

SURVEY OF BUFFALO'S OLMSTED PARKS      SUMMER 1979  
FOR NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

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## 1. FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED AND ASSOCIATES

### a. Early Years

Born in Hartford, Connecticut on April 26, 1822, Frederick Law Olmsted was the first child of John Olmsted, a dry goods merchant and Charlotte Law Hull. He had an inconstant early life. His mother dies when he was just under 4 years old, and his father remarried the day before his seventh birthday. He traveled much through New England and New York, boarding with a series of teachers from the age of eight.

In 1847, at 25, Frederick's father purchased a small acreage for his son, who pledged repayment, on Sachem's Head peninsula in Connecticut. Determined to be a scientific farmer, he worked the rocky ground for three years. In April of 1850, Fred and John Olmsted, his brother, and Charles Brace sailed to England arriving in May. They were very impressed with the English landscape in spring bloom. Frederick especially taken with the London parks and those of France and Germany, was very influenced by these large public parks, the first he had seen. He returned to his land on the Connecticut Coast to farm and write a book on his travels. In 1852 and 1853 he traveled South and West exploring the landscapes and communities of pre-Civil War America. Again writing about his experiences in several newspapers and magazine articles, and finally in a full length book. In 1854 he left Staten Island to become an editor and publisher in Manhattan with a few friends. This venture failed in August 1857.

### b. Landscape Architecture

In the fall of 1857 a friend mentioned the opening of a position as superintendent of the new Central Park. He applied with recommendations from many important people he had met in literary circles, including Andrew Jackson Downing, Asa Gray and William Cullen Bryant, and was awarded the position. At thirty-five he began to apply his surveying, farming and traveling experiences to the creation of a landscape for New Yorkers. Olmsted had met Calvert Vaux, a young English architect, at the home of Downing in 1853 and they became good friends. In 1857 after Downing's death, Vaux moved to New York. On October 30th of that same year, a competition for the design of Central Park was advertised by the Board of Commissioners. Vaux asked Olmsted if he would collaborate on a design. Olmsted, reluctant at first because of his position as park supervisor under Chief Engineer Viele, was persuaded and the work began. They submitted a plan named "Greensward" and on April 28, 1858 the commissioners awarded it the grand prize and so began the collaboration of the two men who founded the field of Landscape Architecture.

In the "Park Maker" Elizabeth Stevenson writes, "Thoughts and ideas swarmed. Later Olmsted and Vaux did not sort out, they even purposely agreed never to sort out whose was this idea and whose was that, in the making of the park. Olmsted was to have everything to do with making the park a place in which people might enjoy themselves, playing, exercising, loafing, looking at green things growing. Vaux was

# 1. FREDERICK LAW OLNSTED AND ASSOCIATES

## b. Landscape Architecture

to care little for the daily life of the park after it was once designed. Olmsted was to care as much for the life of the park as for the designing of it, so that in later years he was necessarily more closely associated with it than Vaux. And in this and in all their many years of joint work, Olmsted was to have the more public personality, to be more aggressive, to enjoy the battle with public officials for attaining his own way, to push and push for what he wanted, and to write and talk about open spaces. So it was going to be inevitable that the more retiring Vaux would become the shadowy figure in the work he and Olmsted had done together and fade out of the public mind when they had separated and worked apart from each other."

## c. Sequence of Firms, The Principals

The collaboration of Olmsted and Vaux began with the Greensward Plan and continued on and off, through the late 1880's. They officially announced the firm of Olmsted, Vaux and Co. Landscape Architects, after the Civil War on November 22, 1865. They began working on Prospect Park in Brooklyn and on Central Park. Their advice was soon requested by other cities including Chicago and Buffalo in 1868. The Olmsted and Vaux partnership officially ended on October 18, 1872 as a result of Calvert Vaux's desire to get on with a number of important architectural works.

F. L. Olmsted and his family moved to Manhattan to 209 West 46th Street. From 1872 through 1883 it served as both home and office to the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect. His eldest son, John Charles Olmsted, began to mature during this period, and apprenticed to his father, being considered a partial partner from 1878-1883. Olmsted began to use other professionals to complement the firm. George Radford, the Civil Engineer and Jacob Weidenmann, the landscaping architect, were two of these. In June 1875, John Charles took on a full position with the firm. During this period Olmsted worked in Tarrytown, New York, on Mount Royal in Montreal, and Amherst, Yale, John Hopkins and the New York State agricultural colleges, but his two largest works were for the Albany New York Capitol Commission and the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. In 1884 the Olmsteds moved to Brookline, Massachusetts and the title of the firm was changed to F.L. and J.C. Olmsted. John Charles was now a full partner with his stepfather. Both of these early partnerships served an educational purpose with young men coming into the firm as apprentices. Many who worked for them went on to careers and prominence.

Two young men who were apprentices became principals, Henry S. Codman and Charles Eliot. The firm was renamed in 1889 to F.L. Olmsted and Co. and included John Charles Olmsted and Henry Codman as principals with the senior Olmsted. Henry Codman died suddenly in 1893 and Charles Eliot who had apprenticed with the firm and was working on his own at the time, was asked to join. As a result the name of the firm was changed again to Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot in 1893.

1. FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED AND ASSOCIATES

c. Sequence of Firms, The Principals

Frederick Law Olmsted retired in 1895 and Charles Eliot died in 1897 causing another change to F.L. & J.C. Olmsted. John Charles and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. were the principals. They changed the name to Olmsted Brothers in 1898. Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. was partially active in the late 1890's and he died in 1903. John Charles died in 1920 and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. retired in 1949. The firm continues as Olmsted Associates, Landscape Architects today.



## 2. OLMSTED'S DESIGN THEORY

From his early days, Olmsted spent much of his time in natural settings. During the course of his education with various ministers in the New England area, he was known to run off for an afternoon or for a few days to the woods and sleep in a tree. He learned scientific farming in rural New York and traveled about the state enjoying its natural wonders. His father's passion for natural beauty was a strong influence.

The men of the family would vacation together, seeking out the natural camping and exploring. His mature taste shows his disregard for the contrived in the following quote from the "Report on the Design of Franklin Park", of 1886. "The urban elegance generally desired in a small public or private pleasure ground is to be methodically guarded against. Turf, for example, is to be in most parts kept short by sheep rather than lawn movers; well known and long tried trees and bushes to rare ones; natives to exotics; humble field flowers to high bred marvels; plain green leaves to the blotches, spotted and fretted leaves which, in decorative gardening, is now the fashion."

The great public parks of Europe provided another source of inspiration as did the writings of Andrew Jackson Downing, and others. He regarded his works as living entities, not to be considered finished at any point. The landscape changed with time and the needs of the people changed. His flexibility is seen in the number of preliminary studies, revisions or major redesigns cataloged in the Buffalo Parks file in the Olmsted archives. This ability to allow forces to influence the work is seen in this quote: "It is a common error to regard a park as something to be produced complete in itself, as a picture to be painted on canvas. It should rather be planned as one to be done in fresco, with constant consideration of exterior objects, some of them quite at a distance and even existing as yet only in the imagination of the painter."

In Olmsted's opinion, the word, "park", was reserved for special application. A small area could be called a neighborhood ground or a pleasure ground, but not a park. A large acreage with natural or developed beauty was necessary to merit the distinction of being a park. It had to be large enough that the sights and sounds of the city were shut out. The park goer was to be surrounded by the natural, and influenced by its subtlety and peace. All of the structures built for convenience and comfort were to be hidden by trees, shrubs and vines. Olmsted felt that parks could have a very beneficial effect on the residents of a densely populated area. Parks made cities liveable. The following quote captures his concept of the social reform value of parks:

"For this purpose neither of the forms of ground we have heretofore considered are at all suitable. We want a ground to which people may easily go after their day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of

## 2. OLMSTED'S DESIGN THEORY

the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them. We want the greatest possible contrast with the streets and the shops and the rooms of the town which will be consistent with convenience and the preservation of good order and neatness. We want, especially, the greatest possible contrast with the restraining and confining conditions of the town, those conditions which compel us to walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously, which compel us to look closely upon others without sympathy. Practically, what we most want is a simple, broad, open space of clean greensward, with sufficient play of surface and a sufficient number of trees about it to supply a variety of light and shade. This we want as a central feature. We want depth of wood enough about it not only for comfort in hot weather, but to completely shut out the city from our landscapes."

This quote from the most respected landscape architect and leading writer of the time shows a strongly negative attitude toward the cityscape and a love for the pastoral as exemplified in the landscape of parks. The pastoral landscape represents a tame middle ground between the rugged wilderness and the oppressive urban environment. The pastoral setting combines the influences of men and nature creating a secure and pleasant stage for human activity. Olmsted points out the effect, resorting to a park for natural entertainment in this question: "Is it doubtful that it does men good to come together in this way in pure air and under the light of heaven, or that it must have an influence directly counteractive to that of the ordinary hard, hustling working hours of town life?" It was not doubtful that thousands of Buffalonians resorted to the parks and pleasure grounds of the Olmsted system for relief from the hustle and bustle of life in a growing trade and industrial center.

The work of Frederick Law Olmsted spanned a period of thirty-seven years and left a legacy of open space on the lands of the country as well as in the hands of his associates and those he trained. Nearing the close of his active career he described his years as a landscape architect in a letter to Elizabeth Baldwin Whitney on December 16, 1890:

"I need not conceal from you that I am sure that the result of what I have done is to be of much more consequence than any one but myself supposes. As I travel, I see traces of influences spreading from it that no one else would detect, which if given any attention by others, would be attributed to 'fashion'. There are, scattered through the country, seventeen large public parks, many more smaller ones, many more public or semi-public works, upon which, with sympathetic partners or pupils, I have been engaged. After we have left them, they have, in the majority of cases, been more or less barbarously treated, yet as they stand . . . they are a hundred years ahead of any spontaneous

## 2. OLMSTED'S DESIGN THEORY

public demand, or of the demand of any notable cultivated part of the people. And they have an educative effect perfectly manifest to me - a manifestly civilizing effect. I see much indirect and unconscious following of them. It is strange how often I am asked 'where did you get that idea?' as if an original idea on the subject had not been expected. But I see in new works of late much evidence of effects of invention - comprehensive design; not always happy, but symptomatically pleasing. Then I know that I shall have helped to educate in a good American school a capital body of young men for my profession - all men of liberal education and cultivated minds. I know that in the minds of a large body of men of influence I have raised my calling from the rank of a trade, even of a handicraft, to that of a liberal profession, an art, an art of design."

