



Plan for a Public Park on the  
Flats South of Buffalo.

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BROOKLINE, Mass.,  
1st October, 1888.

TO THE PARK COMMISSIONERS:

Sirs,—

We have the honor to submit drawings showing a plan for a park adapted to a site on the shore of Lake Erie, south of the city, as contemplated in a resolution of the Common Council of February, 1887, and in subsequent action of your Commission, recorded in its last Annual Report.<sup>1</sup> For distinction's sake, we shall refer to the proposed park as the South Park, and to your present park as the North Park.<sup>2</sup>

It is believed that many citizens of Buffalo are of the opinion that discussion of the subject of this report might better be deferred until it has been more maturely considered whether the city just now wants to engage in another park enterprise, and whether if it does so, the required park had better be in a place naturally so unattractive within itself as that which you have had in view. Mature consideration can be given to neither of these questions, without a much more definite statement of the project than has hitherto been possible, and a better knowledge than has hitherto been had by the public, of what could be made of the conditions of the locality. What is thus wanting to open a profitable discussion, it is hoped that this report may supply.

Nevertheless a conviction that the project is, at least, premature, must stand much in the way of the patient and candid study necessary to a

just estimation of a plan of character so unusual and so little to be judged by ordinary standards, as that to which your attention will be asked. For this reason we wish, as a preface, to recall certain facts of the recent history of your city.

When, twenty years ago, the bill providing for the North Park was before the State Legislature, an amendment was introduced with an intention of keeping down its cost. Its immediate effect was to compel a few acres of ground to be thrown out, which had before been included in the scheme.<sup>3</sup> Had this not been done, the plan afterwards adopted for laying out the park might have been bettered at nearly all points, but particularly so at one. As soon as the park began to be a place of much popular resort, the need of greater spaciousness at the point referred to became so evident, that at length the City Council united with the Park Commission in asking the Legislature to authorize a portion of the land thrown out under its first action to be annexed to the park. This has since been done, but the cost of taking the annexed land has been about ten times as much as it would have been, but for the delay; the cost of its improvement will be much greater, and the value of the result will be less.<sup>4</sup>

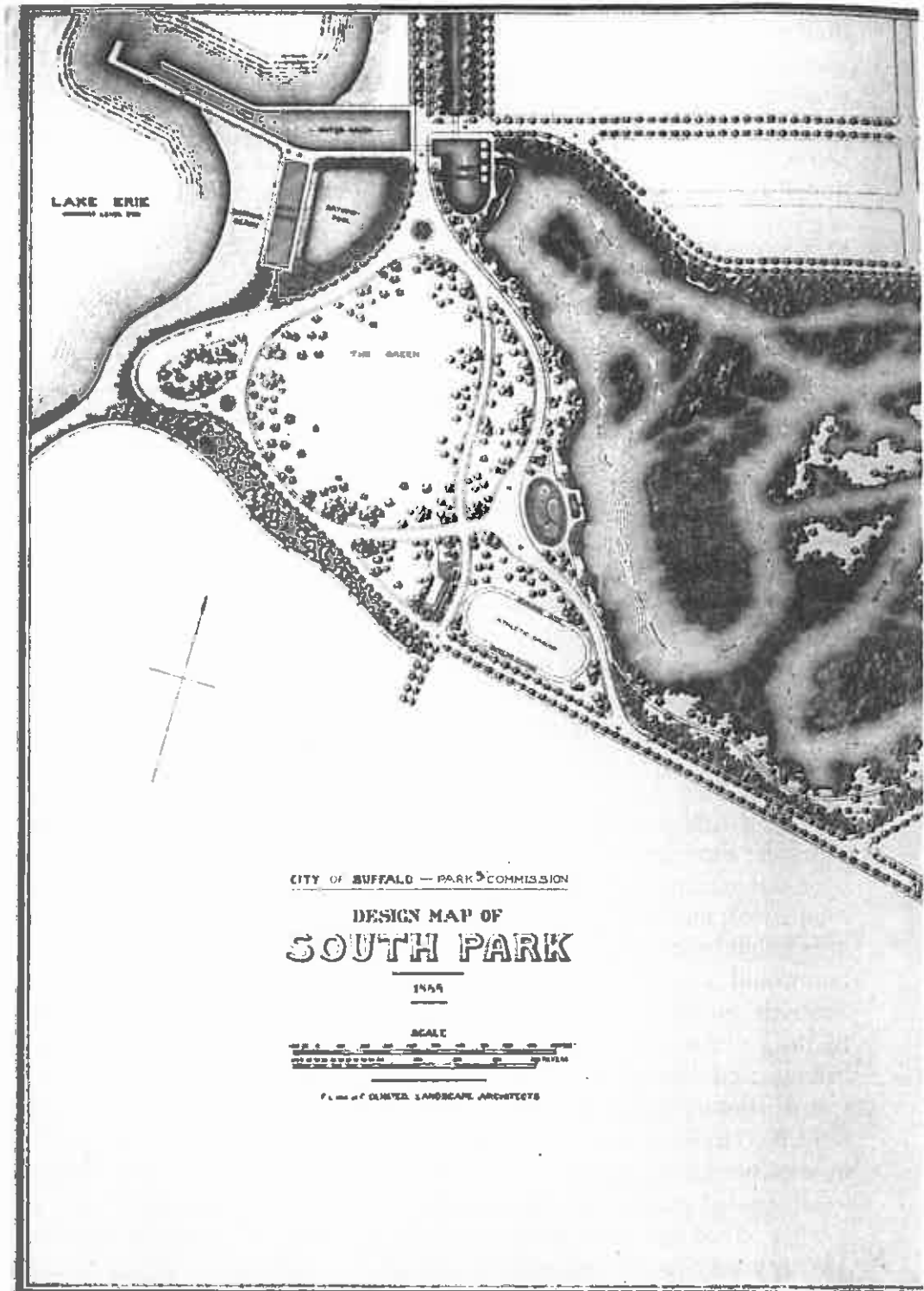
A similar experience, as you are aware, has been had at the Front, proceedings yet being in progress for obtaining additions to the area of your property there, which could have been acquired, at the time of the city's original purchase, at a tenth of what it will cost now.<sup>5</sup>

With these incidents as a guide, it is to be considered what would have occurred if the park movement of twenty years ago had been much delayed.

