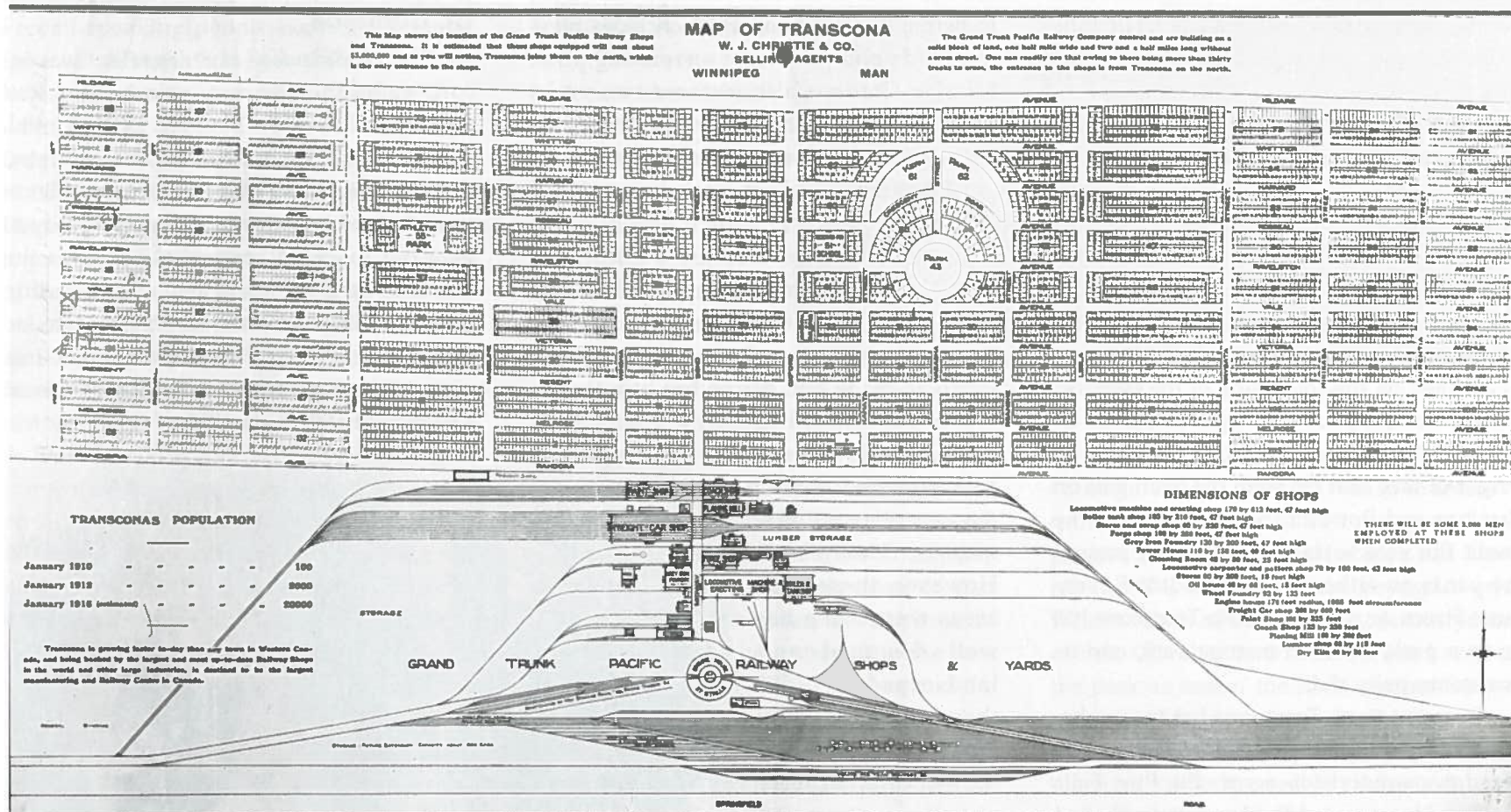
result of the availability of cheap and abundant electrical power. But the bubble burst in 1913 when the opening of the Panama Canal lessened railway traffic through Winnipeg and the economy went into depression. Transcona's isolation was reinforced when the planned street railway link with Winnipeg was abandoned during World War One. Following a period of slow growth in the twenties and real decline during the depression the Second World War helped Transcona get back on its feet. The completion of a concrete highway in 1931 along Nairn and Regent avenues improved transport between Winnipeg and Transcona. But Transcona residents were only able to take



Transcona Fair Grounds, c. 1914. PAM, Foote, N2648.

full advantage of this after 1945 when cars became more affordable than they had been during the depression. The town was growing once again, this time not only as a result of railway workers locating there but also because of an influx of suburbanites who commuted to jobs in Winnipeg. Transcona formed a parks board in 1949 and was incorporated as a city in 1961.¹⁷

The way in which Transcona is laid out is evidence of an early attempt to create a town centre. Park Circle and the crescent-shaped green space bordered by Kern Drive were evidently designed by the town's earliest real estate developers to imitate an English style village green around which the res-



Section of realtor W.J. Christie's promotional street plan of Transcona, c. 1911. Park Circle and Kern Park were designed to provide a central focus for the town, reminiscent of an English village green.
Source: Transcona: The New Railway City of the West, n.d.

idential area would be located. The southern limit of development for the town was defined by the position of the CNR Transcona Yards, its northern limit by the CNR Pine Falls line and its western limit by Plessis Road.

When Transcona was first being planned, it was thought that the townsite ought to be located south of the yards. However, the land there was low and marshy and it did not take long for the developers to realize that a site north of the tracks on higher, dryer ground would be much more practical. During the 1960s, a residential community did become established on the south side of the tracks in defiance of the poor drainage. The CNR allowed foot traffic to go through the yards on a right-of-way that ran from the main gate on Pandora and Bond to the south side of the yards. But vehicle traffic had to drive around the yards on either Plessis Road or Ravenhurst Street. As a result, South Transcona has its own park, South Transcona Park, and its own community club.

In recent years Transcona has moved beyond its previous natural borders. The Meadows subdivision across the Pine Falls line has incorporated the irregularly shaped green space and retention pond concept so popular in residential subdivisions of the late seventies and eighties. The new subdivision of Mission Gardens, west of Plessis Road has

filled the gap between the industrial sector of St. Boniface and the CNR Transcona Yards. It too has its own recreation complex adjacent to Bernie Wolfe School which includes playing fields and an indoor swimming pool. Mission Gardens also features two parks tucked into the east and west corners of the development, Balaban and Robson parks.

Transcona has been very successful in setting aside parks and playing fields throughout the urban area. Just north of Park Circle is a large recreation centre with a stadium, an arena, a swimming pool and baseball diamonds. Crocus Park, with its distinctive man-made hill, sits on top of a former municipal land fill site. By the mid 1960s Transcona had more park area per resident than any other community in Manitoba.¹⁸ However, these park areas were often not well designed and landscaped nor did they offer a diversity of activities. Unsightly industrial areas were not always separated from residential areas by the use of screen plantings.¹⁹ After 1971, park planners began to

pay more attention to these design details, particularly in the newer subdivisions.

St. Boniface

The Municipality of St. Boniface was incorporated in 1880 and included the Red River parishes of St. Boniface and St. Vital. The Town of St. Boniface was incorporated in 1883. In 1903 the Municipality of St. Boniface changed its name to the Municipality of St. Vital to avoid confusion between the Town of St. Boniface and its surrounding rural area. Then in 1908, St. Boniface was incorporated as a city. Because the urban area of the city was growing, St. Boniface annexed a portion of St. Vital in 1914.



St. Boniface Cathedral and Graveyard, 1922. PAM

Separated from Winnipeg by the Red River, St. Boniface has maintained its distinct character as the largest population centre of French-speaking people west of the Great Lakes. The French and Roman Catholic character of the area was established in 1819 when the first priests came to minister to the Quebec born fur trade employees, their Métis children and the members of the Desmeurons regiment hired by Lord Selkirk to protect his settlement. The downtown area of St. Boniface retains all of the institutional bulwarks of Franco-Manitoban identity from St. Boniface Cathedral to the Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain. It is also one of the most historic neighbourhoods in Manitoba. The St. Boniface Museum occupies the former convent of the Grey Nuns which was completed in 1848 and is the oldest building in Winnipeg. The green areas surrounding the religious, educational and medical buildings in this area make a walking tour of St. Boniface a verdant pleasure. Whittier Park on the Red River, LaVérendrye Park fronting on Taché and Provencher Park fronting on Provencher Boulevard contribute to making the older urban area of St. Boniface greener than any other part of Winnipeg.

This is fortunate, for not every part of St. Boniface has been so blessed. Its shape has been greatly affected by rail development. The first railway link between Mani-

toba and the world outside ran from St. Paul, Minnesota to the Town of St. Boniface in 1878. Thereafter, the eastern section of the district became criss-crossed with tracks: the CNR main line, the CPR Emerson line, the Winnipeg Aqueduct and Railway line and the CNR Sprague line. The rail infrastructure encouraged industrial development resulting

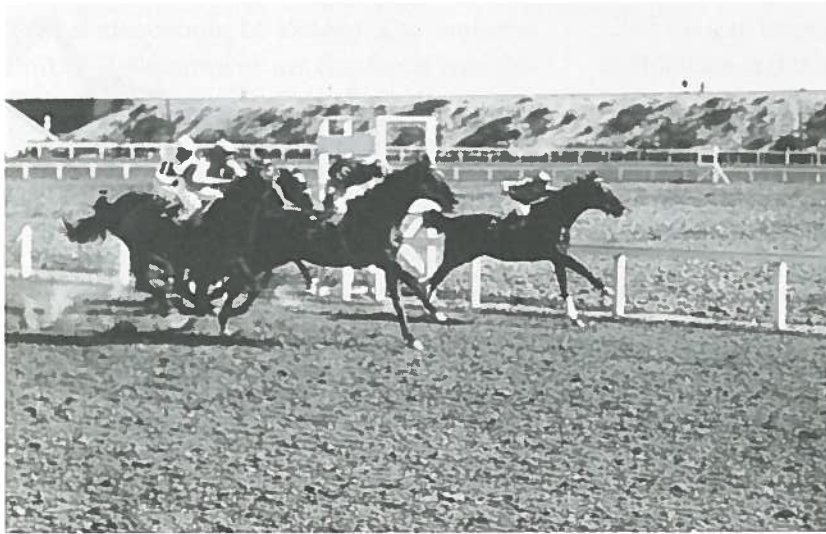
in the location of the stockyards and related industries in St. Boniface. Oil refineries and the CNR Symington Yard are more recent additions to the industrial area. This heavy industrial development early ensured that the residential and business development of St. Boniface would be restricted to the area roughly between Archibald Avenue and the Red River.

St. Boniface is fortunate to have a large proportion of its riverside land available for public parks. The CNR mainline, where it crossed the Red River into downtown Winnipeg, cut off a portion of the riverbank from the rest of St. Boniface. This became Whittier Park, in its earliest days a private park where



Whittier Park Race Track, 1925. PAM N784.

Winnipeg's first horse racing track was located in 1924. Latterly, Whittier was acquired by the City of Winnipeg and has gradually been developed for park use. Starting in 1974, the Festival du Voyageur used Whittier Park as the site of its reconstruction of Fort Gibraltar and since 1975 it has used the park as one of the main sites of festival activities. The downtown St. Boniface complex of church and hospital properties along the river made it possible to create Promenade Taché, an extremely attractive river front development opposite The Forks. The view from The Forks across the river to this promenade, with the Cathedral ruins behind it, is certainly one of the most striking in



A race in action at Whittier Park Race Track, 1924. PAM, P. McAdam Collection.

Winnipeg.

The English-speaking suburb of Norwood Flats, located on a meander of the Red River west of St. Mary's road, began to be developed in about 1895. In planning this suburb, Lyndale Drive was designed as a scenic river parkway in order to enhance the attractiveness of the suburb for middle class residents. It is one of the very few instances in Winnipeg where a river parkway has been created without residential development on the river side of the drive.

The tightly meandering Seine River is the other main natural feature of the St. Boniface landscape. The depth of its valley and its ten-

Stretches of the river bed have been choked with broken pieces of concrete, discarded bedsprings, oil drums and the like. The expense and effort required to reclaim the Seine as park land has meant that a piecemeal approach has been adopted. The development of the Seine River Parkway, Kavanagh Park and Happyland Park have successfully reclaimed most of the St. Boniface length of the Seine. Also, the establishment of the St. Boniface Country Club, the Windsor Park Golf Course and the Niakwa Country Club, all bordering on the river, has assured its retention as open space for the pleasure of St. Boniface and St. Vital residents. Recent ef-

dency to flood discouraged residential settlement directly fronting on the creek. This meant that when its possibilities as a natural park were recognized in the 1950s, a significant part of its length was still available for parks and recreation purposes. Unfortunately a long stretch of the Seine flows through the industrial area and it has suffered as a result.

forts of residents living along the Seine to mount a campaign to clear out the unsightly garbage bode well for its future as a park and recreation resource.

The urban growth of St. Boniface since 1945 has been primarily residential and has taken a generally southeastward direction along the division between St. Boniface and St. Vital at the Seine River. To move in this direction from the older residential district of St. Boniface is to take a tour through the successive styles of suburban design since World War Two. Starting in the mid-1950s, the Windsor Park subdivision broke away from the older grid pattern of street layout. Instead, Windsor Park's streets are laid out in bays among which irregularly shaped small park areas are interspersed. Four larger thoroughfares cut through the bays and allow vehicles to move around the subdivision more directly. The major schools, a community centre and a shopping area have been placed in the middle of the development. The major thoroughfares on the south and east of Windsor Park, Fermor Avenue and Lagimodiere Boulevard, were landscaped with shrubs and small trees to buffer traffic noise and the boulevard between these streets and the subdivision was far wider than would have been the case in an older development.

Still, Windsor Park looks only half-real-

ized when compared to its southern neighbour, Southdale, which began to be developed about ten years after Windsor Park and which shows a further refinement in the design of the enclosed residential subdivision. Here serpentine-shaped retention ponds are placed roughly at the centre of the development with green space around them. A large shopping mall is located on the edge of the development fronting on Fermor Avenue so that it serves both Southdale and Windsor Park. The main roads offering quick access are not straight, as is mostly the case in Windsor Park, but curved in harmony with the outlines of the retention ponds. Schools and recreation centres are dispersed throughout the development.

Proceeding south across Bishop Grandin Boulevard the Island Lakes development illustrates the style of the 1980s. Here one large serpentine retention pond is placed in the centre of the development with the residential bays laid out around it in curvilinear fashion. The larger thoroughfares, Island Lakes Drive and Desjardins Drive, cross the retention pond and allow more direct access to all parts of the subdivision. The central bays are almost completely surrounded by the branching arms of the retention pond.

As well as offering a text book tour of post-war suburban design, the subdivisions of Windsor Park, Southdale and Island Lakes

have diluted the francophone character of St. Boniface. Although Windsor Park began with a reasonable number of French-speaking residents, many newcomers were attracted by the easy access to downtown Winnipeg via Archibald Street and St. Anne's Road and by the suburban amenities offered. Of course, the influx of English speakers had begun with the estab-

lishment of Norwood at the turn of the century. While the struggle for survival of francophone culture has always been a distinctive undercurrent in the municipal dealings of St. Boniface, this has been less evident in the provision of parks and recreation services. Especially after 1950, a typical St. Boniface sports team contained speakers of both languages and competed in city-wide leagues in which English was the dominant language.

St. Boniface had well-developed volunteer community recreational associations quite early on. The St. Boniface Parks Board was formed in 1934, which made it the oldest



The Seine River, c. 1880. As the most important natural feature of the St. Boniface and St. Vital landscape, the Seine has provided these communities with numerous small park and golf course sites. PAM.

municipal parks board, apart from the City of Winnipeg board, in Greater Winnipeg. By 1950, St. Boniface already had a community club association, the Central Council of St. Boniface Community Clubs. Its purpose was, "to elevate the moral, social and intellectual standards of the community, to co-ordinate activities and lay down general policies."²⁰ The 25 affiliated organizations were not all community recreational centres. They represented a very wide range of activities in which cultural and social programs shared equal time with sports. By 1957, St. Boniface had seven community centres of the kind found elsewhere in the city. Generally speak-

ing, the older part of the suburb did not have an overabundance of playing fields. The lack of arenas was remedied in 1967 when two arenas were built, Maginot Arena and Bertrand Arena, one on each side of the Seine. Until the opening of the Bonivital Pool on Archibald Street, St. Boniface was without an indoor pool. However, there are more outdoor pools located in St. Boniface than in any other part of Winnipeg.

St. Vital

There is little reason to consider the parks and recreation history of St. Vital separately from that of St. Boniface. The two municipalities were interrelated from the first. However, particularly since World War Two, St. Vital has increasingly pulled away from its francophone roots and has become the quintessential North American suburb. Its municipal council first began to transact business in English in 1912. Like St. Boniface, during the period 1911 to 1968, the rate of population growth in St. Vital consistently outstripped that of Greater Winnipeg as a whole.²¹ Although the growth of Winnipeg has been slow since 1968, new subdivisions have continued to sprout in St. Vital as growth spreads southward. Clearly, Winnipeggers continue to find the suburban life attractive.

St. Vital was incorporated as a city in 1962 and created a Parks Board in 1965.

Shaped like a triangle with its apex pointing towards downtown Winnipeg, St. Vital's boundaries are well-defined. The Red and Seine rivers provide its eastern and western limits and are also the most striking natural features of the suburb. The southern edge, where the new development has always taken place, is a moving transitional zone between agricultural and residential usage. St. Mary's Road and St. Anne's Road on the north/south axis and Fermor, Dunkirk, Bishop Grandin and the Perimeter Highway on the east/west axis are major thoroughfares which break up the suburb but they also provide quick access to other parts of the city.

St. Vital Park was the large suburban



Section of a plan of Greater Winnipeg in 1957 showing St. Boniface and the northern half of St. Vital. Windsor Park's more adventurous street layout contrasts with the grid pattern of the older part of St. Boniface. Schools, community centres and parks are marked. Source: "The Greater Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Survey", 1957.

park designated for use by residents of the south-east quadrant of the city. It was set aside as park land when the municipality sold the land to the City of Winnipeg in 1929. However, the complete development of St. Vital Park did not occur until the sixties and seventies. For a long period of time, the park was left more or less in its natural state. Once the consciousness hit in the 1960s that river land ought to be retained for public purposes wherever possible, a concerted effort was made to acquire large blocks of river property south of the urbanized part of the municipality. The fact that this land was still primarily agricultural and was therefore available in large lots made land assembly easier than would otherwise have been the case. St. Vital Park, River Road Park, Normand Park and Maple Grove Park, taken together, provide St. Vital with excellent public access to riverbank land. Maple Grove Park is, in fact, larger than St. Vital Park and is located directly across the river from Fort Garry's major new park, King's Park. Normand Park was acquired by Metro and became the nursery of the Metro Parks and Protection Division's landscape and nursery branch. It is fortunate that St. Vital residents have ample access to the river since the newer subdivisions like Meadowood, Riel, and River Park South were not designed around retention ponds as was the case with the subdivisions

on the St. Boniface side of the Seine.

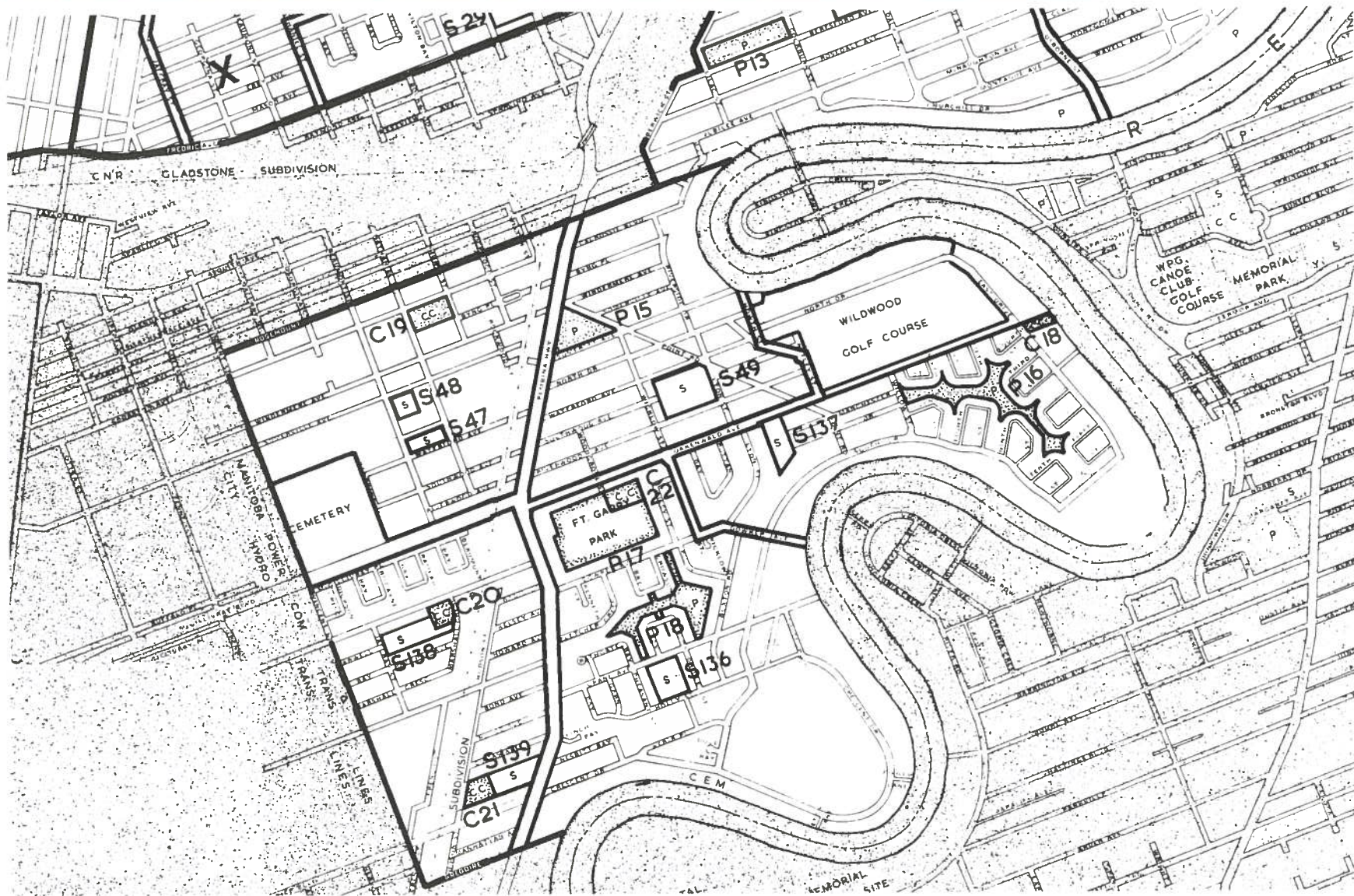
Park acquisition on the St. Vital side of the Seine has not been quite as successful as on the St. Boniface side and is limited to small parks like Blenheim Park. It was the dream of the Metro Planning Division during its brief reign during the 1960s, that the whole of the Seine riverbank on the St. Vital side be acquired as park land. Metro envisioned an 11 mile long linear park that would provide an amenity not found elsewhere in the city. Unfortunately the value of the property for private development and the expense to the city of acquiring such a large piece of land has so far prevented this dream from being realized.

