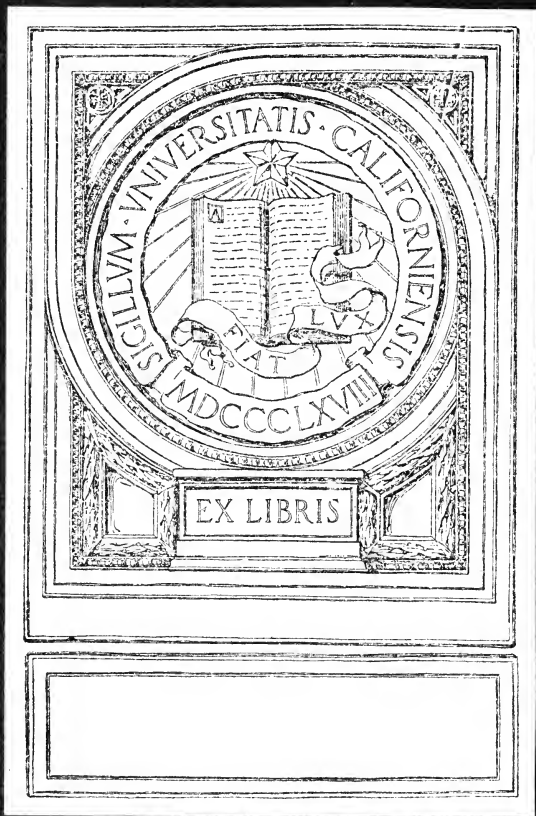


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# General Plan of a Park and Playground System

FOR

NEW LONDON, CONN.

REPORT TO THE MUNICIPAL ART  
SOCIETY OF NEW LONDON

By

JOHN NOLEN

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

1913



Reese

Univ. of  
California



GENERAL PLAN  
FOR A  
PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM  
NEW LONDON, CONN.

GENERAL DESIGN, L. F. F.  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
 JOHN NOLAN, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
 CANTON, MASS.  
 1912 (REVISED PLAN AND LAYOUT 1914)  
 LITHO BY J. H. BROWN, NEW LONDON, CONN.  
 1914 (REVISED PLAN)

GENERAL PLAN  
OF A  
PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM  
FOR  
NEW LONDON, CONN.

BY  
JOHN NOLEN  
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CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Many things must be carefully prepared, as carefully watched, and persistently pushed, by the man who will get any city public into and through a great public improvement. Wearied, and worried, and hindered, he must never sleep, never be beaten, never desist, and if, by a whole five years of toil, he gets his work on far enough to become an interest in itself, and take care of itself, he does well, and there may rest.—HORACE BUSHNELL, Hartford, 1869.

BOSTON  
PRESS OF CEO. H. ELLIS CO.  
1913

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## Foreword

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THE MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY of New London, by a City Planning Architect of distinction, and embodies the general conclusions derived from a wide experience and from a two years' serious study of the possible and proper development of a park and playground system for New London.

It is not expected that the comprehensive plan herein delineated can be completed in the near future. It is realized, moreover, that riper experience may call for modifications of these plans and the inclusion of other features not mentioned. Our immediate purpose has been to inform ourselves and the community as to park and playground systems, to get something concrete to work to and for, and especially to furnish a guide to our Park Commissioners and city government in future acquisition of lands for the development of new streets, squares, playgrounds, and parks. If the system outlined in this Report should seem too ambitious for New London to attempt, a careful perusal of the facts stated in the Appendix as to the outcome of similar undertakings in many other cities of the same class will clearly

[ iii ] .

## FOREWORD

indicate that, if managed with skill and foresight, an adequate system of parks and playgrounds may be secured for our city without burdensome investment and at little or no ultimate net cost.

THE MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY.

## The Need of Parks

*It is very poor economy of human life, it is very poor economy of money, to postpone their [parks'] purchase any further. "Nothing is so costly," it has been well said, "as sickness, disease, and vice; nothing so cheap as health and virtue. Whatever promotes the former is the worst sort of extravagance; whatever fosters the latter is the truest economy."*

*And now every argument that has been thus far adduced bears with at least equal force upon the question of the country park—or the public park proper. In the town squares and boulevards, men and women will find fresh air and shade and decent surroundings for their hours of sociability, and safe playgrounds for the children, and fresh nurseries for the babies. But there is an important element in human nature which the town square cannot satisfy. This is that conscious or unconscious sensibility to the beauty of the natural world which in many men becomes a passion, and in almost all men plays a part.*

*The providing of what I call country parks to distinguish them from squares and the like is as necessary for the preservation of the civilization of cities as are sewers or street lights. As our towns grow, the spots of remarkable natural beauty, which were once as the gems embroidered upon the fair robe of Nature, are one by one destroyed to make room for railroads, streets, factories, and the rest. The time is coming when it will be hard to find within a day's journey of our large cities a single spot capable of stirring the soul of man to speak in poetry. Think of what this will mean for the race, and start to-morrow to secure for your children and your children's children some of those scenes of special natural beauty which I trust are still to be found within a reasonable distance of this hall.—CHARLES ELIOT.*

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## I. The Need of Parks for New London

New London is an old city, having been founded in 1646. Its age, its picturesque situation between Long Island Sound and the Thames River, and its irregular topography have combined to make it one of the most interesting cities on the Atlantic coast. It has a distinctive appearance and charm. The site of the city rises gradually from the Sound and the River to a series of hills. From these hilltops one gets commanding views of coast and inland scenery which for variety and beauty few cities can equal. The harbor of New London is the best on Long Island Sound, being three miles wide, thirty feet deep, and thoroughly protected against storm and ice. The Thames River is famous as the scene of the annual boat-race between the crews representing Harvard and Yale Universities.

The great natural beauty of New London, its remarkable commercial harbor, and its strategic situation midway between New York and Boston justify it in planning and building confidently for the future. The existing plan of the city is very irregular, and the street system in the older parts not altogether convenient. Many of the main thoroughfares, however, are wide and well located.

Like other small American cities, New London has given little attention to the systematic acquisition and development of open spaces, parks, and playgrounds. Such public grounds as it now owns have come into its possession through occasional gifts from its citizens and

## NEED OF PARKS FOR NEW LONDON

somewhat spasmodic, haphazard public action. Nevertheless, it has a nucleus for a first-class park system. The city holds title to a number of good-sized school grounds, several very valuable, because centrally situated, city squares or open spaces, a beautiful little park of forty acres or more on the Thames River, and a half-mile strip of ocean beach which, for location, beauty, and usefulness, is not surpassed by any other small American city.

It is quite natural that the people of New London should turn their attention at this time to the planning of a more adequate and comprehensive park system. The city is growing in population, its standards of public improvements are steadily rising, it is getting a fresh hold on business and commerce, it is becoming a more important educational centre through the establishment there of the Connecticut College for Women, and it is attracting each year a larger and larger stream of desirable tourists. Every one of these forms of growth and development calls for a more complete system of open spaces, and every one is favorably affected by the timely selection and development of the parks and playgrounds now under consideration.

Parks are no longer considered a luxury by growing American cities. They are classed with streets and sewers and schools as a necessity. They contribute directly to health and efficiency, to pleasure and economic wealth. Moreover, they stir and nourish civic pride.

There are at least four reasons why New London should now act in a large way in acquiring and improving land for use as parks and playgrounds. (1) Property is steadily increasing in value. It is not likely to be cheaper than it is now. (2) Once bought, park lands increase in value. All other public works depreciate. Parks



## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

appreciate. (3) Parks pay for themselves, or more than pay for themselves, by making new real estate values. Some examples in support of this statement are given in the Appendix. (4) A sound park policy vigorously pushed by public authority, soon brings rich gifts from private individuals. The history of American city parks furnishes much evidence in support of this tendency. Cities that own few parks seldom receive gifts of parks. On the other hand, cities like Hartford, Conn., that have a long and honorable record in public park-making, have an equally long and honorable record of private gifts for parks.

In considering the justification of important additions to its holdings for parks and playgrounds, New London would find profit in reviewing the experience of other cities. No better example could be given than that of Hartford. It now has more than twelve hundred acres of carefully developed public play and pleasure grounds, at least one acre to every seventy-three of its population. The Hartford Park Department has been persistently and systematically at work for over fifty years, planning, acquiring, constructing, planting, and maintaining parks, and the steady growth and high reputation of the city have been due in no small part to the work of this vigorous city department. Hartford does not stand alone as an example. Limiting the selections to cities the size of New London, one may with pride direct attention to Colorado Springs, San Diego, La Crosse, Elgin, Salem, Mass., Nashua, Cedar Rapids, Ia., Quincy, Ill., Waltham, and Madison. In all of these cities, there has been notable park-making, for in all of them there is an average of one acre or more of parks to every two hundred of the population.