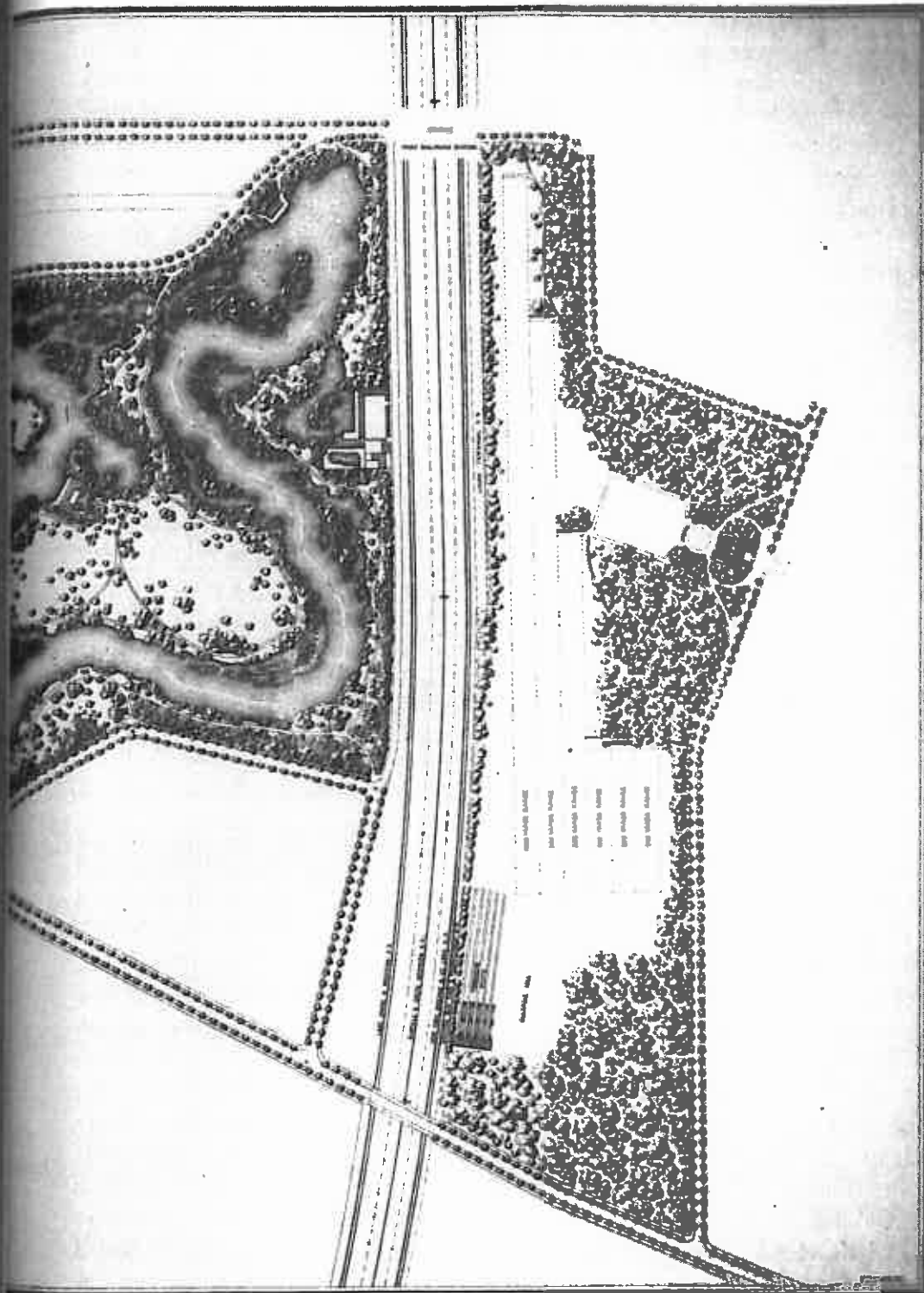
It is likely that if the site of the North Park had not been secured about the time it was, it never would have been. The cemetery might have been extended over a part of it<sup>6</sup> or a new cemetery laid out upon it. The State Insane Hospital, afterwards built on its border, might have been placed upon it, or might have been placed where the buildings and grounds of the institution would have blocked approaches to it from the city.<sup>7</sup> Various structures since erected in the vicinity of it would have been built upon it; the Belt Railroad, shortly afterwards laid out a few hundred feet away, might have been carried through it.<sup>8</sup>

But it is unlikely that the city would have gone without a park to this time. It is almost certain that it would have acquired somewhere else, a much inferior site for it at greater cost for the real estate, and have made a much inferior park upon the site, at much greater cost for the making.

What now is to be anticipated of Buffalo in the next twenty years? Twenty years hence Buffalo will be not only a city of much larger trade, much larger wealth and much larger population, but it will be a city of much more metropolitan character, than, notwithstanding its recent rapid advance in this respect, it has yet come to be. The currents of civilization, which in all metro-



DESIGN MAP OF SOUTH



PARK, BUFFALO, 1888

politan centres have, in modern times, been increasingly manifest, will have been growing correspondingly stronger. The drift of these currents in relation to parks is indicated by the fact that eleven cities of Europe and America have, during the last thirty years, added twenty thousand acres of land to their park properties, and that towns which a few years ago were thought to be particularly well provided, have been recently adding largely to what they had; as London, 6000 acres, New York, 3000, Boston, 700.

The drift being as thus indicated, the question upon which this report bears, is not whether the people of Buffalo require just now more and other park provisions than they have, but whether the people of Buffalo twenty years hence will have required no more and no other? It is wholly probable that in less time than that a considerable additional park will have been required and will have been provided for. If so, it is not to be questioned that going about the business now in a deliberate way, pursuing the same steady, methodical, frugal but efficient methods that have distinguished the proceedings of your Commission from its origin, such additional park provision as will be required may be obtained of a much more valuable character and at much less outlay than it will be, if all effective action toward the result is now staved off indefinitely. This consideration, rather than a conviction of any immediate urgent necessity for an additional park, accounts for such favor as the project has hitherto received from conservative citizens.