Elsewhere in St. Vital, park and recreation space has usually been adjacent to school land so that joint usage would be possible. The indoor swimming pool at the South Winnipeg YM/YWCA on Fermor is still the only indoor swimming pool in St. Vital but access to pools in St. Boniface is relatively easy. As is the case on the other side of the Seine, the northern part of St. Vital is not well provided with playing fields. Glenwood Community Club Arena serves the northern part of the suburb and St. Vital Centennial Arena in Meadowood serves the southern part.

Fort Garry

Fort Garry today takes in the Red River era parish of St. Norbert and part of the old parish of St. Vital. Located at the junction of the Red and La Salle rivers, the village of St. Norbert, which was founded in 1857, was the oldest developed area of the suburb. The Trappist Order of monks established a monastery on 1,000 acres of land bordering the La Salle River in 1892 and helped create the francophone and agricultural identity of the village. The northern part of Fort Garry, from the City of Winnipeg boundary running along Parker and Jubilee avenues to St. Norbert, remained agricultural until the first decade of this century. In 1912 the Rural Municipality of St. Vital, which at that time extended across the Red River, was split into the rural municipalities of St. Vital and Fort Garry. That same year Fort Garry annexed territory to the south, including the Village of St. Norbert. The total area of the Municipality of Fort Garry was, by then, about 28 square miles.²²

As time went on, this area became increasingly broken up by large thoroughfares like Pembina Highway, and by hydroelectric lines, railway lines and industrial areas. Residential development in the northern part of the suburb began before World War One and picked up steam during the twenties. Small neat bungalows began to appear in the area



Section of a plan of Greater Winnipeg showing the northern part of Fort Garry as it was in 1957. The innovative Wildwood Park subdivision, with its bays of houses laid out around a central strip of park land, has been much studied by city planners across Canada. Source: "The Greater Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Survey", 1957.

south of Jubilee Avenue and east of Pembina Highway. Growth in Fort Garry encouraged the City of Winnipeg Parks Board to secure a large suburban park for the southern part of the urban area. The Rural Municipality of Fort Garry sold the land on which Wildwood Park now sits to the City of Winnipeg in 1930. The tendency of this land to flood and the fact that the Winnipeg Parks Board had no money to develop it resulted in Winnipeg returning Wildewood Park²³ to Fort Garry at the beginning of World War Two. Meanwhile in 1930 the decision of the University of Manitoba to establish its campus in Fort Garry next to the Manitoba Agricultural College encouraged the southward residential expansion of the municipality.

Like other residential suburbs of Winnipeg, Fort Garry's strongest period of growth began at the end of World War Two. Beginning in 1944, the Bird Construction Company developed one of the most unique residential subdivisions in Canada at Wildwood Park. The design for Wildwood Park involved locating bays of houses around a central strip of park land. The unusual part of the design was that there were no front streets. Vehicle access to the houses was provided by bay-shaped back lanes. Wildwood Park continues to be studied in Canadian architecture and city planning courses but, surprisingly, the design was never copied else-

where in Winnipeg.

After a considerable set-back caused by the 1950 flood in which Fort Garry, and especially Wildwood Park, was badly hit, residential development continued. The Beaumont and Maybank areas west of Pembina Highway and the Crescent Park area south of Wildwood were built up in the fifties. During the sixties, the areas immediately north and south of the university became popular residential areas for university personnel and the Village of St. Norbert swelled with the arrival of people craving a rural ambiance. The Metropolitan Parks and Protection Division recognized this southward expansion by acquiring the river peninsula then known as Washington peninsula, today King's Park. Metro had earlier taken over Crescent Drive Park from the municipality and had created a nine hole golf course there in 1966 which became the busiest among the municipal golf courses. Metro also established a large natural park on the La Salle River called La Barriere Park.

Fort Garry formed a parks board in 1947



Crescent Drive Golf Course, c. 1970, showing the clubhouse. WPRD.

and appointed a Recreation Council to act in an advisory capacity to the parks board the following year.²⁴ Clearly the board had been formed in response to the rapid growth of the suburb and the need for a body to co-ordinate parks and recreation matters and to take an administrative load off the municipal council. The board's major role during its first decade was to make sure land was set aside in new developments for parks, to foster development of community clubs and to provide trees for boulevards. The municipal council set aside three-quarters of a mill as the rate for the parks board levy. Though the suburb was growing continuously during this period, the tax base of the municipality



La Barriere Park, c. 1965. WPRD.

was still small compared to the City of Winnipeg. As a result, the Fort Garry Parks Board was limited in what it could do. It could set aside parks space but could do little to landscape or improve parks. For example, the Wildwood Park green spaces were maintained by area residents, not the municipality. The Parks Board could provide boulevard trees from its own nursery in a corner of Fort Garry Memorial Park (later renamed Garry Hobson Park) but it could not maintain boulevards once the trees were planted. It could subsidize, to a limited degree, the heating and lighting bills of area community clubs. But it could not provide program directors or janitors to clubs and di-

rection of the municipal recreation program was limited to a summer student and volunteers. The municipality was unable to develop the riverside park land north of Wildwood Park. Instead the land was rented to the Wildwood Club on a long term lease on the proviso that the club would develop the land as a golf course.

This way, the northern part of the suburb got a golf course and rental of the land gave the Fort Garry Parks Board some badly needed extra revenue.

Money by-laws to raise the parks levy in Fort Garry were defeated by the ratepayers in 1950 and 1952. Fort Garry's entire parks and recreation budget for 1957 was \$12,723.²⁵ Like most of the suburban municipalities, Fort Garry did not see major green space improvements until the Metro era when the Metro Parks and Protection Division took over responsibility for major parks. Metro was able to work on a scale that the municipality had been unable to achieve. A similar leap forward was not achieved in the area of

recreation as the Metro structure had left recreation as a municipal responsibility.

Because the residential areas of the suburb were so spread out and because it was split up by major roads, railway lines, hydro transmission lines and the university campus, the sharing of recreational resources between neighbourhoods was impossible. Each little neighbourhood needed its own community centre. By 1957, Fort Garry, which then had one tenth of the population of the City of Winnipeg, already had developed nine community clubs compared to the City's 18.²⁶ These clubs were: Fort Garry, Wildwood, Victoria, Grandin, King's Park, St. Norbert, St. Avila West and Turnbull Bend. That same year, the board was forced to discontinue its grants towards the fuel and floodlighting costs of community centres.²⁷ The exception to this neighbourhood level of recreational development was the athletic park, Fort Garry Memorial Park, situated behind the municipal offices between Oakenwald and Dowker Avenues. Eventually this park contained facilities for football, tennis, track and field, and a swimming pool as well as the facilities of the Fort Garry Community Centre. Until Vincent Massey Collegiate was built on the south-west corner of this athletic park, the municipal nursery was also located there. This park is now called Garry Hobson Park.

During the sixties, the municipality made a concerted effort to attract industry to Fort Garry. This industrial development took place in the attractively landscaped Fort Garry Industrial Park located between Pembina Highway and Waverley Street. From here the industrial belt spread west until eventually it joined the Tuxedo industrial area. This industrial development brought much needed revenue to the municipality. It also separated the eastern part of the suburb from the new residential subdivisions developed in the seventies and eighties, Waverley Heights, Lindenvoods and Whyteridge.

Towards the end of the sixties, the municipality began to provide some other amenities on a regional basis. Century Arena, on Clarence Avenue in the industrial park was one of the municipality's centennial projects in 1967. The southern end of the suburb got its own arena in the unicity era when the Richmond Kings Arena was built.

Tuxedo

The Town of Tuxedo was planned by the developer Frederick Heubach as an elite residential suburb and was incorporated as a town in 1911. The 1910 plan of the town was designed by Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts, a firm which had been founded by the protean Frederick Law Olmsted, the father of landscape architecture in

North America. Heubach's hope that the University of Manitoba would be located immediately south of Assiniboine park and provide one of the focal points of the town was reflected in this plan. The plan's similarities, in spirit if not in detail, to Frederick Law Olmsted's 1865 plan of Berkeley, California, have been noted by Winnipeg writer Ian McDonald.²⁸ After decades of wrangling, however, the university finally chose Fort Garry over Tuxedo and Heubach's dream of Tuxedo as the Berkeley of the north were dashed. A downturn in the economy meant that only the part of the town adjacent to the eastern boundary of Assiniboine Park and north of Corydon Avenue was developed for sale. These lots were filled up by 1950.

The 1910 plan also included a large lozenge-shaped park called Olmsted Park located south of Corydon Avenue. This park, now called Frederick Heubach Park, was not actually developed until the 1960s when the Metro Parks and Protection Division took over responsibility for the park. It was to have been the most elaborate neighbourhood park in the city with bridle paths, pergolas, a wading pool and scenic driveways. When finally built, it was much simpler than first conceived. In the original plan it was not to be broken up by any thoroughfare. However, by the time Heubach Park was developed it was clear that there would have to be

a main route in addition to Corydon/Roblin Boulevard to connect Charleswood with important north/south thoroughfares at Kenaston and Pembina Highway. The decision was made to run Grant Avenue through the middle of the park which was improved in two phases with the section north of Grant being developed first.²⁹ The street layout of the more recently developed residential sections adjacent to Heubach Park also differs from the original plan. Olmsted's street layout was a graceful variation on the grid theme, with the east/west main streets taking an elegant southward curve at the centre of the subdivision. This southward curve is preserved in the present day shape of Cuthbertson, Grant and West Taylor Boulevard. However, the residential streets in the northeast quadrant south of Corydon are laid out in bays with many small green spaces. The whole area south of Grant is laid out in larger bays with a retention pond in the south-west corner of the subdivision.

Given the ample size of its residential lots, the distribution of small green spaces, the proximity to Assiniboine Park and the creation of Heubach Park, Tuxedo is as rich in green space as it is in the other amenities of life. It is also a suburb with well defined boundaries that enhance the sense of exclusiveness. The location of the Tuxedo Golf Course and the later reservation of the

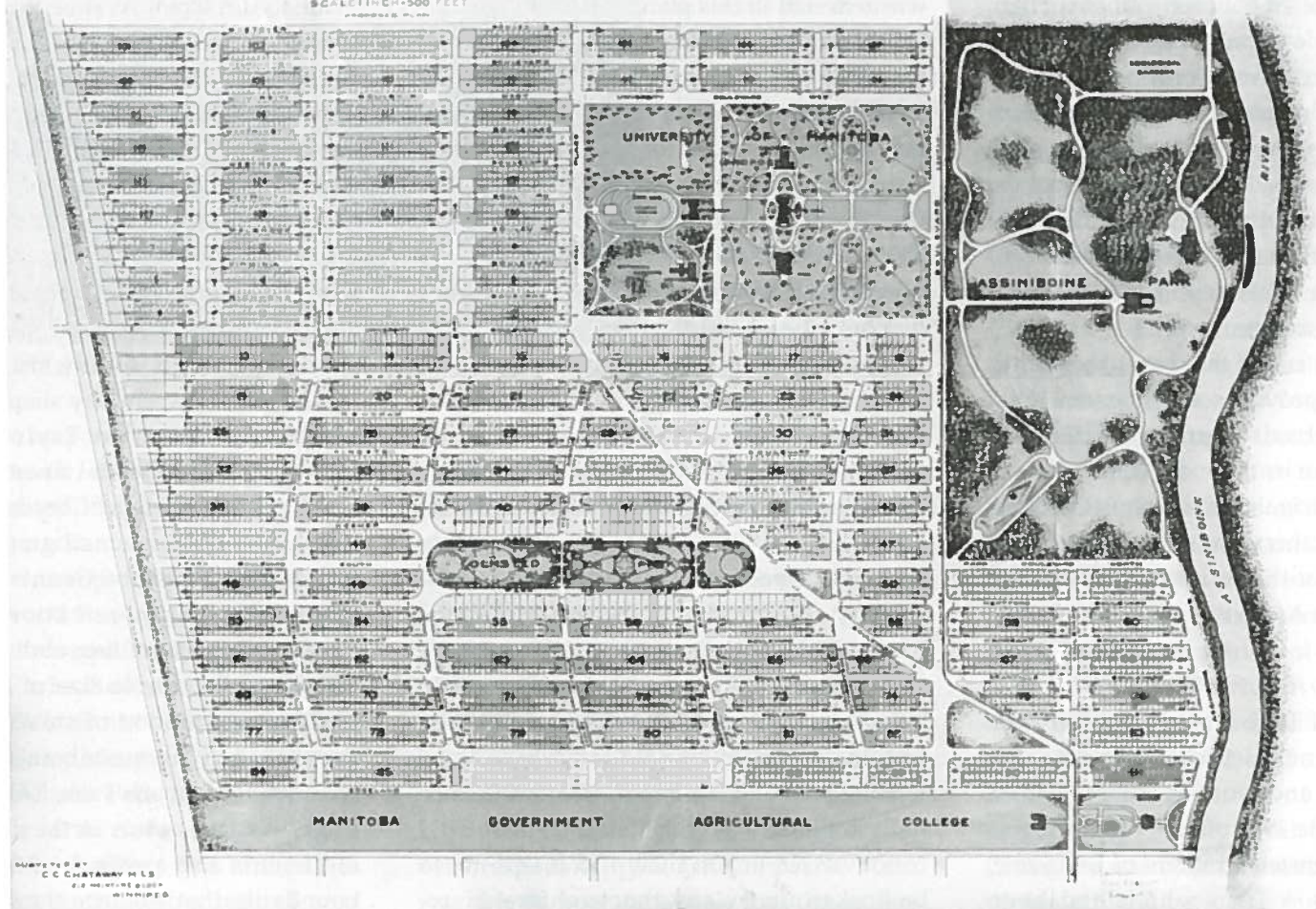
TUXEDO PARK

*University Section of
The Suburb Beautiful*

PART OF LOTS 5 TO 24 ST. CHARLES

SCALE 1 INCH = 500 FEET

UNIVERSITY GROUNDS 180 ACRES
AREA OF ASSINIBOINE PARK 20.2 ACRES
OLMSTED PARK 28.4 ACRES



Plan of the proposed Tuxedo residential suburb, including Assiniboine Park, published by real estate developer F.W. Heubach, c. 1910. Features of this plan by the Olmsted Brothers were implemented, notably the elegant curve of some east/west streets and the shape of Heubach Park. A site in Fort Garry was subsequently chosen for the University of Manitoba. UMA.

Assiniboine Forest as park land during the unicity era added two more amenities and provided a distinct western border for the suburb. The large industrial area to the south of the CNR tracks effectively limits Tuxedo's southward expansion. The eastern limit is provided by the Canadian Forces Base South Site and the provincial buildings at the former Fort Osborne Barracks site. On the north is the Assiniboine River.

Being both small in area and catering to affluent residents, Tuxedo has had less need to provide municipal recreational facilities within the suburb itself. Many area residents belong to private golf clubs and sports clubs like the Winnipeg Winter Club or the Winnipeg Squash Racquet Club. One community centre, Tuxedo Community Centre, serves the needs of the area and school grounds and parks provide playing fields. The Pan-Am swimming pool and the River Heights Arena are only a short drive away.

Charleswood

The Municipality of Assiniboia, which was incorporated in 1880, was comprised of land on both sides of Assiniboine River. Communication between the two parts of the municipality was by ferry, boat and winter road. It was not until 1913 that the area on the south side of the river was separated from Assiniboia to become the Rural Municipality of

Charleswood.³⁰ Charleswood remained essentially rural and agricultural until after World War Two. The extreme need for new housing for veterans initiated the development of the Roblin Park subdivision under the Veteran's Land Act. By 1948, 35 percent of Charleswood's 800 homes were owned by veterans.³¹

The pace of growth accelerated after 1955 and today Charleswood remains a very popular choice for home-buyers in Winnipeg.

One look at a map reveals the reasons for Charleswood retaining its rural character longer than other Winnipeg suburbs. At almost 37 square miles, it had the largest area of all the suburban municipalities.³² Although residential growth was significant after 1955, there was simply a lot of space to fill. Charleswood's ties with the rest of Winnipeg were more tenuous than other suburbs, too. In the early days when the street railway was linking Winnipeg's suburban hinterland to its downtown centre, Charleswood, because of its sparse population, had no such link. No railway line passed through the ear-



The Assiniboine River showing the Charleswood ferry, c. 1919. PAM, P. McAdam Collection

liest settled part of the suburb on the southern bank of the Assiniboine. Access to Winnipeg was via roads and bridges and, until the New Perimeter Bridge was built, there was no bridge over the Assiniboine between the St. James Bridge and the Headingley Bridge. As a consequence, Charleswood had closer ties to Headingley than to Winnipeg and had to provide all of its own municipal services and amenities. A relatively small tax base spread out over a wide area made this task all the more difficult.

The provision of parks for the municipality was, perhaps, the easiest municipal task for Charleswood. With ample open space still available within the municipality

and easy access by road to Assiniboine Park, Charleswood had no particular need for a parks board. The municipal council saw to the limited parks and recreation requirements of the suburb. By 1970, there were two neighbourhood parks, Varsity View and Roblin Park community centres, a tot lot and five school playgrounds, recreation centres in Westdale and Headingley, and the Charleswood and Breezy Bend golf courses. Charleswood did appoint a recreation commission in 1968 when it appeared that the steady rate of growth would require considerable development in area recreation facilities.³³ This commission carried on into the unicity era, working with the Community Committee in planning parks and recreation matters for the suburb. A full-time recreation director was hired in 1970 who reported to the Recreation Commission and supervised a small staff. This was an active period which saw the opening of the Charleswood Recreation Centre, a provincial centennial project in 1970, that included an arena, football and baseball fields, and a playground. This centre was later renamed the Eric Coy Recreation Centre. New community clubs were opened at Westdale and Pembina Trail as well as the Phoenix Community Centre in South Headingley. The opening of the Varsity View Sportsplex provided a second arena for Charleswood.

Though reasonably well provided with other recreational facilities, Charleswood lacked a swimming pool of its own, as it does to this day.

The dominating natural feature of Charleswood is the Assiniboine River with its well-treed south riverbank. As in other Winnipeg municipalities, much of Charleswood's riverbank is under private ownership. During the unicity era, however, Charleswood added two new river parks to its parks system. These were Caron Park, adjacent to the New Perimeter Bridge on its eastern side and a linear creek park made up of Beaverdam Creek Park and Beauchemin Park.

Metro and Unicity Provide Suburbs With an Infusion of Cash

However cleverly the suburban municipalities administered their parks and recreation programs, they could not escape fiscal realities. Their tax bases - or their taxpayers - could not or would not provide the same quality of service as could the City of Winnipeg. When the Metro Parks and Protection Division took over responsibility for the larger suburban parks in 1961, the suburban parks boards could concentrate their efforts and funds on neighbourhood parks, playgrounds, and community centres. Metro was able to acquire large parks such as

Maple Grove Park and King's Park and to improve existing ones like Fraser's Grove. As can be seen from the survey above, a great many new parks and recreational facilities were put in place in the late 1960s in the suburbs. When parks and recreation became a city-wide responsibility after amalgamation in 1971, there was, again, an increase in the number of arenas, recreation centres, and swimming pools built in the suburbs. Availability of funding from other levels of government during the Canadian centennial in 1967, the centennial of Manitoba in 1970 and the Winnipeg centennial in 1974, no doubt assisted in this process. Many of these facilities were centennial projects of one sort or another.

The enclosed quality of the residential subdivisions built since 1950 has virtually dictated that each subdivision must, in practical terms, have its own services. This meant that parks and community clubs have proliferated as the suburbs have been developed at an ever-increasing distance from the centre of the city. It did not take long, for example, for the number of community centres in the suburban municipalities to equal and exceed the 18 clubs in the City of Winnipeg. There is no doubt that the need to extend services to new suburban areas has placed a strain on the tax base and made inequities between the centre of the city and the sub-

urbs more extreme. In spite of a good deal of support from city planners for limiting suburban growth during the last 20 years, many

Winnipeggers still want to live in a suburban environment, developers see an economic opportunity there and municipal politicians

find these pressures hard to resist.



PART V
COPING WITH COMPLEXITY
1960 - 1993



Community centre hockey in action, c. 1975. WPRD.

CHAPTER 12

THE LEAP FORWARD UNDER METRO 1960-1971

In its short, turbulent life, the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg had both its bitter detractors and its passionate defenders. There is no question, however, that during its 11 year reign extraordinary progress was made in building up the infrastructure of Greater Winnipeg. A short list of some of its projects reads like an inventory of Winnipeg's most important modern conveniences: the St. James Bridge and underpass, the St. Vital Bridge, the new Maryland Bridge, the Winnipeg International Airport, the Fort Rouge Transit Base, the George MacLean Pumping Station and the Nairn Avenue Overpass to name a few. There is also no question that under Metro, Winnipeg's major parks received more attention than they had seen since the twenties. The inauguration of Metro allowed city-wide planning and funding of major parks which resulted in more money being spent on green space during the Metro decade than in the previous 30 years. Neighbourhood parks and recreation services, which remained the responsibility of the individual municipalities, did not fare quite so well. However, the availability of funding from other levels of government for the Canadian and Manitoba centennials in 1967 and 1970 enabled the mu-

nicipalities to add to their recreation facilities by building arenas, sports parks and swimming pools.

