

TOLEDO'S PARK SYSTEM.

Pres. Jermain Presents
His Annual Report.

MANY IMPROVEMENTS

Have Been Made and Many
More Are Contemplated--An
Excellent Showing.

President Jermain, of the Park board, has presented his annual report to the park commissioners. The full text follows:

To the Honorable Board of Park Commissioners:

Gentlemen:—The duty of making the president's annual report to this board has come to me with a triple responsibility, being the third to fill this office during the year just closed. I cannot fulfill the task of three but shall endeavor to faithfully review the considerable work accomplished and what its significance has been as touching the future—that future so big with possibilities for the highest good of our city.

The report of our secretary gives a carefully prepared classification of receipts and expenditures. To this statement public attention is especially called. I will not duplicate statements of details, therefore, but will call attention to the chief expenditures and the results attained.

The policy of the year has been not only to spend carefully but to spend well. It has been a year of results and that we have been able to make the following showing and yet finish the year with a balance to our credit is due first of all to the wise economy of the last administration, which planned and saved against the time when notable work could be done.

We began the the year with a balance of \$6,555.18 to the credit of our fund for general purposes. We received from the city council a special appropriation of \$7,500 for the purpose of making a payment on the new green house now completed at Walbridge park. This building cost \$13,670.73 and this cost closely approximated the estimates made for a house which would be adequate to our present imperative needs. It could not be built to-day for less than \$20,000, at the ruling prices of structural iron, pipe and other materials. It was said that the city council would furnish the money to pay the balance of \$6,170.73, but, contrary to public anticipation, the board did not request it, and provided for the balance within its very limited funds. The members of the council were invited to inspect the work and united in commending the investment. This fine permanent improvement, with its beautiful and commodious palm house, is fast becoming one of the show places of Toledo, and cannot fail to be a source of growing pride of this city. The propagating houses are of sufficient capacity to handsomely decorate all of Toledo's parks and triangles, as well as the Centennial grounds when the time comes.

Thus each year will this be the source of our city's growing beauty. As our parks grow plants and flowers, shrubs and trees, so grow they civic pride; as grows civic pride, so grows that working spirit for better conditions which is at the root of all good citizenship.

Before leaving the subject of the green house I would call attention to Superintendent Moore's recommendations as to

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tendent Moore's recommendations as to
pository. We have already received a
notable gift from Mr. Rollin Starr, and
valued loans from Mr. Grasser, and
others. In this, as in all respects, our
parks offer an especial field for private
gifts. Cleveland's two finest parks were
given outright and in a completed state
by two citizens whose names will never
be forgotten by the grateful people of
that city. Our Toledo parks should in
time be greatly enriched by private gifts.
No citizen can leave a better or more en-
during monument. By such acts as these
does the present as well as the future
measure the real success of a life.

With a balance on hand of \$6,553.18,
as shown above, and a total of only \$17,-
622.22 from the tax levy, and \$401.75
rent from Collins Park tract and other
sources, we have paid the green house
balance, paid for labor \$11,532.51, at all
of the parks, general expenses \$4,690.07,
and have a net balance of \$1,483.84 to
the credit of our fund above all claims
upon it. (The total balance is \$2,183.84,
but of this \$700 is set aside account of
contracts for the new green house, the
claims for which are in litigation.)

The boulevard fund is special and as
will be seen by our secretary's report
\$21,757.08 still stands to its credit. Con-
cerning the future disposition of this I
will refer you to that part of my report
concerning the boulevard.

The total for general expenses in-
cludes giving of the park band concerts;
\$1,042.80 was paid for these concerts, in-
cluding the cost of the portable band
stand and its handling. This useful de-
vice is in first class condition for future
concerts.

The unqualified success of these con-
certs is so well known that I need not go
into details. By means of the portable
stand they were so given as to reach the
people in all sections of the city. The
music was taken to the people, and not
the people forced to come to the music.

No pains were spared to have all of the
working arrangements perfect. These
are ready to put into operation this year
for, it is to be hoped, a longer and even
more enjoyable season of inspiring music
in the parks. I would earnestly recom-
mend the plan of beginning these con-
certs this year as early as June 15 and
continuing them until September 15. I
can safely say that no public money has
ever been spent to a better advantage or
where it has received a more hearty and
unqualified appreciation from the people.
The new happiness and hope which it
brought into many lives was surely very
great. It was one notable demonstration
of what the park movement really means
in the often colorless lives of those "who
labor and who wait." Careful estimates
by our superintendent show that about

seventy-five thousand people listened to these concerts.

Visitors at the Parks.

His report also shows that more than 600,000 people visited the parks the past year. The constant and large increase of visitors each year is the best evidence that the people generally are entering into the fuller use and enjoyment of the parks.