### 3. THE BUFFALO SYSTEM

#### a. Beginnings of Public Parks

On July 23, 1868 William Dorsheimer, a Buffalo attorney, inquired about the possibility of a Buffalo park. Quoting from Dorsheimer's letter, "Many of the...citizens of Buffalo are talking about establishing a park here, and I desire to obtain from you such information as you may be able to give about the subject." Mr. Olmsted had been in Buffalo during the Civil War and had admired Joseph Ellicott's original city plan for its departure from a strict grid system and its sensitivity to the topography of the region. He was, however, dismayed at the lack of public open space for the recreation of the growing populace. By the late 1860's the rapid expansion of the city threatened overcrowding and the "proliferation of unplanned disconnected settlements with small lots on narrow streets in the bleak and scenically unprepossessing environs."

Mr. Olmsted spent Sunday, August 16, touring the city and surrounding countryside with William Dorsheimer and after an additional exploratory visit wrote to him on October 1, 1868 outlining a scheme that "would be in the best interest of the citizens at large, without regard to classes or localities." Olmsted urged that the move towards establishing public parks be comprehensively approached. He cited the unpleasant experiences of several cities who had not carefully considered their public land purchases and paid high economic penalties. He strongly suggested the prompt purchase of the necessary lands. Olmsted suggested that the park or parks should be expected to fulfill the needs of the future populace as well as the immediate residents of the city. Olmsted further notes that the "mental impressions of the town itself" will be linked to the public parks provided with ease of access for the citizens. In the following quote from this letter, printed in the "Preliminary Report respecting a Public Park in Buffalo" Olmsted states his reasons for a comprehensive approach:

"A comprehensive and well prepared scheme seems to us, for several reasons, to be peculiarly desirable for Buffalo; first, because Buffalo is a place of singular mobility and progressiveness, rapidly increasing in population and wealth, with every reason for expecting a prolonged career of prosperity, and a more than usually rapid development of advance in the common requirements of civilization; second, because the immediate environs of the town, in the condition they now are, and have been for a number of years, are not generally at all attractive, and young people in search of recreation, especially, have very little inducement to a pure, healthy, natural exercise of their faculties and tastes, and, in consequence, there are special inducements to offer them facilities and stimulants to unwholesome substitutes for recreation; third, the relation of the town to its canals and railroads and the lakes and rivers is such as to make an escape from it in several directions, to anything like rural quiet, difficult and disagreeable, if not impossible; fourth, during a considerable part of the year that portion of the environs which is otherwise least repellant to rural exercise is swept by harsh, damp winds, very trying to those who are in most need of quiet open air recreation."

### 3. THE BUFFALO SYSTEM

#### a. Beginnings of Public Parks

The letter of October 1st, recommends the formation of a parks system with a large acreage to the north and two smaller ones closer to the center of the city. These were to be connected by parkways from 100' to 200' wide with medians and/or borders planted with shade trees. The pleasant thoroughfares would allow Buffalonians easy access to "pure, healthy, natural exercise."

On November 16, 1868 a citizens committee composed of five prominent Buffalo gentlemen, Pascal P. Pratt, William Dorsheimer, Sherman S. Jewett, Richard Flach and Joseph Warren, sent Mr. Olmsted's report to Mayor William F. Rogers. This committee had been appointed at a meeting of citizens held on August 25 at the home of Sherman S. Jewett. These citizens had obtained the opinion of the most prominent landscape architects of the day regarding the approach to and potential cost of public parks fro Buffalo. The group had taken in hand an issue of public and private debate obtaining and paying for the services of the best for Buffalo's populace. They served as catalysts for the reservation and improvement of an eventual 1025 acres of parks, parkways and minor places, a legacy to Buffalo citizenry.

The Mayor of Buffalo, William F. Rogers, was in support of this effort. He forwarded the letter from the citizens committee and the Olmsted and Vaux report to the Common Council on November 23. In his letter of transmittal he noted the benefits to be derived and the necessity for prompt action. He recommended the formation of a joint committee including members of the Council and the citizens committee "for the purpose of securing the enactment of a law clothing the Council with the authority to acquire....the land and property necessary to carry out the objective in view, and to issue the bonds of city for payment and improvement of same." With this charge the joint committee set to work and five months later, on April 14, 1869, the Legislature of the State of New York passed an act that authorized "the selection and location of certain grounds for public parks in the City of Buffalo, and to provide for the maintenance and embellishment thereof." The text of this act contains thirty-seven sections establishing the political, financial and design guidelines for these public grounds. The firm of Olmsted, Vaux and Co. were retained to design a system of parks for the City of Buffalo in May of 1870.