Metropolitan government was inaugurated in Winnipeg when the Manitoba Legislature passed the Metropolitan Winnipeg Act on May 26, 1960. This act created the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, a corporation consisting of 19 area municipalities. This included not only the City of Winnipeg and the 14 suburban municipalities but also parts of the rural municipalities of Rosser, Assiniboia, Macdonald, Springfield, East St. Paul and West St. Paul. By the end of the decade, these rural municipalities had, by and large, opted out of Metro because of growing rancour between Metro and its member municipalities. Under the Metro system, Winnipeggers elected two councils: the municipal council of their city or municipality plus representatives to the Metro

Council. The Metro Council was composed of ten councillors each representing one of the ten Metro districts. It had a Parks and Protection Standing Committee of three members. This Committee ruled on matters of policy and budget while administration was left to the staff of the Parks and Protection Division, which was headed by Andrew Currie. Initially, it was decided that the Metro Parks and Protection Division would oversee Metro area parks of more than ten acres. Later smaller parks that were located on Metro thoroughfares were also trans-



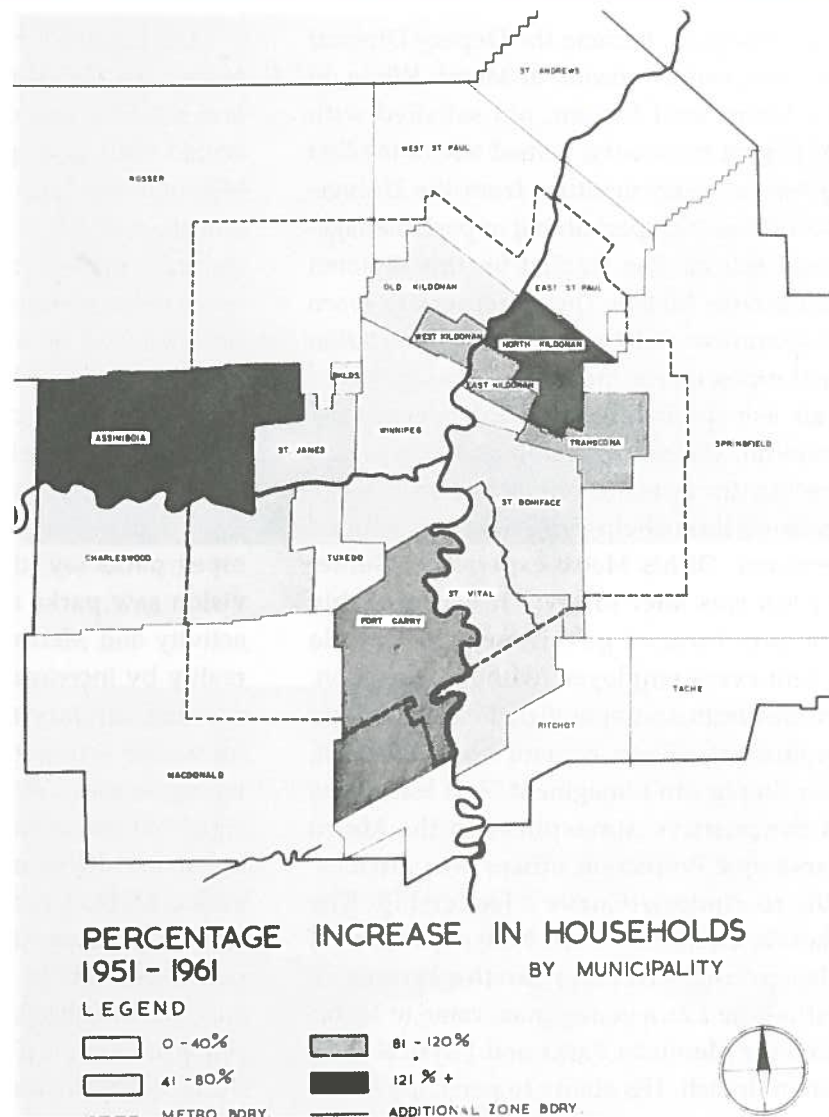
Metro Parks and Protection Division Director Andrew Currie surrounded by his staff towards the end of the division's short but happy tenure. WPRD.

ferred to the division. Sports parks remained the responsibility of the municipalities. Transferred to Metro as of April 1, 1961 were: Assiniboine Park and Zoo, Kildonan Park, Kildonan Golf Course, Windsor Park Golf Course, Westview Park, St. Vital Park, and Crescent Drive Park.¹ The following parks had been added to Metro's list by 1969: Churchill Drive Park, Fraser's Grove Park, Heubach Park, Crescent Drive Riverbank, Lyndale Drive Park, Seine River Park, Taché Avenue Riverbank, Normand Nursery and Wildwood Riverbank. In pursuit of its pledge to add 1,000 additional acres of park land to the system, by 1969 Metro had purchased land for the following major parks: John Blumberg Park and Golf Course, Bonnycastle Park, Grant Avenue Park, La Barriere Park, Little Mountain Park, Maple Grove Park and King's Park. In addition to major parks, Metro's Parks and Protection Division was responsible for constructing and maintaining boulevards on the designated major thoroughfares. The division also undertook landscaping of Metro properties and provided landscaping assistance to member municipalities.

The Metro Vision For Parks

There was a very exciting feeling in the air at the new offices of the Metro Parks and Protection Division. This was so in spite of

the fact that the staff was mostly made up of people who had been transferred from the City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board effective January 1, 1962. The staffs from Assiniboine and Kildonan Parks, for example, were simply moved over to Metro along with responsibility for their respective parks. But the Metro Division was going to place more emphasis on design and planning. Some of the Winnipeg department's best qualified staff in these areas moved over to Metro. Gunter Schoch, who had received extensive horticultural and landscape design training in his native Germany, was one. Martin Bennum, who had been Assistant General Superintendent under



Map of Greater Winnipeg 1961, showing rates of population growth in suburban municipalities 1951-1961 and the Metro boundary. Source: Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg Annual Report 1963.

Tom Hodgson, became the Deputy Director of Parks and Protection at Metro. While on the Metro staff Benum, not satisfied with his degree in forestry, gained one of the first diplomas in horticulture from the University of Guelph, specializing in park management. Schoch also studied for this diploma while with Metro. The eagerness to learn and improve skills was only one indication of the positive atmosphere among Metro staff. For the first time since before the depression, Winnipeg park planners were allowing themselves to dream on a large scale, without being restricted by money concerns. Of his Metro experience, Gunter Schoch was later to say: "It was probably the only form of government in Canada where every employee, without exception, worked with an unparalleled eagerness and enthusiasm. If you haven't been part of it, you simply can't imagine it."² At least some of the positive atmosphere in the Metro Parks and Protection offices was attributable to Andrew Currie's leadership. The likeable Currie, who had been supervisor of playground directors for the Winnipeg Parks Board as a young man, came to Metro from the Manitoba Parks and Physical Education Branch. His ability to persuade Metro Councillors on the Parks and Protection Committee to approve the division's plans was a key element in its success.

During the first year of Metro's existence, the Parks and Protection Director and the Director of Planning jointly presented their blueprint for the future to the Metropolitan Council. The objectives were simple and achievable, though they required considerable spending. Except in those parks where high standards of maintenance had already been established, parks were to be designed to require minimum maintenance at minimum cost. In new parks, natural aspects were to dictate the design in preference to designs requiring extensive grading or earthworks. Winnipeg parks lay idle in winter. The Metro vision saw parks as year-round centres of activity and Metro pledged to make this a reality by increasing catering services, improving sanitary facilities and providing for winter activities with skating rinks and toboggan slides. While supporting the principle that the public should be able to pursue many different forms of recreation in parks, Metro's focus would be the provision of parks and facilities. Recreation programming would remain a municipal responsibility. Perhaps the most ambitious plank in the platform was the Parks and Protection Division's plan to add an additional 1,000 acres to the parks system within five years. The five year deadline was not quite realistic but by 1971 Metro

had met and exceeded this goal.

The War on Weeds and Mosquitoes Reaches Its Peak

It made sense to carry out weed control and mosquito abatement on a city-wide basis and so these responsibilities were attached to the Parks and Protection Division. A weed control branch was established in 1965. The Greater Winnipeg Mosquito Abatement District, which had hitherto been an independent organization with a hodge podge of funding from private sources and the area municipalities, was given a home at Metro in 1961. The Mosquito Abatement Branch retained close ties with the University of Manitoba Department of Entomology and, in fact, Metro funded a continuing research project there. In insect control circles the Winnipeg program became famous, with people coming from as far away as Malaysia to observe the program in action. With secure funding, it became possible to step up the war on mosquitoes. Larviciding in ditches and wet areas was carried out with DDT sprayers mounted on trucks and by employees on foot using hand operated sprayers where trucks could not reach. Fogging to kill adult mosquitoes usually began in late May and continued unabated until the end of September. Residential streets were fogged every eight to ten days but parks and golf courses



Above: Greater Winnipeg Mosquito Abatement District workers spray ditches with an oil and DDT larviciding spray, 1955. WPRD.



Above right: Greater Winnipeg Mosquito Abatement District workers fog on the river, 1955. WPRD.

Right: Greater Winnipeg Mosquito Abatement District workers fog the city dump using a Tifa fogger mounted on a truck, 1955. WPRD.



were fogged more frequently. Fogging was done from trucks, from boats on the rivers and also from airplanes for large open areas. By 1967, the branch was also spraying DDT oil solution on low areas in October and November and using an airplane to drop DDT granules onto 9,000 acres of bush and park land in January in an effort to inhibit early emerging larvae. However, the first alarms about overuse of insecticides and herbicides had been raised in 1962 when Rachel Carson's book, *The Silent Spring*, was published. The next year the branch re-examined its procedures but pronounced their formulations "well within the desirable safety ranges".³ But the environmental issue did not go away. Throughout the late sixties and into the seventies, the environmental movement gained strength and additional disturbing findings appeared in the literature. After the use of DDT was banned in the United States, the Mosquito Abatement Branch, by then part of the new unicity department, scaled back its efforts and stopped using DDT.

Civil Defence Gets a Nasty Wake-Up Call

The Metro division also found itself in charge of civil defence, one of those organizational orphans that had to be attached to the Metro structure somewhere. Parks and

Protection seemed as good a place as any. However, Civil Defence became anything but an organizational backwater in the fall of 1962 when the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world as close to nuclear annihilation as it had ever been before. Caught unawares, the Civil Defence Branch was still in a rudimentary state of organization. It soon became evident that Winnipeg and Manitoba were not nearly well enough prepared to face a nuclear catastrophe. At the back of everyone's mind, of course, was the thought that no amount of preparedness would be enough in the event of the unthinkable. People who were school children during that week in October will never forget the eerie sound of air raid sirens being tested, bizarre air raid drills or the tense discussions around dinner tables as parents planned the family's escape route out of the city. Happily the crisis passed and both the province and the federal government increased their financial commitment to Civil Defence thereafter. By the time

the blizzard and flood of 1966 came around – disasters of the everyday variety – Civil Defence, by then renamed the Emergency Measures Organization, was better prepared.

Assiniboine and Kildonan Parks Brought Up to Date

The Assiniboine Park Zoo expansion that had been started in the fifties was continued by Metro in the sixties. In 1962 landscape architect Gunter Schoch and the zoo director, Dr. Gunter Voss, prepared a new five year improvement plan for the zoo which featured extensive landscaping to improve the



The east entrance to the Assiniboine Park Zoo, c. 1970. Part of the zoo rebuilding program in the sixties involved improving the look of the site through the use of landscaping. The east entrance was constructed and landscaped in 1965. WPRD.

look of the facility. That year the decrepit old concession building, which had been condemned by the City Health Department, was replaced with a new concession building. Unfortunately this new structure was subsequently the site of a fire and it, in turn, was replaced by the Carousel Coffee Shop in 1967. Also in 1962, a new incinerator, emergency paddocks and new sun shelters were installed. In 1963, new carnivore cages and an indoor/outdoor mammal house were built and sewer and water services were upgraded. The 500 car east parking lot was begun in that year, its look designed to be softened by tree and shrub plantings. By this

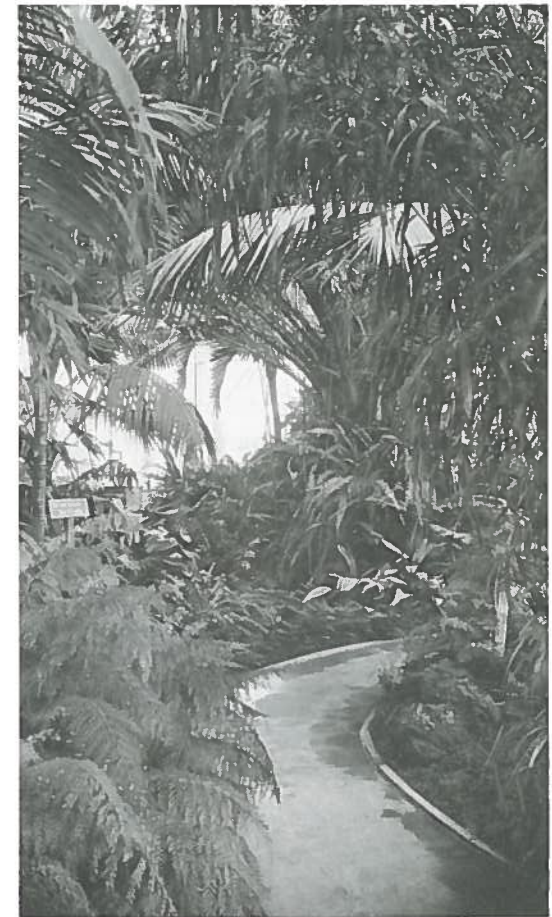


Skating on the Assiniboine Park Duck Pond, 1968. WPRD.

time, the Winnipeg zoo had worked its way into the worldwide network of zoos and was trading animals with other zoos in Canada, the United States, Germany and Switzerland. In 1965, the new east entrance was constructed and landscaped. In 1966 there were further improvements to the sewer and water system, a staff house was built complete with communications system and work was started on enclosures for tragopans, racoons, snow leopards and hardy hoof stock. These enclosures, along with a new bear pit were completed in 1967, thus completing the rebuilding of every enclosure in the zoo. The result was an attractive zoo in which the animals were well displayed and easy to watch, and families had the facilities to spend several hours at the zoo in comfort. The most important beneficiaries of this refit were the animals themselves. With improved enclosures and sanitation, the mortality rate of mammals, for example, declined from more than 12 percent in 1960 to less than four percent in 1965.⁴ Plans for an important new attraction, a Tropical House, were finalized in 1970 and its construction begun in 1971. As the Metro era drew to a close in 1970, the zoo got a new director, Clive G. Roots, who replaced the departing Gunter Voss.

There was no lack of activity in the rest of Assiniboine Park either. In 1963, the pace picked up with the construction of a new ser-

vice building, a new picnic shelter near the formal gardens and an extension to the perimeter road. A new coffee shop was built adjacent to the conservatory in 1964 and a patio added in 1966. In 1964 a 50 car parking



Interior of the Assiniboine Park Conservatory, c. 1930. WPRD.



The new Assiniboine Park Conservatory, 1970. Opened in 1969, the new conservatory was constructed over top of the older building, saving the original plantings which dated back to 1914. WPRD.

lot was built between the pavilion and the conservatory. This allowed the parking lot in front of the pavilion to be replaced by a sunken fountain in 1965. At the same time Conservatory Drive, which connected the south entrance of the park to the pavilion, was realigned and a new gate was built. In 1966 the cricket facilities received a facelift since the park was to be the site of the cricket and field hockey events for the 1967 Pan-American Games. The cricket pitch was reconstructed and the 56 year old cricket pavilion was replaced with a new structure. In the same year, the rose beds in the English Garden were completely replanted using

over 400 hybrid tea roses from Holland. During the centennial year of 1967, a skating rink on the duck pond and a toboggan slide near the conservatory successfully lured winter park-goers. In addition, the picnic shelter west of the pavilion was replaced with a modern structure and a new greenhouse was built. Nineteen sixty-eight was another important year. The con-

servatory had been badly in need of replacement for some time. That year construction of a new conservatory was started. The new structure was built over top of the old conservatory, allowing the plantings in the old building, many of which dated back to 1914, to be saved. The new conservatory, which had been designed by Pratt, Lindgren, Snider and Tomcej, was opened in 1969 and doubled the space for plantings and exhibits. Also in 1969, the refreshments area on the main floor of the pavilion was completely renovated. Throughout the sixties, the roads in the park were extensively improved and repaved.

Kildonan Park also received considerable attention from Metro. Starting in 1961, the backstage area of Rainbow Stage was extended, providing rehearsal space, larger dressing rooms and washroom facilities. The next year a new sewer diversion and lift station were installed and the main entrance and drive were repaved. Toboggan slides were provided on an experimental basis that winter and proved to be very popular. The pavilion, built in 1915 and badly damaged during the 1950 flood, was looking shabby and did not fit with Metro's vision of the park as a year-round centre of activity. A new pavilion was designed by Blankstein, Coop, Gillmor and Hanna in 1964. It was to be a fully winterized structure, a first in Winnipeg parks. Set into the valley of the Lord Selkirk Creek slightly to the north of the old building, it was planned to harmonize with the wooded creek bed. The creek was impounded allowing the pavilion to look out on ornamental ponds in summer and a skating rink in winter. The bi-level structure featured strong horizontal lines with windows running the whole length of the upper level overlooking the pond. The second level contained dining and catering facilities and a balcony. Changing and washroom areas for skaters and tobogganers were located on the lower level. There were large open fireplaces, two on each level. Construction be-



Above: The new Kildonan Park Pavilion in summer, c. 1970. Completed in 1965, the pavilion was designed to fit in harmoniously with its creek bed site. WPRD.



Above right: The new Kildonan Park Pavilion in winter, c. 1970. WPRD.

Right: The swimming pool at Kildonan Park, c. 1968. WPRD.





Garden at St. Vital Park, 1971. When the Metro Parks and Protection division took over St. Vital Park, no significant improvements had been made to it since the early depression years. WPRD.

gan in 1964 and the pavilion was opened in August of 1965. In 1966, the park received a summer attraction of note when an olympic-sized outdoor swimming pool was opened. The same year, considerable work was done to upgrade roadways and sewer service and in 1967 additional lighting was installed on roadways and walks and new playgrounds were built in the park.

Metro Comes to the Rescue of St. Vital Park

St. Vital Park still had a long way to go before the potential outlined in George Champion's 1928 plan would be realized. No

significant work had been done to improve the park since 1934. However, it was getting harder to justify a 100 acre park just on the basis of the day-camping that had been its primary use since the late forties. Developers in St. Vital had coveted the park for residential use since the end of the war. It was becoming increasingly difficult to fend them off. Metro

park planners knew that the sixties would be a make or break decade for St. Vital Park.

Though not able to lavish as much attention on it as was given to the other parks, Metro did make a concerted effort to open up St. Vital park to more uses, to improve its amenities and to project long-term plans for its development. In 1963 a public washroom and park concession building, a new service building and a new park gate were all constructed. In addition, barbecues were installed along the river section, a feature which drew families to the park in summer. The summer of 1964 was designated the last year for day-camping in anticipation of the



The new concession building at St. Vital Park, c. 1970. Improvements made to the park during the Metro years assured its future as park land. WPRD.

area's future use as a public park. During that summer extensive brush clearing and clean-up took place and in 1965 work on the lake, which had been suspended 34 years before, was resumed. The 1966 flood was a set-back for St. Vital Park, damaging turf and roadways, but no buildings were harmed and in the summer a picnic shelter and additional washrooms were built. That winter a skating rink was opened on the lake and for the first time ever the park roads were kept cleared of snow throughout the winter. In 1968 a comprehensive plan was adopted for the park that included more parking lots, an additional picnic shelter and playground,

and a coffee shop by the lake. Though St. Vital was designed with the accent on trees, shrubs and water, flowers were not entirely excluded. In 1965 a small informal garden was developed close to the lake and in 1968 2,500 spring flowering bulbs were planted around the lake. In 1970 the lakeshore was redeveloped with limestone groupings and edgings. Finally, in 1971 after the inauguration of unicity, a sewer system was installed that solved the sewage disposal problems of the park.⁵ The Metro decade had assured the future of St. Vital Park and raised its profile with Winnipeg park-goers.

Meanwhile, Back at the City of Winnipeg

The City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board did not cease to exist when Metro took over its largest parks in 1961. It only seemed that way. Left with small parks, sports fields, recreation and assorted other responsibilities, the board and its employees seemed to suffer a loss of direction. The suburban parks and recreation boards did not react the same way because they had never been in charge of large parks in the first place. It did not help that transfers to the Metro office had reduced the Winnipeg board's staff. Nor did it help that, sadly, Tom Hodgson was stricken with cancer at a time when his leadership was badly needed.

Hodgson was ill for much of 1960 and 1961, with Deputy Superintendent Martin Benum acting in his place until Benum, too, transferred to Metro. There was a sense of drift as some ill-advised schemes had to be scrapped. Even without the benefit of hindsight, the attempt to place a major sports and recreation facility in Omand's Creek Park seems like a bad idea. Nevertheless,

this is exactly what the board proposed to do in 1960. Residents on Raglan Road, who would have looked out on the development, complained bitterly about the prospect of greatly increased traffic, parking problems and noise. Wisely, the board dropped the scheme with a minimum of fuss.

The defeat of the 1960 recreation by-law, which had included a substantial sum for parks and recreation development, placed the board in a difficult position. Community club facilities were aging and being outgrown. The city lacked sports facilities and swimming pools. At the same time, the public was starting to demand other kinds of



Arena at the Old Exhibition Grounds, c. 1968. Arenas began making their appearance in the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation system during the early sixties. They were constructed on a regional basis with each facility serving several community centre districts. WPRD.

recreational facilities. The popularity of hockey and figure skating was, if anything, growing. It would be so much easier, said parents, coaches and figure skating teachers, for children to skate in covered arenas. No games or lessons would have to be cancelled due to extreme cold weather. Parents could watch their children skate in relative comfort. At the same time, Charles Barbour was pressing for recreational services to serve more than just the six to 18 age group that then predominated in the board's programs. While the board recognized the merit of these arguments and agreed with them, the money for an expansion of recreation facili-

ties and services could not simply be pulled out of a hat. A successful money by-law in 1961 of \$1,100,000, which just squeaked by, gave the board a chance to meet some of these demands. Two indoor arenas were built, the Grant Park Arena and the Old Exhibition Grounds Arena. From the beginning, the board regarded arenas as regional facilities and discouraged particular community centres from building arenas on their sites. This is one reason why no money was forthcoming from the board for the arena at River Heights Community Club that was built the following year. The recreation centre at Omand's Creek Park having been scuttled, the board turned its attention to improving facilities at Sargent Park, the Old Exhibition Grounds and Grant Park, the new sports field in south Winnipeg. An arena was completed at Sargent Park in 1964, complete with artificial ice.

Meanwhile, the board's relative weakness seemed only too apparent to the City Council, which for some time had wanted to abolish it and take on all of the authority for parks and recreation matters in the city. In 1961 a request to the Legislature to abolish the board in favour of a City Council committee by means of a change to the City charter was rejected. After that, council waited. It took a little bite out of the board's by now small empire in 1963 when it transferred au-

thority for the board's workshops and stores to the city's Engineering Department. The new Superintendent of Parks, J. G. Lees, was furious. He called the workshop and stores "the heart of our economical operation" and pointed out that the board would now have to purchase these services from the city at a mark-up of ten percent. Apart from anything else, the shops actually made certain equipment specifically for the board like mesh garbage baskets, steel tennis net posts, hardball backstops, baby swings, merry-go-rounds, basketball standards and picnic tables.⁶

This was only a prelude to the final assault. The Legislature having given permission for a referendum, council decided in 1964 to present the question of the abolition of the Parks and Recreation Board to Winnipeg voters. Unluckily, at that time the board was involved in one of its periodic spats over funding with the Association of Community Centres of Winnipeg (ACCW). Although the ACCW initially supported the retention of the board, it reversed this stand mid-way through the referendum campaign. This was ironic, since in the past a *Winnipeg Tribune* editorial writer had worried that the board would become, "... little more than a special pleader for the community clubs."⁷ With the public sympathetic to arguments about streamlining decision-making and

without a powerful champion outside the board's own chambers, the referendum was not likely to go the board's way. On Oct. 28, 1964 the citizens of Winnipeg voted to abolish the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board, ending its 72 years of service. In its place as of January 1, 1965 there was to be a standing committee of City Council, the Parks and Recreation Committee composed of the mayor and six aldermen. This change made no difference to the aldermen members of the former Parks and Recreation Board. To them it simply meant being part of a committee of council with other aldermen instead of sharing a board room with unelected citizen members. The last meeting of the board took place without fanfare as the Chairman, Alderman William McGarva, officially thanked the board's staff for their faithful service and brought the gavel down to adjourn the board forever.

