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# PUBLIC GARDENS for the PEOPLE

By Katherine L. Smith



It is little wonder that people in crowded districts, shut in by brick and mortar, deprived of flowers, with none of the privileges of country life, should thirst for substitutes, for woods and fields and the glimpses of rural landscapes that parks afford. Parks for cities are a demand born of necessity. The health and happiness of the public demand that open spaces should be provided for public use. President Roosevelt was the first to suggest that solution of public municipal problems might be obtained through congress having direct control of the city government at Washington and making it a model municipality. If this were feasible one of the first movements would be toward the establishment of a park system, for open places and public playgrounds are necessary means for the development of wholesome citizenship.

Though the park movement has grown wonderfully in the past few years, so that approximately there are being spent annually in the towns and cities of the United States \$11,000,000 for park improvement and maintenance, and 75,000 acres of land, apart from United States government reservations, have been dedicated to public use, most of the large parks have been located on the outskirts of the city, away from the crowded districts which need them. This has arisen from the failure of those who lay out cities to set aside land for public use, from the desire to obtain land at reasonable cost and from the fact that much of the land has been acquired by gift.

If the city fathers, in planning a town, would more often consider the desirability of parks, the question of location would be settled while land is cheap and many breathing places could be located in the business portion of the city. When a city is built, the problem has to be solved in the best way, expense, location and available land being taken into consideration.

The park idea is the result of a gradual growth of taste, and civic pride for open spaces are a delight to the educated and well-to-do as well as to the poor. That the demand for beauty in cities has increased of late years may be gathered from the fact that when, in 1853, an effort was made to secure land for Central Park, New York, it was most bitterly opposed, and the movement grew so slowly that in 1858 there were only 20 large rural parks in the United States. Today the whole attitude has changed. One firm of landscape artists alone direct park work in nearly 50 cities at an expenditure

of \$30,000,000, positive proof, if one were needed, that parks and public open places in a town are now demanded as a necessity.

The chief difficulty in the older cities lies in obtaining good locations, for aside from expense, sanitation and art are to be taken into account. The small, new village can overcome obstacles by planning when lots are laid out. Other places are attempting to provide breathing places by choosing sites on the outskirts and connecting them by boulevards, thus creating a chain system, which in some cases encircles the town. This is one solution of the park question. Others are a large number of small, scattered spaces, about a quarter of a mile square or a smaller number of large parks. The first system has been adopted by Boston and Chicago. Many other cities, New York in particular, are considering the advisability of adopting, as in Paris, little spaces in the central part of the city, on the theory that these numerous small areas draw many people to the French city in search of a pleasant abode.

New York is also starting to connect some of her 164 parks by a series of boulevards which will join the different park areas into one long whole. This was done in the case of several parks and parkways and the effect has added much to the viewpoint of the city's beauty. The Palisade Park, intended to preserve the famous palisade of the Hudson, will be wonderfully beautiful and will form a portion of a Greater New York system, which will not only serve the purpose of beauty, but will broaden the feeling of personal interest in the outdoor possibilities and serve as an incentive for bequests for park grounds.

Interesting as these New York park plans are, Boston may be called the most striking exemplar of the outer park system, for this place has one of the most conspicuous park organizations in the United States, if not in the world. In 1880, the Metropolitan Park Commission was organized with the idea of linking Boston and all the surrounding towns of the large metropolitan outside into one continuous park chain. Since then the Metropolitan Park Commission has con-

ducted about 40 municipal corporations and expended \$11,000,000, three-fifths of which went for land. It has 19 miles of parkway which serves as a connecting link. With the park holdings of Boston and other towns in the metropolitan district, there are about 16,000 acres of parks. Its seashore reservation aggregates eight miles of ocean front, it has three river valleys and two highlands. The whole system is complete in districts as well as a whole and continuous work. What was first considered an Utopian dream, the making of forests, hills, river drives and seashore into one chain, is now one of the most beautiful park systems.

In Chicago, somewhat of the same idea has been adopted with success and seven large parks, three on the lake front and others in different quarters of the city, are connected by broad boulevards or drives, containing here and there magnificent detached dwellings. The whole, the wide parkways and handsome boulevards, make a beautiful encircling drive. Chicago is planning new parks, each to contain a building where physical and mental recreation can be had for nothing. These will be neighborhood centres or assembly halls, and for the enjoyment of the people. Kansas City and Minneapolis have a system based on the chain principle and many miles of completed parkways and an ample park acreage has helped to make these cities beautiful. Other cities, among them Louisville, Portland and Seattle, are planning extensive links.

Cleveland has not only been inspired with the idea of connecting one lake shore park with another, thus encircling the city, but is working on a court of honor, a group plan which will compose a public library, chamber of commerce, city hall, post office and a court house, all overlooking the beautiful lake front. The whole, with mall and esplanade ought to form an approach few American cities are fortunate in possessing. This is quite a change from the early years of park improvement when Central Park in New York and Fairmount Park in Philadelphia were the only ones considered worthy of notice.

Parks, like public libraries and are museums ought to be the result of high ideals and should meet the needs of the public. Sometimes this is attained by such organizations as one in Philadelphia, which founded forty years ago, as composed of men, women and children who contribute to a fund from which to purchase works of art for the adornment of the park. At other times it is attained by the philanthropy of individuals. The citizens of St. Louis have had cause to be thankful for Tower Grove Park and Shaw's Gardens, the gift of a citizen who not only provided parks with complete maintenance for their support but with statues, botanical gardens and a school of botany.

