

A Park System for Small Towns*

C. E. Chambers, Park Commissioner, Toronto, Ont.

NO town, however small, can afford to grow up without providing suitably for the parks and open spaces it will surely need if its beautification and healthfulness are to receive proper consideration. In practically all of our

requirements when development has probably extended its boundaries far into the environs. In the preparation of the plan the location and distribution of the park areas should be given careful thought, to the end that each section or district

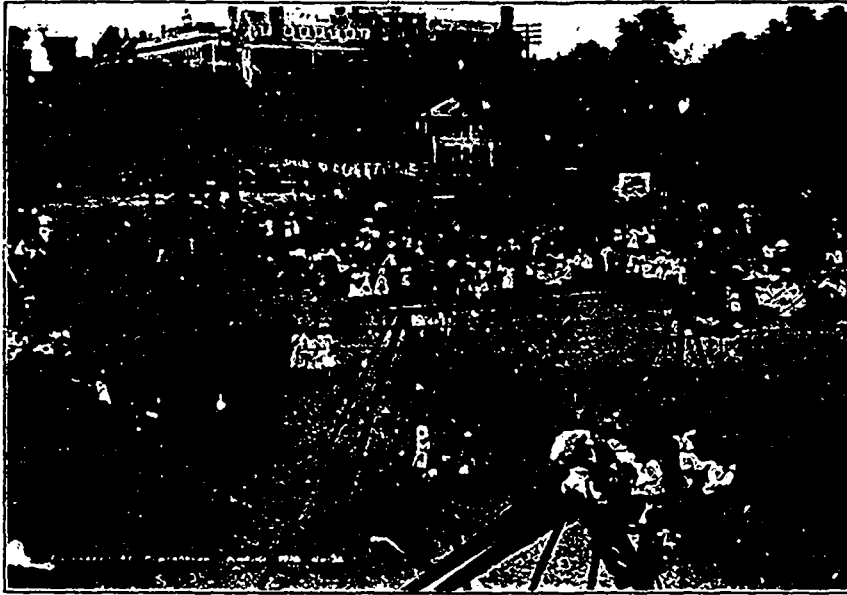
pleasure grounds. Wooded areas adjoining the town will, of course, be conserved, and park lands will be secured within its probable boundaries, as financial means will permit.

THE PARK SITE

In selecting a park site attention should be particularly paid to the matter of its boundaries. It is a somewhat common error to neglect this. Where necessary to a complete picture, the whole of a hillside should be secured, the whole of a body of water, or the whole of a glen or ravine. The appearance of many parks is marred by an impression of incompleteness, brought about by the unnatural restriction and limitation of their boundaries. The park within the town will necessarily be bounded by streets, but on no account should its boundaries be built upon. Back yards as a frame to a park should not be tolerated. The park should be an aid to the town's beauty, instead of being concealed in the rear of buildings, however desirable.

DEVELOPMENT OF SITE

The development of the park site involves a serious responsibility. It calls for the preservation of natural beauty, and the creation of that which should add its share of charm to the town's attractiveness. The location and topography of the site will, of course, govern to a considerable degree the treatment to be accorded it, but great care must be exercised in this, lest, in too great straining for ornamentation, the natural advantages which nearly every well-chosen area possesses be lost in the effort to improve, and an artificial and undesirable result be substituted therefor.



A Playground Festival, Elizabeth St. Playgrounds, Toronto

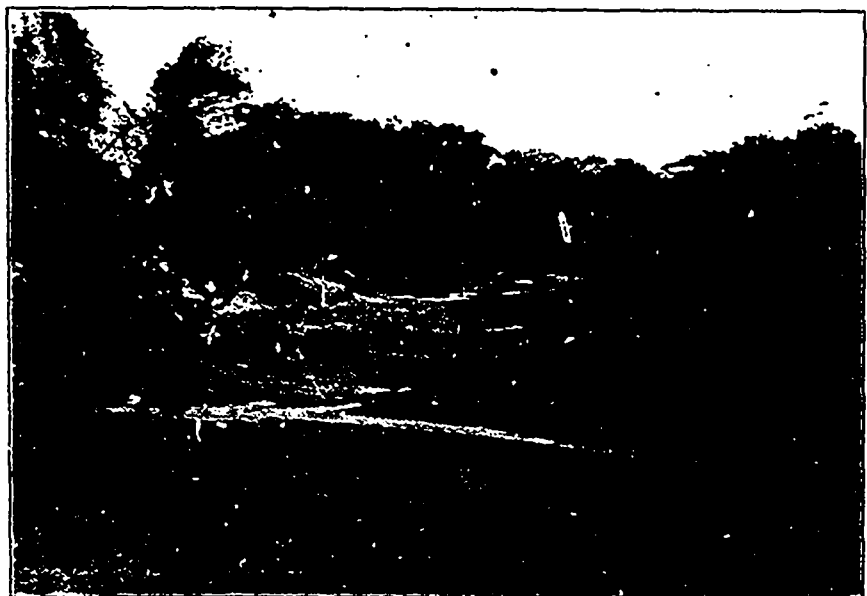
older cities we have examples of how rapid development and attending congestion have crowded out the open spaces which should have been preserved for the creation and enjoyment of the people. Railways and other undesirable features have been allowed to thrust themselves upon the lake or river front, despoiling it for ever of its natural charm and beauty, and robbing the city or town of its chief attractiveness, and areas which at one time possessed infinite possibilities in scenic value are pre-empted and needlessly destroyed for commercial purposes. There is no excuse for such conditions obtaining in the growing town if the lesson of properly planning for its development is learned in due season. With the wide world furnishing, as it does, a school in which this knowledge may be freely had there is no excuse for neglect to learn this lesson.

PREPARATION OF PLAN

The early preparation of a comprehensive plan is the first step in the conservation of the features of natural beauty with which a town may be endowed or surrounded, and for the setting apart of areas for park and recreation purposes and the establishment of 'boulevards, playgrounds, squares, or open spaces. This plan will have largely in mind not only the town's needs of to-day, as evidenced within its present limits, but the

may have its proper complement of parks, squares, recreation grounds, and playgrounds, properly related in their location to the purposes to be served by them.

The most striking scenery of a district will naturally be reserved for park purposes, and especially the banks of a stream or the water front—where such exist. Waste or marshy areas may be profitably reclaimed and converted into



Recreation Area, Bellwoods Park, Toronto, Ont.

*An address delivered at the recent annual convention of the Ontario Horticultural Association.