

REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS AND CEMETERIES FOR 1910

TO THE PARKS BOARD, CITY OF CALGARY.

SIRS:

While I did not assume office till July 1910 and am therefore not altogether familiar with, nor in any way responsible for, the work during the first half of the year, I have deemed it wise to include the work of the whole year in my report, so that the members of the new Board may understand as fully as possible the position of affairs in the Parks Department at the present time.

My report will not include a financial statement which will come as part of the City's complete financial report at a later date.

In the past the books of the Department have been kept by the Comptroller and Treasurer's Departments, and for this year I have not thought it wise to advise any change in this connection, excepting that I have devised a daily time card for use by our foremen, which will show the amount of time put in by each employee for the day, the amount of time spent on each of the various jobs in different parks, etc. by each employee by the day, the rate of pay and amount of money earned by each employee for the day, the amount of money spent on each of the various jobs in the different parks, etc. for the day, and finally is self-balancing by having the amount spent on different jobs and the amount earned by all employees totalled on different corners of the card, thus showing the correct total expenditure for the day. These cards are to be filed in the office of the Department daily so that we can at any time quickly ascertain the total expenditure, or expenditure up to date on any job, park or bylaw; also the amount of time served by any employee and the work upon which he was engaged on any particular day or days. In this way we will be enabled to settle any disputes which may arise with the workmen, or answer any question which the members of the Board may ask from time to time in regard to the various parts of the work under their jurisdiction.

Taking the year's work under various headings I will refer first to St. George's Island.

ST. GEORGE'S ISLAND.

In the month of April the bandstand was removed from its former location to a position farther east on the island, and an area of about $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres, extending eastward from the original site of the bandstand was plowed and disced, and a certain amount of levelling done with a view to seeding with a suitable lawn mixture. The failure to pass a bylaw on May 10th made it necessary to discontinue this work as funds for its continuance were not available.

Later in the season a set of swings were purchased and placed on the island for the use of the children, and these, as well as the dancing platform erected by the Street Railway Department, were frequently patronized and much enjoyed. During the warm weather a water pipe was carried across the south bridge and a tap and drinking cups placed in a convenient location for the use of visitors to the island.

Since the close of the principle work of the season our Park team has been employed in hauling good stable manure to the Island and placing it in two large piles near the area which was plowed and levelled for seeding.

Soon after my arrival in the city I observed that the soil over most of the area covered by the city and the country immediately surrounding it, was greatly in need of the addition of humus, if satisfactory plant growth was to be obtained, and yet the manure from most of the stables in the city was being hauled to a dump south of the Elbow River and burned with rubbish of various kinds, and thus not only being wasted but creating a most disagreeable and unnecessary nuisance. On making inquiry as to why this manure was being burned I was informed that, owing to the dry climate here, stable manure would not rot properly and so was not generally looked upon as being of much value.

It occurred to me then that where there was no great need of humus it would surely be worth while making an attempt to secure it from this manure supply. I therefore decided to make the experiment, and accordingly in the autumn directed our teamster to haul about two hundred loads to the Island and place it in large heaps, keeping these piles constantly tramped or packed, so as to prevent evaporation, by driving the team and wagon over the pile as each load was dumped; and besides this to occasionally apply a quantity of water so as to further induce close packing and rapid rotting. In addition to this it is the intention to have the manure all turned or forked over twice during the winter, in order to still further hasten and complete the process of fermentation, and to destroy the vitality of any weed seeds which may be in the manure. One of these piles has already been turned once and gives every promise of what I have hoped for. In the spring the manure will be applied to the land which is under preparation for seeding, and worked into the soil before the grass seed is sown, and if the experiment proves successful, as I now have every reason to believe it will, I would recommend to the City Commissioners that a civic compost be established which shall be under supervision, so that all rubbish such as cans, boxes, wire, broken dishes, etc. will be kept out, and only good manure or other suitable material will be placed in the pile and the whole treated as we are at present treating the manure piles on St. George's Island. This supply could then be drawn upon by citizens for lawn and garden use, or by the Parks Department for park and boulevard use, instead of being made a nuisance of and wasted as at present. The need for an ample supply of such material will be more fully realized and more keenly felt from year to year as time passes.

The 5½ acres under preparation for seeding on the Island was plowed a second time in the autumn just before the ground froze up, and with a little more levelling in the spring and the manure already referred to plowed in, should be in good condition for seeding.

CENTRAL PARK

Owing to the confusion and disorder caused by the work of erecting the new library very little was done in Central Park during the past year. In the spring a few dead trees were removed and later in the season the weeds and grass were cut a couple of times and paper and other refuse cleaned up. In addition to this a number of new chairs were provided for use in the bandstand in the centre of the park.