There is another consideration, however, that should be allowed a bearing in the same direction, the weight of which is likely to have been duly appreciated only by those who have closely followed the history of older parks in other cities. It may be presented in this way: —

Your present North Park is rarely well adapted to certain quiet forms of recreation, favoring a contemplative or musing turn of mind and restful refreshment. It is not in the least larger than it should be for a park designed to that end, and in a single park of its size, provision for no other end is more desirable for a city. But it is not always that merely soothing, out-of-door refreshment is wanted. Occasionally by all, but oftenest by those who pass most of their time in monotonous occupations and amid sombre surroundings, tranquilizing natural scenes are less demanded than those by which gayety, liveliness, and a slight spirit of adventure are stimulated. This being the case, it is inevitable that an inclination will arise, and year by year increase, to have better provision made for the purpose on the North Park. It will follow that unless comprehensive provision for it is soon undertaken elsewhere, you will be constrained to meet the requirement by a succession of small, feeble, imperfect and desultory interpolations upon the design of the North Park. An unconsciously indulged tendency in that direction has, we think, already been manifest in the minds of some of your number. If it should continue and spread, the North Park will come in time to lose the character in which otherwise it will, year after year, be gaining, and by which

it would take a more and more distinguished position among the parks of the world, while, because not having been broadly designed for anything else, it can be made respectable in no other character. Thus the question now to be decided may be this:

*Twenty years hence shall Buffalo have one park, of a poor, confused character, or two, each of a good, distinct character?*

Assuming that it is wise that the City should soon enter upon proceedings looking to the acquisition, in good time, of another park, and of a park which shall have a character essentially different from that of the park which it set about obtaining twenty years ago, argument will hardly be needed to make the following conclusions acceptable:—

1st. Buffalo owes its importance as a city to its position on Lake Erie. It has in Lake Erie really great natural scenery. It has no other, and can have no other to be compared with it in value. It has no work of art and can have no work of art that will compare with it in value. Having made no use of its good fortune in this particular for the aggrandizement of its first large park, it ought not, except for absolutely\*conclusive reasons, to fail of making use of it in its second. The new park should be in a position to annex to itself the grandeur of Lake Erie.

2d. The situation of the first park having secured much greater advantages of access and use to those who would visit it in carriages upon common roads, than those who could come to it only by other means of transit, it will be better, in fixing the place and determining the plan of the second park, that special regard should be given to the point of providing inexpensive, convenient and agreeable means of access to it and conveyance within it, independently of ordinary road vehicles.

The site which we were specially invited by your Board to consider,<sup>9</sup> has the following obvious advantages:—

1st. It looks upon the Lake.

2d. There is navigable water and there are four lines of railway already in operation, and others contemplated, between the place and the heart of the city.

3d. To acquire the site, nothing of importance would have to be paid for buildings or other improvements. The land as a whole has little productive value, and probably none as near the heart of the city has had as little commercial or speculative value.\*

\* It has another grand advantage which will be better stated in our report on the parkway question.<sup>10</sup>

There are, however, serious objections to the locality, — serious difficulties to be overcome before a park can be made of it. They may be indicated as follows: —

Of the area proposed to be taken, the surface of nine-tenths is almost perfectly flat. Upon this larger part there are no trees growing, no rocks, no natural features of value for a park. Its surface is but a little above the ordinary surface of the water in Lake Erie. It is below the level to which the Lake occasionally rises. It is consequently imperfectly drained and not only half swampy at all times, but liable at intervals to be completely submerged. The difficulties growing out of these circumstances are aggravated by the fact, that below the gravel beach and the low shifting sand dunes that form the apparent lake shore, there is a stratum two feet thick or more of rotten vegetation in the form of black muck, which is easily washed out, undermining the beach. On this account the shore is rapidly wasting and the lake encroaching upon the land. Finally, there is no natural protection or facility of any kind for landing from boats on the Lake.

The weight of these objections to the site being realized, it will be seen that the first question in a discussion of a plan must be this: — By what devices, if any, can the objections to the site be so far overruled that a result of any attempted improvement of it can be looked for, that shall not have cost more than it will be worth?

This was found to be so difficult a question, that we were for a period in doubt whether we ought not to advise you to give up the idea of a Lake shore site, and we accordingly took upon ourselves the duty of examining all the southerly borders of the City in search of a site that we might recommend you to consider in place of it.

Our conclusion, however, at last came to be, that unless an excessive price would have to be paid for the site on the Lake shore, it would be wise to adopt it, and undertake to overcome its disadvantages by means, the general nature of which will presently be indicated. We believe that a park can be made upon this site which, for all time, will be of greater value to the city than any park possible to be made in any other situation as near to the city's centre.

We must now ask your attention to the drawing with the title of "Design-Map," which represents what a map of the park would be, should the plan be carried out. On the left is Lake Erie; at the bottom the "Ridge Road" as proposed to be widened and improved; near the right hand border appear a series of parallel railroad lines.

For the present, only that part between the railroads and the lake is to be considered. The extent of this part is about 240 acres, and about nine-tenths of it lies below the surface of the lake at high stages. There is, however,

a narrow strip of ground on the south side, and a larger space on the west side, where the surface is several feet higher, and these elevations, with the embankment already constructed for the railroads on the east, leave the tract subject to flooding from without only on the north and a short distance on the west side. A levee four and a half feet high along this unprotected line will, therefore, shut the lake water out of the entire area. Suitable material for its construction is found in a stratum of clay two feet below the surface, on and adjoining the line of required protection. Looking at the map it is to be supposed that the planted sidewalk of the street adjoining the northern border of the park, is made upon such a levee.

With reference to the difficulty of landing from boats on the lake, adequate provision for very large boats is not important; frequent trips of numerous boats of a smaller class being more desirable than trips of large boats at longer intervals. This for the reason not only that less time will be wasted by visitors at the starting point, but that a large throng thrown all at once from a boat into a pleasure ground, is a dangerous and inconvenient occurrence. For boats of the length of those now mostly used for public pleasure excursions from Buffalo, an artificial haven is proposed to be formed; entrance to it being between two parallel piers extending to a point on the lake, where at low stages, there can be had without dredging, a depth of water of seven feet. Such a structure, to be thoroughly secure, will be costly but well worth its cost.

With regard to inroads of the lake, a firm sand bank may be expected to form on the south side of the piers, which, so far as it extends, will protect the wasting shore. How far such a bank will extend cannot be accurately determined in advance. If it is inadequate for the protection of the entire shore of the park, it may be supplemented by a riprap wall, the boulders for the construction of which can be gathered near by. If this is insufficient the method can be adopted which has been successfully used for the protection of the property of the Lehigh Valley Railway Company nearer the city.<sup>11</sup>

We shall now describe other parts of the plan.

