

CALGARY CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF PARKS



©... from the ground up ...©

CALGARY CELEBRATING
100 YEARS OF PARKS

☞ from the ground up ☞





*This book is dedicated to all the individuals, groups and organizations
which have supported and contributed to Calgary's parks and pathways.
Our parks and pathways are remarkable, a direct reflection of the extraordinary people
who have, and continue to give, their time and energy creating and sustaining a vibrant,
healthy, safe and caring community filled with beautiful spaces for
Calgarians today and for generations to come.*



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1900s.

TCARDS: COURTESY MR. ROE

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1910s.

CHIVES NA-4355-31

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1940s.

CHIVES PA-3538-20



Letters

Dear Fellow Calgarians:

Our natural environment is an important asset in our great city, and it is particularly important as our city grows and matures, we protect, expand and enhance our public green spaces. Over the past 100 years, Parks has worked to create and sustain a vibrant, healthy, safe and caring community as the provider of parks and open space.

Please join me in celebrating the 100th anniversary of The City of Calgary Parks as we commemorate the past, present and future of parks and open spaces in Calgary. From the time of the first Parks Superintendent, John Buchanan, until now, the citizens of Calgary recognized the need for quality parks and open spaces.

Understanding our roots and working to maintain and enhance our natural environment will help ensure a bright future for all Calgarians, spanning many generations and centuries to come. Parks are a precious resource in a big city – please take some time to learn more about Calgary’s open spaces, and get out and enjoy them for yourself!

Sincerely,



October 12, 2010
Dave Bronconnier
Mayor

Dear Reader;

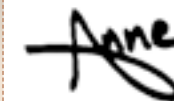
The year 2010 marks the 100th anniversary of The City of Calgary Parks. One hundred years ago the first Parks Superintendent was tasked with planning and establishing a park system for the growing town of Calgary; population approximately 40,000.

Although Parks has seen significant changes over the last century, many things haven’t changed. Calgarians’ appreciation for green spaces was woven into the fabric of Calgary’s culture early in 1884 when citizens could purchase spruce trees for five cents each to help beautify the town. Today, Calgarians continue to care for and protect our green spaces of more than 7,700 hectares and including more than 700 kilometres of pathways. Our parks have truly grown with us – from activities that have stood the test of time like music concerts in parks, to new activities like geocaching – parks have a special place in our lives.

For 100 years, The City of Calgary Parks has stewarded open spaces and nature.

We have been a part of every Calgary neighbourhood. We look forward to many more years of promoting environmental stewardship and community pride in these parks that make Calgary a great city and a wonderful place to live.

Sincerely,



October 10, 2010
Anne Charlton, CSLA
Director

The earth beneath our feet

This is the story of the builders and benefactors of Calgary's parks and open spaces; the individuals, community groups and corporations that have together shaped the softer side—the sense of place—in this urban centre, over the past 100 years.

It is the story about people changing nature to conform to human needs and expectations, and then changing expectations to align with, to preserve, and even to restore the natural environment and cultural landscape that is Calgary.

Calgary's physical setting is spectacular and opportune. The city sits on the western edge of the prairie grasslands in clear view of the Rocky Mountains to the south and west.

The varying textures are dramatic, the climate brazen, the microclimates and plant life diverse.

Two rivers bring in clean mountain water, which over thousands of years, has carved steep escarpments, rendered bluffs and defined islands along the river valley.

The region's topography was ideal for bison hunting among the First Nations people who have been here all along. In time, it would lend itself to more recreational exploits as environmental parkland within the city. The natural landscape of Calgary provides the physical resources for the growing of parks. People provide the vision and energy to make that growth happen.

Whether enjoyed as a place to walk, sit, play or socialize, parks have considerable bearing on the quality of life enjoyed by the population of any urban community. Parks provide a much-needed respite from the unnatural pace of an urban lifestyle.

But competing interests and high land values can challenge priorities, and the natural environment is always and by definition, vulnerable. Putting useful land to the side for public enjoyment before private interests consume it is at best expensive, and at worst, cost-prohibitive.

The City of Calgary has benefited immensely from the foresight and generosity of indivi-

duals, families and corporations that recognize the intrinsic value of public open space by making it a priority, for now and for the future.

After 100 years of growing and nurturing, Calgary boasts a parks and open space system that covers 7,742 hectares spread over 5,345 individual parcels. This system of community parks is supplemented by an extensive pathway system stretching more than 700 kilometres.

As Parks celebrates 100 years of effort and accomplishment, the parks themselves continue to provide a source of public pride and a place of belonging.

POSTCARDS BELOW

(left to right) CPR Park, 1900s, Skating on Elbow River, 1910s, St. George's Island, 1920s, Central Memorial Park, 1940s, Dinny at Calgary Zoo, 1950s, Central Memorial Park, 1970s.

HISTORIC POSTCARD COLLECTION
COURTESY OF MR. ROE.





PAGE Picnic lunch
loughing in Alberta,

CHIVES NA-3747-6

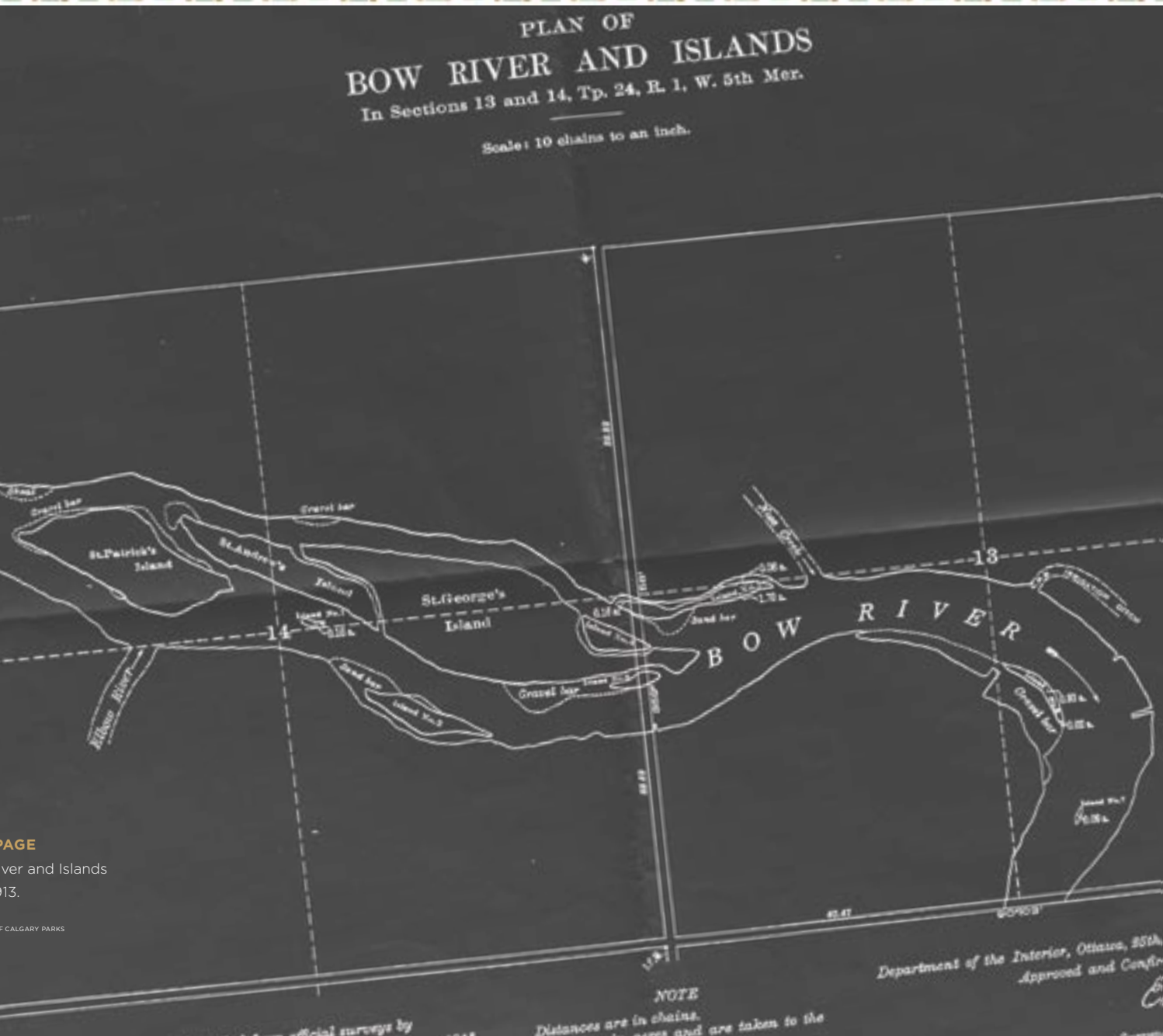


CHAPTER ONE

Putting down roots

[1875 - 1909]

Putting down roots – growing Calgary’s park system



Putting down roots

1875 - 1909

After the establishment of

Fort Calgary, the town of Calgary became official in the fall of 1884, with its own government, industry (agricultural), newspaper (the Herald) and a spattering of timber homes exposed to the relentless winds and manic climates of the bald prairie. It was a harsh environment, but the 500 or so residents were optimistic they could transform it into home.



The promise of economic opportunity stimulated considerable interest in the area, and by the time the railroad arrived in 1883, a steady influx of settlers had already spawned a small town.



Picture it if you will. A camp on the north shore of the Bow River, across from what is now St. George's Island. Smoke is wafting from a smouldering fire that barely warms the crisp morning air. The running river animates an otherwise silent vignette at this strategic junction in the First Nations trail system. For generations the people of the Blackfoot Nation have camped here.

In the winter of 1787-88, European explorer David Thompson joined them. He recorded the longitude and latitude of the spot in his journal.

Not far away but nearly 100 years later, the North West Mounted Police established an outpost on a tract of barren land at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers. The year was 1875 and the west was about to be settled. Fort Calgary represented law and order in this remote region on the western edge of the prairies. And that semblance of civilization, along with unprecedented homesteading opportunities, would entice enterprising pioneers to stake a claim out west.

In 1880, the Canadian Pacific Railway revealed its plan to re-route the transcontinental train south and west along the

Bow River valley. The promise of economic opportunity stimulated considerable interest in the area, and by the time the railroad arrived in 1883, a steady influx of settlers had already spawned a small town.

The town of Calgary became official in the fall of 1884, with its own government, industry (agricultural), newspaper (the Herald) and a spattering of timber homes exposed to the relentless winds and manic climates of the bald prairie. It was a harsh environment, but the 500 or so residents were optimistic they could transform it into home.

When it came to transforming the landscape from barren to beautiful, William Pearce proved to be Calgary's earliest and perhaps most influential benefactor. An inspector for the Dominion Land Agencies in Ottawa, Pearce oversaw all land title claims out west.

A man of considerable clout, and unchecked arrogance, Pearce had a singular ability



ABOVE First Nations camp near Fort Calgary, AB., c 1880s.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-665-1

LEFT The View of Fort Calgary, AB., looking north from bank of Elbow River, 1881.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-325-13

From his first visit to the area in the early 1880s, Pearce believed in the creation of a city that would be visually attractive to citizens and visitors alike.

to irritate just about everyone he came in contact with. His boss, the Minister of the Interior, once claimed that 98 out of 100 people that Pearce met, disliked him. Fortunately for Calgary, what he lacked in popularity he made up for in vision.

From his first visit to the area in the early 1880s, Pearce believed in the creation of a city that would be visually attractive to citizens and visitors alike. He wasted no time getting things started. In 1884, three years before purchasing his own acreage from the CPR (Pearce Estate), Pearce used his position to reserve land along the north side of the Bow River between what would eventually become the Langevin and Louise bridges. As adjacent properties were being gobbled up with aggressive land claims, this 200-foot wide reserve was to be saved for public use, improved upon with the planting of trees, and destined to provide a pleasant drive along the Bow River. Today it is the city's landmark boulevard — Memorial Drive, and an important part of Calgary's extensive river pathway system.



William Pearce, c. 1881.

CHIVES NA-339-1

That same year, the community requested land from the Dominion Government for use as a public park. The request was approved and a large section of bare land adjacent to the Bow River at the far west end of town was transferred to the Town in 1885. Calgary's first park — which included the lands where Mewata Armouries and Shaw Millennium Park are today — would lay fallow for a good 20 years. It was out-of-the-way and its value was largely overlooked as parkland.

In June 1890, the Town filed for permission to use this land commonly known as the “west end park” for a waterworks pumping station. In September of the same year, they offered the entire property to the CPR for a train works yard if the railroad moved its Divisional point to Calgary. The CPR declined the offer, and the Town went on largely ignoring the park until 1906.

As prospective landowners continued to scramble for title to choice properties in 1884, the Town wrestled with many of the logistics that plague a young town, including the question of where to bury its dead. The Catholic Mission (established in Calgary in 1875), had its own cemetery, but the arrival of the railroad introduced a predominantly Protestant population that could not, and



ABOVE Calgary, AB, 1885.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-3188-42

would not be accommodated there indefinitely. The Catholic site was consecrated ground.

Suggesting the lack of a designated cemetery was forcing the burial of people at random locations around town, the Herald called on civic leaders to demonstrate some leadership and come up with a solution. The Town responded by creating a cemetery committee that, in turn, enlisted the assistance of

William Pearce in the search for suitable land. After careful consideration, Pearce selected 112 acres west of town where Shaganappi Golf Course is today. Its location on the hill afforded a lovely view of the town site, road access was deemed easy to establish, and there was potential for the site to serve other municipal needs such as a park, or a reservoir, if Calgary chose to establish a waterworks system in the future.



Calgary's early settlers were naturally drawn to the river's edge for leisure and refreshment, enjoying community picnics and family time there.



Funeral procession in Cemetery, Calgary, the 4, 1911.

CHIVES NA-2315-6

Always thinking ahead, Pearce was.

The one thing Pearce didn't do however, (nor did anyone else, for that matter), was plant a shovel in the ground there. If he had, there's a good chance he would have realized the criteria for a suitable graveyard involves more than a good view and easy road access.

In the winter of 1885, the federal government granted the Town the chosen site for use as a cemetery. By fall of 1888, it was clear the site was ill-suited for that purpose. The clay-based earth and stony subsoil made hand-digging graves an impossibly arduous task. There was no way around it. A new cemetery would need to be found and when it was, the interred remains here would have to be moved there.

At the east end of town, readily accessible and conveniently down wind, 40 acres on what is now Scotsman's Hill was considered a good alternative. The Dominion Government, which owned the land, had designated it for use as school land, but agreed to make it available to Calgary through public auction. In true eleventh-hour style, someone else swooped in and outbid the Town at auction, and the search for an alternate cemetery site continued.

Since free or cheap government land close to town was no longer available, a third plan to acquire a cemetery site was necessary. The Town clerk contacted the Minister of the Interior to ask permission to sell the old cemetery site (at Shaganappi) and purchase private land. Permission was granted and the search for a new site resumed.

