

CALGARY'S MOUNT ROYAL
A GARDEN SUBURB
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by

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CALGARY'S MOUNT ROYAL

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INTRODUCTION

Settlement patterns and urban development on the prairies were dictated by two major factors, the Dominion Land Survey and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The former surveyed the entire prairie region, from Manitoba to the Rocky Mountains, into square townships. This grid spatial pattern was rigidly applied, regardless of the topography, and set the stage for the arrival of the CPR.

As part of its agreement with the federal government in 1881, the CPR received 25 million acres of land in western Canada, apportioned in alternate sections of land within 24 miles of the right-of-way of the railway lines. As it constructed its rail line across the prairies, the company not only determined the location of towns and divisional points, it also imposed its own townsite plans. While the CPR had some half dozen plans, they were all of a grid configuration in which the main and secondary streets were either parallel to or at right angles to the rail lines, and lots were 25' wide and uniform in size. The north-south, east-west grid configuration was thus imposed on both rural and urban settlements from the beginnings of settlement.

The continuing dominant effect of the CPR on the urban development of the city of Calgary cannot be over-estimated. Its decision in 1883 to locate its station on the west side of the Elbow River, on a section of land owned by the railroad, established the centre of the city in a location confined by the Bow river to the north and the railway lines to the south. Both were obstacles to expansion and posed expensive problems for the fledgling city, as they created a need for the construction of bridges and underpasses.

By the judicially timed development of its land in alternate sections south and west of that central location,

the CPR also exerted control over the type of residential development in the city. Given the rigidity of town planning imposed by the CPR in its townsites, it is interesting that the company departed so dramatically from the grid system when it came to development of its residential subdivisions in the south west area of the city. The community of Mount Royal was designed as an elite and prestigious residential area, the streets followed the contours of the topography, lots were large and irregular in shape, and situated to make the most of the view. The community of Scarboro, another elite although somewhat less prestigious subdivision, was also designed by the CPR a few years later. The development of these two areas effectively defined the south western part of the city as the elite residential areas, where land values were the highest. Communities near these two subdivisions developed as middle class areas and south west Calgary became, and remained for many years, the preferred part of the city in which to live.¹

COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of Mount Royal for the purposes of this report are as follows:

- on the north side, Royal Avenue from Hope Street west to 10th Street, south to Colborne Crescent, then west to 14th Street. (Excluded are the two areas along Royal Avenue that are now apartments.)
- on the west side, 14th Street from Colborne Crescent south to Council Way. The houses facing on to 14th Street, however, are not included.
- on the south side, Council Way eastward to Premier Way, then north and east to 8th Street, and then follows the escarpment to Hillcrest Avenue.

¹Max Foran. Calgary, *Canada's Frontier Metropolis*. Windsor Publications Inc. 1982. See also: Gerald Hodge. *Planning Canadian Communities*. Toronto: Methuen, 1986. p.95

- on the east side, Hillcrest Avenue and then follows the escarpment north behind the houses on the east side of Hope Street, to Royal Avenue. (see Map 1)

The boundaries of the community now known as Mount Royal have changed over the years. Initially the whole of the northern half of Section 9 from 17th Avenue to Dorchester Avenue was known as the CPR subdivision. Even after the name Mount Royal was given to the district on the hill in 1910, the area below the hill was often referred to as Mount Royal.² Later it became known as Lower Mount Royal. When the CPR designed the area between Dorchester and 34th Avenue in 1911 it was placed on the market as South Mount Royal. It was not until development took place south of 34th Avenue some decades later, that the name South Mount Royal referred to the district south of Council Way. For the purposes of this report, while Mount Royal covers the area delineated above, it should be borne in mind that for some forty years this area included what was then known as South Mount Royal, and will be referred to as such in this report.

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT

In the years before and after the turn of the century, the City Beautiful Movement was at its height. This movement had its genesis in the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893, which is credited with raising public interest across North America in civic design and beautification.³ Garden City and Garden Suburb concepts emerged at much the same time and together they formed the beginnings of town planning, of moulding the environment to improve the quality of life for the inhabitants. In Great Britain, Europe, the United States and Canada there was a great surge toward improvement schemes

² see CPR Townsite Land Sales, 1906-1912. Glenbow Alberta Archives, (hereinafter shown as GAI) M2269, Vol. 38.

³ Norman Newton. *Design on the Land*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1971. pp. 363-377. See also: William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989. pp. 53-74.

in an effort to make cities more pleasant places in which to live.

Some of the immigrants who came from the more settled, and treed, areas of eastern Canada and from Great Britain brought with them the concept of these movements and Calgary became swept up in attempts to improve the visual aspects of the city. During the early 1900s, both citizens and Council took significant steps to improve its appearance. There were already a few parks, some boulevard construction, and massive efforts made to plant trees - and ensure that they survived. In the treeless plains, great emphasis was placed on planting trees and City Council inaugurated Arbor Day: an annual public holiday when citizens were urged to spend the day improving the visual aspects of their homes and gardens. In 1908 the Calgary Horticultural Society held its inaugural meeting,⁴ and the following year City Council formed a Parks Commission. A.J. Sayre, one of the first residents in Mount Royal, was a member of both, and also supplied poplar trees from his farms for boulevard planting. And in 1911 City Council ruled that no further plans of sub-divisions would be approved unless at least 5% of the land was deeded to the city for parks.⁵

The CPR, which had a vested interest in making the prairies more attractive to the prospective settler, played a large part in promoting this movement in the west. The company promoted the development of ornamental gardens alongside its railway stations throughout the prairies, one of the largest being the Calgary station garden, and instituted a Forestry Department which had its own tree and perennial nursery at Wolsely in Saskatchewan.⁶ And in its development of the subdivision of Mount Royal the company followed the

⁴ *The Albertan*, April 10, 1908

⁵ "From Prairie to Park. Green Spaces in Calgary," in Volume V, *The Century Calgary Historical Series*. Calgary: Century Calgary Publications, 1975

⁶ Edwinna von Baeyer. *Rhetoric and Roses. A History of Canadian Gardening, 1900-1930*. Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984. pp. 14-33.

precedents of such residential subdivisions in North America as the plan for the suburban village of Riverside, Illinois, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, the founder of the landscape architecture profession, in 1869.⁷

Some of the precepts proposed by Olmsted that can be seen in Mount Royal are curvilinear circulation systems that respected the natural contours and features of a site; the planting of roadside trees; residential lots with ample setbacks and sideyards; generous open spaces for parks and recreation areas; and separation of different types of traffic routes.⁸ Such subdivisions were most successful when they were designed for the wealthy, and Mount Royal is an excellent example.

CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

In 1885, the CPR received patent to the west half and north-east quarter of Section 9, in which Mount Royal is located. The boundaries of this section were 17th avenue to the north, 14th street to the west, 34th avenue to the south and 4th and 8th streets to the east, and excluded the lower lying areas adjacent to the banks of the Elbow River, that were subject to flooding. The district that was to become Mount Royal was on a rise of land that rose gently from the north but more precipitably on the east side, forming a distinctive ridge along the eastern edge of the area. At the top of the rise, gently contoured hills and dales rose and fell to the south and west; water sometimes gathered in the lower lying areas, and a creek meandered down what is now Premier Way on its way to the Elbow River.⁹ The entire area was covered with short prairie grass and it was treeless.

⁷ Julius Gy. Fabos, Gordon T. Milde, & V. Michael Weinmayr. *Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., Founder of Landscape Architecture in America*. Cambridge: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1968. pp. 47-56.

⁸ *ibid.* pp. 48 and 50.

⁹ Jack Peach. "Calgary's Rapid Growth Eclipses Boyhood Haunts," in *Calgary Herald*, July 23, 1983. This creek and areas of low lying water are discernible on Air Photograph CA112-29. (See Figure 1)

It would be twenty years, however, before the first plans for the subdivision were registered. In the years immediately following the construction of the CPR, immigration to the west was slow to develop and Calgary remained a small town. Following the turn of the century, however, the momentum began, and the city experienced a rapid increase during the first decade of the century. By 1922/12 the city was in the throes of a tremendous real estate boom, and land speculation was rampant.

Before the initial plan, however, some other developments took place on Section 9. In 1903, Western Canada College, a private school for boys, was established on the corner of 17th avenue and 5th street with extensive grounds extending south to 20th avenue. Another development took place the same year. In an article about the construction of a sanatorium "on the crest of the hill southwest of the city," the Calgary Herald called it "a pretty area."¹⁰ (see Map 2)

Because of its altitude and dry climate, Calgary had long been considered a good place for the treatment of tuberculosis, a widespread and usually fatal disease in the early decades of this century. Dr. Ernest Wills, an English doctor with a lot of experience in the treatment of the disease, arrived in Calgary sometime in 1903. After purchasing ten acres of land from the CPR, in what is now the centre of Mount Royal, he proceeded to build a sanatorium.¹¹ The building was, apparently, quite substantial. It had a drawing room, dining room, recreation and music room, as well as sleeping areas, and also accommodation for Dr. Wills and his family.

Construction of the house and a few canvas-walled chalets were complete by July 1904, but unfortunately Dr.

¹⁰ *The Weekly Herald*, June 30, 1904. p.9.

¹¹ Its legal description was S.W.1/4, Legal Subdivision 11. It is the square block now enclosed by Dorchester Avenue, Tenth Street West, Prospect Avenue and Carleton Street.

Wills had little time to fully establish this enterprise. In September of that same year, he fell off his bicycle while riding down the steep trail from his sanatorium to the city and was knocked unconscious. One of his employees found him, but only after several hours had elapsed. He was taken to his sanatorium where several doctors endeavoured to save his life, but without success.¹²

It is difficult to ascertain definitively what happened to the sanatorium after Wills' death. His wife inherited the property, and in 1907 she put the lots on the market. They were priced between \$450 and \$700 each and advertised as choice lots as they had no building restrictions, unlike the lots on the "new CPR sub-division" that surrounded them.¹³ The subdivision had not been registered with the Land Titles Office, however, and she had little luck in selling them. In 1908 she sold the ten acres to Richard L. Morrison, a physician who had taken over management of the sanatorium. Morrison had the area subdivided in February 1909 (see Map 3, Plan 304V) and the street that runs north and south down the middle of the area, now Morrison Street, was presumably named after him. The restrictive caveat placed on most houses in Mount Royal by the CPR was not on the title of houses in Plan 304 V.