As before stated, there is a body of land in the southwest part of the tract, the surface of which is several feet above high-water level of the lake. The old Hamburg turnpike passes through it;<sup>12</sup> there are several dwellings upon it, the soil is good and much of it is cultivated as a market garden. It is proposed to make as much of this ground as practicable, into a single park-like body of turf, with scattered trees upon its margin. It is designated The Green, will be about twenty acres in area, and is expected to be commonly used as a general playground. Upon occasions it will be a good place for parades, exhibitions, balloon ascensions, and public ceremonies. Near it, where the upland is narrower, there is to be an Athletic ground, with a running and bicycling track and an out-of-door Gymnasium, three acres in extent.



Between the Athletic Ground and the Green there is a pleasant dwelling house, the old Crocker Mansion,<sup>13</sup> which it is proposed to retain and improve. In this would be rooms for the deposit of dressing and playing gear and other conveniences, for those using the Athletic Ground and the Green. Near the house the map shows, also, a range of public horse-sheds.

A road for general traffic across the park, is shown on the eastern limit of the Green. It will take the place of the Hamburg turnpike, the line of which it nearly follows.

A proper pleasure road, with broad bordering walks mainly in the shade of trees, will be seen making a circuit of the Green, with liberal curves and liberal turning places. On one side of the circuit this road will command a broad view up Lake Erie, on the other a broad view over the park water. Where these views will be seen to the best advantage, there are expansions of the drives, and places arranged for people both in carriages and on foot to congregate. On the west side of the Green a minor circuit road is introduced, and the junctions are made so large that there can be a circulation of carriages about the point where the lake and the breeze from over the lake can be best enjoyed. On the east side, where the best lines of view over the park water are to be had, there is a standing place for carriages, and near it a large aquatic garden, for growing choice water-plants.

Where the lake beach is likely to be finest, owing to the packing of sand to the windward of the Pier, a bathing establishment is provided for. From its dressing rooms, bathers would pass on one side to the surf beach of the lake; as at the Newport and Long Branch bathing places, or that of Rochester on Lake Ontario, and Detroit on Belle Isle;<sup>14</sup> on the other side they would pass to the beach of a still-water bathing pool. In the latter, the water being shallow and brought from the shallow waters of the park, although constantly flowing, would be heated above the temperature of the lake, by the sun, and it is intended for the use of delicate persons and children, and as a swimming school. But about this feature of the plan, until the effect of building the pier is determined, there must be some doubt. At present the material of the peaty stratum before referred to, washing out from the shore makes the beach unattractive for bathing. It is confidently hoped that the defect may be remedied. If it cannot, surf-bathing as a feature of the park must be abandoned, but a still-water bathing place can, by a slight modification of the plan, be provided in the interior park waters.

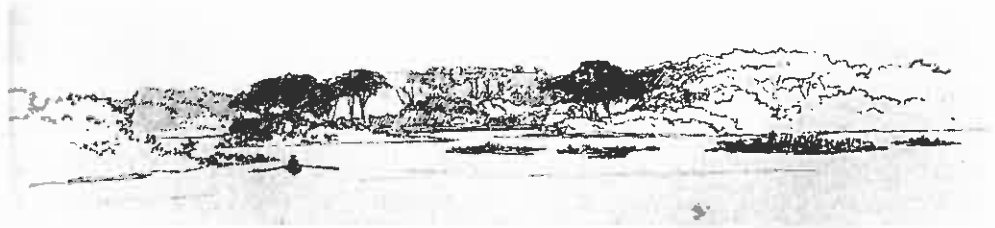
All the arrangements of the plan thus far considered are situated at the west end of the site and either upon the naturally high ground, or upon ground in connection with the beach which is to be protected and kept above the lake level by the pier.

There remains to be laid out about 180 acres of the low, flat, more or less swampy land to be protected by embankment from being occasionally submerged by the lake. What we propose for this is that it shall, in the first

place, be thrown into ridges and furrows, mounds and hollows, the material taken from the depressions forming the elevations, being heaped for the purpose upon intervals of flat land left between them. The ridges being often discontinued, so that the furrows will wind round the ends of them, and water being then let in to a suitable height, the result will be a body of water nearly a mile in length and a third in breadth, within which the elevations will form islands, savannas, capes and peninsulas.

The required water is expected to be drawn from Cazenovia Creek<sup>15</sup> by gravity, either through the canal which has been projected for the relief of the Thirteenth ward from floods,<sup>16</sup> or if that and all similar schemes should be abandoned, by two miles of tile pipe laid for the purpose. The water thus brought would flow first through the park, then into the still-water bathing pool, and thence between the piers into the Lake. The islands of the park water are to be of varied form and extent, and it has been a principal part of our study to so contrive them, that when overgrown by suitably designed verdure and foliage, they will, with the waters upon their borders, form pleasing landscape compositions of a natural character.

The half-decayed vegetable matter which forms the surface of the ground, having been thrown up, exposed to frost and aerated, will make the principal part of a deep, rich mould on the surface of the islands. This mould kept moist by the adjoining water, and the water shallow and heated by the sun, the conditions will be favorable to types of vegetation, such as it is rare to see profusely displayed in nature except at much inconvenience to the observer and in close association with disagreeable elements, and which it is still rarer to see exhibited in a large and intricate way in works of gardening.



By varying the conditions, so that the water will at points be comparatively shallow and at others deep, and the land at points low and at others high, the shores here abrupt, there gently inclined; giving them, sometimes the form of beaches, at others of banks, and the banks being at some places shaded by trees, at some overgrown by bushes, at some dressed with turf, at some hidden by rushes, flags, irises and other waterside plants, an extended series of interesting passages of scenery will result. At intervals there will open long vistas over water under broad leafy canopies; there will be coves completely over-arched with foliage, forming verdant grottoes; some of the islands will be large enough to have within them spacious forest glades; some will be low and

densely wooded, their shores so shallow that boats cannot land upon them, and their skirts so hedged with thickets as to be impenetrable. These will be nurseries for song birds, where their nestlings will have protection from natural enemies. The waters will everywhere abound with water-fowl, for the breeding of which other islands, unapproachable by visitors, will be set apart.<sup>17</sup> They will be navigated largely by a special class of boats gaily painted and gilded, decorated by day with bright awnings and bunting, and at night with colored lights. Small electric lights will also at night mark out the shores, the electricity to be supplied from storage batteries charged by dynamos to be run by windmills, for the use of which the locality has special advantages.