It didn't take long to find one. A tract of mostly treeless, hillside land southeast of the Elbow River was for sale. Having pre-determined its suitability for grave excavation, the Town went on to purchase the land from Augustus Carney for \$70 an acre. Carney would remain in his house for some time after the sale. He served as the cemetery's first caretaker until the Parks and Cemeteries Committee appeared in 1892 to assume the responsibility of managing what became known as Union Cemetery.

For some reason, the Town never did follow through with the sale of the old cemetery land. And so Calgary's inventory of parkland grew, by default.

The natural topography of the region provided several other opportune park areas. Escarpments and bluffs along the rivers, and islands in the stream, for example, were preserved as part of Calgary's park system essentially because they appeared unsuited for anything else.

The Bow and Elbow rivers, with their fresh, mountain water and numerous small wooded islands, provided a stark contrast to the parched prairie land everywhere else. Calgary's early settlers were naturally drawn to the river's edge for leisure and refreshment, enjoying community picnics and family time there.

It should come as no surprise then that the Town of Calgary's first initiative to create a public park was a petition to the Minister of the Interior in 1887 requesting title to three of the largest Bow River islands within town limits.

William Pearce once again proved a strong advocate on behalf of Calgary. He proposed the Town take ownership of the islands with the condition they be used exclusively for

park purposes and that the Town plant trees and take other such initiatives to beautify the sites.

Suspecting the islands might one day be needed for future railway construction, the government opted to lease instead of granting ownership title. At first, the Town rejected the offer because it did not want to spend money for improvements to parkland it didn't own. But when the Herald suggested Calgary's civic leaders were out-of-step with other Canadian cities such as Montreal and Toronto in terms of Calgary's park development, the Town of Calgary had a change of heart.

More than two years of negotiations followed before the Town signed the lease agreement in 1890 and named the lower

BELOW St. George's Island, c 1900s.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-2159-10



Calgary's station garden was strategically located immediately north of the railway; right around where the Calgary Tower stands today.

island for St. George, the centre island for St. Andrew, and the upper island for St. Patrick.

While the Town saw the value in the island parks, by 1893 its investment in their beautification had been minimal. Instead, its priority was to connect the islands, and more specifically – St. George's Island – to the mainland, and thereby, the public to the parks. A ferry was designed, staffed and swept away by the river – twice. A bridge was the obvious and more expensive choice, though the structure wouldn't actually materialize until 15 years later.

The diversion of attention, and funds, did not please William Pearce who maintained a strong personal interest in the beautification of the island parks. He saw random

incidents, like a Town official's decision to chop down island trees, to be reprehensible. He called attention to the risk of subjecting Calgary's parks and cemetery assets to the whims of a fresh chairman of the Parks and Cemeteries Committee each year. He argued it would be better to place parks and cemeteries in the hands of a responsible Parks Board.

Individual agendas weren't the only thing influencing Calgary's future. In the heart of cattle country, Calgary's agricultural roots run deep. By 1884, Samuel Livingston was already well known for his farming success. In June of that year, he got together with other area farmers and businessmen, including Colonel James Walker, George King, Augustus Carney and James Fitzgerald to organize the Calgary and District Agricultural Society.

Their objective was to promote the agricultural potential of Calgary and area, within town and nationwide, with an annual fall fair, entries in agricultural fairs across the country, and publications proclaiming the fertility of Alberta's soil.

The Society needed land to host their annual exhibition, and petitioned the federal government for free land accordingly.

St. George's Bridge, Calgary, AB.,

CHIVES NA-2114-4



While the original request was being considered, the Society found a better location for an exhibition site; Crown land just north of the Elbow River. In early 1889, the federal government agreed to sell these 94 acres of land at a total cost of \$235.

In 1896, the debt-ridden Society sold the property to R.B. Bennett, a Calgary lawyer and the future prime minister of Canada. Five years later, in 1901, Bennett sold it to The City of Calgary for \$7,000. The property was renamed Victoria Park, and over the next several years, would provide exhibition grounds and Calgary's only athletic park. Victoria Park would eventually go on to house "The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth" — the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede.

Around the same time the Calgary and District Agricultural Society secured its piece of Calgary, the Canadian Pacific Railway developed one of theirs. In 1889, Alberta Divisional Superintendent John Niblock designated a block of CPR land for the development of a station garden, the likes of which had started blooming elsewhere in the western provinces with considerable success.

These station gardens were designed as a marketing showpiece, exemplifying the fertility and versatility of the region for the benefit of those travelling by rail. The

gardens showed travellers first hand what fine things are possible on the prairies.

Calgary's station garden was strategically located immediately north of the railway; right around where the Calgary Tower stands today. Newcomers in town, and visitors travelling through, couldn't miss it.

The CPR saw to the design and planting of the garden and the Town agreed to water and maintain it.

BELOW CPR Park, Station Garden, c 1900s.

HISTORIC POSTCARD COURTESY MR. ROE.





Appearances aside, everything with the CPR and the Town of Calgary wasn't all marigolds and roses in the late 1880s. The CPR was amassing a substantial debt to the Town of Calgary in the form of unpaid property taxes, and the growing municipality desperately needed the railway to pay up.

It was a familiar story clear across the nation. The CPR was just getting their railroad going and they were getting hammered with expenses. The company had stockpiled an incredible inventory of land as a speculative investment, and now every fledgling town along the tracks had its hand out for tax money. The railroad wanted special concessions and was refusing, in many cases, to pay.

With its own start-up expenses growing, the Town of Calgary had no choice but to sue the CPR for back taxes. Probably every small town along the rail was thinking about doing the same thing. In 1888-1889, the CPR sat down with its lawyers and drafted up a deal. They offered to turn over half the property taxes owing Calgary, and some land, at a reduced price.

The one stipulation the CPR added to the deal was that the land could not be resold and the Town had to use it as a park.

Roughly 20 years later, that property would be transformed into one of Calgary's favourite gathering places — Central (Memorial) Park. It is the first example of land acquisition for non-payment of taxes in Calgary.

In addition to the development of a few select parks and the designation of land as future parks, the Town of Calgary and its citizens became avid tree planters in the early years.

The environmental benefits of planting trees were the subject of considerable discussion throughout North America in the 1880s. But for Calgarians living in this essentially treeless, wind-swept landscape, aesthetics was likely as much of a motivator as anything else.

Beginning with The City of Calgary's incorporation in May 1894, and continuing on at various times through the spring of 1905, The City distributed spruce trees to taxpayers upon request for a small fee. Calgary's backyards were starting to green up.

In 1895, The City introduced a boulevard tree-planting program that saw trees going in along Calgary's main roads. The co-ordinated effort between The City and its citizens planted the seeds for Calgary's urban forest.



The success of the tree planting program and the general transformation of the Calgary landscape was dependent on providing water. The mid-1890s were marked by a period of drought. Without proper irrigation, nothing in the way of vegetation would thrive. Enter William Pearce, again. He had started the Calgary Irrigation Company in

1892, with an ambitious plan to redirect water from the Elbow River via a lengthy system of canals and flumes, or channels, to promote mixed farming and forestry in the region. It was controversial, to say the least.

Pearce was accused of using his influence with the federal government to gain privileges others felt they were being denied.

ABOVE (top-bottom, left-right) Photographs and postcard of Central Park (now Central Memorial Park), Calgary, AB., 1908, 1930s, 1914.

HISTORIC POSTCARD COURTESY OF MR. ROE.
GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-115
GLENBOW ARCHIVES ND-8-481

The Pearce Estate became western Canada's first experimental irrigation farm; an oasis of sorts in the midst of the prairie.

The Feds were in the process of drafting the North West Irrigation Act at the time, and Pearce was in fact following the rules to the letter. Of course, if you help write the rules, you know what they are.

Then, just as the battle for irrigation was getting really heated, it started to rain. Pearce hadn't seen that coming. The drought ended at the turn of the century and the actual influence of the Calgary Irrigation Company proved modest. The Pearce Estate became western Canada's first experimental irrigation farm; an oasis of sorts in the midst of the prairie. And despite appearances, his efforts weren't entirely self-serving. The federal government's Forestry Branch credits Pearce with having established the first tree farm in Western Canada.

Today, the Pearce Estate has another life as home to the environmental Pearce Estate Park Interpretive Wetland project and the Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery.

Around the turn of the century, the mood in Calgary was shifting from tentative to confident. The Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern railways arrived and stirred up a new wave of interest and investment. As the city's population increased, so did land values and the number of subdivisions. And with the promise of prosperity came an increased level of public expectation.

Calgary's civic leaders responded by extending the township limits and investing in necessary infrastructure including water, sewer, and electric systems, a street railway, and parks. They pictured a conscious transformation: the creation of a "Greater Calgary," a more desirable and beautiful place to live. A general interest in parks and recreation, including everything from public gardens, children's playgrounds, athletic fields and amusement parks to zoological displays and agricultural exhibitions, was integral to that vision.

The sense of optimism in Calgary was tangible. In the spring of 1906, taxpayers were so convinced of Calgary's potential as a

William Pearce
Calgary AB.,
CHIVES NA-3898-5



ABOVE Pearce Estate Park, 2010. **LEFT** House at William Pearce Estate, c 1890s.

PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY
GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-3898-2



The Calgary Horticultural Society encouraged citizens to improve their individual properties, and assisted them in doing so.

place of beauty and civic pride they voted in favour of a new bylaw that would raise and invest \$23,000 for parks.

It was a substantial coup for Chairman Hunt and the Parks and Cemeteries Committee. The Parks operating budget for 1906 had been a meagre \$2,858. That paid for caretaker wages, regular maintenance and little else. Here was an opportunity, the first of its kind really, to transform the long-neglected piece of parkland along the Bow River on the far west end of town into something special.

Hunt had his own vision of what that might entail, but to ensure the best possible result, and to his credit, he recommended the Town hire a professional landscape architect to create a master plan.

The clear choice in Hunt's mind was Frederick Todd, a renowned American landscape architect from Montreal and the designer behind that city's Mount Royal Park. Calgary would surely benefit from bringing in his skills, and his reputation.

But Calgary's civic leadership neither understood nor particularly respected the discipline of landscape architecture at the time. One alderman suggested The City engineer was every bit as capable of doing the work. And, although he was himself

in favour of contracting the work out to a professional, that City engineer conceded he could and would draw up the plans himself.

After much debate, Hunt proved convincing and Frederick Todd was awarded the contract as Calgary's first landscape architectural consultant. The park was to be called "Mewata," a Cree word meaning "be joyous," and it was to be beautiful.

But in early 1907, Chairman Hunt left Calgary rather abruptly, and with him went the impetus to develop Mewata Park and the focus on horticulture in park development.

The Administration promptly cancelled Todd's contract, and the Parks and Cemeteries Committee shifted its attention, and funds, to various construction projects. These included the redevelopment of Victoria Park as a proper exhibition space for agricultural fairs and various live-stock associations with a grandstand, administration buildings and such; building a bridge to St. George's Island; and making general improvements at Union Cemetery.

As The City went about single-mindedly planting mainly hard infrastructure at various park locations during 1907-1908, six local businessmen joined forces to plant flowers. The Calgary Horticultural Society formed in the spring of 1908.

Its purpose was clear and steady: to promote the inherent growing potential of the region and, in so doing, ensure the development and prosperity of a great city. The Society hosted an annual flower show, presented model gardens and published articles and later books to educate and inspire citizens. A.M. Terrill, one of the founding members, owned and operated Calgary's first greenhouse and florist shop. That was in addition to his role as both alderman and chairman of the Parks and Cemeteries Committee. His business connections were viewed as an asset rather than a conflict of interest and so he too garnered a certain level of public recognition and respect.

And by 1909, William Reader, the personal gardener for local cattle king Pat Burns, was contributing regular articles on the subject of local gardening and speaking on behalf of the Horticultural Society.

The Calgary Horticultural Society encouraged citizens to improve their individual properties, and assisted them in doing so. But, according to the Herald, if Calgary was to blossom into a truly great city, the civic leadership would need to embrace the same objective for the town as a whole.

By the end of February 1909, the Society had persuaded City Council to create a

Parks Board to formally oversee the future of Calgary's parks and cemeteries with A.M. Terrill appointed chairman. It wasn't the first time the suggestion had come up, but it was the first time Council acted on it.

By June, the Board had drafted a bylaw that provided for a Parks Board of five commissioners who would, among other things, have the authority to establish a budget and appoint a Parks superintendent to manage day-to-day park development and operations.

The bylaw brought the administration of parks, cemeteries and boulevards under one authority and positioned the Parks Board to effectively direct the growth of parkland and playgrounds and, in concert with the Calgary Horticultural Society, spearhead the beautification of the town.



LEFT William Reader representing the Horticultural Society, Calgary, AB., c 1910s.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-55

AGE Parade,
y, 1905.