What was probably the sanatorium building became a convalescent home for charity patients, opened in May, 1911 on "Ten and a Half" street.¹⁴ Supported by voluntary contributions, the house was donated rent free for one year, and a matron and steward had living quarters in the building.¹⁵ The Calgary Convalescent home remained at 2305 Morrison Street for several years, and over the course of time a number of alterations and additions were made to it.

¹² *The Daily Herald*, September 21 and 24, 1904; *The Albertan*, September 28, 1904.

¹³ *The Morning Albertan*, February 18, 1907.

¹⁴ When streets were still numbered, this was what is now Morrison Street.

¹⁵ *The Calgary Herald*, May 12, 1911.

Eventually it could accommodate 27 patients but as it was made entirely of wood and the stairs were very steep and narrow it was, ultimately, considered unsafe. In 1932, it moved to another and larger house in Mount Royal, 699 Royal Avenue. Renamed Calgary's Old Folks Home, it continued at this address until 1967, when the house was demolished.¹⁶ (see Figure 2)

The house that was originally the sanatorium remained vacant for some time and eventually there was a fire in the house which necessitated its demolition. A new house appeared at the same address in 1940.¹⁷

* * * * *

The design of Mount Royal occurred in several stages and J. Lonsdale Doupe was involved throughout. Doupe had a great deal of knowledge of the west. He was the son of a civil engineer and surveyor for the federal government who worked for many years in western Canada, and he himself was the Chief Surveyor for the CPR Western Region, serving with the company for 42 years.¹⁸ The initial plan in 1905 shows 8th Street curving up the hill following the contour of the land and the aptly named Prospect Avenue following the crest of the hill. (see Map 4, Plan 4453L) The only subdivision into lots was in Blocks 8 and 9, the area along Royal Avenue between 5th and 7th Streets and the lower part of Hope Street. This was where the first development took place.

Seventeenth Avenue was then the southern boundary of the city and expansion beyond that line would not take place until 1907. The first houses built in the area then were outside the city limits, did not require city building permits nor did they appear on the tax rolls. Seven houses were built before the end of 1907, all on Hope Street or Royal Avenue, at the first rise of the hill, west of the escarpment, and

¹⁶ GAI. Picture file NA-4016-1.

¹⁷ Various issues of Henderson's Directories.

¹⁸ Inventory of the Doupe Family Papers. Archives of the Province of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

overlooking the extensive grounds of Western Canada College.¹⁹ Two of these houses have been demolished: The Honens house on Royal Avenue east of Hope Street has been replaced by an apartment block (see Figure 3); and the Hall house on Hope Street, now known as the Ryan House, was demolished in 1993 and remains a vacant lot. (see Figure 4)

These homes were, by and large, luxurious houses, well built and architecturally designed, with large lots, but they were unserviced as they were outside the city limits. E.G. Hall, and probably most of the other home owners, installed a water plant in his basement that was powered by a gasoline engine. One evening, when Mrs. Hall went to start this engine it exploded and she was fatally injured.²⁰ And according to John Cruikshank, grandson of Louis and Julia Strong, who built the home at 707 Royal Avenue,

"no one lived in the house during the cold winter months - the coal furnace in the basement just couldn't heat all those roomsJulia and the children went south to San Francisco for the winter while Louis and other husbands checked into the Alberta Hotel."²¹

In 1907, the CPR registered Plan 179R with the Land Titles Office. This covered the area from Royal Avenue, and its western extension, Colborne Crescent, south to Dorchester Avenue, and from the eastern escarpment to 14th street on the west. It was still known as the CPR subdivision or the CPR addition to Calgary. (see Map 5) Designed as an elite residential area, the lots were large, ranging in width from 50' to 175'. Many of them were through lots extending the full depth of the block, anticipating the construction of large homes complete with both formal front entrances and rear service access. Lots on Sydenham Road extended right

¹⁹ They first approved on the Tax rolls, in 1908. City of Calgary Archives. (hereinafter shown as CCA.) It should be noted that the sanatorium was the first house constructed in Mount Royal. It was assessed at \$3,000 in the 1908 tax rolls.

²⁰ *The Daily Herald*, July 15, 1907, p.1.

²¹ "The Strong Era" in the brochure for the Designers' Showcase '94. The Murphy Residence. p.26.

through to Prospect Avenue, as did those between Hope and 7th Streets, and Royal and Durham Avenues. The curvilinear roads followed the contours of the land, although the blocks between Prospect and Dorchester Avenues showed some relationship to a grid conformation, albeit with much more spacious lot sizes. The most desirable lots were on a slope and afforded the best views: northward they has a panoramic view of the city and the Bow River valley; and south and westward a view to the foothills and the Rocky Mountains. They were, of course, also on a distinct rise of land, above the dust and smoke of the city, an aspect that applies to many elite districts, Mount Royal in Montreal, for instances, and Shaughnessy in Vancouver.

After the city expanded its boundaries in 1907 the CPR addition became a part of the city, and water and sewer lines, road construction, sidewalks, and electricity entered the area. The lots sold fairly well and ranged in price from \$500 all the way up to \$6,000, but most were in the region of \$1,500 to \$3,000.²² Most of the purchasers were real estate agents or land sale companies, and many of the early residents in the area purchased not only their own lot, but also several others in the vicinity.²³ Construction of new homes continued, but most extended westwards along Royal Avenue and south up Hope Street, in all probability because of lack of reasonable access and services to the lots higher up the hill.

Initially the sale of lots was not overwhelming and the CPR had a number still on its hands. Specifically no lots were sold in Blocks 37, 38, 47 and 48. Plan 2112AC, registered in January 1910, made some amendments to the earlier plan. (see Map 6) Sydenham Road west of Carleton Street was closed, Carleton north of Sydenham was opened and joined Provost

²² CPR Townsite Land Sales, 1906-1912.op.cit.

²³ 1908 Tax rolls. CCA.

(now 11th Street), and both 12th street and Metcalfe (now 13th street) were opened up from Colborne Crescent through to Prospect Avenue.²⁴ No reasons were given for these changes, but as these three streets are quite steep it may have been difficult to maintain a road crossing this elevation.

The central core of the initial development remained the same - the area between 7th and 10th Streets and Royal and Prospect Avenues - but most of the large through lots were reduced in size and no longer extended from one street to another: specifically those between Colborne Crescent and Sydenham Road, between Sydenham and Prospect, between Hope and 7th Streets, and between Prospect and Hillcrest. Subdivision of the through lots eliminated rear service access, and no lanes were added.

The removal of through lots appears to have been a reaction to the market place, and also to some second thoughts by Doupe. Frederick Todd, the landscape architect who designed Shaughnessy in Vancouver in 1908, commented that through lots created a need for more streets thus reducing the amount of land available for lots, and were uneconomical both to the municipality and to the home owner.²⁵ Doupe himself said that he could see no way of avoiding double frontage lots when he first planned the subdivision because of the topography. But he felt that "bringing the rear of one lot in full view of the frontage on the opposite side of the street, is objectionable."²⁶

The final stage of development took place with the registration of Plan 7080AJ on October 17, 1911. (see Map 7) Entitled South Mount Royal, it covered the area south from Prospect Avenue between Carleton and 14th Streets, and south

²⁴ Judicial Agreement between the CPR and the City of Calgary, January 10, 1910. Law Department papers. CCA

²⁵ Frederick G. Todd, Report on Subdivision Plan for Shaughnessy Heights, n.d. cFebruary 1908. Canadian Pacific Archives, Montreal. #85797.

²⁶ Letter, Doupe to J.C. Olmstead, November 4, 1910. Olmsted Associates Collection, #B286. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

from Dorchester Avenue between Carleton and 8th Streets. It extended to 34th Avenue, the southern boundary of Section 9.

Doupe sought the advice of Olmstead Bros. in Brookline, Massachusetts in this final plan.²⁷ This company, a successor to the original Olmsted, Vaux & Co., was run by F.L. Olmstead's two sons. Doupe may also have contacted the firm when he drew up the initial plans, but if so the records are not shown in the inventory of the Olmsted firm archives.²⁸ In November 1910, however, Doupe sent to Olmsted the contours of Blocks 49 and 50 in the "old" survey, which he wished to re-subdivide. On Olmsted's advice Prescott Avenue was closed as was part of Dorchester Avenue and several new streets added which had better grades. (see Map 8) These changes, and those shown in Plan 2112 AC, did much to obliterate some of the blocks which were originally of a grid-like configuration.

Some correspondence between Doupe and J.C. Olmsted, who had previously visited the site, has been supplied by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., which holds the written records of the Olmsted firm. Without access to the plans and prints, however, which are held at Brookline, Massachusetts, it is difficult to follow the precise implications of the discussions.

The letters, however, give some idea of the thinking behind the plan. Doupe wrote:

"We anticipate that a large portion of this (South Mount Royal) will become a high class residential property and a large portion of same might, I think, be generally laid out into lots of from 75 to 125' without lanes. We may, however, be disappointed, and be eventually forced to subdivide or re-subdivide into 50' lots and if the lots are reduced to this size the regulations governing surveys compel us to provide lanes."²⁹

²⁷ Mount Royal was one of only eight sites in Canada for which the original Olmsted firm and its successors has records.

²⁸ The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted firm, 1857-1950. Published by the National and Massachusetts Associations for Olmsted Parks. 1987.

²⁹ Letter, Doupe to J.C. Olmsted, op.cit.

Olmsted responded to these remarks in a letter to one of his employees:

"I have adopted 100' for normal width of lots and 150' for usual minimum depth. To make houses accessible on steep slopes I have adopted 40' alleys in some cases. A 66' St. is not necessary in such cases to comply with law and this seems to obviate Doupe's growl about lots running through from st. to st. so far as appearance on paper is concerned. Actually I expect houses to be built sideways. Maybe this could be enforced by a restriction....There'll be a bad fill where Premier Way leaves 14th St....It's a tougher topo than I remembered but I was only on 14th st.³⁰

Neither Doupe nor Olmsted had a free hand with the design of the area. All plans had to be approved by city authorities and, as Doupe remarked: "... one can never bank in advance as to what form the ideas of the average civic committeeman will take..."³¹ In fact, the size of the lots was reduced, lanes were introduced in some blocks, and no through lots incorporated. However, the plans for the design were seemingly accomplished satisfactorily as Olmsted's account for \$933.67 was paid by the CPR in August 1911.³²

The lots were smaller. Most were 50' wide, but they varied up to 95', and a few were 40', but all had good depth, ranging from 125' to 200'. While the original development north of Prospect had several small triangular shaped island parks, this plan included four public parks, all of which were of quite a good size. Most blocks were curved and while many of them had laneways, these followed the contour of the block rather than being rigid in design. The roads were curvilinear and followed the contours of the land.

