

Their Public Parks Are the Pride of the People of Council Bluffs

"It is commonly only after American cities have matured and become populous that the importance of public parks is realized, when it is often impossible and always expensive to secure adequate and conveniently located grounds for park purposes. Such is not the case in this city, which has already acquired no less than 647 acres of park land within or immediately adjacent to the city limits. The people of Council Bluffs are only beginning to appreciate the great and growing value of the magnificent heritage which has been secured to them by the efforts of far-sighted pioneers, who deserve the warmest praise rather than the criticism they have too often received. It is our duty to preserve this heritage to future generations. Parks are the pride and ornament of our city, and not only afford places for public recreation, but enhance the value of property and indicate in a measure the culture and refinement of our people."

So spoke Mayor Jennings in his message to the city council at the commencement of the fiscal year last April, and as his words suggest Council Bluffs is more so probably than any other western city of its size particularly favored in possessing beautiful parks and pleasure resorts within its midst or immediately adjacent to its municipal limits. While to Dame Nature the citizens of Council Bluffs owe much, yet to her alone is not all the credit due. Had it not been for the generosity and foresight of some of the pioneers of this city, residences and business blocks would in all probability now encumber the two beautiful parks located in the very heart of the city, which in summer time are the daily resort of hundreds of men, women and children. To the latter, particularly, are these two parks an inestimable boon.

Extent of Park System.

As before stated Council Bluffs owns in the neighborhood of 647 acres of park land divided as follows: Fairmount park, nearly 100 acres; Lake View park, 426 acres; Bayliss park, a little short of four acres; Cochran park, three acres; Island park, 100 acres.

Of the five parks Fairmount ranks first and has a reputation all over the west for the picturesque beauty of its hills and glens. It is the ideal resort for pleasure seekers, and while the hand of man has been instrumental in artificially beautifying portions of it and making every nook and corner accessible to the visitor, yet the artistic handiwork of nature has not been desecrated and the park stands today as one of the most beautiful natural pleasure resorts in the country. Few places present a fairer aspect than does Fairmount park when the hills and glens are covered with the deep verdure of the luxuriant grass and the trees which cover the sides and tops of the bluffs and line the avenues and pathways are heavy with their rich foliage.

The park, situated as it is at the head of Graham avenue, can be reached from the heart of the city in ten minutes by the motor cars, which enter through a deep ravine, overhanging which are two bridges. At the end of the ravine stands a pavilion, round which the car tracks circle. The pavilion is in the center of a neatly-kept lawn which forms a resting place for visitors while waiting for the cars. White iron railings enclose the grounds around the pavilion, while stone steps lead down to the park proper.

Here in immediate vicinity of the pavilion is what might be termed the children's paradise. Here are the venerable caretaker Fred Lamb's pets, which are the delight of the small folk. In a large wire enclosure struts the stately peacock, with a small colony of pigeons as his companions. Here a number of squirrels have their home and feed from the peanuts which the little folk delight to give them. In adjoining cages may be seen the monkeys, whose antics afford endless amusement for both young and old. Further up the hill are cages containing foxes and coyotes and last, but not least, Old Bruin himself. All along the side of the hill from the animal cages to the entrance to what is known as the "horseshoe" swings are scattered everywhere and form one of the chief attractions for the younger folk, and on a fine day in summer hundreds of children may be seen enjoying themselves while their parents and older sisters and brothers enjoy the shade on the many seats placed at every convenient and available point.

The New Bandstand.

Half way between the pavilion and the entrance to the "horseshoe" is the handsome new bandstand erected at a cost of \$1,500. A band concert in Fairmount park never fails to attract thousands of visitors to that popular resort and last summer much regret was felt that the park commissioners were unable to see their way to provide music on Sunday afternoon.

Entering the "horseshoe" a beautiful scene spreads itself before the view of the visitor. Here is the cultivated part of the park. On either side and at the north end are the green covered and tree-topped bluffs, with their winding pathways and carriage drives. Here the landscape gardener has had full sway and the result is picturesque. Bordering the well-kept sward are the gravelled driveways with concrete coping. Clusters of trees, many of them stately kings of the forest, afford ample shade, and beneath their spreading branches are to be found comfortable seats and tables in sufficient quantity for the numerous picnic parties which are to be found scattered all over the park almost any day in the week during the summer and early autumn.

In the middle of the "horseshoe" is a



ENTRANCE TO FAIRMOUNT PARK, COUNCIL BLUFFS.



FAIRMOUNT PARK PLAY GROUNDS.

pretty little lake with a fountain in the center. Concrete steps lead to the many winding paths on either side which bring the visitor to the summit of the bluffs.

The view from the summit of the bluffs on a fine day is one that once seen is not easily forgotten. From here a matchless view of the surrounding country can be obtained. Directly in front lies the city with its church spires and the roofs of its many handsome homes rising above the tops of the trees. Beyond may be seen the Missouri river and the city of Omaha. To the south the visitor may view Lake Manawa, its placid waters reflecting the deep blue of the sky and the soft green of the surrounding farm lands. To the northwest gleaming in the sunlight may be seen with remarkable clearness the buildings of that beautiful White City—the Greater America Exposition—which is now but a recollection of the past. At night when lighted with the thousands of incandescent lamps, the exposition as seen from the top of the bluffs of Fairmount park resembled one large fairy place. Nightly the bluffs were the resort of countless numbers of visitors who made the ascent for the sole purpose of viewing this beautiful picture.