The extension of the park and playground system of a

## NEED OF PARKS FOR NEW LONDON

city does not ordinarily proceed regularly year by year, as the extension of the street system or sewer system or school system does. So far as land takings go, it is much more apt to move periodically. There are years in which the park area of a city may be multiplied many times. Such years may be followed by long periods in which the park department is occupied mainly with the development of the newly acquired property. This method has proved sound in practice. In the first place, it is more economical, as a rule, to acquire at one time all the property that is needed in any particular neighborhood. Secondly, the people of a city are more likely to approve of important park additions if the different neighborhoods are fairly represented in the proposed takings. And, finally, as park lands and permanent construction are an investment of city funds which give increasing returns to future generations, they are usually provided for by bond issues, and the question of bond issues, especially if it requires a popular vote, cannot readily be taken up every year. Therefore, it is considered good policy and, in the long run, economical to map out periodically, say every ten or twenty years, according to growth, somewhat large general additions to the existing parks, endeavoring always to convert detached properties into organic parts of a unified system.

There are a few principles in the selection of lands for parks, parkways, and playgrounds which are finding increasing acceptance by city authorities. Briefly stated, they are as follows: (1) to acquire those easily accessible small tracts in different parts of a city which may most cheaply be adapted to serve as local playgrounds or recreation centres; (2) to seek also some moderately large tracts, even though less accessible for the present generation, provided they are capable of conversion at rela-

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

tively small cost into parks which will have the beauty of natural scenery; (3) to acquire property for large parks in advance of a general settlement of the neighborhood; (4) to select generally, though not always, lands which are not well adapted for streets and buildings; (5) to distribute the lands over the city in such a way as to give the maximum of use to the people who will be called upon to pay for their acquisition, development, and maintenance.

These five common-sense principles have been approved and followed by the leading landscape architects. They have been kept constantly in mind in making up the list of park properties for New London, in fixing their approximate boundaries, and in drawing up the recommendations which are embodied in the Report and Plans herewith submitted for consideration.

## II. Park and Playground Properties

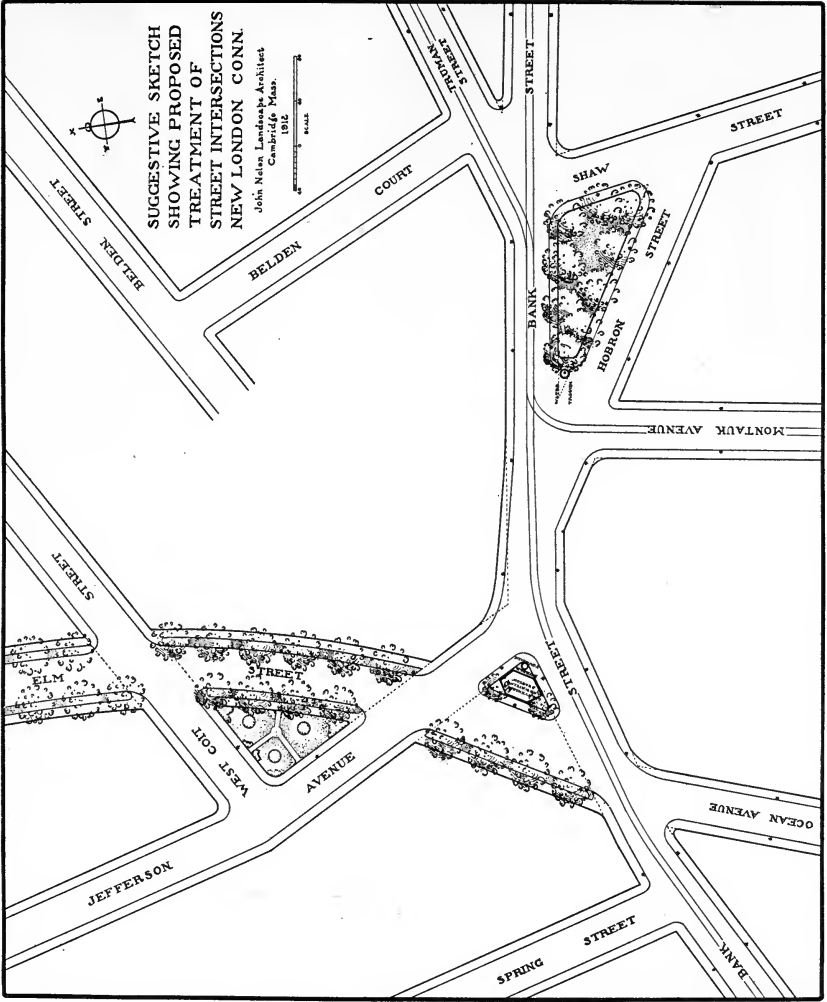
The following is a list of the existing and proposed park or playground properties, all of which are shown on the accompanying map. The names, of course, are subject to change. For the sake of convenience the following classification has been adopted, although these divisions are not in all cases mutually exclusive. There is inevitably some overlapping.

- A. City Squares and Small Open Spaces.
- B. School Grounds.
- C. Playgrounds and Athletic Fields.
- D. Neighborhood Parks.
- E. Large Outlying Reservations.
- F. The Inner and Outer Parkway System.

### A. CITY SQUARES AND SMALL OPEN SPACES

#### 1. Railroad Station Plaza

The small Plaza in front of the Railroad Station is at present inconvenient in arrangement and unsatisfactory in appearance. The need, it seems to me, is not to add anything to the Plaza merely for the sake of adorning it, but to rearrange the space for use, so as to make it more serviceable, more orderly, and more comfortable. Incidentally, its appearance would be improved. Following this point of view, I recommend (a) the removal of the parking, fencing, etc., in the middle of the Plaza and the substitution of a lamp with a small isle of safety around which traffic would



SUGGESTIVE SKETCH  
SHOWING PROPOSED  
TREATMENT OF  
STREET INTERSECTIONS  
NEW LONDON CONN.

John Natan Landscaps Architect  
Cambridge Mass.  
1912



## LIST OF PROPERTIES

naturally turn; (b) the removal of all poles and wires; (c) the rounding by easier curves of the street corners; (d) the slight widening of the sidewalks and the planting of a few trees.

### 2. Williams Park

An attractive and useful existing city "square" with walks, grass, and trees, comprising about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres. No change is recommended.

### 3. Williams Memorial Park

An existing square of about 4 acres, located at Broad and Hempstead Streets. It is much used by the people of the neighborhood. It might be well to consider its improvement.

### 4. Bank Street Triangles

One of these triangles (corner Shaw and Bank Streets) has been acquired recently by the Park Board. The others are small pieces of land which have been left between street intersections as a result of cutting through Elm Street as a part of the Inner Park Drive. A plan showing the approximate location of these streets and triangles is submitted. It is important that they be secured for public use.

### 5. The Old Mill

The Old Mill building and the ground around it form a very picturesque and historic open place. The building dates back to 1650, and is now owned, I understand, by the city. The Mill and its environment are worthy of careful preservation. The improvement of Winthrop Cove, which adjoins the Mill, will be of great advantage.

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

### 6. The First Burial-ground

A tract of about an acre and a half constitutes a dis-used burial-ground opposite the Bulkeley School. For the present nothing needs to be done with it except the planting of some good shade-trees at suitable places. In the years to come it might be brought into use as a small open place in much the same way that old burial-grounds in London, England, are now used.

### 7. Historical Museum Triangle

The Triangle on Bank Street between Tilley and Brewer Streets, though small, is a very valuable public space. It affords an open foreground to the fine old Colonial building now used as an Historical Museum.