CHIVES NA-1497-9

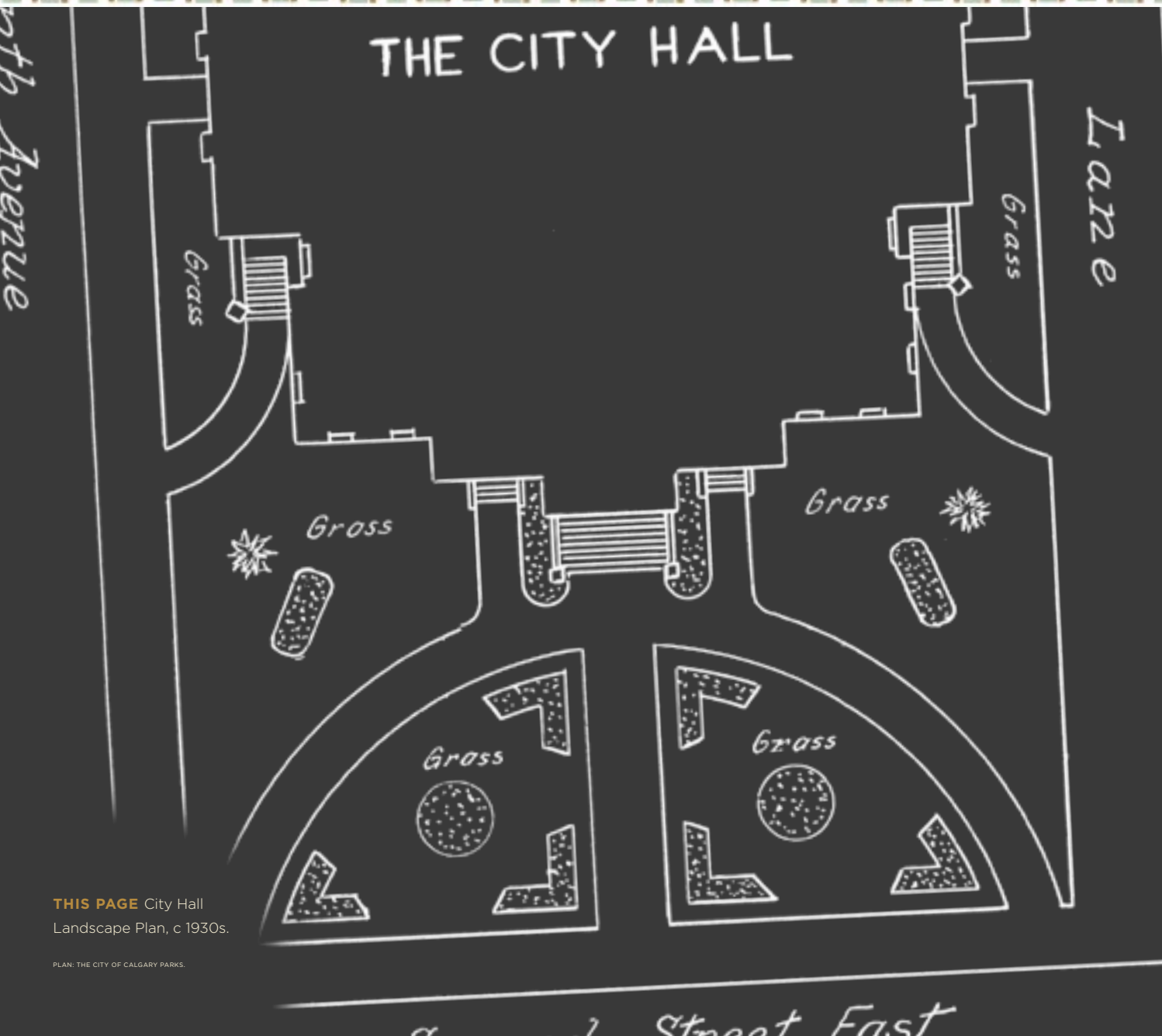


CHAPTER TWO

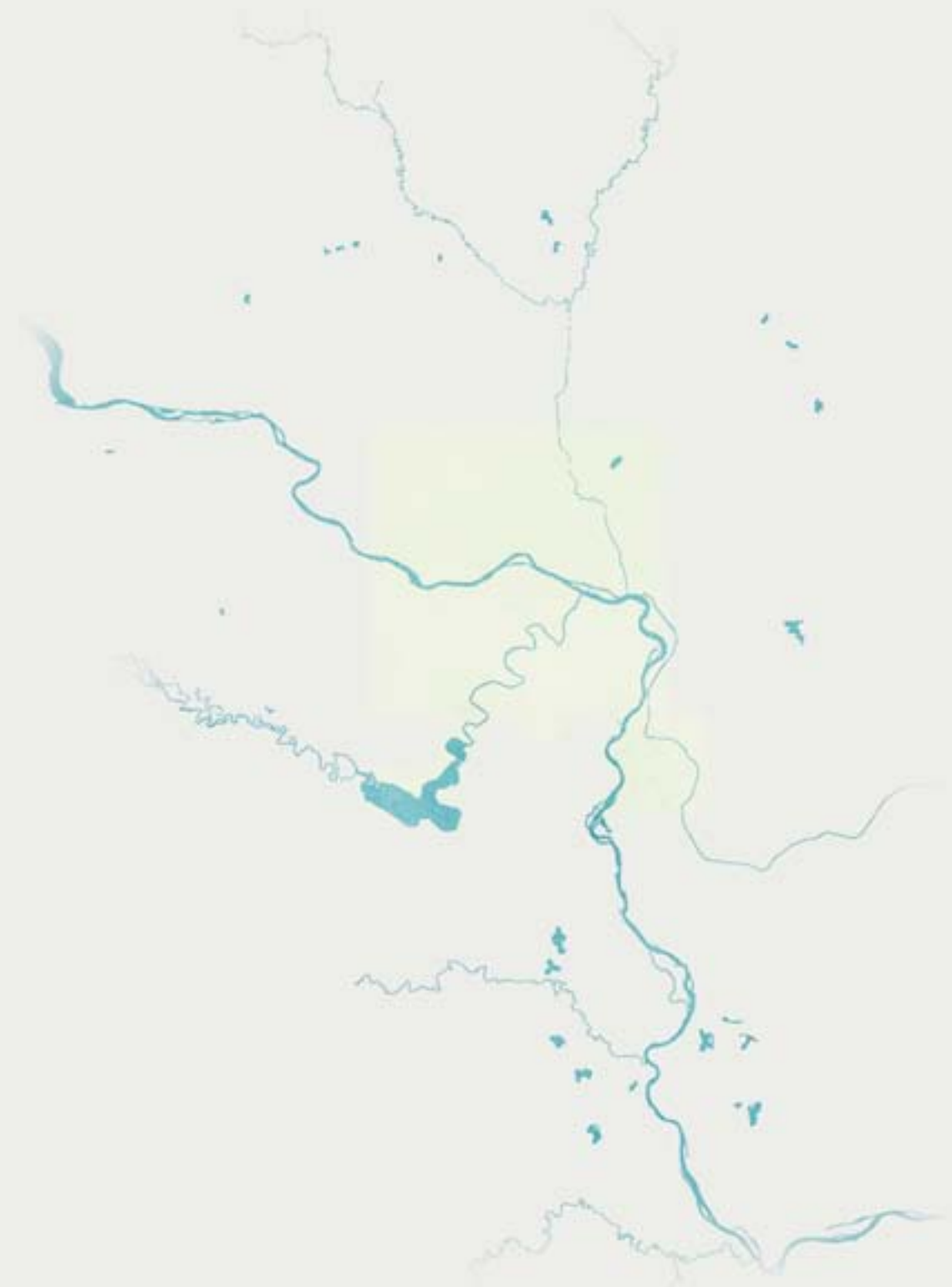
The seeds of promise

[1910-1946]

Calgary's pre-war parks system



THIS PAGE City Hall
Landscape Plan, c 1930s.





THIS PAGE Women playing cricket at Riley Park, Calgary, AB., 1921.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA2393-1

Buchanan was confident in his knowledge of botany and professed to be an excellent public speaker. Deemed the perfect candidate, his skill set would be put to work designing a parks system, cultivating public interest in park development, promoting public education around the proper care and value of parks, and hopefully, generating public funding to make it all happen.



By the beginning of 1910, the sense of absolute confidence in Calgary's future as a western metropolis made planning for that future a meaningful exercise. Park development was seen as integral to the city's success, not optional.

After a substantial hiccup caused by the resignation of the Board chairman at the end of its first year, J.S. MacDonald stepped into the chairman's shoes and the Board followed through with its first priority, which was to hire a Parks superintendent to design and lay out a parks system for Calgary.

It was a monumental decision signalling the official birth of The City of Calgary Parks.

John Buchanan of Guelph, Ontario, was the man for the job. Well-read on the subject of landscape gardening, Buchanan was confident in his knowledge of botany and professed to be an excellent public speaker. Deemed the perfect candidate, his skill set would be put to work designing a parks system, cultivating public interest in park development, promoting public education around the proper care and value of parks, and hopefully, generating public funding to make it all happen.

To some extent, public interest was already evident. Wealthy private citizens were dedicating substantial tracks of land to the expansion of The City's parks inventory. In February of 1910, Ezra Hounsfield Riley donated 20 acres of his land in Hillhurst for park purposes. In October, James Shouldice transferred 100 acres of his land along the Bow River to The City with the stipulation it be used for games, sports and other such recreational activities. Including the site of the town's original failed cemetery which was officially transferred from the federal government in March and named Shaganappi Park, the total parks inventory would exceed 300 acres by year-end.

But land ownership and park stewardship are not the same thing. Without adequate budget money, the parks system designed by Buchanan, and all that parkland could not be developed. The Board knew that, and Buchanan knew it too.

So with the Board's blessing, Buchanan proposed a budget of \$100,000 to finance immediate and much-needed improvements to the island parks, Union Cemetery, Mewata, Central and Riley parks and he drafted a bylaw to that effect.



ABOVE

Ezra Hounsfield Riley, c 1900s and John Buchanan, c 1900s.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES M-8375-16-4
PHOTO OF JOHN BUCHANAN: UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH.

Planting shade trees along streets and boulevards, introducing a variety of new tree and shrub species, protecting young trees from the damaging chinook winds by wrapping them in burlap, even dynamiting the hardpan earth to loosen the soil and make planting easier; these were some of the solutions Iverson had in mind.



Portrait of Iverson, a German self-professed landscape artist, c 1910s.

CALGARY CORPORATE RECORDS, LA CR-92-049-10

Buchanan then met with the editors of the Herald to obtain public support. Despite a valiant effort and numerous editorials praising the medical benefits of recreation, fresh air and breathing spaces (typhoid fever was in town), and despite a series of public meetings to discuss its merits, the bylaw was narrowly defeated.

And apparently, so was Buchanan. Although he loved his job, upon submitting his first and only annual report to the Board in January 1911,

Buchanan resigned from his position as Parks superintendent and left Calgary, forever.

The good people on the Parks Board started searching far and wide for a new Parks superintendent. They placed ads in various newspapers out east and into the United States. Local gardener William Reader applied for the job, but his application didn't garner any attention.

The Board was looking for a superstar; someone who would add instant credibility and status to Calgary's Parks department. They thought they found one in Richard Iverson, a German trained, self-professed landscape artist.

Iverson was described as a man of marked ability who had studied forestry and park work at the University of Berlin where he graduated with the highest honours. Following graduation, he worked in the German Imperial Gardens and became a personal favourite of Kaiser Wilhelm, apparently on account of his energy and ability.

Iverson arrived during an April snowstorm and his initial impression of Calgary was not good. He wasn't a quitter though (a fact that would become painfully clear later on), and soon warmed up to the idea that, with his extensive knowledge and refined skills, he could greatly improve the existing situation.

Planting shade trees along streets and boulevards, introducing a variety of new tree and shrub species, protecting young trees from the damaging chinook winds by wrapping them in burlap, even dynamiting the hardpan earth to loosen the soil and make planting easier; these were some of the solutions Iverson had in mind.

Challenges aside, there were a few key logistical issues that Iverson would not have to contend with in his position. He got the keys to the newly constructed Parks superintendent's residence at Union Cemetery, for one.



LEFT (top) Tree lined streets, looking East on 13th Avenue, c 1920s.

HISTORIC POSTCARD COURTESY OF MR. ROE.

BOTTOM Superintendent's house at Union Cemetery, c 1911.

PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY PARKS

And Iverson benefited from the passage of a bylaw in May 1911, right after his arrival, followed by another the next year that



together contributed \$161,000 to Parks' operating budget. It was much needed funding and Iverson didn't waste any time spending it. Iverson had plenty of his own ideas about what needed to be done with respect to the development of Calgary's parks and parkland. And he didn't even pretend to care if he had consensus moving forward.

While his list of accomplishments would grow to be quite impressive — everything from landscaping plans for Union Cemetery (complete with an expensive entrance



archway), and Riley Park (with a picket fence and two costly entrances), a tree nursery on St. Patrick's Island and Calgary's first playground installation on St. George's Island, to the design and development of a formal Victorian garden at Central Park (with a statue, fountains and a magnificent bandstand fit for royalty) — his utter disregard for the opinion of others put him in a bad way from the beginning, and without a doubt, limited his influence on Calgary's parks in the end.

Within a couple months of his arrival Iverson had managed to alienate the Calgary Horticultural Society, which began campaigning for his removal immediately. By spring of 1912, he had lost the confidence of a couple members of Council who complained that he had failed to competently administer the parks program, with the result that projects were incomplete and over budget.

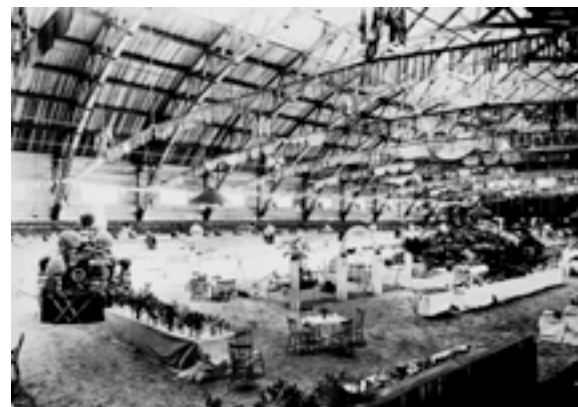
Allegations of incompetence were joined by that of ethical misconduct when, during a general audit of all City departments, one alderman reported the suspicious delivery of 12, two-horse loads of potatoes to the Parks superintendent's residence.

A formal inquiry ultimately cleared Iverson of any wrongdoing with respect to the

potato incident. The investigation concluded however, that though he was a first-class technical expert, he was a poor choice for an administrator. It was recommended he be relieved of his administrative responsibilities immediately.

True to form, Iverson refused to quit. And though City Council asked the Parks Board to fire him, the Board flat out refused. After a year-long stalemate between the three bodies of power, the Parks Board was abolished in March 1913, and Iverson was paid \$500 to submit his resignation.

The real cost of the Iverson fiasco was yet to be determined. Parks had neglected its responsibilities during the controversy and public support for parks inevitably lost some ground as well.



At the same time, the inventory of City-owned parkland was expanding exponentially as promoters of land subdivisions proposed to exchange property for access to City infrastructure.



LEFT (top) Marketing sketch for Tuxedo Park, c 1911. **LEFT OPPOSITE** (bottom) Calgary Horticultural Display, c 1913.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-2472-1
GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-96

Throughout Iverson's contentious term as Parks superintendent, Calgary kept growing. The general beautification of the city through boulevard construction and tree planting continued, but staff struggled to keep pace with growth. New streets were springing up everywhere, as were conflicts with other City departments that managed water, sewer and gas connections buried under planted boulevards.

At the same time, the inventory of City-owned parkland was expanding exponentially as promoters of land subdivisions proposed to exchange property for access to City infrastructure. Requests for access to The City's waterworks system came to be expected. Extensions to the street railway system became a popular request.

Tuxedo and Bowness parks are two of the more notable examples of land that came

Bowness Park holds a special place in Calgary's park history, its cultural landscape, and in the hearts of Calgarians. Its picturesque natural setting along the Bow River on the outskirts of town made it a classic example of the kind of "pleasure grounds" enjoyed by city folk in the early 1900s.

into Parks' inventory through this type of exchange in 1911-1912. Both would take several years to be fully developed due to a simple lack of resources.

Bowness Park holds a special place in Calgary's park history, its cultural landscape, and in the hearts of Calgarians. Its picturesque natural setting along the Bow River on the outskirts of town made it a classic example of the kind of "pleasure grounds" enjoyed by city folk in the early 1900s. The streetcar was extended west to encourage public access. The lagoon made for a popular swimming hole in the summer and an equally popular skating rink in the colder months. Visitors enjoyed amusement park rides and music, broadcast through an electronic phonograph connected to loudspeakers on the lagoon. Music remains a nostalgic part of the skating experience there to this day.