The largest of the islands shown on the drawing is to be reached in a two minutes' walk from the entrance of the park, over a short foot bridge. It will be twenty acres in area, or more than twice as large as that portion of the North Park hitherto used for picnics, and is intended to be used in a similar manner. Its surface is to be mainly four or five feet above the level of the water; it is to be planted with large-growing umbrageous trees, chiefly near the shores, and its central parts are to be open spaces of turf. There is to be a refectory upon it with the usual conveniences for picnic parties. There are to be swings and other resources of recreation; sand parks and means of amusement for infants and little children. There is to be a landing for boats bringing passengers entering the park from the land side.

The three islands near the centre of the map, being the largest of all except that last described, are to be of the same general character. Each is to have a landing, and to be entered upon only at the landing, bars below the surface preventing boats from coming elsewhere to the shores. The landings are also to be barred at will. These three islands vary from one and a half to two and a half acres in area, and are to be assigned as there may be occasion, on application in advance, each for the exclusive use for a day, or part of a day, of picnic parties that may prefer to be secured from intruders. Thus family and club entertainments may be given upon them, or a charitable society may take one as a place for a day's outing of a body of children or the conva-



lescents of a hospital. They may be used, as parts of the parks of Paris are much used, for wedding parties, or for the anniversary festivals of all manner of associations. The outlooks from these picnic islands will be particularly attractive, and quite unlike anything to be had from the places which have usually to be accepted for such occasions.

But it is impossible to convey much idea of what it would be sensible to expect in respect to the local scenery to be enjoyed from them, or in any part of the park waters or their shores. No example of a realized design of such a character can be pointed to. Growing largely out of the peculiar conditions of the locality and the distinctive requirements upon the designers, the result would be a park of unique character. To judge the plan in this respect, free play must therefore be given the imagination. The bird's-eye view and the sketches we set before you, are designed to give a general direction to the imagination, but even in this respect they must be regarded as but crudely and distantly suggestive.



Looking upon the ground as it now appears, there may be a doubt whether what we have said does not represent a day-dream of impracticably romantic character? As to this we may reasonably take it upon ourselves to say, that if twenty years ago, one standing at a certain great piggery, slaughter and pork packing house, and looking over a nauseous and dismal swamp on the northern outskirts of your city, had read a description of what was actually to be seen from the same place ten years afterwards, such a doubt would have been much more reasonable. In truth, the processes to be used for realizing the design which we are now trying to suggest, so far as the production of effects of natural scenery is concerned, will be simpler and surer, and, in this sense, of a more practical character, than those used to bring about the existing water-side scenery of the North Park.

Your attention is now asked to that part of the tract represented by the map, which lies east of the railroad embankment and six to eight hundred feet from the park water. It is suggested that on this ground a Rifle Range should be established, not necessarily as an integral part of the park, but as a public institution which may be, to the extent indicated, advantageously associated with the Park. At present the Rifle Range for the militia of Western New York is a leased ground ten miles from Buffalo.<sup>18</sup> The lease of it is soon to expire, and officers have been looking for a ground elsewhere, less open to certain objections than the present ground has been found to be.

The proposition to use this ground adjoining the park has been submitted to some of these officers and received their warm approval. In their opinion there would be no danger of bullets straying from it; the conditions would be more favorable for accurate shooting than they are at the present ground, and the multiplied means of transportation between the locality and the city, with the saving of time, expense and inconvenience that they would secure, would make the arrangement a desirable one.

As the adoption of this division of the plan must be contingent upon action of the State authorities, and as details of the military part of it must be approved by a military board, we shall not here dwell upon them. The breadth of the range, as shown on the plan, is greater than that of the present range, partly with a view to the larger numbers of the military forces that may be expected to resort to it in the future; partly that there may be accommodations upon it for sharp-shooting by civilians. There is a pleasant grove upon the ground under which there may be tables for refreshments; there is room for a small camp-ground, and positions for a mess-house, officers', armorer's and sutler's quarters are indicated.

Our suggestion is that the Range should be owned by the city, and such use of it as may be required leased to the State. If this is approved, it would be used as a range only in summer, and we propose that in winter the larger part of the ground shall be flooded, forming a skating pond, and that

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upon the southern hill-side toboggan and coasting courses shall be formed leading to lanes upon the ice, guarded from the incursion of skaters. Skating and sledding on the waters of the park proper are to be avoided, because of the destruction involved to the shrubbery and plants along the shores.

One advantage of placing the Rifle Range in the vicinity of the park, is that those visiting it, added to those visiting the park, would give reason for better railroad service than there might otherwise be between the locality and the city. There are four railroads passing from the city to a point between the northeast corner of the park and the northwest corner of the Range, and from this point passengers may be conveyed to the central station of the railroads in the city in ten minutes.

A bridge for general street business over the railroads will eventually be necessary at this point, and in connection with it a passenger station common to all the railroads is assumed. From this station to a boat on the park on the one side, and to the Range on the other, will be but a minute's walk.

We shall make a separate report to you on the question of approaches to the Park. For the purpose of this report it is only necessary to say, that besides the approaches by rail and carriage to the northeast corner just referred to, the plan takes into account probable approaches in the future by inside and outside boats, carriage-road and street railroad at the northwest corner. It is presumed that many people will come to one of these entrances, pass through the park by boat and return to the city from the other; also that many will come by one of them, make the tour of the park by boat and return from the same entrance at which they arrived. In either case, their chief enjoyment of the park would be while afloat, and the designed boating arrangements of the park are of critical importance.