## B. SCHOOL GROUNDS

### 8. The Harbor School

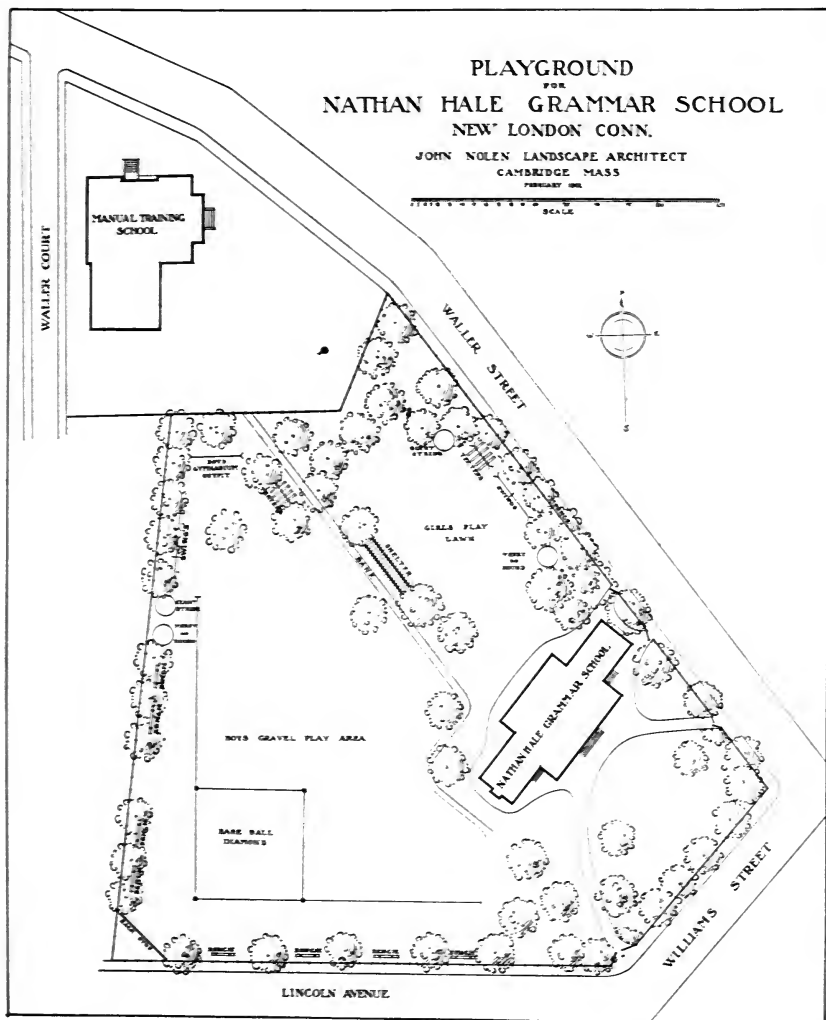
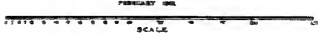
No large use can be made of the grounds for play unless they are developed and equipped with apparatus. Some planting could be done with advantage. A valuable addition has recently been made to the north along Montauk Avenue. The grounds should be still further extended, so as to connect with the proposed Harbor School Park.

### 9. Nameaug School

The grounds here are too small for any extensive use. They would be improved by planting and made somewhat more useful by installing simple apparatus. The building seems to be unfavorably situated for making the best use of the ground. It might be worth while

PLAYGROUND  
FOR  
NATHAN HALE GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
NEW LONDON CONN.

JOHN NOLEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
CAMBRIDGE MASS





## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

for the committee to consider the advantage of selling the lot on the north side of the school property and using the money to purchase additional ground to the south. A lot in the rear should also be considered. It would probably be inexpensive.

### 10. Saltonstall School

The grounds are too limited for any playground use other than recess. To serve better this purpose, they might be developed and equipped with apparatus. Planting would improve their appearance. Perhaps a third of an acre on the west side along Truman Street could be added with advantage and at little cost.

### 11. Bulkeley School

This is the boys' high school. It offers no opportunity for play purposes. Planting is recommended. Plans would have to be prepared.

### 12. Williams Memorial Institute

This is the girls' high school. The grounds are of considerable extent, but unsuitable for use for recreation on account of topography and steep grades. Part of the land might make a desirable site for another school building in the future. Planting is recommended.

### 13. Nathan Hale Grammar School

The size of the lot here is sufficient for use as a local playground. I recommend that it be graded and developed, providing a baseball diamond, tennis courts, etc. A tentative plan to illustrate my recommenda-

## LIST OF PROPERTIES

tions is submitted. The plan is only tentative, and is not submitted as a working or construction plan.

### 14. Manual Training School

The grounds of this school are too limited for utilization as a playground. There appears to be no convenient or inexpensive method of extending them.

### 15. Robert Bartlett School

The land in connection with this school is sufficient for the needs of small children. It requires grading, development, and some simple apparatus. The baseball diamond for the use of small boys could be relocated with advantage.

### 16. Winthrop School

The grounds of this school, as with most of the others, are too small except for recess use. They could be made more serviceable by slight equipment and more attractive by some hardy planting.

## C. PLAYGROUNDS AND ATHLETIC FIELDS

### 17. Williams Street Playground

Six acres of low level land between Bayonet and Williams Street, adjoining the proposed Inner Park Boulevard and the College for Women. This tract can probably be acquired at small cost.

### 18. Bank Street Playground

This area comprises 10 acres of low land at the southeast corner of the proposed Large Natural Park Reservation, not far from Bank Street. It would be a



## LIST OF PROPERTIES

valuable tract to reserve for future playground development. No immediate action appears necessary.

### 19. Willet's Avenue Playground

About 10 acres in the low level land next to the parkway in Waterford, between the New York, New Haven, & Hartford Railroad and Willet's Avenue,—a valuable reservation for a general playground for future development.

### 20. Elm Street Playground

This area is bounded by Jefferson Avenue, Garfield Avenue, McDonald Street, and Connecticut Avenue. As outlined above, it would include approximately 6 acres suitable for general playground purposes. The fact that the Inner Parkway passes through this tract would not necessarily be objectionable, as the two parts would have separate use and development.

### 21. Thames Street Playground

General playground, size about 8 acres. Located at the south-east corner of Thames Street and Ocean Avenue. While this property might be high in first cost, it should be kept in mind that it is admirably adapted for its purpose and well located.

### 22. Athletic Field

Area bounded by Connecticut and Cedar Grove Avenues and Ledyard and Broad Streets, with the exception of the house lots fronting on Connecticut Avenue. It comprises about 6 acres. A preliminary design is submitted as an illustration of the use that could be made of this property for games and other

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

athletic purposes. This plan illustrates also the kind of use that could be made of other properties here recommended for acquisition, even though their development might not be undertaken immediately. I recommend that this property be acquired early, and that full working plans (grading, construction, and planting) be prepared by a landscape architect.

### D. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

#### 23. Riverside Park

One of the main features of the existing park system, with 35 or 40 acres occupying a partially wooded slope down to the Thames River. The park is well located. Its size, however, could be considerably increased with advantage, as shown on the plan. At present it is cut up by too many roads and it lacks recreation facilities. The new approach provided by the proposed Inner Parkway would be a great improvement. I recommend, as one of the first actions of the Park Board, the preparation of definite plans for the extension and development of Riverside Park. It is already too good not to be made better. Now appears to be the time for action, as this neighborhood will build up rapidly with the opening of the College for Women.

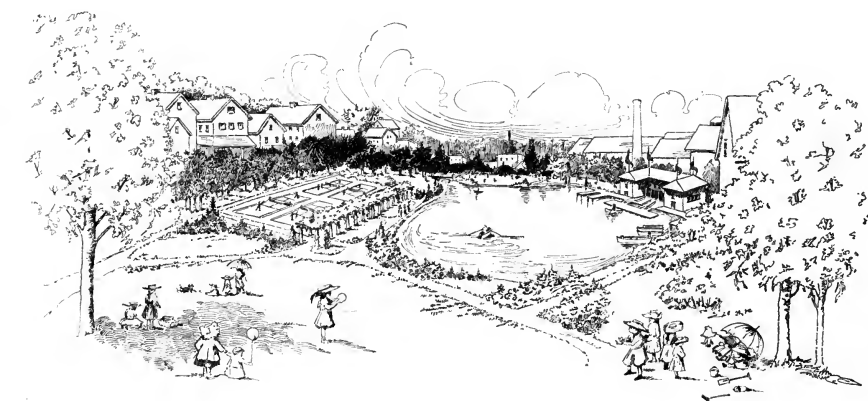
#### 24. Ocean Beach Park

An existing shore reservation of inestimable value for wholesome and delightful recreation. The city already owns about 2,000 feet of ocean beach at this point. It is recommended that it be extended to the west, as indicated on the General Plan, so as to include a beach with a total length of at least 3,600 feet, a wide strip





SHAW COVE · NEW · LONDON · CONN · EXISTING · CONDITIONS · JOHN HOLEN · LANDSCAPE · ARCHITECT · CAMBRIDGE · MASS ·



SHAW COVE · NEW · LONDON · CONN · PROPOSED · TREATMENT · JOHN HOLEN · LANDSCAPE · ARCHITECT · CAMBRIDGE · MASS ·

## LIST OF PROPERTIES

inland, and the little islands known as Shore Rock and Cormorant Rock. Here, again, there is opportunity and need for early action on the part of the city. Ocean Beach is New London's most distinctive park feature, and it should be enlarged so as to serve the steadily increasing demands made upon it. There is no doubt of its popularity nor of its appreciation by the people. New public bath-houses, more like those at Beverly Farms, are likewise needed.