The CPR instructed William Toole of Toole Peet and Company, sole agents for the CPR in the sale of all its property in Calgary, to place restrictive covenants on the

³⁰ Letter, Olmsted to Jones (employee of the Olmsted firm) 7th Dec. 1910. *ibid.*

³¹ Letter, Doupe to Olmsted, *op.cit.*

³² Letter, Doupe to Olmsted, 10th August, 1911. *ibid.*

titles of each property on Plan 7080AJ. The caveat, dated December 7th, 1911 included the following restrictions:

- no mercantile business building or livery stable to be erected.
- only one building, together with needed out-buildings on each lot.
- the house not to cost less than \$2,500.00.
- the house, including any verandah or annex, must be a minimum of 25' from the street or avenue.
- the lots were not to be used as sand or gravel pits, and no sand, gravel or stone was to be removed from the lots.
- the covenant was to remain with the title on resale.³³

Caveats had been placed on the previous plans in 1907 and 1910 and they were similar in content: the minimum cost of the house varied between \$2,000.00 and \$5,000.00 depending upon the particular lot, and there was no mention of sand and gravel pits.³⁴ It is difficult to say with any accuracy the particular houses in Mount Royal that are free of the covenant. The original settlement clustered around Royal Avenue and the lower slopes of Hope Street did not have any restrictions, nor did the "sanatorium block" as it was placed on the market by a private individual, not the CPR. A few lots have had the caveat lifted, for example the three apartment blocks on Royal Avenue between 7th and 8th Street. Sample copies of the caveats are shown in Appendix I.

Lots in South Mount Royal ranged in price from \$750 to \$3,000.³⁵ The lower priced lots were those at the southern part of the plan, further away from the prospect of being serviced in the foreseeable future. Sale and development in this part of Mount Royal was slower. A few houses were built under this plan before World War I, and there was continuing

³³ Caveat number 8299AJ, December 7th, 1911.

³⁴ Susan Reid. "The Development of the Community of Mount Royal." Paper prepared for Alberta Culture, August 1982. p.15.

³⁵ CPR Townsite Land Sales, 1911-1912. op.cit.

development between the wars. By 1923 there were still 416 unsold lots in South Mount Royal, with an estimated value of close to \$200,000.00, and the CPR still retained some at the end of World War II.³⁶

All this vacant land led a group of enthusiasts to develop a golf course in 1919 on the land on the brow of the escarpment between 7th and 8th Streets. The course circled the school and hence called itself the Earl Grey Golf Club. They started with six holes, and then expended west of 8th and Cartier Streets, and south of Frontenac Avenue to complete a nine-hole course. The location of the holes can be seen on Figure 1. Captain Duncan Stuart, a lawyer, was present for several years. He lived at 822 Hillcrest Avenue, conveniently located just across the street from the first tee and the ninth green. The circular greens were oiled sand.^{36a}

By 1924 the club had a small club house on the south side of Hillcrest Avenue and a membership of 271. The limit of membership was 275, and included men, women and juniors, with annual fees set at \$6, \$4 and \$3 respectively. In 1925 there was a long waiting list and an initiation fee of \$2 was instituted. The following year the executive drew up a constitution and by-laws and increased the limit of membership to 600 with no more than thirty juniors.

Play in such a confined area had certain limitations. The first three holes never needed to be cut as they doubled as the school's playground and the grass was well trampled down. On school days play was prohibited on these three holes until after supper. The prairie grass on the two short holes was rarely cut, the long grass in front of the greens provided an extra hazard, as did the steep drop into Elbow Park. There were complaints from time to time as golfers

³⁶ Department of Natural Resources, CPRC, Land Branch Report, 1923. (GAI)

^{36a} All the information about Earl Grey Golf Club was obtained from Robert E. Buchanan, Club Historian, and from the Haddin papers, file 40, in GAI Archives.

drove balls across the streets, and the city commissioners expressed their opposition to this practice unless the club accepted complete liability for any damage caused.

In 1929 as housing development gradually increased, the club moved south to the area between Premier Way and 38th Avenue and in 1932 it negotiated with the city for land even further south, on which it is presently located.

In 1934 the four lots on Hillcrest Avenue, east of Earl Grey School were subdivided by the CPR into 12 lots, six facing on to Hillcrest and six on to the extension of Dorchester Avenue (now called Earl Grey Crescent). A couple of years later, Block 18, at the top of the Hillcrest hill, was divided into nine lots, four facing on to Hope Street and five on the Hillcrest. A triangular island park was installed between the two new blocks.

In the 1940s the pace of development picked up and by the 1950s and 1960s there were ever fewer vacant lots. The area south of the school on the east side of 8th street was developed, an area that has not previously been subdivided. The standard of housing remained high in this area, some homes were large and exhibited similar characteristics as the earlier homes: large lots, dual entranceways and a coach house. Others were smaller - one and a half storey homes and bungalows appeared on the scene. It was an interesting and eclectic mix. Changes in methods of transportation resulted in some front drive and attached garages, particularly where there were no lanes. This section of the community retained the elite and "garden" image. The trees in long established homes reached maturity, and three planting followed new construction as rapidly as before World War I. Set backs were normally greater than the 25' stipulated in the caveat.

During its maturing process in the years between the wars, the community developed as an insular district sufficient unto itself. Vacant lots created an even more spacious and open feeling and many of the young people living in the area had their own horses, tethered for the most part on their own

lots. There was no development to the south and they had the wide open prairie over which to ride.

While the southern part of the community was consolidating itself in the 1950s and 1960s, the northern edges began to suffer encroachments in the form of apartment blocks. There were a number of casualties along Royal Avenue: the two houses east of Hope street and three houses between 7th and 8th Street. When oil money started to come in to Calgary changes began to occur and over a period of years a number of the larger lots of the district were subdivided. These are shown in Appendix II.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

Planning of the Mount Royal district took place when Calgary was about to undergo a rapid expansion of its population. Initial designs showed very large lots, set on a hillside that afforded views of both the city and Bow River valley and the foothills and Rocky Mountains. Many of the lots extended the full depth of the block with the intention of providing sufficient space for substantial homes and estates. The Garden Suburb and City Beautiful movements emphasized, among other things, a sensitivity to local topographical conditions in order to provide and improve the living environment, and this element can be seen as an influence in the design of the layout in the Mount Royal district.

In reviewing the visual characteristics of the community in its current setting, there are a number of features and elements that retain the original character of the district:

The "Hill"

The district of Mount Royal was situated on a rise of land located on the edge of the city, and the hill itself is a defining natural feature of the area. Before subdivision the hill was treeless and its natural topographic forms were exaggerated in the "naked" shapes. The first residents in the

area set about planting trees and shrubs to modify both the environmental and visual qualities of the hill. Homes were set far back on their lots at the highest point of elevation, commanding a sweeping view and emphasizing the spaciousness of the district. Street patterns were somewhat curvilinear, following the natural features of the hill. Later phases of subdivision more fully embraced the notions of the then popular City Beautiful movement with its ideal landscaped setting for residents.

Edge Conditions

The initial point of development in the Mount Royal district occurred on the north-east corner at the base of the hill. It is defined by two sets of school grounds - Western Canada High School with its open playing fields to the north, and Cliff Bungalow School to the east. These school grounds are set against the escarpment that defines the eastern boundary of the district. The first homes in the district were at this location, and it is from this vantage point, looking west along Royal Avenue and up the hill, that a number of contemporary photographs and post cards publicized the area. They offer one of the best historic views of the district. (see Figures 3 to 6) The open school yards, the escarpment and the view up onto the hill are primary features defining the visual quality of Mount Royal.

Through Lots

The initial plan of the district anticipated the development of estates. The sloping view lots were extra wide and full depth from street to street in anticipation of the construction of large homes complete with both formal front street entrances and rear service access. Homes were constructed with large setbacks at the front, long formal walkways from the street and a long side entrance for vehicles combined with a rear entrance from the adjacent street for service. Abutting this service entrance typically was a

coach house, incorporating space for stables, a carriage, and later motor cars, as well as accommodation for staff. A few examples still exist in the community of homes with a coach house, although most of the latter are now converted to separate residences. This is also considered a primary defining element typifying the initial intent of the district.

Subsequent reductions in the size of many of the large through lots, resulted in the absence of lanes in this part of Mount Royal. Consequently many of the lots had a semi-circular or u-shaped driveway which served as an entrance to both the front and rear portions of the house. Dual entranceways on one lot serve as another character defining element. As the community evolved over time economic and social changes took place, and as you move through the chronological development of the community, the number of sites with these characteristics diminish.

Beautification of the Landscape

The city of Calgary experienced unprecedented growth during the first decade of the century, and it was accompanied by an economic buoyancy. Residents anticipated a great future for their city - it would become "the Chicago of the West." This was particularly evident amongst the affluent and is particularly well illustrated in Mount Royal by the subdivision planners adoption of the design ideals of the City Beautiful Movement.

One of the design influences from this movement can be seen in the street patterns that exist in the district. A curvilinear street pattern that flowed with the topography of the area, controlled and restricted view lines from and to the houses. Homeowners immediately initiated tree planting on a large scale to create a more idealized landscape, and extensive front yard tree plantings occurred along the curving streets. Many of the owners also planted a row of fir trees along the boundary line between lots, and these lines of now very tall trees are a distinguishing feature. To further

augment the sensuous nature of the streets themselves, trees and bushes were set on the triangular islands placed at intersection points throughout the older part of the district. (see Figure 7) The lush designs of the parks in South Mount Royal provided much added beauty to the garden or park-like atmosphere of the district. Such widespread tree planting has resulted, today, in restricting views both from and of the houses. These elements defined a more naturalistic pattern to the development of the community and can clearly be seen as a conceptual change from the grid pattern typical of community development over which these homes viewed the downtown area of Calgary (see Figure 8)

Homes were generally set far back on the lot leaving plenty of room for such landscaping features as sweeping, and sometimes undulating, lawns, flower beds, water fountains and concrete steps through the centre of the lot leading to the front door. These latter were often decorated with sculpted figures. From the street the central steps drew the eye up to and enhanced the house behind. (see Figures 9 to 11) Several of the homes on the larger lots developed extensive gardens, for instance the sunken garden of the Coste House, and the magnificent Japanese garden that formed part of the Burns Estate. (see Figures 12 and 13)

Throughout the district houses were generally placed on the highest elevation of the lot. South of the initial rise of land to Prospect Avenue, most of the streets are hilly and many of the lots are sloping. Along Premier Way, for instance, all the houses on both sides of the street, are situated at the back of the lot with steep sloping lawns to street level. Landscaping features throughout the district have made use of these slopes and have developed what is now a truly "park-like" district.