As park development and boulevard planting continued to lag further and further behind the city's growth under the direction of the Parks Board, our old friend William Pearce began meeting with the Calgary Horticultural Society. They discussed the need for a master plan for parks and the creation of a new institution that would be more effective in dealing with some of the long-term planning questions and issues around parks.

In December 1911, the Town Planning Commission formed. Its mandate was to plan for parks, boulevards and the like, city-wide and far into the future. This arm's length group of citizens would contract a town planning consultant from the British Empire named Thomas Mawson. His job was to create a plan for a greater Calgary, and though truly inspirational in its vision of an "open space" parks system with "linear parks" and "pathway connectivity," the Mawson Plan of 1914 had not anticipated the social and economic challenges of the First World War. Through no fault of its own, the Mawson Plan would be shelved even before it was completed.

When Council disbanded the Parks Board in 1913, Calgary's third Parks superintendent, William R. Reader took control.

William Roland Reader was a gardener before all else. His expertise in horticulture was a matter of great personal pride; the product of many years of hands-on experience and experimentation in private estate gardens such as that of Patrick Burns.

Reader's original application for the position of Parks superintendent in 1911 made no reference to his qualifications in landscape architecture or public speaking, which may have been why he was overlooked at the time.

His flawless track record as secretary and speaker for the Calgary Horticultural Society could have spoken to his passion, his administrative talents, his attention to detail, his eloquence, and a proven ability to play nicely with others in the sandbox.

On April 1, 1913, Reader was appointed Parks superintendent on an interim basis. Three months later he moved into the Parks

superintendent's residence with The City's blessing, on a permanent basis.

It was not to be an easy tenure. Economic crises, environmental extremes and two world wars; this was the context for Reader's career with Parks. The optimistic bubble over Calgary had developed a slow leak. Social needs would start to attract serious consideration.



LEFT John Hextall with City officials at Bowness Park, 1911.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-3496-16



LEFT Swimming at Bowness Park c 1930.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES ND-8-337.



The challenges started almost immediately with the collapse of Calgary's real estate boom and a dramatic drop in economic activity. For Parks it meant an uncertain operating budget and the apparent end to the acquisition of parkland through private donations. Ironically, the development of Calgary's parks system would benefit in the end.



Canoeing in the Bowness channel at Bowness 1930.

CHIVES NA-1604-66

Reader had always seen the value of boulevards, parks and playgrounds as influenced by their dependence on one another and their distribution throughout the city. The collapse of the real estate economy meant The City was acquiring a massive amount of land through tax sales; land in neighbourhoods all around town. Here was an opportunity for The City to develop a comprehensive network of parks, pathways and playgrounds city-wide. It was a dream situation for the Parks superintendent really.

In 1922, The City's administration embraced Reader's suggestion and adopted a policy for reserving land for parks. It was a

major cause for applause because it meant that Calgary would never be in the position that other big cities found themselves in, where population growth out-paced the existing park system.

The property we now know as Woods Memorial Park came to be in The City's possession as a result of the new policy in 1922. It was one of several prime locations acquired around the same time, including land for parks in Crescent Heights, Mount Pleasant, Killarney, Glengarry, Capitol Hill, Rosedale, Stanley Park, East Calgary, the Millican Estate, Bankview, West Calgary and South Mount Royal. Reader transformed the respective parcels into priceless ornamental gems.

Reader also developed a network of smaller ornamental parks using plots of land left over after laying out the street system. These small plots included traffic circles, street ends and islands in the middle of crescents. If he could plant it, Reader would work to make it beautiful. If it was beautiful, people would value, and by extension, respect it in their community.

The Vacant Lots Garden Club pioneered what we call the "broken window" theory back in 1914 with its civic beautification initiative. The objective was to encourage

The Vacant Lots Garden Club pioneered what we call the "broken window" theory back in 1914 with its civic beautification initiative. The objective was to encourage individuals who owned vacant lots to cultivate and transform them into fertile garden plots.



LEFT A Vacant Lots Garden Club garden, c 1920s.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-85

individuals who owned vacant lots to cultivate and transform them into fertile garden plots. The City would help prep the soil for planting and provide free seed. Free of weeds and garbage, the gardens would produce vegetables or flowers and contribute to the nourishment and overall aesthetics, and pride of the community as a whole.

Participation in the program peaked in 1943, the year following Reader's retirement. At that time, 3,229 of these garden lots blossomed across Calgary.

The Bridgeland-Riverside Vacant Lots Garden is the last of its kind in Calgary.

The garden dates back to the late 1920s and continues to grow produce and community pride.

Reader took great pride in a little garden of his own; an oasis of sorts that he called the "rockery" on the steep north slope of Union Cemetery and the grounds of his official residence as Parks superintendent.

The creation of this cascading rock garden was a personal passion that consumed a great deal of Reader's spare time from 1922-1929 as he continued to experiment with seeds, plant species and placement in the local climate. And though he put so much

Reader Rock Garden is now one of Calgary's most special settings and is designated as a Provincial Historic Resource. Visitors are welcome any time, as it should be.

of himself into its being, Reader always remained adamant that it was a public garden and meant to be shared.

Many decades of neglect following Reader's 1942 retirement, and then his death the very next year, saw the garden all but disappear beneath a steady growth of grass and weed. Then, in 2004, Parks deemed the cultural landscape worthy of historical restoration.

Reader Rock Garden is now one of Calgary's most special settings and is designated as a Provincial Historic Resource. Visitors are welcome any time, as it should be.

Reader always thought of parks in terms of their inherent value to society. He believed

a progressive public education program was inseparable from public welfare. Tree-lined boulevards and beautiful parks added to the value of adjacent property and bolstered civic pride. Parks themselves expanded the opportunity for comfort and pleasure. They invited participation and raised the level of individual and community well being. Parks were always about and for the people.

In the fall of 1913, Reader introduced skating rinks in Mewata, Hillhurst and Victoria parks. It was the start of a comprehensive recreational program that encouraged citizens to make full use of the parks. Fresh air, exercise and enjoyment were wholesome therefore recreation ought to be promoted.

But money was tight and options limited. In the early summer of 1914, The City identified a suitable location for swimming in the Elbow River. It cleared debris, roped off the deeper, more dangerous areas and provided his and her dressing rooms for public enjoyment. It was a popular public venue and if there had been money in the budget, Reader, who was an active member of the

William Reader in
ckery, c 1920s.

CHIVES NA-1604-101



LEFT William Reader's house and garden, c 1930s.

THE CITY OF CALGARY ARCHIVES NA-1604-102



Calgary Swimming Club, would have liked to do more.

As it was, Calgarians would have to be content swimming for free at a few choice locations along the Bow and Elbow rivers, at the lagoon in Bowness Park, or paying at private facilities such as the YMCA and YWCA, until 1941. That's when The City built its first pool at Mewata Park.

In 1915, Reader developed the first City-owned golf course on the site of the original west end cemetery. Shaganappi Golf Course provided the public nine holes of undulating greens and a panoramic view to die for.

Maude Riley and
n, c 1950-1955.

CHIVES: PA-3647-4



Playgrounds were another component of Reader's overall focus on recreation. The one Iverson had installed on St. George's Island just wasn't cutting it. In 1916, Reader's staff installed a number of swings, sand pits and teeter-totters at various parks around town. But bullying turned into a problem and formal supervision, though deemed necessary, proved cost prohibitive. If the public wanted to play, the community would have to step up and help.

And it did. In 1917, Reader worked with citizen Maude Riley to establish the Calgary Playground Association, which in turn received limited City funding for summer playground supervision. The arrangement continued through to 1922 when Reader finally got the budget to hire playground program staff.

The Parks department also provided facilities for various athletic leagues, namely, The City-owned athletic fields at Victoria, Mewata and Riley parks. These facilities became even more important to Reader after the First World War. In 1919, Parks invested in upgrades at two of them. Mewata Park benefited from a new grandstand, and cricket players in Riley Park reaped the benefit of two new pitches there. Later, in 1930, the addition of a stadium in Mewata Park made it the city's centre for organized sporting events.

The Zoo on St. George's Island was another of Reader's great successes. By the mid-1920s, the animal attraction was drawing record numbers of people to the island, and that, in Reader's mind, was the true measure of success. Anything that got people out to the parks was good.

The Zoo on St. George's Island was another of Reader's great successes. By the mid-1920s, the animal attraction was drawing record numbers of people to the island, and that, in Reader's mind, was the true measure of success. Anything that got people out to the parks was good. The fact the Zoo generated revenue to help sustain itself made it just that much better.

Despite his focus on leisure and recreation, Reader's tenure as Parks superintendent was definitely not all fun and games. The war years, and those in-between, had Parks scrambling for budget money and staff, re-examining its role and redefining the use of some of its parkland. Mewata Park was commandeered for exclusive military use and military teams made extensive use of others, including Riley Park. Key staff volunteered for military service. The situation was often challenging.

Parks inherited the honour and responsibility of commemorating the participation and sacrifices of Calgarians in the First World War. These efforts included working with various community members from 1922-1928 to plant boulevards along what is now Memorial Drive with a living legacy of more than 3,000 trees.

It also included redesigning Central Park to accommodate the cenotaph, removing the bandstand, and renaming the site Central Memorial Park in 1928.

In 1922, Parks expanded its cemetery system, adding Burnsland Cemetery and reserving 200 plots in Union Cemetery for the burial of ex-service men. In 1930, the cemetery system expanded again to include a new St. Mary's Cemetery, and then again in 1940, with Queens Park Cemetery which included Chinese, Jewish and Catholic sections along with a Field of Honour.

In 1940, the department hired Richard Haughian as a playground supervisor to assist Reader with the administration of the rapidly expanding City recreation programs. This addition of staff suggested the Administration finally recognized demand for City recreation programs was great — and growing. It was a major breakthrough from Reader's perspective, and though it was a long time coming, it would prove short-lived.



ABOVE A kangaroo at the Calgary Zoo, c 1920s.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-92



Arthur Morris concentrated on the traditional role of horticulture in park development while everyone waited for the end of the Second World War.

LEFT Zoo on the grounds of St. George's Island, c 1944.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-5643-172B

In the fall of 1942, Reader retired from The City, Haughian enlisted in the army and Parks was left seriously understaffed. Reader's successor, Arthur Morris, concentrated on the traditional role of horticulture in park development while everyone waited for the end of the Second World War.

The result was a recreation crisis in Calgary, prompting the Council of Social Agencies (a group created in the early 1930s to coordinate the various social agencies and ensure the efficient distribution of relief efforts), to conduct a survey on the city's recreational needs and the level at which they were being met.

It was essentially a citizen satisfaction survey on quality of life, and Calgary failed miserably. In its 1945 report, the group made a number of suggestions for immediate consideration, including creating a pathway system between parks, providing amenities along the riverbanks, and suggesting the creation of an entirely separate recreation department. The City took the report very seriously.

723



THIS PAGE Overlooking
Calgary from Nose Hill,
c 1973.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-2864-23851



CHAPTER THREE

The growing season

[1947-1976]

Calgary's post-war parks system



PAGE
Confederation Park
1965.

CITY OF CALGARY PARKS





The City promoted its Playground Director W. Garnett to director of the new Sports and Recreation division in 1947, and officially drew the line between parks and recreation for the first time.

THIS PAGE Riley Park, 1954.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-5600-7875C

Calgarians of all ages wanted to play games, to compete in organized sports, to cheer on their teams, to enjoy nature, to explore their creativity. With its focus on horticulture, the Parks department could not be all things to all people.



The war years were over, the economy was looking up with the discovery of oil in Leduc, people were desperate to be happy. Calgarians of all ages wanted to play games, to compete in organized sports, to cheer on their teams, to enjoy nature, to explore their creativity. With its focus on horticulture, the Parks department could not be all things to all people.

The City promoted its Playground Director W. Garnett to director of the new Sports and Recreation division in 1947, and officially drew the line between parks and recreation for the first time.

The development and administration of recreational amenities and programming gathered considerable momentum in the late 1940s and early 1950s as the general public, community groups and organized sporting leagues jostled for facility space and priority scheduling.

In 1950, a negotiated agreement between Parks and the local school boards brought schoolyards into the mix, making them available for public playfields after-hours and on weekends. As the city grew and new schools were built, these joint use sites would become standard practice.

The schools, and a few of the community-run facilities took care of their own, but regular maintenance of the parks, playgrounds and athletic fields was generally the responsibility of Parks staff.

The new Parks Superintendent, Alex Munro, was a long-time employee under William Reader and carried on in his tradition of civic beautification, planting trees and flowers, and maintaining many of the ornamental gardens and grounds his mentor had created.

In the 1950s, Munro developed the Senator Patrick Burns Memorial Rock Gardens on the northeast slope of Riley Park. It would be the last of its kind in the city. Calgary, and its parks system, was growing too fast to afford staff the luxury of time and money to plant and maintain these ornamental gems.

In 1952, the Province revised the Town and Rural Planning Act. Land developers were now required to set aside 10 per cent of new subdivision land as municipal reserve. It could be used, at the municipality's discretion, for the purpose of a school or a public park and recreation area. It would see The City's parkland holdings keep pace with the phenomenal growth of the next 25 years.

Calgary's growth was explosive and planning would have to begin in earnest at all levels of The Corporation if it had any hope of holding things together. Parks planning was integral to the whole.

And it would pressure Parks, responsible for park development and maintenance, to do the same.

Calgary's boundaries had remained untouched since 1911, but the economic growth and prosperity in the area during the post-war years would change everything — a total of 20 times. And as Calgary nearly doubled in area, its population more than quadrupled, from about 100,000 in 1947 to more than 470,000 in 1976.

The baby boom contributed to some of that growth, though certainly not all of it, and Calgary's parks and playgrounds were in greater demand than ever. As new subdivisions sprang up, schools, small community parks and neighbourhood tot lots dotted the landscape on the property set aside as municipal reserve.