VICTORIA PARK

Only \$500.00 was allowed for improvements in Victoria Park, and much of this was expended in the erection of a neat fence around the experimental tree plantation which was established just inside the main entrance to the park by the Dominion Tree Planting Division at Indian Head, and in placing short fences across the angles on the south side of the Industrial Building, where plantations of shrubbery and perennial flowering plants were established by the same institution. The Parks Department also furnished the labor necessary for making these plantings and for the cutting of weeds and cultivation of the soil throughout the season. Besides this, a large amount of work was done in the sunken garden in the cutting of weeds from the walks and flower beds, the mowing of grass, the application of fresh cinders to the walks, and the filling up of blank spaces in the flower-beds and urns with fresh flowering plants at exhibition time; as well as in planting a number of trees around border of the garden.

NURSERY

In the city nursery, which was established in the spring of 1909, on the low ground at the northwest corner of the Union Cemetery property, a considerable amount of work was done in the year just closed. The land not yet planted to trees was plowed twice and disced. In the tree plantations much hand-hoeing and weeding was done; and in the latter part of the season a good horsehoe was purchased, and used for the final cleaning up in the au

autumn. About 8,000 Balm cuttings were planted in the spring of the year, but owing to the extreme drought in the early part of the season only a small proportion of these grew. We have, however, about 8,300 young Balm trees and 1,000 Russian Poplars, growing nicely from cuttings set out in the spring of 1909, and in addition to these, we have about 150 Balms from three to five years old, which were shipped into the city for boulevard use last spring, and not required for that purpose and were therefore set in the nursery.

The 8,300 young Balms grown from cuttings were trunk pruned in the autumn, but the Russian Poplars still remain to be pruned. All of these should be re-set next spring at a greater distance apart, and in two years more most of them should be of a good size for boulevard planting.

CHILDREN'S AID HOSPITAL GROUNDS

In the month of August these grounds were cleaned up and the grass cut, so that the children might play croquet and other games, and the trees surrounding the grounds were given some necessary attention. Next season these grounds should have better care, and hose supplied so that the lawn might be kept watered. Some planting of shrubbery, etc. might also be done here to good advantage.

UNION CEMETERY

Up to the present time the cemetery caretaker has been allowed an annual salary from the parks estimates, and a certain amount of extra help was supplied him when required, and all monies collected for the sale of plots and for burial fees have gone into the general revenue of the city. In addition to his regular salary the caretaker has also been allowed to collect for his own private use such sums as he saw fit from individuals owning burial plots, for extra work in trimming or beautifying these plots. This may have been a satisfactory plan in earlier days, but in a large city such as Calgary now is this seems hardly a businesslike system to follow, especially as the monies collected for sale of plots and burial fees--leaving out of consideration the monies collected by the caretaker for beautifying plots--is very far in excess of the money expended. I wish, therefore, to recommend that owing to his greater efficiency--gained by experience, and the greater responsibility and larger amount of work to be done, the caretaker be given a reasonable raise in salary, and that a regular fee be charged for special work in the beautifying of burial plots; and that monies thus collected, and all other monies collected in whatever way at the cemetery be placed in a special cemetery fund, to be used entirely for the upkeep and improvement of the Cemetery; and that all monies expended for salaries, wages, repairs, upkeep, etc. be taken from this fund.

During the year the work at the cemetery has gone along steadily and regularly and has been well looked after by caretaker Galloway. In the month of June a violent gale blew down part of the building used as chapel and morgue, and it required quite a sum of money to make the necessary repairs. A permanent water main was laid from the Second Street entrance up through the central part of the cemetery, and a few summer service extensions were added. This improvement was greatly appreciated by the caretaker, and much more should be done along this line as soon as possible.

In November the portion of Section L which had not yet been staked was laid out in burial plots 8'x 12', as lots of this size were in demand; and in the same month a marked improvement was made at the main entrance by giving the fence and gates a good coat of paint, and by planting a nice group of handsome Spruce trees about fifteen years old at each side of the entrance. These trees were furnished gratis by Mr. Underwood from his property on the corner of 13th Avenue and First St. West where a large business block is now being erected. Since we were obliged to remove them at a very unsuitable season there is a possibility that they may not all survive but every possible care was taken in mowing the trees to ensure their future growth. The thanks of the city are due to Mr. Underwood for this kind donation and it

is to be hoped that other citizens who may find it necessary to dispose of trees from time to time owing to the expansion of the business section of the city, will remember the Parks Department in the same way.

BOULEVARDS

Up to the present time all boulevard construction work has been done under special bylaw, and paid for by local frontage tax, and the work of maintenance or renovation, after the first construction is completed, is done on general park and boulevard estimates, or charged to paving or curbing bylaws where the laying of pavement or curb made the renovation of boulevards necessary.