The planning ideals of the City Beautiful Movement are best illustrated by the later subdivision plans issued for South Mount Royal in 1911. Here there are four parks

interwoven in the district with curvilinear street patterns. The Olmsted firm in Brookline, Massachusetts was consulted for design input to ensure this new subdivision captured these ideals. The City Parks Superintendent, W.L. Reader, carried through with extensive boulevard tree planting and development of picturesque features in the parks. Designs of the parks and islands are shown in Appendix III.

Stone Detailing

During the early development of the district, there was significant usage of washed river rock for the construction of fences, entrances and retaining walls. Due to the changing elevations of the hillside itself and the large lot sizes, these stone elements are often extensive in their coverage of the landscape and are a significant character defining element. Many of these remain even though the site may have been considerably modified. (see Figures 14 to 16) Later development saw the use of natural stone and brick in retaining walls, fences and landscaping details, and these are still evident throughout the district.

Streetlighting

In 1929 the residents of South Mount Royal successfully petitioned the city for the installation of "ornamental" streetlighting in their area. These were "Union Metal Lamp Standards topped with a Novalux cast bronze lantern" and were the most elegant units in the whole city. (see Figure 17) As a number of the streets in Mount Royal did not have sidewalks or even curbs, parking cars caused a certain amount of damage over the years to the bases of these lamp standards. Installation of new lights took place in the district in the 1960s, but some of the old standards found a new home in Memorial Park, and a few still remain in the community.³⁷

³⁷ W.E. Hawkins, *Electrifying Calgary. A Century of Public & Private Power*. Calgary: The University of Calgary Press. 1987. pp. 20-21.

Sanatorium Site

Well before the first subdivision occurred an enterprising doctor recognized that the hill was an ideal location for a tuberculosis sanatorium. He purchased a ten acre parcel from the CPR, located at the apex of the hill to provide an ample supply of fresh air and open space for his patients. Following his untimely death, the rectangular area was subdivided in a standard grid pattern. This anomaly is visible today with its straight streets and uniform sized lots. While the sanatorium building remained on site for some thirty years, it was eventually demolished and there are no visible signs of its existence.

NAMING OF SUBDIVISION AND STREETS

As previously stated, the initial settlement in what is now Mount Royal took place around the lower slopes of Hope Street, then often known as 6th street, and along Royal Avenue, known as 20th avenue. And most of these early homes were occupied by Americans. A.J. Sayre, Louis Strong, J. E. Irvine, E.G. Hall, Harry Honens, and A. J. Davidson were not only the same nationality, but their business affairs were also interwoven, all revolving around rural land development and urban real estate ventures. Several of them came from the Dakotas, were familiar with prairie land sales, and were astute enough to foretell the coming boom conditions in Alberta. Most of them arrived in Calgary in the early years of the century, 1903 or 1904, and were able to get in at the early stages, although not the beginning, of land speculation.

Initially the CPR did not name its subdivision; on city maps it was known as the CPR addition to Calgary, or the CPR Subdivision. The area became known locally as American Hill because of the preponderance of Americans on the first rise of the hill. While it was never official, it was in common enough usage that not only Henderson's Directory, but also city correspondence and the daily newspapers often referred to

the area using this terminology. It has been suggested that those early residents wanted to name the streets after well known Americans such as Washington, Cleveland and Grant.³⁸

This did not go down well with the predominantly British-Canadian culture of Calgary at that time. The majority of the population came from eastern Canada or the British Isles, and they were proud of their connection with the British Empire.³⁹ R.B. Bennett, Sir James Lougheed and other long-standing and influential citizens, Toole Peet, the real estate company charged with selling the properties, and the CPR itself were not happy with this nomenclature. The initial reaction came with the 1907 plan, showing such names as Sydenham, Durham, Colborne, Carleton, Dorchester and Amherst, names resonant of British rule in Canada, which should have been enough to counter the concept of American Hill.⁴⁰

However it was not until the 1910 plan that the name Mount Royal was given to the subdivision. It was William Toole and R.B. Bennett, both staunch Conservatives, who took their concerns to J. Lonsdale Doupe, then the Assistant Land Commissioner with the CPR in Winnipeg. Doupe concurred and chose the name Mount Royal, after the Montreal district where the CPR president, William Van Horne, lived.⁴¹ In October, 1911, when the plan for South Mount Royal was registered, the full force of Canadian patriotism was brought to bear when the street names zeroed in on prominent French Canadians

³⁸ Susan Reid. op.cit. pp. 12 and 13

³⁹ Henry C. Klassen. "Life in Frontier Calgary" in *Western Canada. Past and Present*. Calgary: University of Calgary, McClelland & Stewart West, 1975. pp. 43-57.

⁴⁰ There is one unfortunate error in these names. Dorchester meets Carleton, but in fact these were one and the same man. Sir Guy Carleton later received the title of Baron Dorchester. (See letter to the Editor from Donald B. Smith, *Calgary Herald*. September 30, 1990.)

⁴¹ Montreal's Mount Royal was named by Jacques Cartier in 1535 when he climbed the mountain behind the Indian village of Hochelaga. He named it "Mont Royale" which evolved into Montreal. (John Robert Colombo. 1001 *Questions About Canada*. p.32)

in our history: Frontenac, Montcalm, Talon, Laval, Joliet, Vercheres (the only woman in the group), and early explorers such as Cabot and Champlain. Montreal, Quebec and Levis were thrown in for good measure. After this, there was no more talk of American Hill.⁴²

A third player in the controversy was Calgary's City Council. It had, in 1904, decided on a numbering system for all streets and avenues in Calgary, disbanding the original naming system that immortalized early CPR officials. From 1907 city directories consistently used numbers throughout the district, occasionally adding the name as well. For instance: 21st avenue, sometimes known as Durham Avenue, and 23rd avenue, sometimes known as Prospect Avenue. Morrison Street was known as 10 ½ street until the late 1920s. But the CPR prevailed, as was its wont, and the naming system gradually took precedence, with the exception of some of the streets, which remained numerical.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE COMMUNITY

The first people to live in the area were predominantly real estate agents. They were the ones who snapped up several lots when they first went on the market, and some of them built on one of the lots they owned. As the economic boom contained apace in the years 1910 to 1913, the number of real estate agents increased rapidly and their companies frequently expanded their services to include insurance, loans, investments and general financial agencies. It was a period of intense speculation, a lot of money changed hands, and a lot of fortunes were made - and many were subsequently lost.

Those who were involved in building and the supply of materials for the construction business also benefitted from the buoyant economy, and a numbers of them built homes in

⁴² James Gray. *R.B. Bennett. The Calgary Years.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991. pp. 119-120. It has been suggested that it was actually Van Horne himself who chose the name for the district. (Reid, op.cit. p.13)

Mount Royal - building contractors, plumbing and heating engineers, lumber companies and manufacturers' agents. In such good times, those who supplied the growing population with goods and services, the retail and wholesale trade, also did well, several of them well enough to buy into the area. Two other groups were well represented, lawyers and bank managers, and a few CPR officials also made their homes in Mount Royal.⁴³ It should be noted that the really wealthy, men such as Lougheed, Hull and Patrick Burns who had been in Calgary since before the turn of the century, lived along 12th and 13th Avenues and few of them moved up to Mount Royal.

Following the collapse of the boom in 1913 the real estate market fell apart, but another venture was just on the horizon to tempt the entrepreneurial spirit - the discovery of oil in Turner Valley. Presidents of now defunct oil companies began to show up as residents of Mount Royal and also an increasing number of financial brokers. But these two ventures also foundered as the twenties drew to a close and the years of depression began. As one long time resident of Mount Royal observed, "the community began as American Hill and by the thirties it was known as Mortgage Hill."⁴⁴ Those who remained in the area were predominantly the professional and managerial classes.

One of the most dramatic falls from "riches to rags" occurred to the owner of one of the most impressive houses in the area. The T.J.S. Skinner home on 7th street, was set on three lots between Hillcrest and Prospect. (see Figures 18 to 23) Skinner was one of the most prominent real estate men in the city. He also had a financial and insurance agency, interests in several of the major companies in the city, and was one of the Directors of The Canada North-West Land Company along with William Van Horne, President of the

⁴³ Henderson's Directories, 1907 to 1919 and various years following.

⁴⁴ Mr. Larry Winter, who was born and raised on Hope Street and still lives in the area.

CPR, Sir Thomas Shaughnessy and Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal.⁴⁵ By the early 1930s, however, he could not afford the upkeep of his house and rented it to a bank manager for five years. After that family left, it remained vacant and the city acquired the house under the Tax Recovery Act. During World War II the Canadian Women's Army Corps occupied it and following the war it was made into apartments. With such multiple use it fell into disrepair and the City demolished it in the early 1950s. All that remained was the coach house, which had also served as servants' quarters, and a sandstone retaining wall. The coach house, which faces onto Prospect, has recently received extensive alterations.

The "mansions" of Mount Royal suffered most in the years between the wars. It is worthy of note that the two most photographed houses in the district, the Skinner house and the Coste house, fell to ownership by the city under the Tax Recovery Act. The latter fared better than the Skinner house, in that it was leased by the Allied Arts Council for several years after World War II before returning to private ownership. (see Figures 24 to 28) In 1923 the Sayre house, 717 Royal Avenue, became an Ursuline Convent, and the Strongs converted their house, 707 Royal Avenue, into apartments. The Linton house, 699 Royal Avenue, became an Old Folks Home. The Raby/Laurendeau house, 1009 Royal Avenue, became the Junior Red Cross Hospital for Crippled Children in 1929. (see Figures 9 and 29 to 38) And in the 1950s, the Tapprell house, 823 Royal Avenue, became a Mission House.

Maintaining a large house in times of depression and slow growth was very difficult - they were expensive to heat, owners could not afford the servants required to keep them clean, nor the staff to maintain the extensive grounds. And as society changed over the years it became increasingly difficult to get domestic staff at any price.