A Breakthrough in Relations With the Winnipeg School Board

Ever since the 1946 Recreation Commission report had shown that schools and school grounds could be valuable venues for public recreation, the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation staff had been trying to find ways of co-operating with the Winnipeg School Board. School playgrounds and auditoriums sitting on costly public land were often idle

when these facilities could have been serving the needs of the surrounding neighbourhood for recreation. In new developments, it seemed to make sense to plan park, recreation and school sites together to make most efficient use of land. However, in spite of a will to co-operate on both sides, there had been no significant co-operation between the school board and parks and recreation authorities. When the department used school facilities, cumbersome rental agreements had to be signed and there was often friction between the school and community groups over hours of usage, responsibility for cleaning and other matters. The 1957 Parks and Recreation Survey had reiterated the need for closer co-operation and suggested joint planning of future school buildings and joint usage agreements between the Parks and Recreation Board and the school board. However, when it came time to negotiate, the legal and bureaucratic barriers to forging joint usage agreements proved both numerous and puzzling, causing Mayor Steve Juba to scratch his head and remark, "It's very strange we can't get together with school board authorities."⁸ In order for the city to enter into agreements with the school board covering joint funding of schools and recreational facilities and for joint use of these facilities in the future, nothing less than an amendment to the city charter was neces-

sary. In 1967 a significant step forward was achieved when the charter was amended to allow the city to enter into joint agreements with the school board. At the same time, the Schools Act was amended to allow the school board to participate in joint use agreements.⁹

Looking for Direction

No detailed examination of parks and recreation services in Winnipeg had been made since 1957. The request for a re-assessment of current and future needs came, oddly enough, from the Association of Community Centres of Winnipeg. Relations between the centres and the department had deteriorated to such a point that the ACCW not only supported the abolition of the board in 1964 but also refused to help campaign for the recreation by-law of 1965. The ACCW's point was simply this: why rush head-long into a by-law campaign to approve money for recreation when no one knew if the money was going to be allocated for the right things? Why not commission a study that would compile basic data, show where the real needs were and help the department chart some future directions? Either the logic of the suggestion was irrefutable or the Parks and Recreation Committee wanted to mollify the ACCW by going along with its recommendation. In any case, in 1966, Prof. J. B.

Leicester of the University of Saskatchewan School of Physical Education was hired to oversee a comprehensive survey of the department's activities.

When it was tabled in 1967, the Leicester Report, issued under his consulting company name, Problems Research, had very little good to say about the way the department was structured, the way services were delivered or the relationships between the department, the council committee and the community centres.¹⁰ All the administrative things that were wrong in the fifties were still wrong. The committee did not have enough communication with groups outside the city administration, including community centres, which played a vital role in the department's work. The recreation branch was still understaffed. It was significant that, five years after Tom Hodgson's death, the post of General Superintendent remained vacant. Instead, the department had been divided into a parks branch and a recreation branch, which were independent of each other and reported directly to the Council Parks and Recreation Committee. Charles Barbour, the Director of Recreation and J. G. Lees, the Superintendent of Parks were effectively, the leaders of the department. This was certainly the kind of change that Barbour had advocated, but it meant that the recreation and parks sides of the operation

were more isolated from each other than they had ever been. As for the council committee, Leicester found it dominated by ward interests and too easily influenced by political pressure. The leadership vacuum left by Hodgson's death meant that the committee had to assume the role of chief executive and to adjudicate between Barbour and Lees. This, together with its other burdens, meant that it was impossible for the committee to do anything more than react to daily problems.

Leicester recommended some sweeping and controversial changes. He found that Winnipeg spent the least amount of money on a per capita basis for parks and recreation of any major Canadian city.¹¹ Factoring in Winnipeg's tax contribution to Metro raised the total, but Leicester still found the department's financial resources to be inadequate for the city's needs. At the same time, the department was dependent on regular passage of money by-laws for capital improvements, a chancy business. Leicester recommended abolishing the legislation requiring voters to approve by-laws for recreation capital expenditures. He recommended increasing the size of the Parks and Recreation Committee to 13 of whom only four would be aldermen. The rest of the committee was to be composed of three citizen appointees and representatives from various interest groups like

the ACCW and the Welfare Council. This recommendation essentially converted the council committee back to an independent board. In Leicester's view, the expanded committee would make decision-making less subject to political pressure. Leicester also called for an end to the power vacuum at the top of the department's structure. The department needed a single, powerful administrative leader again, who Leicester chose to call a commissioner of parks and recreation. He also thought that parks and recreation concerns in the City of Winnipeg, particularly since the advent of Metro, should not be planned without consultation with other municipalities. To this end, he advocated a municipal parks and recreation advisory board composed of representatives of all the Greater Winnipeg municipalities.

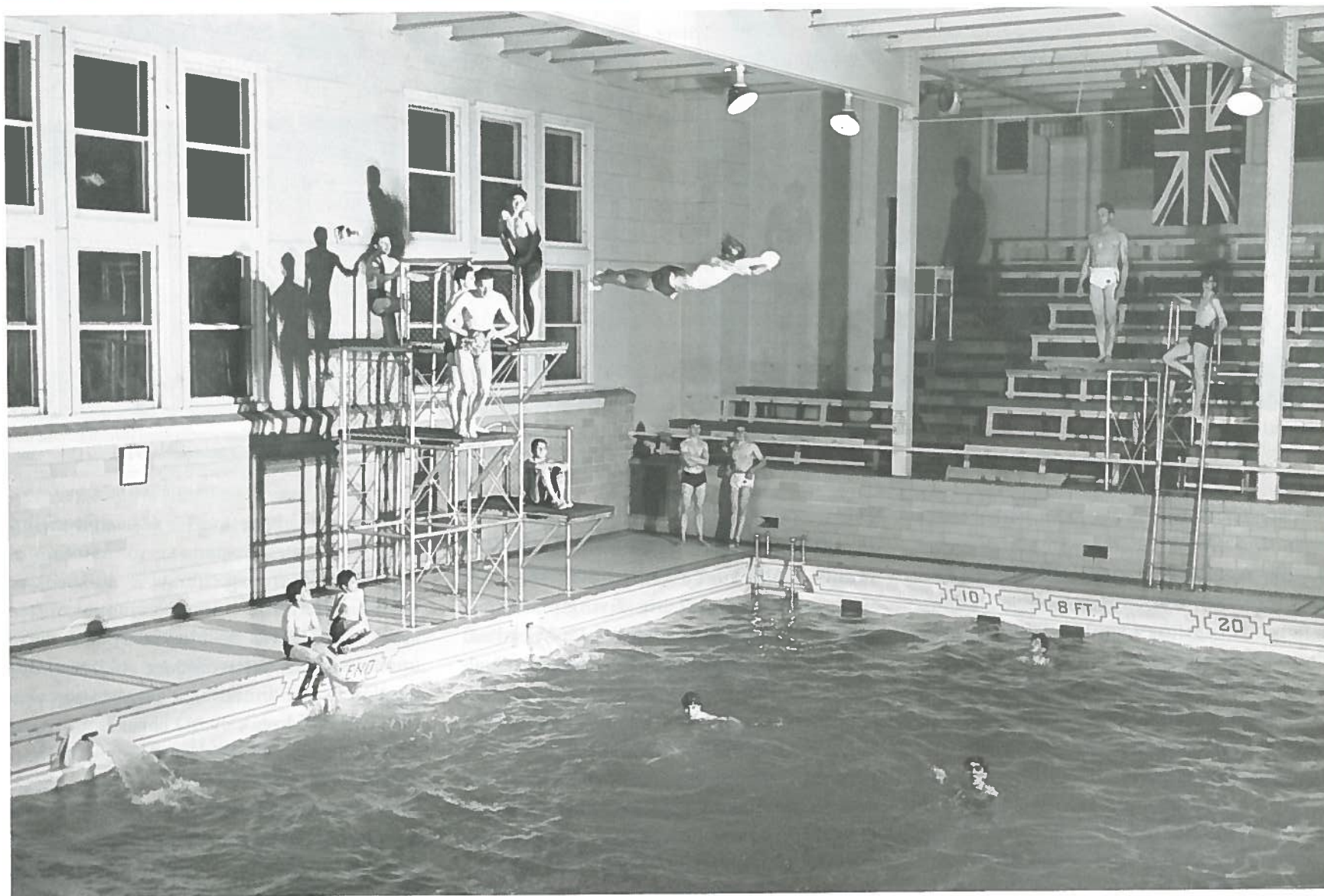
Although the Leicester report had extremely detailed and comprehensive recommendations, members of the Parks and Recreation Committee rejected the suggestion that they should return the committee to the bad old days before 1919 when non-elected members had held the balance of power. This and the recommendation to abolish the need for capital by-laws, in the committee's view, took the decision-making power out of the hands of elected officials and placed it in the hands of administrators. The recommendations had no chance of im-

plementation and the council committee's hostility to them made it generally cool to the rest of the report. The committee did see the logic in hiring a new head for the department, however. The appointment of Olie Johanson as the new General Superintendent of Parks and Recreation filled that gap and also demonstrated to Winnipeg voters that the Leicester report was not commissioned in vain.

Problems with Pools

One of Leicester's most shocking recommendations was that by 1975 the City of Winnipeg would require 15 more municipal swimming pools. Only four existed at the time the report was written.¹² Leicester suggested that these pools be built co-operatively with the school board and that they be located at or near a high school. Based on Canadians' growing interest in swimming, diving and other water sports, the Leicester plan would provide one pool for every 20,000 residents.

Members of the council committee were as cool to this suggestion as they were to the rest of the report. Perhaps one reason why the city had not been in hurry to build more swimming pools was the somewhat unhappy history of municipal pools thus far. The Cornish Swimming Baths and the Pritchard Swimming Baths had been opened



Sherbrook Pool, c. 1960. Built as a replacement for the Cornish Baths, the Sherbrook Pool was heavily used until the opening of the Pan-Am Pool in 1967. WPRD.



Entrance to the Cornish Swimming Baths, c. 1930, shortly before the baths were closed and demolished. WPRD.



Pritchard Swimming Pool, c. 1955. The Pritchard Pool had originally been an indoor pool but was converted to an outdoor pool in 1948. After years of low attendance and maintenance problems, it was closed in 1965. WPRD.

amidst great fanfare in 1909 and 1912 respectively. The Cornish Baths lasted little more than 20 years and were closed in 1930. The Sherbrook Pool was built as a large, modern replacement for the Cornish Baths in 1931. That same year an outdoor pool, then the largest in western Canada, was built at Sargent Park.

After years of maintenance problems and low attendance, the decision was made to convert the Pritchard Pool to an outdoor pool in 1948. This was not an outstanding success and the pool was closed entirely in the mid-sixties. An olympic-sized outdoor pool was constructed in Kildonan Park in

1966 as a summer attraction for the park and to replace the closed Pritchard Pool. The necessity of providing an olympic-sized pool with competition quality diving platforms for the Pan-American games in 1967 resulted in the construction of the Pan-American Pool on Grant Avenue that same year. This pool was turned over to the city following the completion of the games. Winnipeg's complement of pools, then, stood at two indoor and two outdoor by 1967. Had it not been for the indoor pools of the YMCA, YWCA and YMHA, which offered swimming at moderate cost, Winnipeg would have been sadly lacking in swimming facilities.

The fact of the matter was that swimming pools were expensive to maintain in the severe Winnipeg climate and expensive to staff. Apart from a limited amount of free swimming, it was decided early that these municipal facilities would be subject to admission fees and that the ideal situation was for a pool to break even. This they consistently failed to do. With a summer of good weather, Sargent Park Pool might break even. Sherbrook Pool was constantly in use and, in fact, overcrowded at times, but the best it could do was recoup 75 percent of its costs through admission fees.¹³ The opening of the Pan-Am Pool pulled users away from



The Pan-American Pool under construction, 1966. The pool was built for the swimming competitions of the 1967 Pan-American Games and featured olympic class diving platforms. Run as a municipal pool since 1967, it has allowed Manitoba's competitive swimmers to train in a world-class facility. Winnipeg Free Press.

the Sherbrook Pool, which looked down-at-heels compared to the spanking new facility. This, of course, made the revenue to expenditures picture at the Sherbrook Pool even worse. With swimming pools virtually guaranteed to be money-losing operations - Leicester projected a budget deficit of at least \$10,000 per new facility - the Parks and Recreation Committee was not likely to take Leicester's recommendation to build 15 new ones very seriously. Although the completion of the Centennial Pool in 1969 added a significant amenity to the Old Exhibition Grounds recreation complex, the recreational ideal of adequate

swimming facilities for all Winnipeggers was not possible given the department's limited revenues. Meanwhile, the suburban municipalities, which were even worse off for pools than the City of Winnipeg, used the Canadian and the Manitoba centennials of 1967 and 1970 as a means of adding several pools to the Greater Winnipeg tally.

Still No Expansion of Parks and Recreation in the Inner City

Because the Metro Parks and Protection Division's responsibilities were tied to large parks, Metro could have little direct involvement in the problem of poor to non-existent park facilities in the inner city. Metro's new park acquisitions were all in areas on the outer fringe of urban development such as King's Park in Fort Richmond. Because any new parks in the inner city would have to be small, the problem of what to do to increase parks and recreation facilities there remained with the City of Winnipeg Parks and Recre-

ation Department. No new parks had been constructed in the core area since the acquisition of Norquay Park in the mid-1920s. (And Norquay Park was not really "new" since it replaced Victoria Park, which the Parks Board had sold.) Community Centres serving the inner city - Sinclair Park, West End Memorial, Orioles, and Broadway Optimists - were few in number and distributed around the outer edge of the area.

They were, therefore, poorly located in relation to where people actually lived. Although there had been modest additions to the areas of the clubs serving the inner city, their average size was still significantly smaller than that of the suburban clubs. For example, the Broadway Optimists Community Centre property on Preston Avenue and Young Street in 1962 consisted of 2.77 acres compared to Crescentwood Community Centre's 7.17 acres.¹⁴ Because they were so cramped for space, these clubs were not able to provide the number of skating rinks and playing fields required by the populations they served. Playgrounds and tot-lots were slightly better distributed, but they too did not come close to meeting the needs of the area. Although the department had wrung its collective hands over these problems for at least 40 years, no significant improvements had been achieved. It was no exaggeration to say, as Alderman Joseph Zuken said



Members of the Broadway Optimist Community Centre Ladies Auxiliary do canteen duty, c. 1960. WPRD.

in 1966, that the north end of Winnipeg up to St. John's Avenue was "a recreational desert". The combined effects of lack of money and lack of political will had ensured not only that no new parks and recreation areas were added but also that the old neighbourhood parks like Dufferin Park and Selkirk Park had been allowed to deteriorate.

During the 1960s, Winnipeg began to apply a new approach to urban decay in the inner city, an approach that had become popular in the United States and other large Canadian cities. "Urban renewal" attacked the physical decay and depressing circumstances of inner city life by bulldozing the dilapidated, poorly maintained old buildings

and replacing them with pristine modern buildings and landscaping. The City Council created a separate Urban Renewal Committee to oversee the city's involvement in projects; the inner city was divided into urban renewal areas and projects were planned involving shared funding from three levels of government. While this approach reduced some important heritage buildings to rubble and merely applied a cosmetic brush to the surface of inner city problems, it did offer new opportunities for parks and recreation. The bulldozers created some open spaces that could have been filled with new small parks and recreational facilities. However, the catch was that in urban renewal projects, parks and recreation services were not eligible for tri-level funding. The city had to pay the full costs of these aspects of projects. As a result, when the Lord Selkirk Park low-cost public housing project was built in 1966 north-west of Dufferin Avenue and King Street, only four acres were set aside for recreational space. This space

was occupied by a playground for children 12 and under.¹⁵ With four acres to serve the recreational needs of families occupying the complex's 328 housing units, the residents of the area were only slightly better off than they had been before the complex was built. Although a full-time recreation program director was provided for the area in 1968, recreation programs had to be run out of local schools. That year a delegation from the neighbourhood begged the City Council Parks and Recreation committee for a community centre.

The failure of the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department to address the inner city deficit in parks and recreation services was frustrating for everyone. Citizens of inner city neighbourhoods were becoming more vocal over these issues but the lack of response was filling delegations with impotent rage. Prominent social welfare agencies began to warn of increases in violent crime, gang warfare, and vandalism. In 1969, the Social Service Audit called for Metro to take over responsibility for all recreation programs and facilities in the Greater Winnipeg area.¹⁶

But by this time, Metro's days were numbered. The two-tier system had been structured in such a way as to allow the member municipalities to retain just enough power to paralyze the Metro Council if they

wanted to. And they wanted to. The Metro administration, while brimming with fresh ideas, early acquired a reputation for arrogance and for spending money and then presenting the bill to the municipalities.

With Winnipeg Mayor Steve Juba at the head of a pack of municipal mayors scraping like feudal barons in various turf wars between themselves and Metro, the whole system began to grind away, getting

nowhere. In 1970, the new NDP provincial government stepped in with a plan that seemed like the only available alternative: complete amalgamation of all Greater Winnipeg municipalities.



CHAPTER 13

UNICITY AND THE YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY 1971-1979

As the creativity and affluence of the sixties faded into the energy panic and galloping inflation of the seventies, the total reorganization of Winnipeg local government took place. For Parks and Recreation staff this reorganization was to make the Metro changes seem like a day at the races. It took almost a decade to put a unified department in place and, to a certain extent, the reorganization is still going on. Bad economic times and periodic overhauls of the new city's political structure have meant that, for the new department, a high degree of change has become the norm.

The Unicity Structure

The new City of Winnipeg came into existence January 1, 1972 with the amalgamation of all the municipalities of Greater Winnipeg. The extent of this change in local government can hardly be underestimated. The task of bringing the administrative units of 12 separate municipalities under one central political authority was daunting enough. But the nature of the new political authority was itself unlike any other municipal government then in existence in Canada. The brainchild of the NDP provincial government, "Unicity", as the amalgamated city was called, was

intended to usher in an era of greater citizen participation in urban decision-making. The structure combined centralized political and administrative decision-making with decentralized delivery of services. The co-ordination of policy and administration was to be facilitated by the close co-operation of a Board of Commissioners, who would act as the senior officers of the city's civil service, and the 50 member City Council with its three standing committees. In order to deliver services at the local level, the city was to be divided into 13 community committee areas. The community committee was to be composed of the councillors for the wards within the community's boundaries. In order that citizens might have a means of participating at the local level, each community committee was to draw on the advice of a Resident's Advisory Group. The community committees were to have a high degree of autonomy in that they were to decide on how the community's budget for certain designated services was to be spent and how the services themselves were to be delivered.

The three standing committees of the city council: Finance, Environment, and Works and Operations were each assigned the services of a commissioner. This com-

missioner, as well as sitting on the Board of Commissioners, would act as the senior civil service officer to the departments of the city administration that were assigned to the jurisdiction of that standing committee. The central administration unit of the Parks and Recreation Department was assigned to the Standing Committee on Works and Operations and, therefore, the Commissioner of Works and Operations acted as a kind of deputy minister of Parks and Recreation. On the other hand, the Community Parks and Recreation Branches reported to the Commissioner of Environment. The Board of Commissioners was composed of the three commissioners plus the Chief Commissioner. The Board of Commissioners ensured that the city's business was managed in a co-ordinated way and that efforts in one department were not duplicated in another or that departments did not unwittingly act at cross purposes. The Chief Commissioner, in addition to chairing the Board of Commissioners, was also the administrative officer of the Council Executive Policy Committee. The powerful Executive Policy Committee acted as a kind of cabinet of council and had under its jurisdiction the central administrative ser-

vices of the administration such as the City Clerk's department, Information Services and the Budget Bureau.

When Unicity was inaugurated, the separate administrations of the municipalities were not immediately amalgamated. This massive, detailed and painful process was to take place in stages, following considerable research and consultation with the unions involved. The scale of this operation can only be imagined considering that each former municipality had its own civil service with its own seniority lists, pension plans, benefits, classification systems and collective agreements with employees. Quite apart from the task of creating a totally new city-wide civil service to run the city's business effectively, there was the problem of ensuring that existing employees of the former municipalities were treated fairly. As far as Parks and Recreation was concerned, it was decided that the existing boards would continue to run parks and recreation matters in their community committee areas and, instead of being responsible to a municipal council, would be responsible to the community committees.

In 1971 there were six former municipalities with parks and recreation boards or recreation commissions: East Kildonan, Fort Garry, St. Boniface, St. James-Assiniboia, St. Vital and West Kildonan. The other

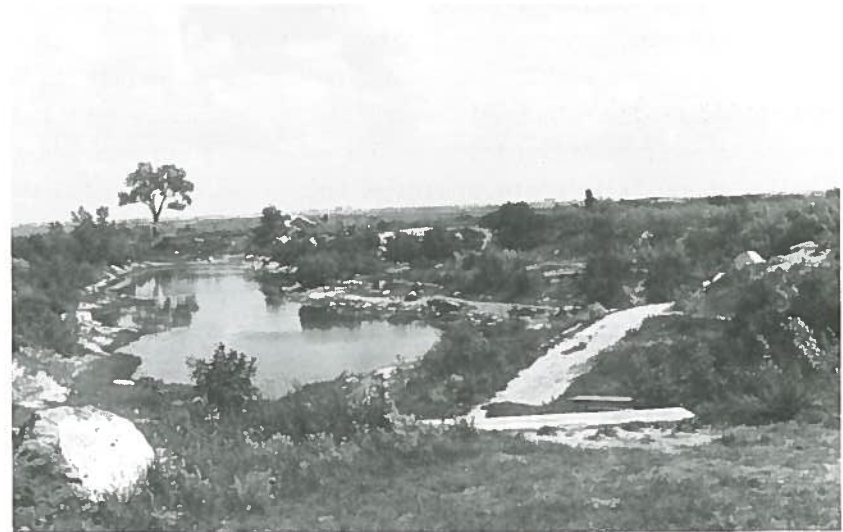
six former municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg, had run their parks and recreation programs through a council committee. The former City of Winnipeg experienced the most change in the formation of Unicity since its territory was carved up between several community committees, leaving only the Inner City Community Committee as a remnant of former greatness. The Metropolitan Parks and Protection Division staff were transferred to Unicity to form the nucleus of the central administration for the Parks and Recreation Department.

CUPE Gets Ready to Do Battle

For a number of reasons, amalgamation posed a threat to the jobs of union members. City authorities would want to eliminate duplication by eliminating jobs. Other Canadian cities had begun to contract out services and Winnipeg's unions were on their guard. By 1971 the largest city union, Local 500 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) was powerful

enough to be a significant force in defence of its members. As discussed earlier, in 1957, Winnipeg's Federation of Civic Employees had affiliated with the National Union of Public Service Employees (NUPSE) as Local 500. Then in 1963, NUPSE and the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) had merged to create the largest public service union in the country, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).¹ The Winnipeg local retained its name as Local 500 of CUPE.