The rash of new communities created unprecedented challenges

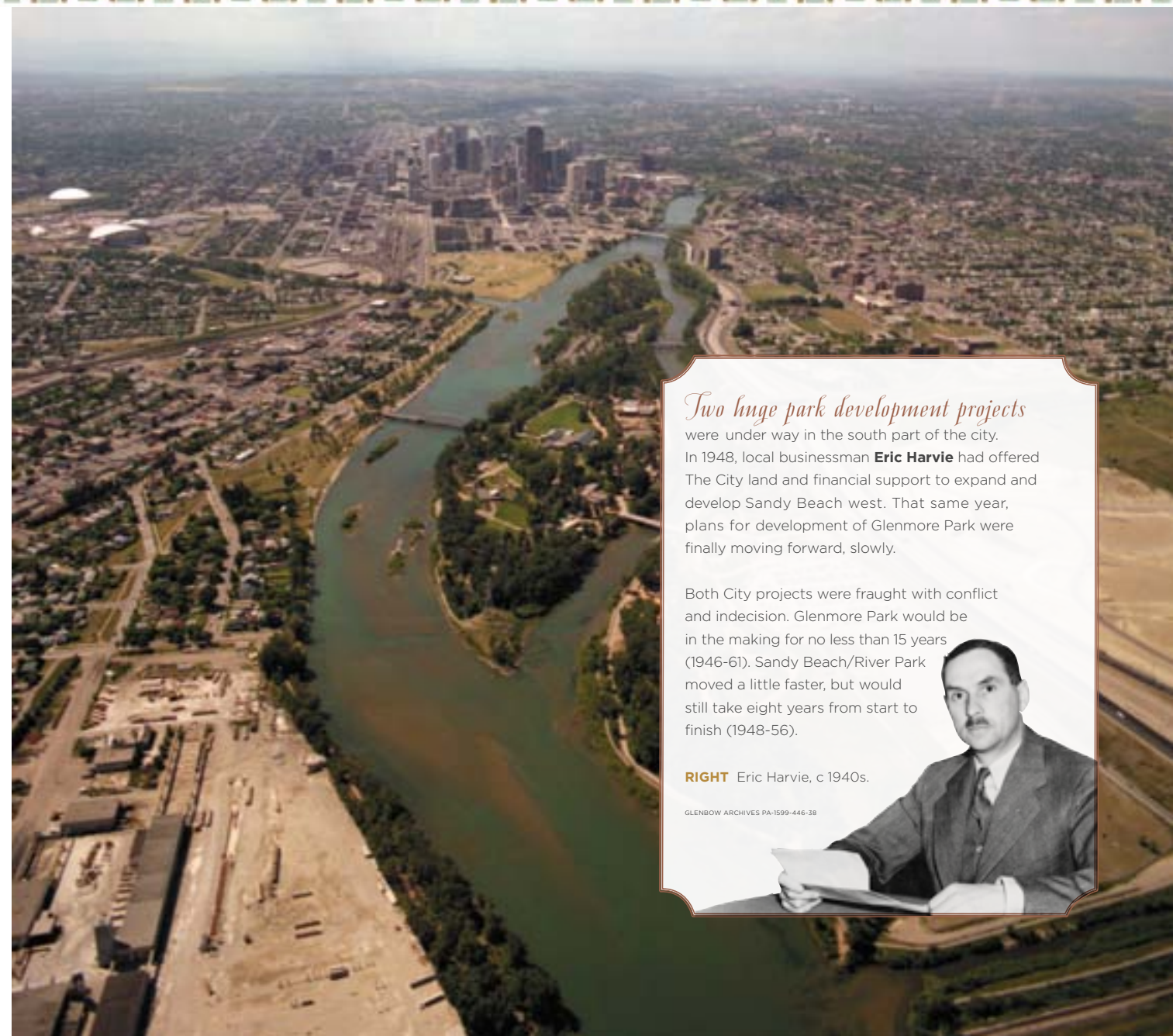
for the growing city, as conflicts between City departments made progress in any direction difficult. City work crews regularly inflicted damage along freshly planted boulevards, digging them up to access underground utilities. Maturing poplar tree roots wreaked havoc on buried waterlines and sewer pipes. The Land department and the Parks department engaged in regular debate over who was responsible for what property where.

Calgary's growth was explosive and planning would have to begin in earnest at all levels of The Corporation if it had any hope of holding things together. Parks planning was integral to the whole.

After a long, respectable career with Parks, Munro retired in 1959. Harry Boothman, the department's British-born horticulturalist, stepped up to take charge of managing the busy department in 1960.

Calgarians wanted more, bigger and better places to play and Boothman was adamant that parks should, above all else, accommodate the public. The small, decorative gardens with their high maintenance ornamentation weren't working for anyone anymore. Not the public and not Parks operations.

Alex Munroe,
intendent,
Recreation
ment, 1955.
Calgary aerial
1984.
CALGARY, CORPORATE RECORDS.
ALTA CR-92-005-020
CHIVES NA-5654-62



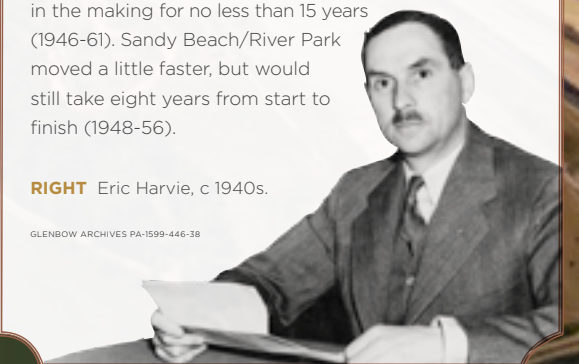
Two huge park development projects

were under way in the south part of the city. In 1948, local businessman **Eric Harvie** had offered The City land and financial support to expand and develop Sandy Beach west. That same year, plans for development of Glenmore Park were finally moving forward, slowly.

Both City projects were fraught with conflict and indecision. Glenmore Park would be in the making for no less than 15 years (1946-61). Sandy Beach/River Park moved a little faster, but would still take eight years from start to finish (1948-56).

RIGHT Eric Harvie, c 1940s.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES PA-1599-446-38



The City's 1963 General Plan provided an excellent starting place. It contained the closest thing to a parks master plan since William Pearce's cursory submission to Council in 1910, and the Mawson Plan of 1914. There were commonalities in all three plans, with reference to the impressive inventory of natural features including vast expanses along the river valley and dramatic scenic bluffs, and the value inherent to this native landscape from a parks perspective.

Boothman's solution on the operations side of things was to expand the scope of territory individual Parks foremen supervised, and to replace the existing one-man one-park maintenance regime with crew-style park maintenance city-wide.

His approach to managing park development would be more democratic. He would listen to the people, help formulate and then support and follow — a plan.

The City's 1963 General Plan provided an excellent starting place. It contained the closest thing to a parks master plan since William Pearce's cursory submission to Council in 1910, and the Mawson Plan of 1914. There were commonalities in all three plans, with reference to the impressive inventory of natural features including vast expanses along the river valley and dramatic scenic bluffs, and the value inherent to this native landscape from a parks perspective.

All three plans also referenced the need to connect the parks and open spaces, to each other and to the people of Calgary, with a network of pathways and scenic boulevards. This point had been reiterated in the Council of Social Agencies Report of 1945, and although Parks wouldn't formalize a pathway plan for another 25 years, the idea of pathways was slowing taking off.

In 1965, the Equestrian Advisory Council established an equestrian trail on the south side of Glenmore Park. A dirt trail complete with obstacles and jumps for cross-country equestrian events, it was clearly not intended for general public or pedestrian use.

In 1969, Chinook Trail Association built a mostly dirt walking path along the north side of the Bow River, west from the Zoo to the Bearspaw Dam. This pathway accommodated horses and pedestrians. Parks installed signage along the trail.

Then, in 1970, the federal government's Opportunities for Youth program provided funds to design and build The City's first complete trail along the Elbow River from the Bow River to the Glenmore Reservoir. While horseback riding remained a permitted use, pedestrians and cyclists were top of mind during construction. It was a start. Point A, so to speak.

The 1963 General Plan proposed a parks classification system that categorized individual properties in accordance with their size and intended use. About 3,130 acres of unrestricted open space was included in the various categories. Two thirds of Parks' inventory was determined to be larger, multi-use regional parks and natural parkland, with the balance



LEFT Opening of Prince's Island Park, c 1970.
GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-2864-5807A

distributed in smaller bits throughout the communities.

The Plan stressed the importance of reason and design behind the city's open spaces, noting a series of odd patches left over after the best sites had been chosen for buildings and streets, did not a park system make. With Boothman's consent, Calgary's park system would be heavily influenced by public opinion, citizen engagement and collaboration from this point forward.

By the early 1960s, citizens regularly established the identity of their neighbourhoods, the validity of their expectations, and a channel to communicate those needs to their municipal government by first forming local community associations.

The City encouraged them in their efforts. The logic was simple. No one was better suited to meet the social and recreational needs of individual communities than the communities themselves. Power to the people, and all that.



A close-up
plan of
Confederation Park.

CALGARY CORPORATE RECORDS,
FILE CR-92-005-104

Naturally, organized communities started speaking with each other, and common interests and agendas surfaced. With urban development moving full bore, the fate of undeveloped public land was guaranteed to be a hot topic. And where there was a strong will, community resources, and a plan, there was a movement led by a public champion.

Confederation Park in the city's northwest is a great example of community will and influence. In November 1964, Eric Musgreave, the president of both the Rosemont Community Association and the North Hill Centennial Committee, wrote to the mayor asking to be involved in the development of the North Calgary Parkway.



The City had just laid out the large tract of land for future park development in its General Plan and Musgreave's committee was organized and at-the-ready to get things started. The letter provided specific (tangible) projects the committee was prepared to sponsor, including the construction of wading pools, the planting of trees, and the purchase of park amenities such as playground equipment, tennis courts, benches, bridges and fountains.

Boothman signed up Parks for this collaborative effort. Musgreave's committee formalized as the Centennial Ravine Park Society, and three years later, in honour of Canada's 100th birthday, Confederation Park was already realizing its potential as an expansive urban park venue.

Prince's Island, and the surrounding riverbank area was first developed during the 1880s by Peter Prince of the Eau Claire Sawmill Co. and the Calgary Water Power Company.

Another particularly influential citizen group, the Calgary Beautification Association, was active about the same time. Chief Justice C.C. McLaurin headed-up the Association, incorporated in 1966, and pressed for the development of Prince's Island Park as its inaugural project.

Prince's Island, and the surrounding riverbank area was first developed during the 1880s by Peter Prince of the Eau Claire Sawmill Co. and the Calgary Water Power Company. The island served to protect log booms in the river and did not see a great deal of traffic. It functioned more as a space than a place.

William Pearce had proposed the island be used as a park back in 1910. The City purchased the island in 1947 and since then, had only got as far as labelling it a Regional Park of special significance in its 1966 Downtown Master Plan.

McLaurin and the Calgary Beautification Association wasted no time from there. They commissioned an independent study of Prince's Island and the Bow River banks to determine its feasibility for park development. In 1967, The City hired an architectural firm to draw up a master plan for the park's development and Prince's Island opened to the public in 1970.



Much of the open space that had escaped the encroachment of Calgary's urbanization to date had remained relatively untouched, not by plan, but by default.

Development of the Bow River embankment, steep hillsides and low-lying marshland (i.e. Fish Creek Park) had either been too inconvenient, too difficult or too expensive to pursue.

Nose Hill Park was one other situation where mitigating circumstance proved effective at holding off developers. Though zoned for development, the panoramic real estate was in direct line with the flight path for the Calgary airport, and rendered unfit for residential development accordingly.

ABOVE Aerial view of Prince's Island, 1985.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-5654-160

Parks Superintendent Harry Boothman died in office in 1976. There can be little doubt that his passion for working with Calgarians to ensure the most desirable outcome for all raised the caliber of the parks themselves.



By the late 1960s though, the development industry had grown extremely ambitious and competition within the industry, aggressive.

The only thing that seemed to be forever shrinking was the supply of available land.

Between 1966 and 1973, The City struggled repeatedly to stave off development of the Fish Creek flood plain, which was in grave danger of encroachment by adjacent land developers. Public support for the creation of a park came on strong with Southwood resident Rosa Gorrill leading the Fish Creek Centennial Park Committee, and marshalling an army of separate but equally outraged organizations. In 1973, the Province stepped in and purchased the land as part of a new urban park development program. The people had spoken and Fish Creek Park had been saved.

In the meantime, jets had arrived up at the airport and Calgary's runways and terminal needed immediate upgrades. The airport was moved to new, larger facilities further north. The flight paths changed accordingly and Nose Hill came out of the land freeze in 1969.

The proposed development of a combined subdivision and Regional Park on Nose Hill in 1970 provoked a public battle cry unlike

anything The City had ever experienced. The Calgary Field Naturalists' Society and 10 community associations joined forces in ardent protest.

At the request of the community associations, university professors weighed in on the matter, adding authority to the community's unmitigated passion. Council ultimately prepared and approved a sector plan protecting Nose Hill from development and Nose Hill was saved as a future Regional Park in April 1973, with 4,100 acres put aside as proposed parkland.

Parks Superintendent Harry Boothman died in office in 1976. There can be little doubt that his passion for working with Calgarians



LEFT Harry Boothman, c 1970s.

OPPOSITE Aerial view of Calgary, AB., 1985.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-5654-129
PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY PARKS

AGE City skyline
esent day Rotary
70.
CHIVES NA-2864-5311

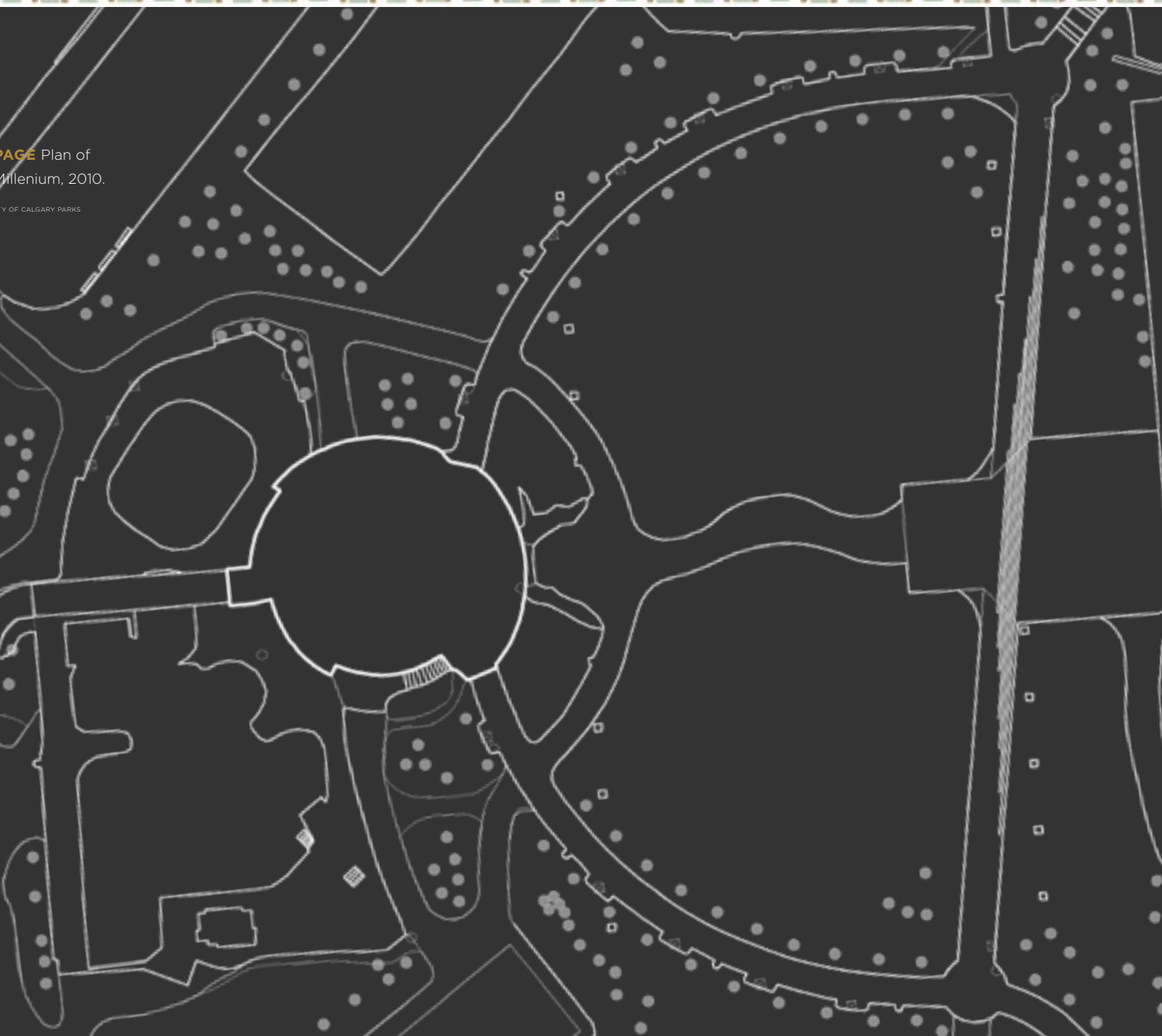


CHAPTER FOUR

A respectable harvest

[1977-2000]

Boomtime in Calgary's park system



PAGE Plan of
Millenium, 2010.
Y OF CALGARY PARKS





The threat of human activity to Calgary's natural areas had likely raised a few eyebrows along the way, but up until the work of groups like the Calgary Field Naturalists' Society in the 1960s, the value and fragility of the natural environment itself was never fully appreciated. As an example, during the mid-1950s an entire wetland was filled in to construct a new park in Knob Hill. It had seemed like the perfect solution. An unsightly, useless bog in an upscale neighbourhood was replaced with a lovely community park.