⁴⁵ The Canada North-West Land Company Land Company Papers. (GAI. M6531)

Little home construction took place anywhere in Calgary during World War II and with the return of servicemen and women after the war, Calgary experienced a critical housing shortage. Caveat restrictions requiring single family dwellings in Mount Royal were overlooked and several of the larger homes in the area were either made into apartments or took in roomers. As already mentioned, the Skinner house was one of these, and the Young house on 8th Street became a boarding house. (see Figures 38 to 43) After the discovery of oil at Leduc, the momentum for development began again, only this time it was spread over a longer period of time. As American oil companies moved in to Calgary and brought their own employees with them, once more Americans moved into Mount Royal. Ownership in the area became more eclectic, but it remained predominantly professional and managerial classes.

SERVICING THE COMMUNITY

Public Works

As soon as the city's boundaries were expanded to include the subdivisions in 1907, the Public Works Department began servicing the area. They numbered the streets and avenues and began work on installing concrete sidewalks in 1908.⁴⁶ Installation of the water supply began in 1909 and by the following year the entire area south to Prospect and west to 13th Street was completed. Laying of sewers began in 1910 and was completed in 1911, half the cost being borne by the property owner, the other half by the City. By 1912 they had extended into South Mount Royal. Concrete sidewalks were laid on several of the community's streets by 1910, including Hope, Royal, Prospect, 8th and 12th Streets, and while the roads were not paved, they were graded.⁴⁷ But in 1912, some of the more settled roads were paved, 8th, 9th and 10th Streets, and Prospect, Hope and Royal, with later extensions

⁴⁶ *The Albertan* March 24th, 1908. p.1.

⁴⁷ City Clerk's Files, f.214.CCA.

to Hillcrest, Durham and Quebec in 1913. In 1912 retaining walls were built by the Engineering Department where Colborne Crescent meets 10th Street.⁴⁸

When William Reader was appointed Superintendent of the newly formed Parks Department in 1913, he initiated an extensive programme of renewing old boulevards and building new ones throughout the city. In 1913 and 1914 boulevards were in place in Mount Royal and some had trees planted on them.⁴⁹

Electricity appears to have been extended on a piece-meal basis as housing developed further into the community. In 1912, John Halstead of the CPR, who had recently completed his house on Frontenac Avenue, asked to have "the wires extended as soon as possible." This was done, and at the same time, the department installed an Arc lamp on the corner of Frontenac and 11th Street.⁵⁰

Fire services were provided from a fire hall built in 1908 on land donated by the CPR at 17th Avenue and 11th Street.⁵¹

Public Transportation

Calgary's Street Railway system was inaugurated in 1909, and a line extended along 17th Avenue, and south along 4th Street. By 1912, it also extended up the 14th Street hill to 26th Avenue. That same year some of the residents of Mount Royal sought the construction of a rail line through their neighbourhood, a move that resulted in a fracas that separated the community into several factions. A large number of people signed a petition asking for a line from 17th Avenue up either 10th or 8th Streets. Those who lived on 10th Street, however, signed a petition against such a line giving as their reasons: that it was not needed as it was well

⁴⁸ Engineering Services Papers. Series II. #1823.CCA.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* #1824.CCA.

⁵⁰ Board of Commissioners Papers. Box 31.

⁵¹ *The Albertan*, May 29th, 1908. p.1.

serviced from the 14th Street route; the curves on the street would make it dangerous; and that many of the property owners had made expensive improvement to their properties and such a line would be a nuisance and detrimental to the value of their property.

Those who lived on 7th Street, fearing perhaps that their street would be selected, likewise signed a petition supporting the 8th Street route as it was in centre of the subdivision. There were few houses on 8th Street at the time, and nothing was heard from them. Eugene Coste, who lived on Amherst Street, wrote to the mayor to express his "firm opposition." He felt that a street car line going through the middle of a district that was destined to be "the best residential district of Calgary" would spoil the purpose for which the district was intended. He also felt the district was adequately served by existing lines, and served notice that if the matter came before Council he would be present to voice his opposition.⁵²

It was the people who lived at the top of the hill, a long way from any of the existing lines, who were most in favour and those in the northern part of the subdivision most opposed. And the latter won the day. Mount Royal was, however, the first community to have a bus service, instituted as an experiment in 1931. Two Leyland buses were rented and the service was well received by community residents. A special committee of the Mount Royal Community Club in urging City Council to continue the service, reported that the community had suffered from not having transportation services: it had retarded building and sale of lots to some extent, and the continued development of the area would substantially improve the tax rolls of the city.⁵³ The City agreed and the following year the Calgary Municipal Railway purchased two buses that travelled the route up 7th Street to

⁵² Correspondence and petitions in Board of Commissioners Papers, I, Box 37. CCA.

⁵³ City Clerks files. Box 221. f.1479. CCA

Prospect and thence to a turn-around near the intersection of Council Way with 14th Street, and then back down 8th Street to the downtown area.⁵⁴ (see Figure 44)

Parks

In 1914, the CPR transferred to the City the portions of land shown as public parks in the South Mount Royal Subdivision plan, on payment of \$1.00.⁵⁵ It would be a number of years, however, before any work was done on them, due mainly to lack of funds. The Parks and Recreation Department maintained four island boulevards at street intersections in Mount Royal, the skating rinks at Prospect and 10th Street, the grounds of the Convalescent Home on Morrison Street, the Children's Hospital on Royal Avenue and, after it came into the possession of the city, the grounds of the Coste House. There was no city-run playground in Mount Royal.

The island boulevards were treated as ornamental parks. They were planted to grass as well as trees, shrubs and perennial flowers. The first mention of traffic problems in Mount Royal occurred in 1927 when it was decided to reduce the plot on 8th Street and Royal Avenue to half its size as the shrubbery on it obstructed the line of vision of motorists.⁵⁶ Later only annuals were planted on this island, and eventually it was removed altogether. In 1933 the trees and shrubs on all the islands were severely thinned out, and a couple of years later some trees removed as they restricted the view of motorists. By 1951 the islands received only maintenance sufficient to keep them clear of weeds and the shrubs pruned to provide a clearer view for motorists.

In 1928, work began on South Mount Royal Park, the park bounded by Quebec and Montcalm Avenues and Wolfe Street. The north-east corner had previously been used as a skating

⁵⁴ Colin K. Hatcher. *Stampede City Streetcars. The Story of the Calgary Municipal Railway*. Montreal: Railfare Enterprises Limited, 1975. p.63.

⁵⁵ Board of Commissioners Papers. Box 70. CCA.

⁵⁶ Annual Report, 1927. Parks and Recreation Department Papers. CCA. The following information about parks development in the area was obtained from the annual reports of this Department.

rink in the winter and a tennis court in the summer. The department ploughed, manured, and graded it and planted trees around the north-west corner. It took several years to develop the park as it has been "a barren expanse of clay and sand, an eyesore, and a nuisance because of the dust." By 1932 the grass was well established, flower beds were prepared and pathways graded and gravelled. A rustic arbour and a number of seats were placed around the park, and it became a show place.⁵⁷ By the following year, the rustic shelter was almost completely demolished by vandals, and was replaced by the pavilion from the abandoned cricket ground at Riley Park. More trees and shrubs were added each year, and flower beds planted with annuals. It was a great show case as can be seen from the design in Appendix III. Figures 46 and 47, aerial photos taken in 1948 and 1970, also show the design of the park: curved paths radiating out from a central circular flower bed. Figure 1, the 1924 aerial photograph, shows the area used as a skating rink and tennis court.

A triangular park between Talon and Laval Avenues and Carleton Street, known as Talon Park, had sloping sides and work began in 1931 to make it into a sunken rock garden with lawn areas. The next year the rockery was completed, well over a thousand plants planted and the lawn seeded. The whole area was fenced to prevent cars from driving through the depression and to discourage the playing of baseball. In 1940 the floral display in the rock garden was well established, but a rustic fence surrounding the park seemingly did nothing to stop the motorists as it needed constant repair.

Cartier Park bounded by Cartier and Champlain Streets and Premier Way was largely undeveloped before 1937. A building was erected at the foot of the hill to provide storage space for tools, and rustic steps and a hand rail built, as well as several paths. This park was on a steep

⁵⁷ Work carried out during this period was done by "relief labour."

incline and a large area on the higher elevation was dug and graded and seeded to grass. A number of trees and shrubs were planted over the next few years along the lower perimeter of the park. These gradually spread over the lower part of the park forming attractive, natural-looking groves of willow and poplar trees.

It was 1951 before any work was done on Levis Park, another triangular park bounded by Levis Avenue, Carleton Street and Council Way. Previously undeveloped it was then seeded to grass, flower beds cut out and trees and shrubs planted.

In 1933 the remaining portion of the Hillcrest hillside not city-owned was transferred from the CPR to the city, making the hillside a complete unit from 8th Street to Hillcrest Avenue, with access from both east and west. It was not until 1951, however, that any landscaping was done on the terraced portion of this area that adjoined the school grounds and was known as Earl Grey Park. At this time the Parks Department designed terraced gardens together with a children's play ground, the first one there had ever been in Mount Royal. (see design in Appendix III.)

Schools

In 1911 the School Board purchased two lots on Hillcrest Avenue from the CPR at a cost of \$18,000,⁵⁸ and the following year constructed a school on the brow of the Hillcrest escarpment. (see Figure 45) It is fitting that in a community with street names taken from Canadian history that the school should be named Earl Grey, who was currently serving his final year as the Governor-General of Canada. It was the traditional four-square building, with six classrooms, constructed from roughcut sandstone and by 1918 was bulging at the seams. Play rooms in the basement were renovated

⁵⁸ Calgary Public School Board Minutes, May 9th, 1911.

for use as classrooms, and only children from the immediate district were allowed to attend.⁵⁹

During the war years the Home and School Movement began in Calgary, and a branch was organized in Mount Royal.⁶⁰ In 1923 this group prepared plans for the improvement of the school grounds, first grading and levelling the ground and then planting it to grass. After this they launched into a programme of tree planting. In 1927 the CPR offered to sell the property west of the school to the School Board for \$1,000, and this was accepted. It was a considerably lower price than the cost of the original property in 1911 at the height of the boom period.

A gym was added to the school in 1953, but by the 1960s, it was destined for demolition. The building was not large enough for current enrolment, did not measure up to fire prevention standards, and changes in the educational system required a more modern building. Upgrading would be expensive so a new school was built. The new Earl Grey school opened in 1968 and the following year the original was torn down. (see Figure 48) The new school, offering an experimental "open-area" system of teaching, was a low, square, windowless building. The building too was experimental. It was "the first school in Canada to have been built with special steel which rusts and then turns to a beautiful dark purple brown."⁶¹ A colour the residents of the community are still waiting to see!