### 25. Shaw Cove

The conditions now obtaining in the vicinity of Shaw Cove make it very desirable to turn its low shores and mud flats into a neighborhood park and recreation centre. The taking should include the entire shore line and also suitable entrances from near-by streets. As a suggestion for the development of this area, it is proposed that south of Hamilton Street shall be the Children's Playground. The cove should be filled in, leaving a wading pool in the centre only, with boys' and girls' apparatus, enclosed space with sand-courts, etc., for small children, and a ball-field for boys. In the larger section north of Hamilton Street the cove should be reduced in size and regraded, so that no flats will be exposed. The tidal wash and water from the small brook should then keep the basin clean. Small boats will have access to this pool from the outer cove, and may be given anchorage, as at present. Ultimately, it should prove desirable to establish a public landing and moorings with a boat-house on the bank. Shrubs and trees should be used, partly hiding the surrounding dwellings and furnishing shade on the knoll on the west side with its pleasant views over the park. More active recreation should be provided for by a ball-



## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

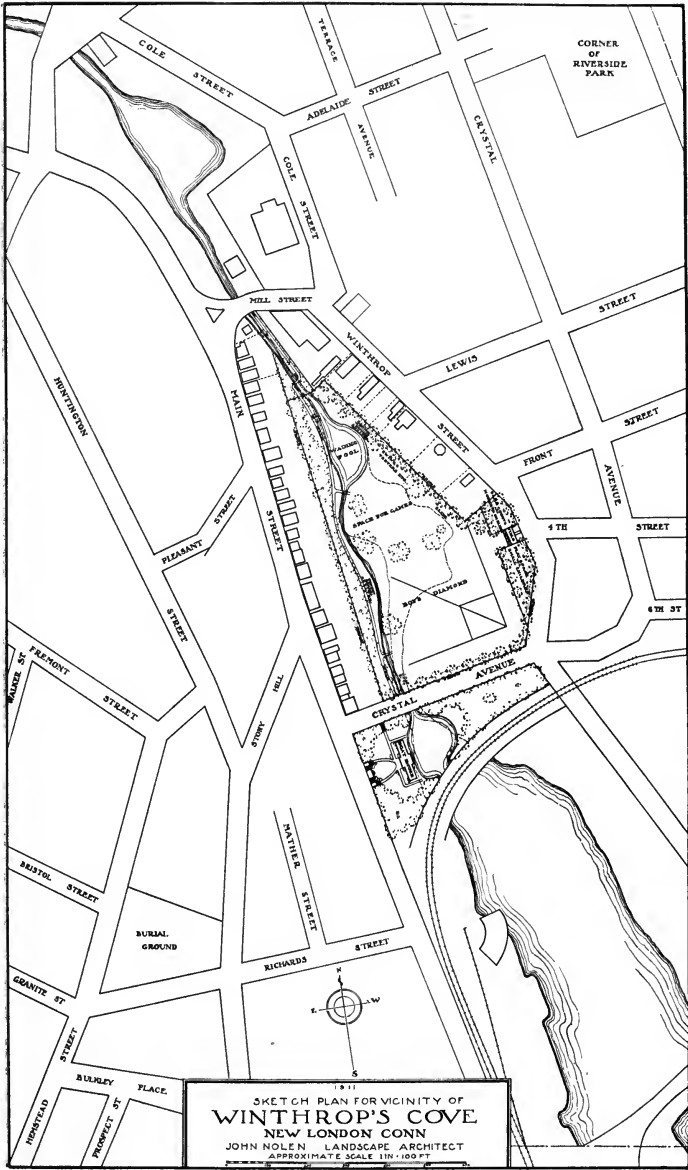
field, playfield for girls, and tennis courts. It may be feasible to keep out the tide in winter for skating. No roads are proposed for the park, as they would be of no great service, would take up much room, be expensive to maintain, and provide no new frontages to lots of adequate depth. To further improve conditions in this region, it would be well to widen and improve the grade of Shaw Street, so that it might become an important tributary to Pequot Avenue. Howard Street should be changed, so as to make a safer and more convenient connection with Pequot Avenue. A general plan and two sketches are submitted to illustrate the improvements recommended in this neighborhood. The area obtained for public use would be about 15 acres. Prompt action here is imperative on the ground of health and sanitation as well as public recreation.

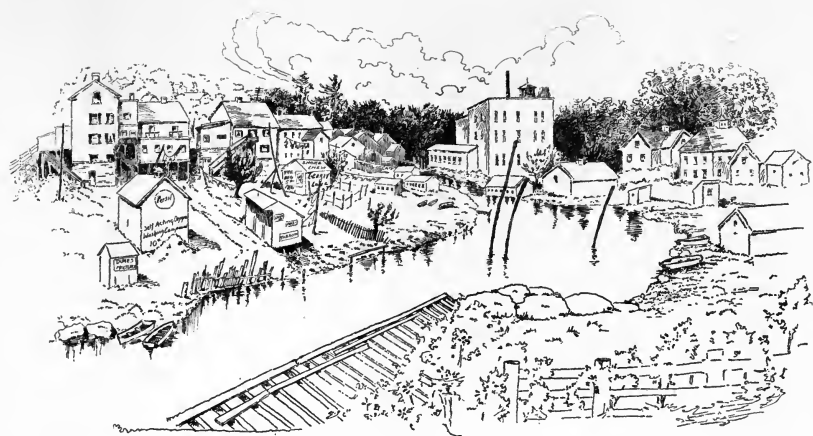
### 26. Winthrop Cove

The improvements recommended for Winthrop Cove are much along the same lines as those for Shaw Cove. The opportunity, however, is not so great, the amount of land available, about 5 acres, being more limited. Nevertheless, the changes would bring about a veritable transformation in one of the most unsightly and conspicuous sections of the city, and provide a recreation centre and small neighborhood park where one is much needed. A general plan and two sketches are submitted. South of the railroad bridge there is an opportunity for important commercial development.

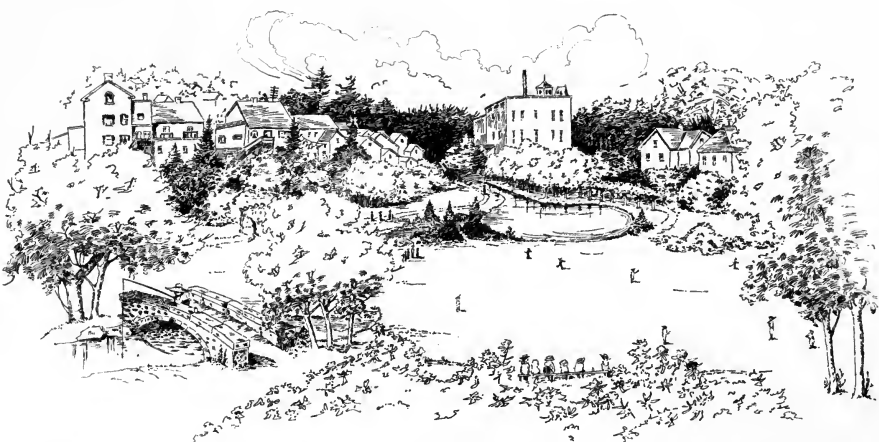
### 27. Harbor School Park

There is an open strip of land about 300 feet wide, just north of the Harbor Public School, extending from the Lawrence Hospital to the shore. In my opinion,





WINTHROP COVE - NEW LONDON CONN - EXISTING CONDITIONS JOHN-NOLEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT CAMBRIDGE MASS



WINTHROP COVE - NEW LONDON CONN - PROPOSED TREATMENT JOHN-NOLEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT CAMBRIDGE MASS

## LIST OF PROPERTIES

it is very important that this should be acquired by the city and kept open forever. In the first place, it would preserve a desirable open space from the Hospital to the water front; secondly, it would provide a small park in this neighborhood as an adjunct of the public school and for general local use; and, finally, it is one of the best opportunities to obtain a small stretch of pleasant beach for public use. I believe this property is now owned by the Lawrence Hospital Trustees. If so, some joint action ought to be taken soon, providing for the future development of this property in the interests of the Hospital and the city.

### E. LARGE OUTLYING RESERVATIONS

#### 28. Mamacoke Hill

This hill, 100 feet in height, has a fine commanding position in the Thames River and is almost entirely surrounded by water. Virtually, it is an island, connected with the mainland only by a neck of salt marsh. It is an ideal spot for picnicing. On the General Plan I have indicated a taking of approximately 80 acres. This could be increased or diminished according to cost and other controlling conditions. In any case the reservation ought to include the wooded slope across the railroad and a connection with the interurban car line and the Inner and Outer Parkway Systems. While action is not urgent, this splendid hill should ultimately come into the possession of the city or some other public body.

#### 29. Natural Park Reservation

The large undeveloped territory to the west of the city offers a most remarkable opportunity for a large out-

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

lying woodland reservation. This property is exceedingly varied in character and topography, and is now practically unspoiled. It appears now not to have any large value for city or suburban residential development. Yet it is admirably located for convenient connection with the Outer Parkway System. The extent of territory that should be included in this reservation will depend largely upon its cost and the ease with which it could be obtained. I should recommend that an effort be made to secure a tract of at least 300 acres.\* It seems to me beyond question the best situation for a really large park for New London.