#### b. Key People on the Ground

People of the City of Buffalo working on the parks system ranged from a low of 3 or 4 to as many as 300-400 men during intensive development. Employees of the Buffalo Park Commissioners performed in various capacities building the parks system. In shaping the land they moved tons of earth and stone, grew and planted trees and shrubs, dug lakes, widened creeks, built bridges and dams. By constructing solid roadways, footpaths, and bridle paths the system was connected by smooth, pleasant thoroughfares. The lands were embellished with simple shelters, shelter houses, greenhouses for

### 3. THE BUFFALO SYSTEM

#### b. Key People on the Ground

propagating, boathouses, ornamental bandstands, and gracious public buildings. At several points in the developmental history special funds were appropriated for the employment of unskilled labor for the public work of the parks when jobs were scarce. The majority of the work was carried out by men hired under the Commission, although large contracts were performed by others.

The creation of the Parks System, spanning over 30 years, was supervised by eight key people. In 1870 Olmsted and Vaux recommended Mr. George Kent Radford to fill the post of Engineer in Charge. Radford was born in England and immigrated to Canada in 1850, working in the Toronto area. He began in 1870 as the engineer for the Buffalo parks system. He remained in this position for three years and then moved to New York. There he collaborated with Vaux and occasionally with Olmsted on other projects. During his work in Buffalo, Olmsted and he prepared a sequence of plans for the lands adjoining The Park on the north and east as a neighborhood called Parkside. The streets were gently curving and lots of ample size for a spacious suburban setting. He also designed an ornamental wooden bridge for the park lake and later, in 1890, won a competition for the redesign of the bridge in iron.

William McMillan, "a practical horticulturist and landscape gardener," was hired as Superintendent of Planting. The first report states that he had thus far performed his duties in a very adequate manner and that the work progressed greatly "under the direction and superintendence of Mr. Radford and Mr. McMillan." Mr. McMillan was to fill the post of general superintendent from 1870 to 1897. On the occasion of the 27th annual report, the commissioners note that "During the past year, Mr. William McMillan has served the Board in the position of Superintendent, which he has filled since the establishment of the Park system, more than twenty-five years ago. The Board bears cheerful testimony to the intelligence, efficiency and zeal with which he has discharged his multifarious duties."

John L. Brothers came to the staff as Auditor and Paymaster in 1894 and continued through 1902 taking the position of Superintendent as well in 1898 when McMillan left. In 1903 he assumed the superintendency and continued through 1908. Following the same pattern as John Brothers, David Seymour became Auditor and Paymaster in 1903 as Brothers moved to superintendent. Seymour continued in this capacity until 1909 and became superintendent as J.L. Brothers steps down. He is listed in this position on the final annual report.

### 3. THE BUFFALO SYSTEM

#### b. Key People on the Ground

As the parks system developed South Park was added as an arboretum. John T. Cowell was hired in 1896 as superintendent of the South Parks in their early development and then as Director of the Botanic Gardens, serving for a total of nineteen years. The Forty-Sixth Annual Report of 1915 notes his death and commemorates it with the following quote from the Journal of the New York Botanical Garden: "Mr. Cowell was born in Wrentham, Massachusetts, March 3, 1852, and was educated there and in Boston, where he studied and practiced law, and subsequently continued his law practice in St. Paul, Minnesota. He moved to Buffalo in 1874 and for ten years was a school principal in that city and became director of the Buffalo Botanic Garden in 1894. He served for a number of years as Professor of Forestry in the University of Buffalo, and delivered lectures on forestry, botany and horticulture in Buffalo and elsewhere." Mr. Cowell was a noted botanist. Several plant species were named after him during his tenure with the Botanic Garden.

Mr. Frank Thompson was the Zoological Curator for the first three years of this position from 1896-98. In the succeeding sixteen years, 1899-1915, Dr. F.A. Crandell fills the position. The zoological collection in the Meadow Park increased from a few deer, elk and buffalo to include sea lions and gila lizards for a total of 351 specimens.

The final position to be created was City Forester. It was held by Harry B. Filer from 1908 onward. During this period street trees were planted in residential areas throughout the city following the example of the parkway system.

These key people in the developmental years and embellishment of the parks system were employed for an average of 13 years with William McMillan serving for 27 years. This consistent, talented, competent group gave continuity to the first half century of Buffalo's System.

The Board of Parks Commissioners was peopled with prominent citizens who served the city well. They were allowed no payment except for expenses and were appointed for a five year term. Some citizens served more than once. They were also barred from monetary gain resulting from their position as supervisors of the park systems development. The public-spirited dedication and frugality of the Board provided the watchful framework necessary to see the fulfillment of the ambitious plans of their talented Landscape Architects, under the direction of the staff on the ground.

