heart of downtown: an enlarged commons, or a miniature Central Park. It is the focus of the kind of gatherings and encounters we associate with a place like Manhattan's Union Square.

The map of downtown Hartford on page 159 shows Bushnell Park in relation to the city core, which sweeps in a wide arc around it. Containing thirty-eight acres, the park is crossed at its western end by a still important passenger railway. At two points may be seen the abruptly broken route of Interstate 84. The expressway has tunneled under the library, but the plan was to cross the park at grade. The plan has been aborted, and ugly scars are left where the cement terminates.

The park formerly contained an open river, giving life and focus to the landscape. Unfortunately, upstream flooding led to the burying of the stream in a culvert. Today the bridge that once arched its waters can be seen incongruously just above the filled-in land. Until now Bushnell Park has remained without the enclosure of a structured wall. The buildings that contain it are low, and their line is broken by towers against the middle sky. Churches still have a part in this composition; such a high-rise office building as the Traveler's is not inharmonious; and the twin towers of Bushnell Plaza, the apartment complex designed by I. M. Pei, enhance rather than exploit the scene.

Unhappily, the solid, turreted façade of the YMCA was torn down in 1974. Many mourned the passing of this fine old landmark—a familiar object gone from downtown. But few perceived how important it had been in enriching the park, and how regrettable a gap it had left. Similarly, few seem to realize how grave a detraction from the park are the badly designed hotels that have arisen on its northern edge.

Various forces have thus done their worst to Bushnell's fragile and charming scene. Yet a fountain was able to attract the young to this place—in those recent years when the young liked to gather in the open to perform their tribal rites; a lake still reflects the surrounding trees and towers, a memorial commemorates the Civil War. In winter the benches of the little park are removed by the Parks Department and the paths and lawns seem deserted. Let the mild days come, however: Bushnell Park plays its part as the center and bull's-eye of the city's compact core.

7 The City Park

NOT EVERY CITY has a surviving central square; but virtually every city in the United States has a park that can be called its central park. For the stranger in a city, this central park is a first feature to be searched out and explored. Much may be learned from it about the mix of the population and the condition of government, about the city's history and about the citizens' current mood and habits. Rarely will it be difficult to identify this park, or will there be much dispute about which of many parks deserves the priority. If not always the most central in location, it is first in use and in its standing with the public.

Every City's Central Park

On the following pages appear the names of central parks in major U.S. cities. Most of them have the following principal characteristics:

- Age—dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century.
- Location—conveniently accessible to the downtown area.
- Size—from 150 acres to as many as 4,000.
- Facilities—major cultural institutions of the city; often a zoo or a botanical garden.

In addition, these parks are almost invariably "sensitive areas." Since they were carefully designed, any change of form or use becomes a matter of public controversy. In the late 1960s and early 1970s these central parks were the gathering place of the hippies—the scene of protests, demonstrations and festivals.

CENTRAL PARKS OF SOME AMERICAN CITIES

ATLANTA—Piedmont Park 185 acres; site of the Cotton Exposition of 1870; original design by Olmsted; golf course, rose garden, greenhouse and conservatory, pavilion and grill; in a residential neighborhood close to downtown.

CHICAGO—Grant Park 304.7 acres; donated to the city by private citizens in 1844; contains major cultural institutions: Art Institute, orchestra shell, Shedd Aquarium and Field Museum of Natural History; on the lake and fully accessible.

CINCINNATI—Eden Park 185 acres; a cultural center containing Krohn Conservatory, art museum and art academy, zoo, theater and bandstand; hilly terrain with curving roads; affords views of Mount Adam and the Ohio River and overlooks downtown.

DALLAS—Fair Park 189.6 acres; site of the first Texas State Fair in 1886; original plan by George Kessler, 1904; most buildings date from Texas Centennial celebration, 1936; museum of fine arts, museum of natural history, horticultural center, music hall, amphitheater, aquarium, Cotton Bowl; close to downtown but needs to be better connected.

DENVER—City Park 314.3 acres; a flat landscape embellished with fountains, flowers, statuary; site of museum of natural history, planetarium, zoological gardens; summer evening concerts by the Denver Symphony Orchestra.

FORT WORTH—Trinity Park 252.75 acres; purchased in five acquisitions from 1892 to 1913; original plan by George Kessler; a bike and hike trail following the bank of the Trinity River; miniature train running through park; contains Japanese garden and botanic garden; site of annual Mayfest.

INDIANAPOLIS—Garfield Park 128.5 acres; the first county fairgrounds, purchased by the city in 1873; the site of regular Sunday concerts, an amphitheater, swimming pool, tennis courts, sunken gardens, a controversial pagoda; contains twelve lighted horse-show courts; in recent years the gathering place of hippies; in a residential area a mile from the central business district.

KANSAS CITY—Swope Park 1,769 acres; gift to the city from Colonel Thomas A. Swope, 1896; zoo, nature center, "starlight" theater, golf course, lake and boathouse; for history see pages 199–203.

LOS ANGELES—Griffith Park 4,063 acres in the Santa Monica Mountains overlooking downtown; five golf courses, observatory, zoo, Hall of Science, Greek Theater, riding trails. Highway department paid three million dollars in compensation for portions of the park on the north and east lopped off for freeway.

LOUISVILLE—Cherokee Park 409.3 acres; designed by Olmsted and dedicated as "a place for artists to paint and for poets to sing about"; strong citizen protest unsuccessful in keeping freeway out, but did succeed in getting a portion of the route tunneled; severely damaged in tornado of April 1974.

MEMPHIS—Overton Park 342 acres; site of Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, city zoo and aquarium, Academy of Arts, open-air theater, golf course; subject of 1971 Supreme Court case (see page 186).

MILWAUKEE—Lake Park 136.8 acres along the shores of Lake Michigan; site of the Saarinen War Memorial, used as museum and community center; unresolved question of planned expressway through park; hippies encouraged to gather in park during 1960s, though the fountain on the bluffs above had been their first choice.

MINNEAPOLIS—Loring Park 32.5 acres; acquired in 1883 as part of park system designed by H. W. S. Cleveland; originally called Central Park; freeway skirts the park but leaves it intact within downtown; Walker Art Museum and Guthrie Theater outside park.

NEW ORLEANS—City Park 1,460 acres; created by Louisiana legislature in 1895 with its own board of commissioners; a flat, grassy peninsula surrounded by water; expressway on railroad right of way alongside park; forty-four tennis courts, five golf courses.

PHILADELPHIA—Fairmount Park 4,079 acres on both sides of the Schuylkill River; from its establishment in 1865 the park has grown through gifts and purchases from 28 acres to be largest in-city park in the country; six restored historic mansions in park; contains art museum, Playhouse in the Park, zoo, aquarium, Robin Hood Dell.

PHOENIX—Encanto Park 219 acres; acquired through purchase and donation in 1934; an oasis in the desert; a romantically landscaped park in a residential neighborhood close to downtown; contains lagoons, tennis courts, swimming pool, recreation building, band shell.

PITTSBURGH—Schenley Park 456 acres; 300 acres donated by Mrs. Mary E. Schenley in 1889, the rest acquired through purchase and donation between 1891 and 1929; contains ball fields, tennis courts, golf course, swimming pool, ice-skating rink; cultural facilities include Phipps Conservatory, nature museum and outdoor theater; major vehicular arteries cut across the natural landscape of hills and ravines.

SAN ANTONIO—Brackenridge Park 248.78 acres; donated to the city by the Water Works Company in 1899 and named for the company's president, George W. Brackenridge; a largely natural landscape; contains zoo, museum, a miniature train, a sky ride, open-air theater; the Sunken Gardens, once a rock quarry, has been developed into a botanical garden; the San Antonio River runs through the park.

SAN DIEGO—Balboa Park; set aside in 1868; a lush landscape of 1,158 acres created; hosted the Panama California Exposition of 1915–1916 and the California-Pacific International Exposition of 1935–1936; buildings of Spanish, Mexican and Indian architecture remain, housing the Fine Arts Gallery, the Museum of Man, the Natural History Museum, the Balboa Park Club, the Spanish Village; famous for its zoo.

SEATTLE—Volunteer Park 45 acres; oldest park in the city; designed by Olmsted Brothers; once hippie gathering place; a "pitched battle" was waged over attempts to change the wading pool; contains art museum, water tower, reservoir, tennis courts, baseball fields; reached by Interlaken Boulevard, overlooks downtown and Seattle Center.

Other large parks in the city have specialized uses. They may be important as centers for sport, as areas conserving natural resources, as regional recreation facilities. The central parks, however, are essentially mixed in use and multiple in their appeal. At their best they mirror nature, they invite play,

they offer a choice of cultural and recreational diversions. They draw a public of various ages, races and economic backgrounds. Being so closely tied in with the character of the city, so revealing of its existing conditions and its prospects, they are a form of open space that deserves from municipal governments better maintenance and more intelligent planning and programming than they usually get.

The Park Movement

The central parks of American cities were the product of deeply held social and economic beliefs. The Old World might look upon parks primarily as amenities; the cities of the New World were looking for means to uplift and moralize their citizens—particularly the immigrants. Crowded into tenements under conditions that denied them light and air and (it was believed) rendered them particularly susceptible to crime and vice, these newcomers were to be saved by access to nature. The romantic landscape developed by park builders was at least as important in its capacity to affect men's character as it was to delight their senses.

"A grand park within the reach of every citizen would do more in preventing disturbances and vice than half the sermons preached"; it would "keep away the poor and the young from the temptations scattered all about them." Thus spoke a San Francisco editor in the mid-nineteenth century.[1] More sophisticated spokesmen for the park cause echoed the theme. Olmsted saw the growth of big-city parks as the expression of a self-preserving instinct within society. President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard asserted that parks produce the best means to restrain the vices of men coarsened by the factory system and urban crowding, and also to feed their "mental and spiritual growth."[2] In Philadelphia, the tenth annual report of the City Parks Association asserted that "whatever furnishes innocent recreation and amusement exerts a potent influence in checking crime, and the public square and playground must be given prominent places among the agencies favorably affecting the moral condition of society."[3]

Besides these idealistic factors, a strong economic argument was made for the construction of parks. Within a decade after the completion of Forest Park in St. Louis, Andrew McKinley (who was, incidentally, the first president of the park's board of commissioners) was advertising the sale of building lots near its eastern edge. He claimed that the value of the lots had already risen from fifteen dollars per foot in 1873 to forty dollars in 1885.[4] The building of Central Park in New York resulted in a quadrupling of rates from surrounding houses, so that within twenty years the whole cost of the park was recouped.[5] Other cities found their parks yielding similar economic benefits.

Nevertheless, by the 1880 census, parks existed in comparatively few cities. Of 210 cities enumerated, twenty made no report of public spaces (presumably because they had none).[6] The examples of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Buffalo had not yet been generally followed. Pittsburgh, with a population of 156,000, had less than one and one-third public acres; Kansas City, in those pre-Kessler days, had two acres of parks for its 56,000 souls. A broad movement, however, was soon to begin. Playgrounds and athletic facilities would be built; but the park most desired by the citizens, highly visible and usually the recipient of generous funding, was that which was to continue its pre-eminence and to become the central park of the contemporary city.

Conflicts and Tensions

From the beginning conflicts developed between the romantically conceived central parks and the needs of the rapidly changing cities. The parks had been created not so much to enhance or beautify the city as to provide an escape from it—indeed, so far as possible to deny the city's very existence. The ideal park was designed to render the surrounding city invisible; New York's Central Park had a wall of trees which were to grow higher than any likely residences. Within, long meadows, trees casting a deep shade and shrubbery massed to create a sense of mysterious distances, were combined with expanses of water reflecting the sky. Roads and paths followed a curving course. Specialized uses were decried and buildings were kept to a minimum.

Here was a Walden for the multitudes; but the accomplishment was not readily understood by the politicians of the Tweed ring or by city people clamoring for places to engage in active sports and mass entertainments. A tendency toward depression accentuated Olmsted's own gloom. He saw his New York masterpiece bordering on failure; and in looking back over a life's accomplishment he could assert with a characteristic mixture of pride and pessimism: "There are, scattered through the country, seventeen large public parks . . . upon which, with sympathetic partners or pupils, I have been engaged. After we have left them they have in the majority of cases been more or less barbarously treated."[7]

Olmsted's concern was deeply based. The nineteenth-century park,

beautiful and refreshing as it could be, was a fragile oasis in the midst of a city that was demanding specialized forms of recreation and whose citizens were increasingly able to make their group interests felt. Open spaces created to meet precisely defined needs—bird sanctuaries, nature preserves, beaches, golf courses, athletic fields—could be maintained with comparative ease and could preserve their integrity in the face of opposing pressures. But the many-faceted park of romantic configuration contained at its best a large number of smaller attractions harmoniously related to each other and dependent for their charm upon subordination to the overall design. Yet special groups pressed for the satisfaction of their claims—the baseball players, the swimmers, the ice skaters, the spokesmen for the elderly, for cultural institutions, for schools.

The demands became more insistent as these parks—most of them originally outside the built-up areas—found the city encroaching on their very borders. The hoped-for impression of rural quiet was lost. Commercial towers and high-rise apartments destroyed the scale. Even more seriously, the original concept of the central park was frequently strained by change in the social composition of the surrounding neighborhoods. Large mansions converted to apartments, crowded with the poor and with racial minorities, created a park public with other interests than the enjoyment of a romantic landscape. As time went on, many of these parks become a patchwork of special uses. And then the slow process of decay set in. Masonry steps and terraces proved difficult to restore; ancient trees suffered from the city's polluted airs; the earth became compacted and thin.

New generations of park users rebelled against restrictions imposed by older social mores. Litter, graffiti and vandalism signalized that the parks were neither being adequately supervised nor satisfying needs of the current population.

In many cities groups formed to defend and renew the historic green spaces. They were composed of well-intentioned citizens, often thoroughly informed on the objectives of the original park-builders and motivated by an earnest desire for restoration. They saved the parks from many hasty and ill-considered invasions. Yet many of them were not capable of seeing that contemporary city life had its own justifiable claims, or realizing that some compromise with modernity was necessary.

Efforts of public-spirited citizens were not sufficient to stem the tide of deterioration. Neither private philanthropy nor strained city budgets could effectively repair, maintain, supervise and police these vulnerable and menaced parks. The danger was that they would come to stand in the

modern city as a somewhat pathetic anomaly, cared for grudgingly and with a sense of guilt. Meanwhile in the newer forms of urban open space—in the restored riversides, the busy plazas and malls—men and women would find the sort of urban experiences most congenial to the twentieth-century mood. They would discover their pleasures in the heart of the city, amid its turbulence and diversity, and not (as the earlier park builders had proposed) in a flight to pastoral illusions.

CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK

We turn now to an examination of certain of the major parks—brief case studies pointing up the assets of these historic open spaces and their problems.