Two factors are now entering into the choice of a site for city parks—the elevation of the land and the desire to make use of a waterfront. These are two phases of natural scenery that suggest nature working in a glorious and spontaneous manner. They are equally desirable whether in an outer system or in a public open space near the centre of the town. These features are often hard to obtain, but whatever the selection it is desirable, when a city grows and the surrounding country becomes more and more remote to have open spaces scattered through the town. These may take the place of an outer chain system in small places that are not connected with outlying towns. The size of the town and the financial condition must always be taken into account, for the cost of maintenance must be met annually.

Often waste land, which if uncared for would become an eyesore, forms a location for a picturesque park, and the spot becomes a beauty instead of a menace to public health. In all cases, the landscape artist can advise what is the best method of treatment, whether to use artificial adornment, to employ trees and shrubs, and how to frame the picture. The modern method is to reserve formalism for small areas or to protect some place of historic or local interest and to depend on natural features for large tracts, and many a monotonous level surface has been changed by border plants and fringes of trees and shrubs.

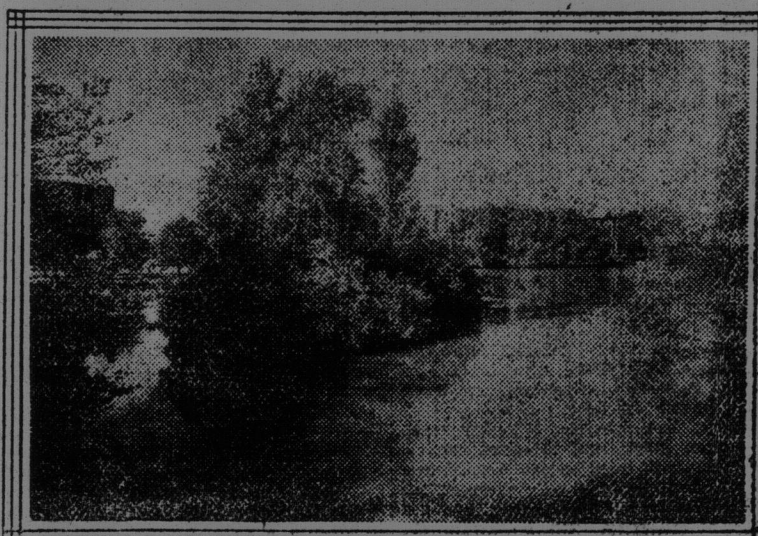
In some locations a playground may be demanded with accommodations for athletic and field sports. The park on Harriet Island, in St. Paul, contains all these features and is furnished with elaborate and

practical bathhouses. Scranton, Pa., has a park with a commodious kitchen for the use of picnickers, as well as many summer shelter tents. Playgrounds in parks are always in demand. A park may be more beautiful if people are expected to walk in defined districts, but it will not be as useful and enjoyable as the one where a part is given to the playgrounds and the people. If persons are allowed to roam at will over the grass, the green may die, but every park should contain an area where the enjoyment of the people, young and old, is the first consideration. The necessity of untainted fresh air and the advisability of zoological and botanical gardens are also factors to be considered.

U. S. cities do not lack illustrations of fine treatment of parks and the number in process of establishment bespeaks an added value of real estate and a soothing influence to the weary body. The spread of the movement shows that the entire nation is ready to extend park development from the aesthetic, business and hygienic point of view. Whether the outer chain system or the embellishment of inner sections is attempted must depend on the size of the city and the use to which the

park will be put. Though the United States is behind Europe in civic art, the cities have in some instances better park systems. It is true that the large suburban parks of Paris are near enough to the city to be thronged on holidays, but they were really royal preserves. Windsor Park in London, though a large one, is also a royal domain and somewhat hard of access. Much of the beauty in foreign cities lies in the wide streets rather than in the parks.

In any mental picture of a beautiful city, there is no doubt but parks take the first place, but they are useless unless they can be reached by the people and are convenient for the poor. Many of the elegant parkways form magnificent carriage drives but are of little use to the man who with difficulty pays street car fare. If any system of parks, chain or otherwise, is to be of benefit, it must be accessible and become an integral part of a city's thrilling life. Sky, fresh air, trees, shrubs, flowers—these are the possessions of the people by birthright. Parks must provide these and become a necessary as well as an esthetic phase of the many urban blessings.



A Park Scene in Minneapolis, Minn.

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## BIG SUMS TO HELP; TABLET DAUGHTER

Widow of Millionaire Leaves Child Furniture "Valued at \$15."

Newark, N. J., June 16.—A dining-room table "valued at \$15," is the sole bequest made to an only daughter in the will of Mrs. Frances Hartley, widow of a millionaire gun manufacturer, which was probated here. More than \$1,000,000 in cash is distributed among other relatives and friends and several bequests of from \$1,000 to \$5,000 are made to servants who attended her in her home at West Orange, N. J., where she died in April.

No reason is given for the cutting off of the daughter, Mrs. K. Jenkins, of Madison avenue, New York city.

## GUILTY OF ASSASSINATION

A man, razor in hand was caught by his wife assassinating not an enemy, but a corn—what he needed was Putnam's Corn Extirpator; it's safe, painless, and sure. Try "Putnam's"—nothing sells so good.

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## CIVIL SERVANTS CAN GO TO CAMP

By Order-in-Council the Governor General has authorized leave of absence to all permanent employees of the outside Civil Service throughout the Dominion to proceed to camp to undergo annual training with the corps to which they belong, and that such leave shall not be reckoned as annual leave.

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