The reorganization of city government presented City Council with an opportunity to reassess the ways in which the city delivered services. In 1972, the council had com-



The quarry pool and picnic area at Little Mountain Park, 1978. Located in Rosser Municipality, this park was acquired during the Metro era and developed in the seventies. It remains a lesser known treasure of the Winnipeg parks system. WPRD.

missioned a study of two large departments, Public Works and Engineering, and Parks and Recreation. The management consulting firm Urwick, Currie and Partners Ltd. was given the job of investigating several basic organizational options for each department and making recommendations to the city, based on the relative costs of each option. A significant factor in each option was the degree to which the department's functions could be contracted out to private sector companies. Urwick Currie did not find it practical to contract out much of what the various parks and recreation departments had been doing. But its view of the public works and engineering department was very different. It recommended "a staged withdrawal" of the city from garbage collection, road construction, sewer and watermain construction, and asphalt and concrete plant operations in favour of private contractors.² CUPE reacted immediately with a barrage of media spots, advertisements, interviews on radio open line shows and television interviews opposing the proposed contracting out and questioning Urwick Currie's figures. According to CUPE, the real beneficiaries of contracting out would be large construction firms such as Genstar, which wanted to acquire the city's extensive concrete and asphalt plants.

Reorganizing Parks and Recreation Becomes a Marathon

The contracting out battle was polarizing workers and management and increasing the tension in what was already an unsettled time. It was not the best atmosphere in which to accomplish a difficult reorganization. However, against the background of the much higher profile contracting out battle, City Council continued to make plans for reorganizing the Parks and Recreation Department. The Urwick Currie recommendations with respect to the administrative structure of this department were less controversial and quite sensible. They recommended keeping parks and recreation services together under one department and using the same basic model as the Unicity structure itself: that is, a centralized administration and decentralized delivery of services. As far as the former municipal parks boards were concerned, Urwick Currie recommended abolishing them and moving to a six district organization for delivery of services. Each of these districts was to have a Parks and Recreation branch office. All recreation facilities across the city - arenas, swimming pools and golf courses - were to have standardized admission, rental fees and accounting practices.

All three standing committees of council reviewed the Urwick Currie report and

made recommendations to the Executive Policy Committee. The Council Environment Committee recommended splitting the department by assigning the parks component to the Public Works Committee and the recreation component to the Environment Committee. The reaction of parks board superintendents and directors of parks and recreation throughout the city was immediate and unprecedented. They drew up a letter to the Commissioner of Works and Operations in reply to the Environment Committee recommendations in which they vehemently protested the proposed splitting of parks and recreation functions. The letter pointed out that the trend in other North American cities was just the opposite; elsewhere cities were uniting parks and recreation functions that had hitherto been separate under one departmental structure. "The City of Winnipeg now has an opportunity to reorganize Parks and Recreation according to modern concepts of Parks and Recreation management proven to better serve the citizens of a large metropolitan area. It is unlikely that this opportunity will be available to the City again. If Parks and Recreation are separated from one another and the identity of Parks lost in the reorganization of Public Works it is unlikely that Parks and Recreation will ever be reunited."³ Citizen members of parks boards also objected strenu-

ously to the proposed abolition of the boards. They said it would be the death of volunteer involvement in local recreation and that the Urwick Currie plans involved too much centralization. The restructured department was bound to be insensitive to local concerns.

Faced with a potential palace revolt over these recommendations, the City Council decided to slow down plans to reorganize the department and announced further consultations. This contentious issue was not resolved until July 16, 1975 when City Council voted for total amalgamation of the parks and recreation departments into one department and for the abolition of separate parks and recreation boards and commissions.⁴ In order to oversee the reorganization, a new General Manager of Parks and Recreation was appointed on October 15 of that year. This was Boris Hryhorczuk, a young but fast-rising manager with a Yale engineering degree who had been the assistant director of streets and transportation.

With the basic direction for reorganization set, a new complication had arisen. Unicity had then been in existence for four years and the provincial government had authorized a complete review of the City of Winnipeg Act in order to work out the kinks in the new system. And kinks there were in abundance; it was rumoured that the review committee felt there were too many commu-

nity committees and too many councillors. The reorganization of parks and recreation services was taking place against the background of a radical reorganization of Unicity itself. It was like shooting at a moving target. On November 1, 1976 the abolition of all existing parks and recreation boards took effect. However, although council had agreed to a new organizational concept for parks and recreation in May of that year, the issue of possible changes to the community committee numbers and boundaries was still not settled.

The Shape of the Future

Following the abolition of the parks and recreation boards and commissions there was an interim period during which Hryhorczuk and the Council Works and Operations sub-committee on Parks and Recreation ran the department's affairs while designing the new department. By the middle of 1977, it was apparent that the Act would be rewritten to reduce the number of community committees from 13 to

six and the number of councillors from 50 to 28. With this issue about to be settled, the way was clear to begin implementing the changes. The new structure, as it was introduced in 1977, broke the department down into three divisions:

1. Community Parks and Recreation Division

This division administered both recreation programming and maintenance of facilities and grounds at the community committee level. Each community committee was to have a Community Parks and Recreation Branch headed by a Manager of Com-



Park constables Stephen Green and Walter Chimilar receive certificates of merit, 1973. The creation of a special corps of park police dates from 1899 when a special constable was hired to prevent people from trampling on boulevards. WPRD.

munity Parks and Recreation to oversee all aspects of local parks and recreation services including neighbourhood parks, community centres, playgrounds, arenas, swimming pools, athletic grounds, school grounds, and bowling greens. The community committee was to have a sub-committee on parks and recreation comprised of community councillors and citizen members.

In addition to the six community committee parks and recreation branch offices, a seventh unit called Regional Recreation Services was to provide support and resources to the six community committee branches. The Regional Recreation Services Branch was to be split into four major units: Regional Facilities; Sports and Fitness; Rehabilitative and Special Programs; and Interpretive Programs. Resource staff would provide consultation in these major areas to all community level units. Regional Recreation Services was also to operate and manage regional facilities: golf-courses, Sargent Park Complex (excluding the arena) and the Pan-Am Pool.

2. Planning, Development and Central Services Division

This division was to be the central administrative core of the department. Planning and design services were to be available for consultation with all other units and divisions within the department needing these

services. Instead of being distributed throughout the department, resource staff were to be concentrated in this division so that they could undertake research projects, develop standards and co-ordinate training programs for all branches of the department. All parks and recreation construction services were to be centralized here to provide landscaping, small facility construction and equipment construction services to the whole department. Capital construction projects that were beyond the scope or availability of the in-house construction crew were to be contracted out.

Since the senior managers of all three divisions were to be located in one building with the Planning, Development and Central Services Division, an administrative support unit for these managers was to be created. In addition to this, administrative services like accounting and information services for all three divisions were to be centralized in this division.

3. Regional Parks and Operations Division

Essentially, this division received all the functions of the former Metro Parks and Protection Division that were not allocated to the Planning, Development and Central Services Division. Major parks like Assiniboine Park and Kildonan Park were now to be referred to as regional parks. The city was to be divided into six Regional Parks and Operations Districts. Within these six districts, all regional parks, boulevards, cemeteries and floriculture services were to be maintained and operated. This division was also to oversee the city-wide functions of weed control and insect control and to take charge of all



Bonnycastle Park from the air, 1972. Acquired by Metro and developed in the seventies, this park was the first significant addition to downtown green space since the 1920s.

city nurseries. A new forestry branch was to be developed in the Regional Parks and Operations division to combat the increasing threat of Dutch Elm Disease and other dangers to the city's urban forest. The forestry branch was to take over all responsibility for boulevard tree planting and maintenance.

In general, the structure reflected modern managerial thinking. The directors of the three divisions plus the general manager made up a management team in contrast to the hierarchical style that had characterized previous structures. While formerly parks workers and recreation workers had been quite isolated from each other, the new structure featured a little more integration of the two aspects of the department's operations. In theory, at least, this integration was to be facilitated by the management team. The old dichotomy would live on, but the new structure did provide more opportunities for the two solitudes to touch. This was in keeping with the latest thinking in parks and recreation philosophy which held that the real business of a parks and recreation department ought to be the enrichment of the leisure time of its citizens. "Leisure" was a concept that included both the passive enjoyment of green space and the more active pursuits that dominated the recreation agenda.

It became the job of the management

team to take the theory and ideals on the organizational chart and make them work in the real world. The reorganization of the department and its implementation phase became a baptism by fire as General Manager Boris Hryhorczuk, Community Parks and Recreation Director Jim Swail, Planning, Development and Central Services Director Olie

Johanson and Regional Parks and Operations Director Martin Benum struggled between 1977 and 1979 to complete the process.

The management team had to tread a fine line in defining positions and assigning classifications to the new jobs. Both CUPE and the recently formed management union, the Winnipeg Association of Public Service Officers (WAPSO), had to be consulted exhaustively in order that their members be treated fairly. Both unions eventually approved the plans although there were questions about whether specific job classifications were high enough or whether the numbers of staff in certain administrative units were adequate. With the new jobs and classifications approved, the ex-



The Assiniboine Forest seen from the heights of the "viewing hill", 1982. During the seventies Winnipeggers began to demand more natural park areas. WPRD.

isting employees had to be slotted into the new positions. The reorganization did not result in significant layoffs. In fact there was a slight increase in the total number of jobs in the new department. However, as with all reorganizations on this scale, employees could not be absolutely sure that they would be re-assigned to a job which suited both their qualifications and their tastes.

Change Becomes a Way of Life

In many ways, the Parks and Recreation Department has simply continued the reorganization process into the eighties and nineties. Partly this has been the result of the sheer magnitude of the changes resulting

from the Unicity amalgamation and partly it has been because of grim economic realities. The two worst recessions since the Great Depression have occurred during this period against the backdrop of minimal growth in the Winnipeg tax base. Almost yearly budget cuts have forced the department into the staff reductions and structural changes that have become common in the public sector elsewhere in Manitoba and across Canada.

In spite of this, the current department is still recognizably similar to the one put in place between 1977 and 1979. A new standing committee structure for City Council resulted in the Parks and Recreation Department reporting to the Parks, Protection and Culture Standing Committee under the Parks, Protection and Culture Commissioner. In a controversial reorganization in 1990, the department acquired a fourth division when the Planning Development and Central Services Division was split into the Planning and Development Division and the Staff and Financial Services Division. Also in 1990, the responsibility for boulevards and streets was moved from the Regional Parks and Operations Division to the Community Parks and Recreation Division. The changes to the City of Winnipeg Act initiated in 1992 resulted, among other things, in the reduction of community committees from six to five, causing a reordering of the Community

Parks and Recreation branch offices.

Innovations of the Seventies

Despite the mammoth task of reorganization that lasted virtually throughout the seventies, parks and recreation work continued to get done. The initiation of development agreements between prospective real estate developers and the city guaranteed that adequate space for parks and recreation would be included in the plans for new subdivisions. Developers were required to dedicate a minimum of ten percent of the land in a subdivision to parks and recreation use. The seventies were also the decade when park designers rediscovered water in all its varieties. Because people are fascinated by water and drawn to it, various studies had counselled parks and recreation planners to include water in new parks wherever possible, to acquire river land for parks use and to preserve the natural waterways of the city. During the seventies, it became possible to act on these recommendations. It was the era of

the linear creek park as Sturgeon Creek in St. James, Beaver Dam Creek in Charleswood, and Bunn's Creek in North Kildonan were reserved and developed. The most ambitious linear creek park design, the Seine River Linear Park, which was to make the Seine an 11 mile long parkway, still remains to be realized.

The new residential subdivision retention ponds offered both opportunities and dangers as sites of recreation. The primary purpose for these ponds was to act as a reservoir for surface run-off allowing the development to be serviced with smaller sewer pipes than



The Portage Avenue median in spring, showing damage to the grass from salt and grit-laden snow, 1971. WPRD.



Above: The Portage Avenue median after re-landscaping, 1971. The boulevards were paved and landscaped with rough stones, planters and trees. As well as being decorative, the stones camouflaged the electrical outlets for the Christmas tree lights. WPRD.

Right: The Portage Avenue median decorated for Christmas, 1972. WPRD.





The "bear-pit" park at the Pembina-Corydon-Osborne intersection, c. 1970. This park was loved by its designers but hated by the people who lived in the neighbourhood. WPRD.

would otherwise have been the case. Their aesthetic qualities were an added bonus but their use for recreation was problematic. While some of the ponds could be used for boating and canoeing in summer and as skating ponds in winter, wading and swimming were forbidden because, apart from periodic surveillance by parks staff, the ponds were unsupervised. But they were accessible at all times and neighbourhood children often waded and swam in them anyway. Several drownings and near drownings brought the Parks and Recreation Department under severe pressure to consider fencing the ponds.⁵ Since this seriously detracted from their aesthetic function, it was not a favoured option.

park was built on the south side of the Pembina/Corydon/Osborne junction at the site of the old Gladstone School. Curiously, this project had been the brainchild of the Metro Planning Department and not the Parks and Protection Division. The idea behind the design was to create a small urban breathing space where people could sit, removed from the traffic and noise of the busy intersection. A sequestered feeling was created by building a sunken park below street level. Although the park did have some grass, trees and planters, most of it was constructed of concrete formed into various geometric shapes. It was the ultimate in low maintenance parks. Unfortunately, the people who

The renewed interest shown by Metro park designers in small parks and urban breathing spaces carried through into the seventies. Sometimes the creative solutions did not work out and designers had to learn from their mistakes. The most notorious example of this had occurred during the Metro decade when the so-called "bear pit"

lived in the neighbourhood thought it was the ultimate in bad planning. What they really wanted was an enlarged community centre and more recreation programming. East Fort Rouge had become a neighbourhood marked by transiency, high crime and low incomes; the bear pit park simply did not suit the area's needs. The recessed park was an ideal setting for drug deals, theft and rape, but not for sitting in the sun and eating lunch. Residents found the park ugly, uninviting and dangerous, and they refused to use it.⁶ Few tears were shed when the park was removed to make way for an expansion of the River Osborne Community Centre in 1988.

Thankfully, the unfortunate fate of the bear-pit park did not put a damper on creativity in park design. Another idea that was born during the last days of Metro became further developed under Unicity. "Port-a-parks" or "vest pocket parks" were intended to wage guerilla warfare on urban decay in the downtown area. All too often a building would burn down or be torn down leaving an unkempt empty space for several years. Land was going to waste in an area that desperately lacked parks and green space. The idea behind port-a-parks was to install a small park space with benches and shaded areas, planters and shrubbery where people who worked or spent time downtown could



Above and above right: The two faces of the Carlton Avenue Port-a-Park in 1972: a skating rink in winter, a tranquil place to lounge in summer. WPRD.

Right: Another downtown port-a-park, 1972. WPRD.



sit in the sun and watch the world go by. The land would be leased by the Parks and Recreation Department from its owner. The benches, planters and landscaping elements of the port-a-park were designed as modules that could easily be installed or moved to another location. When the owner of the land required it for another purpose, the port-a-park would be packed away for use elsewhere. The first port-a-park, which featured a small skating rink, was installed by Metro in the fall of 1971 at the corner of Carlton Street and Graham Avenue adjacent to the Aberdeen Hotel. During the summer, the skating rink was replaced by benches, planters and shrubs.

Inner City Recreation - A Few Drops in the Bucket

There were a few significant additions to recreation facilities and programming in the inner city during the seventies. In 1975, the Parks and Recreation Department stepped in to take over the former North Winnipeg Action Centre at 387 Dufferin Avenue. A neighbourhood steering committee was put in place to continue running recreation programs from the centre, which had once been a knitting factory and had been renovated by

students from R. B. Russell School. The province, the city and Central Mortgage and Housing got together in 1973 to buy the former Midland Railway Property at the corner of Isabel Street and Ross Avenue in order to convert it into the Freight House Community Centre and Kin Recreational Park. By 1975, Kin Park had a full time recreation co-ordinator. This park, along with Freight House has become one of the primary recreational facilities in west-central Winnipeg.

An idea similar in spirit to the port-a-parks was used to increase summer recreational programming in the inner city. The premise was simple: if there are no playgrounds for children to go to, invent a travelling playground that goes where the kids are. The Fun on Wheels Travelling Play Program packed two recreation directors and a lot of fun paraphernalia into a van. The van would set up shop on a vacant lot or even a mud-caked boulevard. Out of the van would come frisbees, tetherball poles, bits and pieces of costumes and an amazing portable water slide. Run in co-operation with outreach agencies like the West Central Community Program, the Fun on Wheels recreation directors would rely on outreach workers who knew the local kids to round them

up and lead them to the place where the van was set up. The van would visit two sites per day and each site would receive a weekly visit.⁷ It was no substitute for permanent playgrounds and community centres with year round programming but it was something more than these children were getting.

Clever as the Fun on Wheels Play Program was, it was symbolic of the desperate measures the Parks and Recreation Department had been forced to take by the end of the seventies. If the urban decay of central Winnipeg was a war, Fun on Wheels constituted house-to-house combat. No matter how audacious, as they struck furtive blows against the enemy, recreation programs like Fun on Wheels were no match for the pervasive, deep and unyielding malaise of central Winnipeg. Though reams of studies on this sickness were generated during the seventies, and though the subtle interrelationships of poverty, racism, illiteracy, family breakdown and substance abuse were documented, Winnipeg was still far from coming to terms with the massive scale of the onslaught that would be required to remedy decade after decade of neglect.



CHAPTER 14

HARD CHOICES: THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES

The decade of the eighties was a time of contrasts for Winnipeg generally and for the Parks and Recreation Department in particular. It is not hard to point to positive developments. For example, the Core Area Initiative tackled some of central Winnipeg's long-standing problems with verve and style and, by funding The Forks development, gave the city a unique downtown park. The physical improvements in the downtown area raised people's spirits and allowed the distinct character of several downtown neighbourhoods to be brought out. On the other hand, the necessity of funding these development schemes while also maintaining other needed services caused the city to dig itself badly into debt. At the end of the eighties the Parks and Recreation Department found itself faced with some difficult challenges. All indicators predicted that Winnipeg would experience only slow growth through to the year 2006 and that demographic and employment trends would result in the tax base growing more slowly than the economy in general. Restraint in civic budgets would continue to be the order of the day for the foreseeable future. Since public expectations of the department had not declined and Plan Winnipeg

had laid out an ambitious program, Parks and Recreation workers endeavoured to do the same quality of work with fewer bodies and fewer materials than in the past.

Plan Winnipeg

One of the driving forces behind the formation of metropolitan government in Greater Winnipeg had been the need for city-wide planning of land use and zoning, major transportation routes, waterworks and waste disposal, and parks and recreation space and services. The Greater Winnipeg Development Plan had been approved by the Metro Council in 1968 but compliance with it had been problematic and by the late seventies it was badly in need of revision. With the worst of the amalgamation headaches resolved, the Unicity Council announced plans to update the city plan, which for convenience was re-

named "Plan Winnipeg".

It was the task of the Parks and Recreation Department to formulate the parks and recreation component of the plan, giving the amalgamated department a chance to set out basic principles and goals for the first time. What made the Plan Winnipeg exercise different from other planning efforts the department and its predecessor organizations had gone through in the past was that for the first time the public participated directly in the effort. Extensive public consultations were



A dietician teaches new immigrants about foods available in Canada and how to cook them, 1983. During the eighties Parks and Recreation planners broadened the variety of courses run by the department in order to respond to new needs. WPRD.

organized to find out how Winnipeggers felt about parks and recreation programs, facilities and administration. Interested groups were gathered together for detailed discussions followed up with questionnaires and other market research paraphernalia. Consensus was hard to find amidst a welter of opinions. However, there was a clear message from the groups consulted about the department's own operations. People wanted more involvement in the planning phase of parks and recreation facilities and programming. They wanted to know a lot more about the location and function of the various parks and recreational facilities. They urged the department to "assert its role as an essential service".¹ As far as recreation programs were concerned, the dominance of athletics over other forms of leisure activities was challenged. The groups reaffirmed community centres as the main venues for recreational programming but inequities in the funding formula and declining volunteer numbers were identified as problems. Some people also thought that community centres ought to diversify their programming to accommodate new recreational needs and to avoid duplication. Joint use agreements with schools were seen as a problem area. After 20 years of experience the meshing of the two bureaucracies still was not producing co-operative, trouble-free joint usage of school

recreational facilities. There was a consensus that the downtown area lacked green space and was losing out to suburban priorities. The groups felt that historic buildings and features of the city ought to be preserved and incorporated into parks planning wherever possible. There was also a strong feeling that acquisition of riverbank property for public use was not a high enough priority and that opportunities would be lost unless the city acted decisively.

The Parks and Recreation component of Plan Winnipeg both incorporated approaches developed through public consultations and reflected park planning ideas floating around North America at the end of the seventies. The plan adopted the name "open space system" for the parks and recreation system, as this term covered the wide variety of spaces and facilities in the department's inventory. The central idea of the plan was to categorize Winnipeg parks and recreation areas into a hierarchy, with each type of park having a particular role. The hierarchy consisted of:

1. Neighbourhood Parks

A neighbourhood was defined as an area serving about 7,000 people focused on two elementary schools and a community centre.

In older neighbourhoods these types of parks - which include small parks, tot-lots,

playgrounds and community centres - were dispersed throughout the neighbourhood. In new developments, Plan Winnipeg recommended that they be amalgamated into one school/park site and that this site be placed in a prominent location in the neighbourhood. That way all the main public lands of a development would be situated together for the best possible joint use of facilities. Every second school/park site should be large enough to accommodate a "neighbourhood centre" (community centre). In older neighbourhoods, the plan stipulated that older parks should be upgraded and new parks should be acquired to remedy deficiencies.

2. Community Parks

Community parks were defined as parks serving three to five neighbourhoods or a population of approximately 28,000. These parks would comprise 35-40 acres and, ideally, would focus on a distinct geographic or physical feature. Where possible the community park would be located next to a high school or other public facility such as an arena, library or swimming pool. Since these parks would tend to become the centre of the community, they should be intensively developed with facilities, landscaping and design features. Community parks and facilities comparable to those in suburban areas should be provided in older neighbourhoods.

3. Regional Parks

These parks were of two major kinds: parks preserving a unique landscape, like La Barriere Park, or parks providing major activities or attractions on a city-wide basis like a zoo, outdoor theatre or specific sports complex. At the time Plan Winnipeg was put together, there was at least one regional park in each community committee area. The plan called for development of three more. Each regional park should have a distinct image or theme and each should have a water feature such as a river, stream, retention pond or lake. Ideally regional parks would open year-round and would offer a variety of activities.

Parks were to be linked wherever possible to other open space areas by bicycle paths and walking trails referred to as "linkage systems". The linkages were to take advantage of existing roads, and rail and hydro rights-of-way. Existing riverbank linear parks were to be integrated into the linkage systems. In spite of their problems, the plan indicated that storm retention ponds were valuable landscape and recreation elements whose potential the department would continue to explore. Transportation routes which allow a driver to traverse the city also had a role in the look or image of the city. The plan emphasized that "image routes", like Portage Av-

enue or Pembina Highway, which give the driver a sense of position and direction, and scenic drives were all vital parts of the city's open space system as were buffer zones used to separate two conflicting land uses or to reduce noise. In a departure that reflected the temper of the times, Plan Winnipeg stated that, wherever possible, Winnipeg's open space requirements should be accomplished on private lands within a development and not on public lands.²

Plan Winnipeg's Downtown Wish List

By the late seventies, it was becoming apparent that Winnipeg's downtown, once teeming with activity and truly the centre of the city's activities, was in danger of becoming a blighted eyesore. This had happened already in many North American cities. Vacant store fronts on the north side of Portage Avenue and panhandlers begging for change greeted tourists and, after five o'clock on a weekday evening, the downtown became a concrete wasteland as working people returned to the suburbs. The Chamber of Commerce complained that there was not enough to draw people back downtown in the evenings. The old downtown retail giants, Eaton's and the Bay, used to have retail activity for the whole city locked up between them. But business had been steadily ebbing



Participants in Fitness Family Day at Assiniboine Park, 1983. WPRD.

away from them since the fifties as the large suburban shopping malls provided one-stop shopping closer to home and free parking to boot. By the time the St. Vital Mall opened at the end of the seventies, the pattern seemed irrevocably set. Business interests and politicians trying to boost Winnipeg as a great place to do business knew that the drab, con-

servative downtown with limited green space and no central focus was not creating the exciting, go-ahead image they wanted to show the world.