### F. INNER AND OUTER PARKWAY SYSTEM

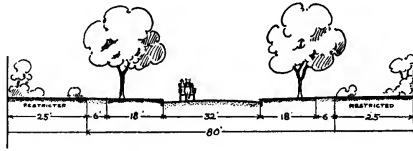
#### 30. Inner Parkway System

The system here proposed for Inner Parkways would include the following, as shown on the General Plan:—

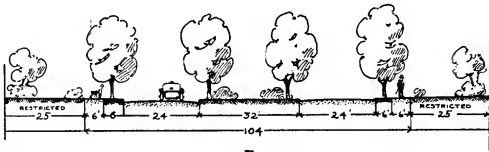
Mamacoke Hill  
Mohegan Avenue  
Williams Street  
Ledyard Street  
Elm Street  
Ocean Avenue

This Inner Parkway System would have a length of about 6 miles and an average width of at least 80 feet. In some places it could be 104 feet wide. In both cases building restrictions should be adopted to prevent the erection of buildings within 25 feet (or thereabouts) of the street line. The proposed treatment is shown in Parkways Sections No. I and No. II herewith submitted.

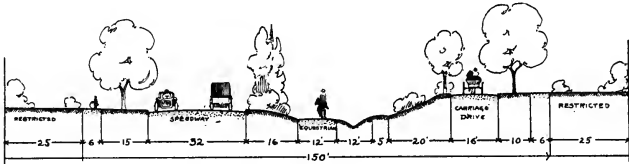
\* Part of this tract, about 90 acres of Bates Woods, has been secured since this Report was prepared.



I



II



III

PROPOSED PARKWAY SECTIONS  
FOR  
NEW LONDON CONN

SCALE 1" = 20'

JOHN NOLEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
CAMBRIDGE MASS

1912

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

### 31. Outer Parkway System

The system here proposed for Outer Parkways would include the following as shown on the General Plan:—

Mamacoke Hill  
Williams Street  
Gallows Lane  
Bayonet Street  
Chapman Street  
Lake Brandegee  
Phillips Street  
Jefferson Avenue  
and the Parkway  
to Ocean Beach

The total length of this Outer Parkway System would be 8 miles or more, and the width of the parkway itself should average at least 150 feet. In some locations it could easily exceed that width. Restrictions as to building should be passed by the City Council as recommended for the Inner Parkway System. A single illustration of the proposed treatment is shown in Parkway Section No. III herewith submitted.

Taken together, these small open spaces, playgrounds, parks, and parkway systems comprise a fairly complete provision of public grounds for the needs of the city of New London to-day and a reasonable anticipation of the requirements of the immediate future, so far as they can now be foreseen. The recommendations of various park and playground properties are respectfully submitted for the consideration of the Municipal Art Society and the Board of Park Commissioners.\* Further mention need

\*Under an Act of the Connecticut Legislature, approved August 23, 1911, the Board of Park Commissioners of the City of New London has ample power to acquire, develop, and maintain parks, parkways, and playgrounds. The Board also has authority, under the same Act, to issue park bonds to an amount not exceeding the sum of one hundred thousand dollars.

## LIST OF PROPERTIES

be made only of two points more or less directly related to park development. (1) Fort Trumbull, now owned by the Federal Government, may some time become inactive. If it does, it should pass into the hands of the New London Park Department and be used as Fort Independence is used in Boston. (2) The strip of land to the east and south of Pequot Avenue, extending to the water's edge, should become public property or in some way come under public control. At present there is no building of importance between Pequot Avenue and the Sound, and the view from the road is one of surpassing beauty,—beautiful residences on one side and an unbroken view of the sea on the other. Few American cities have anything so fine. While this Report is not directly concerned with street changes, mention, perhaps, should also be made of the desirability of extending Washington Street from Reed to Coit, thus affording a better connection from the Pequot Avenue section to the heart of the city.

All of the grounds referred to above have been indicated on the accompanying general map. No lengthy descriptions of location, etc., therefore, are necessary. On account of the lack of a more satisfactory survey, one giving the topography at a suitable scale, and of property values, it is possible to show only approximate boundaries for the proposed playgrounds, parks, and other open spaces recommended. The General Plan is based upon an enlargement of a survey by the United States Government. However, I believe that the boundaries are indicated with sufficient accuracy for present purposes. The need now is to obtain action only on the general features which the plan presents. Later on, when the approval of the Park Board is obtained, it will be necessary to take up definite planning in greater detail.

In conclusion, may I call attention again to the oppor-



## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

tunity of the school authorities to develop and improve the various school properties, adding thereto and equipping a suitable Athletic Field, as suggested under paragraph 22. The program mapped out for the Park Board is naturally much larger. Action would appear to be called for first in connection with the proposed extensions of Riverside Park and Ocean Beach and the acquisition of Shaw and Winthrop Coves, the so-called Harbor School Park in front of the Lawrence Hospital, and the wild tract referred to on the plan as the Large Natural Park Reservation. When the general recommendations for these properties are approved, more detailed plans should be made for the takings, the land should be acquired, and then design, construction, and planting plans should be prepared by the landscape architect for the improvement of each park.

It will take years to execute the park and playground system as outlined for New London. That, I believe, is clearly understood by the Municipal Art Society and the Park Board. One advantage of the General Plan, however, is that it shows the relation of each part to the whole and enables the members of the Park Board and the city authorities to keep the final system constantly in mind. It will help the city to avoid mistakes and make many economies possible.

There is a new spirit in New London. It has already expressed itself in a phenomenal improvement of roads and sidewalks, in the founding at New London of the Connecticut College for Women, and in the plans now under way for large commercial and business development of the city. To these great enterprises there will be added, unless all signs fail, a park and playground system which promises to be as good as that of any other city in the class of New London.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF THE INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC PARKS IN INCREASING CITY LAND VALUES

One of the arguments for public parks, which has influenced real estate owners and tax-payers generally, is the direct effect of park acquisitions upon the value of city property and their indirect influence upon the city's income from the taxation of land. Some examples of results are given below.

### *Madison, Wis. (1)*

While the members of the committee are unable by any mathematical modes of calculation to reach definite figures representing the weight or effect of the influences produced by the establishment of parks, drives, etc., the general considerations partly indicated in the foregoing statements have caused us to conclude, and we accordingly report, that, in our judgment, from ten to fifteen per cent. of the increase in the value of taxable property in the city of Madison during the period mentioned is attributable to the establishment of parks, drives, playgrounds, and open places in and about the city of Madison, by and through the activities of the city, its citizens, and the Park and Pleasure Drive Association.

(From Report of Citizens' Committee appointed to investigate and report upon the amount of increase in the assessed value of property due to parks, 1909.)

### *Madison (2)*

On the basis of the very conservative report of the Citizens' Committee, the parks, instead of being a burden upon the tax-payers of the city, are meeting all the expenses of their maintenance and all interest charges on the investment, and in addition are paying into the city treasury at least \$10,000 to be expended by the city for other municipal purposes. It would seem as though such facts as these should put a stop to any criticism that the park work is placing an undue burden upon the community, or indeed any burden at all.

If the comparison be confined to real estate values alone, the result is as follows:—

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

True value of real estate in 1900 . . . . .	\$17,930,370
True value of real estate in 1908 . . . . .	<u>34,314,259</u>
Increase during the period of . . . . .	\$16,383,889
Or an average annual increase of . . . . .	\$2,047,986
Of this amount, 12½% is due to park work, or . . . . .	255,998
That is, during this period there has been added each year to the wealth of the real estate by virtue of the park work the sum of . . . . .	255,998

The above comparisons are based on the true or actual values of property within the city. Taking the assessed values, the results shown by this report are equally interesting. Confining the comparisons to real estate, it is seen that the assessed value in 1901 was \$15,201,182, which rose in 1908 to \$21,738,975, making an average annual increase for the seven years covering this period, in the assessed value of the real estate of the city, of \$933,970. On the basis that 12½ per cent. of this increase is due to the park work, there has been added each year during this period to the assessed value of the real estate by reason of the park work \$116,746.25.

Another interesting fact brought out by this report is that the average annual increase in the assessed value of real estate in the city from 1893 to 1900 was only \$314,772, while the average annual increase from 1901 to 1908 is \$933,970. It may be said that this comparison is unfair because, in 1901, the first attempt was made to assess real estate at figures more nearly approaching its true value. But this objection is met by the fact that in the comparison for the later period the increased assessment of \$15,201,182 (which includes the new tenth ward) is taken as the starting point, and the assessments made for the first period, 1893 to 1900, are all doubled. Hence, the figures demonstrate that since 1901 the average annual increase in the assessed value of real estate has been substantially three times the average annual increase for the period from 1893 to 1900.