Visitors from Far and Near.

Fairmount park draws its patrons and visitors not only from this city, but during the summer thousands come from Omaha to spend the day or afternoon in it. Sunday afternoon is a specially favorite time for the people of Omaha to visit it and the large motors are run direct from the city across the Big Muddy to the park. Fairmount park is an ideal resort of the picnicer and its many nooks and glens afford that privacy which is so essential to the enjoyment of an alfresco meal, whether luncheon or supper. Here families spend the entire day, being joined in the evening after business hours by the father and husband, who finds rest and recreation in the cooling freshness of the green-covered sward after the toll and dust of the city.

This beautiful pleasure resort was secured for the city through purchase at a remarkably low figure. Lengthy litigation, however, ensued, which added over \$20,000 to the cost before the title became perfected in the city.

Bayliss park, located in the very heart of the city, takes its name from the late Samuel Bayliss, who generously donated it to the city. Studded as it is with magnificent trees it affords one of the most delightfully shady lounging places imaginable. It is intersected with cement walks, which converge at the center, where a handsome fountain stands. Flower stands, bright with vari-colored posies, are to be seen on all sides. Bordering the walks and scattered under the trees are seats which, when the weather is favorable, are rarely without their occupants. Summer evenings Bayliss park is a most popular resort. One of the features of this pretty little park is the number of squirrels who make their home among the trees. They are a source of great

interest to the visitors to the city, who take great pleasure in feeding the city's pets with nuts. They are cared for and regularly fed by the park caretaker, Samuel Bayliss, the generous donor of the pretty little park which bears his name, died in straitened circumstances, while today the property which he so freely deeded to the people of Council Bluffs is worth many thousands of dollars.

Some Smaller Parks.

Cochran park, situated in the southwest part of the city, was donated by the late Colonel Cochran and adjoins the grounds of the Twenty-second street school. This park has sprung up, it may be said, with the growth of the city westward with the new homes and the new schools. Its trees and shrubbery are still in their infancy, but each year adds beauty to the place, which is much appreciated by the people residing in that section of the city. Here special attention is paid to flowers and thousands of beautiful plants fill the beds every summer.

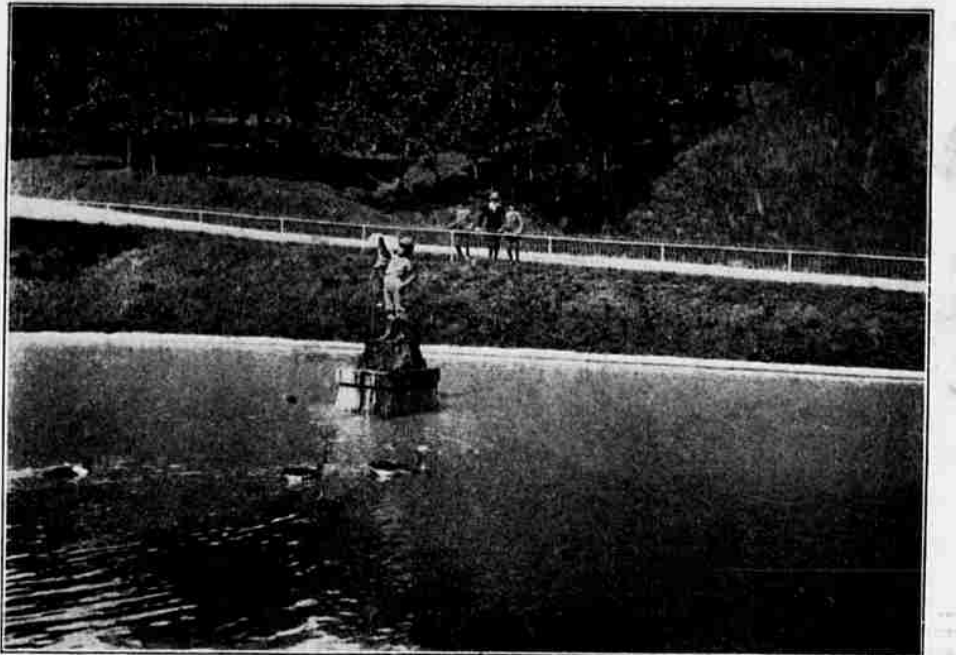
Lake View park, which is situated at the northern boundary of the city, is as yet unimproved. Big lake, whose waters form part of the reserve, affords at times capital fishing, and on that account is a favorite resort of some. The Fort Dodge & Omaha railway's right of way cuts through Lake View park and its long trestle spans the lake. The land comprising Lake View was granted to the city by the government.

Island park consists of 100 acres located outside the city limits. Not so many years ago it was little more than a mere swamp covered with a thick growth of willows. Today the greater part of it is drained and covered with grass. The park is let out for grazing purposes, as it is too far at present from the city to be of any practical benefit as a pleasure resort.

The management of the city parks is in the hands of a board of park commissioners, consisting of three members elected by the people. The present members are Martin P. Schmidt, chairman; William Arnd and A. C. Harding. N. C. Phillips, city clerk, is secretary to the board. Formerly the commissioners served without pay, but under the code of 1897 their remuneration was fixed at \$100 per annum. The parks are maintained by a 1-mill levy in the city.



GLIMPSE OF BAYLISS PARK, COUNCIL BLUFFS.



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