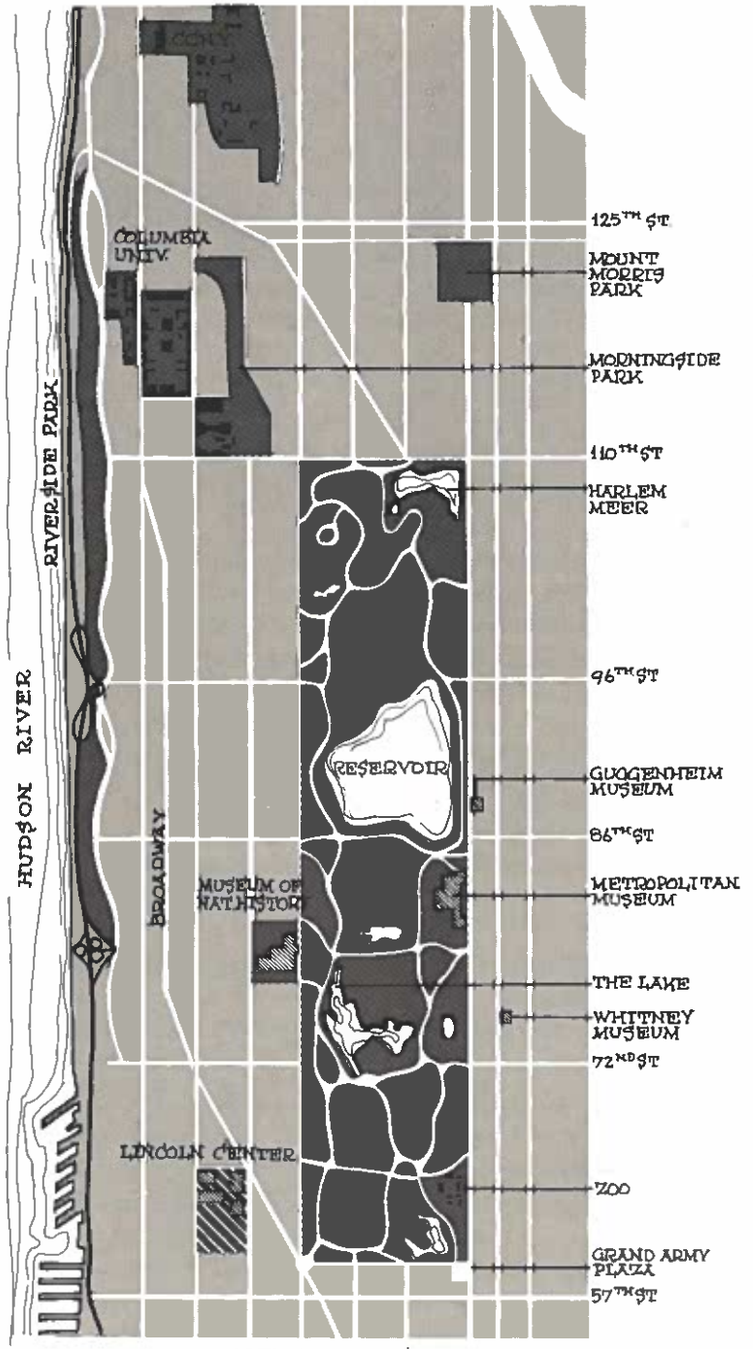
No choice exists but to begin with Central Park in New York City. This was the first large-scale park created in this country. Its impact upon other cities was immediate. Its principal designer, Frederick Law Olmsted, became a national figure, calling into being a new species of park-builder. Central Park presents today the whole range of problems with which authorities in other cities are contending.

The map on page 168, besides recalling the park's scale and essential features, shows something that is not often taken into account. Central Park does not stand isolated: at its northern end there is a series of topographic features that could, if the links were developed, make it part of an extended chain of green spaces. Within a few hundred yards Morningside Park begins, running along the ridge that also underlies Colonial Park. Directly north of Central Park, Cathedral Parkway runs westward to Riverside Park. (Morningside and Riverside parks were designed by Olmsted, and it was he who envisaged the "parkway"—now a crowded street uninviting to pedestrians or cyclists.)

At its southern end Central Park opens into a different kind of urban space—especially where the Grand Army Plaza leads to Fifth Avenue and down toward Rockefeller Center.

Two other important aspects of the situation of Central Park need to be noted.

First is the encircling ring of major cultural institutions. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has been in the park since its establishment in 1870. The Museum of Natural History is on parkland just outside the park's borders. To the west are Lincoln Center and the New-York Historical Society; on



NEW YORK - CENTRAL PARK

Central Park, shown in relation to green spaces forming Manhattan Island's spine and the Hudson riverfront. In addition to Central Park, Olmsted designed Morningside and Riverside parks.

the east, the Guggenheim Museum faces the park, while the Whitney is a block away. The strong affinity between parks and cultural institutions is thus expressed, while a minimum of Central Park land is made use of.

Second is the way in which diverse neighborhoods surround the park. To the south are outstanding hotels and commercial developments. To the north, centering on Mount Morris, is Harlem. Two more different communities, both feeding into the park, could hardly be imagined. The east and west sides have also long been dissimilar in economic and social characteristics. Thus the park is located so as to draw a varied population. Today's widespread use of the bicycle has helped ensure that no group will remain isolated in a particular geographic location.

Origins of the Park

When Central Park was first envisaged, Manhattan Island was poor in open space. A few squares—Bowling Green, Union Square, Madison Square—broke the grid extending northward from the Battery. Broadway's slanting progress up the island left in its wake small triangles not suited for being built upon. The New York plan of 1811, though boldly providing for a city of far greater size than then existed, did little to cure the deficiency of open space. Anxious not to disappoint the hopes of real estate speculators, it counted upon the waterfront to provide a substitute for parks. Not until the middle of the century, when built-up areas were moving steadily northward, did the need for a large public park begin to make itself felt.

The park movement was fortunate in having at that same time a group of strong civic leaders, and having in William Cullen Bryant a powerful editorial voice convinced that a large park or "pleasure ground" was essential to the growing city. Two principal sites were considered, a location known as Jones Wood, along the shore of the East River, and the other at the center of the island. The latter was selected in 1857, and the planning and construction of the new park was begun.

The several hundred acres acquired for park purposes (the ultimate size of Central Park was to be 840 acres) were as uncongenial to development as could have been imagined. At once rocky and marshy, this site of abandoned farms and wretched hovels might well have been difficult to conceive as a place of any utility, far less of beauty. Yet here was to take form a setting of romantic vistas and rural perspectives in a style that was to be followed in city after city throughout the remainder of the century. The practical and artistic accomplishment was due in large part to the

genius of a man whose name was to become synonymous with landscaped parks.

Olmsted was cast more or less by chance into the role of park-builder. He was not trained as a horticulturist. Little in his early experience suggested that he would become the country's foremost landscape designer and the founder of a new profession.[8] Something of a wanderer in youth, he tried his hand at many things before settling down to the one big thing that was to form his career. He had had, like Melville, his season before the mast. Like Thoreau he had hoed and planted. He was one with many of his generation in being troubled throughout his life by depression and by unresolved psychological drives. Yet when the chance arose to act as supervisor of construction in the new Central Park, and then to compete in its design, he stepped in as if born to the work.

In partnership with the British-born architect Calvert Vaux, he won the competition. He oversaw the park's development and (despite many threats to quit) was its manager during most of its formative years.

For Olmsted and his contemporaries there was little doubt about what the new park should be. It should provide a contrast to the existing city, a refuge from its noise, its oppressive darkness, from the crowdedness and the inhuman surfaces of streets. The concern for picturesqueness and for country amenities was not an aesthetic judgment alone. In a typically American way it was a moral judgment, rooted in the conviction that men's outlook and character could be changed for the better.[9] It would be the workingman's park (as well as that of the swells and dandies), and all would benefit spiritually as well as through pleasures received.

The design of Central Park showed many important innovations. The park drives; the separation by grades of various forms of circulation; the sunken transverse roads; the careful substructure of irrigation and drainage and the use of natural outcroppings as design features—these were to prove suggestive in the future. For the visitor, however, the park gained its special character from the shaded views, the long expanses of grass, the sense of a wide yet subtly mysterious landscape in which a man might find a sense of peace and a recollection of his earlier roots.[10]

Olmsted's Influence

Completed just after the Civil War, in a period when many American cities were entering upon a period of dramatic growth, New York's Central

Park created a profound effect. It seemed that everyone wanted a park, and wanted it to be as much like New York's as possible. Olmsted's views were accepted as the true gospel, and his disciples multiplied. A young Texan, George Kessler, had worked briefly as a gardener in Central Park, but grew homesick for the spaces of his native West. It was Olmsted who recommended Kessler for the job of laying out a railway excursion park near Kansas City. The latter went on to design Kansas City's famous parks and park system. He also made plans for Cincinnati, Indianapolis and Dallas.

H. W. S. Cleveland, whose Boston firm had competed unsuccessfully in the Central Park competition, met Olmsted in 1868 and the two became friends. When Cleveland was fighting to establish the Minneapolis park system, his board asked the famous landscape designer for advice. Olmsted, in a classic letter to the park board, backed Cleveland.[11] The system became one of the outstanding achievements of nineteenth-century urban planning.

In San Francisco William Hammond Hall worked in what he believed to be the Olmsted tradition. He submitted the plans for Golden Gate Park to the older man and received a reply giving general approbation of the design but expressing doubts whether it could be executed on such a site in such a climate.[12] Olmsted's misgivings later gave way to optimism and generous praise.

Mention should be made, finally, of a young man who came to Olmsted's Boston office to serve as an apprentice just after his graduation from college. Charles Eliot, the son of Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard, had been determined from youth to become a planner and landscape architect. The apprenticeship served both men well. Eliot learned much, and had opportunity to work on Belle Isle Park in Detroit as well as on the Boston parks with which the firm was at that time chiefly occupied. He accompanied Olmsted on his trips around the country and must have added much to the journeys of the older man. Eliot left the firm to travel in Europe. In 1893, when he joined in a partnership with Olmsted and his son, the creator of Central Park was entering upon the mental decline that darkened his last years. Eliot himself was to be victim of a rare disease only four years later.

Charles Eliot's career, though brief, was one of genuine accomplishments in his field. We shall meet him again when we deal with open spaces at the perimeters of modern cities. Here we emphasize his basic agreement with Olmsted on the nature of the central city park. The square, said Eliot, was a proper place for monuments, for decorations, for gardens. But the true

park is to be kept free of "townlike things." Parks are intended for the recreation of people "by means of their rural, sylvan and natural scenery and character."[13] Thus he expressed the ideal underlying Central Park in New York and many of the other central parks that were established afterward across the country.

The Park Today

The public devoted to the cause of Central Park is prone to exaggerate the abuses that have overtaken it in the more than one hundred years of its history. Like Olmsted himself, they see the park as "going to the devil"; they may even echo his "grave doubt whether the undertaking to provide a rural recreation ground upon such a site in midst of a city like this was not a mistake. . . . The park," Olmsted added, "can easily become a nuisance and a curse to the city."[14] Today's park devotees become similarly preoccupied with shortcomings of upkeep or restoration, and are often troubled by the number of people Central Park attracts.

In fact, the park has survived remarkably well, considering the changes in the city around it and the variety of social and political pressures to which it has been subjected. Friends of the park like to circulate a map indicating the various outrageous and bizarre proposals—including a huge hotel, an automobile speedway, a landing field for airplanes and a permanent world's fair—which have been made over the years. But the surprising fact is not that such proposals have been made; it is that they were never implemented. They were effectively resisted in some cases, simply laughed out of court in others. A vigilant public makes the park as safe today from major changes or encroachments as is any piece of land in any city of the world.

This is not to deny that there are severe problems—problems of adequate maintenance, of safety, of architectural and horticultural restoration. There are also difficult and delicate choices to be made in the management of the park. The underlying difficulty stems from the basic nature of Central Park and of the parks that were made in its image. "A rural recreation ground" (to use Olmsted's words) is bound to have problems when placed "upon such a site in midst of a city like this." But the problems need not be insuperable. The underlying concept should not be considered an anachronism. At least it can be said that New York has made better use of its Central Park, and dealt with its problems more sensitively, than many cities in similar circumstances.

Examples taken from the experience of other cities help give us insight into the dimensions of these problems and some of the measures required.

FOUR PARKS REVISITED

Forest Park—Piecemeal Change

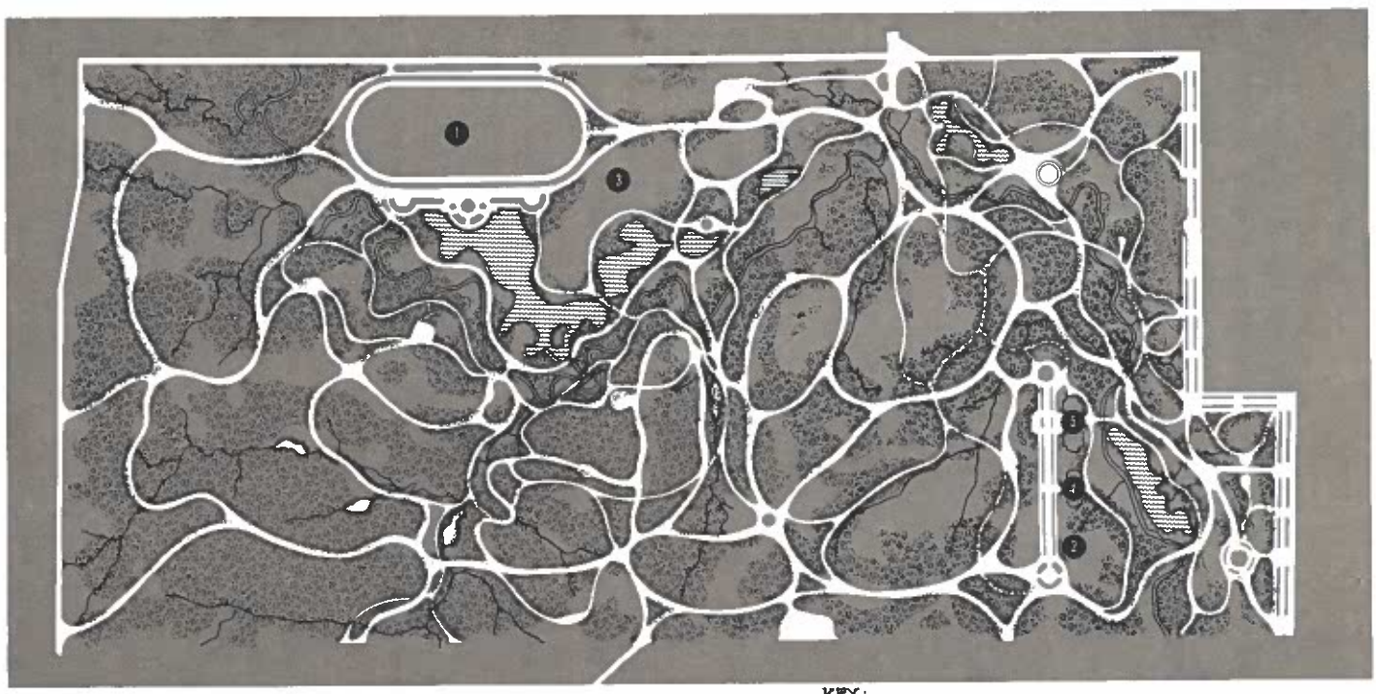
The central position of Forest Park within the semicircle of present-day St. Louis has already been noted. The two square miles of green dominate the urban expanse and form with the newly recaptured waterfront two nobly proportioned and complementary open spaces.