There were a variety of schools in the surrounding area for Mount Royal children to attend. Western Canada College, a private day and boarding school for boys, opened its doors in 1903. It was on 17th Avenue, just on the door step of Mount Royal. Not much further away was St. Hilda's, established in 1905, on 12th Avenue and 8th Street. It was

⁵⁹ Calgary Public School Board Archives. Earl Grey School file.

⁶⁰ Robert M. Stamp. *School Days: A Century of Memories*. Calgary: Calgary Board of Education and McClelland & Stewart West, 1975. p. 63.

⁶¹ *The Albertan*, August 28, 1968.

a private day and boarding school for girls. For Catholic school children it was just a short walk down the escarpment east of Hope Street to the Holy Angels School on 5 ½ Street, and St. Mary's High School was on 18th Avenue.

Calgary's private schools experienced financial troubles in the inter-war years and did not survive long. Western Canada College closed its doors in 1924 and in 1926 the Public School Board bought the building and grounds for \$35,000,⁶² and opened Western Canada High School. In the 1930s both the Technical and Commercial High Schools were united with the high school and in 1938 the three combined to become Western Canada Composite High School.⁶³

The first public school to open in the area was Mount Royal School on 14th Street, north of Colborne Crescent. It opened in 1910 with an enrolment of 395 students who came from both sides of 14th Street. William Aberhart, who later served as Premier of Alberta, was the principal from 1911 to 1913. A skating rink on the school grounds provided entertainment for neighbourhood children.⁶⁴

Traffic Problems

As the city's population began to escalate beginning in the 1950s, the streets of Mount Royal and other inner-city communities gradually came to be used as a regular route to the city centre for those travelling from surrounding communities. The streets of Mount Royal were winding and hilly and not designed for heavy and often fast traffic. Well established trees and heavy foliage restricted sightlines, and community residents became concerned for the safety of their children, as well as for the preservation of their residential community. What had been designed as a park-like

⁶² Douglas Coats. "Calgary: The Private Schools, 1900-16," in *Frontier Calgary*, edited by A.W. Rasporich and H.C.Klassen. Calgary, University of Calgary and McClelland and Stewart West, 1975. pp. 144-146.

⁶³ Stamp, op.cit. p.55.

⁶⁴ Calgary Board of Education Archives, Mount Royal School file.

residential community had become an established traffic route for commuters to and from the down-town.

Beginning in 1967 representatives of the Mount Royal Community Association began a series of appeals to City council and the Engineering Department, expressing their concerns about the congestion of traffic in the area. Both sought means by which traffic could be regulated, and eventually in 1972 it was agreed to set up barricades on certain streets that would restrict northbound traffic on 14th Street from entering the community from the west side.⁶⁵

The erection of such barricades sparked intense discussion from the citizens at large, many of whom who saw it as a special privilege afforded to an elite community. A resident of south-west Calgary sued the city, and sought to quash Council's resolution to erect the barricades. He said it was discriminatory in that it operated unfairly and was partial and unequal in its operation between different groups of the citizenry of Calgary. However, the case was dismissed, on the grounds that the barricades were intended to regulate the flow of traffic, not prohibit it. The streets were still public thoroughfares, only access to and egress from them were restricted.⁶⁶

The topic attracted much discussion in the newspapers over a long period of time, but eventually the issue of the need to preserve some of the inner-city neighbourhoods became paramount. Traffic problems and restricted access to streets in the area have continued over the years, but as new freeways have been constructed in the city, commuter traffic through Mount Royal has decreased considerably.

SUBDIVISION OF LOTS

The subdivision of lots in Mount Royal has a long history. In fact the first subdivision took place before

⁶⁵ Law Department, I, Box 11. CCA.

⁶⁶ Law Department Files, Series I. Box 11. CCA

the community had been named. Louis Strong purchased Lot 2 in Block 9 in June 1906, and lost little time in selling off a portion of that lot to Julia Irvine (wife of John E. Irvine) in August of the same year. The Irvine's immediately erected a house (now 2103 Hope Street) at the south end of a piece of land, 240' by 50', on the north and east side of Lot 2.⁶⁷ Construction of the Strong home took place a year or two later, and included a coach house facing on to Durham Avenue and a tennis court at the south east corner of the lot. In 1922, Strong sold that corner allowing for the construction of a house, 704 Durham Avenue. Following World War II, the coach house was converted into a dwelling house, and the original Irvine lot was subdivided allowing for the construction of a house on the north-east corner, making a total of five houses on the original Lot 2.

There was no caveat on this lot, and in 1906 the lot was south of the city limits, so there were no restrictions on these subdivisions. As discussed above, however, most homes in Mount Royal are covered by a restrictive covenant and it was many years before any further subdivisions occurred. The first one seems to have taken place in 1930 when a large lot on the corner of Frontenac Avenue and Wolfe Street was subdivided into two lots.⁶⁸

In 1933 the Town Planning Commission received a request to subdivide the end three lots on the south side of Prospect Avenue into four or five. The owner complained that they were "just useless to us and to anybody else the size they are, being so close to 14th Street, no one would build a first class house."⁶⁹ In reply the Commission noted that a Judge's order would first be required to ascertain whether owners of neighbouring lots might have a grievance and grounds for action because of changes to the value of their land

⁶⁷ Certificate of Title, D.Z.176, 1st August, 1906.

⁶⁸ See Plan #363 5658 EE. An amendment to Plan 7080 AJ.

⁶⁹ Letter, F.R. Freeze to The Town Planning Commission, Oct. 11 1933. Town Planning Commission Papers. RG 1507.f.16. CCA

and buildings. Furthermore the CPR had an interest and was concerned that its "various clients receive no injury through any departure from the subdivision layout or conditions."⁷⁰ The subdivision did not take place.

The following year another application sought a subdivision of the two lots on the south-west corner of Durham Avenue and Hope Street to form a third lot facing on to Durham Avenue.⁷¹ This application also was not approved, presumably for the same reasons.

According to plans obtained from the City Engineering Department, several changes did take place over the years, some were subdivisions while others increased the size of lots. They are listed in Appendix II. Over the last twenty years, however, applications for subdivisions have gradually increased in number and concern has been expressed by many that some of these have disturbed the essential fabric of the community. Smaller lot sizes, reduced set backs and side yard requirements, encroachments into the traditional streetscapes, coupled with houses that do not conform to the traditional architectural styles of the historic community, have led to an ever increasing amount of opposition from immediate neighbours and the community at large.

In March 1979 a proposed Inner City Plan designated the area as a conservation area, one that should be "preserved (protected from more intensive development) . . . or may accept new development so long as it respects and enhances the existing fabric of the community."⁷² Just a month later there were four applications for subdivision in Mount Royal and the Calgary Planning Commission requested the Planning Department to investigate the situation and propose a set of conditions that would be required for subdivisions in this area. The Department did not make any recommendations but

⁷⁰ Letter, City Engineer to F.R. Freeze, October 16th, 1933. *ibid.*

⁷¹ Application, H.E. Foster to TPC, December 10, 1934. *ibid.*

⁷² Proposed Report on Subdivisions in Mount Royal, May 2, 1979. p.1. Planning Department Papers, f.6280.12. CCA.

presented some options, one of which was that the area be reclassified with special guidelines so that a Development Permit would be required.⁷³

A subsequent report of the Planning & Building Department, made in March 1987, also proposed several options, the first of which was to "redesignate all or portions of Mount Royal to "D.C." with specific rules that would relate to both lot dimensions and architectural guidelines.⁷⁴

Applications for subdivision continued to be received. A number have been appealed by neighbours, some were withdrawn because of neighbours' objections, still others went on to the Alberta Planning Board. While both the Calgary Planning Commission and the Alberta Planning Board have expressed sympathy toward the concept of maintaining the fabric of this unique community, they have also stressed that as land-use by-laws currently exist many of the subdividers' applications cannot be refused. A consistent response from the APB has been to encourage the community association and the City to prepare an "area redevelopment plan which will address the community goals and objectives with respect to future subdivision and development within Mount Royal."⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

The ultimate success of a well designed garden suburb is that its basic precepts of design and character are still apparent many years later, despite changes in transportation, technology and societal and economic mores. Given this criteria, Mount Royal's design has to be considered eminently successful. It remains a park-like area, close to the centre of a major city, despite significant growth all around it,

⁷³ *ibid.* p.2.

⁷⁴ Planning & Building Department Report to the Calgary Planning Commission, 1987 March 11. p.1.

⁷⁵ Alberta Planning Board, Board Order: 379-S-87/88, 14 October, 1987. p.5.

