CALGARY CELEBRATING
100 YEARS OF PARKS

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

letters 10

introduction 12
THE EARTH BENEATH OUR FEET

CHAPTER 1
putting down roots 14
1875–1909

CHAPTER 2
the seeds of promise 32
1910–1946

CHAPTER 3
the growing season 54
1947–1976

CHAPTER 4
a respectable harvest 68
1977–2000

CHAPTER 5
a bountiful future 86
2001–ONWARD

timeline 106
1867–2010

bibliographical essay 110
CALGARY CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF PARKS

notes 116
Calgary Celebrating 100 years of parks

Victoria Park, Calgary, Alta.

Shaganappi Point, Bow River, c. 1900s.

Swimming at Bowness, c. 1910s.

Swimming in Elbow River, c. 1940s.
Dear Fellow Calgarians:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

October 12, 2010

Dave Bronconnier
Mayor

Dear Reader:

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

October 10, 2010

Anne Charlton, CSLA
Director
The earth beneath our feet

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

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

Calgary’s physical setting is spectacular and opportune. The city sits on the western edge of the prairie grasslands in clear view of the Rocky Mountains to the south and west. The varying textures are dramatic, the climate brazen, the microclimates and plant life diverse.

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

The region’s topography was ideal for bison hunting among the First Nations people who have been here all along. In time, it would lend itself to more recreational exploits as environmental parkland within the city.

The natural landscape of Calgary provides the physical resources for the growing of parks. People provide the vision and energy to make that growth happen.

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

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

The City of Calgary has benefited immensely from the foresight and generosity of individuals, families and corporations that recognize the intrinsic value of public open space by making it a priority, for now and for the future.

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

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

Putting down roots

[1875–1909]
Putting down roots – growing Calgary’s park system

Plan of Bow River and Islands

1913
The promise of economic opportunity stimulated considerable interest in the area, and by the time the railroad arrived in 1883, a steady influx of settlers had already spawned a small town.

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

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

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

In 1880, the Canadian Pacific Railway revealed its plan to re-route the transcontinental train south and west along the Bow River valley. The promise of economic opportunity stimulated considerable interest in the area, and by the time the railroad arrived in 1883, a steady influx of settlers had already spawned a small town.

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

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

A man of considerable clout, and unchecked arrogance, Pearce had a singular ability...
Pearce believed in the creation of a city that would be visually attractive to citizens and visitors alike.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

William Pearce in the search for suitable land. After careful consideration, Pearce selected 112 acres west of town where Shaganappi Golf Course is today. Its location on the hill afforded a lovely view of the town site, road access was deemed easy to establish, and there was potential for the site to serve other municipal needs such as a park, or a reservoir, if Calgary chose to establish a waterworks system in the future.
for some reason, the town never did follow through with the sale of the old cemetery land. and so Calgary's inventory of parkland grew, by default.

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

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

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

William Pearce once again proved a strong advocate on behalf of Calgary. He proposed the Town take ownership of the islands with the condition they be used exclusively for park purposes and that the Town plant trees and take other such initiatives to beautify the sites.

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

More than two years of negotiations followed before the Town signed the lease agreement in 1890 and named the lower below St. George's Island, c 1900s.
Calgary Celebrating 100 years of parks

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

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

William Pearce who maintained a strong personal interest in the beautification of the island parks. He saw random incidents, like a Town official’s decision to chop down island trees, to be reprehensible. He called attention to the risk of subjecting Calgary’s parks and cemetery assets to the whims of a fresh chairman of the Parks and Cemeteries Committee each year. He argued it would be better to place parks and cemeteries in the hands of a responsible Parks Board.

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

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

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

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

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

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

These station gardens were designed as a marketing showpiece, exemplifying the fertility and versatility of the region for the benefit of those travelling by rail. The gardens showed travellers first hand what fine things are possible on the prairies.

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

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

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

Below CPR Park, Station Garden, c. 1900s. Glenbow Archives NA-2114-4

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

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

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

These station gardens were designed as a marketing showpiece, exemplifying the fertility and versatility of the region for the benefit of those travelling by rail. The gardens showed travellers first hand what fine things are possible on the prairies.