Now, it is an interesting fact that the park work within the city started in the spring of 1899, by the securing of what now constitutes a part of Tenney Park. It was two years, however, before this land was filled ready for planting. Then followed the Yahara River Improvement in 1903, and the Henry Vilas Park and Brittingham Park Improvements in 1905, and the work on these different improvements has not yet been completed, although pushed as rapidly as possible. *The point here*

## PARKS INCREASE LAND VALUES

*made is that the very rapid increase in the values of real estate is coincident with the period of park development; and the most marked increase has been in the districts where the parks are located.* As well stated in the report: "The committee has been unable to obtain data affording accurate or definite indications of the actual increase in realty values in the territory adjacent to the parks and other improvements referred to; but there is abundant general information indicating that actual values have increased very rapidly in such districts after the establishment of the parks or other improvements, beginning as soon as the plan for making the improvement has become known to the public. Rarely has such increase been less than 100 per cent. within three or four years from its beginning, where the improvement is of any considerable importance, and in some cases the gain has been several hundred per cent."

(Report of the Directors of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association, 1909.)

### *Boston*

In 1849 a Land Commission was appointed to deal with the subject of creating new land out of the Back Bay mud flats, Boston. Comprehensive plans were reported in 1852, but the work of filling the land was not begun until 1857. The Commonwealth had the right to the flats below the line of riparian ownership. The plan of the Back Bay Improvement was the work of the late Arthur Gilman, an eminent architect.

In 1857 the Commonwealth owned on the Back Bay 4,723,998 feet, and the net profits on the sale of this land up to 1882 were \$3,068,636.28, with 102,593 feet remaining unsold, valued at not less than \$250,000. The net profit of the Land Company amounted to over \$2,000,000.

The Back Bay to-day is characterized by broad, handsome streets and the magnificence of architecture both in its public buildings and private dwellings. Commonwealth Avenue, the principal street, is 200 feet wide with broad green mall in the centre, and the distance from house to house across the street is 240 feet. The Back Bay is one of the most valuable parts of the city, the real estate assessment being now about \$100,000,000.

One mistake was the short-sighted policy which permitted the building over of the territory between Beacon Street and the Charles River, as that street might have been placed on the line of a beautiful embankment. Three times a proposition

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

was made to give to the city 500,000 feet of land between Beacon Street and the river on condition that it fill the land, never allow it to be built on, and add the territory to the Public Garden, which itself had been secured by filling. Unfortunately, the value of the river front for park and other purposes was not appreciated at that time, and the proposition was repeatedly rejected.

In the case of "The Fens" in Boston, the park cost about \$4,300 an acre. The land surrounding this park, though much of it is still vacant, is worth now on an average of \$86,000 an acre.

### *Cambridge, Mass.*

The increase in real estate values in the immediate neighborhood of Cambridge Field is a matter of interest. When this Board, in 1893, recommended that this field be taken for park purposes, one of the reasons advanced was that in future years this enterprise would be justified by the enhanced value of the remaining property. At the time this recommendation was made, there was little or no movement in real estate values in this neighborhood. The field was taken, and within certain limits it is fair to claim that the increased values since then have been due to park influences. To ascertain what this increase has been and will be each year, a certain territory has been marked out and the assessors' valuations taken. In marking out this territory, a very conservative claim has been made, and it is believed that within these lines it will be generally agreed that the increased values of the last three years may justly be said to be due to park influences.

The territory so considered is shown upon the accompanying plan, and is bounded as follows: Beginning at the railroad crossing, the front lots on the northerly side of Cambridge Street are included to Willow Street. The distillery property is not included. At Willow Street the line crosses to the southerly side of Cambridge Street, and continues to Winsor Street, thence along the easterly side of Winsor Street to Hampshire Street to Bristol Street, thence along the northerly and northeasterly side of Bristol Street, across Portland Street nearly to the ward boundary line, and then including the front lots on Portland Street (which extend nearly to the ward boundary from Portland Street), to Cambridge Street at the point of beginning.

Within these limits the area of taxable land in 1893 was

## PARKS INCREASE LAND VALUES

1,847,161 square feet. In 1896 the assessors taxed but 1,353,649 square feet, the remaining 493,512 square feet having been taken from the taxable lists for the park and new streets. With the park uncompleted on the first day of May, 1896, it would probably have met the expectations of the most confident, if it could have been shown that at that early date in park development the city treasury had suffered no loss in the total amount of taxes collected from the realty in the territory under consideration. The result, however, is much better, for this territory in 1896 showed a valuation of \$156,200 more than it did in 1893, as follows:

	<i>Square Feet Taxed</i>	<i>Value of Land</i>	<i>Value of Buildings</i>	<i>Total Value</i>
1896 . . . . .	1,353,649	\$442,000	\$650,300	\$1,092,300
1893 . . . . .	1,847,161	403,100	533,000	936,100
		\$38,900	\$117,300	\$156,200

In other words, this territory, at the end of three years, after being reduced 26 per cent. in taxable area, on a tax rate of \$15.10 on \$1,000, showed an increased yearly earning for the city treasury of \$2,358.62.

This creation of \$156,200, due to park influences, was, on the first day of May, more than the park had then cost. The total cost of Cambridge Field to December 1, 1896, is \$194,733. But since the assessors' valuations on May 1, there has been an increase in this territory in new buildings to an approximate amount of \$100,000, which will appear in next year's valuations. Cambridge Field has cost, to the present time, including all expenses of land, filling, surfacing, building the Shelter, etc., 35 cents per square foot. There is no land fronting on any of the four sides of Cambridge Field which can now be bought for less than 35 cents.

It is proposed to make in the annual report each year in the future a statement of the changes in values in this territory.\* On a cost of \$194,733 for the completed park, the annual expense to the municipal treasury (estimating 6 per cent. for interest and sinking fund requirements) will be \$11,683.98. It is believed that within a very few years the amount which this territory will pay into the city treasury in taxes in excess of the amount paid in 1893 will more than balance the annual cost of the park, although this means that every dollar invested in the park must create nearly four dollars outside.

(Report of Cambridge Park Department, 1896.)

\*In 1897 the value of land increased to \$475,400; buildings, to \$1,051,800; total value, \$1,527,200, a gain over 1896 of \$435,200.

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

### *Hartford, Conn. (1)*

Parks also contribute materially to a city's property values, and prevent real estate in their neighborhood from deteriorating. No exact statement of this return can be made in figures, but a careful examination shows that the parks constructed during the last ten (10) years have increased the Grand List by a sum equal to that expended by the city in their purchase and development and have gone far toward making up that which has been taken from the Tax List. This increase will continue for years. The estimate which real estate dealers have made of the value of the city's Park System, as an asset, exclusive of Keney Park, is about two and one-half millions of dollars. That of the four (4) large parks constructed during the past ten (10) years, Riverside, Goodwin, Pope, and Elizabeth, aggregated \$800,000. In securing these, the city issued bonds to the amount of \$300,000, which represents the cost to the city, and about \$230,000 worth of property has been received by gift. The true value of a park system in municipal development cannot be computed, however, except after the lapse of a longer period of time, as the history of Bushnell Park shows. Such connecting parkways as have been projected would add vastly to the park system, and the more practical objects of its usefulness can only be secured by the layout of small areas easily accessible for playgrounds in the densely populated sections of the city.

(Hartford Park Commission.)

### *Hartford (2)*

Keney Park has been entirely constructed and maintained from funds of the estate of Henry Keney under the direction of the Keney Park Trustees. It consists of over six hundred acres, and is developed as a country park. At the time the lands were purchased, sixteen years ago, their value was from \$25 to \$400 per acre. The abutting property was of a somewhat higher value, as much of Keney Park was interior land. If the influence of Keney Park is considered to exist only one thousand feet from its borders, then the value of the lands abutting it is probably four times the value they were sixteen years ago, and with the buildings erected has at a low value probably four million dollars' increase.

The maintenance of Keney Park, when turned over to the city, is supposed to be about \$12,000 (under present prices) per year, and if my estimate is correct, that there should be

## PARKS INCREASE LAND VALUES

\$50,000 increase of value to each \$1,000 cost in maintenance, then the increased valuation on account of Keney Park should be \$600,000, but the increased valuation as estimated by me is four million dollars, and the lands about Keney Park are not more than twenty per cent. developed, so that it is easily seen, under those conditions, that Keney Park will bring into the city treasury much more money than it has taken out, and that it has already brought into the treasury during the sixteen years of its construction a large sum of money from increased taxes, and has not as yet taken one dollar from it.