### 3. THE BUFFALO SYSTEM

#### c. Significance

The Buffalo Parks System was unique in the career of Olmsted in several ways. It was begun at the start of his second partnership with Vaux and had the benefit of the Vaux-Olmsted collaboration in its initial planning. It was the first interconnected arrangement of parks and parkways they designed. The occasion of the invitation to Buffalo was one of the only opportunities that Olmsted had in his career to advise on the selection of lands to be purchased for parks. This selection took place when the city was expanding, but good sites with natural advantages of both large and small acreages were still available. Olmsted was proud of the Buffalo System. In the spring of 1876, he made a map exhibiting the features of the general plan of Buffalo, with the relative locations of the parks and the interconnecting parkways. The map was sent by Olmsted to Philadelphia for the Centennial Exposition and then on to Paris in 1878 for an international exposition.

The work in Buffalo was carried out primarily by McMillan throughout the initial development and later addition of three more parks to the system. This quote taken from the 1887 report on "The Projected Park and Parkways on the South Side of Buffalo" written by F.L. Olmsted shows his esteem for William McMillan and his feelings about the Buffalo Parks System at the time. ". . .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 a 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." The employment of McMillan from 1870-1897 and the ambitious posture of the Park Commissioners in carrying out the initial plan and later enlargement, created a parks system very close in content to the design schemes. It was in Mr. Olmsted's opinion, one of the best realized works he and Vaux had designed. He is quoted in 1884 history of Buffalo as saying "I am not unreasonable in saying that in the more important qualities of a park, that of Buffalo compares favorably with that of New York City." Frederick Law Olmsted and his associates in their various firms from 1868 through the early 1900's were in communication with the development and alterations of the Buffalo system. This long term relationship afforded continuity and flexibility to the enlarging scope of Buffalo's public grounds.

The unique qualities of these parks was nationally and internationally recognized beginning with the selection of Buffalo as the location of the Pan American Exposition in 1901. The annual meeting of the Park Superintendents of the United States and several national sports competitions have also been held in the parks.



### 3. THE BUFFALO SYSTEM

#### c. Significance

The fact that the Buffalo parks system was the first designed and carried to the ground, that communication with Olmsted and his associates was continuous for over 30 years, that the key position was filled by McMillan, hand chosen by Olmsted and Vaux, and that they system was actually constructed as planned, makes the Buffalo system unique and significant as a national resource.