Not surprisingly, a park so large and so centrally located has a lively historical background.[15] The acquisition of the tract was subject to controversy and its subsequent development was under the impulse of varied and often contradictory pressures. In 1871 enterprising citizens in the western part of the city secured legislative authority to acquire the park, and three years later the city purchased it for the sum of $849,058.61. Property owners sued against what seemed an act of folly and a derogation of their natural rights to speculate in the land. The basic legislative act was, however, declared valid.

The next problem was to design the park. The names of two relatively unknown men, M. G. Kern and Henry Flad—one a park superintendent, the other an engineer—appear on the original plan, now in the possession of the St. Louis Historical Society. These men were evidently familiar with Olmsted's work, and in the winding roadways, the rustic bridges, the deference to natural forest areas, the master's influence is visible.

Another aesthetic force was also at work—the tendency toward the grand and the classical, which has long inspired the citizens of St. Louis and may be seen today in the city's central mall. A hippodrome with a monumental figure of a horse at the center, a bizarre music stand, a castle (subject to being redesigned as the "ruin of a castle") and a statue of Edward Bates, a local political luminary, were among the incongruous features included. For better or worse, the plan—unlike that of New York's Central Park—was not one to which there was ever any strong commitment. The depression of the early 1890s drastically cut the funds available for development—though leaving enough for the statue of Mr. Bates. Then the St. Louis Exposition of 1904, the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase, changed the park's physical aspect and turned the city's thought to new social concerns.

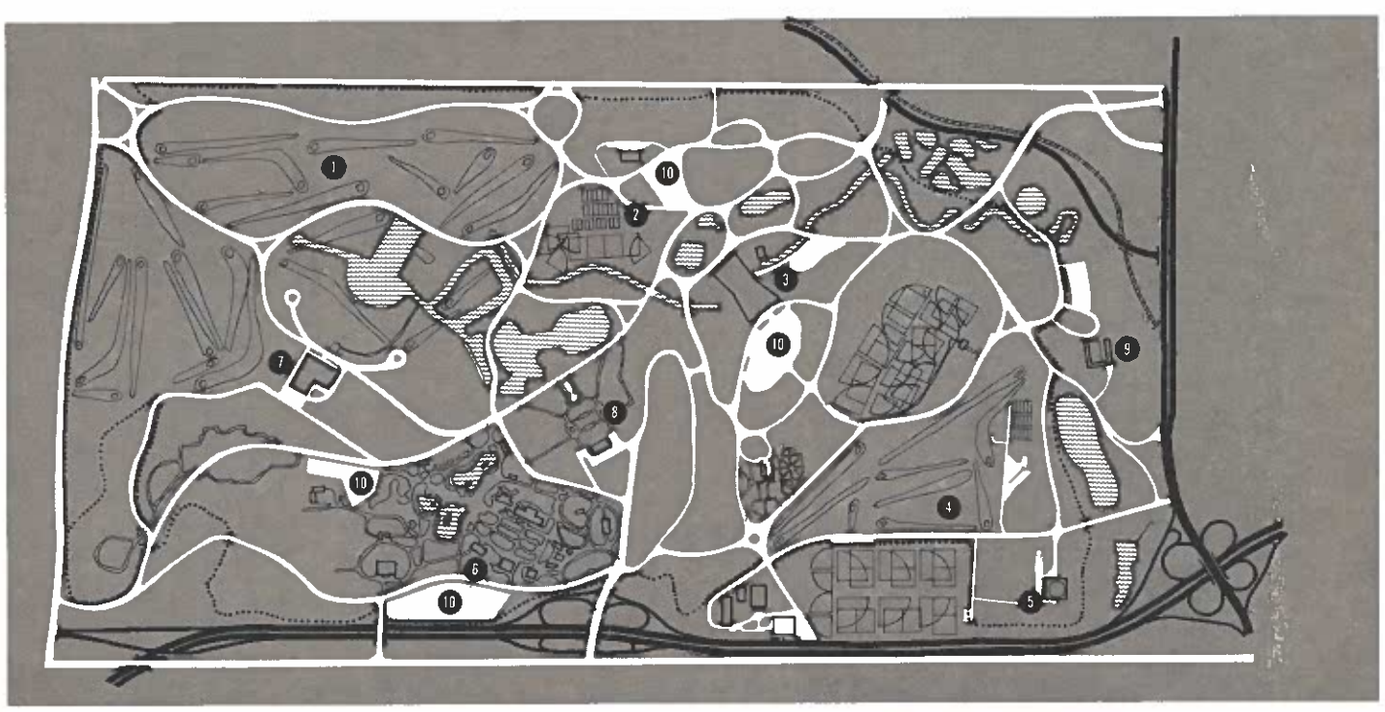
The exposition authorities promised to return the parklands "as found."



FOREST PARK - ST.LOUIS

KEY:
1 HIPPODROME
2 FLORAL WALK
3 THE MEADOW
4 AQUARIUM
5 TROPICAL GARDEN

Original design of Forest Park, greatly influenced by Olmsted, with formal elements at Hippodrome and Flower Walk.



FOREST PARK - ST.LOUIS

KEY:
1 MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE
2 TENNIS CENTER
3 MUNICIPAL OPERA
4 A.A.A GOLF COURSE
5 PLANETARIUM
6 ZOO
7 ART MUSEUM
8 WORLD FAIR PAVILION
9 SKATING RINK
10 PARKING

The park today, showing multiplicity of special uses, traffic lanes, parking spaces, etc.

But in clearing sites for their buildings they felled seventeen thousand trees; and they left structures that are in use to this day. In addition, to compensate for the destruction of the trees, a new Jefferson memorial was constructed, a formal portal to the park at the De Baliviere entrance. The two wings of the building now house the Historical Society, and a monumental figure of Jefferson looks down upon the park from the pillared loggia.

The loss of the forest and the introduction of new man-made elements opened the way to an avalanche of "improvements." Thereafter, every time a new institution was created or a new entertainment devised, Forest Park seemed the natural place to put it. Today the park contains a zoo—an excellent one—using seventy of its acres, a fine arts museum, a planetarium, an ice-skating rink, a municipal opera and three golf courses (one of them semiprivate), as well as much space given over to parking. The River des Peres, once thought of as a natural feature of great potential beauty, but subject to flooding and unpleasant smells, has been placed underground in a sewer. Here, a local historian asserts, it has "ceased to be a source of annoyance to visitors to the park."[16]

The adjoining maps on pages 174–175 form an instructive contrast. One shows the original plan of the park; the other, the park as it now exists. The features singled out for reference suggest how widely separated are the interests of today's park users from those of a hundred years ago. In one case, the "floral promenade," the "sheep folds," the "terrace," the "rustic shelter"; in the other, "model airplane field," "golf course," "skating rink," "baseball field," etc.

Before dismissing Forest Park for its apparently piecemeal and haphazard accumulation of special features and programs, we must take into account the very real interest in social causes that animated St. Louis and affected its outlook on parks. The 1904 Exposition may have occasioned the cutting down of trees. But it also made articulate a new emphasis on social processes and humanitarian reform. If man the creator was on display, so were the forces shaping man. Instead of only showing the wonder of scientific invention and consumer gadgetry that the new century was ready to pour out, the fair became by the conscious decision of its sponsors an opportunity to present to its visitors the latest theories of social scientists. Forest Park itself became a laboratory in which new ideas of education and recreation were explored.

Installed as part of the fair, a model playground was retained and became a pattern for others throughout the city. Hundreds of small plots were marked out at the edge of the park and assigned to children for growing

vegetables. In 1911 something even more revolutionary in the use of the park took place. The "Keep Off the Grass" signs were removed. To the sociologically oriented park officials, grass was no longer something to be looked at from a distance and surveyed from paved pathways. "To the element of natural beauty," states a park report of 1915, "has been added the conception of social utility. . . . The primary purpose of the park system has become the raising of men and women rather than grass or trees." In that same year the name Department of Parks ceased to be used and the agency became known as the Division of Parks and Recreation of the Department of Public Welfare.

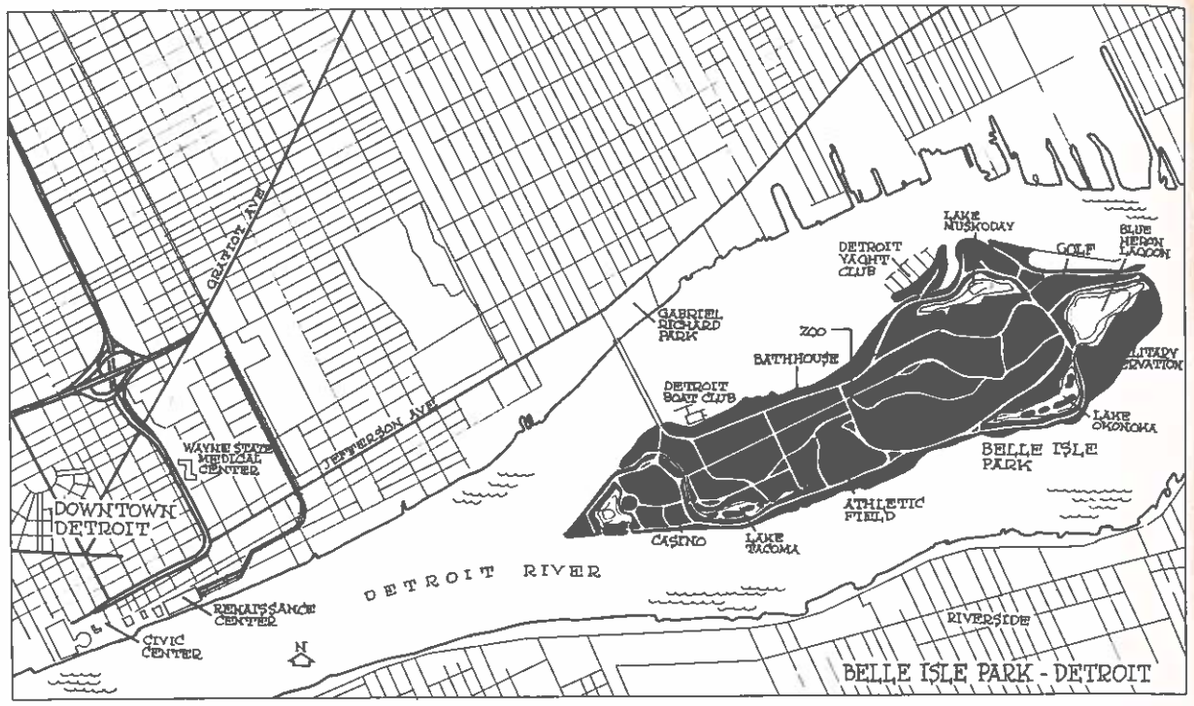
The emphasis on "social utility" may seem naïve; yet one should not minimize the degree to which Forest Park has served the communal interests of the city around it. The strong tradition which persists to this day of outdoor pageants, festivals, concerts and ethnic celebrations has worked as a unifying force in St. Louis; and the many facilities for sport and culture give the park a lively, well-used appearance. In short, if Central Park in New York has survived as a powerful civic asset because it resisted change, Forest Park has survived and on the whole has prospered because it accommodated itself to new needs and to new social doctrines.

Belle Isle—Park with a Social Problem

No one of the country's larger parks presents today a more tantalizing challenge than Belle Isle in Detroit. The Belle Isle map shows it as an island in the narrow Detroit River, which separates the United States from Canada, situated a few hundred yards off the U.S. shore and no more than half a mile downstream from the business core. Belle Isle was set aside as a park in 1881 when Olmsted came out from Boston to survey the land and make a plan. The design was in his characteristic style, with a formal area toward the end of the island nearest the city, an elaborate water system with canals fed from the river, and with a natural forest carefully preserved and pruned so that sun could penetrate to the undergrowth.

Olmsted does not seem to have been entirely happy (he rarely was entirely happy) with the way his plan was implemented by the city authorities. From the beginning there was a disposition to place within the park more buildings than he thought desirable and to set land apart for such specialized uses as ball games, swimming, tennis courts and formal gardens.

Today Belle Isle, enlarged by landfill to a thousand acres, is in many of



Belle Isle Park, shown in relation to downtown Detroit and to existing and projected waterfront development.

its areas a hodgepodge of inharmonious and tasteless structures, while delicate wrought-iron bridges from the last century decay and rust.[17] The casino, an exotic period piece, shelters the elderly and a third-rate eating place. More recent additions like the Scott Fountain and the Nancy Brown Peace Pavilion serve less to provide an air of elegance than to make everything else look the more shoddy.

Yet the park is well used, and in a strange sort of way is well loved. As many as 23,000 people per day, most of them black, come over the one bridge from the city that the whites left behind when they fled to the suburbs. A small but intense group of such suburbanites constitutes the Friends of Belle Isle Park, determined to restore it to something of its former natural charm and man-made splendor.

The park has become a symbol to both blacks and whites. Coleman Young,

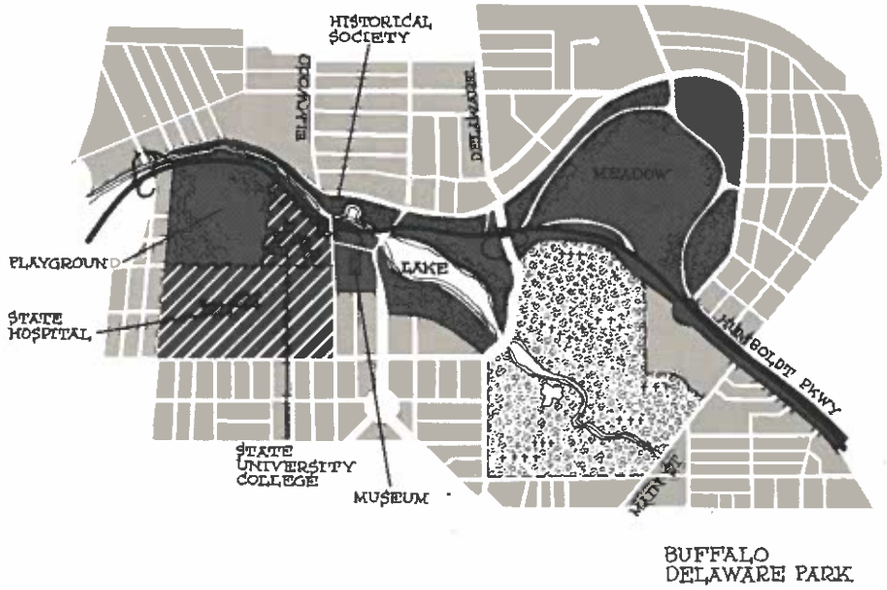
the black mayor elected in 1974, echoes the dedicated Ray Rickman, chairman of the Friends, in calling Belle Isle "a top priority"; yet one has the feeling that each has a somewhat different picture in mind. The mayor sends in city forces to pave the roadways and enlarge the parking places; while the Friends struggle to get a city contract with an outstanding landscape architect, whose first recommendation would probably be to narrow or eliminate the roads and to restrict parking. Yet for everyone this grand open space is a test of the city's capacity to survive; and the Friends, fortunately, are not so blindly devoted to a past tradition that they cannot see the need to meet the interests of new racial and economic groups.