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

The CPR saw to the design and planting of the garden and the Town agreed to water and maintain it.
Appearances aside, everything with the CPR and the Town of Calgary wasn’t all marigolds and roses in the late 1880s. The CPR was amassing a substantial debt to the Town of Calgary in the form of unpaid property taxes, and the growing municipality desperately needed the railway to pay up.

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

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

The one stipulation the CPR added to the deal was that the land could not be resold and the Town had to use it as a park. Roughly 20 years later, that property would be transformed into one of Calgary’s favourite gathering places — Central (Memorial) Park. It is the first example of land acquisition for non-payment of taxes in Calgary.

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

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

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

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

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

Enter William Pearce, again. He had started the Calgary Irrigation Company in 1892, with an ambitious plan to redirect water from the Elbow River via a lengthy system of canals and flumes, or channels, to promote mixed farming and forestry in the region. It was controversial, to say the least. Pearce was accused of using his influence with the federal government to gain privileges others felt they were being denied.
Today, the Pearce Estate has another life as home to the environmental Pearce Estate Park Interpretive Wetland project and the Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery.

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

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

The sense of optimism in Calgary was tangible. In the spring of 1906, taxpayers were so convinced of Calgary’s potential as a...
place of beauty and civic pride they voted in favour of a new bylaw that would raise and invest $23,000 for parks.

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

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

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

But Calgary’s civic leadership neither understood nor particularly respected the discipline of landscape architecture at the time. One alderman suggested The City engineer was every bit as capable of doing the work. And, although he was himself in favour of contracting the work out to a professional, that City engineer conceded he could and would draw up the plans himself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The seeds of promise

1910–1946
Calgary’s pre-war parks system

City hall landscape plan, c. 1930s.
By the beginning of 1910, the sense of absolute confidence in Calgary’s future as a western metropolis made planning for that future a meaningful exercise. Park development was seen as integral to the city’s success, not optional.

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

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

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

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

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

So with the Board’s blessing, Buchanan proposed a budget of $100,000 to finance immediate and much-needed improvements to the island parks, Union Cemetery, Mewata, Central and Riley parks and he drafted a bylaw to that effect.
Buchanan then met with the editors of the Herald to obtain public support. Despite a valiant effort and numerous editorials praising the medical benefits of recreation, fresh air and breathing spaces (typhoid fever was in town), and despite a series of public meetings to discuss its merits, the bylaw was narrowly defeated.

And apparently, so was Buchanan. Although he loved his job, upon submitting his first and only annual report to the Board in January 1911, Buchanan resigned from his position as Parks superintendent and left Calgary, forever.

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

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

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

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

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

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

And Iverson benefited from the passage of a bylaw in May 1911, right after his arrival, followed by another the next year that together contributed $161,000 to Parks’ operating budget. It was much needed funding and Iverson didn’t waste any time spending it. Iverson had plenty of his own ideas about what needed to be done with respect to the development of Calgary’s parks and parkland. And he didn’t even pretend to care if he had consensus moving forward.

While his list of accomplishments would grow to be quite impressive — everything from landscaping plans for Union Cemetery (complete with an expensive entrance...
archway), and Riley Park (with a picket fence and two costly entrances), a tree nursery on St. Patrick’s Island and Calgary’s first playground installation on St. George’s Island, to the design and development of a formal Victorian garden at Central Park (with a statue, fountains and a magnificent bandstand fit for royalty) — his utter disregard for the opinion of others put him in a bad way from the beginning, and without a doubt, limited his influence on Calgary’s parks in the end.

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

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

A formal inquiry ultimately cleared Iverson of any wrongdoing with respect to the potato incident. The investigation concluded however, that though he was a first-class technical expert, he was a poor choice for an administrator. It was recommended he be relieved of his administrative responsibilities immediately.

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

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

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

At the same time, the inventory of City-owned parkland was expanding exponentially as promoters of land subdivisions proposed to exchange property for access to City infrastructure.
Bowness Park holds a special place in Calgary’s park history, its cultural landscape, and in the hearts of Calgarians. Its picturesque natural setting along the Bow River on the outskirts of town made it a classic example of the kind of “pleasure grounds” enjoyed by city folk in the early 1900s.