For several years I have given this subject considerable thought and study, and my conclusion is that when parks are properly located as to the city's area and population, and are so constructed and maintained as to meet the needs of the people they are to serve, also made beautiful, attractive, and suitable for the work they are to do, they will bring more money into the city treasury than they take out, the amount depending upon how well they are balanced with the needs of the people.

(G. A. Parker, Park Superintendent, Hartford.)

### *New York City*

The amount collected [in taxes] in twenty-five years on the property of the three wards [the wards contiguous to Central Park], over and above the ordinary increase in the tax value of the real estate in the rest of the city, was \$65,000,000, or about \$21,000,000 more than the aggregate expense attending and following the establishment of the park up to the present year. Regarding the whole transaction in the light of a real estate speculation alone, the city has \$21,000,000 in cash over and above the outlay, and acquired in addition thereto land valued at \$200,000,000.

(Report New York Park Association, 1892.)

### *Harrisburg, Pa.*

It can hardly be surprising that the whole face of the city of Harrisburg has been changed by this movement for improvement. When the cost of it is inquired into, a marvel appears; for while the most favorable construction placed upon the cost proposed, in 1906, an increase in the city taxes of two mills, the effect of the improvement feeling in increasing enterprise, the further effect of a better adjusted valuation, and the city's



## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

advances along all lines enabled the city authorities to keep house properly with an increase of but one-half mill in the tax rate for 1906. That is, the increased cost has been barely one-fourth that proposed under the most favorable conditions at the time the movement was projected. For 1907, the tax rate has been fixed at a rate one-half mill less than the 1902 promise.

In 1906 the Harrisburg Park Commission purchased of Mr. E. B. Mitchell certain lands to extend its Reservoir Park in Harrisburg. The whole tract, including, I think, some twelve or thirteen acres, was offered to the city at \$1,000 an acre. Only a portion of the offer was accepted, and the owner, Mr. Mitchell, was very much provoked at the declination to buy all of his land at \$1,000 an acre. A little more than two years later—the park in the mean time having been extended and opened—I had a desire to live close to one of its entrances, and in that portion of the Mitchell tract which was not accepted from him when offered at \$1,000 an acre. I went to Mr. Mitchell, and asked his price on an acre or a half-acre. He declined to talk with me at all on the acre basis, and finally and rather grudgingly offered to sell me a half-acre at \$6,250. I declined to buy, but he eventually sold not only that tract, but all the rest of it, at a rate equal to or exceeding the price asked me.

This is one instance. Another is close by. The same park has so changed valuations in its vicinity that the price established some six or seven years ago of \$400 an acre for land a little farther away from the park has changed to between \$2,500 and \$4,000 an acre for the same and neighboring land.

While I do not have on the instant other items, I can say to you that a rather extended and close observation of these matters, proceeding over some ten years, has convinced me that in no case have adequate park extensions failed to largely increase real estate values in the vicinity.

(J. Horace McFarland, Park Commissioner.)

### *Brookline, Mass.*

Recurring now to an illustration of municipal development on broad lines as a remunerative investment for the town, the Beacon Parkway will be cited. Beacon Street from opposite the State House in Boston extends in a westerly direction about ten miles to Newton Lower Falls. About two and one-half

## PARKS INCREASE LAND VALUES

miles from the State House it enters Brookline, and is about twelve thousand feet or a little more than two miles long in Brookline, as far as the Brighton line. Beacon Street was originally laid out through Brookline fifty feet in width and in two sections,—the western half, west of Washington Street, in 1850, the eastern half, east of Washington Street, in 1851. The original laying out of Beacon Street appears to have been harder to secure than its conversion into a parkway in 1886–87. The promoters of this latter project were promptly supported by the selectmen and citizens. The benefit to accrue to the town was instantly seen; what the promoters might gain was problematical. But the fitness of co-operation between public and private interests here received strong confirmation. One helped the other; each was dependent upon the other; the result was profitable to both. Beacon Street was widened into a parkway from 160 to 180 feet in width, with a reservation for street-car service near the centre, the entire cost being \$615,000, of which the town paid \$465,000. This was done, regardless of what the city of Boston might do at either end. The town would and did compel the city to follow its lead. In six years the increase in assessed values of land and buildings on each side of the Beacon Parkway throughout its entire length in Brookline, for an approximate distance of only 500 feet from the side line on both sides of the street, is \$4,330,400, with no allowance for any increase in personal estate incident thereto. At \$11.80 on \$1,000, the tax rate of 1892, Brookline received last year about \$51,000 in the taxes on these two strips of land 500 feet wide only, and the annual revenue is increasing each year. The Beacon Parkway is therefore paying for itself long before the most zealous advocate of that measure supposed it would, and is a striking proof that well-considered plans for large public improvements of this kind are profitable public ventures.

It is an interesting fact that the average rate of taxation in Brookline during the past ten years, the period of its most extraordinary growth and boldest improvements, is less than for the preceding ten years. The average rate from 1882 to 1892 was \$10.87 per \$1,000. The average rate from 1872 to 1882 was \$12.01 per \$1,000. The town debt has increased during the past ten years  $43\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; while the town valuation in the same period has increased  $113\frac{3}{8}$  per cent. Of course, with the town's growth, come added expenses and demands each year. But Brookline has recognized the fact that the town will grow whether it is encouraged so to do or

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

not, and that, as between a large population ill prepared to meet modern municipal wants and a population and surroundings which are strong and attractive, the latter are preferable. To meet the growing demands of such a town, new capital must be brought in and such inducements offered as will attract and retain persons having capital. A higher rate of taxation and a less efficient government would follow a diminution of public income; hence the town aims to draw within its limits strong and active classes.

(Brookline: A Study in Town Government. Alfred D. Chandler.)

### *Kansas City, Mo. (1)*

Table showing typical increase of property values due to boulevard establishment:—

#### ASSESSED LAND VALUATIONS—NORTH AND SOUTH PARK DISTRICTS.

1910 North Park District . . . . .	\$22,115,060	
1910 South Park District . . . . .	9,168,070	
		\$31,283,130
1898 North Park District . . . . .	\$12,619,530	
1898 South Park District . . . . .	6,801,470	
		18,421,000
Natural land gain in districts of 69.82% . . . . .		\$12,862,130

#### BENTON BOULEVARD ASSESSED LAND VALUATIONS.

ALL IN NORTH AND SOUTH PARK DISTRICTS, INDEPENDENCE AVENUE TO THIRTY-FIRST STREET.

1910 . . . . .		\$372,690
1898 . . . . .		131,415
Benton Boulevard land gain of 183.60% or . . . . .		\$241,275

#### FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENTS.

Cost \$229,996.44, or 70% of \$328,537, being 100% of \$131,415, 1898 assessed valuations.

#### RECAPITULATION.

Benton Boulevard land gain . . . . .		183.60%
Frontage improvement cost on 1898 land value 70% . . . . .		
Natural land gain in districts 69.82 . . . . .		139.82%
Net gain due to boulevard establishment . . . . .		43.78%

In consideration of the above table, it will be noted that the combined assessed valuations of the land in the North and

## PARKS INCREASE LAND VALUES

South Park Districts for the year 1898 (before Benton Boulevard from Independence Avenue to Thirty-first Street was completed) was \$18,421,000. In the year 1910 the combined assessed land valuation in the North and South Park Districts was \$31,283,130, or a natural gain of assessed land valuations in the period 1898 and 1910 amounting to \$12,862,130, or 69.82 per cent.

In the year 1898 (before Benton Boulevard from Independence Avenue to Thirty-first Street was built) the land fronting on what is now Benton Boulevard from Independence Avenue to Thirty-first Street was assessed at \$131,415. In the year 1910 this same land frontage was assessed at \$372,690, producing a gain of \$241,275 assessed land value, or 183.62 per cent.

In 1898 as well as in 1910 all land was assessed on the theory of 40 per cent. of its marketable value. This ratio would make 1898 assessed valuation, as recited above, show a theoretical marketable value of \$328,537 for land fronting on Benton Boulevard from Independence Avenue to Thirty-first Street. All frontage improvements of Benton Boulevard from Independence Avenue to Thirty-first Street amounted to \$229,996.44, or 70 per cent. of marketable value (based as above \$328,537).

The land fronting on Benton Boulevard from Independence Avenue to Thirty-first Street increased in value in the period 1898 to 1910 183.62 per cent. Of this per cent. of boulevard land gain 70 per cent. is absorbed for frontage improvements and 69.82 per cent. for natural gain of all land throughout the North and South Districts from 1898 to 1910, thus leaving the land gain of Benton Boulevard frontage 43.78 per cent. net in excess of the land in the North and South Park Districts not fronting on Boulevards.

(Report of Park Commissioners of Kansas City, 1910.)