Delaware—Park with a Plan

The location of Delaware Park within Buffalo is indicated on the map on page 180. It will be seen to the northeast of the downtown area, at a distance from Niagara Square of some two and a half miles. It is bordered by institutional developments, an attractive residential area and a cemetery. It is cut through by a modern expressway. The accompanying large-scale map of the park shows the expressway route and the principal areas as they exist today.

This was clearly intended to be the central park of Buffalo, a city in the last half of the nineteenth century immensely civic-minded and immensely ambitious. The business leaders heading the park movement would have no one but the designer of New York's Central Park to create their own. Olmsted stopped off in Buffalo on a Sunday in August 1868 and spent the afternoon driving about looking for an appropriate site. He discarded suggestions that involved land too expensive to transform into the desired rural pleasure ground. But coming to an elevation overlooking the city from the northern countryside, "Here is your park almost ready made," he exclaimed.

"The Park" (or Delaware, as it came to be known later) was laid out with diverse facilities and wide areas of lakeside and meadow. By the late 1880s it was a popular gathering place; old photographs show its use by large crowds strolling on a Sunday afternoon or taking drives along the carriage roads. The Pan-American Exposition of 1901 was sensibly placed just outside the park, and left as a residue within it only the agreeable building now used by the Historical Society. In 1905, when the Albright-Knox Art Gallery was built, Delaware was still a pastoral park and sheep grazed in the meadow.



An Olmsted park divided by an expressway, Delaware is the only such park now the subject of a comprehensive master plan.

The original design had carefully separated competing or incompatible activities. Opportunities for active recreation, for passive pursuits and for purely social encounters were provided with minimal intrusion of one upon the other. In the early years the 350-acre park assured ample room to satisfy diverse needs. With time, however, sports made increasing demands on the park's open space. Ball fields pre-empted a portion of the Meadow; an eighteen-hole golf course was added; playgrounds for neighborhood children appeared along the park's edges.

The most traumatic change came in the early 1960s with the construction of the Scajaquada Expressway and its interchanges. This was a shock from which the park has not recovered. The nineteenth-century landscape was drastically altered; the entire area was bisected. Mirror Lake and the Historical Society found themselves cut off behind the expressway barrier. Other pieces of parkland were fragmented and isolated.

With portions of the park rendered inaccessible, intensity of use came to

vary widely. Some areas were heavily overused; others fell into forlorn neglect. As the park's natural environment deteriorated, its man-made facilities fell into a state of disrepair. A hundred years after Delaware Park was created for a city alarmed by its dwindling open space, Buffalo woke to the need to re-examine the park's condition and to consider what could be done to minimize the expressway's inexcusable encroachment.

Buffalo became the first city to have a carefully drawn master plan for its central park.[18] New York has not been able to achieve this for its own great park despite the obvious need for an appraisal of each acre, monument and structure. San Francisco's city-wide plan calls for such a re-examination of Golden Gate Park; so far nothing has been done. In Buffalo, however, a citizen's advisory group worked closely with professional planners in a major effort to accommodate to twentieth-century conditions a park designed according to a nineteenth-century philosophy. If this master plan had been done twenty years earlier, the encroachment of the expressway would surely not have been tolerated.

As it is, the planners accept the expressway as a fact of life, though with the faint hope that in the future it may be depressed in at least some sections of the park. In addition, they propose softening its impact by the removal of entrances and exits that bring traffic directly into the park.

The plan emphasizes the underlying dilemma posed by the differences in urban living—in life styles, recreation preferences, modes of transport—between two historic periods. How can the park be assured of "relevance" for today? How can a rural pleasure ground retain its character and at the same time satisfy contemporary tastes? Accommodation with the automobile is the first major concession to modernity. Parking spaces are included for "a greatly increased number of cars." The Meadow is to be ringed by a continuous one-way Meadow Road with parking and support services provided. The planners assume that without convenient automobile access, the park will not reach its full use. Public transport to the park is indeed lacking, but the possibility of providing it in some attractive form might have been examined.

Aspects of pedestrian and bicycle traffic within the park are effectively dealt with. The interior barrier created by the expressway is at least to be broken through at crucial points by pedestrian underpasses.

Circulation problems thus disposed of, the report concentrates on activities. It makes the explicit assumption that there will be more facilities adopted to special uses, more participant and spectator sports, more communal events and more indoor recreation. Yet it seeks to embody these

functions within a landscape retaining its original flavor and set in definite contrast to the surrounding urban environment. It seeks to embody them, also, without doing violence to the neighborhoods that edge the park. Sensitive to the park's context, the report shows how recreation for small children and the elderly is to be kept close to residential areas, while active sports and spectator events are confined to the park's more central areas.

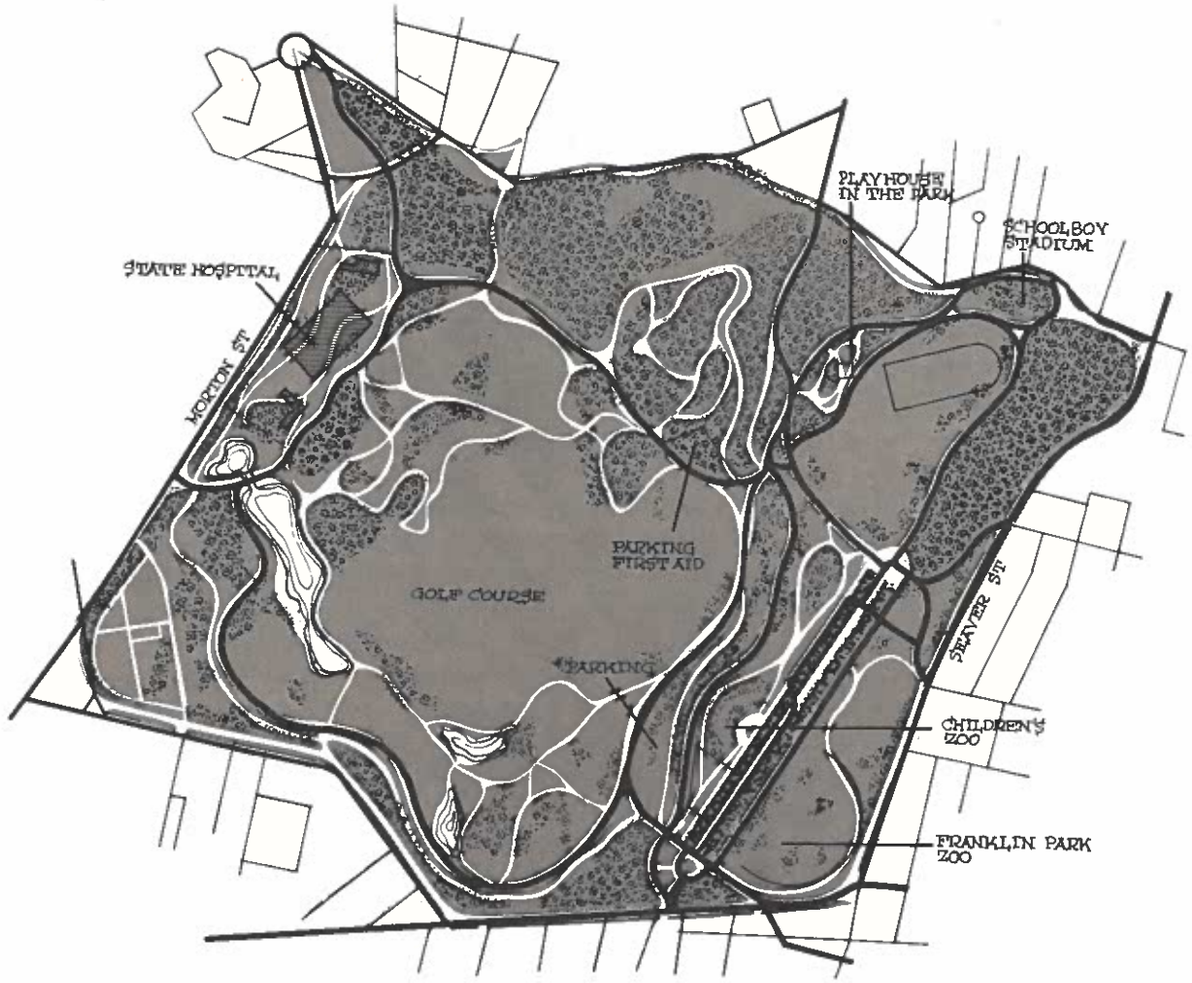
The Delaware Park plan can well serve as a model for other cities. It deals with basic issues of park philosophy in a practical and realistic way; it recognizes the validity of contemporary values without discarding the past. A strong infusion of citizen thinking has been skillfully combined with professional judgments. As with all plans, the ultimate question is whether it will be followed up and implemented.

Franklin—The Park That Got Lost

The inclusion of Boston's Franklin Park in this discussion of "central parks" may be thought surprising. It certainly does not meet all our criteria—the Common and Public Garden are located at the heart of the city, while Franklin seems comparatively remote; it is those, not Franklin, that attract public ceremonies and arouse the people's fanatic involvement where any change is contemplated. But Franklin was *intended* to be Boston's great rural pleasure ground. In design it was considered the equal, if not superior to, Olmsted's two other masterpieces, Central and Prospect parks in New York and Brooklyn. Though farther out than the Common and Public Garden, it was still no more inaccessible to Bostonians of the last century than was Forest Park to the people of St. Louis or Delaware to the people of Buffalo.

The question is, what happened to Franklin Park? Basically it got caught within a social context that made it the province of a single community rather than a city-wide resource. And that community has not been sufficiently sure of its identity to make effective use of what it possessed.

Franklin Park's general location is best seen on the map of Boston's park system, page 196. It stands as the climax of the series of green spaces that begins with the Common at the heart of the city. This greenbelt has suffered as its once pleasant drives have become subject to the strains of modern traffic. The transformation of the park's basic access route has played a part in Franklin's isolation. Yet it may be noted that the privately maintained Arboretum, along this same belt system, is visited by hundreds of thousands who have grown accustomed to spurning Franklin Park as a no man's land.



Olmsted's conception of Franklin Park, with land uses of today superimposed.

The accompanying map of Franklin Park is drawn at a scale to show the disposition of the park's interior spaces—the original woods and meadows, remarkably unchanged today—with some contemporary uses overlaid. Olmsted, who had first proposed the site in 1876 as the location for Boston's major park, admired the way the land lay, finding its ridges, its natural groves and its expanses of meadow so agreeably combined that he avoided the use of lakes and running water. (Later park commissioners, feeling they had been slighted, added their own ponds.)

The park is the same overall size as Prospect Park in Brooklyn, but chunkier in dimensions. The core is a large central space formed by a relatively level meadow. A curving space called Ellicottdale draws one toward the north, and between are gentle hills—Schoolmaster, Hagborne and Scarboro. A circuit drive winds around the park. On the east is the kind of formal space—known here as the Greeting—such as Olmsted often included within his rural landscapes, but which in this case he seems to have assented to reluctantly.

In declaring this "the best piece of work done by its designer," Olmsted's son commented: "The topography and ridges and trees lent themselves not only to many picturesque bits of landscape designing but afforded, with moderate grading, excellent fields for such sports as are permissible in a landscape park."[19]

Over the years the number of "permissible" sports has grown; the park has been subjected to various encroachments and invasions. An edge was lopped off for Shattuck Hospital. The North Meadow was pre-empted by a stadium and parking lot. The Metropolitan District Commission claims a significant portion for the zoo and is hoping to acquire more. Nevertheless, a largely rural atmosphere prevails, and the absence of surrounding high-rise buildings gives the park an agreeably isolated feeling.

This isolation, however, is a major reason why Franklin Park is in trouble. Although once surrounded by middle-class homes, the park never spurred the development that might have been anticipated. When the middle class moved on to the suburbs, the poor, mostly black, took their place. Services in the area declined and today the surrounding homes are deteriorating. With this change in the neighborhood the park began to suffer. Harassment, muggings and acts of vandalism increased, until the number of visitors began to drop off. Fewer families came out on a Sunday afternoon to picnic or play; even the zoo failed to attract them.

The Great Meadow had long since become a municipal golf course. Here levels of maintenance were relatively high and the clubhouse on the slopes of Refectory Hill was well cared for while other park buildings deteriorated.

Even so, fewer and fewer people came out to play golf, until a few years ago it was decided to use only the nine holes nearest the clubhouse, which seemed to offer golfers some measure of protection.

The basic issue in regard to Franklin Park is whether in fact it is a city-wide park or belongs to the adjacent Model Cities neighborhood. In 1975 a $900,000 appropriation was withdrawn by the city council when the chairman of its appropriations committee, Louise Day Hicks, argued against the expenditure on the grounds that city-wide tax money ought not to be spent on a park so exclusively within the domain of a minority.

The park does have a constituency, however—one that is fighting hard to secure restoration of city funds and to get on with necessary improvements. It has been led by a remarkable woman, Elma Lewis, who devoted herself to providing programs for Franklin Park. She conducted a dancing class for children and trained them rigorously. During the summer, in an outdoor theater that had been named for her, she ran nightly programs of music and dance. Standing directly in opposition to Louise Day Hicks, Mrs. Lewis went beyond encouraging her own community to use the park and take care of it. She did not lose sight of the park's place in the total city and demanded that the city fulfill its obligation.

Mrs. Lewis and her friends were joined by a much larger and less defined constituency—those Bostonians conscious of the city's historic heritage, not willing to stand by and let Franklin Park decline. The park touches a raw nerve because public officials and citizens alike feel some guilt at having seemed to abandon the masterpiece in their midst. "If it weren't for Elma Lewis and her group," said one civic leader, "nobody would care about Franklin Park."

The way back is not easy to find. Certainly the expenditure of public funds cannot by itself guarantee a cessation of vandalism or assure greater use for the park. The lack of development in the surrounding area suggests that long-range planning for the park ought to wait a little longer until the future of that part of Boston is assayed. Meanwhile Franklin Park must receive proper maintenance and policing. Otherwise there will be little left to plan for when the nature of its constituency, their interests and requirements, are finally determined.

SOME BASIC ISSUES

The parks just sketched raise certain issues about the historic central parks which can now be placed in a wider perspective.

All the parks show the strain of adapting to new conditions; all have suffered to a greater or lesser degree from a gap that has developed between their original conception and their present-day situation. In some cases the result has been overdevelopment, in others a falling off in use. The strain may manifest itself in so obvious a deformation as bifurcation by a major highway, or in ways so subtle as neglect and creeping vandalism. Yet in none of these cases—nor in any we know of—is there an intention to give up the land. In none is there serious argument for surrendering a major park's central status, or abandoning its character as a landscaped oasis.