Another special expenditure, but of small amount for day labor, was in the preliminary work of laying out the public golf links at Ottawa park, in order to promote and demonstrate the value of that park as a public outing ground. In this, as in other respects, Toledo is again among the foremost of our American cities to devote her parks to the best practical uses and enjoyments of the people. The fine game of golf has heretofore been confined to the comparatively few who could afford to join a country club, where the dues are necessarily high. It takes large sums to buy the necessary land for a country club and golf course. But Toledo already possessed a park big enough for all this and much more, and the people were getting very little benefit from it. Hence the golf course, the base ball grounds, and other out-of-door pastimes projected there. The little work already done in the short days of the fall months has brought an immediate and large return in public appreciation. The plans are now complete for carrying forward this work, the course will be kept in excellent condition this year, and the ball park will be one of the very best. Undeveloped ground and spring freshets overflowing the bottom lands make it the wisest plan to maintain a nine-hole golf course this year.

As to the overflowing of these bottom lands: Competent engineers pronounce it perfectly feasible to control this flood water by means of dams and water gates and so regulate it that this trouble need not exist. This board has not had the means, however, to begin on a piece of engineering work of that extent. It is a matter, however, which should be given serious attention at such time in the future as the means on hand will warrant the outlay.

The golf course for this coming season will start as now, at the park house near the entrance, and crossing the bottom lands in a direct line westward, return to the same point from the northeast. The total distance will be about three thousand yards for the links of nine holes. The whole course will be bunkered in a manner to stimulate good golfing and attract the best players. We aim to have it one of the best links in the country, where tournaments may be held and noted golfers take part.

When the street car company extend their lines to this point, which we trust will be soon, big field days can be held during the long summer season, when all manner of open air games can be played. At such times Toledo's thousands will find recreation and keen enjoyment in the pure air and the broad acres of this fine woodland park.

While the park board were unable, by reason of legal restrictions, to spend any money on the playground movement, its members, individually, took an active interest in the work and joined the association in pushing it to a quick and successful opening at the Canton avenue ground.

The playgrounds have come to stay. Their permanency has been made secure by the act of this board in the establishment of playground No. 2 on park property, at the City park, on Nebraska avenue.

Trough the untiring zeal and labor of Mr. Tsanoff this playground has been made one of the best equipped in the United States. Its great value in the lives of the children of that quarter of the city can never be estimated. Toledo owes much to that enthusiastic gentleman whose indomitable courage has kept this movement constantly advancing until it has now broadened its work to that of complete education. The good which the Canton avenue playground does during the season is daily under the eye of a large number of our citizens.

It is of first importance that the entire system of playgrounds planned for the future should be owned by and under the fostering care of the city. They should be supported by general taxation for the benefits are to the community in general. By no other method can we more surely breed good citizens, nor by its neglect suffer more in the paupers and criminals who fill our almshouses and jails a menace to stable society and

and jails, a menace to stable society and a grievous burden to the state.

That Toledo was among the first of the American cities to make these children's playgrounds, equipped as they are, a part of the park system, will ever prove a matter of pride to our citizens. Just as surely will we take a great step in advance, making the system founded by Mr. Tsanoff complete, when the winter work in mental and physical culture becomes a part of our public school system.

Steps have been taken which will result for the coming season, and hereafter, in adequate lighting in the parks, with eleven arc lights in Walbridge park, three at Navarre park, East Side; five at Riverside, and two at City park. The information of this improvement will be gladly received by many who wish to enjoy the cool breezes in the parks in the early evening. This is especially true of Walbridge and Navarre parks, where proper lighting is much needed.

Shelter Buildings and Lavatories.

At this point I would call especial attention to the urgent need of a commodious shelter pavilion at Walbridge park and adequate lavatories there. There is also imperative need of the same at Navarre park, East Toledo, as well as the early laying of the water pipes as planned by the board. These are immediate necessities, as during the past summer at Walbridge park much real suffering resulted from their lack. The people wish to go to this exceptionally beautiful waterside park—they do go in thousands almost every pleasant day, and the present season should not pass without better facilities being established for public comfort there and elsewhere.

There is also urgent need of a proper building at Ottawa park, for there is no place in that large park where picnic parties, or other visitors, can find shelter and comfort during a storm, or the needed conveniences of an outlying park

Such a building as the board have been reviewing plans for would also do much toward attracting many to the spot and prove a potent factor in bringing it into popular public use. The city has a large investment there, and should enter into its enjoyment now and not in the indefinite future.

Protect the Parks.

During the year the park properties have been jealously guarded from encroachments, notably at Riverside park, where the water front facilities were threatened by a railroad line. This great damage was averted by prompt action in the repeal of an ordinance and the vacation of the streets as platted, thus giving additional protection for the future. Too much vigilance cannot be exercised in the protection of our public parks from the encroachments of private interests, and especially the railroads.