Parks and Recreation planners had been pondering these problems for some time along with others in the city administration. The urban renewal strategies of the late sixties and seventies had hardly made a dent in the problem. The location of the new City Hall and then the Planetarium, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Centennial Concert Hall and Manitoba Theatre Centre on Main Street within a block of one another was an attempt to revitalize a decaying part of the city. By placing leisure institutions among the dingy hotels, beer halls and flop houses of the Main Street area, planners hoped to bring middle class people downtown at night to spend money in restaurants and bars. An unspoken belief behind these plans was that middle class entrepreneurs would then gradually push out the denizens of the beer halls, hotels and flop houses leaving chic boutiques, restaurants for fine dining and trendy coffee houses for the affluent young. It did not happen. Instead, concertgoers parked their cars in the police station parkade, rushed anxiously down the connecting tunnel to the concert hall, enjoyed their evening at the symphony or ballet, returned to their cars the same way and went

home. A self-enclosed middle class island had been created in the midst of the squalor but the surrounding neighbourhood remained much as it had been. At the same time, the location of the concert and theatre district exacerbated the problem of the downtown having no focus or single centre of activity during evening hours.

By the time Plan Winnipeg was being revised, it was obvious that plunking new buildings into decayed areas would not, alone, revitalize the area. For some time, the Department of Environmental Planning, the Parks and Recreation Department and the Streets and Transportation Department had been working jointly on finding solutions to the downtown area's physical and aesthetic problems. Together the three departments concentrated on acquisition and development of open space, streetscaping, port-a-park development and riverbank acquisition. The section on the downtown area in the Parks and Recreation component of Plan Winnipeg reflected this experience. It amounted to a set of principles or directions that the department wished to pursue in the future. First, it endorsed the approach of the Environmental Planning Department in dividing the downtown into "precincts" based on physical boundaries and the distinct character of the area. It was suggested that each precinct should be developed in order to

bring out its particular image or character. For the first time, the plan recommended that aesthetic qualities of the downtown, such as views and view sequences, be protected and enhanced as a matter of policy and that important buildings be registered as part of the zoning plan in order to protect them from inappropriate changes or demolition. "Streetscaping" was a new word in the urban design vocabulary. It meant simply that the image of a given street would be expressed through a co-ordinated approach to the paving, landscaping, signs and storefronts. The plan supported the imposition of design controls in precincts. This would allow co-ordinated streetscaping to occur since developers would be bound to produce signs and storefront decoration in keeping with the look set out in the design controls. The Plan also endorsed two significant downtown projects that were then in the wind: a pedestrian mall and a major park.

The Parks and Recreation downtown vision was more in the nature of a wish list, a hope for the future. This was because the wish list needed the co-operation of other departments of city government, significant political will on the part of council and an infusion of money from other sources besides the city's coffers, if it were to be realized. Most urban planners realized that changing the look of the downtown through new green

space, landscaping, streetscaping and historical preservation strategies would not work unless the underlying economic and social problems that had created the decline in the first place were addressed. Plan Winnipeg's revision was, in fact, originally intended to be not only a development plan but also a plan that set out strategies to reverse the economic and social decay and identified monies to accomplish these strategies. The deliberations had involved the provincial and the federal governments, both of which had given financial support for the plan in its early stages. The exits of the senior levels of government from the Plan Winnipeg negotiations in 1979 left a much weakened planning document in their wake.³ Plan Winnipeg contained goals without either the detailed plans or the money to achieve them.

There were hopeful signs, however. Another government scheme concluded around the same time was going to be of some help in upgrading city parks. The Canada-Manitoba Agreement for Recreation and Conservation (the ARC Agreement), which was initiated in 1978, was intended to enhance riverbank park development at no cost to the city. The purpose of the ARC Agreement was to preserve and enhance the historical, natural and recreational features of the so-called "Red River Corridor", an area of the river extending from St. Norbert north-

ward to Lake Winnipeg. Among other things the ARC Agreement made possible an attractive scenic drive along the old River Road between Winnipeg and Lockport thus realizing one of George Champion's dreams of 1908. Under the agreement, too, some of the city parks with river frontage - Kildonan, St. John's and the St. Boniface riverbank - received attention in order to make them attractive and accessible to boaters. The most notable aspect of the ARC Agreement was its declared intention to create a park on the CNR lands at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. This would provide the much-wanted downtown park, but even the ARC Agreement could not provide enough funds to secure and develop the forks site without additional involvement.

Enter the Core Area Initiative

While Plan Winnipeg was in the process of revision and following the conclusion of the ARC Agreement, another scheme relating to inner city and downtown development was percolating around Winnipeg. This was the brainchild of Liberal federal cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy and reflected his intense interest in downtown redevelopment in general and in Winnipeg's downtown in particular. A child of Winnipeg's north end, Axworthy was a political science professor at the University of Win-

nipeg prior to his political career. There he founded the Institute of Urban Studies in 1969, a research institute that had published numerous studies on aspects of Winnipeg's urban problems. Among other things, Axworthy discovered that a widespread perception - nothing really changed in the inner city despite governments' best efforts - was far from the truth. In fact, the situation was growing measurably worse. In 1951 inner city residents earned, on average, 11 percent less than residents in the rest of the city. By 1978, this disparity had grown to 32 percent. During the period 1962 to 1978 employment in the core area declined by ten percent while employment elsewhere in the city increased by 48 percent. With both detailed knowledge of the problem and clout at the federal cabinet table, Axworthy was able to get the three levels of government together to fund the most powerful assault on inner city decline that Winnipeg had yet experienced. The 1981 Winnipeg Core Area Initiative (CAI) represented an effort by the federal, provincial and city governments to improve the social, economic and physical conditions in a ten square mile area of Winnipeg's inner city. The five year initiative was to funnel some 96 million dollars into various projects, with each government contributing one third of the shareable costs for all approved projects.⁴ In 1986, the CAI was

extended for a further five years and with another 100 million dollars. Additional funding was provided by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Manitoba Housing and the private sector.⁵

A Shot in the Arm for Downtown Parks and Community Centres

The role of parks and recreation services in improving the quality of life in core area neighbourhoods was acknowledged by CAI planners. During the ten years that the CAI was in operation, almost all of these inner city facilities were upgraded and several new open space areas and recreational facilities were added. Never had core area parks received such comprehensive rehabilitation. Central Park, one of the original parks purchased in 1893, was extended to Ellice Avenue and developed with attractive plantings and streetscaping. St. John's Park received new asphalted walkways, improved lighting, a new wading pool, bridge and general landscaping. In Elmwood the beautiful King Edward Park ornamental pond was redeveloped along with much new planting, sodding and other improvements. A new playground building was installed in Elmwood Park plus new asphalt pathways, lighting, play structures and a new apron for the wading pool. Mayfair Park, Fort Rouge

Park, and Vimy Ridge Park received comparable attention. Some older parks received added attractions such as a toboggan slide in Fort Rouge Park and a new stage and water slide in Vimy Ridge Park. New green space was added in the heart of downtown when almost a full block between Portage and Ellice avenues was bull-dozed to make way for the new Air Canada building. The building was set in the centre of the block so that its southern approach could become a lawn and part of its northern approach the new "window" park. The park was to be a window on Portage Avenue. Its central focus was a recessed oval pool. Around the pool there were small trees and plantings creating a sequestered feeling. The pool was flanked on one side by a modern colonnade while massive classic columns, rescued from historic buildings that had previously succumbed to the wrecking ball, guarded the entrance to the park from Portage Avenue. Though its design was controversial at the time, the window park has since meshed seamlessly with Winnipeg downtown life. It has become a favourite sitting spot in summer for refugees from the surrounding offices and from the neighbouring Portage Place Mall. In the west end, a number of new smaller parks were created at various points on the north riverbank of the Assiniboine culminating in Omand's Creek Park, which was substan-

tially upgraded. In north Winnipeg, Dufferin, North Logan and Pritchard Parks were redeveloped.

The CAI provided the opportunity to follow through on some of the streetscaping ideas contained in Plan Winnipeg. The value of Winnipeg's downtown heritage buildings as a source of character and visual interest had been recognized for some time. During the seventies a historic buildings unit had been added to the city's Planning Department and some rehabilitation efforts, such as the redesign of Old Market Square and the conversion of the Travellers Building into restaurants and shops, had already been accomplished. In the eighties, the CAI funds made it possible to provide financial incentives to businesses and developers to locate their businesses in these buildings and to upgrade them. Extensive streetscaping and tree planting in these areas to bring out the character of the district was also undertaken thanks to CAI funding. The Exchange District, as the area of vintage warehouses north of Notre Dame Avenue became known, was transformed in a few short years. Known as the best collection of turn-of-the-century warehouse architecture in Canada and possibly North America, the area has become a popular shopping, dining and drinking district with a unique ambience. Winnipeg's Chinatown, which ad-



Above: An aerial view of "Window Park" at the corner of Carlton Street and Portage Avenue, 1985. WCPI/Winnipeg Free Press.



Above right: Saturday morning in Old Market Square in what was soon to be known as the Exchange District, 1977. WPRD.



Right: Children and supervisors engaged in a parachute game at Vimy Ridge Park, 1980. The Core Area Initiative sponsored several innovative recreational programs for core area children. WCPI/Winnipeg Free Press.

joins the Exchange District on its northern edge, was also substantially redeveloped and received newstreetscaping to reflect its distinct character. Selkirk Avenue, as the main shopping street of the ethnically cosmopolitan north end, was also targeted for upgrading, redevelopment and streetscaping. Other streetscaping projects included Provencher Boulevard in St. Boniface, Sargent Avenue, Ellice Avenue, West Broadway and Osborne Village.

In addition, the CAI also funded the substantial upgrading of core area community centres and recreational facilities. Hardly a playground or tot-lot was missed. Community centres renovated or extended included: Sinclair Park, Luxton, Riverview, Earl Grey, Wolseley, Clifton, Isaac Brock, Robert Steen, Action Centre, Burton Cummings (formerly West End Memorial), Elgin House and Freight House. At long last the people of the Lord Selkirk Park, Dufferin and William Whyte neighbourhoods got a new 12,000 square foot recreation building, the Turtle Island Recreation Centre (formerly called the Lord Selkirk Recreation Centre). In addition to this, playground and recreational facilities at many core area schools were significantly improved. The Old Exhibition Grounds, the historic athletic field and recreation centre of the north end, received site improvements and a new

4,600 square foot multi-purpose space.

Even though the parks and recreation developments under the CAI involved park and building upgrades, recreation programming was not neglected. The role of recreation activities in building self-esteem, channelling energy in a positive direction and alleviating boredom was well known. Some CAI recreation programming projects, like Project Praxis which provided summer recreational activities for native youth of junior high school age, simply provided programs where few had been available before. Others improved facilities and provided programming support for existing neighbourhood social agencies like Rossbrook House and the Pritchard Place Drop-In Centre. Training programs assisted ethnic communities by upgrading the recreational leadership skills of their members. The South East Asian community's recreational association was assisted in this way as were various aboriginal groups. Projects like the Native Education Support Program and the Native Effort for Talent gave native youth opportunities for cultural enrichment and allowed gifted native children to gain access to training in music, art, dance and drama.

Although the CAI's onslaught on the physical decay of the core area was impressive and although many of its facility improvements will be of lasting benefit to the

community, even the significant amount of money poured into the area by the CAI was not enough to attack the systemic problems at their roots. The problems of Winnipeg's core had been worsening for at least 60 years and the complexities were mind boggling. A ten year attack was not enough to turn these problems around. Parks and playgrounds can be fixed up and brightly painted, but if people do not feel safe they will not use them. A 1988 Parks and Recreation study of crime and vandalism in inner city parks made sobering reading. It contained an incident tally for core area parks during that summer. Five parks were the sites of sexual acts or child molestation threats. Fighting occurred at 11 sites. There were threats of violence at three sites. Glue sniffers caused problems at ten parks and drug or alcohol incidents occurred at eight sites. Vandalism was a problem at virtually every site.⁶ Many of the attractive improvements and cleverly renovated buildings paid for out of Core Area funds were soon defaced and vandalized. The long term solution to the core's problems seemed to be to continue and increase broad-based community development programs like the ones sponsored by the CAI which enabled the people living there to help themselves. Unfortunately, when the CAI came to an end in 1991, the whole country was in the grip of a serious

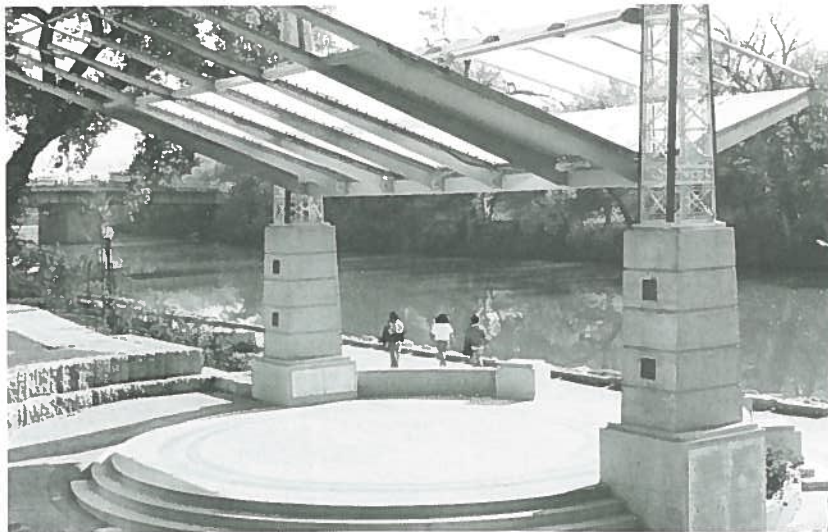
recession and the tap of government spending was abruptly turned off.

The Forks Becomes the Long-Awaited Downtown Park

Probably the CAI's most lasting gift to Winnipeg will be The Forks development. Though the property had been available since the early seventies, the city had not had the resources to acquire the land without assistance from other levels of government. Over five million dollars of the CAI's money went into the purchase of the 90 acre site. The site was then divided among four landlords: 56 acres to the Forks Renewal Corporation, eight acres to the City of Winnipeg

and nine acres to Environment Canada's Canadian Parks Service. CN retained 17 acres for its own use. The Canadian Parks Service, using ARC Agreement funding, was to make its Forks Historic Park into a national park which commemorated the long history of the place with its successive waves of inhabitants and range of uses. The Forks Renewal Corporation, using CAI funds, was in charge of the development of the rest of the site while the Core Area Initiative itself, through its Riverbank Enhancement Program, developed complementary walkways and parks on both sides of the river. Two of these projects, Stephen Juba Park and walkway (which also involved ARC funding) and

the Assiniboine Riverwalk provided linkages between The Forks site and the rest of the downtown. The city's existing Bonnycastle Park was redeveloped with an attractive new fountain and linked to the Assiniboine Riverwalk. Two small "breathing space" parks were developed: Mostyn Place Park and walkway and Parc Joseph Royale on the site of the old Tourist Hotel on the St. Boniface side of the river. On that side of the river, too, the St. Boniface walkway behind St. Boniface Hospital was developed. All the design work for both the Forks Renewal Corporation projects and the CAI projects was tendered to private designers and landscape architects, providing a mini-boom in that in-



The new amphitheatre stage at Bonnycastle Park with the Assiniboine Riverwalk in the background, 1992. WPRD.



The Forks site looking toward Market Plaza and the Forks Market with the viewing tower on the right. Tourism Winnipeg/Malak.

dustry. The maintenance of the river walkways and parks, once built, has fallen to the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department.

Although the site continues to be developed amidst controversy, The Forks became an instant hit with Winnipeggers. Its linked riverwalks, casual and funky market, and plaza with terraces down to the marina basin are thronged with people summer and winter. The Assiniboine River Trail, a meandering trail laid out on the river ice each winter between The Forks and the Osborne Bridge, gives skaters a linear skating experience that they can get nowhere else in the city. Events like the Canada Day fireworks have found a new home at The Forks, drawing large num-

bers of people in boats and on foot.

New Additions to Suburban Parks

Parks activity outside the core area in the eighties and nineties was less ambitious due to the budget restraints that marked the period. Three new large parks made their official debuts during the eighties: Harbour View Recreation Complex, King's Park and the Assiniboine Forest. All three are notably different from each other, ranging from the completely natural Assiniboine Forest, through Harbour View with its unique fishing village ambiance to the oriental feel of King's Park with its small pagoda, arched bridge and stylized waterfall. In these three

parks, the department's determination to develop a diverse system of parks with each park having a distinct identity can readily be seen. If there was a trend in the eighties, it was in favour of natural parks like the Assiniboine Forest. In these parks, the natural vegetation is retained without any of the elaborate design, turf laying, mowing, weeding and planting of flowers and shrubs that goes on in parks of the traditional English landscape style. There were several reasons for the popularity of natural parks. To cost-conscious park planners they were, of course, the lowest maintenance parks imaginable and thus the cheapest. With environmental concerns gaining high prominence,



The lake at King's Park, c. 1983. This is an English landscape style park with an oriental ambiance. WPRD.



The Clubhouse at Harbour View Recreation Complex, 1982. WPRD.



Bluestem Park in its first phase of development, c. 1980. The acquisition of this section of Omand's Creek as park land rescued a natural habitat from the residential development which would have destroyed it. WPRD.

Winnipeggers enjoyed the opportunity to walk, hike and bicycle through spaces that were relatively unaltered by humans. Ever since the addition of the Living Prairie Museum to the Winnipeg park system at the end of the sixties, there had been a growing sentiment that, wherever possible, small natural habitats surviving within the city's boundaries ought to be protected. The Manitoba Naturalists Society and other environmental groups mounted vehement protests whenever any of these areas were endangered by developers. Their efforts caused the city to save the northern reach of Omand's Creek from being paved over at the begin-

ning of the eighties. The creek and surrounding area became Bluestem Park, named after one of the varieties of prairie grass that was reestablished there. The necessity to save small urban natural habitats is now enshrined in Plan Winnipeg

Natural parks may, in fact, be a bit of a misnomer. The term makes it sound as if parks workers simply

take what is there and let it have its way. In fact, establishing a natural park is a tricky business. In both Bluestem Park and Normand Park, another natural park on the Red River in St. Vital, varieties of prairie vegetation that may once have thrived in these areas were reintroduced. These new plantings need a lot of tending in the first few years in order to get properly established. Once established, they thrive and choke out undesirable plants. From that point on, the park becomes a low maintenance park. Because these ecological processes are still not well understood, the department agreed to participate in a research project with Wildlife

Habitat Canada and other agencies in order to find out more about restoring tall grass prairie habitats in Manitoba.

The Zoo Bucks the Eighties Trend Towards Austerity

With revenues declining, the older regional parks were in a quiescent phase during the eighties. However, the Assiniboine Park Zoo was anything but quiet. The zoo's response to the fiscal crunch was to go on the offensive. Blockbuster attractions were the order of the day. The first of these was the panda bear exhibit in 1989. The two pandas, Rong Rong and Cheng Cheng, spent four months in Winnipeg delighting children and bringing hard currency back to their home in the People's Republic of China for panda conservation efforts. A special air-conditioned enclosure had to be built to house the panda exhibit but revenue from admissions paid for it and it became a permanent enclosure following the departure of the pandas. Winnipeg went temporarily panda crazy as the loveable black and white bears appeared on billboards and promotional design motifs all over town. In order to take advantage of pandamania, the zoo opened a boutique. The Zootique became a permanent and popular fixture, offering all manner of stuffed animals and zoo memorabilia. In 1993, the zoo welcomed the Win-



The Leo Mol Sculpture Garden and Gallery at Assiniboine Park, 1993. WPRD.



Cheng Cheng lounges over a stump in the specially constructed enclosure built to house the two visiting panda bears from China, 1989. WPRD.

nipeg Down Under exhibit from Australia, complete with koala bears. Two new zoo facilities were opened during the eighties. The Kinsman Discovery Centre provided an innovative hands-on learning experience showing children how animals adapt to water, land and air environments. A new monkey house provided the zoo's collection of monkeys, gorillas, chimpanzees and orang-utans with a larger home which allowed the public to see them year-round. On a less happy note, 1993 was also the year when the zoo, one of the last in North America not to charge admission fees, was forced by the city's worsening financial dilemma to abandon its free admission policy.

In 1992 Assiniboine Park opened an attractive new feature adjacent to the English Garden. Winnipeg sculptor Leo Mol had agreed to give his sculptures to the city on condition that the city create a sculpture garden and gallery setting for them. For Winnipeggers skittish about modernism in public art, Mol's naturalistic sculptures in a traditional European style have been a comfort and a joy. The Leo Mol Sculpture Garden has taken root beside the English Garden as if it had always been there.

It was ironic that just as Rainbow Stage was heading into one of its worst periods of crisis, there was a big push on to upgrade its facilities. After a few sodden seasons at the



The new Kinsman Discovery Centre at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, c. 1990. WPRD.

end of the sixties, the department finally gave up and put a roof over the theatre. Theatre under the stars was all very well, but theatre under the deluge was threatening the very life of the facility. Grants of money from all three levels of government in the mid-eighties made it possible to build a new stage house and backstage area and to make improvements to the entrance and seating areas. No sooner had the new facilities been dedicated in 1988 than the theatre's executive director, Jack Shapira, was convicted of embezzling the theatre's funds. Felon or not, Shapira had been able to run Rainbow Stage successfully as few others had in its history. His departure and changes in musical theatre

tastes left the theatre, by then the oldest continuously operating outdoor theatre in Canada, directionless and struggling to find a way to please its audience.

Recreation Adapts to the Greying of the Baby Boomers

Members of the baby boom generation spawned after World War Two now had children of their own and, in fact, were entering middle age in record numbers. The greying of Winnipeg's population and its declining birth rate mirrored national trends in Canada. These facts were pointing the way to the future of recreation programming. Though the recreational agenda since 1946 had been dominated by the needs of children, especially boys, recreational planners now had to respond to a diversity of needs from other age groups as well as from groups with special needs. Programming for seniors came into its own in the eighties along with facilities like the Elmwood-East Kildonan Senior Centre. People were interested in fitness programs and leisure activities that allowed for individual exploration and growth. A growing awareness of the way in which the disabled were prevented from participating in recreation programs caused the department to hire resource people to improve access for special needs groups. With women entering the work force

in large numbers, day care for pre-school children and after school programs for older children became needs that local community centres could fill. As the nineties dawned, the department's own surveys and futurists elsewhere began to predict that for the first time since World War Two, North Americans would have less leisure time rather than more. People reported that they were working harder and longer than they had been before as the recession forced them to spend their spare time either working for additional income or returning to school to upgrade their skills. The challenge that faces recreation planners is to find ways to give these people leisure options that fit into their busy schedules.