Before describing them, it may be observed that wherever any considerable advantages for boating are offered in a park, the use of them has proved to be exceedingly popular. The principal park of Stockholm is accessible only by boats,<sup>19</sup> and besides those used by the public in general, many citizens have private boats which are used by their families, as private carriages in parks elsewhere. The park at Detroit is accessible only by boats, and it is noticed that many visitors never land from them.<sup>20</sup> In the Philadelphia park several small steamboats are in use, besides a large fleet of row boats.<sup>21</sup> In Boston harbor there are six hundred pleasure boats in use, not including row boats or a large fleet of small fishing craft often used for pleasure. The city is now building an iron pier at a cost of two hundred thousand dollars as a single feature of a haven, to be exclusively used as a mooring place for pleasure boats.<sup>22</sup>

It has been a surprise to us that Lake Erie is no more used than it is by Buffalonians for this manly and wholesome form of recreation; we believe that the reason must be the lack of places pleasant to visit by boat within convenient distance of the creek. The use of the row boats on the North

Park, shows that under favorable circumstances there is as much fondness for boating in Buffalo as in any city.

In the South Park plan, land, water and plantations have been disposed not only with regard to landscape beauty to be best enjoyed from boats, but with a view to prevent any swell from occurring, so that boats can never run out of still water. The islands are so disposed that, without much appearance of it to those in boats, they will practically be kept to water-roads, a hundred and fifty feet wide, and in navigating them the ordinary rule of land roads, "keep to the right," will apply. For an additional precaution against collisions, care is taken in the plan that where bends of the channel occur between one reach of water and another, the point of land to be turned will bear no foliage that will prevent the boatmen from seeing over it. The water is expected to be nowhere beyond a man's depth. The course of the channels is such, that while a direct line from the northeast to the southwest landing would measure but 1000 yards, the route to be taken by a boat would be 4000 yards. The length of the round trip would be nearly four miles. Rapid movement of the boats would not be desirable; the time occupied in a round trip of a steam launch, including stoppages at five landings, might be three-quarters of an hour.

Row boats, canoes and small steam yachts for private parties are expected to be used. For the conveyance of the public in general, however, regular lines of packet boats are had in view. For the propulsion of these, the circumstances are particularly favorable to the use either of electric or of compressed air engines, but steam or naphtha engines will be available.

The packet boats would be broader, roomier and stiffer than ordinary steam launches. Making but short trips they would carry little fuel. Never running out of still water they would need no decks. Boats of twenty-five feet length accordingly, would be spacious for the conveyance each of sixteen passengers under an awning. Each boat would be well managed by one man, who would have police authority, and the boat police thus provided, constantly reviewing as it would, all the waters, would see that suitable regulations were observed in other boats as well as in the packets.<sup>23</sup>

The cost of a water carriage of the class proposed, with efficient machinery, will be less than that of any style of land carriage fitted to convey the same number of passengers with anything like equal comfort and luxury; it would be half the cost of a good hackney coach that would carry a fourth part of the number. Its ordinary running expenses would be but a trifle more than the pay of the boatman. Plying in the manner of omnibuses or street cars, with five-cent fares, a numerous fleet of such water carriages would be profitably employed.

The most weighty objection to the scheme as it has been thus presented will doubtless be its costliness, and its costliness will be felt chiefly through comparison with that of the North Park. Therefore it should not be

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forgotten that the North Park has been obtained at exceptionally low cost. We know of no other park with which comparison could be at all fairly made that has not cost twice as much.

There have been two reasons for this:

First, a smaller number of requirements were sought to be provided for in the North Park than there usually have been in others, and it was practicable to adjust to the natural topography a simple plan for securing what was attempted, so that the item of grading has been comparatively insignificant. In the New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Boston, Montreal, Albany and Bridgeport parks, for example, the grading of walks and roads with their immediate borders, has probably cost, on an average, more than twenty times as much as it has in your North Park.

Second, the greater part of the work on the North Park has been done under circumstances unusually favorable to economy, steadily; with freedom from political embarrassments; mainly by unskilled labor, at comparatively low wages, and under the unbroken direct superintendence of one man of unusual zeal, industry and competency for his duty, enjoying your confidence in such degree that he could plan his operations well in advance and carry them on with decision, discipline and method, such as is rarely practicable on our public works.<sup>24</sup>

The Rifle Range is not an essential part of the plan for the park, and as your action upon the proposition for it will necessarily wait on action of the military representatives of the State, we shall not regard it in what we have to say of the cost of the park.

As to the market value of the site for the park, we find men who should be well-informed varying in their estimates by more than a hundred per cent., and we need only repeat what we said at the beginning of this report, that if the city is ever going to want another park, there is no other body of land which can be taken for it that will not probably be more costly than this. Certainly there is none on the Lake shore. It is of much less intrinsic value than the land of the North Park. Very little of it is fit for cultivation or for a dwelling place, while that at the North Park was the choicest near the city either for agriculture or for healthful residence. Had the North Park not been made, and it was now a question of the choice of sites for a park, the North Park site would undoubtedly be much the more costly.

Assuming that the wages of labor and the prices of materials are to remain as at present, and that work is to proceed about as rapidly and as steadily as it did on the North Park, we calculate that to complete the South Park as planned, an average outlay for ten years will be needed of sixty-two thousand dollars a year, or about thirty per cent. more than the outlay made during the same period upon the North Park.



A more important question than that of the cost of construction is that of the constant cost to keep the park when made in good order. In all the principal items of maintenance, the work required for this purpose would be considerably less than that required for corresponding items in the North Park. The North Park is about a third larger in area than the South Park is proposed to be, and of its area more than twice as much will be occupied by water. Water-space costs less than any other in a park to take care of. The extent of road and walk space will be less in the South than in the North Park. The distances to which materials, such as gravel and sand, must be carried will be less. On the whole, the cost of maintaining the South Park would probably be less by about a quarter than that of the North Park.

We have thus indicated what we believe the undertaking would cost the city. You will consider whether the result would justify the cost. In our opinion there is better reason to think that it would, than there was twenty years ago that the undertaking of the North Park would be so generally conceded as it now is, to have been entered upon discreetly and providently.

Respectfully,

F. L. & J. C. OLMSTED,  
Landscape Architects.

The original was published in City of Buffalo. Park Commission, *The Projected Park and Parkways on the South Side of Buffalo. Two Reports by the Landscape Architects.* 1888 (Buffalo, N.Y., 1888), pages 3-26.