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

When Council disbanded the Parks Board in 1913, Calgary’s third Parks superintendent, William R. Reader took control. Reader’s original application for the position of parks superintendent in 1911 made no reference to his qualifications in landscape architecture or public speaking, which may have been why he was overlooked at the time.

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

On April 1, 1913, Reader was appointed Parks superintendent on an interim basis. Three months later he moved into the Parks superintendent’s residence with The City’s blessing, on a permanent basis.

It was not to be an easy tenure. Economic crises, environmental extremes and two world wars; this was the context for Reader’s career with Parks. The optimistic bubble over Calgary had developed a slow leak. Social needs would start to attract serious consideration.
Calgary Celebrating 100 years of parks

LEFT Swimming at Bowness Park c.1930. Glenbow Archives ND-8-337.
The challenges started almost immediately with the collapse of Calgary’s real estate boom and a dramatic drop in economic activity. For Parks it meant an uncertain operating budget and the apparent end to the acquisition of parkland through private donations. Ironically, the development of Calgary’s parks system would benefit in the end.

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

In 1922, The City’s administration embraced Reader’s suggestion and adopted a policy for reserving land for parks. It was a major cause for applause because it meant that Calgary would never be in the position that other big cities found themselves in, where population growth out-paced the existing park system.

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

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

The Vacant Lots Garden Club pioneered what we call the “broken window” theory back in 1914 with its civic beautification initiative. The objective was to encourage individuals who owned vacant lots to cultivate and transform them into fertile garden plots. The City would help prep the soil for planting and provide free seed. Free of weeds and garbage, the gardens would produce vegetables or flowers and contribute to the nourishment and overall aesthetics, and pride of the community as a whole.

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

The Bridgeland-Riverside Vacant Lots Garden is the last of its kind in Calgary. The garden dates back to the late 1920s and continues to grow produce and community pride.

Reader took great pride in a little garden of his own; an oasis of sorts that he called the "rockery" on the steep north slope of Union Cemetery and the grounds of his official residence as Parks superintendent. The creation of this cascading rock garden was a personal passion that consumed a great deal of Reader’s spare time from 1922–1929 as he continued to experiment with seeds, plant species and placement in the local clime. And though he put so much...
of himself into its being, Reader always remained adamant that it was a public garden and meant to be shared.

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

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

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

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

But money was tight and options limited. In the early summer of 1914, The City identified a suitable location for swimming in the Elbow River. It cleared debris, roped off the deeper, more dangerous areas and provided his and her dressing rooms for public enjoyment. It was a popular public venue and if there had been money in the budget, Reader, who was an active member of the...
The Zoo on St. George’s Island was another of Reader’s great successes. By the mid-1920s, the animal attraction was drawing record numbers of people to the island, and that, in Reader’s mind, was the true measure of success. Anything that got people out to the parks was good.

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

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

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

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

In 1940, the department hired Richard Haughian as a playground supervisor to assist Reader with the administration of the rapidly expanding City recreation programs. This addition of staff suggested the Administration finally recognized demand for City recreation programs was great — and growing. It was a major breakthrough from Reader’s perspective, and though it was a long time coming, it would prove short-lived.
In the fall of 1942, Reader retired from The City, Haughian enlisted in the army and Parks was left seriously understaffed. Reader’s successor, Arthur Morris, concentrated on the traditional role of horticulture in park development while everyone waited for the end of the Second World War.