Parks Superintendent Harry Boothman's death coincided with a shift in the department's approach to managing Calgary's parks and open spaces. In keeping with an emerging corporate culture City-wide, the Administration behind Parks took a back seat to the administration of parks.

Planning and policy development superseded the personal preferences, vision and principles of the individuals in charge. Policy documents would begin to define general Parks goals and functions, and outline a decision making process. The department's objective was consistency, and ongoing relevance to the needs of Calgarians.

And there had been a shift there too.

The desire to change Calgary's natural landscape so that it conformed to society's idea of beautiful (i.e. so that it looked and felt more like back home) had run its course. Calgary was home to the current generation. There was a newfound appreciation for the region's natural landscapes and a strong desire to preserve and even, where necessary, restore Calgary's natural areas.

Society in general had evolved. The public was well educated and had found and honed

its voice into a powerful and pointed tool that all branches of the civic government were wise to heed and wield in careful measure.

The first natural area to be protected in Calgary goes back to 1929. It was then that Colonel Walker's son Selby successfully asked the federal government to designate 59 acres of his father's estate on the west side of the Bow River in Inglewood as a federal migratory bird sanctuary.

Forty years later when the Calgary Bird Club became the Calgary Field Naturalists' Society (1969), the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary was positioned to become the cornerstone of natural areas programming in Calgary.

Fearing the sanctuary might succumb to the pressure of urban development, the Society presented a convincing argument on the educational value of natural areas for school children living in the urban setting. It pointed to the need to introduce and protect



ABOVE Nose Hill Park, 2008. **LEFT** Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, 2007.

PHOTOS: THE CITY OF CALGARY

*The Calgary Field Naturalists' Society's tradition of inspiring the public to be involved in understanding, interpreting, and saving Calgary's ecosystem continues. In 2006, the society published Jim Foley's *Calgary's Natural Parks: Yours to Explore*.*

a new category of parkland — natural area parks, in and through which children could learn the natural history of their native land.

It was a compelling argument fortified by a sense of urgency. The City of Calgary purchased the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary in 1970, and established nature education programming from there.

The success achieved with influencing City policy and saving the bird sanctuary encouraged the Field Naturalists to initiate a second natural areas committee in 1972. Their proposal was modest enough. Why not get members of the Calgary Field Naturalists' Society to put their considerable observation skills to use collecting data on areas threatened with development?

Dr. C.D. Bird, associate professor of Botany at the University of Calgary, co-ordinated the efforts of skilled volunteers to conduct the survey. The result was an inventory of Calgary's natural areas, the flora and fauna in existence prior to urban growth, and management recommendations to mitigate the effects. Dr. Bird presented the report to the mayor in early 1973. Two years later, the Society published *Calgary's Natural Areas: A Popular Guide*. The word was out. Now it was just a matter of time before understanding, saving and interpreting the ecosystem would be integral to Parks' day-to-day operations.

To be eligible for available recreation funding, the provincial government required municipalities to have a current, long-range plan for recreation and park development. So in 1976, The City of Calgary Parks/Recreation department prepared a Policy Statement and Planning Recommendation report.

It reiterated the familiar philosophy that the department existed to promote personal development and well-being for people of all ages through leisure time opportunities. What was new in this document was a focus on the protection, preservation and enhancement of the environment for all to enjoy, and the championing of this mission as a civic responsibility within Parks.

SITE (top to bottom)
 ers of Nose Hill
 g Committee on
 Hill, 1980, deer
 Inglewood Bird
 ary, 2007, and a
 walk in Bowmont
 Environment
 010.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES PA-3198-1
 CITY OF CALGARY

N American white
 is and double-
 d cormorants,
 Inglewood Bird
 ary, 2007.
 CITY OF CALGARY





In 1978, Parks/Recreation established a planning section to help roll out the various recommendations presented in the 1976 report. Until that time, park planning had been the responsibility of The City's Planning department. This new section connected the process of planning for parks more closely to the business of park development and operations.

As part of the overall research behind the document, Calgarians had been invited to provide input through a public survey on their recreational needs and desires. The growing public interest and appreciation of environmental issues was evident in the results.

Recreational choices and trends revealed a desire for more spontaneous individual activities like jogging, cycling and hiking. People wanted, among other things, more pathways, nature trails and interpretive programming. This urban population valued Calgary's open spaces and topographical diversity, and they wanted access to it.

The report made a number of recommendations to improve the protection of natural features and access to the city's open spaces. Formalizing a river park system was a priority. All natural areas that remained in the river valleys (i.e. the Weaselhead, Nose Hill and Beddington Creek escarpments) were to be preserved. Minimum setbacks were suggested to buffer the riverbank and escarpments from future development. Continued development of the pathway system along waterways and open spaces was a must. A system of pedestrian bridges linking the pathways and park resources to residential areas was also part of the plan.

The shortage of parks and park amenities in the downtown core and inner city communities was identified as a problem that would need to be addressed. Calgary's oldest neighbourhoods had not had the benefit of municipal reserves. As apartments and multi-family units replaced individual homes there, higher densities amplified an already troublesome shortfall. Pedestrian walks and bikeways were recommended for new and redeveloped communities to provide a link to the major parks and open space system beyond.

This 1976 document was a comprehensive policy statement for The City of Calgary Parks/Recreation; a physical manifestation of intent moving forward. Parks' newest Director, Fred McHenry, brought it forward to Council.

In 1981, Parks/Recreation upgraded this earlier statement document with the publication of the Policy and System Plan. It was intended to provide a roadmap for the next 10 years of leisure services in Calgary.

Not surprisingly, the Plan featured the river parks system that William Pearce



ABOVE A family picnicking in Marlborough Park, 2010. **LEFT** Winter along the river. Prince's Island Park, 2008.

PHOTOS: THE CITY OF CALGARY

The Parks Foundation Calgary was another important addition in the spectrum of public involvement in parks in 1985.

had initiated in 1884, and which Reader, Mawson, Lady Lougheed's Local Council of Women, Boothman, and more recently, everyday Calgarians, had determined to be worthy of protecting — from urban development, from the CPR's urban renewal scheme in the 1960s, and from undue human impact.

Though the Calgary River Valleys Plan is dated 1984, it was ultimately the result of a grand vision and concerted efforts going back all those 100 years.

The recommendation that an open space park system be created in Calgary, and that land use controls be introduced within that park system to reduce the impact of human activity and flooding, had a resounding, hauntingly familiar echo to it.

As public awareness and appreciation for Calgary's parkland continued to grow, so too did community interest and hands-on citizen involvement in park development and operations.

In 1985, The City introduced its popular Adopt-a-Park program. It encouraged individual citizens and citizen groups to help care for and maintain the green spaces, parks or flowerbeds within their own communities.

It was another win-win situation for Calgary as a whole. Public volunteers were happily engaged in making a tangible difference in their communities (many learning new skills and making new friends along the way). Community flowerbeds and public parks were maintained at a higher level than what The City could afford to do on its own, increasing civic pride for everyone. And Parks Operations staff could step-up the level of maintenance in the larger, regional parks enjoyed by all.

The Parks Foundation Calgary was another important addition in the spectrum of public involvement in parks in 1985. Founding members Norm Harburn and Terry Hawitt saw the need for an arm's-length organization to inspire and co-ordinate community volunteer initiatives that preserve Calgary's natural beauty and ecologically significant river valleys, ensure new parks and open spaces are developed, and encourage amateur sport.

One of the Foundation's first projects was fundraising for development of James Short Park (1991). Built on the old school site, plans for the park creatively combined the need for open space and parking in the downtown. An underground parkade provided function. The new city park above enhanced the urban form.



LEFT Eau Claire Promenade, 2005.

PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY

Parks Foundation Calgary remains true to its original intent, relevant and active to this day as a valued partner with The City of Calgary Parks on a number of key initiatives.

In 1989, with Director Ken Bosma at the helm and provincial funding at the ready, Parks & Recreation initiated the next step toward realizing the much anticipated river park system. The Urban Park project would elevate the role of public engagement in park planning to invaluable status.

Planning Advisory committees were set up for each of the five study areas along Calgary's main waterways. Working in concert with local landscape architecture firms, these committees co-ordinated community involvement. Multiple public information sessions garnered interest and participation. A public opinion survey (Pulse on Parks) collected more than 45,000 responses, and these, in turn provided critical data, and welcome reassurance that Parks was indeed on the right track.



In 1991, the 18-hectare property of Tom Campbell's Hill was designated a park after years of pragmatic use— from grazing cattle to pasturing exotic zoo animals. Today the park is enjoyed as a multi-use site and includes one of Calgary's 138 off-leash dog areas. Tom Campbell's Hill overlooks the Bow River in the northeast part of the city. Its patches of rough fescue grassland, aging poplar trees and diverse bird population provide a gentle but striking contrast to the city's skyline visible to the west. First the hill and then the park was named after a large sign advertising Tom Campbell's Hats. That sign became such a familiar landmark in the 1930s that no one would have imagined calling the place by any other name.

Calgarians were appreciative and supportive of their parks and the river valley system as a whole. They agreed with expansion of the system, primarily through natural areas, pathways and trails.

A biophysical assessment of the study area continued the tradition introduced by the Calgary Field Naturalists' Society in the 1970s. It recommended the creation of three distinct park categories.

The first type was designed to provide for the preservation and maintenance of currently undisturbed natural areas and enhancement of existing natural features. Human access to these areas would be limited. The Weaselhead is a good example of this type of preservation park.

Naturalized parks were those designed to rehabilitate previously disturbed areas for less-intensive park use. The intent was to create a more natural appearance through the re-establishment of native vegetation

and to reduce maintenance requirements. Carburn Park is a naturalized park.

The final category was manicured parks, designed as the traditional high maintenance groomed parks to be used intensively for sport, picnicking, festivals and other gatherings where large numbers of park users are anticipated. Prince's Island is a prime example of this type of park.

Several years of focused and collaborative effort culminated in Council's approval of the Urban Park Master Plan in 1994.

The Plan aimed to create significant open space to ensure Calgarians had ready access to the natural environment. It initiated the development of those areas in a manner that would support sustained and unimpaired use for outdoor recreation. And with community involvement the hallmark of the Plan itself, it established public input as integral to both the process and its success.



OPPOSITE (top-bottom, left-right) Tom Campbell's Hill, wading in Riley Park, canoeing down the channel in Bowness Park, playing catch in Prince's Island Park, 2010.

PHOTOS: THE CITY OF CALGARY



AGE A family
down the Elbow
during the summer
, 2009.



While the Parks planning section used pen and paper to draft the future of Calgary's parks and natural areas, the operational side of Parks kept busy out in the field, establishing new parks, and maintaining all the others.

New natural area parks established at this time include Tom Campbell's Hill, Bowmont, Bearspaw and Clearwater.

The 1988 Calgary Olympic Games introduced an unexpected opportunity to create a new city park in the heart of the downtown. Olympic Plaza was a special gathering place from the beginning, and continues to attract high-profile events and culturally diverse crowds.

And then there's Shaw Millennium Park. Looking ahead to the year 2000, this park was a reflection of the department's determination, under Parks and Recreation Director Kenn Knights, to remain relevant and responsive to the public's recreational wants and needs.

Where just about everywhere else in the city people were navigating toward nature, a large sector of active urban youth was calling for smooth modulated concrete, ledges, banks, bowls, pipes and rails.

Calgary's premium skate park, the largest of its kind in all of North America, was built on a section of the city's original west end park. That's right. The land that had sat derelict for the first 20 years of Calgary's park history because it was too out-of-the-way to attract any public attention was to become a magnet for young thrill seekers from around the world.

LEFT Runners along the Bow River pathway system near Prince's Island Park.

BELOW Shaw Millennium Park, 2009.

PHOTOS: THE CITY OF CALGARY

Shaw Millennium Park

is Calgary's premium skate park, the largest of its kind in all of North America, was built on a section of the city's original west end park.





PHOTO COMPOSITE: THE CITY OF CALGARY

CHAPTER FIVE

A bountiful future

[2001 – onward]



A bountiful future

1001-onward



In 2002, Parks published its Open Space Plan, a comprehensive source of policy and direction regarding Calgary's public open space system. The culmination of years of study, this single document fused both early and emerging ideas about Parks management with the mass of policy documents developed since the 1980s.



Parks Superintendent Harry Boothman had summarized the partnership between Parks and Recreation as one where Parks was the landlord and Recreation was the tenant. In 2000, the department split into separate operational units to focus on their respective lines of business.

With Dave Breckon installed as general manager, Parks moved on with the administration of The City's natural areas, urban forests, wetlands, pathways, playgrounds and playfields. In addition to park planning and development activities, and day-to-day maintenance, it would continue with research and policy work in the interest of preserving Calgary's natural assets for all to enjoy for all time.