### *Kansas City (2)*

Let us discuss the question, then, from a purely practical standpoint, a business point of view, if you please. I would add to the park reservations the boulevard and connecting parkway plan, affording fine pleasure driveways upon which desirable residential frontages may be obtained. If this plan is followed, and a comprehensive connected system of parks, parkways, and boulevards commensurate with the size, importance, and civic spirit of your city be adopted (this work should

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

be studied and recommended by a broad-minded, competent landscape architect), and the improvement work carried out with great care and attention to detail, *I undertake to say that any wide-awake city can establish its park system without one cent of general indebtedness to the city.* In other words, the enhancement in values of benefited lands will be more than sufficient to pay all the cost of the acquisition and improvement of the park system. This will impress you as possibly being a too optimistic view, yet in our own city it is a fact recognized and not disputed, with reference to boulevards and to a somewhat less degree with reference to parks and parkways.

That this general benefit is greater in actual enhancement of values of property than the cost of the Kansas City park system in its present stage of development is freely acknowledged, and the land owners of that city have now invested in the park system over eleven and one-half millions of dollars and are our staunch supporters for still more parks and boulevards. In Kansas City, at least, the effect of park and boulevard improvements has been the enhancement of land values far in excess of the whole cost of the acquisitions and improvements of their park system.

(W. H. Dunn, Superintendent of Parks, Kansas City, 1912.)

### INFLUENCE OF PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS ON SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT AND LAND VALUES FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A REAL ESTATE OPERATOR (WILLIAM E. HARMON,\* OF WOOD, HARMON & CO., REAL ESTATE AGENTS AND OPERATORS).

At one time, a few years since, my associates and I were seriously engaged in a consideration of the "ideal charity"; in other words, attempting to find a form of charitable or public service, in which a given sum of money could be utilized with the least possible waste, the greatest possible good, and which would leave a perpetual monument to the giver. We took up the various forms of philanthropic activity,—educational, religious, care of children, care of the aged, and all others we could think of,—and finally, somewhat to our surprise, arrived at the conclusion that vacant land was the only

\* See "Lebanon Trust: An Experiment in Small Parks for Small Cities," in *The Survey* for March 1, 1913, as an additional illustration of the soundness of Mr. Harmon's point of view.

## PARKS INCREASE LAND VALUES

gift free from the risk of the decay which assails material construction and of the mismanagement which menaces capital dedicated to charitable endeavor. This conception regarding vacant land shaped itself into the form of dedicated playgrounds or parks, close to big cities, which could forever be the recreation place for the neighboring population. We began to realize we were cutting up lands upon which people would dwell for all ages to come; we were changing wholesale acres into a form from which they could be changed again only at great cost. At this point it would be the simplest thing in the world to set aside, if we were so charitably-minded, some of this land and leave it as a perpetual open space for generations to play upon. At that time no other aspect of the case suggested itself to us. It did not seem possible that such an immediate sacrifice to our future expectations would work any important benefit to our treasury balance; in other words, that it was not a business proposition, although it did look like the most justifiable sentimentalism. In this we were mistaken. *There were infinite business possibilities in such an act of generosity, and could we have seen ahead, as we can now look back, we would immediately have begun the segregation of lands for park purposes in all our subdivisions, and would not only have served the community better, but would have received a return in dollars and cents sufficient to amply repay for every foot of ground so utilized.* From a lack of courage we began reluctantly and niggardly to carry out this policy; therefore, our education has been slow, but we are at last convinced that upon every consideration of public and private policy intelligent land segregation pays the cost.

Where these grounds are properly distributed and intelligently laid out, in almost every instance, it will be found that the land surrounding such spots can be marketed at a price sufficiently high to entirely offset the cost of the contribution, which is the final test of the value of your enterprising beneficence.

Having watched the gradual growth of scattered suburbs into densely populated city blocks, one cannot but wonder at the short-sighted policy of the average municipal engineering department. There is no intelligible reason why there is not incorporated into the official city map of every city a certain percentage of the area to be set aside for small parks and playgrounds, as a matter of public well-being, exactly as streets and alleys are so treated. If 5 per cent. of the area of the undeveloped land contiguous to large cities were properly

## PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM

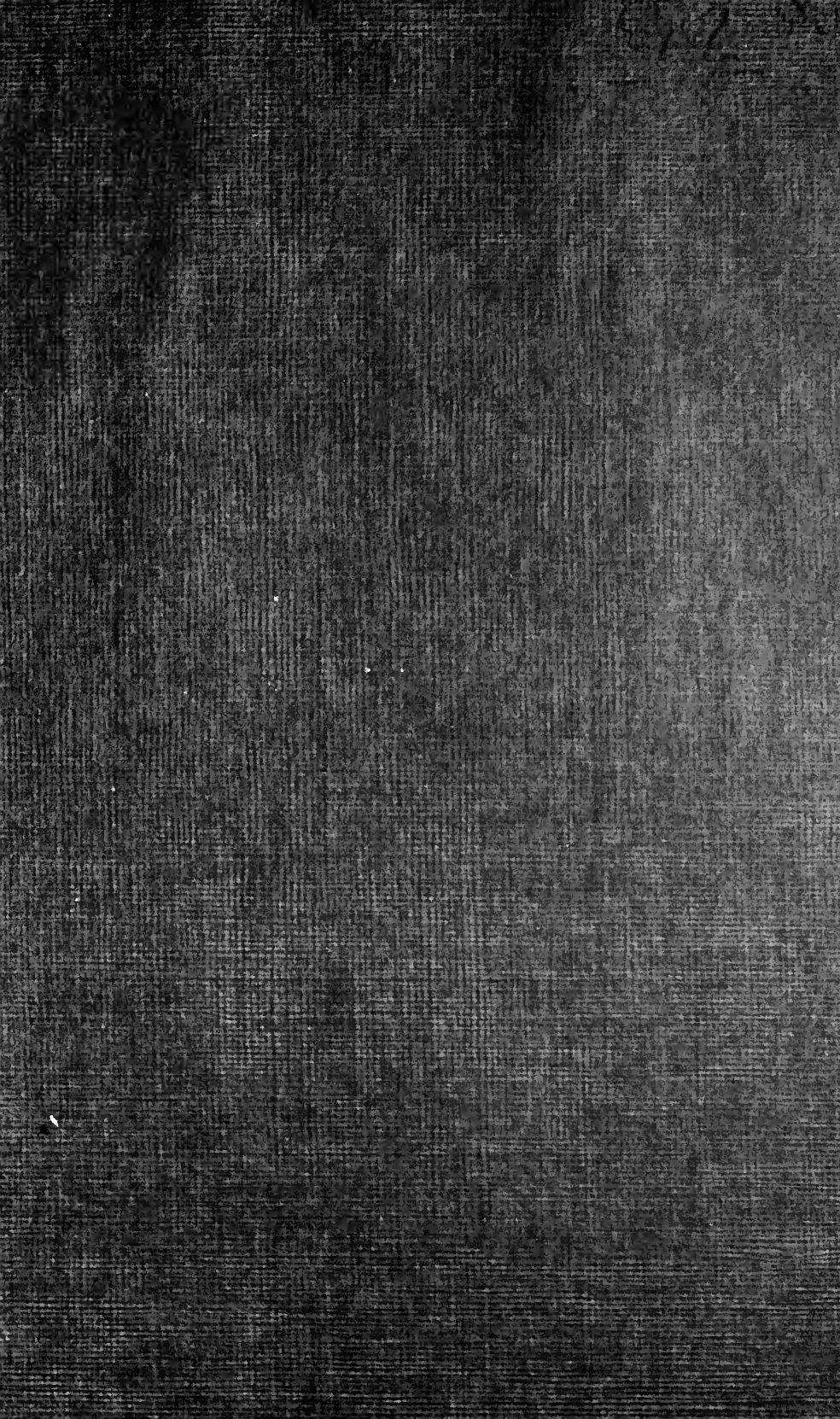
distributed in small park appropriations, one problem of congestion would be solved without any injustice to any one.

In many cities in this country the Engineering Departments plot the whole area of the suburban sections in anticipation of future development, showing sewer and street elevations, street widths, etc. Park appropriations could be made a part of this planning, and would be accepted by developers without question. If short-sighted, they would not realize the value of such spaces in the sale of their land, but they could set their prices so as to treat these parks the same as they consider the areas set aside for street purposes. In this way, cities could get all the park lands necessary without any cost whatever. This plan would apply only where the operator undertook the opening up and construction of streets on his own account. In case streets are opened and improved by the city, and lands contained therein condemned for street purposes, these parks could be included in the same condemnation proceedings, and the cost therefor assessed on the abutting property; so, that the city would be in exactly the same position with regard to the acquisition of parks as it now is with regard to the acquisition of streets.

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