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

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

The growing season

[1947–1976]
Calgary’s post-war parks system

Calgary’s post-war parks system

Calgary’s post-war parks system

This page

Confederation Park


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Calgarians wanted more, bigger and better places to play and Boothman was adamant that parks should, above all else, accommodate the public. The small, decorative gardens with their high maintenance ornamentation weren’t working for anyone anymore. Not the public and not Parks operations.
Boothman’s solution on the operations side of things was to expand the scope of territory individual Parks foremen supervised, and to replace the existing one-man one-park maintenance regime with crew-style park maintenance city-wide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The City encouraged them in their efforts. The logic was simple. No one was better suited to meet the social and recreational needs of individual communities than the communities themselves. Power to the people, and all that.
Naturally, organized communities started speaking with each other, and common interests and agendas surfaced. With urban development moving full bore, the fate of undeveloped public land was guaranteed to be a hot topic. And where there was a strong will, community resources, and a plan, there was a movement led by a public champion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nose Hill Park was one other situation where mitigating circumstance proved effective at holding off developers. Though zoned for development, the panoramic real estate was in direct line with the flight path for the Calgary airport, and rendered unfit for residential development accordingly.
Parks Superintendent Harry Boothman died in office in 1976. There can be little doubt that his passion for working with Calgarians to ensure the most desirable outcome for all raised the caliber of the parks themselves.

By the late 1960s though, the development industry had grown extremely ambitious and competition within the industry, aggressive. The only thing that seemed to be forever shrinking was the supply of available land.

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

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

The proposed development of a combined subdivision and Regional Park on Nose Hill in 1970 provoked a public battle cry unlike anything The City had ever experienced. The Calgary Field Naturalists’ Society and 10 community associations joined forces in ardent protest. At the request of the community associations, university professors weighed in on the matter, adding authority to the community’s unmitigated passion. Council ultimately prepared and approved a sector plan protecting Nose Hill from development and Nose Hill was saved as a future Regional Park in April 1973, with 4,100 acres put aside as proposed parkland.

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

A respectable harvest

[1977–2000]
Boomtime in Calgary’s park system
arks Superintendent Harry Boothman’s death coincided with a shift in the department’s approach to managing Calgary’s parks and open spaces. In keeping with an emerging corporate culture City-wide, the administration behind Parks took a back seat to the administration of parks. Planning and policy development superseded the personal preferences, vision and principles of the individuals in charge. Policy documents would begin to define general Parks goals and functions, and outline a decision making process. The department’s objective was consistency, and ongoing relevance to the needs of Calgarians. And there had been a shift there too. The desire to change Calgary’s natural landscape so that it conformed to society’s idea of beautiful (i.e. so that it looked and felt more like back home) had run its course. Calgary was home to the current generation. There was a newfound appreciation for the region’s natural landscapes and a strong desire to preserve and even, where necessary, restore Calgary’s natural areas. Society in general had evolved. The public was well educated and had found and honed its voice into a powerful and pointed tool that all branches of the civic government were wise to heed and wield in careful measure.

The first natural area to be protected in Calgary goes back to 1929. It was then that Colonel Walker’s son Selby successfully asked the federal government to designate 59 acres of his father’s estate on the west side of the Bow River in Inglewood as a federal migratory bird sanctuary. Forty years later when the Calgary Bird Club became the Calgary Field Naturalists’ Society (1969), the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary was positioned to become the cornerstone of natural areas programming in Calgary. Fearing the sanctuary might succumb to the pressure of urban development, the society presented a convincing argument on the educational value of natural areas for school children living in the urban setting. It pointed to the need to introduce and protect a respectable harvest
a new category of parkland — natural area parks, in and through which children could learn the natural history of their native land.

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

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

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

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

It reiterated the familiar philosophy that the department existed to promote personal development and well-being for people of all ages through leisure time opportunities. What was new in this document was a focus on the protection, preservation and enhancement of the environment for all to enjoy, and the championing of this mission as a civic responsibility within Parks.
As part of the overall research behind the document, Calgarians had been invited to provide input through a public survey on their recreational needs and desires. The growing public interest and appreciation of environmental issues was evident in the results. Recreational choices and trends revealed a desire for more spontaneous individual activities like jogging, cycling and hiking. People wanted, among other things, more pathways, nature trails and interpretive programming. This urban population valued Calgary’s open spaces and topographical diversity, and they wanted access to it.