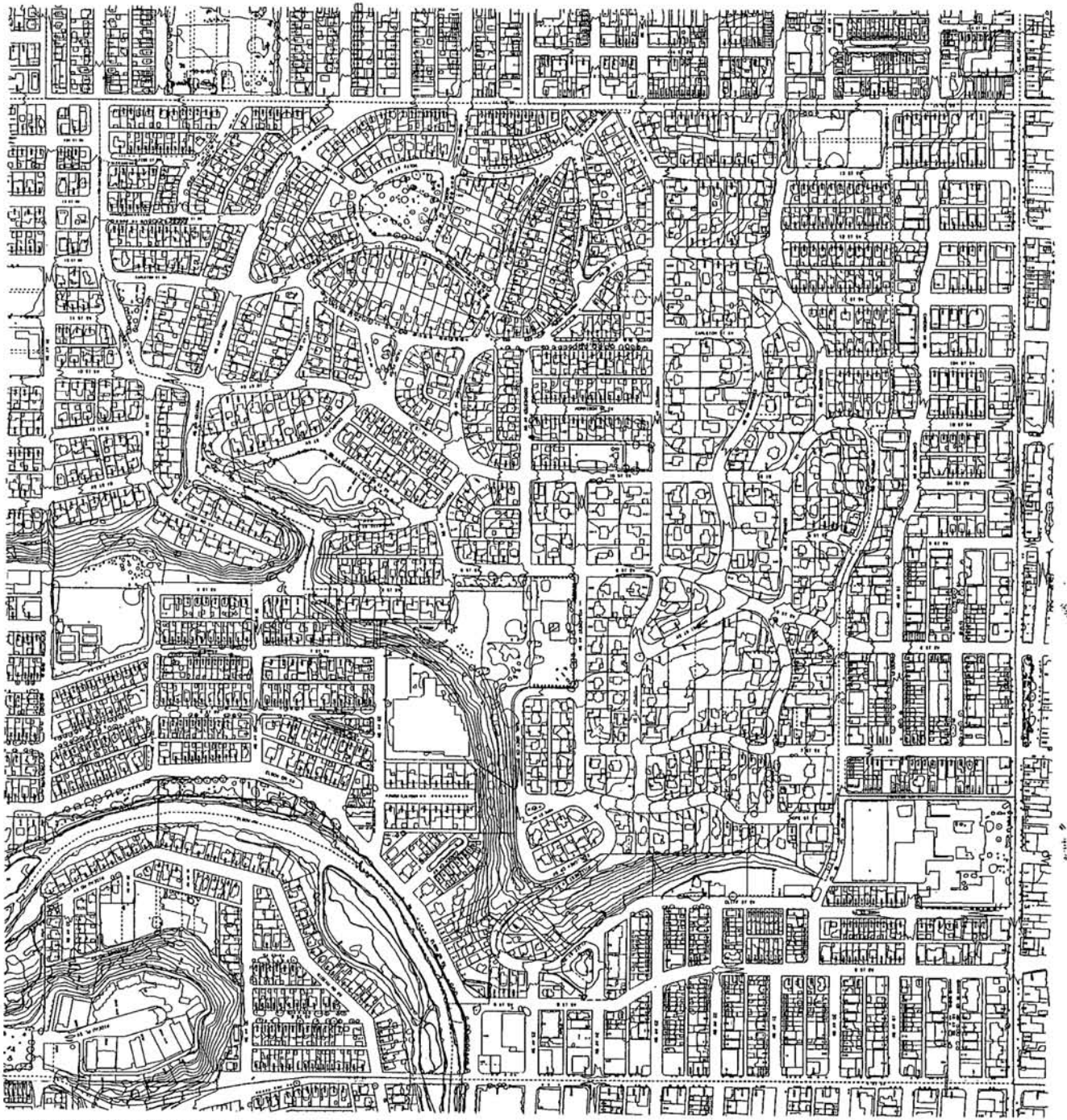
and the attendant problems of traffic and encroachment of apartment buildings.

A study of the aerial photograph taken in 1924, Figure 1, shows South Mount Royal as a bleak and barren hillside. It is a lasting tribute to the designers that they could foresee the potential in the topography for the park-like community that has evolved over the past ninety years.

The area was subdivided over a period of six years, from 1905 to 1911, and different design principles are discernible. The area north of Prospect Avenue was developed primarily as an elite residential area with large lots situated on a hillside, houses placed to make the most of the views, and the deep set backs beautifully landscaped. The "sanatorium block" was subdivided in the traditional grid-iron conformation, yet the lots are a good size, the homes blend in to the architectural style and the maturation of landscaping has softened the straight lines. South Mount Royal, designed by one of the best known landscape architects of the time, exhibits all the principles of the Garden Suburb, curvilinear street systems, large set backs and sideyards, park areas, and tree planting along the front of and between the lots.

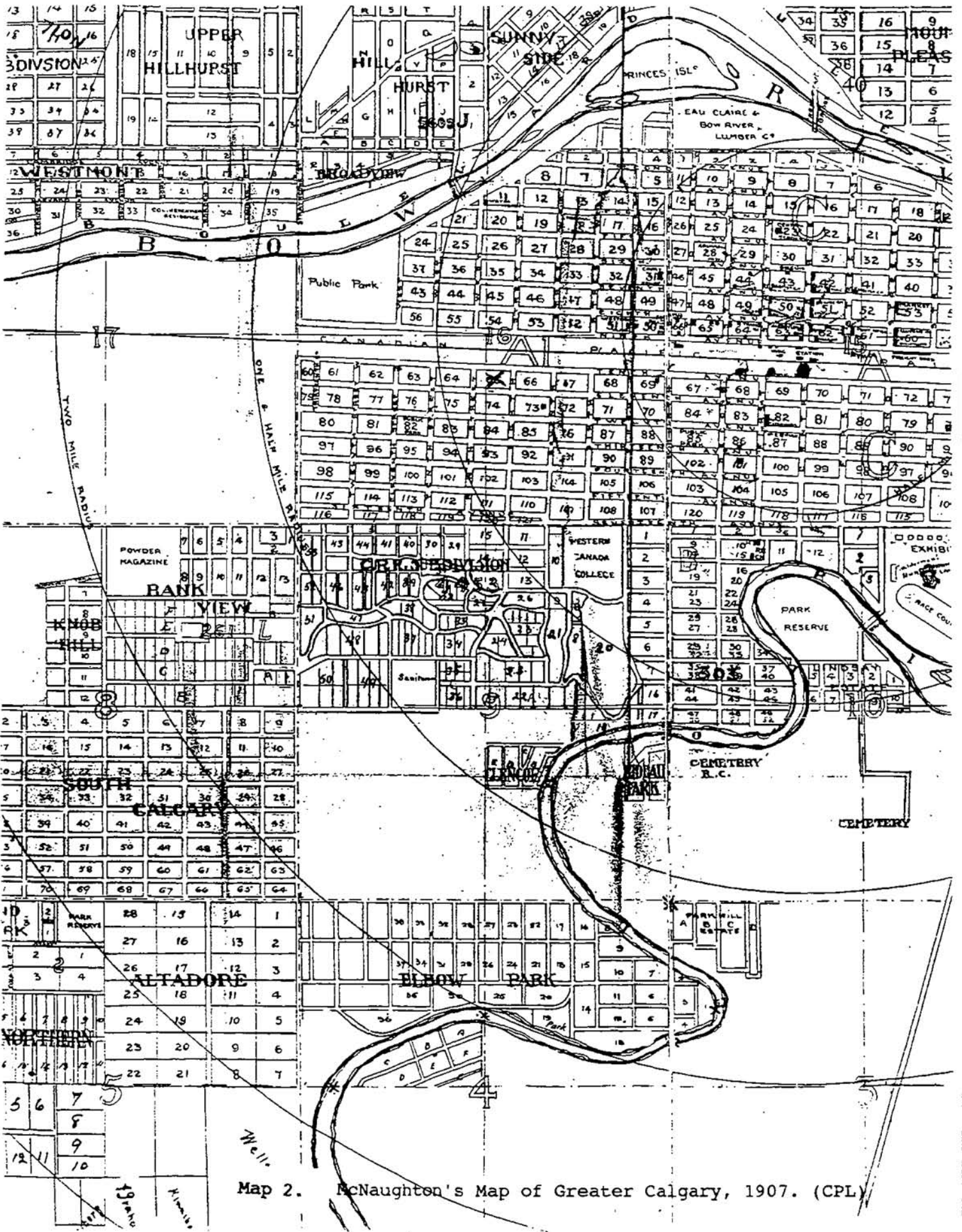
Time has reduced the differences and they have all blended into a cohesive whole. Mount Royal's boundaries, both natural and man-made, have strengthened rather than lessened over time, and within the community there is a feeling of tranquility and stability. The landscaping is mature, and the setbacks of the houses are, in most cases, uniform. There is an atmosphere of individual privacy and spaciousness. While elite residential districts have been developed in several areas of the city, Mount Royal remains the most distinctive and has consistently maintained both its land value and desirability.

* * * * *



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Map 1. Boundary lines of the community of Mount Royal.
(Planning Department, The City of Calgary)



Map 2. McNaughton's Map of Greater Calgary, 1907. (CPL)

Registered 8th Feb 1909
Plan. 304. V.

PLAN

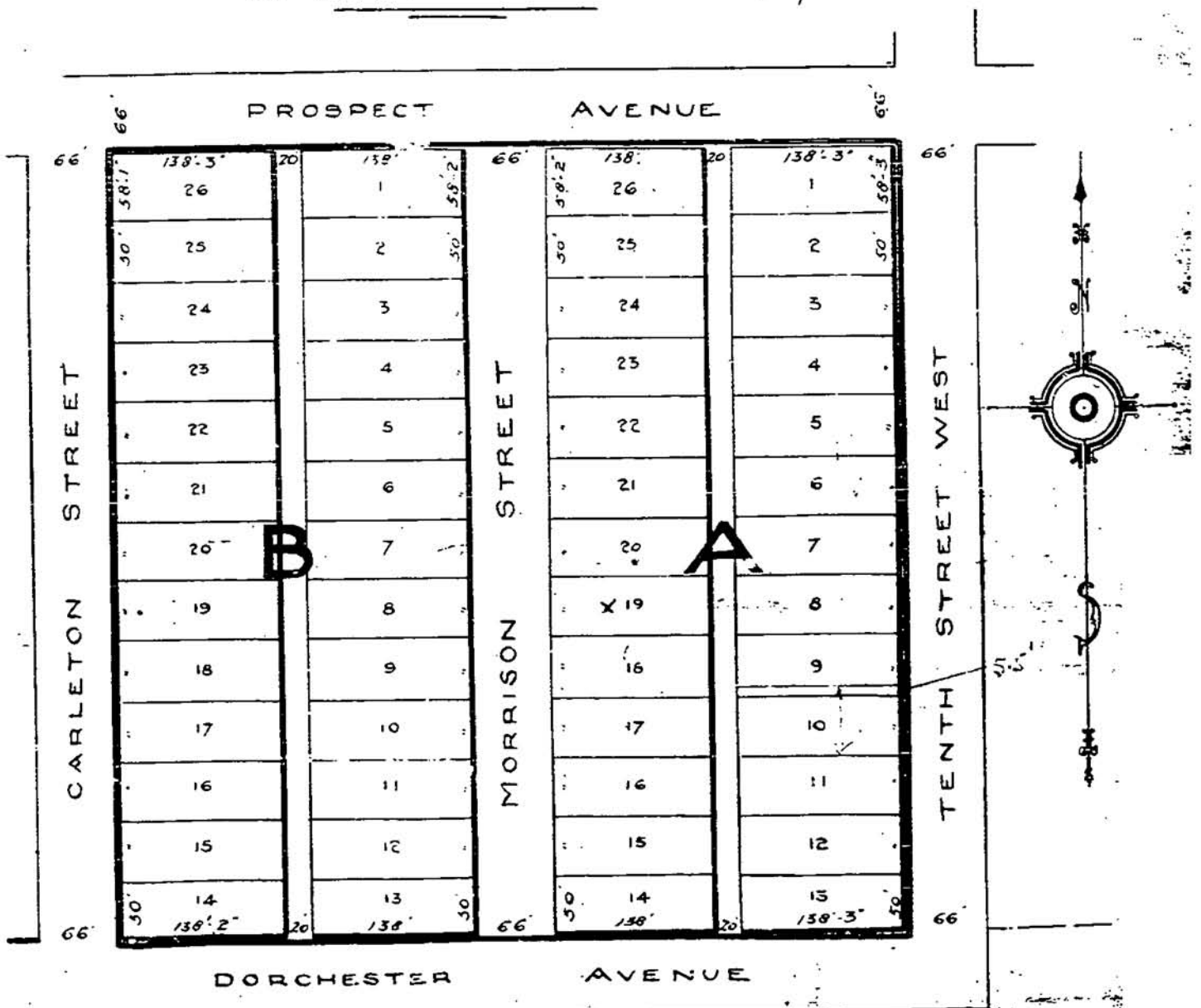
SHEWING SUBDIVISION OF THE S.W. 1/4 L.S. II.