The danger is not that officials or private groups will advocate these things, but that by a compromise here and there, or by a single major alteration presented under the guise of necessity, a park will lose its unique aspects. An opposing danger is that through a doctrinaire and inflexible attachment to the past on the part of its supporters, a park may prove unable to provide what a new generation is seeking. The young people may then come to look upon it as being without significance and will cease to be concerned for its future. In acts of vandalism certain groups may actually set out to destroy the park.

Other threats to these old parks come from a slow decline in upkeep, to the point where they seem shabby and uninviting; and, perhaps most pervasive, from a sense of fear among their users. Some special problems:

Encroachments

Use of central parks for plainly nonpark purposes is comparatively rare, though schools and hospitals, as well as some dubious commercial enterprises, have been allowed to intrude. Today's public is apt to resist in a historic landscaped park the kind of pressures to which outlying green spaces are often highly vulnerable.[20]

From one major form of encroachment, however, even the central parks have not been immune. In a half-dozen instances roads have lopped off portions of a central park,[21] and in others a road stands poised to pass through the city's most cherished open space. The likelihood of this threat's occurring in the future is diminished by the review provided by Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, and by the strong support this has received from the Supreme Court in the case of the proposed highway across Overton Park in Memphis.[22] Such protection, however, cannot be absolute, as has been shown in the case of Brackenridge Park in San Antonio.

Brackenridge stands in the line of a north-south expressway which is presently stopped dramatically at the point where it enters the park. The Department of Transportation ruled against the road, as having adverse environmental effects. However, the local San Antonio legislature voted in its favor. The case is still in the courts, and the future of the park is uncertain.

Balboa Park in San Diego lies close to the downtown, greatly treasured by the citizens and highly attractive to tourists. Unlike the Olmsted-type central parks seen elsewhere, Balboa is developed with elaborate structures, housing cultural institutions and the world-famous San Diego Zoo. It would seem most unlikely that here, of all places, a highway could be let pass through. Yet the Cabrillo Freeway cuts off a broad edge of the park and pre-empts at least forty acres with its cloverleaf. San Diegans tend to be apologetic about this encroachment, claiming that it gives the motorist (as indeed it does) a beautiful entrance to the city. The freeway is elaborately landscaped—a pioneering concession won from the federal highway authorities as a result of citizen protest. Yet nothing really seems to justify this use of parkland. It can only be hoped that a movement to widen the expressway will be permanently staved off.

Special Uses

More difficult than the problem of encroachment on lands of the central park is the question of what facilities and structures can properly be located there. Most of the proposals made for special use—ball fields, golf courses, museums, recreation centers, stadiums, etc.—can be justified as having a park purpose. Nearly all of them can be plausibly presented and will be defended by public-spirited citizens. The question is whether a particular facility belongs in a particular park. That makes each case delicate and each one unique.

A park designed from the beginning as a coherent work of art, preserving its original character into the present, would seem to eliminate all difficulties of choice. The obvious decision when changes are proposed would appear in each case to be a negative one. New York's Central Park presents the best example of this situation: to keep the original form of the park, to restore as may be necessary its horticulture and its architectural monuments, to resist attempts to add new features and "attractions"—this has been accepted by successive park commissioners as their charge. Nevertheless, even here a line is sometimes hard to draw.

In recent years much controversy has occurred over the completion of the Metropolitan Museum within a master plan occupying hitherto open parkland. A scheme to restore and relandscape the dilapidated area around the bandstand was defeated by park groups. More understandably, the gift of a restaurant for the southern end of the park was rejected by one mayor after having been accepted by another. In the near future decisions will have to be made—upon which Olmsted can offer no direct guidance—regarding what to do with a reservoir that becomes obsolete as part of the city's water supply.

In parks less sanctified by tradition, the question of what is a legitimate improvement and what is an unwarranted diversion becomes less clear. Many past decisions achieve acceptance and even favor, though they represent a course we would not want to see continued or repeated. Few, for example, would find that Delaware Park in Buffalo suffers from having the Albright-Knox Art Gallery within its borders. Nevertheless, if one were to build such a museum today, the case against taking parkland would be very strong. A location along the edge of the park or in the downtown area would seem more desirable from many points of view. The use of central parklands for zoos has long been accepted; but today one must question whether the small zoo usual in such a park is justified as an institution, and whether the land could not better be left free for general park purposes.

Cultural institutions are taken for granted as fitting adornments to a city's principal park, but that is no reason for adding to their number. Too often a park location has been the easiest, as it is obviously the least expensive, to acquire. With more justification than a school, but creating hardly less of an intrusion, a museum or theater has taken the place of trees and grass. Afterward the full effect of the required parking is felt, and then begins the almost inevitable pressure for expansion. If the citizens of our cities care about their green spaces they will insist on keeping them green, notwithstanding plausible arguments as to the merits of mixing art and nature.

Active and spectator sports are another major source of difficulty for the central parks. Here, too, the arguments for compromise are persuasive and often insistent. Many of the larger parks do indeed incorporate ball fields, golf courses and tennis courts without any sense of incongruity. Ice-skating rinks and swimming pools, while theoretically compatible with a historic landscape, are usually of such poor design and require so many supporting facilities as to become visual blights. A stadium is obviously out of place, yet not beyond the range of what sports fans may demand.

A separate sports park, centrally located and accessible by public transportation, is the real answer to these claims. It is significant that in designing Prospect Park Olmsted created a special area for active sports just outside it (as he created another for cultural institutions). In the Buffalo system he urged a large park for sports on the south side of the city, balancing his landscaped park at its north.

The nature, size and location of each central park will finally determine what special land uses are justified. A master plan, formulated by professionals with effective public participation, is essential. Many desirable services and functions can be incorporated if their design and placement are thought through in advance, whereas they would do violence to the park if introduced piecemeal, according to the wish of a donor or the pressures of an intransigent community. A clear sense of direction, combining traditional values and contemporary needs, should emerge from the process of park planning. That sense of direction will confirm not only the park's identity but the city's.

The Public Order

The parks under discussion are the showplaces of their cities and, with major exceptions, they are better maintained than might be supposed in a day when municipal budgets find it difficult to supply bare necessities. The exceptions, unfortunately, include New York's Central Park. An example to so many others in its design, and the envy of others because of its popular appeal, it shows what happens when repairs are deferred and the years are allowed to take their toll. The soil, always thin, has been compacted by intensive use; erosion jeopardizes many of the old trees. Structures and monuments await restoration. Belle Isle Park shows a more frowsy face, and Franklin Park declines more somberly in its neglect. But it is a municipal, and indeed a national, disgrace that the first and foremost central park should have to be compared with the worst, and not with the best, of its kind. In contrast, Golden Gate is a well-maintained oasis; Eden Park in Cincinnati, Encanto Park in Phoenix, are decent images of city pride.

There are disadvantages in setting apart one park in a city and giving it special treatment. A showplace spruced up and well-maintained, while neighborhood parks are overrun by weeds and falling prey to vandalism. is not conducive to the city's peace. Nevertheless, there is something to be said for singling out the park that is so often a major source of enjoyment to all the people. A budget kept distinct from the general park budget, a super-

intendent not only experienced but visible to the public, will help fix accountability. If there is attrition in the work force, or deferments of capital improvements, these will be known. At present the cuts too often occur by slow degrees, and the worsening condition of the park is not evident until it gets out of hand.

A sense of decline and shabbiness keeps people out of a park; so to an even greater extent does a feeling of personal insecurity. The amount of crime in major parks is probably exaggerated in the public mind, but the *fear* of crime is an ever-present fact not to be minimized. The landscaped park forms an environment particularly difficult to police, with its abundant shrubbery and the deep shadows of its trees. Olmsted, aware that safety after dark was not attainable in a heavily landscaped park, enforced the closing of Central Park at dusk. A later generation thought a better method of dealing with the problem was to cut down the shrubbery.

The visible presence of police in a park invariably pays off not only in added use by the people but in a better mixture of races and age groups.[23] In Forest Park, as in Piedmont Park, Atlanta, mounted police were responsible for maintaining the kind of confidence that allows varied elements of the city's population to mix comfortably. Officers in plain clothes, heavily relied on in New York, may have the effect of deterring would-be muggers and criminals; they do not, however, restore in the public the sense of confidence derived from a uniformed presence.

People in large numbers are in themselves an important provider of safety. Programs that draw the public, entertainments and events appealing to various audiences, banish the feeling of isolation in which fear is born; besides, the crowds become largely self-policing. An empty park always seems dangerous. Very probably it *is* dangerous.

Special Park Boards

The unique character of these central parks suggests that besides a budget and a superintendent of their own, they should, in certain cases at least, be within the keeping of a specially appointed park board.[24] Such a board would be particularly useful in a city like New York, where the park commissioner, directly responsible to the mayor, is without a board or commission related to his work.

In many cities a number of different departments have jurisdiction within parks—Highways, Recreation, Sanitation, Gas and Electricity, to name

only a few. In Buffalo, eight different municipal departments share responsibility for Delaware Park. A stronger central authority is obviously required; but beyond that, in a park so deeply involved in history and in the values of the community, a board of guardians could play an essential role. It should include leading citizens, members of the landscape and architectural professions, and representatives of the surrounding communities.

Irreparable damage may be done to the character of a historic park by introducing into it forms of lighting, highway signage and fencing, play equipment and benches that may be entirely satisfactory in parks of a different nature. Standard maintenance procedures, such as the use of blacktop for pathways or asphalt tile for roofing, may be disastrous when applied to a carefully designed landscape environment. Similarly, a thoughtless change in plant or tree material can destroy a delicately conceived and long-nurtured visual effect.

In all such matters a board of guardians would exercise a constant surveillance and would have a final say. In the making of long-range plans, the raising of funds from public and private sources, and the maintenance of the park's image, it would play a part as important as the authority and dedication of its members makes possible.

In contrast to a park director, who may have hundreds of parks and playgrounds under his control (in New York City the number is close to a thousand), the board would have one park. Safe from political interference, undistracted by the clamor of special groups, it would have one task—to make sure that nothing is done in the present which betrays the past and that all is done which may assure for the park in the future a distinguished civic role.

8 Park Systems

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MAJOR PARKS brought the city a long way beyond the historic square. But it was not to be the end of the road. The planners of open space were impelled beyond the isolated or rigidly circumscribed pleasure ground; from the beginning they sensed the need for a continuity of green space, for an interpenetration of urban and rural elements. They were to reach outward to shape the systems of open space that will be described in this chapter. Their successors were to overleap the bounds of the existing city and to organize greenbelts on the scale of megalopolis.

Respect for topography was one factor leading beyond the traditionally conceived park. If the underlying bones of the urban form were to be kept visible, if its natural assets were to be captured for recreation, green was the color to be applied liberally to the map. The green would run along shores and ridges, touch hilltops and the steeper slopes, spill over into wetlands. The park domains of such cities as Seattle and Washington, D.C., have been described in an earlier chapter to indicate the way physical geography affected the evolution of open space. That evolution tended toward open spaces linked by corridors of green.

Such was the result when a *naturalistic* approach was applied to park planning. We shall now look at what happened when the approach was primarily *urbanistic*. This chapter deals with parks systems that arose from a sense of the city's inadequacies, from the felt need to make it a more congenial place to live and work.

Breaking Through the Wall

The building of Central Park did not satisfy Olmsted's ambitions for New York. That bounded landscape, walled, ringed with trees, stood apart from the city almost as an act of defiance. Subtle approaches to this oasis, varied routes of dispersion toward other green spaces, would extend the park's influence and would ultimately transform the city. As his thinking matured, Olmsted moved toward this goal. He began to make accessible from the park the open spaces along Manhattan's rocky spine and those on the shore of the Hudson River.

In this he was not to be entirely successful. As has been noted, social and economic factors kept the areas north of Central Park from the kind of development for which Olmsted was reaching. In Brooklyn a better opportunity presented itself, and he approached the challenge of Prospect Park in full command of the new vision. The park would profit from what he conceived to be the shortcomings of his pioneering effort: not only would active sports and cultural institutions be banished to adjacent spaces, but the park would be linked by a linear green system to other parts of Brooklyn and to the sea. He even hoped that one day his two masterpieces—Central and Prospect—would be so joined. Unfortunately, the system Olmsted envisaged for Brooklyn was not completed, but one major segment of it, Ocean Parkway, we have already met up with in our discussion of Brooklyn's sequence of urban spaces.

Olmsted's supreme achievement of a unified and continuous system, however, was to be Boston's inner greenbelt. This was followed by his scheme for Buffalo and similar accomplishments by H. W. S. Cleveland in Minneapolis and George Kessler in Kansas City. What these men were doing in the America of the last century went far beyond park-building in the ordinary sense. They were planning cities; they were determining not only where structures would be excluded but the location of residential areas and neighborhoods. The spirit in which they acted was later to be expressed by Lewis Mumford: "Park planning is part of the broader process of ordering the human environment in such a way as to make the most of its varied possibilities," he wrote in his famous "Report on Honolulu." "Park planning, in other words, cannot possibly stop at the edges of the parks . . . The park system is thus the very spearhead of comprehensive urban planning."[1]

The early park planners thought in such large perspectives, but their arguments were cast in more traditional terms of beauty, "sanitation" (mean-

ing health) and common enjoyments. Reading between the lines of Kessler and Cleveland, we detect their interest in a concept of urban planning still waiting to be formulated, while they appear to be urging only the advantages of healthy physical exercise or the pleasures of a shaded afternoon drive. Like all true prophets, they had their message for the multitude, while below the surface they kept a subtler appeal to the initiated, both of their own and of future generations.

The Concept of Parkways

The park-builders connected their parks and formed their greenbelts by developing boulevards and parkways. Modern traffic has so completely altered the nature of transportation routes that we must by an effort of the imagination put ourselves back a century in time if we are to understand how the park systems were intended to function.

Carriage roads were not generally thought to be incompatible with a park environment. Indeed, a major reason for building parks was to give people a pleasant place to drive. In New York's Central Park the roads were planned to exclude through traffic. But as late as 1917 the Minneapolis city plan could assert that in new parks "effective appreciation of the requirements of through-traffic should be shown." When an existing park impedes traffic, "the wise park enthusiast," we are told, "will be the first to seek the best method of conducting that traffic through the park, *whether it be vehicular or foot traffic.*"[2]

As for foot traffic, the report suggests that walking will be healthy, morning and evening, for working men and women going to and from their work. Meanwhile "hastening businessmen," presumably riding in their carriages, "will be cheered by the sight of the park"!

Olmsted recognized the importance of carriage drives, yet in the end concluded that "the walks of the park are more used than its wheelways." He urged that some of the best scenery of any park should be capable of being viewed only from its pedestrian paths. His reason, however, was not because horses would go fast and kick up the dust, but rather that it would be good for people to "take walking exercise."[3]

The attitude toward traffic in parks being thus ambiguous, and certainly on the whole lenient, it is not surprising that the park-builders should have grasped the opportunity to shape linear green spaces designed principally for carriages. They were not very clear in their writings about the difference

between the *boulevard*—usually broad and straight, intended to be bordered by houses behind dense rows of trees—and the *parkway*, which was inclined to be sinuous and to follow natural contours. They used the two words more or less interchangeably. But in either case they had created for themselves an open space device of charm, and potentially of great significance to the form of our cities.