The water fronts are naturally most tempting to these enterprises, and while I fully appreciate the great value of railroads in the industrial prosperity of a city, there is here in Toledo dock front enough, and to spare, to afford ample railroad facilities for a city many times our size without destroying the few waterside breathing spots. These have been rescued for the permanent use and imperative needs of the people of this growing city. As the common heritage of the people, the public parks represent the right of eminent domain in its supreme sense and power in preserving their integrity. When this right is granted by the state to a quasi-public institution, such as a railroad company, which being operated for private gain, it must ever be subservient to that higher right, which is the composite right of all the people. "Judge-made law" is not basic law, it is often simply mistaken interpretation of the spirit of all equity, which needs no books nor decisions to make it good or eternally enduring. The plea of public necessity is often successfully used where it is simply a case of competition for business.

I now come to that public work which has claimed so large a share of the attention of the board during the past year, and which is daily growing in magnitude and importance in the upbuilding of our city. I refer to the boulevard.

Early in the year, the council transferred to our use the sum of \$25,000 for boulevard right-of-way purposes. Of this we spent for all purposes \$3,242.92, leaving a balance to the credit of that fund of \$21,758.08. Careful estimates show that this will be sufficient to put the city in actual possession of the entire right of way, such as setting back fences, moving barns and houses and doing some necessary initial grading.

The work of securing the deeds and agreements for the right of way on the west side of the river is now nearly complete, and it is earnestly desired to complete that of the East Side before the opening of spring. I trust that the public, as well as all private interests of that section of the city will work harmoniously together for the common good. The East Side has before it its great opportunity. Its future fine residence quarter is yet unlocated, and will undoubtedly center upon its boulevard. This board will endeavor to determine wisely in this matter, guided solely by the purpose to do what is for the best in the end.

Through the enterprise of the public press, which has been quick to perceive and loyal to support Toledo's best interests, the efforts now being made for an appropriation of \$150,000 for boulevard improvement have received full and favorable mention. These press notices have also exerted their customary influence in creating helpful public sentiment. The facts are becoming generally known and their importance realized.

Statistics from all sources invariably show that a boulevard

First—Increases the value of abutting property 300 to 500 per cent, hence

Second—Increases revenue from taxation on such property in the same ratio.

Third—Reduces the general tax rate instead of increasing it.

Fourth—Thus gradually pays for itself

helps to reduce the general city in

Fifth—Is the best investment a city can make.

Sixth—Greatly beautifies the city.

Seventh—Attracts investors — attracts those who build.

Eighth—Enjoyed by all classes, for it will contain broad bicycle paths, as well as driveways and parkways.

Ninth—Furnishes much needed employment, both in its construction and on the new building which it stimulates.

Tenth—Is thus a potent factor in a city's material prosperity and the well-being of its workers.

Should the people of Toledo decide that they want to have this work pushed forward, the labors upon which this board will enter will be filled with care and responsibility, and will prove a task by no means to be coveted. The work means so much, however, for Toledo's future that this added responsibility is undertaken. The entire policy of this board is for improvement and maintenance. In parks, as in everything, nothing but results really count. Parks, parkways and boulevards have no significance unless improved and brought into the fullest use and enjoyment of the people.

The development of the park idea in all of our American cities is remarkable, but it is also imperative. Within a few years a great awakening has taken place as to the vital importance of this preserving and beautifying large and conveniently situated tracts of land. All this is as it should be. As Mr. Richard Holden eloquently says, "City roadways leading to parks should be such that people can go readily out to the parks every day and take in just so much as time and inclination will permit. The parks themselves are great civilizers; they are great equalizers; they equalize upward. They are one of the most positive evidences of the growth of the people to power. They lift the people to a higher life; they are educational; they are full of inspiration, and make life worth more to every man, woman and child who comes to enjoy them; they are sanitariums; they are priceless boons to the weak and poor, who may go from dark and dingy rooms into verdure and sunlight free from cost. Whichever way you turn, whether from the economical standpoint or from that of health or pleasure, the hand of every citizen should be lifted in favor of the parks. They are the people's heritage for all time to come."

It would not be fitting to close this report without speaking with regret of the resignation of our president, Mr. J. D. Robinson. How wisely he planned, and how faithfully he labored for the best development of our park system, none knew better than do those who were so closely associated with him. The same interest he still feels, although care for his health compels him to spend most of his time in travel. To me, he represents that type which is the best in our Amer-

ican citizenship, with wise convictions and courage to abide by them—"without fear and without reproach."

Especial mention for faithful service is due the employes of this board in all departments. The keepers at the various parks have made a remarkable showing with the few men they have had, and their work deserves hearty commendation. To our secretary, whose valued services this board has had the benefit of so long, and to our superintendent, who has so capably performed his difficult duties, the sincere appreciation of this board is due. They have done their work with a devotion to it for its own sake, which will ever distinguish the ideal public servant.

S. P. JERMAIN, President.