SEC. 9, TP. 24 R. 1 W OF 5TH M.

SCALE: 100 FT. = 1 IN

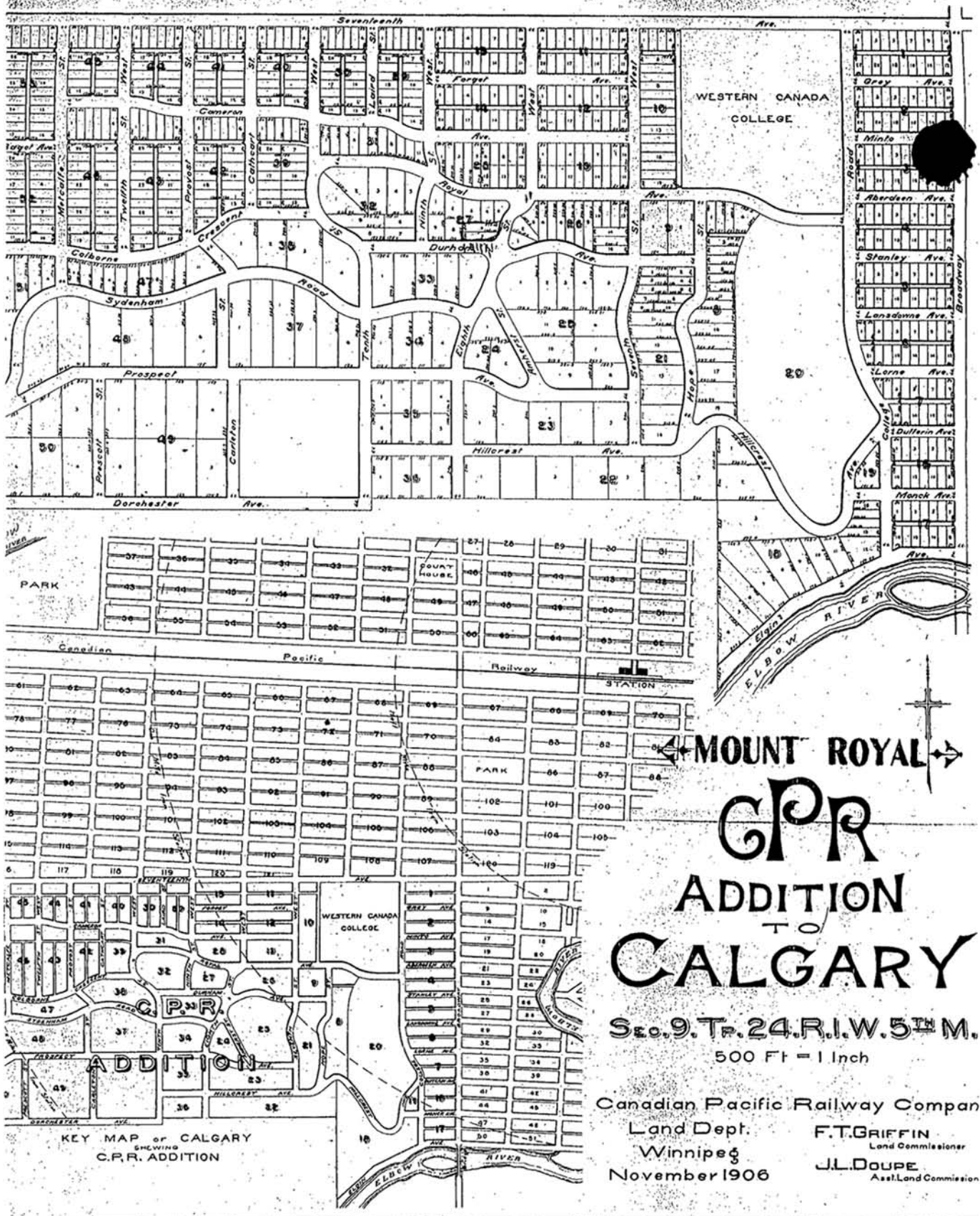
BY A. P. PATRICK, D.L.S.

A.P. Patrick
D.L.S.
R.L. Morrison
Owner



Map 3. Plan 304V. Registered 8th February, 1909.
(Land Titles Office)

SCALE



← MOUNT ROYAL →

CPR

ADDITION
TO
CALGARY

SEC. 9, T. 24, R. 1, W. 5TH M.
500 Ft = 1 Inch

Canadian Pacific Railway Company
Land Dept. F.T. GRIFFIN
Winnipeg Land Commissioner
November 1906 J.L. DOUPE
Asst. Land Commission

KEY MAP OF CALGARY
SHOWING
C.P.R. ADDITION

Map 5.

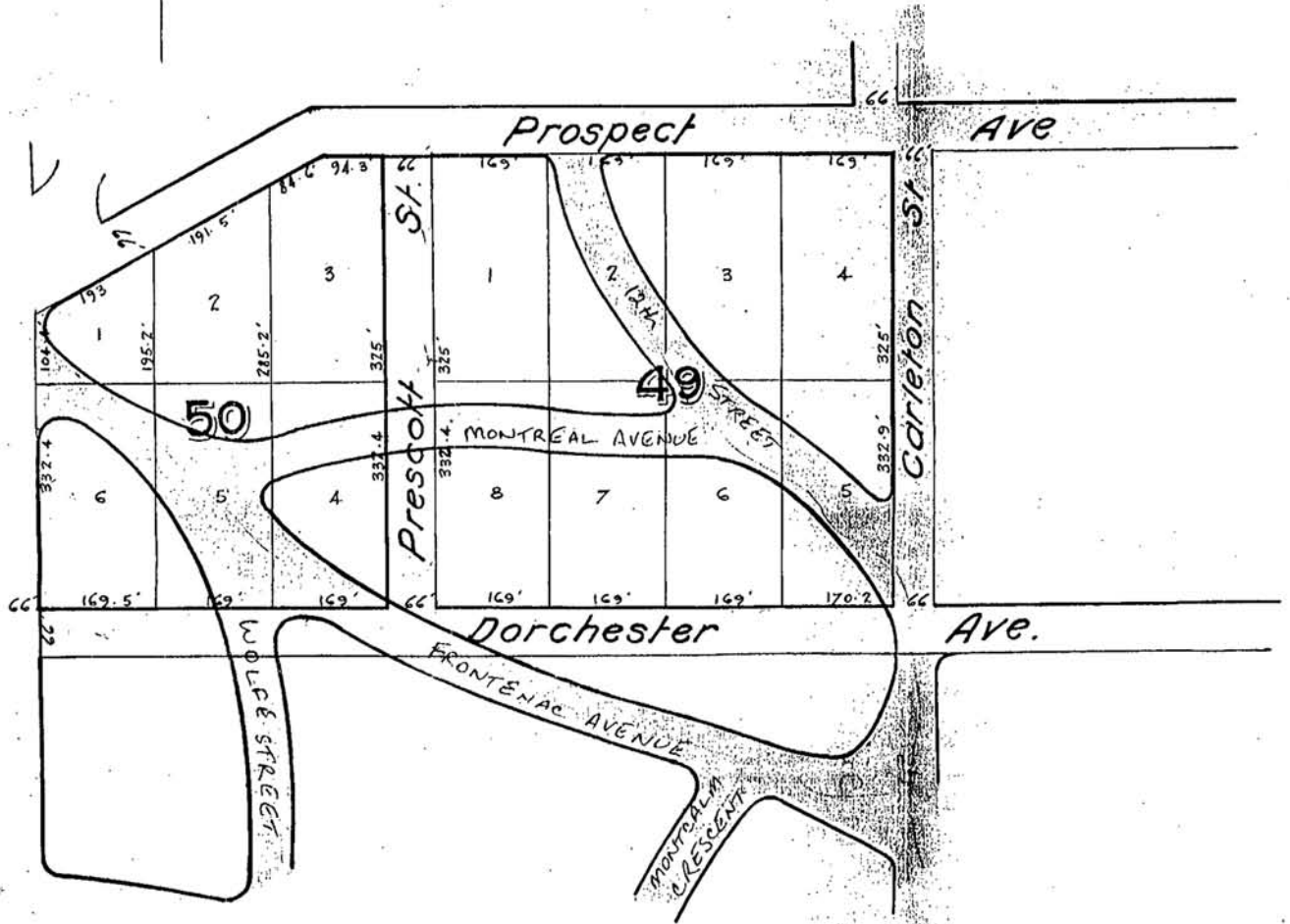
CPR Addition to Calgary, Canadian Pacific Railway Company, Winnipeg, November 1906. The upper half of the map shows the plan of the subdivision (Plan 179R, registered May 1907) while the lower part exhibits the vast difference between the design of the addition and the traditional grid configuration of the rest of Calgary at that time.
(CCA. Commissioners Papers)



PLAN. Shewing colored pink Prescott St and that portion of
Dorchester Ave Plan N^o 179 R. CALGARY

Part of W¹/₂ 9. Tp 24 R. 1 W. 5th M.

Scale 200 ft. = 1 Inch



Streets to be closed Colored Pink
Streets to be opened by C.P.Ry. in lieu
of above Colored Blue.

Map 8.

Changes made to Plan 179R on the advice of J.C. Olmsted in 1911. Those coloured pink were Prescott Street and Dorchester Avenue. The present day names of the streets coloured blue have been added by the author.
(City of Calgary Papers. f.236. CCA)