In 2002, Parks published its Open Space Plan, a comprehensive source of policy and direction regarding Calgary's public open space system. The culmination of years of study, this single document fused both early and emerging ideas about Parks management with the mass of policy documents developed since the 1980s.

The Open Space Plan aimed to establish links between the park system and the natural ecosystem of the Calgary region. It promoted a mandate for stewardship of the

park system for the benefit of the parks and the public.

The intrinsic benefit of trees is something Calgarians have suspected, and valued, even before they planted them. It's why they planted them. Pretty much all of them. One look at a photograph of Calgary, circa. 1880, makes it perfectly clear. Trees were not indigenous to the prairie grassland.

Calgarians were encouraged to plant trees on their own (private) property as early as 1884 when the Town started offering spruce trees at a cost of five cents each. Similar subsidized programs were available on and off right through to 1968, at which point the rate of residential development simply outpaced City resources.

The civic government introduced its first tree planting program along Atlantic Avenue (now Ninth Avenue S.E.) in 1895. Its first tree protection bylaw came four years later.

Accidents, abuse and the conflicting interests of thriving root systems, underground utilities and other City departments took its toll on the boulevard trees. Keeping them out of harm's way proved a full-time, albeit futile job for a special boulevard policeman William Reader hired and retained up until the First World War.

LEFT Laurel leaf willow in Confederation Park, 2007.

PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY



The challenge remains nearly 100 years later as Urban Forestry technicians continue to advise and educate people on the importance of protecting public trees.

Calgary's first comprehensive tree management policy, the Urban Forestry Management Plan, was approved by Council in 1988. It set a target ratio of one tree for every two people in the city. That meant planting thousands of trees to keep up with growth, and thousands more to compensate for any part of the forest lost to the forces of nature or human activity.

Parks addressed the age-old conflicts between trees, public abuse, City utilities and road construction head-on in 2002 when it introduced the first tree protection bylaw since 1899. The bylaw requires public trees be protected during development activity. It prohibits defacing, or attaching anything to any City tree in any way. And it requires advance notice of pruning or planting activities planned by other City departments or anyone in the private sector.

Griffith Woods,

CITY OF CALGARY



In 2007, Parks received Council's sign-off on its current version of the Urban Forestry Plan: *Calgary... a city of trees*. This document emphasizes the health of Calgary's trees and shrubs, and the need for continued public collaboration. Accordingly, Parks introduced various initiatives that promote public engagement in growing, tending and loving the urban forest.

By the early 1990s, Parks' responsibilities had expanded to include water management. In 2007 Council adopted *The City of Calgary Parks Water Management Strategic Plan*. Its intent: to sustain the health of plant material growing in The City's open spaces, recreational sites and landscaped areas, while conserving water and financial resources.

Irrigation isn't exactly new to Parks. The department installed its first irrigation system in 1912. What is new is the scope of Parks' water management in 21st century Calgary. Calgary's strategy involves controlling every feasible dimension, from application to conservation, drainage and erosion control to water recovery. It's not just about keeping trees, shrubs, flowers and grass alive and beautiful anymore.

It's about keeping the entire ecosystem healthy and sustainable.



Their highly public profile makes parks the natural venue of choice for public art exhibits and installations in Calgary. In recent years, The City of Calgary has added several works to the local landscape for all to experience, including that of world-renowned artists Beverly Pepper (Sentinels – Ralph Klein Park) and Barbara Paterson (Women are persons! – Olympic Plaza). The art contributes another, cultural layer to the richness and diversity of the city's public places.

ABOVE AND LEFT

(top to bottom) Ralph Klein Park Education Centre and Beverly Pepper – Sentinels, 2010.

PHOTOS: CITY OF CALGARY

The Six Landscapes of Celebration



LEFT Four of the six Landscapes of Celebration for The City of Calgary Parks' 100-year anniversary in 2010.

1. Pergola Music by Field Sound (Douglas Moffat and Steve Bates.)

2. Big Sky by North Design Office (Pete North).

3. The Centennial Grove by IBI/Landplan (Yogeshwar Navagraph and Garth Balls).

4. Come play in our Garden/Passe-moi un sapin by Rita (Stéphane Halmaï Voisard and Karine Corbeil).

PHOTOS: THE CITY OF CALGARY

In recognition and honour of The City of Calgary Parks' 100-year anniversary in 2010, Olympic Plaza featured six Landscapes of Celebration, including a display from the internationally acclaimed Jardins de Métis festival. It encouraged Calgarians to interact with the art and the park in new ways. Naturally, the more attractive a city is, the more people want to live there. More people means more land development for housing, and for all the connecting infrastructure.



the six Lanscapes
oration:

5. Picnic by spmb
do Aquino, Matthew
Ralph Gior, and
shanski.

ITE PAGE

ot a Gopher
on McCulloch
tes (Kristina
-Prins and
an Sagi).

As development in Calgary spilled out onto the prairie, area wetlands were at risk of annihilation.

Wetlands provide critical habitat for wildlife and an important means of water quality control. An estimated 90 per cent of the pre-settlement wetland system in and around Calgary had already been lost.

The remaining 10 per cent needed immediate protection.

So in 2004, Parks published The City of Calgary's Wetland Conservation Plan, a collaborative work with external stakeholders that established procedures for the protection of priority urban wetlands, and a no-net-loss policy for wetlands in areas of future development.

It put leading edge conservation at least two steps ahead of the bulldozers. And with everyone's co-operation and support, it will keep the wetlands right where they are.



6

Fountain at Central Memorial Park, 2010.

WHITE PAGE Plan of Central Memorial Park, 2010.

MAP: THE CITY OF CALGARY

unique initiatives related to the conservation of Calgary's historical landscapes. Reader Rock Garden's cultural landscape was the first to be restored. The project manager was Anne Charlton, a landscape architect by profession who became Parks' first female director in 2007.

Today, Parks is establishing a Cultural Landscape Strategic Plan aimed at acknowledging the historic significance of other Calgary gems including Central Memorial, Bowness, Riley and Confederation parks, to name a few.



Park for free will during its refurbishment in 2010. It's expected other parks will follow.

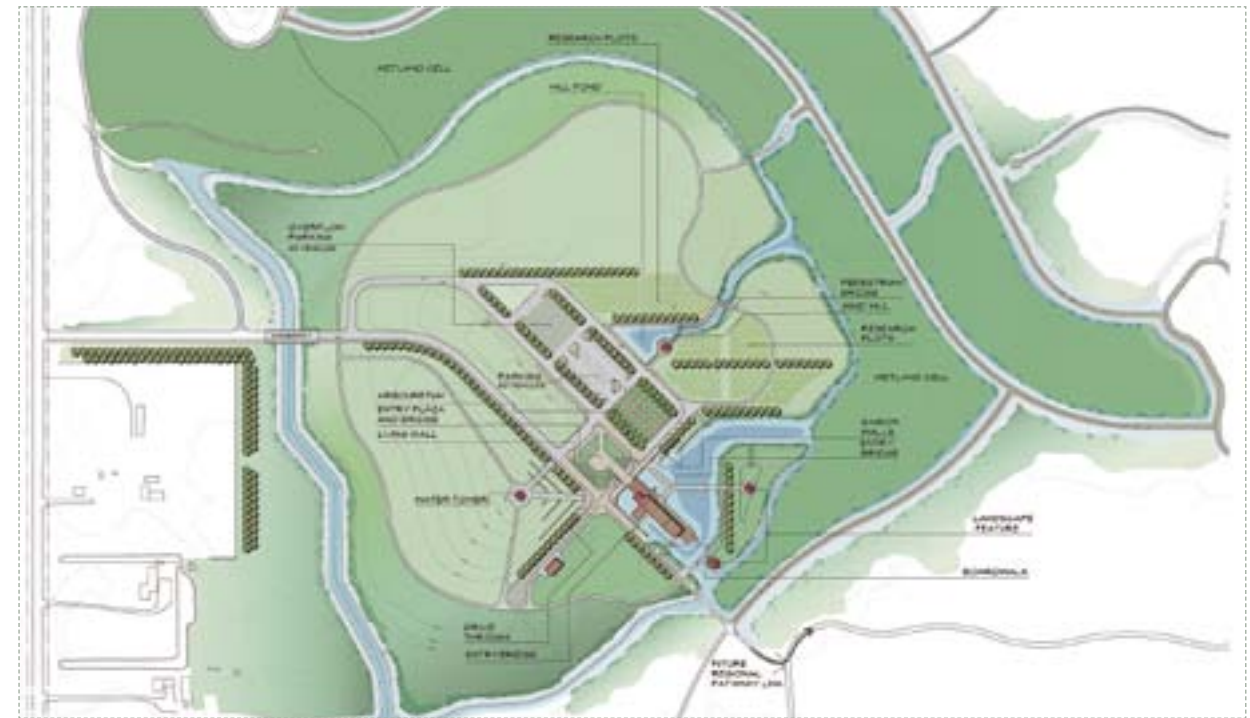
GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS) technology used in geocaching, a high-tech treasure hunt that's gaining in popularity around the world. As part of its 100-year celebrations, 100 caches were hidden in various Calgary parks. Using donated GPS devices checked out from the public library, or geocaching applications downloaded to their cell phones, Calgarians were invited to explore the parks and their hidden treasures.

With scores more park projects already plotted on the horizon for as long as the Legacy funding lasts, Parks is realizing the vision its forefathers could only dream about. And then some, the likes of which could never have been imagined.

Technology has introduced a whole new layer of sophistication to Parks' business operations and public offerings.

Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping software pinpoints the exact location of Parks' assets on a map citywide, right

This same year, Parks introduced a 10-year strategic plan for cemeteries that calls for



Encouraging citizen engagement in environmentally friendly gardening and yard care practices is the cornerstone of a popular public program at The City. **The Healthy Yards program** provides homeowners with tools and education to effectively manage their backyards using horticultural best practices.

Parks' Integrated Pest Management team launched this successful program with two other City business units: **Water Services and Waste and Recycling Services**. Water conservation, composting and selecting appropriate plants for Calgary's climate are important components of the Healthy Yards experience.

Citizens, communities and The City of Calgary are **working together to ensure a healthy future for Calgary and generations of Calgarians yet to come.**

In his 1930 annual report, William Reader envisioned the possibility of a bridle path stretching all the way from Calgary to Banff. He imagined it would be for the enjoyment of locals and tourists alike.



Griffith Woods Regional Park, 2007.
ITE PAGE
head Natural Environment Park, 2007.
CITY OF CALGARY

the construction of The City's first new cemetery since Queen's Park was started in 1938. Technology will have a place there too, though no headstone.

There won't be any headstones. The green cemetery is to be located adjacent to Ralph Klein Park. Individual graves will be marked using a Global Positioning System (GPS) exclusively. It's the way of the new millennium.

If the start of the new millennium is a reflection of what to expect in the future, Calgary's park system is in extraordinarily good shape heading into the next 100 years. The entire Calgary region will be connected.

In addition to the capital growth afforded Parks through the ENMAX Legacy Parks windfall, private land donations and collaboration from the Government of Alberta continues to grow the expanse of publicly owned parkland.

Wilbur and Betty Griffith donated a

portion of their estate along the Elbow River to be set aside as a nature preserve. In 2000, Griffith Woods Regional Park opened to the public. Located along Elbow River in the city's southwest, this spectacular 93- hectare park is classified as a Special Protection Natural Environment Park because of its overall environmental sensitivity and significance. Pathways meander through the dense forest growth of mature white spruce. Boardwalks traverse the many wetlands. Interpretive signage rounds out the experience for nature-loving visitors.

In 2001, The City joined the provincial government in designating Twelve Mile Coulee a park on the northwest edge of the city's limits. The Coulee was named for its position, roughly 12 miles from the post office at

Fort Calgary. It once served as a mail drop on the old stagecoach run to Cochrane. Today it offers fresh air, hiking trails and picture perfect scenery.

In his 1930 annual report, William Reader envisioned the possibility of a bridle path stretching all the way from Calgary to Banff. He imagined it would be for the enjoyment of locals and tourists alike.

His dream of such an extensive pathway system might have been farfetched at the





LEFT Central Park, c 1920s. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Central Memorial Park, 2010.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-94
OPPOSITE PAGE PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY

beginning of the Great Depression, but at the beginning of the 21st century, thanks to recent donations of land along the river valley, that dream was about to become a reality.

The Haskayne family donated \$5 million in land toward The City's future 360-acre Haskayne Legacy Park on the east side of

the Bearspaw Reservoir, directly across from the future Bearspaw Legacy Park. The two parks run parallel to the Bow River heading west, and represent a critical link in the Bow River Valley parks system. Then the Harvie family and the provincial government struck a charitable land deal to create Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park, a 3,400-acre foothills and grassland park that starts where Haskayne Legacy Park is set

Timeline



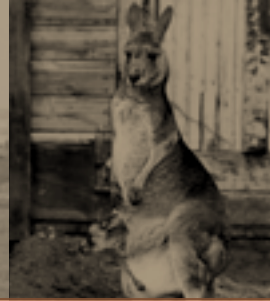
BOWNESS PARK GLENBOW ARCHIVES: NA-4355-31



ST. GEORGE'S BRIDGE GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-2114-4



SHAGANAPPI GOLF COURSE, GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-60



GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-92

1890s Union Cemetery was established.

1890 The Town leased St. George's, St. Andrew's and St. Patrick's islands from the Dominion Government.

early 1900s Central (Memorial) Park was created.

1908 The Calgary Horticultural Society was established.

1909 The Parks Board was created.

1910 John Buchanan, the first Parks superintendent was hired.

1910 Ezra Houndsfield Riley donated land for use as a public park, known as Riley Park.

1880s Prince's Island was developed by Peter Prince from the Eau Claire Sawmill Company and by the Calgary Water Power Company.



UNION CEMETERY GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-2854-43



CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY GARDENS, c. 1908. GLENBOW ARCHIVES: PA-762-5

1900

1910 James Shouldice donated land to be used for games, sports and other recreational activities, known as Shouldice Park.

1911 William Iverson became the second Parks superintendent.

1913 The Parks Board disbanded.

1913 William R. Reader became Parks' third superintendent, moved into the house at Union Cemetery and started working on the 'Rockery' at Reader Rock Garden.