#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

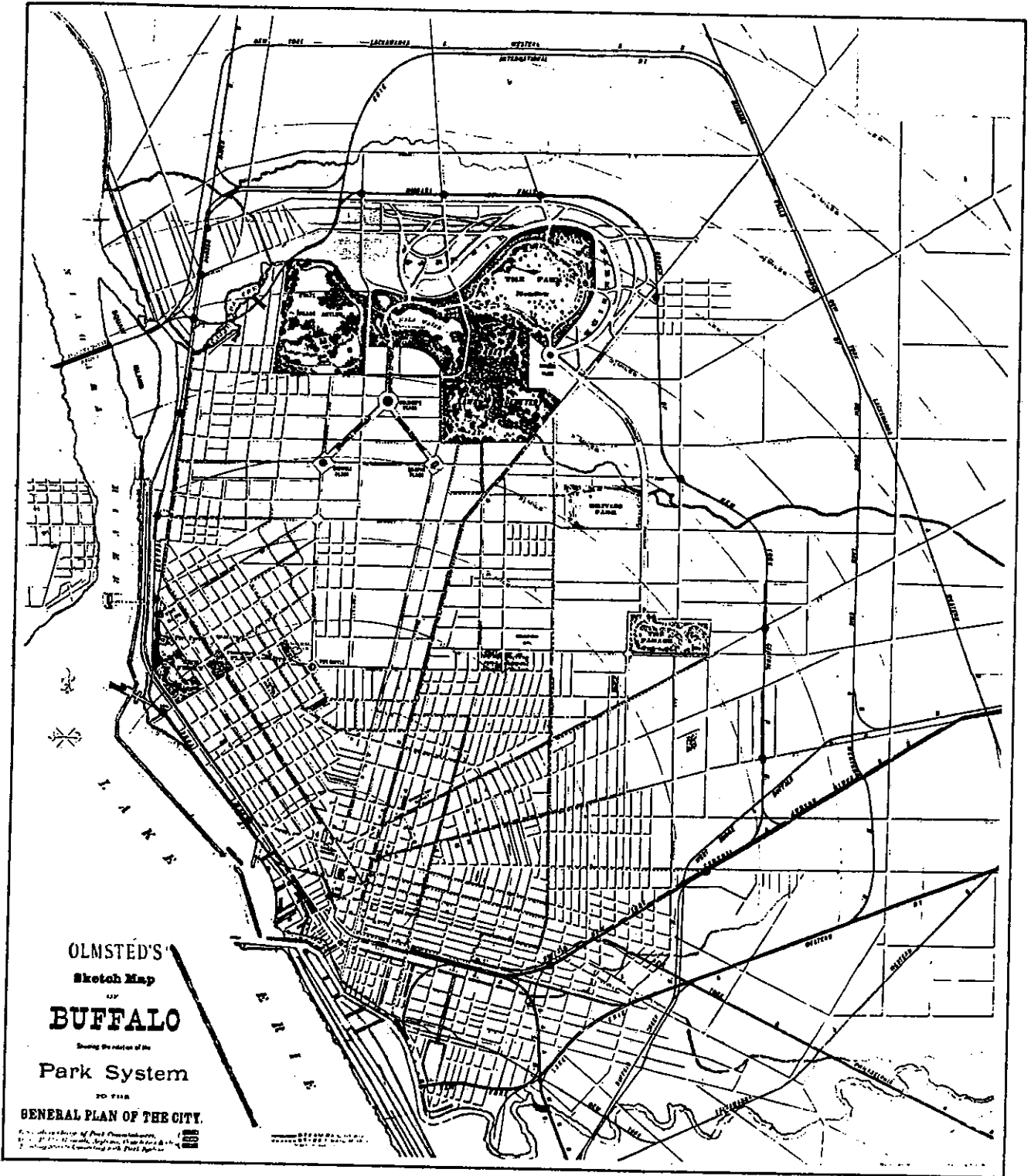
##### a. The Parkway System

A critical ingredient in the plan for Buffalo's public spaces was the connection of the parks by means of parkways. Parkway were ideally designed with ample width for two or three roadbeds, medians planted with shade trees and trees along the edges. The original plan for the city by Ellicott included several trunk thoroughfares of liberal width. Some of these were incorporated into the Olmsted plan for routing to parks. They were supplemented by the creation of a system of parkways. The 1870 plan is seen on the accompanying sketch map of Buffalo prepared in 1876 for the centennial exposition in Philadelphia and also sent to Paris for exhibition in 1878. The following quote from the text which accompanies the map describes the value of the system:

"In addition to the drives within the Parks, the length of roadway provided in the Parkways and Avenues and the minor places in charge of the Park Commission is about twelve miles. In combination with the leading avenues of the radial system with which these boulevards connect, the line of carriage travel to any of the Parks from any part of the city, is unrivaled for directness of route, ease of travel and breadth of way."

The path of this first portion of the parkway system can be traced from the most westerly point at the edge of the Niagara River. The Porter Avenue parkway starts at the river, crosses over the Erie Canal and passes beside The Front. It has a wide roadbed with a hundred foot right-of-way and was originally lined with American Elms. At Niagara Street Porter passes Prospect Place. A turn down Niagara Street to the east would carry the traveller to the hub of the radial system in the center of downtown. After passing Prospect Place, Porter Avenue curves to the east and intersects the Avenue, now known as Richmond Avenue, at the Circle, now known as Symphony Circle. In 1870 this area was used as a burying ground at the periphery of the city. The bodies were removed to Forest Lawn Cemetery and a five hundred foot circle formed. Sketches of the layout for the roadbeds and green spaces are in the Brookline archives. Today the wedge shaped open spaces provide a gracious setting for Kleinhans Music Hall, designed by Eliel Saarinen, on the southeast, a massive Medina sandstone church on the south, the Rosa Coplan Home and a large historic mansion on the east and a row of early nineteenth century homes on the north. Symphony Circle was recently included in the National Register application for the Allentown historic district.

From the Circle the Avenue moves north on a one hundred foot right-of-way lined with elms. It passes through Ferry Circle with its wedge shaped green spaces. From the western edge of this circle Massachusetts Avenue moves down to the waterfront at The Bank on the north edge of Fort Porter. This direct line from a major parkway node forms another secondary route to The Front. From Ferry Circle the Avenue continues northward to Bidwell Place, currently known as Colonial Circle. This rectangular space measures 420' by 500' with turf, walks and trees on