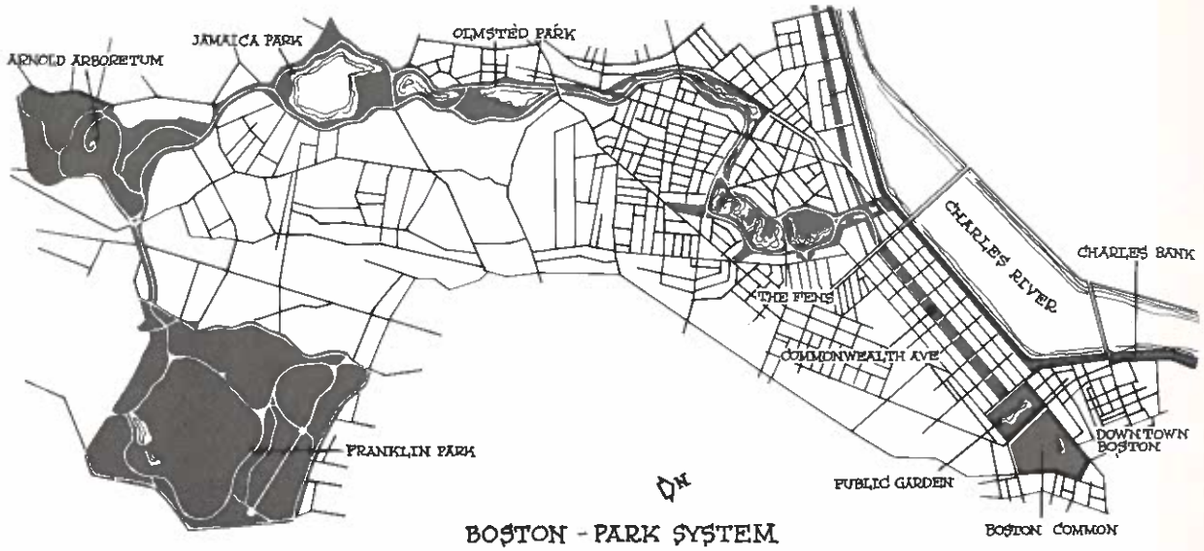
The parkways were conceived of at one level as an agreeable way of getting to parks, and a way of getting from one park to another. But more subtly they were seen as basic form-givers to the emerging cities. "What are called parkways, if judiciously designed," wrote Olmsted to the park commissioners of Minneapolis in 1886, "are likely to become the stems of systems of streets which will be the framework of the permanent residence quarters of our cities in the future." This in fact occurred. To this day Minneapolis neighborhoods have been stabilized and given identity by their relation to an arrangement of parkways and boulevards laid out a century ago.

The weakness of the romantically designed parkway, like the weakness of the classical Beaux Arts avenue, was that it lent itself so readily to being taken over by the automobile. The change in use and nature of the route was not immediately apparent and people went on believing the old ideas about the parkway when in fact an entirely new situation had come into being. The incompatibility of automobile roads and parks becoming finally apparent, the battle against the invader was inhibited by the parkmen's traditional tolerance of wheeled traffic. In the end a Robert Moses could become the great advocate of both automobiles *and* parks. The damage to parks would be immense as noise and pollution increased. In some cities older boulevards or parkways were taken over as routes for expressways or commercial avenues.

Origin of the Boston System

As New York's Central Park was the standard against which all other landscaped parks had to be judged, so the Boston greenbelt, also designed by Olmsted, became the standard for judging park systems.

Olmsted had moved to Boston when a long-simmering park enthusiasm culminated in an act of the state legislature opening the way to park acquisitions. At that time Boston possessed no major parks except the Common, going back to 1634, and the later Public Garden. Broad-based support



The Boston park system is strongly rooted in the central city, thrusting outward from the Common in a great arc climaxed by Franklin Park. The continuous greenbelt has been insensitively broken at several points.

existed for a system of green spaces linked by corridors and encircling the existing city. The Boston Parks Commission gave Olmsted the charge of carrying out the concept.

The system, graphically illustrated in the accompanying map, has its roots in the city's core and extends in a wide semicircle to the south. (Olmsted had hoped to complete the circle to the sea.) The actual greenbelt takes off from the juncture of the Charles and the Muddy River—the latter an insignificant stream that had been nothing but a nuisance until Olmsted made it the principal feature of his Fens park and the spine of his related parks and parkways. Along this spine are Jamaica Pond and the park now named after Olmsted. Continuing the greenbelt are the Arboretum and Franklin Park.

Olmsted's skill and sensitivity to nature are indicated by the way he treated the fen area. The city had planned a flood control and reservoir system for the unsightly and odorous mouth of the Muddy River, which, seeping in a

wide delta into the Charles, had bothered the residents of the newly created Back Bay. Olmsted met the practical requirements posed by floods and sewage, and at the same time created a delightful park. Sewage was diverted; the mud flats were depressed by grading to a point just below low tide, while a high rim of encircling land provided a storage area for flood waters. A tide gate permitted a normal ebb and flow.

Within this ecological and engineering framework the art of the landscape artist was deployed. Codgrass cultivated on the submerged mud flats, trees planted around the rim, were supplemented by park drives, paths for horsemen and pedestrians, shelters and bridges.

The other parks of the greenbelt were designed and developed with similar imagination. Connecting them were drives or promenades designed each to have its own character—as each had its own name—and to invite a leisurely exploration of the whole system. Going beyond this, plans were made for the development of the Charles River basin as an area of mixed recreational and institutional use, running more than eight miles from the mouth of Boston Harbor upstream to Watertown.

The System in Trouble

These related open spaces provide the Boston of today with an unusually handsome park environment. Along the greenbelt, major institutions, including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, have found a natural setting; and residential communities have maintained a special character. One unfortunate high-rise development has reminded the city of the absolute necessity to enforce the existing height limitations upon all buildings adjacent to parks.

Looked at more closely, the system shows deterioration and misuse at critical junctures and through most of its developed length. The decline began a generation after Olmsted finished his work. In 1910 a dam was built across the Back Bay fens. The original salt-water environment, washed by tides and sustaining the precious codgrass, became the site of a sterile fresh-water lake. Marshes were filled in to create conventional recreation space. The Muddy River was constrained within a hard-edged channel.

Highways have become the principal factor altering the relationship between man's open spaces and nature's. The Fenway, the Riverway, the Jamaica Way—segments of interconnected park roads which at the slow speeds of the nineteenth century could each be experienced individually—gradually coalesced into one continuous stream of fast-moving traffic. A route designed for pleasure became part of a modern transportation system

facilitating the inner-city worker's escape to the suburbs. Minor physical changes and repeated widening further eroded the green space. In the 1960s park interests narrowly averted a plan to change the nature of the open space system by straightening the original drives and removing thousands of trees.

Not averted, however, was the construction of a maze of ramps and overpasses at the point where the open space system meets the spaces of the Charles. Here the Muddy River suffered the final humiliation of being placed underground in a culvert. Despite the millions of dollars that went into structures for moving automobiles, nothing was spent for bridges or underpasses for the far less demanding pedestrian. Today, as noted earlier. he cannot pass from the green spaces of the river to those of its tributary.

A 1973 study has gone into some of the conditions that currently mar the Olmsted system.[4] Jamaica Pond and sections within Brookline are most heavily used and are comparatively well maintained; the Arboretum is a model of good management. But in other areas rats are often the most prevalent form of wildlife. The path network is poorly maintained; the original picturesque light fixtures are inoperable or destroyed; statues and monuments show the result of long neglect. Within the 115 acres of the Back Bay fens, once the gem of the whole system, pollution and road noise destroy the park atmosphere.

What went wrong? Somewhere along the way the original vision failed. What followed occurs wherever city governments forget that parks are fragile creations and need constant preservation and upkeep. Broad social developments have played their part—new urban trends, new forms of transportation, changing neighborhoods and life styles. Yet if the original concept of the park system had remained vivid, a new generation could surely not have permitted such incongruities as the barrier of the cloverleaf at the mouth of the fens; or—a smaller but no less excusable defection—the Sears, Roebuck parking lot that breaks the greenbelt's continuity.

In the process of restoration upon which Bostonians now seem determined, a first move should be to make clear to the public by maps and graphics the essential nature of the greenbelt. Well-designed signs together with a consistent style of ornamental lights and benches could help, at the very least, to stimulate a remembrance of the vanishing Olmsted system. The citizens may then find the will and energy to make major repairs, and even to re-examine such basic matters as the development of new arterial traffic routes to spare the parks some of their present burden.

What has happened to the Boston park system does not warrant the conclusion that this form of open space is obsolete. The city possesses a

major resource created by earlier generations. As with all of man's achievements, there is a choice: either it can be allowed to decline and gradually disappear, or it can be saved and renewed. If the latter course is successfully pursued it will be a lasting benefit to Bostonians and also an example to other cities with a similar heritage.

Kansas City—A System That Grew

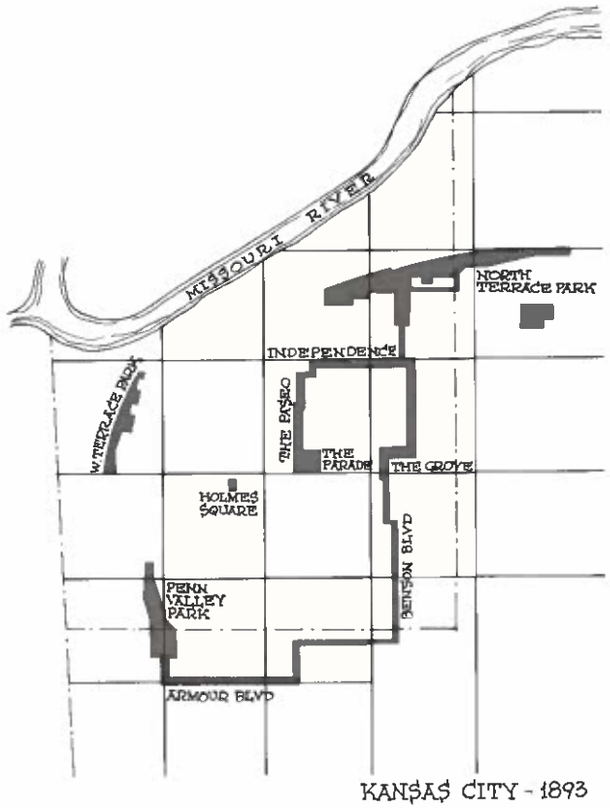
Three examples of park systems related to Boston's but playing particular roles within their cities will now be examined. Each of these remains a significant part of the modern city, though with varying degrees of effectiveness.

The system of parks and boulevards in Kansas City, Missouri, was conceived by an ambitious park group and designed in 1893 by a newcomer from Texas. Two maps illustrates what is perhaps the most striking fact about this system, its capacity to extend itself so as to keep pace with the growing city, maintaining its basic outline and identity while serving a broader area than was conceived by its originators.

The 1893 map is drawn to the same scale as the existing system. Such features as North Terrace Park and Penn Valley are still intact, and indeed play an important part in the city's life. The main boulevard of the Paseo continues beyond the Parade for eight and a half miles to the outskirts of the present city limits. New features have been added, but the scale of the large grid has been preserved and wherever possible the principle maintained of tying in the green spaces with topographic features. It is a remarkable achievement and makes Kansas City one of the most interesting urban environments of the country.

George Kessler, who was asked to design this park system for Kansas City, had left his native Dallas to study forestry, botany and engineering abroad. There he had opportunity to see at first hand the old cities and under a private tutor studied civic design. Our readers have already met him briefly as a Central Park gardener. Kessler was well grounded in Olmsted's landscape principles and he rejoiced in the opportunities provided him by Kansas City's "topographical eccentricities."

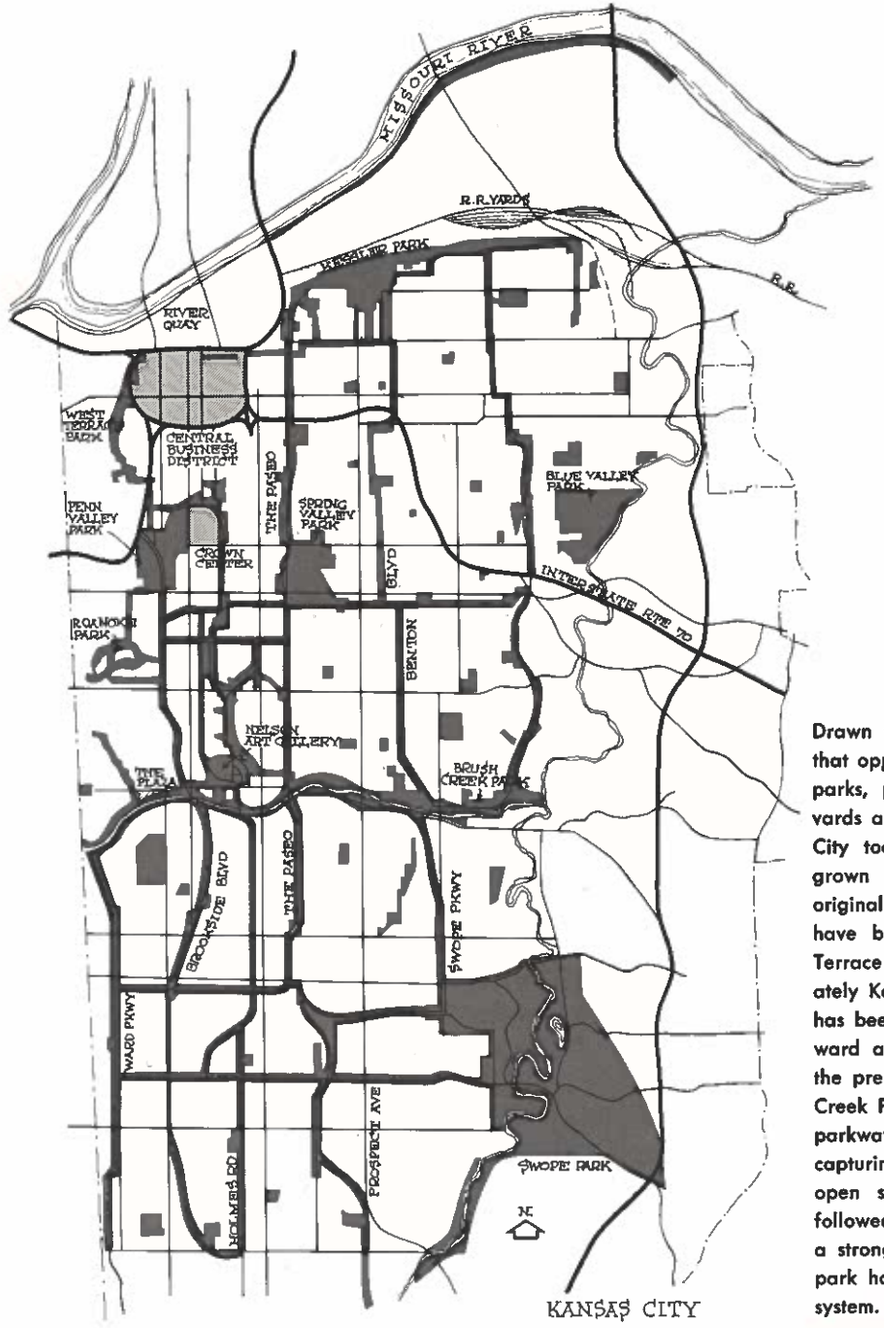
Kessler and his first park board were convinced, nevertheless, that their contribution would depart from Olmsted's.[5] While appreciating the effect of his scenic parks in "correcting and opposing the evil results of life in crowded cities," they saw Kansas City as having other needs. The young midwestern metropolis wanted public squares and local parks; it wanted the embellishment of notable urban points and a primary system of parkways.