LEFT: ST. GEORGE'S ISLAND GLENBOW ARCHIVES: NA-1604-74
WILLIAM READER, GLENBOW ARCHIVES: NA-2755-12

BELOW: FAMILY PICKNICKING, GLENBOW ARCHIVES: NA-2755-12

1877 Treaty 7 was signed, delineating land boundaries between the First Nations and settlers in Alberta.

1894 The Town of Calgary became incorporated as The City of Calgary.

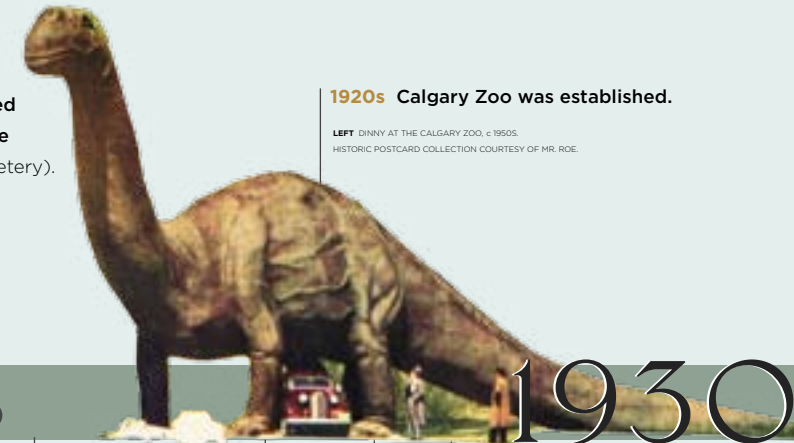
1883 The arrival of the railroad and subsequent influx of settlers.

1884 Calgary officially became a Town.

1867 Confederation; Canada became a country.



1915 Reader established Shaganappi Golf course (site of the former cemetery).



1920s Calgary Zoo was established.

LEFT: DINNY AT THE CALGARY ZOO, c. 1950S. HISTORIC POSTCARD COLLECTION COURTESY OF MR. ROE.

1915

1914 The Vacant Lots Garden Club was established.



VACANT LOTS GARDEN CLUB, GLENBOW ARCHIVES: NA-1604-85

1916 Reader began to build playgrounds in parks.

1917 The Calgary Playground Association was created through collaboration between Maude Riley and William Reader.

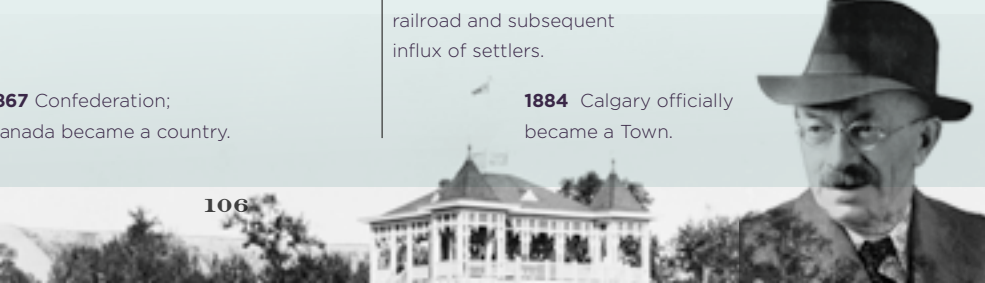
1928 Central Park was renamed Memorial Park when the cenotaph and memorial benches were added.

1922 Burnsland Cemetery was established.
1922–1928 Parks inherited the honour and responsibility of commemorating Calgarians in WWI and planted boulevards along what is now Memorial Drive.

BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT CENTRAL (MEMORIAL) PARK, EARLY 1900S, MR. ROE'S PLAYGROUND, GLENBOW ARCHIVES: NA-1604-72
TREES ALONG MEMORIAL DRIVE, GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-2864-6771

1914 World War I began.

1918 World War I ended.



Timeline

continued.



INGLEWOOD GLENBOW ARCHIVES: NA-5093-324



PRINCE'S ISLAND PARK, 2010. PHOTO: CITY OF CALGARY



EAU CLAIRE, 2010. PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY



CITY OF CALGARY ARCHIVES PHOTOS BOX 9 110-15-070C. 1988



CONFEDERATION PARK BRIDGE, 2007. PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY

1940 Queen's Park Cemetery was established.

1940s The Council of Social Agencies recommended The City create a pathway system.

1942/43 Reader retired and died shortly after, Arthur Morris became the Parks superintendent.



INGLEWOOD ARCHIVES: NA-5093-324

1945

1929 Shelby Walker (Colonel Walker's son) successfully petitioned the federal government to designate 59 acres of his father's estate as a bird sanctuary.



1950s Parks Superintendent **Alex Munroe** created Senator Patrick Burns Memorial Rock Gardens.

1960s Calgary's growth prompted Parks Superintendent Harry Boothman to change the way Parks Operations cared for park space; from a "one man - one park" maintenance regime to crew-style park maintenance city-wide.

1960 Citizens began to establish community associations.

1967 The Calgary Tower was built in 1967 as a Canadian Centennial project and opened in 1968.



MEMORIAL DRIVE, AN ENMAX LEGACY PARKS PROGRAM, 2008. PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY

1930 St. Mary's Cemetery was established.

1939 World War II began.

1945 World War II ended.

1970 Prince's Island Park opened to the public.

1970s The Calgary Field Naturalists' Society was instrumental in shifting the focus from ornamental parks to natural area preservation.

1970 The City purchased the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary and established nature education programming.

1973 Council protected Nose Hill Park from development, setting aside 4,100 acres for proposed parkland.



1975

1976 Parks Superintendent **Harry Boothman** died.

1977 Fred McHenry became the new Parks director.

1977 Devonian Gardens opened to the public and is among the world's largest indoor public green spaces. Devonian Gardens were made possible by a donation from the Devonian Foundation.



1973 The provincial government purchased the land for Fish Creek Provincial Park.

1985 The Adopt-a-Park program began, where citizens and citizen groups help care for and maintain community green spaces, parks and/or flower beds.

1985 The Parks Foundation Calgary was created.

Late 1980s Calgary's first off-leash areas were formalized.

1988 Calgary hosted the Olympic Games, which introduced an opportunity to create a new city park in the heart of downtown, called Olympic Plaza.

1988 Ken Bosma became director of Parks.

1988 Council approved the Urban Forestry Management Plan which set a target ratio of one tree for every two people in Calgary.

1990s Parks' responsibilities expanded to include water management.



2005 Reader Rock Garden was restored.

2007 Dawn Thome was appointed acting director for Parks.

2007 Anne Charlton became director of Parks.

2007 Council adopted The City of Calgary Water Management Strategic Plan.

2009 Central Memorial Park was restored, including wireless internet capability.

2010 Dedication of Ralph Kein Park as part of the ENMAX Legacy Parks Program.

2010 Parks celebrates 100 years of growth and change, looking onward to the next century of park development including art in Olympic Plaza, geocaching, and special displays and events.

Calgary Celebrating 100 years of Parks Bibliographical Essay

The writing of this book was based on an extensive collection of primary and secondary sources. *From prairie to park: green spaces in Calgary* by Morris Barraclough, published in 1975, and available as a Reference document in the Calgary Public Library (CPL) Local History Room, is the only history of Parks published to date. It covers up to the end of the Harry Boothman period in 1977.

Information on the Calgary landscape before settlement as discussed in the preface was obtained from *Once upon a river: archaeology and geology of the Bow River Valley at Calgary, Alberta, Canada* by Michael Wilson, published in 1983, also in the CPL Local History collection, and *Calgary's natural parks: yours to explore* by Jim Foley, published in 2006, available at local book stores.

The account of the period 1875 to 1909 was based on minutes of the Town and The City of Calgary council bylaws and agreements held at The City of Calgary Archives. These types of documents are useful for the entire 100 year period.

The role of William Pearce was documented through his personal papers covering the years 1883 to 1930 held by the University of Alberta Archives in Edmonton. These papers include correspondence between Town and

City officials and Pearce in which he explains his views on the need for parks development and how they should be developed. His views on parks are also explained in an article by Sue Anne Donaldson entitled *William Pearce: his vision of trees*, which appeared in the *Journal of Garden History*. Vol. 3, No. 3. (1983) located at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library in Calgary.

Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa has orders in council which document the donation of land to Calgary for park purposes beginning with what became Mewata Park. The City of Calgary's first cemetery is the topic of a file in the Department of the Interior Fonds (RG15, Interior, Series D-II-1, Volume 335, File: 83972).

This file follows not only the acquisition of the present site of Union Cemetery but also the eventual development of the original site into a park. The history of Union Cemetery is also outlined in *Central (Memorial) Park and Reader Rock Garden: the British landscape gardening tradition in Calgary* by Rob Graham available at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library (call number 712.6 G741c Pam, dated 1993); the guide for a *Union Cemetery Interpretive Tour* by Lawrie Knight-Steinbach, available on-line at: <http://www.calgary.ca/DocGallery/bu/planning/pdf/heritage/>

[unioncemetery_tour.pdf](#), and *Calgary's historic Union Cemetery: a walking guide* by Harry M. Sanders, published in 2002, in the Calgary Public Library collection.

Additional sources consulted for the period 1910 to 1946 beyond council minutes, bylaws and agreements include the annual reports and operational for files Parks held at The City of Calgary Archives, which deal with such topics as facilities development. The annual reports prepared by William Reader are particularly valuable because they provide detailed information on how specific parks were developed. A series of parks plans are included in the Parks Fonds.

The career of William Reader has been the subject of articles by Donna Balzer and Kathleen McNally, both available at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library. Balzer's *The Reader Rock Garden Reborn* is in the *Alberta Views* 9:4:44-50 (May 2006) and McNally's *Calgary's Reader Rock Garden* is in Reprint #19 of the *Landscape Architectural Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 1990). The Calgary Horticultural Society was the subject of an article in the summer 1998 issue of the *Alberta History* by Liesbeth Leatherbarrow, also at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library.

The City of Calgary Archives has the papers of the Calgary Parks Board and the Town

Planning Commission covering the period from 1909 to 1914. The 1945 report of the Council of Social Agencies is available at the W.R. Castell Central Library Local History Room collection in Calgary.

The history of parks in Calgary for the period 1947 – 1976 made use of city council records and the Parks Fonds in The City of Calgary Archives along with parks planning documents held by the Calgary Public Library. These include the Louis Hamill report of 1969 entitled *Calgary regional parks and recreation study*.

The role of private individuals and associations for the period after 1947 was documented through the use of the papers of Eric Harvie at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Archives in Calgary. The Glenbow also has the papers of a number of organizations which shared Harvie's passion for parks. These include the Rotary Club of Calgary Fonds, the Calgary Local Council of Women Fonds, and Centennial Ravine Park Society Fonds. As well, the Glenbow's collection of newspapers and clipping files supplement the public and private records of parks development. The newspapers provide a good indication of public attitudes to parks development particularly during the period after World War Two.

Calgary Celebrating 100 years of Parks Bibliographical Essay

continued.

The Calgary Public Library has a number of park histories which cover both the human and natural history. The publications of the Calgary Field Naturalists' Society's are focused on Calgary's natural areas. These publications evolved out of the Society's studies of natural areas in Calgary beginning in 1975 with *Calgary's natural areas: a popular guide* by Peter Sherrington. Dave Elphinstone's *Inglewood Bird Sanctuary: A place for all seasons*, published in 1990, is also available at the CPL, as is a book about the development of Edworthy Park, published in 2002 by the Edworthy Park Heritage Society - *Treasures of the trail: A nature guide to Edworthy Park, Lawrey Gardens and the Douglas Fir Trail*, edited by Jerry Osborn.



Maude Riley and
n, Calgary, AB.,
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CHIVES PA-3647-4

The development of the Calgary pathway system is the subject of Terry Bullick's book, *Calgary parks and pathways: a city's treasures* (second edition), published in 2007 and available at local bookstores. *Rosemont: 50 years of community, 1959-2009*, available at Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library includes information on Confederation Park. The Calgary Public Library has in its collection *A leaven of ladies: a history of the Calgary Local Council of Women*, published in 1995, written by Marjorie Norris Barron, and the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library has an article by H.V Nelles entitled "How did Calgary get its river parks", from the Fall 2005 *Urban History Review* (Volume 34:1:28-45), both of which discuss a critical



LEFT Bandstand on
St. George's Island, c 1912.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-1604-74

moment in the history of the river valley parks system.

The government documents section and the Local History Room of the Calgary Public Library have parks planning documents for the period from 1977 to 2000 and annual reports for 1980 and 1985 to 1989. The lack of records in the Parks Fonds at The City of Calgary Archives for the period after 1977 makes this period a greater challenge to document.

The development of the Parks business unit since 2001 was based on policy documents such as *The City of Calgary Parks Open Space Plan*, adopted by Council in 2002, available on-line at: [www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/](http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/parks_operations/Open_Space_Plan.pdf)

[parks_operations/Open_Space_Plan.pdf](http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/buparksoperationswetlandconservationplan.pdf), and *The City of Calgary Parks Calgary Wetland Conservation Plan*, approved by Council in 2004, available in hard copy at the Calgary Public Library and digitally on-line at: <http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/buparksoperationswetlandconservationplan.pdf>.

Information on current City of Calgary Parks activities was obtained from the *Parks 2009 Annual Report*, which is available on-line at: <http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/buparksoperations/parksannualreport2009.pdf>.

—John Gilpin, *Historian* NOVEMBER 2010



Notes

HISTORIC RESEARCH

John Gilpin

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The cover of this book is printed on FSC-certified Beckett Concept manufactured carbon neutral and contains 100% postconsumer recycled fiber. This paper is certified by Green Seal, and by SmartWood in accordance with the rules of Forest Stewardship Council which promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

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CARBON NEUTRAL AND WINDPOWER SAVINGS

2,816 lbs ghg emissions not generated

- **1,155** windpower savings
- **1,661** carbon offset savings

3 barrels fuel oil unused

- **1** windpower savings
- **2** carbon offset savings

equivalent to not driving **2,787** mi

- **1,143** windpower savings
- **1,644** carbon offset savings

equivalent to planting **192** trees

- **79** windpower savings
- **113** carbon offset savings

Technical Notes and Sources

Calculations to demonstrate the environmental benefits of using recycled fiber in lieu of virgin fiber are based primarily upon information publicly available at: http://www.environmentaldefense.org/documents/1687_figures.pdf Calculations to demonstrate the benefits of supporting offsite wind generated electric power and carbon emission reduction projects are based primarily upon Mohawk's corporate-wide greenhouse gas emissions inventory. This inventory was developed to include Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions according to the US EPA Climate Leaders Program technical guidance which is publicly available at: <http://www.epa.gov/stateply/resources/index.html> Calculator outputs specifically represent Mohawk operations and its unique greenhouse gas emissions profile. They cannot be considered representative of other organizations.

FRONT COVER

Women in a potato sack race at Bowness Park, c 1950s.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES PA-2453-114

Boys on a tire swing at Sandy Beach Park, 2010.

PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY

Cycling near the Bow River, 1973.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA- 2864-22837

Pearce Estate Park nature shot, 2010.

PHOTO: THE CITY OF CALGARY

INSIDE FRONT AND BACK COVERS

Historic Map of Township #24, Glenbow Archives.

BACK COVER

Citizens in Riley Park, 1956.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-5600-6843H

All uncaptioned photos are from Calgary parks and were taken by The City of Calgary.

2010



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2010-1674