#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

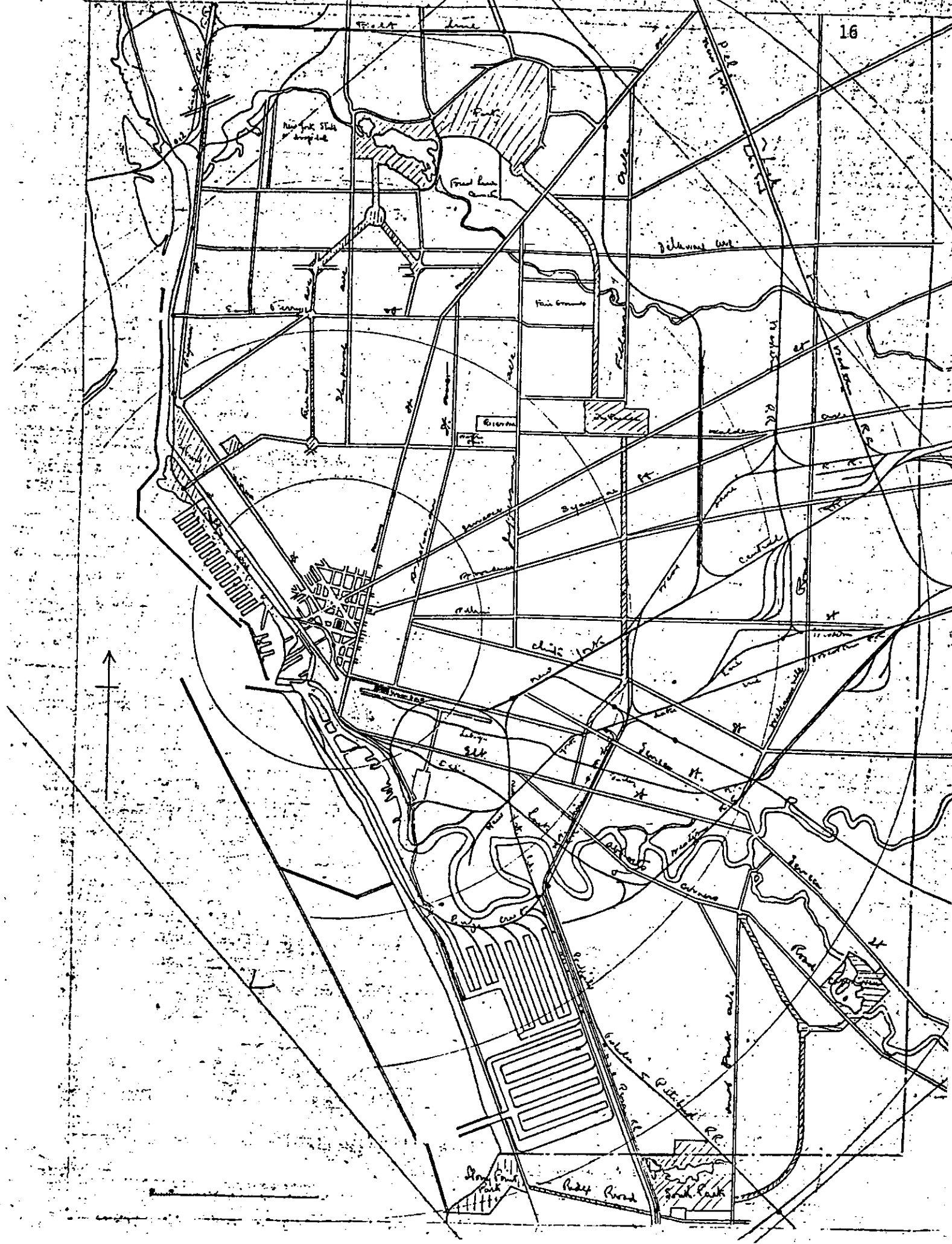
##### a. The Parkway System

the wedge shaped edges. The main feature of this node is a statue of General Daniel Davidson Bidwell astride his horse. This statue is central to the circular space with walks crossing it. Turf and trees surround it. Richmond Avenue continues northward from Colonial Circle intersecting Forest Avenue at the grounds of the New York State Asylum. This entrance to the grounds is flanked by sandstone gates and an iron fence borders the property. The massive sandstone buildings of the original complex were designed by Henry Hobson Richardson in the early 1870's. Frederick Law Olmsted collaborated with him on the site planning and planting design.

Bidwell Parkway moves in a northeasterly direction from Colonial Circle intersecting Lincoln and Chapin Parkways at Soldiers Place. In the 1870 design Soldiers Place formed a broad circle with a central landscaped space. The right-of-way had a diameter of seven hundred feet making this the largest node in the parkway system. The space was designed at this generous scale to form a setting for the towering Soldiers Monument, which was the reason for its name. The city fathers decided to place the ornate monument downtown in Lafayette Square rather than in the countryside north of the inhabited area of the city. As a result, Soldiers Place was redesigned by the Olmsted firm with a smaller central circle and correspondingly larger wedges of turf and trees at the edges. A terraced stone monument with shrubbery and turf is the central feature of the circle. The stonework is in need of repair and the landscaping of the space could be redesigned to create a more appropriate siting in this potentially attractive parkway node.

The widest parkways in Buffalo are the Lincoln, Chapin, Bidwell complex. Chapin and Bidwell Parkways both have two roadbeds with a broad median planted in four rows of elms. An additional row flanks each side of the two hundred foot right-of-way. Bidwell and Chapin Parkways lead away from Soldiers Place to the southwest and southeast terminating at their respective squares. Chapin Parkway meets Delaware Avenue at Gates Circle, originally called Chapin Place. In 1904, Mrs. Charles W. Pardee donated the funds for embellishment of the circle to the Parks Commission. In this central feature a sunken granite fountain basin is surrounded by several pools. A round granite wall with decorative cast iron lamp posts at each entrance surrounds these water features. At the north entrance a small terrace is embellished with two large urns decorated with flowing figures in bas-relief. Outside the wall a band of turf is planted with trees. This central feature is in very good condition. The lamp posts and urns are very beautiful. The fountain was not operating during the summer of 1979 and may be in need of repair. The total space has an area of 420' by 500', forming a rectangle. The four edges are planted with elms and covered with grass.