George Kessler's 1883 plan for a park system in Kansas City.

Kessler's success was in combining the city's natural endowments with an artificial structure to make the city more urbane—or as the good citizens of that time would have put it, more beautiful. To this day Kansas City has a strong sense of civic adornment. A far-reaching program for increasing its already numerous fountains is combined with the acquisition through public funds of contemporary sculpture to be placed in the broad malls of its boulevards.

The achievement of a coherent park system was not without its dramatic moments and its eccentric characters. The 1890 battle for the establishment of a park and boulevard authority was at bottom the age-old fight between two concepts of the city. On the one hand were land speculators



Drawn to the same scale as that opposite, this map shows parks, parkways and boulevards as they exist in Kansas City today. As the city has grown by annexation, the original open space forms have been extended. North Terrace Park is now appropriately Kessler Park. The Paseo has been made to run southward almost to the limits of the present-day city. In Brush Creek Park as well as in the parkways, Kessler's lesson of capturing natural features for open space has been well followed. Swope Park forms a strong anchor. A riverfront park has been added to the system.

—those who put growth above all other goals and set as a foremost value their capacity and that of their brethren to enrich themselves. On the other side were those with an image of what a decent city for living might be.

In the course of rhetorical exchanges the speculators declared parks to be places "where scented dudes smoke cigarettes and play croquet with girls as silly as themselves." They spoke of boulevards as "streets decorated for the wives and daughters of millionaires to drive on." But they met their match in the park forces. A crucial amendment to the city charter was carried in 1895. "Kansas City is going to move on," cried the park leaders of the day. "The new age dates from the election of yesterday, when the mossbacks went down before the forces of progress."[6]

The large outlying park that Kansas City needed to anchor and to complete its system was acquired under picturesque circumstances. Colonel Thomas A. Swope, described as "a wealthy dyspeptic recluse," had been among the most vigorous opponents of what he called "this park foolishness." He was a large landowner and fought the increased real estate levy as long as he could. But in the end he capitulated with a grand gesture. He purchased a 1,134-acre expanse of pasture and woodlands and gave it to the city for a public park. It was nine miles from the business center and Kessler thought it was too distant to be of much use. A decade later, when the city had grown to the edge of the park, he recalled this judgment with amusement.

Swope himself was disappointed by the skepticism that greeted his gift. The man crept deeper into his shell, while his relatives would hear him mumbling under his breath, "Too far out, too far out." A quiet, wispy man, Swope died a violent death: he was murdered along with two other members of his household by a nephew by marriage, Dr. Bennett Clark Hyde. The sensational trial associated with his name has been largely erased from memory, but Swope Park survives. The city, shocked and saddened by the donor's death, tolled its bells and schoolchildren followed the route of the funeral march.

Kansas City has long felt that it got nothing but good from its parks. It attributes to the boulevard system the tendency for residents to disperse evenly, making Kansas City one of the least densely populated cities in the country. Desiring to live as close as possible to a park or boulevard, people have had a wide choice of location. In 1910 a group of conservative real estate men compared the valuation of ground frontage on Kansas City boulevards with that of ground fronting on adjacent streets. They found the difference in favor of the boulevards to be considerably greater than the entire cost to the taxpayers of all the parks and boulevards in the system.

More recently, when so many cities have been plagued by declining neighborhoods and incipient violence, Kansas City has felt that the boulevards stabilized key areas of the city.

Touring the system today,[7] one is disappointed to find the continuous system illustrated on the map narrowed at several points and its borders taken over for commercial uses. Yet strong park support remains, and a Kansas City park commissioner, backed by a united board, can feel safe in taking on other city departments and will be assured of public backing on central issues. Beyond the embellishment upon which civic leaders have set their hearts, there is need for the difficult, often expensive repairs to the system and full restoration of an unbroken green circuit. If Kansas City can keep the spirit it has shown in the past, it will remain an outstanding city. It will be able to claim that parks underlie its success to at least as great a degree as more spectacular downtown improvements.

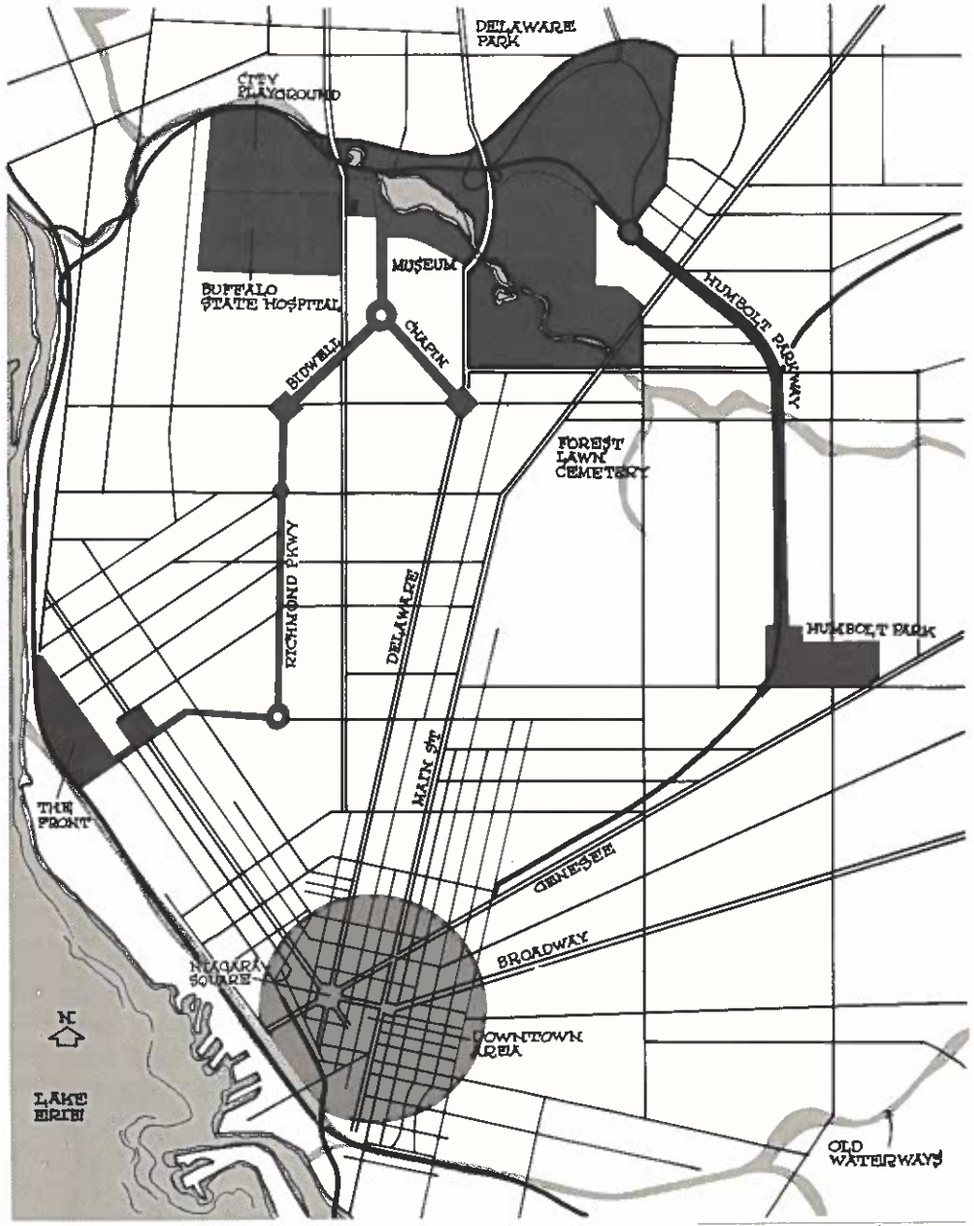
Buffalo—A System Aborted

Delaware Park has been considered as a single central park. It is in fact part of a larger system. We now focus on that series of interconnected parks and roads threading its way through Buffalo, which Olmsted felt might well become the most complete and extensive within any American city.

The Buffalo park system is shown on the map on page 204. One is struck by the way Olmsted's plan supplemented and overlay the design of the earlier city. Buffalo had been laid out by Joseph Ellicott, the brother of L'Enfant's successor as planner of Washington, D.C.[8] Converging on Buffalo's Niagara Square were diagonals comparable to those of the capital city. Olmsted's approach to Delaware Park was in his familiar Romantic style; his boulevards, however, are wide and straight, leading into formal intersections.

Besides the key Delaware Park, the parks of the new plan included the Parade on the east and the Front on a low bluff two miles nearer town, above Lake Erie. Boulevards were conceived as ways of connecting these parks as well as of extending them through green corridors. Olmsted hoped other parks would be added later, and was particularly interested in a large park at the south end of town, on either side of the railroad tracks, for extensive beaches and watercourses as well as for rifle ranges and the ever-present militia.

Olmsted, in short, foresaw the need for waterfront development. This



BUFFALO PARK SYSTEM

The Buffalo park system, designed by Olmsted, is shown in relation to the contemporary city. The structure of open space remains, though the boulevards with their neglected mansions and heavy traffic play an ambiguous role today. Expressways have eaten away at parks and parkways.

would wait a hundred years before becoming part of a sweeping proposal for a new development on the lake—a proposal that would once again be frustrated.[9] He also saw the need of a place for the kind of active sports that he hoped would be accommodated otherwise than by alterations in the character of Delaware Park.

Buffalo began with many of the ingredients necessary to the attainment of an effective park system.[10] A strong mayor, William F. Rogers, took a personal interest in the early stages of planning and land acquisition. A committee of substantial and influential businessmen formed an active park constituency. Olmsted himself, on the basis of his experience in other cities, urged going forward at full speed, warning that with the growth of population, parkland would become at once more essential and more difficult to acquire. The city council, however, found it politically popular to deplore the fiscal extravagances of the park board, and for three crucial years in the 1880s voted no funds for the maintenance of the growing system.

The council claimed its charges of extravagance to have been substantiated by the discovery in the kitchen of a park building of a list of tools which included silver spoons, ice picks and lemon squeezers—obviously the fixings for some wild tea parties. The commissioners were on firmer ground; they countered with arguments showing increased assessments in areas located near parks, from $37 million in 1870 to $104 million in 1884.

In the end, only half of the Buffalo plans came into being, and of this a substantial portion has since been lost, mainly to new traffic lanes. The expressway not only cuts across Delaware Park but runs down the route of one of the principal old boulevards, obliterating the Parade. The Front is also bisected. Other boulevards remain, still wide and tree-lined, but now bordered by mansions of a size and vintage that make them obsolete for family residences. Boulevard traffic, moreover, renders frontage less attractive for living than the side streets. A study has been made of the feasibility of restoring these mansions and adapting them to new uses, but the difficulties seem formidable.

At one of the intersections, Symphony Circle, stands the famous music hall designed by the elder Saarinen, an architectural monument in scale with the boldness of Olmsted's original planning.

Today Buffalo—its pride shaken by economic difficulties—has extensive schemes for reshaping its downtown area, enlisting its Main Street as a pedestrian mall and making it the center for a rapid transit system. Thus on top of the Baroque concept of Ellicott and the Romantic concept of

Olmsted will be laid (if all goes well) the entirely contemporary concept of a tightly organized city core scaled to the pedestrian.

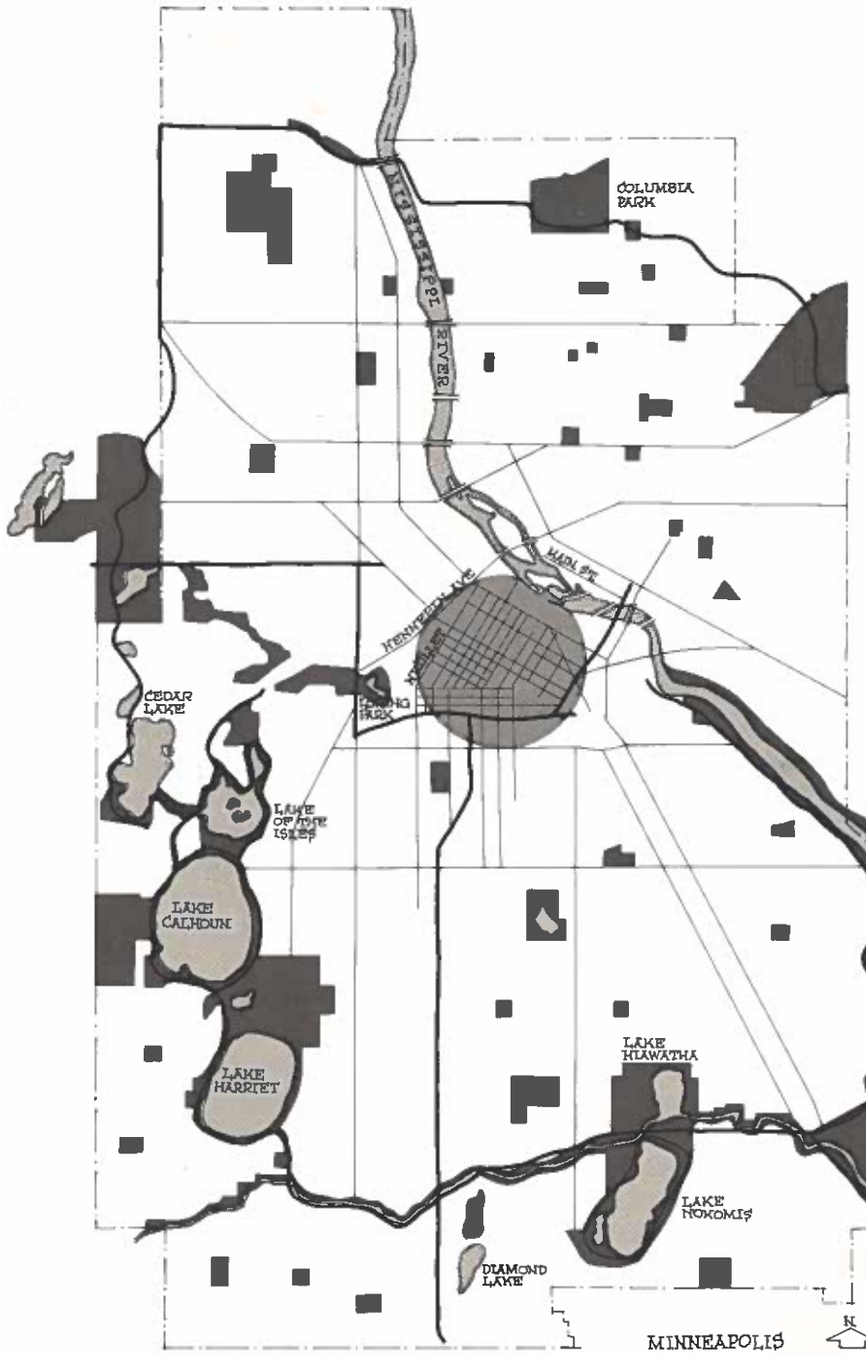
Minneapolis—A Still-Vital System

A third park system, that of Minneapolis, has had a happier history and remains a vital force both in the city's recreation and in its physical organization. The map delineates it—a belt, broken only by one incompleted section at the east, which surrounds the city at its outer limits. The route ties in with the Mississippi riverbank and with the remarkable series of lakes on the city's outskirts.