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

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

This 1976 document was a comprehensive policy statement for The City of Calgary Parks/Recreation; a physical manifestation of intent moving forward. Parks’ newest Director, Fred McHenry, brought it forward to Council. In 1981, Parks/Recreation upgraded this earlier statement document with the publication of the Policy and System Plan. It was intended to provide a roadmap for the next 10 years of leisure services in Calgary. Not surprisingly, the Plan featured the river parks system that William Pearce...
had initiated in 1884, and which Reader, Mawson, Lady Loughheed’s Local Council of Women, Boothman, and more recently, everyday Calgarians, had determined to be worthy of protecting — from urban development, from the CPR’s urban renewal scheme in the 1960s, and from undue human impact.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Planning Advisory committees were set up for each of the five study areas along Calgary’s main waterways. Working in concert with local landscape architecture firms, these committees co-ordinated community involvement. Multiple public information sessions garnered interest and participation. A public opinion survey (Pulse on Parks) collected more than 45,000 responses, and these, in turn provided critical data, and welcome reassurance that Parks was indeed on the right track.
Calgarians were appreciative and supportive of their parks and the river valley system as a whole. They agreed with expansion of the system, primarily through natural areas, pathways and trails.

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

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

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

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

Several years of focused and collaborative effort culminated in Council’s approval of the Urban Park Master Plan in 1994. The Plan aimed to create significant open space to ensure Calgarians had ready access to the natural environment. It initiated the development of those areas in a manner that would support sustained and unimpaired use for outdoor recreation. And with community involvement the hallmark of the Plan itself, it established public input as integral to both the process and its success.

In 1991, the 18-hectare property of Tom Campbell’s Hill was designated a park after years of pragmatic use—from grazing cattle to pasturing exotic zoo animals. Today the park is enjoyed as a multi-use site and includes one of Calgary’s 13 off-leash dog areas. Tom Campbell’s Hill overlooks the Bow River in the northeast part of the city. Its patches of rough fescue grassland, aging poplar trees and diverse bird population provide a gentle but striking contrast to the city’s skyline visible to the west. First the hill and then the park was named after a large sign advertising Tom Campbell’s Hats. That sign became such a familiar landmark in the 1970s that no one would have imagined calling the place by any other name.
A family rafting down the Elbow river during the summer months, 2009.

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

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

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

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

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

Calgary’s premium skate park, the largest of its kind in all of North America, was built on a section of the city’s original west end park. That’s right. The land that had sat derelict for the first 20 years of Calgary’s park history because it was too out-of-the-way to attract any public attention was to become a magnet for young thrill seekers from around the world.
Calgary Celebrating 100 years of parks

A bountiful future

Chapter Five

[2001–onward]
Calgary’s park system in the new millennium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Park Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fish Creek Provincial Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nose Hill Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>North Glenmore Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bowmont Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Elliston Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Haskayne Legacy Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Weaselhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Edworthy Park; Lawrey Gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>South Glenmore Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Twelve-Mile Coulee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Edgemont Ravines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Shouldice Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Southland Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Beaverdam Flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Confederation Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sandy Beach; River Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Carburn Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Laycock Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Tom Campbell’s Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bottomlands Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Pearce Estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Prairie Winds Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Prince’s Island Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Stanley Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Riley Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Bowness Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Shaw Millennium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Griffith Woods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Big Marlborough Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Inglewood Birds Sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Reader Rock Garden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opposite Page

Park name
- Fish Creek Provincial Park
- Hill Park
- Glenmore Park
- Scenic Park
- Erskine Park
- Prince’s Island Park
- Fish Creek Rail Trail
- Sully Park

Plan: City of Calgary Parks

Left

Arts and Athletics in Calgary

Calgary Celebrating 100 Years of Parks

89
In 2002, Parks published its Open Space Plan, a comprehensive source of policy and direction regarding Calgary’s public open space system. The culmination of years of study, this single document fused both early and emerging ideas about parks management with the mass of policy documents developed since the 1980s.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Accidents, abuse and the conflicting interests of thriving root systems, underground utilities and other City departments took its toll on the boulevard trees. Keeping them out of harm’s way proved a full-time, albeit futile job for a special boulevard policeman William Reader hired and retained up until the First World War.
The challenge remains nearly 100 years later as Urban Forestry technicians continue to advise and educate people on the importance of protecting public trees.