Although community centres had been the primary locale for recreation programs, new centres with special facilities began to pop up. The first of these had been the Fort Rouge Leisure Centre in 1977, which involved the renovation of a defunct Loblaws store on Osborne Street in Riverview. The renovated centre provided an arena, fitness centre, day-care centre, meeting facilities and library branch and was intended to be used by the whole south Fort Rouge and northern St. Vital area. Though these new centres increased the number and range of facilities and programs in their areas of the city, they sometimes engendered organizational prob-

lems for local community centres. Some of the Riverview centres complained that the Leisure Centre had made it difficult for them to get volunteers and keep activities going at their own facility.

As for community centres, the falling away of volunteers that began in the late seventies forced many into a difficult period of reassessment. At many centres, facilities were aging and in need of renovation or replacement. The department's funding formula had reflected the level of funding received by the centres on amalgamation in 1971. Since suburban clubs had got less support from their municipal governments than had clubs in the pre-amalgamation City of Winnipeg, this inequity was perpetuated in the Unicity funding formula. Development patterns since 1971 only exacerbated the problem. Centres in the north-west of the city were, in general, badly underfunded in relation to the populations they served. Regardless of the need to change the funding formula, community centres knew that the department would not be in a position to increase its overall level of funding in the near future. Centres were having to face the fact that their long-term survival depended on their ability to raise a higher proportion of their revenues from private sources in the community. This prompted a variety of responses. Some clubs took note of new demographic patterns in

their neighbourhoods and amalgamated with another area centre in order to have a better chance of survival. In Transcona, the former Pirates and Maple Leaf community centres successfully pursued this option, amalgamating to become Park City West Community Centre. Running bingos and renting halls for weddings and special events can add a lot of money to a community centre's coffers. This realization has prompted members of older clubs to work themselves into the ground renovating their centres to provide attractive halls with bar facilities. All of these efforts, of course, depend on volunteers to organize them and make them run. Community centres in areas where the population of young families has declined, or where there are significant numbers of single parent families, find themselves in a difficult position. Some may have to amalgamate with others or close altogether. This process may be hastened by recent changes in the community centre funding formula.

In 1993, the department bit the bullet and overhauled the funding formula for community centres. The new formula significantly increased funding for clubs in the north-west

of the city like the Maples Community Centre. At the same time, clubs in the south end and the core area saw their city funding decline by similar amounts. Though these changes will be phased in over several years, the debate over them has done nothing to heal the fractious relations between the community centres and the Parks and Recreation Department. However, it is truly remarkable how resilient the Winnipeg community centre system has been over the last 50 years. It is a tribute to the spirit of volunteers in Winnipeg that even though they have sometimes been disheartened and exhausted, very few community centre executives have actually closed the doors of their centres.

Welcome to the Nineties - No Time To Rest On Your Laurels

As budgets were trimmed back throughout the eighties, Parks and Recreation officers got the message. Prove your worth; market or die. The same pressures were forcing public sector planners all over Canada to borrow marketing strategies first developed by the business sector. Parks and recreation users became "consumers" and the job of the

department was to increase the quality of the parks and recreation "product", eliminate waste, and provide facilities and services that were wanted by the consumer. The department acquired a marketing officer and its public relations office was given new prominence. Employees were pep-talked on the new way of thinking and told they must constantly try to improve their performance. The department's planning branch began to organize itself in order to undertake continuous strategic planning. This style of management, again borrowed from business, was designed to manage scarce resources in a climate of risk and uncertainty. One of its by-products was the Leisure Survey, a continuous sampling of the parks and recreation opinions of Winnipeggers. While some of this sounds trendy, the idea of centring on the needs and wants of parks and recreation users was not at all a bad thing. The strategic planning style forced the department to reflect at length on its purposes and goals and to evaluate these goals constantly in light of the way Winnipeggers were reacting to parks and recreation services.



CHAPTER 15

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF PARKS AND RECREATION IN WINNIPEG

What began in 1893 and 1894 with the acquisition of land for nine neighbourhood parks has blossomed into a complex, many-faceted parks and recreation system. The Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department now presides over 16 arenas, 242 skating rinks, 12 indoor pools, 100 wading pools, 11 outdoor pools, five golf courses, three cemeteries and 3,961 hectares of parks and open spaces as well as offering 7,159 recreation programs each year. The public park movement in Winnipeg got its start from the timely convergence of several motives, some idealistic and altruistic, some pragmatic and entrepreneurial. The altruists wanted everyone in the city to be able to enjoy open spaces and greenery, not just the affluent who could surround their houses with pleasant lawns and flower gardens. The entrepreneurs knew that beautiful parks, ornamental squares and scenic drive-ways would increase property values and attract investment to the city. Happily for Winnipeg, the calculating businessmen and the earnest civic reformers formed an alliance to support a municipally-funded park system. The first Public Parks Act enshrined the principal tenet of this consensus: that public parks would be funded by the taxpayers and

that access to them would be available, free of charge, to all citizens. The second tenet was evident in the behaviour of the members of the first public parks board. Their intention was to provide each neighbourhood in the city with a local park and to make a large suburban park accessible to all Winnipeggers. In other words, parks and recreation services were to be equitably distributed throughout the city and all neighbourhoods were to have services that were of comparable quality. From time to time throughout the past century, the principle of equitable distribution has been restated, most recently in Plan Winnipeg and the Parks and Recreation Department's 1992 Mission Statement.

Cities do not exist in the world of ideals, however. When the goals of parks and recreation services have brushed up against the realities of a century with more hard times than boom times, the ideals have been whittled down. In hard times, parks and recreation services have been the first in line for cuts. During the depression and World War Two, the Winnipeg Parks Board was able to do little more than keep the park gates open. The resulting neglect badly damaged the parks system and caused the value of the city's investment to decline. It took a full 20

years to recover the ground lost during that period. As the years wore on and the city began to provide more services for its citizens the proportion of the city budget that was allocated to parks and recreation steadily declined. In the political wars over budget priorities, parks and recreation services, more often than not, have lost out to other city services that were perceived to be more important.

Even given these financial realities, however, there has been a solid record of accomplishment. At strategic moments parks and recreation planners have seized opportunities that have provided the city with many of its best loved amenities, features that have defined the character of the city. What would Winnipeg be without Assiniboine Park or its unique community centre system or its boulevards of elm trees? All of these were purchased or initiated during periods of relative affluence and, fortunately, have endured through harder times.

Along the way, the Winnipeg Parks Board had to respond to new demands for services that were, at first, somewhat alien to what had gone before. The first public recreation movement in Winnipeg centred around providing playgrounds and directed play for



A playground director with a crowd of enthusiastic children at the Lizzie Street and Logan Avenue playground, c. 1946. WPRD.



The tree pruning crew, 1971. WPRD.

inner city children. This movement came to prominence before World War One and resulted in the formation of the Playgrounds Commission. In 1919, the Playgrounds Commission was decommissioned as a separate unit and its responsibilities bestowed on the not altogether eager Parks Board. Thus began the rather rocky association of the two major components of Winnipeg's municipally-funded leisure services. The Parks Board continued to treat public recreation as a subsidiary responsibility to its main work of providing a diverse system of parks and facilities. After World War Two, citizen's demands for recreational opportunities resulted in the Parks Board adopting the strategy of provid-

ing municipal funding for the community centres that, formerly, had struggled to exist on their own. Community centres became the main venues for public recreation programming under the enthusiastic bidding of Winnipeg's first Recreation Director, Charles Barbour. The popularity of both Barbour and his program forced the Parks Board to ac-

knowledge that public recreation programming had assumed an equal position with parks acquisition, improvement and maintenance in the board's work. The change of the board's name in 1951 to the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board was a symbolic recognition of this fact. The public has continued to demand new and different recreational services as time has gone on, and the city has often been hard-pressed to satisfy new demands while continuing to fund existing services.

The Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board was not the only entity in the Greater Winnipeg area to provide parks and recreation services. After 1945, the surrounding



A gardener at work in the greenhouse at Assiniboine Park, c. 1955. WPRD.

municipalities of Greater Winnipeg grew rapidly as returned veterans sought out homes in the suburbs, aided by the increased affordability of cars. Soon the suburban municipalities found that they were having to provide community clubs and recreation facilities to their citizens, who craved services that were as well-developed as those in the City of Winnipeg. Municipalities like St. James and St. Boniface created their own parks boards and hired parks and recreation staff, but the ideal of parity with Winnipeg in parks and recreation services was not realistic. Although they were growing, none of the suburban municipalities had tax bases to equal that of the City of Winnipeg. As a re-

sult the suburbs were not in a position to acquire and maintain large parks nor could they subsidize their community centres to the same degree as did the City of Winnipeg. Luckily for the suburbs, the fact that the City of Winnipeg established its large suburban parks in Tuxedo, West Kildonan and St. Vital allowed these municipalities to enjoy large parks without having to support them with their tax dollars.

Within the City of Winnipeg itself, however, an inequity had developed in parks and recreation facilities between the inner city - the downtown area and its residential neighbourhoods - and the newer, more affluent residential areas encircling the city core. No significant improvements had been made in parks or recreation facilities in the inner city since the 1890s, when the first neighbourhood parks had been established there. Lack of available open space, lack of public money and lack of political will all conspired to deprive inner city residents of parks and recreation services that were of comparable quality to those in other parts of the city. The amalgamation of all Greater Winnipeg municipalities into the new City of Winnipeg in 1972 simply compounded the problem. Though experts in every field and the city's own development plan counselled against urban sprawl, Winnipeg seemed unable to resist the demands of developers and prospec-



A zoo keeper readies the Tropical House for opening, 1972. WPRD.

tive home-buyers for new residential subdivisions. Once built, residents of the attractive new subdivisions clamoured for development of their park spaces and for community centres and access to other recreational facilities. It was not until the Core Area Initiative of 1981-1991 that the neglect of the inner city was addressed with a broad-based series of



A swimming instructor teaches CPR to a class of developmentally challenged swimmers, c. 1985. WPRD.

programs to combat the economic, social and physical decline of the core. Though parks and recreation improvements were a significant component of CAI activity, even this ten-year, multi-million dollar effort was not enough to attack the problems of the inner city at their roots. The gradual draining away of any parks and recreation progress made



A member of the weed control crew tips his hat, c. 1980. WPRD.

during the CAI and the continued decline of the core area still remain troubling challenges for the Parks and Recreation Department's second century.

The parks and recreation system has evolved to encompass an ever increasing diversity of open spaces and facilities. Winnipeg's first parks, like those in other North American cities, were designed in the English landscape style popularized by Frederick Law Olmsted. Assiniboine Park, Kildonan Park and St. Vital Park show how this style was adapted to suit the flatness of the prairie setting. The English landscape style remains a classic that Winnipeg park designers have not abandoned. King's Park,

opened in 1987, is an oriental-flavoured realization of this style. These parks were designed to be refuges from the noise and ugliness of the modern city but they involved considerable alteration of the natural environment. The addition of the Living Prairie Museum to the parks inventory of Greater Winnipeg reflected a new philosophy in park design. Natural parks were the result of an increased desire by park planners to protect natural habitats within the city boundaries. The Living Prairie Museum and the George Olive Park, in particular, are places where Winnipeggers can learn about the ecology of these natural habitats. During the sixties, too, park planners adopted the principle of protecting the waterways of the urban area by acquiring and developing riverside land and creeks as park areas. Attractive linear creek parks like La Barriere Park and Sturgeon Creek Park as well as The Forks development have preserved important natural features of the Winnipeg landscape. Park designers have also converted what might be thought of as very unpromising land to park usage. In 1960 the Saskatchewan Avenue dump was converted into an artificial mountain for tobogganing and skiing and was renamed Westview Park. It was the first of several landfill reclamations. Kil-Cona Park with its Harbour View Recreation Complex has been the most extensive land fill recla-

mation project to date. The current inventory of open spaces in Winnipeg features a broad range of styles from intensely landscaped parks to natural habitats.

The same diversification has happened in recreation facilities. With increased interest in amateur sports prior to World War One, the Parks Board acquired responsibility for the provision of municipally-funded sports parks. Sargent Park and the Old Exhibition Grounds gradually acquired more fields and facilities as public demands increased. During the same period the Winnipeg Parks Board and several suburban municipalities began to provide and fund supervised skating rinks. The Parks Board was given the full responsibility for providing swimming pools and swimming programs in 1933. After World War Two, community centres started to be subsidized by the Parks Board, beginning a partnership between the city and local volunteers that, despite its rocky moments, still endures today. The addition of regional arenas to the tally of publicly-funded sports facilities began in the sixties. With the recognition that other ages and sectors of society besides the young have leisure and fitness needs, fitness centres, recreation centres and seniors centres were added to the system in the seventies and eighties.

The principle of providing a wide vari-

ety of open spaces and recreation facilities as well as a diversity of leisure programs is enshrined in both Plan Winnipeg and the Parks and Recreation Department Mission Statement. However, keeping all the balls in the air during an era of declining public revenues has forced the department to change. The nineties have become the era of continuous strategic planning, of keeping close tabs on what Winnipeggers are thinking about parks and recreation services and of doing

more with less.

Parks and recreation employees have built and extended the green space and play areas of the city and have provided recreation programs in the firm belief that they were serving the public good. Apart from a certain scepticism over whether their tax dollars were being spent efficiently, Winnipeggers have been very supportive of these efforts and are eager to point out just where the public good lies. Whether the issue is

boulevard trees endangered by disease or a local pool under threat of closure or a park that needs more attention, citizens will come to the defence of their local parks and recreation services. Quite simply, these services are essential to the well-being of Winnipeggers and they will fight to keep them. As long as people feel this way, there should be no fears for the second century of parks and recreation in Winnipeg.



APPENDIX

1993 IN REVIEW: 101 REASONS TO CELEBRATE ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SERVICE.

Like the first 99 years of the Parks and Recreation Department's operation, 1993 was diverse, colorful, productive and sometimes controversial. The festivities planned for the 100th anniversary were intended to expose the citizens of Winnipeg and department employees to the many facets of parks and recreation in this city – to look at the department's roots, acknowledge and celebrate its current successes and provide a glimpse of the tremendous potential parks and recreation hold for contributing to a better quality of life in Winnipeg.

The department's 100th anniversary celebrations can be likened to a patchwork quilt – many seemingly dissimilar pieces, each representing a component of the department's history or operation, stitched together with a common thread to create a beautiful product of lasting significance.

Although it is impossible to describe in a few pages all of the activities and events that formed the 100th anniversary “quilt”, it is essential to present a sampling of them in order to capture the essence of our centennial year and complete the written history of the Parks and Recreation Department’s first century. Here then, are some of the “patches”...

FORMAL APPROVAL FROM CITY COUNCIL

On October 14, 1992, Winnipeg City Council formally approved the Parks and Recreation Department’s recommendation that special celebrations be held in 1993 to acknowledge the department’s 100th anniversary. The approval paved the way for the Anniversary Coordinating Committee to stage recreational, educational and commemorative events and activities for Winnipeg residents and department employees.

SUDS ‘N SALSA EMPLOYEE KICK-OFF

Many department employees braved the first snowstorm of the season on November 10, 1992 to attend the 100th Anniversary Employee Kick-Off. Those in attendance were treated to warm hospitality and hot food as they previewed the events and activities planned for the centennial year. The anniversary logo was also unveiled, and logo contest winner Alice Ivanyshyn was introduced.

MAYOR’S RECEPTION/PUBLIC KICK-OFF

February 1, 1993 marked the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Parks Board in Winnipeg. This momentous day served as the official public kick-off for the 100th anniversary celebrations. A formal reception was hosted at City Hall by Her Worship Mayor Susan Thompson to commemorate the occasion. 100th anniversary lapel pins were presented to current and former Winnipeg mayors,

councillors and aldermen. The Anniversary Quilt, featuring patches depicting the many facets of the department’s operation, was unveiled as part of the ceremonies, as was the anniversary photo display. Citizens of Winnipeg were treated to free public swim and skate times at Parks and Recreation facilities, as well as birthday cake and other festive trimmings

100TH ANNIVERSARY PROMOTIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A hard-working Promotions Committee ensured that employees within the department and beyond were kept apprised of 100th anniversary happenings. A monthly departmental newsletter, aptly named Chronicle One Hundred by contest winner Connie Plickett, provided details on upcoming events and reported on activities that had taken place. Ongoing coverage of anniversary events was also provided in the Civic Pulse. Employees were able to promote the 100th anniversary beyond the workplace by purchasing promotional items such as sweatshirts, mugs, pins and watches featuring the anniversary logo.

WINNIPEG PARKS ROSE

Unveiled at the Mayor’s Reception, ‘Winnipeg Parks’ is a hardy new rose introduced by the Agriculture Canada Research Station in Morden, Manitoba. It was named in honour of the department’s 100th anniversary, and symbolizes the department’s commitment to providing public flower gardens for the enjoyment of the citizens of Winnipeg. The rose was planted at City Hall in 1993, as well as in several regional parks and the Leo Mol Sculpture Garden.

CANADIAN CONGRESS ON LEISURE RESEARCH

As part of its commitment to research and development in the

leisure service field, the department joined with the University of Manitoba to bring in Dr Peter Williams of Simon Fraser University, to address the 7th Canadian Congress on Leisure Research. The Congress was hosted in Winnipeg from May 13 – 15, 1993 by the University of Manitoba. Dr. Williams spoke about links between research and practice in leisure services. The department also supported the publication of the conference proceedings, which were circulated to all delegates.

100TH ANNIVERSARY CRAFT SALE

Department employees with a talent for crafts had an opportunity to show off their wares at the 100th Anniversary Craft Sale, held May 22 – 24th at the Assiniboine Park Pavilion. The sale was open to the public, and featured the work of over a dozen employees.

MTS PHONE BOOK COVER

The changing face of parks and recreation over the years was the theme of the 1993–94 Manitoba Telephone System Winnipeg White Pages Phone Directory. Depicting Assiniboine Park past and present with the pavilion in the background, the cover brought the department's 100th anniversary into virtually every Winnipeg household.

'WINNIPEG DOWN UNDER' EMPLOYEE EVENT

After a rain out on the original date, the 'Down Under' event went off without a hitch on June 23, 1993. Employees and their families were treated to a tour of the Australian exhibit at the zoo, complete with interpretive talks by zookeepers and other staff, an imaginary tour of the outback led by an Australian ragman, prizes and a peak at the koalas while they were awake! G'day, mate!

100TH ANNIVERSARY FLOAT IN THE RED RIVER EXHIBITION PARADE

Although winter clothing seemed to be the order of the day on June 27th, the Parks and Recreation 100th Anniversary float added some sizzle to the Red River Exhibition parade. The float was conceived and designed by several employees who volunteered countless hours to create a masterpiece which truly captured the many facets of the Parks and Recreation Department's operation. The float was a crowd favorite and garnered the coveted Judges Award.

CBC RADIO EVENT AT THE PAVILION

Wet weather did not deter hardy Winnipeggers from attending CBC Radio's live broadcast from the Assiniboine Park Pavilion on June 25th. Pancakes, juice and coffee were served up by volunteers with the Down Under exhibit, while instructors and leaders demonstrated a variety of the programs and services offered through the department, including line dancing, giant bubble making, and magic. Host Leslie Hughes participated in many of the activities and enthusiastically described each endeavour for the benefit of her audience at home.

SUMMER SPECIAL EVENTS FOR THE PUBLIC

A myriad of special events and programs commemorating the 100th anniversary were offered for the public during the summer of 1993. These included the dedication of Drewry Lane adjacent to St. John's Park, 100th anniversary theme weeks as part of the childrens' summer programs, a block party program, a 100th birthday party in conjunction with the Grand Opening of Poolview Park adjacent to the Elmwood/Kildonans Pool, an Olde Fashioned Picnic in St. John's Park, and a Sandcastle Building Contest. All events drew enthusiastic crowds who enjoyed the centennial festivities.

EMPLOYEE REUNION PICNIC

Hundreds of current and former employees attended the first ever Employee Reunion Picnic, held on Sunday, August 29th. Wet weather forced the event indoors at the Grant Park Arena, but did not dampen the spirits of those in attendance, as they played carnival games, sang along with local entertainers, and ate record quantities of hot dogs, candy floss and ice cream!

CANADA POST COMMEMORATIVE CANCELLATION STAMP

Another 100th anniversary first! In May 1993 Canada Post issued its first ever cancellation stamp featuring an external organization. The cancellation stamp featured the 100th anniversary logo and the words "Celebrate : 1893-1993". The stamp appeared on half of the mail postmarked in Winnipeg over the last six months of 1993.

A FAMILY CHRISTMAS AT THE FORKS

The department planned some very special activities for the 1993 Christmas at the Forks celebrations, in recognition of the 100th anniversary. Quinzhee building, winter survival skills and skating with the Christmas Elf were featured outdoors with Christmas crafts and chocolate-making available for those who preferred to keep warm. Several hundred families participated in the festivities.

VOLUNTEER ROUND-UP : THE GRAND FINALE

The theme was western for the 100th Anniversary Volunteer wind up, held on February 1st, 1994. Hundreds of employees, who had committed their time and effort towards making the anniversary celebrations a success were honoured and treated to some hearty western grub, line dancing, and cowpoking! The Round-Up

marked the 101st anniversary of the formation of the Parks Board in Winnipeg, and made a fitting finale to a memorable year.

LIGHTING OF THE PAVILION: THE LEGACY BEGINS

The energy and enthusiasm generated by the 100th anniversary celebrations continued into 1994, and was embodied in the Lighting of the Pavilion ceremony. The concept of lighting the Assiniboine Park Pavilion was discussed at length by the 100th Anniversary Committee, but did not come to fruition in 1993. However, through the perseverance of several employees, the concept did become a reality. Winnipeg Supply and Services Inc. generously provided the lights, and the pavilion was lit for the first time in its history on May 24th, 1994.

WRITTEN HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT

One of the most exciting legacies of the department's 100th anniversary celebrations is the very book you are enjoying now! *A City at Leisure* captures in words and photos the colorful and sometimes controversial history of the Parks and Recreation Department's first 100 years. The history serves as a permanent record of the significant contributions made by the department in enhancing the quality of life of Winnipeg residents – individually, socially, environmentally and economically.

In closing this review of the events of 1993, a toast is most appropriate To another 100 years of service by the City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department!

GERALD MIRECKI
PATTI REGAN

100TH ANNIVERSARY ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

ENDNOTES

Abbreviations

PAM Provincial Archives of Manitoba
WCA City of Winnipeg Archives
UCEC Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre

Unless another archival location is given, reports and papers of the City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department and its predecessor organizations are held by the department.

Chapter 1 Small Town, Big Dreams 1893-1903

¹ PAM, Winnipeg 1884, entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada in the year 1884 by W. G. Fonseca in the office of the Minister of Agriculture, Mortimer & Co. Lith., Ottawa. This map is reprinted in Alan Artibise and Edward Dahl, *Winnipeg in Maps*, p. 22. An edition of the map was reprinted in 1974 as part of the centennial celebrations of the City of Winnipeg.