This system is the work of H. W. S. Cleveland, one of the small group of outstanding nineteenth-century landscape architects. Cleveland came to Minneapolis from Chicago and the superintendency of the new South Park. Before that he had established a solid reputation in Boston practicing in partnership with Robert Morris Copeland. (Copeland was another unsuccessful competitor in the design of Central Park.) Cleveland had made his own recommendations for the Boston park system and subsequently supported and encouraged the Olmsted plan for that city. In Minneapolis, a city in 1880 of 50,000, he found the opportunity to put into practice his most cherished beliefs.

Cleveland had long been troubled by the way the towns of the West were being settled. Thoughtless repetition of the grid, he felt, betrayed the character of the land and sacrificed chances for giving cities their own form and character. He would break the grid in Minneapolis—break it permanently and decisively by his system of parks and parkways. The natural features of the city were favorable to his schemes—not only the river and the lakes, but the less evident interconnected drainage pattern of swamps, creeks and small ponds. Out of such natural elements he would fashion for the citizens a series of parks, and along the new roads create a continuously changing landscape and a variety of pleasing views. All this was to be rooted in an inner-city system of ornamental boulevards."[11]

The outer system created in the 1880s has been added to over the years and has lost virtually nothing.[12] The idea of inner-city boulevards did not work out and this was perhaps fortunate, for it left later generations to construct their own core, dense and compact—a strong focal point for the greenbelt to surround, a wholly man-made environment to contrast with the environment of nature.



The Minneapolis park system as it exists within city borders, designed by H. W. S. Cleveland in 1883 and virtually unchanged today. The principal organizing feature of the scheme is water—lakes and the river.

In 1971 a study of the Minneapolis parkways[13] confirmed the basic validity of the system. It meets four goals: providing visual relief from the man-made city structures; defining the "edges" that give form to the city and identity to its neighborhoods; serving as a waterway drainage system; and not least, supplying an important recreational experience. Recommendations made in the study are in keeping with these objectives. Improvement and restoration of the parkways are advised not in order to enlarge their traffic capacity, but to strengthen the route's character as a corridor of natural scenery within the city.

In a section-by-section consideration of the route, recreation is stressed but only insofar as it can be adapted to the landscape without destruction of its intrinsic qualities. Swimming, hiking, bicycling and boating receive particular attention.[14] Warnings are sounded about adjacent land uses, and the proposal is made that the park board be a part of any review process for these areas. To screen the parkways from noise and air pollution is judged no less essential than to screen them from visual blight.

Today the parkways preserve their character as scenic routes. Parking is being concentrated and restricted rather than encouraged. An important referendum in the autumn of 1973 provided necessary funds for the work, and a strong park commissioner and board now doggedly back a plan that is adverse to the interests of motorists intent on speed alone.

Going through the parkways, one is impressed by their visual continuity and the general standards of design. At significant points along the way, maps indicate one's position within the system and, more importantly, stand as reminders of the concept as a whole. Here, at least, men once thought in large terms, and here they continue to keep the overall vision in mind.

A Culmination—The Kessler Plan

The ideal of an integrated park system, incorporating as in Boston a fenway or in Minneapolis a chain of lakes, was strong in the minds of nineteenth-century planners. Where was all this leading? The answer is almost breathtaking: it was leading toward an image of the city that did not merely contain parks, that was not merely penetrated by circuits of green, but of the city *as a park in itself*.

For two centuries urbanists have flirted with this idea. Central Park in New York with its elaborate substructure of drainage and irrigation, with its separation of grades for various kinds of traffic, with its formal center

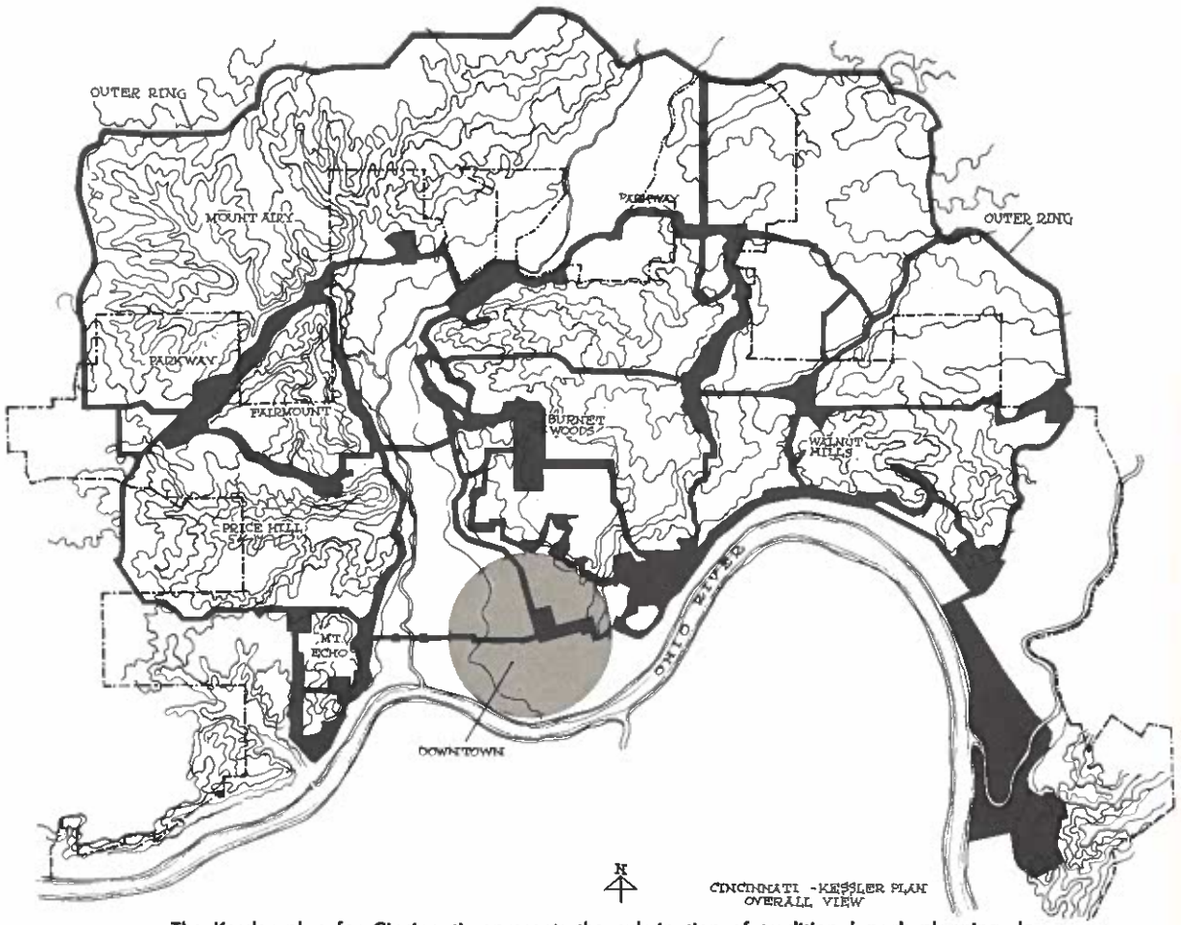
and its romantic environs, could be read as a sketch of the ghost of a city never to be built. Conversely, in his plan for the Chicago suburban development of Riverside, Olmsted built a residential area upon a park base. Ideal plans integrating park and city were later to be elaborated by men as different as Ebenezer Howard and Frank Lloyd Wright. But the audacity of Olmsted, Kessler and Cleveland was to take existing cities and within them to create park systems so large and comprehensive as ultimately to make indistinguishable the point at which park ended and city began.

For the most complete embodiment of this idea, and to conclude and sum up this chapter on park systems, we turn to the plan made for Cincinnati by George Kessler.[15] The original Cincinnati plan has been redrawn in contemporary techniques so as to help the reader see clearly the nature of Kessler's accomplishment. This represents not a quaint image but a dynamic grasp of topography and civic structure. Here is molded into one whole the open spaces and the built-up areas—the solids and the voids—of a living metropolis.

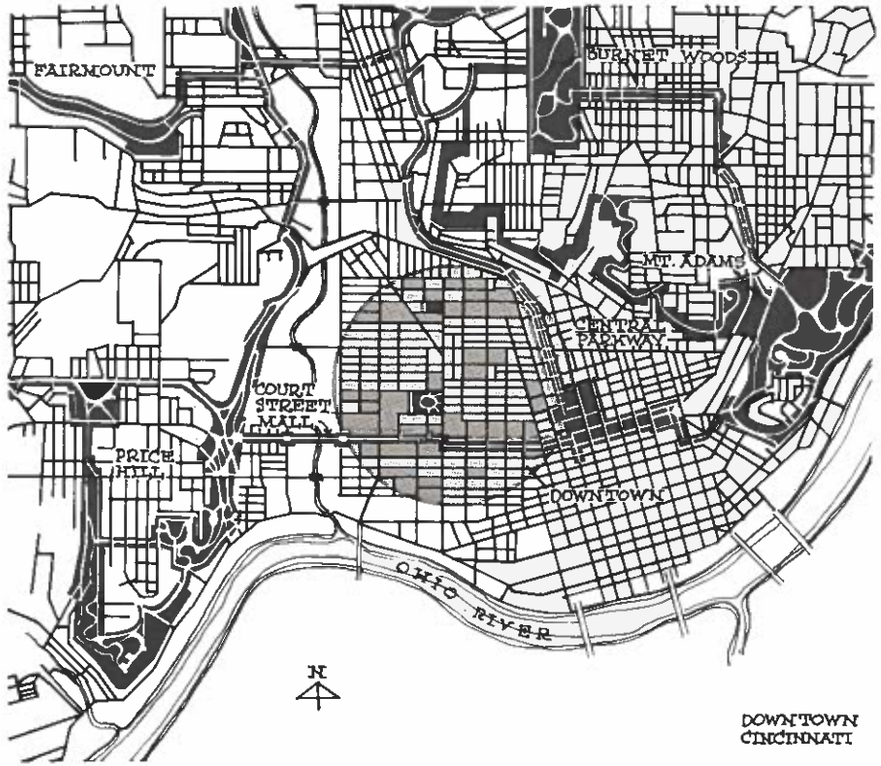
How far we have come from the square, an isolated break in the city's fabric; how far from the central park, a sylvan island in a sea of buildings! How far, even, from Kessler's own Kansas City plan. The Cincinnati scheme, presented to a park commission headed by L. A. Ault in 1907, keeps a perfect balance between the squares and malls of the central business district and the parks of outer residential areas; between movement and stability; between neighborhood and metropolis. The open space system possesses an integrity and harmony that make it a true work of art, surpassing in scale and complexity anything previously proposed for an American city.

Kessler recognized that in the Cincinnati land forms he had rich material to work upon. The downtown area lies between hills of four hundred feet or more in height, pierced by the valleys of Mill Creek and the Little Miami. The railroads, unable to reach the upper levels with their tracks, had left unbroken the principal residential areas. True, the lands along the Ohio and up the major streams had already been taken for industrial uses; any effort to recover these for recreational purposes seemed vain. But a circle of separate hills from Price Hill on the west to Walnut Hill on the east harbored separate communities, ready to be tied into the central business district and linked to each other by flowing green spaces. Kessler saw his opportunity to combine parks and parkways, residential and city-wide parks, into a kind of web that leaves such achievements as Central and Golden Gate parks isolated and almost sterile by comparison.

Kessler saw rightly that everything begins with the downtown area. He



The Kessler plan for Cincinnati represents the culmination of traditional park planning. In effect, it turns the whole city into a park, with open spaces defining and giving form to the business and residential sections. Cincinnati today shows many elements of the Kessler plan, especially the hilltop parks and outlooks, but the parkway system did not develop and would have been self-defeating in the automobile age.



A striking feature of the Kessler plan for Cincinnati was the way it reorganized the downtown area in order to provide a base for the city-wide park system. The development of the mall and the creation of Central Avenue (in the bed of the old canal) created strong open space axes from which the parkways extending in various directions could be reached. Too rarely have the outer parks of a city thus modified and reshaped the town center.

seized upon the then largely unused Miami and Erie Canal, filling it in and setting a broad boulevard in its place. He hoped thus to create what he lacked in other cities, and what many were seeking to obtain at large costs of clearance and construction—"access along fine and easy lines into the very heart of the business district . . . an unsurpassed, main, central artery from the heart of the business portion of the city, connecting it with every residence district." Kessler's Central Parkway reached up into the hills, where it widened into a neighborhood park, or narrowed again as it moved through the next valley toward another hillside community with its own romantically landscaped green space.

The map on page 210 shows this central area of the city, penetrated by the parkway in the bed of the old canal, and crossed by the Court Street Mall; the whole focused on Burnet Park and including the nearest hillside communities from Price Hill on the east to Mount Adams on the west.

The map on page 211 shows the complete system, including the parkway proposed to ring the whole city. What can be only hinted at in such renderings is the elegance with which the parkways blend into parks, or yield to small areas devoted to city views.

By modern standards the plan is open to criticism. The central boulevard carrying traffic into the heart of midtown is at odds with the concept of a loop which arrests and disperses it. Today the 150-foot breadth of the boulevard creates a vacancy at the center of the town and divides the built-up areas. Moreover, through at least part of this way, the disappearance of the canal seems a definite loss. It would have been pleasing to see open water, even though it was no longer necessary for commercial purposes, and the canal could have provided a picturesque amenity at least equal to the proposed gardens of the boulevard.

The main shortcoming of the plan, however, is due to no fault of Kessler's, but to the new mode of automobile transportation which in 1907 was just at the point of bursting upon the cities and deeply transforming their lives.

This book deals with American cities as they are, not with visionary concepts or futuristic projects. Nevertheless, the Cincinnati plan earns its place in these pages, being so clear a culmination of ideas that were being put into effect in actual cities. It makes fully comprehensible what the nineteenth-century park-builders were trying to accomplish. It is, besides, an enchanting vision, reminding us of what our cities might have become had the invention of the internal combustion engine been delayed a few decades.

Cincinnati retains into the present the charm of a city of individual neighborhoods separated and identified by hills. Parts of the Kessler plan have been fulfilled and two important contemporary features have been added—the riverfront development and the 1,500 acres of Mount Airy Park, just outside the central city. But the grand design of a continuous park system has been lost, or lost so far as anything can be that so enduringly tantalizes the mind.