1. On February 28, 1887, citizens living in the Thirteenth Ward, located in the southeastern portion of the city, petitioned the Common Council for an extension of the park system through their ward to the shore of Lake Erie. On the same day the council adopted a resolution providing for the extension of the park system to the lake shore and referred it to the park board. The park board in turn requested Olmsted to visit the site of a possible park and also to determine the possibilities of extending Fillmore Avenue south and using it as a parkway to the new park. Olmsted visited the site on March 22 and 23, 1887, and on March 31 submitted a letter to the park board advocating a lake-shore park but cautioning the board against premature decisions regarding a parkway (*Buffalo Express*, March 1, 1887, p. 6; *ibid*, March 24, 1887, p. 5; "Park Commissioners' Report," in City of Buffalo. Park Commission, *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners. January, 1888* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1888], pp. 8-9; "Proposed Extension of the Park System," in *ibid*, pp. 32-39).
2. That is, the Park (Delaware Park) for which Olmsted and Calvert Vaux prepared plans in 1870. The first published plan for the Park appeared in the Buffalo park commissioners *First Annual Report* (1871) (see OVC to William Edward Dorsheimer, Oct. 1, 1868, above).
3. While the bill authorizing creation of a park system in Buffalo was before the New York state legislature in early 1869, a provision was added to it requiring that one-fifth of the land acquired for the system be east of Jefferson Street. That street had marked the eastern boundary of the system as proposed by Olmsted and Vaux in 1868. To

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comply with the law as passed, they had to reduce the area of Delaware Park west of Jefferson Street (City of Buffalo. Common Council, *Minutes*, Feb. 8, 1869, p. 81; *Buffalo Express*, Feb. 11, 1869, p. 20; New York [State], *Laws of the State of New York, Passed at the Ninety-Second Session of the Legislature . . .* [Albany, N.Y., 1869], chap. 165; City of Buffalo. Park Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners. January, 1886* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1886], p. 18; see OVC to William Edward Dorsheimer, Oct. 1, 1868, above).

4. In 1874 Olmsted sent a communication to the park board entreating it to purchase approximately ten acres of land on the southern border of the park that had been discarded when the park act was passed. Olmsted wrote,

Your Commission was advised at the time that this reduction was a very unfortunate one, chiefly because, after pinching the ground on the north side of the water as much as possible without abandoning the design, it was still necessary, in order to conform to the law, to throw out some ten acres of land on the south side of the water previously intended to be included in the Park and which for many years to come would be more valuable than any other.

I have several times since suggested to the Commission that application should be made to the Legislature for an Act providing a remedy for this misfortune, and in the light of the experience of the year now closing, I beg to renew that advice with earnestness. The ground in question is a part of a grove of well-grown beeches and maples, upon a nearly level surface, and there is no other ground in or near any of your parks or places which for twenty years to come will be equally well adapted for large picnic parties.

Not until 1883 did the park board request an appropriation to purchase the land in question. The following year the state legislature passed an act for the purchase of twelve acres adjacent to the park and bounded by Lincoln Parkway, Delaware Avenue, and Forest Avenue. In 1887 the land was appraised at \$50,000, which was \$20,000 above the purchase price authorized by the law. The landowners, however, agreed to accept \$30,000, providing the city would repay them for the taxes that they had paid on the land during the previous two years while the proceedings had been pending, as well as the interest on the amount for the same time period, the total amounting to \$4,204.68. The original park land when purchased in 1870 cost the city approximately \$657 an acre, and the additional twelve acres purchased in 1887 cost \$2,833 per acre (City of Buffalo. Park Commission, *First Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners. January, 1871* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1871], p. 7; *idem*, *Fifth Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners. January, 1875* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1875], pp. 11-12; *idem*, *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners. January, 1884* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1884], pp. 9-10; *idem*, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners. January, 1885* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1885], pp. 15-16; *idem*, *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners. January, 1887* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1887], pp. 10-11).

5. The same year that the state legislature passed a law providing for the purchase of additional land for Delaware Park, it also passed a law for the purchase of twenty additional acres for the Front. In that case, however, years of litigation prevented the city from acquiring all of the land until 1890. It cost the city \$109,479 for twenty acres or \$5,474 an acre compared to \$657 per acre in 1870 (*idem*, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners*, pp. 14-15; *idem*, *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners. January, 1891* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1891], p. 13; for a description of the Front, see OVC to William Edward Dorsheimer, Oct. 1, 1868, and n. 11, above).
6. That is, Forest Lawn Cemetery, which adjoins Delaware Park on the south (see OVC to William Edward Dorsheimer, Oct. 1, 1868, n. 12, above).

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7. The site for the Buffalo State Hospital for the Insane was approved by the city's Common Council on November 1, 1869, the same day it approved the selection of land for the Park. In fact, the asylum did take up an area south of the western end of Delaware Park where Olmsted in his report of 1868 intended to build a parkway that would connect with streets leading to the Front. Olmsted and Calvert Vaux designed a plan for the asylum in July 1871. In the mid-1870s Olmsted provided plans and planting lists for the grounds (City of Buffalo. Common Council, *Minutes*, Nov. 1, 1869, pp. 715-16, 725-29; "Preliminary Suggestions for the Grounds of the Buffalo State Hospital for the Insane," [July 7, 1871] [*Papers of FLO*, 6: 452-56]).
8. The Belt Line, built in 1883, was Buffalo's first mass-transportation system and consisted of a fifteen-mile railroad loop designed to transport passengers around the outskirts of the city. The line was a branch of the New York Central Railroad and provided service of two trains an hour in each direction (Richard C. Brown and Bob Watson, *Buffalo: Lake City in Niagara Land* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1981], pp. 10-11, 150-51).
9. The site of the proposed park was an area located on the shore of Lake Erie on the southern border of Buffalo. The site included part of Buffalo's Thirteenth Ward and part of the town of West Seneca (Frederick Law Olmsted, "Proposed Extension of the Park System," April 11, 1887, in City of Buffalo. Park Commission, *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Buffalo Park Commissioners*, p. 32).
10. Published with the South Park report was a companion document entitled "Report on the South Parkway Question." In this document Olmsted noted that the South Park site had distinct advantages in that it could be easily approached by water.

Plantations having been grown on the borders of the canal, there would, by this process, have been prepared a pleasant water-avenue, providing a direct inside passage for boats between the park and the lower wharves of Buffalo Creek. The western slope of the levee would be everywhere washed by the waters of the lake, and in passing along the parkway upon it, the full expanse of the lake, clear to the horizon, would be open to view. It would thus form a superb promenade, and as it would be crossed by no streets, but be bordered by a belt of wood on one side and by the lake on the other, it would in effect bring the park a mile and a half nearer the city; that is to say, within two miles of the City Hall (F. L. & J. C. Olmsted, "Report on the South Parkway Question," in *Projected Park and Parkways on the South Side of Buffalo*, pp. 18-19).