We have in the city at the present time 73,000 feet (nearly fourteen miles) of improved boulevards, or putting it in another way 41,249 feet (nearly 8 miles) of street with boulevard on both sides. This is distributed as follows:

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|---|------------|
| Old boulevards completed before 1910 | 23,490 ft. |
| Boulevards made and completed in 1910 | 20,811 " |
| Boulevards renovated in 1910 | 5,400 " |
| New Boulevards made ready for seeding in 1910 | 23,300 " |

Besides we have at present at least 40,000 feet, or about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles of boulevard areas ready for improvement.

The word "boulevard" as used here means a park-strip along the side or sides of an ordinary street or avenue, so that the figures given above do not include the special boulevards skirting the Bow and Elbow Rivers, but include only the areas between curb and sidewalk, or between sidewalk and private property line on the ordinary streets and avenues.

Boulevard construction means all the work necessary to put the boulevard in first class condition for the first time, and consists in either excavating or filling in to bring the surface to grade, and in preparing the surface for seeding, sowing the seed, and planting the trees. In most parts of the city it is necessary to remove the original soil or gravel to a depth of several inches below the curb level and to fill in with rich black prairie loam, in order to get a good seed-bed and a soil that will produce and maintain a good growth of grass.

Boulevard renovation means practically the reconstruction of the boulevard where the grade has been changed owing to the laying of the permanent curb and sidewalk on a different level from that of the old plank sidewalk and curb.

Boulevard maintenance means the patching, grass cutting, weed cutting, watering, tree pruning, etc. necessary to keep the boulevard in a cleanly, tidy, and attractive condition.

One of the largest undertakings of the season was the planting of trees. In the months of April and May several car loads of trees were shipped into the city from outside points. The bulk of these were planted on boulevards by the Parks Department but about 1,200 were sold to citizens for planting on their private grounds. The shipment included in all 7,416 trees, 6,340 of which were Balms, and 1,076 White Spruces. Owing to the unusually dry season and the fact that the work was undertaken on such a large scale that it was not possible to have the trees all planted with the necessary care to insure a reasonable chance of growth, quite a large number of them died during the summer, and these were removed in the fall. At this point I wish to repeat a recommendation made to last year's Park Board soon after my arrival in the city, viz; "that in future boulevard trees be planted at greater distances apart, and that much greater care be taken in the planting of each individual tree", and I would now add to this recommendation that a suitable guard be placed around each tree when planted to protect it for the first five or six years of its growth.

WEED CUTTING

Just when or why the work of weed cutting on all streets became a duty of the Parks Department I am unable to say, and under our new charter I do not think the Department could be held responsible for this work, but since it must be done by some civic department, ours is probably the most natural one to undertake such

work, and I would recommend that the disagreeable task be assumed cheerfully.

Last year a considerable amount of time and money was spent on cutting weeds on streets throughout the city as well as on boulevards, and as soon as possible after my arrival--with the sanction of the Parks Board--I had Mr. Curtis, our Park Foreman, appointed to the position of Official Weed Inspector for the city, by the Provincial Minister of Agriculture, in order that he might see that weeds on vacant lots and all private properties were cut and destroyed. His appointment, however, was made too late in the season to have any marked effect on the weed problem last year, but in time to give him an opportunity to get familiar with the best means of enforcing the Provincial Weed Act within the city limits; and he is now ready and well prepared to undertake the vigorous prosecution of his duties as Weed Inspector from the outset of the growing season of 1911. As the Provincial Department of Agriculture does not pay Mr. Curtis anything for his services as Weed Inspector I wish now to recommend that the Parks Board allow him an extra \$100.00 for this work, as it is by no means a pleasant duty.

REMOVAL OF POSTERS

In order to bring about the enforcement of Bylaw 839, passed in December 1907, and to set a good example to citizens generally, I had all posters and other advertising matter removed from park fences (particularly the Victoria Park fence) and from all bridges and bridge approaches, and at the same time sent a copy of the bylaw to all Bill Posting Companies in the city and a special letter requesting that no further infringement of this bylaw be made.

The indiscriminate posting of gaudy advertising matter is one of the greatest detriments to the making of an attractive city, and it is to be hoped that our citizens will do what they can to prevent this by refusing to rent space on their fences and buildings for this purpose. If the posting of bills were restricted to property constructed and located bill boards, as is done by at least some of the Bill Posting Companies, the evil would be largely overcome.