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

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

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

Calgary’s first comprehensive tree management policy, the Urban Forestry Management Plan, was approved by Council in 1988. It set a target ratio of one tree for every two people in the city. That meant planting thousands of trees to keep up with growth, and thousands more to compensate for any part of the forest lost to the forces of nature or human activity. By the early 1990s, Parks’ responsibilities had expanded to include water management. In 2007 Council adopted The City of Calgary Parks Water Management Strategic Plan. Its intent: to sustain the health of plant material growing in The City’s open spaces, recreational sites and landscaped areas, while conserving water and financial resources.

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

The City of Calgary has added several works to the local landscape for all to experience, including that of world-renowned artists Beverly Pepper (Sentinels – Ralph Klein Park) and Barbara Paterson (Women are persons! – Olympic Plaza). The art contributes another, cultural layer to the richness and diversity of the city’s public places.

AVERAGE AND LEFT (top to bottom) Ralph Klein Park Education Centre and Beverly Pepper - Sentinels, 2010.

Their highly public profile makes Parks the natural venue of choice for public art exhibits and installations in Calgary. In recent years, the City has added several works to the local landscape for all to experience, including those by Beverly Pepper (Sentinels – Ralph Klein Park) and Barbara Paterson (Women are persons! – Olympic Plaza). The art contributes another, cultural layer to the richness and diversity of the city’s public places.
In recognition and honour of The City of Calgary Parks’ 100-year anniversary in 2010, Olympic Plaza featured six Landscapes of Celebration, including a display from the internationally acclaimed Jardins de Métis festival. It encouraged Calgarians to interact with the art and the park in new ways. Naturally, the more attractive a city is, the more people want to live there. More people means more land development for housing, and for all the connecting infrastructure.

1. Pergola Music by Field Sound (Douglas Moffat and Steve Bates.)
2. Big Sky by North Design Office (Pete North).
3. The Centennial Grove by IBI/landplan (Yogeshwar Navagharp and Garth Balls).
4. Come play in our Garden/Passe-moi un sapin by Ritmo (Stéphane Hamel Voisard and Karine Corbeil).

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

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

The remaining 10 per cent needed immediate protection.

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

It put leading edge conservation at least two steps ahead of the bulldozers. And with everyone’s co-operation and support, it will keep the wetlands right where they are.
Today Parks is establishing a Cultural Landscape Strategic Plan aimed at acknowledging the historic significance of other Calgary gems including Central Memorial, Bowness, Riley and Confederation parks, to name a few.

That’s the clincher really. All the policy documents and conservation plans on the planet are nothing more than ink on a page if people aren’t paying them any heed.

It’s nothing new. Public education and engagement in Parks business has been a prerequisite for success all along.

Parks’ success in its first 100 years, and the next 100, for that matter, hinges on its ability to pick up on current trends, respond to public needs, distribute meaningful, practical advice, and secure citizen support, all in good measure.

It requires innovative ways to finance all of the special places and things. The ENMAX Legacy Parks Program has been a godsend for Calgary in that respect.

In July 2003, Mayor Dave Bronconnier announced $50 million in dividends from the City-owned ENMAX Energy Corporation would go into an ENMAX Legacy Parks Program to acquire and develop parkland over a five-year period. The ENMAX Legacy Fund would create a critical mass of funding dedicated to the development and re-development of specific parks projects.

In 2007, Council voted to extend the ENMAX Legacy Parks Program with an additional $75 million in dedicated park funding, making it the most significant single source of capital funding for Parks projects in Calgary’s history.

All of the work is an investment in Calgary’s future; some projects more than others, a tribute to the past.

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

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

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

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

Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping software pinpoints the exact location of Parks' assets on a map citywide, right down to individual park benches and garbage cans. That program then interfaces with another software program, Parks Asset Reporting and Information System (PARIS), to help staff manage the inventory, track and schedule life-cycle maintenance.

Free wi-fi in the public domain is a similar phenomenon. People have come to expect it just about everywhere. Not wanting to disappoint, Parks wired Central Memorial Park for free wi-fi during its refurbishment in 2010. It's expected other parks will follow.

This same year, Parks introduced a 10-year strategic plan for cemeteries that calls for...
the construction of The City’s first new cemetery since Queen’s Park was started in 1938. Technology will have a place there too, though no headstone.

