

A PARK WITH A POPULAR IDEA

By THE SUMMER SCRIBE

When Talking of Your People's Playgrounds Don't Forget Stratford, Ont., whose Beautiful Man-made Park, Reached Out and Became a Popular Octopus

STANDING on the "long bridge" that carries Waterloo Street across Victoria Lake, Stratford, Ont., somebody's best girl and I were gazing at the reflections of the electric lights that surround that portion of the lake between the "long bridge" and the "stone bridge," that makes the



water look like the latest skirt in black and yellow stripes, made of crinkly tissue paper, when I remarked, "This is the most beautiful park in Ontario." To which she replied, in a scornful voice: "This isn't the park, silly! The park is away up there on Queen Street."

Now, of course, you can't quarrel over a matter like that with somebody's best girl, especially under the spell of that golden-banded lake, with the band playing "Somebody's Eyes" in the bandstand behind the willows in the Post Office Park.

I thought, perhaps, she might take that as a proposal, and throw her arms around my neck, and we'd be happy for a week after, till another dispute arose; but just then the band played "God Save the King," as it religiously does on the first stroke of ten by the Post Office clock, and "Somebody's Eyes" seemed to look right through me and to throw out scornful glints as I stood to attention. Ah, well! I can tell something about parks, anyway, and when the soldier lad comes back I hope that he will stand on the "long bridge" under the same enchanting lights and music, with the girl of the starry eyes, and I know that if he sings "Somebody's Eyes" then, that there will be no disappointment in his heart as in mine.

Meantime, was I right, or was somebody's best girl right in the estimate of the park. What is a park?

In most places, a park is a band-stand, surrounded on all sides by a field of long grass, bordered by rows of soft maple trees. This enclosed space is used for races or other events on May 24th, July 1st, and Labour Day. Once in a few years some wandering merry-go-round sets up there, and entertains the children for a few days. During the remainder of the year it is a dreary pasture field, in which the cows of a few favoured citizens try to



see how close they can crop the grass in some places.

Some parks have a respectable grove of trees, beneath which is some play equipment, perhaps a place for heating water, and a pavilion—all closely related to picnics. A higher step in advance is a park with a variety of trees, with shrubs and flowers properly disposed. Then if the grass is kept cut and a fountain can be provided, splashing its water into a small lily pond at its base, with a few fish and water turtles for the amusement of children, the residents within easy walking distance will begin to make more regular use of the park.

But the real park is a combination of land and water that can be used by the citizens for recreation of all kinds, not only on national holidays and picnic days, but every day in the week, after school and business hours.

More than twenty years ago Mr. G. G. McPherson, K.C., offered fifty acres of land in the north-east corner of Stratford for park purposes at a price far below its real value. It was purchased, and in

and the water basin was finished.

Since that time the Park Board has been able to sell some lots from the south side of the park, and this money, with the half-mill levy on the total city assessment, has enabled them to continue the improvement of the park lands on both sides of the lake.

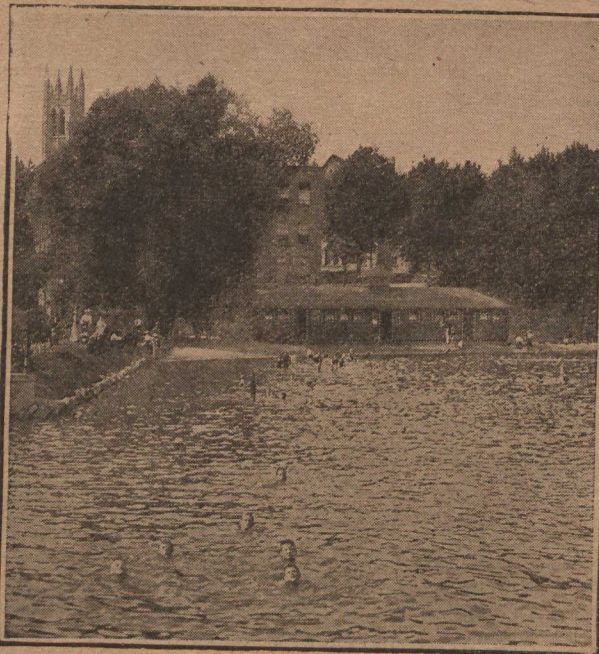
The city granted a free site of six acres in the park to the Government for a Normal School. This corner has gradually become the most beautiful part of the park, for by the agreement there can be no separation between the grounds of the Normal School and the park. For the past two years the Park Board has been preparing football and baseball grounds, north of the Normal grounds. On condition that these will be available for certain specified times for the Normal Students, the Ontario Government has paid half the cost of levelling and seeding these for football purposes.

AS soon as the drive on the north side of the lake is finished, the Park Board will proceed to develop their property below the dam, so that in no distant time the City of Stratford will be divided into two approximately equal parts by a continuous park of land and water, over two miles from end to end. Practically every citizen in Stratford will be able to reach some part of this park in less than fifteen minutes' walk.

Imagine yourself a citizen of this delightful Classic Park City. You may go to the tennis courts below the dam and take part in that vigorous game. You may go to the bathing beach, just above the dam, and enjoy a cooling plunge. From there you may cross the dam to the boat-house and rent a row boat or a canoe for a row up the lake. If too tired to propel the craft yourself you may take the Park Board's motor launch at any half-hour for the mile trip.

Now, to starboard, stands the skating rink, owned

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the course of time a landscape artist was secured to draw up plans for the park system that is now the pride of the city. He drew up a plan which included an artificial lake, over a mile long, beginning at a dam just back of the Post Office and ending at the Water Works, east of the park. This lake varies in width, but averages about one hundred and fifty yards.

A PRIVATE company owned the old dam. The Park Board got the city to buy out the company at a cost of \$10,000. Then a new dam was built and the lake was a real part of the park, but it was very weedy. A by-law was submitted to the people to spend \$15,000 in dredging out the lake to get rid of the weeds. The Park Board spent more than this amount—private members supplying the funds—and the next year a further vote of \$10,000 was secured,