11. The Lehigh Valley Railway Company's property was located just north of the proposed site for South Park. The company had purchased the 320-acre Tiffit farm in 1880. The property provided the company additional room to construct a system of slips connected to the City Ship Canal as well as wharves and storage yards. The company had constructed a levee to protect its holdings from high water (Henry Wayland Hill, ed., *Municipality of Buffalo, New York: A History, 1720-1923*, 4 vols. [New York, 1923], 2: 775; see also F. L. & J. C. Olmsted, "Report on the South Parkway Question," in *Projected Park and Parkways on the South Side of Buffalo*, pp. 17-18).
12. The old Hamburg turnpike followed a north-south route along the shore of Lake Erie between Hamburg, New York, and Buffalo. The turnpike became Ohio Street north of Buffalo Creek in Buffalo's Thirteenth Ward (Matthews, Northrup & Co., *New Map of the City of Buffalo & Erie County* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1886]).
13. A house belonging to "L. Crocker" at the western end of Ridge Road in West Seneca, probably the property of Lemuel L. Crocker (c. 1830-1885), a Buffalo businessman (*Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, March 28, 1885, p. 3; F. W. Beers & Co., *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Erie Co., New York* [New York, 1880]; *Buffalo Express*, Feb. 1, 1887, p. 6).
14. Newport, Rhode Island, and Long Branch, New Jersey, were two popular sea-side

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- resort communities that provided ample bathing facilities for their visitors. The bath houses were separate accommodations from the hotels and boarding houses and were located along the beach. Guests entered from the landward side, changed into appropriate bathing costumes, and exited onto the beach. By the mid-1880s Rochester, New York, could boast of several resorts with bathing facilities along Lake Ontario including Summerville, White City, and Charlotte Beach. At Detroit's Belle Isle, Olmsted proposed a similar arrangement to that of Buffalo with a bathing establishment being constructed on the north side of the island and east of the "City Fair" section (*A Guide to Narragansett Bay . . .* [Providence, R.I., 1878], p. 67; Blake McKelvey, *Rochester: The Flower City, 1855-1890* [Cambridge, Mass., 1949], p. 353; Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Park for Detroit* [Brookline, Mass., 1882], p. 55).
15. Cazenovia Creek was located west of the proposed site of South Park. It flowed in a northwesterly direction and entered Buffalo Creek in the city's Thirteenth Ward at White Corners Plank Road (*New Map of the City of Buffalo*).
  16. In an effort to reduce the damage done to property in the Thirteenth Ward from constant flooding, the Common Council passed a resolution on February 28, 1887, to appropriate a strip of land 200 feet wide from Cazenovia Creek at the junction of Potters Corners and Abbotts Corners plank roads to Lake Erie for the purposes of building a canal. Surveys estimated that the canal would be about 2½ miles long and cost \$185,000 to build. The project was never carried out (*Buffalo Express*, March 1, 1887, p. 6; *ibid.*, March 10, 1887, p. 5).
  17. Other of Olmsted's designs provided for the creation of islands unapproachable by visitors but to be used by birds for nesting. Chicago's South Park and Boston's Back Bay were two such examples. Olmsted also intended that these locations be well stocked with waterfowl, taken from the region's lakes and rivers, if possible, and domesticated for the purpose (OVC, "Report Accompanying Plan for Laying Out the South Park," March 1871, pp. 227-28, above; "City Document No. 15," in City of Boston. Department of Parks, *Fifth Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston* [Boston, 1881], p. 13).
  18. The rifle range was situated in Bay View, on the shore of Lake Erie eight miles south of Buffalo. The range was owned by the Bay View Rifle Association and used by both the 65th and 74th New York militia regiments (*Pauls' Dictionary of Buffalo . . .* [Buffalo, N.Y., 1896], p. 13).
  19. That is, the Djurgården (deer park) (see FLO, *A Consideration of the Justifying Value of a Public Park*, [1881], n. 29, above).
  20. That is, Belle Isle in Detroit (see FLO, *Belle Isle: One Year After*, June 1884, above).
  21. Ample facilities were provided for pleasure boating in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. Steamboat landings as well as rowboats for hire were stationed along the Schuylkill River and provided access to and boating on the park (*Visitors' Guide to the Centennial Exhibition and Philadelphia* [Philadelphia, 1876], p. 46).
  22. Olmsted had provided the city of Boston with a plan for Pleasure Bay (Marine Park) in 1883. The park was to be laid out at City Point in South Boston and would incorporate Castle Island by a causeway on the northeast. On the southeast a long pier was planned for promenading. A wooden pier was first constructed and immediately became popular with Boston residents. Later an iron pier was built as an extension of the wooden one, making the pier 1,300 feet in length. Work on the iron pier was underway at the time Olmsted wrote this report, but it was not completed until the 1890s (Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System* [Cambridge, Mass., 1982], pp. 91-93; Rand, McNally & Co.'s, *Handy Guide to Boston and Environs* [Chicago, 1898], p. 50; City of Boston. Department of Parks, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners for the Year 1890* [Boston, 1891], p. 20).
  23. On the lagoons and canals at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Olmsted realized his vision of awning-covered electric launches. He sailed to En-

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gland in the summer of 1892, traveling up and down the Thames trying several different types of launches and all the while studying them to determine the best design for use at the fair (Laura Wood Roper, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* [Baltimore, Md., 1973], pp. 432-33, 440; FLO to Partners, July 17, 1892; FLO to Daniel H. Burnham, June 20, 1893).

24. That is, William McMillan (1830-1899), horticulturist, landscape architect, and superintendent of the Buffalo parks from 1871 until 1898. Olmsted had long valued McMillan's work on the Buffalo parks, and in October 1893 he stated that "on none of the public grounds that I visit do I find a superintendent who performs his duties as industriously, economically and intelligently as Mr. McMillan" (*Buffalo Courier Express*, Aug. 3, 1899, p. 8; *Buffalo Illustrated Express*, Oct. 1, 1893, p. 2).

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