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

If the start of the new millennium is a reflection of what to expect in the future, Calgary’s park system is in extraordinarily good shape heading into the next 100 years. The entire Calgary region will be connected. In addition to the capital growth afforded Parks through the ENMAX Legacy Parks windfall, private land donations and collaboration from the Government of Alberta continue to grow the expanse of publicly owned parkland.

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

In 2001, The City joined the provincial government in designating Twelve Mile Coulee a park on the northwest edge of the city’s limits. The Coulee was named for its position, roughly 12 miles from the post office at Fort Calgary. It once served as a mail drop on the old stagecoach run to Cochrane. Today it offers fresh air, hiking trails and picture perfect scenery.

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

His dream of such an extensive pathway system might have been farfetched at the
beginning of the Great Depression, but at the beginning of the 21st century, thanks to recent donations of land along the river valley, that dream was about to become a reality.

The Haskayne family donated $5 million in land toward The City’s future 360-acre Haskayne Legacy Park on the east side of the Bearspaw Reservoir, directly across from the future Bearspaw Legacy Park. The two parks run parallel to the Bow River heading west, and represent a critical link in the Bow River Valley Parks system. Then the Harvie family and the provincial government struck a charitable land deal to create Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park, a 3,400-acre foothills and grassland park that starts where Haskayne Legacy Park is set.
1940: Queen’s Park Cemetery was established.

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

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

1945: World War II began.

1945: Shelby Walker (Colonel Walker’s son) successfully petitioned a federal government to designate 59 acres of his father’s estate as a bird sanctuary.

1946: St. Mary’s Cemetery was established.

1948: World War II ended.

1960s: Calgary’s growth prompted Parks Superintendent Harry Boothman to change the way Parks Operations cared for park space, from a “one man–one park” maintenance regime to crew-style park maintenance city-wide.

1960: Alex Munroe created Senator Patrick Burns Memorial Rock Gardens.

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

1970: Prince’s Island Park opened to the public.

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

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

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

1975: Devonian Gardens opened to the public and is among the world’s largest indoor public green spaces. Devonian Gardens were made possible by a donation from the Devonian Foundation.

1976: Parks Superintendent Harry Boothman died.

1977: Fred McHenry became the new Parks director.

1979: ‘Parks for People’ program began, where citizens and citizen groups help care for and maintain community green spaces, parks and/or flower beds.

1985: The Parks Foundation Calgary was created.

1988: The Adopt-a-Park program began, where citizens and citizen groups help care for and maintain community green spaces, parks and/or flower beds.

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

1988: Ken Bosma became director of Parks.

1990s: Parks’ responsibilities expanded to include water management.

1991: The Pulse on Parks survey was distributed to every Calgary household.

1994: Council approved the Urban Forestry Management Plan which set a target ratio of one tree for every two people in Calgary.

1995: Central Memorial Park was restored, including wireless Internet capability.

1996: Korn Knights became director of Parks.

2000: Parks celebrates 100 years of growth and change, looking onward to the next century of park development including art in Olympic Plaza, geocaching, and special displays and events.

2005: Reader Rock Garden was restored.

2007: Dawn Thorne was appointed acting director for Parks.

2007: Anne Charlan became director of Parks.
The writing of this book was based on an extensive collection of primary and secondary sources. From prairie to park: green spaces in Calgary by Morris Barrachough, published in 1975, and available as a Reference document in the Calgary Public Library (CPL) Local History Room, is the only history of Parks published to date. It covers up to the end of the Harry Boothman period in 1977.

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

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

The role of William Pearce was documented through his personal papers covering the years 1877 to 1930 held by the University of Alberta Archives in Edmonton. These papers include correspondence between Town and City officials and Pearce in which he explains his views on the need for parks development and how they should be developed. His views on parks are also explained in an article by Sue Anne Donaldson entitled William Pearce: his vision of trees, which appeared in the Journal of Garden History. Vol. 3, No. 3. (1983) located at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library in Calgary.

Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa has orders in council which document the donation of land to Calgary for park purposes beginning with what became Mewata Park. The City of Calgary’s first cemetery is the topic of a file in the Department of the Interior Fonds (RG15, Interior, Series D-H-1, Volume 335, File: 83972). This file follows not only the acquisition of the present site of Union Cemetery but also the eventual development of the original site into a park. The history of Union Cemetery is also outlined in Central (Memorial) Park and Reader Rock Garden: the British landscape gardening tradition in Calgary by Rob Graham available at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library. The Reader Rock Garden Reborn is in the Alberta Victor 9:4:44-50 (May 2006) and McNally’s Calgary’s Reader Rock Garden is in Reprint #19 of the Landscape Architectural Review, Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 1990). The Calgary Horticultural Society was the subject of an article in the summer 1998 issue of the Alberta History by Liebeth Leatherbarrow, also at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library. The City of Calgary Archives has the papers of the Calgary Parks Board and the Town Planning Commission covering the period from 1909 to 1914. The 1945 report of the Council of Social Agencies is available at the W.R. Castell Central Library Local History Room collection in Calgary. The history of parks in Calgary for the period 1947–1976 made use of city council records and the Parks Fonds in The City of Calgary Archives along with parks planning documents held by the Calgary Public Library.

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

Calgary Celebrating 100 years of Parks Bibliographical Essay


Additional sources consulted for the period 1910 to 1946 beyond council minutes, bylaws and agreements include the annual reports and operational for files Parks held at The City of Calgary Archives, which deal with such topics as facilities development. The annual reports prepared by William Reader are particularly valuable because they provide detailed information on how specific parks were developed. A series of parks plans are included in the Parks Fonds. The career of William Reader has been the subject of articles by Donna Balzer and Kathleen McNally, both available at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library. Balzer’s The Reader Rock Garden Reborn is in the Alberta Victor 9:4:44-50 (May 2006) and McNally’s Calgary’s Reader Rock Garden is in Reprint #19 of the Landscape Architectural Review, Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 1990). The Calgary Horticultural Society was the subject of an article in the summer 1998 issue of the Alberta History by Liebeth Leatherbarrow, also at the Glenbow Museum Collections & Research Library. The City of Calgary Archives has the papers of the Calgary Parks Board and the Town Planning Commission covering the period from 1909 to 1914. The 1945 report of the Council of Social Agencies is available at the W.R. Castell Central Library Local History Room collection in Calgary. The history of parks in Calgary for the period 1947–1976 made use of city council records and the Parks Fonds in The City of Calgary Archives along with parks planning documents held by the Calgary Public Library.

These include the Louis Hamill report of 1909 entitled Calgary regional parks and recreation study.

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

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


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


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

—John Gilpin, Historian  NOVEMBER 2010
Notes

HISTORIC RESEARCH

John Gilpin
---------
---------
The cover of this book is printed on FSC-certified Beckett Concept manufactured carbon neutral and contains 100% postconsumer recycled fiber. This paper is certified by Green Seal, and by SmartWood in accordance with the rules of Forest Stewardship Council which promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world’s forests.
The Map overlays and front and back fly sheets were printed on Curious Translucent sheets and are FSC-certified.

CARBON NEUTRAL AND WINDPOWER SAVINGS

- 2,816 lbs GHG emissions not generated
- 1,155 windpower savings
- 1,661 carbon offset savings

- 3 barrels fuel oil unused
- 1 windpower savings
- 2 carbon offset savings
equivalent to not driving 2,787 mi
- 1,143 windpower savings
- 1,644 carbon offset savings
equivalent to planting 192 trees
- 79 windpower savings
- 113 carbon offset savings

Technical Notes and Sources

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

FRONT COVER

Women in a potato sack race at Bowness Park, c. 1950s.
Glenbow Archives PA-2453-114

Boys on a tire swing at Sandy Beach Park, 2010.
Photo: The City of Calgary

Glenbow Archives NA-2686-2267

Photo: The City of Calgary

INSIDE FRONT AND BACK COVERS

Historic Map of Township #24, Glenbow Archives.

BACK COVER

Citizens in Riley Park, 1956.
Glenbow Archives NA-6600-8837

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