² Artibise and Dahl, *Winnipeg in Maps*, p. 23.

³ "In the Elms by the River", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 31 August 1895.

⁴ John Selwood, "Urban Development and the Streetcar: The Case of Winnipeg, 1881-1913", *Urban History Review*, 3-77, 1977: 37.

⁵ "In the Elms by the River", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 31 August 1895.

⁶ See Alan F. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914*, and other works by Artibise.

⁷ J. R. Wright, *Urban Parks in Ontario, Part II: The Public Park Movement*, Appendix A, 195-206.

⁸ Acts of the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba, 1892, c.31.

⁹ Ibid., s. 25. It is interesting to note, however, that by 1908 the Act had been amended to permit board members to be shareholders in corporations having dealings with the board (The Public Parks Act 55V. c. 31, s. 26).

¹⁰ *Winnipeg Public Parks Board: Historical, Annual Report, Tables 1892-1905*, p. 10. The Winnipeg Public Parks Board annual reports from 1893 to 1906 appear to be missing. This publication summarizes the activities of the board during this period and is, along with the board minutes, one of the few sources available on the first 12 years of public parks work in Winnipeg.

¹¹ Wright, *Urban Parks in Ontario*, p. 167.

¹² WCA, Winnipeg Public Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 7 June 1893.

¹³ *Winnipeg Public Parks Board, Historical, Annual Report, Tables 1892-1905*, p. 16.

¹⁴ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 26 October 1893. This park had a short lifespan. It was sold in two lots in 1923 and 1924 to Winnipeg Hydro and became the location for the Amy Street Steam Plant.

¹⁵ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 1 February 1893. The owner of the Dufferin Park property, John F. Howard, offered to sell the property for \$12,000. It was a price the board found too high.

¹⁶ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 17 June 1897.

¹⁷ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 31 January 1903 estimates.

¹⁸ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 8 October 1897.

¹⁹ "Timely Topics", *Town Topics*, 3 October 1903.

Chapter 2 Boom Times 1904-1914

¹ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 17 October 1899.

² WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 8 June 1899.

³ Parks Board Annual Report 1910, p. 7.

⁴ Parks Board Annual Report 1914, p. 27.

⁵ See Chapter One for details on the naming of Assiniboine Park.

⁶ Peter Jacobs, "Frederick G. Todd and the Creation of Canada's Urban Landscape," *APT Bulletin*, 15, 4: 27-34.

⁷ A flood in the basement of the Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department head office at 2799 Roblin Boulevard during the mid-1970s destroyed most of the earliest plans of Winnipeg public parks including, unfortunately, Todd's original plan for Assiniboine Park. A version of the Assiniboine Park plan was incorporated into a plan of the neighbouring suburb of Tuxedo Park which was published by the developer F.W. Heubach in about 1910.

⁸ A.V. Thomas, "Superintendent of City Parks, On Duty 25 Years, Has Given Signal Service", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 2 April 1932.

⁹ "George Champion Dies in Toronto", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 18 November 1946.

¹⁰ Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department, "Assiniboine Park: History and Development", p. 10.

¹¹ Parks Board Annual Report 1909, p. 3.

¹² "Assiniboine Park Open this Year", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 April 1909.

¹³ Parks Board Annual Report 1910, p. 25.

¹⁴ Parks Board Annual Report 1911, p. 5.

¹⁵ Parks Board Annual Report 1915, p. 11.

¹⁶ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, letter from Charles H. Enderton to the Winnipeg Parks Board, 18 September 1902 and associated documents.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Mary E. Cavett, H. John Selwood and John C. Lehr, "Social Philosophy and the Early Development of Winnipeg's Public Parks", *Urban History Review* XI, 1 (June 1982): 31.

¹⁹ City of Winnipeg, *City of Winnipeg Municipal Manual* 1953, (Winnipeg: City of Winnipeg, 1953) p. 108.

²⁰ Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department, "Kildonan Park: History and Development". A copy of the original Kildonan Park Plan of 1911 is included in this volume.

²¹ Ibid., p. 5.

Chapter 3 Building the City Beautiful

¹ "Timely Topics", *Town Topics*, 25 April 1903.

² See Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America*. Cranz sees the history of parks design and planning as falling into distinct eras: the pleasure ground 1850-1900; the reform park 1900-1930; the recreation facility 1930-1965; and the open space system, 1965 and after. This is a useful typology but, as Cranz points out, a given park, especially an older park, can have a mixture of features dating from any of these eras.

³ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 27 March 1894 and *Henderson's Manitoba and Northwest Territories Gazeteer and Directory* 1894, (Winnipeg: Henderson Directory Company, 1894).

⁴ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1893-1903, 6 September 1899.

⁵ *Winnipeg Public Parks Board, Historical, Annual Report, Tables, 1892-1905*, p. 16.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ It was rumoured after the 1919 General Strike that the Parks Board had sold Victoria Park because it had been the site of the strikers' rallies. The

strike may have given the board additional encouragement to sell the park, but the first mention of the board's desire to sell it came in the 1916 Annual Report. Parks Board Annual Report 1916, p. 14.

⁸ *Winnipeg Public Parks Board, Historical, Annual Report, Tables, 1893-1905*, p. 16.

⁹ WCA, Winnipeg Public Parks Board Committee Minutes 1893-1904.

¹⁰ Ibid., Gardening Committee, 23 April 1894.

¹¹ Ian McDonald, "Landscape Architects in Winnipeg", p. 7.

¹² Ibid., p. 9.

¹³ "Assiniboine Park Open this Year," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 April 1909.

¹⁴ See Margaret A. Meek, "History of the City Beautiful Movement in Canada 1890-1930" and William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*.

¹⁵ Parks Board Annual Report 1909, p. 26.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁹ Parks Board Annual Report 1914, p. 40.

²⁰ Parks Board Annual Report 1909, p. 16.

Chapter 4 Keeping Them Off the Streets 1908-1919

¹ Parks Board Annual Report 1907, p.7.

² See H. John Selwood and John C. Lehr, "Building Better Canadians with American Technology: Diffusion and Adoption of a Recreation Concept", *Bulletin of the Association of North Dakota Geographers*, 33 (1983): 24-31.

³ Selwood and Lehr, "Building Better Canadians", 25-26.

- ⁴ "Winnipeg Playgrounds", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 29 May 1908.
- ⁵ WCA, Minutes of the Playgrounds Association of Winnipeg/Winnipeg Playgrounds Commission 1908-1919, 22 September 1908.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid., 15 April 1909.
- ⁸ Ibid., sample of letterhead appended to minutes, 1909.
- ⁹ Ibid., 28 April 1909 and Winnipeg City Council Minutes, 25 May 1909, by-law 5557.
- ¹⁰ Selwood and Lehr, "Building Better Canadians", p. 27.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² WCA, Playgrounds Commission Minutes 1908-1919, 6 January 1913.
- ¹³ Selwood and Lehr, "Building Better Canadians", p. 26.
- ¹⁴ WCA, Playgrounds Commission Minutes 1908-1919, 11 June 1918.
- ¹⁵ Selwood and Lehr, "Building Better Canadians", p. 27.
- ¹⁶ WCA, Playgrounds Commission Minutes 1908-1919, 11 January 1917.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 14 June 1917.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 13 July 1916.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 18 December 1913.
- ²⁰ Selwood and Lehr, "Building Better Canadians", p. 27.
- ²¹ WCA, Playgrounds Commission Minutes 1908-1919, 18 June 1914.
- ²² Ibid., 9 December 1914.
- ²³ Ibid., duties of the Recreation Commissioner as laid out in a special report dated 19 May 1914.
- ²⁴ Morris Mott, "One Solution to the Urban Crisis: Manly Sports and Winnipeggers, 1900-1914", *Urban History Review*, 12, 2 (October 1983): 58.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

²⁶ City of Winnipeg by-law 5854, passed 30 December 1909. Although the swimming baths were to be built on Winnipeg Parks Board land, they were administered by the Libraries and Swimming Baths Committee of City Council until 1933 when authority for public baths was transferred to the Parks Board.

²⁷ "Mayor Waugh Opens New Public Baths," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 7 May 1912.

²⁸ WCA, Playgrounds Commission Minutes 1908-1919, 11 February 1919.

Chapter 5 *The Strike and the Twenties That Never Roared 1919-1929*

¹ Parks Board Annual Report 1917, p. 22.

² WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 22 January 1919.

³ Jim Pringle, *United We Stand: A History of Winnipeg's Civic Workers*, p. 19.

⁴ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 15 January 1918.

⁵ Ibid., Wage Schedule, 19 March 1919.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Pringle, *United We Stand*, p. 22.

⁸ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 4 June 1919.

⁹ Ibid., 8 February 1918.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Winnipeg Public Parks Board, *The Public Parks Act and By-laws of the Winnipeg Public Parks Board*, p. 6.

¹² WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 2 April 1919.

¹³ Norman Penner, ed., *Winnipeg 1919: The Striker's Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1973), p. xi.

- ¹⁴ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 18 June 1919.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 15 October 1919.
- ¹⁶ Winnipeg Public Parks Board, *The Public Parks Act and By-laws of the Winnipeg Public Parks Board*, By-law no. 8, paragraphs 20, 47, 49 and 63.
- ¹⁷ Parks Board Annual Report 1916, p. 13.
- ¹⁸ Parks Board Annual Report 1924, p. 71.
- ¹⁹ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 2 July 1919.
- ²⁰ Ibid., wage tables, 7 April 1920.
- ²¹ Mott, "One Solution", p. 66.
- ²² WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 4 June 1919.
- ²³ Parks Board Annual Report 1921, p. 125.
- ²⁴ Parks Board Annual Report 1925, p. 110.
- ²⁵ Parks Board Annual Report 1929, p. 2.
- ²⁶ Parks Board Annual Report 1921, p. 126.
- ²⁷ Parks Board Annual Report 1919, p. 11.
- ²⁸ WCA, Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 20 November 1918.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 15 October 1919.
- ³⁰ Parks Board Annual Report 1929, p. 14.
- ³¹ Parks Board Annual Report 1922, p. 18.
- ³² Parks Board Annual Report 1925, p. 118.
- ³³ Parks Board Annual Report 1925, p. 106.
- ³⁴ Clarence Fairbairn, "Mosquito Fighting Coroner", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 9 June 1961.
- ³⁵ Parks Board Annual Report 1927, p. 8.

³⁶ Fairbairn, "Mosquito Fighting Coroner".

³⁷ Parks Board Annual Report 1920, p. 76.

³⁸ Parks Board Annual Report 1929, p. 1.

³⁹ Parks Board Annual Report 1920, p. 64.

⁴⁰ Parks Board Annual Report 1929, p. 2. There were two other fires during the summer of 1929: the Windsor Park Golf Course clubhouse, which was also burned to the ground, and the Kildonan Golf Course clubhouse, which was partially burned and was the subject of an investigation that was inconclusive. The pavilion fire and the Windsor Park fire were attributed to boys breaking in and playing with matches. Arson was suspected in the case of the Kildonan Golf Course clubhouse.

Chapter 6 Making the Best of a Bad Situation 1930-1945

¹ Parks Board Annual Report 1930, p. 3.

² Assiniboine Park: History and Development, p. 16.

³ Parks Board Annual Report 1929, p. 1

⁴ Parks Board Annual Report 1931, p. 20.

⁵ Parks Board Annual Report 1931, p. 3.

⁶ Parks Board Annual Report 1941. Radio talk, "Our Parks and Playgrounds," by C. H. McFadyen, Chairman, 9 January 1941, p. 4.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Parks Board Annual Report 1934, p. 15.

⁹ Parks Board Annual Report 1938, p. 16.

¹⁰ Parks Board Annual Report 1935, p. 3; Parks Board Annual Report 1936, p. 2; Parks Board Annual Report 1937, p. 2.

¹¹ Parks Board Annual Reports 1939, p. 5.

¹² Parks Board Annual Report 1932, p. 10.

¹³ "Artistry Predominated in New Baths," *Western Canada Contractor and Builder*, 28, 3 (March 1931): 16-17.

¹⁴ Parks Board Annual Report 1933, p. 2.

¹⁵ Parks Board Annual Report 1935, p. 8.

¹⁶ Parks Board Annual Report 1941, p. 3.

¹⁷ Parks Board Annual Report 1941. Radio talk, "Our Parks and Playgrounds", p. 6.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Chapter 7 Charles Barbour Comes to Town

¹ "Parks Board and Recreation", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 15 September 1945.

² See W. A. Kennedy, G. F. Bentley and R. Jarman, "Report of the Commission Appointed by the Public Parks Board to Report on Recreational and Youth Activity Needs of the City of Winnipeg", 1 March 1946.

³ "Parks Board and Recreation", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 15 September 1945.

⁴ "Commercial Sport Facilities", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 24 September 1945; "C.H. McFadyen and the Parks Board", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 September 1945; "C.H. McFadyen and Hockey, Baseball, Football", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 26 September 1945.

⁵ "A Positive Sport and Recreation Program," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 27 September 1945.

⁶ See Kennedy, Bentley and Jarman, "Report of the Commission".

⁷ Margaret Wilson Barbour, oral history interview taped 25 May 1993, Winnipeg. Interviewer: Catherine Macdonald.

⁸ Parks Board Annual Report 1946, p. 7.

⁹ Parks Board Annual Report 1946, p. 2.

¹⁰ Winnipeg Public Parks Board Annual Reports, 1954, p. 2; 1958, p. 7; and 1961, p. 2.

¹¹ Margaret Barbour interview.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Parks Board Annual Report 1947, p. 13.

¹⁴ Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board, biographical resumé, "The Late Thomas R. Hodgson"; "Parks Head Dies After Long Illness," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 2 February 1962; obituary, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2 February 1962.

¹⁵ *Winnipeg Tribune*, 28 November 1956.

¹⁶ Margaret Barbour interview.

¹⁷ "Community Clubs Get Dollar for Dollar Aid", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 October 1947.

¹⁸ "Recreation Aid Plan Endorsed By Parks Board", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 November 1947.

¹⁹ Editorial, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 September 1948.

²⁰ Parks Board Annual Report 1948, p. 5.

²¹ Winnipeg Parks Board, Agreement with Community Centres, 1950, quoted in Gerald B. Mirecki, "History of the Winnipeg Community Centre Movement", p. 6.

²² Bruce Larson, "Community Clubs Give City Children an Outlet", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 18 January 1947.

²³ See Margaret Wilson, "Community Centres in Winnipeg, 1957", 1957.

²⁴ Margaret Barbour interview.

²⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 8 Community Clubs and How They Grew

¹ I am indebted to John Shaley of the Canadian Ukrainian Athletic Club who shared both his memories and his photographs of Sinclair Park Community Centre with me. Thanks are also due to Bill Firmin, 1993-94 President of Sinclair Park Community Centre.

- ² UCEC, Canadian Ukrainian Athletic Club Annual Report, 1941, p. 11.
- ³ John Shaley interview, 18 June 1993.
- ⁴ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1964, p. 28.
- ⁵ WCA, Winnipeg Parks Board Minutes 1916-1929, 16 July 1919.
- ⁶ Kennedy, Bentley and Jarman, "Report of the Commission", p. 11.
- ⁷ Margaret Wilson, "Community Centres", Table 1 and "Where's the Action - In River Heights!", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 January 1965.
- ⁸ Wilson, "Community Centres", p. 42.
- ⁹ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1964, p. 28.
- ¹⁰ PAM, Tom O'Brien Papers, "Facts Concerning Our Organization", undated.
- ¹¹ Ibid., Deer Lodge Community Centre, "Five-Point Winter Program", undated.
- ¹² Ibid., note by Genevieve O'Brien, undated.
- ¹³ "Deer Lodge Athletic Group Plans Club Building Project," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2 December 1944.

Chapter 9 Parks at the Dawn of the Metro Era 1945-1960

- ¹ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1955, p. 3.
- ² Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1957, p.66.
- ³ *Winnipeg Tribune*, 5 April 1956.
- ⁴ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1951, p.51.
- ⁵ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1954, p. 54.
- ⁶ Ann Henry, "The 'Music Had a Fizz' at New Rainbow Stage", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 8 July 1954.

- ⁷ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1957, p. 54.
- ⁸ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1950, p. 9.
- ⁹ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1952, p. 15.
- ¹⁰ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1958, p. 24.
- ¹¹ "Assiniboine Park: History and Development", p. 21.
- ¹² Barry Mullin, "Thieves Get Booty In Park", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 November 1985, p. 2.
- ¹³ "Winnipeg's 'Most Glorious Garden' Had no Blueprint", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 February 1959.
- ¹⁴ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1954, p. 64.

Chapter 10 The Struggle to Modernize 1945-1960

- ¹ "Legislation Sought to Reduce Parks Board by Four Members", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 8 March 1949.
- ² See J. D. Woods and Gordon Ltd., Management Consultants, "Survey of Department and Municipal Commissions of the City of Winnipeg", 1953.
- ³ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1954.
- ⁴ WCA, Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board Minutes, 1947-1955, 18 April 1947.
- ⁵ Pringle, *United We Stand*, p. 57.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 60.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 66.
- ⁸ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1958.
- ⁹ Ronald Fromson, "Planning in a Metropolitan Area: The Experiment in Greater Winnipeg", p. 13.

- ¹⁰ City of Winnipeg, *The Winnipeg Zoning By-law*, By-law No. 13060, 1928.
- ¹¹ George Rich, *Local Government Reform in Winnipeg 1945-1971: A Sympathetic View*, p. 16-17.
- ¹² Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1956, p. 5.
- ¹³ Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Board and the Welfare Council of Greater Winnipeg, "The Greater Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Survey", p. 64.

Chapter 11 Parks and Recreation Services in the Suburban Municipalities 1914-1977

- ¹ Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, Planning Department, "Detailed Area Plan of St. James-Assiniboia", 1970, p. 6.
- ² "City May Have Own Prairie", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 14 September 1968.
- ³ "Detailed Area Plan of St. James-Assiniboia", p. 7.
- ⁴ "Brooklands New Clubhouse Opens", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 27 September 1949.
- ⁵ Selwood, "Urban Development and the Streetcar", p. 38.
- ⁶ "West Kildonan Plans \$15,000 Clubhouse Drive", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 27 September 1949.
- ⁷ "Four Arenas Near Completion", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 5 October 1967.
- ⁸ City of Winnipeg East Kildonan-Transcona Community, *On the East of the River: A History of the East Kildonan-Transcona Community*, p. 73.
- ⁹ Gunter A. Schoch, "The Millstones of North Kildonan", North Kildonan Parks Board Annual Report 1966, 16-19.
- ¹⁰ Ross McLennan, "A Tribute to One of Our Pioneers", *Winnipeg Sun*, 27 May 1985.
- ¹¹ North Kildonan Parks Board Annual Report 1964, p. 2.
- ¹² East Kildonan Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1973, p. 22.
- ¹³ "East Kildonan Club Plans Extensive Winter Program", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 10 August 1945.
- ¹⁴ East Kildonan Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1973, p. 14.
- ¹⁵ "A New Park Rises From the Garbage", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2 May 1984.
- ¹⁶ *On the East of the River*, p. 121.
- ¹⁷ Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, Planning Division, "Detailed Area Plan of Transcona 1971", p. 4.
- ¹⁸ *On the East of the River*, p. 143.
- ¹⁹ "Detailed Area Plan for Transcona 1971", p. 53.
- ²⁰ "St. Boniface Club Embraces Social Groups", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 28 November 1950.
- ²¹ Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, Planning Division, "Detailed Area Plan of St. Vital 1968", p. 3.
- ²² Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, Planning Division, "Detailed Area Plan of Fort Garry 1968", p. 4.
- ²³ When the Winnipeg Parks Board purchased the land, the park's name was "Wildewood Park". By the time the Wildwood Park housing subdivision was built after World War Two, the name had lost its middle "e" and was spelled "Wildwood".
- ²⁴ Rural Municipality of Fort Garry Public Parks Board, Minutes 1947-1958, 21 November 1947 and 29 November 1948.
- ²⁵ Fort Garry Parks Board Minutes 1947-1958, 31 December 1957.
- ²⁶ Bob Preston, "Here is a Big Business Running on a Shoestring", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 27 April 1957.
- ²⁷ Fort Garry Parks Board Minutes 1947-1958, 10 April 1957.
- ²⁸ Ian McDonald, "Landscape Architects in Winnipeg", 2-6.
- ²⁹ Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, Planning Division, "Detailed Area Plan of Tuxedo 1970", p. 5.

³⁰ Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, Planning Division, "Detailed Area Plan of Charleswood 1970", p. 5.

³¹ "Detailed Area Plan of Charleswood", p. 5.

³² Artibise and Dahl, *Winnipeg in Maps*, 62-63.

³³ Charleswood Recreation Commission/Recreation Advisory Board Minutes 1968-1974, 20 June 1968.

Chapter 12 The Leap Forward Under Metro 1960-1971

¹ Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg Annual Report 1961, p. 8.

² Conversation with Gunter Schoch, 20 September 1993.

³ The Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg Annual Report 1963, p. 19.

⁴ "Assiniboine Park: History and Development", p. 29.

⁵ Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department, "St. Vital Park: History and Development", 8-10.

⁶ Parks and Recreation Board Annual Report 1963, p. 7.

⁷ "The Parks Board", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 May 1961.

⁸ "Using What We Have", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 7 November 1966.

⁹ "Charter Proposal Endorsed", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 11 January 1967.

¹⁰ Problems Research Ltd., "City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Survey, Final Report", 1967.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹² *Ibid.*, 166-174.

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¹⁴ Parks and Recreation Board, List of Properties, 1962.

¹⁵ "Govt. Aid Sought on Renewal Parks", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 29 November 1966.

¹⁶ "Parks Officials Rap Audit's Plan", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 August 1969.

Chapter 13 Unicity and the Years of Uncertainty 1971-1979

¹ Pringle, *United We Stand*, p. 69.

² See Urwick, Currie & Partners Ltd., "City of Winnipeg: Re-organization of Public Works and Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments".

³ Letter, Directors of Parks and Recreation and Parks Board Superintendents to the Commissioner of Works and Operations, City of Winnipeg, 30 January 1973.

⁴ Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department, "Report on the Reorganization of the Parks and Recreation Department", p. 1.

⁵ "Park Pond Denounced as Danger to Children", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 July 1980.

⁶ "New Attack Levelled at 'Bear-pit' Park", *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 November 1968.

⁷ "Van-tastic Fun for Everyone", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 16 July 1980.

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² Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department, *Plan Winnipeg, Parks and Recreation Component*, 1-6.

³ David Henderson, "Plan Winnipeg: Its Mandate and Purpose", *Social Planning Council Newsletter*, September 1990, p. 3.

⁴ Winnipeg Core Area Initiative Policy Committee, "Proposed Winnipeg Core Area Initiative", p. 3.

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What began in 1893 and 1894 with the acquisition of land for nine neighbourhood parks has blossomed into a complex, many-faceted parks and recreation system. The Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department now presides over 16 arenas, 242 skating rinks, 12 indoor pools, 100 wading pools, 11 outdoor pools, five golf courses, three cemeteries and 3,961 hectares of parks and open spaces as well as offering 7,159 recreation programs each year.

A City at Leisure captures in words and photos the colorful and sometimes controversial history of the Parks and Recreation Department's first one hundred years. The history serves as a permanent record of the significant contributions made by the department in enhancing the quality of life of Winnipeg residents – individually, socially, environmentally and economically.



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