PARK PROPERTY

The Parks Department now has under its control and management the following land properties:-

- ✓ St. George's and two adjacent islands (about 34 acres)
- ✓ Central Park (about 4½ acres)
- ✓ Victoria Park, with the exception of ground occupied by exhibition buildings and race-track (about 80 acres).
- ✓ Riley Park (about 20 acres)
- ✓ Mewata Park (about 30 acres)
- ✓ Shagnappi Park (about 75 acres)
- ✓ Union Cemetery property (about 60 acres)

Making a total of approximately 300 acres in park and cemetery. In addition to this we also have the management of all boulevard areas within the city.

The department possesses equipment in implements, tools, etc. represented by the following list:-

- 1 Cleveland Bicycle
- 1 Boulevard watering tank
- 1 Wagon
- 1 Land Roller
- 1 Lawn Roller
- 1 Disc Harrow
- 1 Drag Harrow
- 1 Land Plow
- 1 Scuffler, or Horse-hoe
- 1 Hand Cultivator
- 3 Wheel-barrows

- 12 Lawn Mowers
- 1 Grind-stone
- 1 Zinc Pail
- 1 Sanitary Closet
- 5 Large Tool Boxes
- 10 Shovels
- 7 Spades
- 6 Picks
- 4 Manure Forks
- 1 Digging Fork
- 1 Lawn Edging Knife
- 4 Dutch hoes
- 5 Draw Hoes
- 1 Wooden Rake
- 2 Grass Rakes
- 8 Steel Garden Rakes
- 10 Grass Scythes
- 1 Bush Scythe
- 4 Scythe Stones
- 4 Pairs Grass Clippers
- 1 Pair Edging Shears
- 2 Sickles
- 2 Standard Pruners
- 4 Pruning Saws
- 2 Secateurs
- 7 Pruning Knives
- 1 Wood Saw
- 1 Harchet
- 2 Nail Hammers
- 3 Monkey Wrenches
- 2 Screw Drivers
- 3 Brooms
- 5 Steel Stamping Letters
- 1 Steel Measuring Tape
- 2 Paint Brushes
- 4 Oil Cans
- 3 Drinking Cups
- 2 Water Taps
- 30 Electric Lamps
- 1 Garden Line
- 1 Garden Hose
- 41 Park Seats (slat seats with metal ends)
- 111 Park Seats (wooden benches without backs)
- 27 Chairs for bandstand use.
- 12 Tables for picnic use
- 34 Tressels
- 1 Small stove
- Small amount of office equipment.

REGULAR EMPLOYEES

The following are the names of the regularly employed working staff of the department;

J. Buchanan, Superintendent
 E. Curtis, Park Foreman
 Mr. Galloway, Cemetery Caretaker
 Mr. Vincent, Island Park Caretaker
 Geo. Loughrey, Teamster.

I would recommend that the services of a stenographer be secured for at least part of the time at as early a date as possible, and would suggest that we might cooperate with the Plumbing Inspector's Department in securing a stenographer for the two offices.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

I wish to make the following recommendations.

1. That the sum of \$100.00 be set aside this year for the purchase of books and periodicals dealing with park, garden, cemetery, and town planning, and such matter, these books, etc. to be kept in the offices of the department for the use of the members of the Parks Board, the Superintendent, and the other employees, and any citizens who may wish to consult them from time to time.
2. That at the end of the year 1911 an attractive illustrated report be prepared and a sufficient number of copies printed to supply one to each family in the city. This report should contain a statement of the work for the year, and illustrations showing some of Calgary's beauty spots, the work of boulevard making in progress, views before and after improvements have been made, and sketches of suggestive improvements to be made, etc.
3. That the bylaws governing the management of parks, cemeteries and boulevards, be revised in order to make it coincide with the recent amendment to the city charter, and to make a few minor alterations and additions which seem desirable.
4. That the Board ask the City Council to define its (the Boards) powers in the locating of boulevards. The Parks Board either should or should not have the right to determine where boulevards should be located, and this should be definitely established either one way or the other in order to avoid unnecessary disputes and misunderstandings.
5. That a building be erected to be used for the storage of all implements, tools, etc. belonging to the department. At present these are stored in various buildings, wherever accommodation could be found, and it has even been necessary to leave some of them out of doors. If we had a suitable building these things could be kept in better condition, and repairs could conveniently be made during winter days when the severe weather prevented outdoor work.

CONCLUSION

In December arrangements were made to abolish the old system of appointing the members of the Parks Board for only one year, and an amendment was made to the city charter providing for the appointment of the Parks Board on a more permanent basis, so that deeper interest might be evinced in the Parks Proposition and a continuity of policy maintained. The amendment also provides for the raising of funds for a park and boulevard maintenance, by levying a tax of not more than three quarters of a mill on all the assessed property in the city.

The Board is therefore starting work this year in a new and much more satisfactory basis, and I believe we can confidently look forward to more substantial progress in future.

Respectfully submitted,

(sgd). J. BUCHANAN.