Lincoln Parkway extends north from Soldiers Place to Forest Avenue with a broad, central street, two service roads to each side and



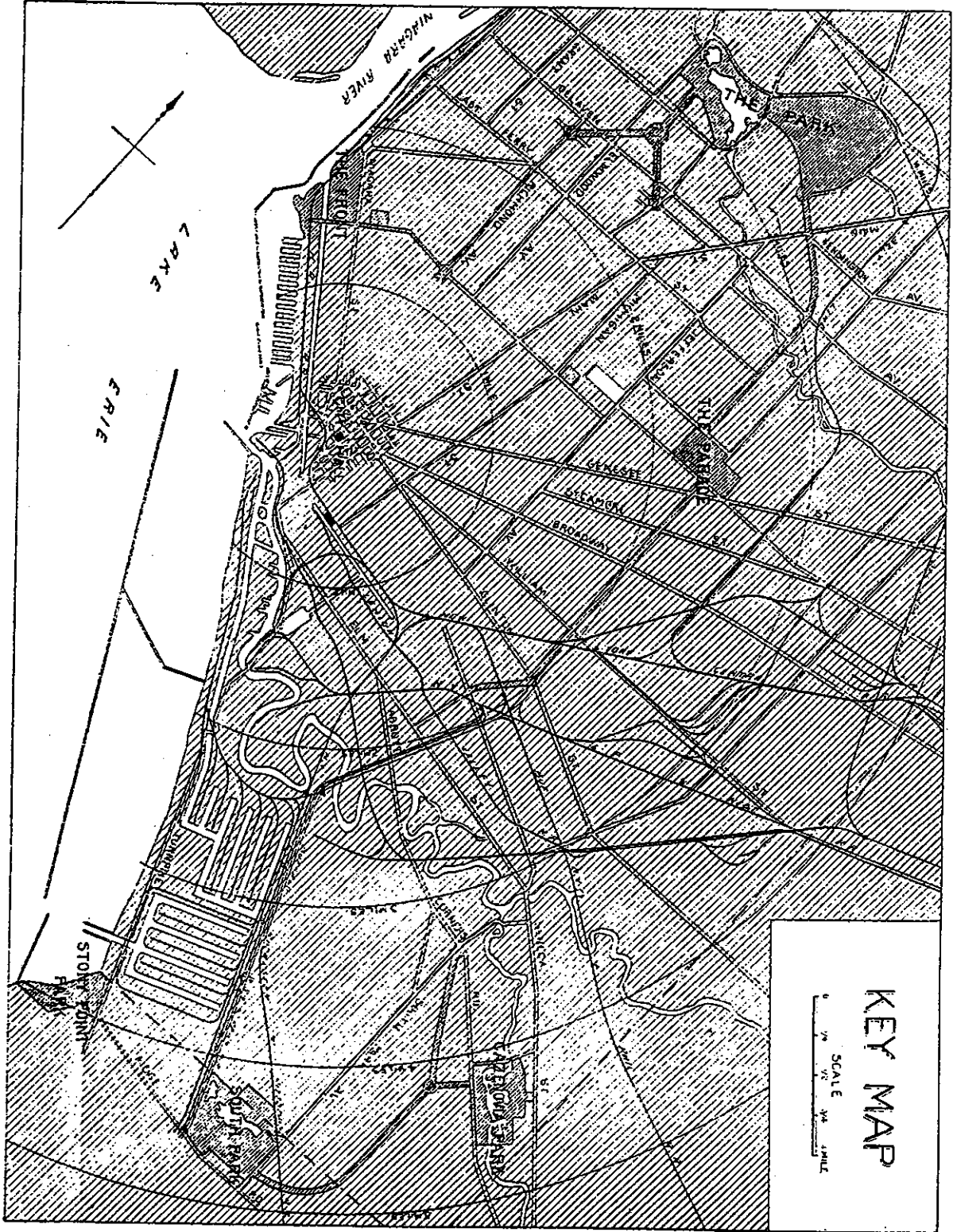
#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### a. The Parkway System

two medians each with a double row of elms. From Forest Avenue to the park the eastern service road disappears and is replaced by grass and trees. Only the main road continues as this parkway enters Delaware Park and drops down to the level of the lake. Here Lincoln Parkway is joined by the Scajaquada Parkway at the stone Bridge of the Three Nations built in 1900. The map published by Matthews-Northrup Co. at the time of the Pan American Exposition shows the extension of the park lands toward Grant Street. In 1895 work was begun on this additional approach to the park under private subscription of the Citizen's Relief Committee organized to furnish work to unemployed local laborers. The land for this extension ran along the Scajaquada Creek on the north edge of the Buffalo State Hospital encompassing an area three thousand feet long with a combined upland and bottomland width of three hundred feet. In 1897 Messrs. Pratt and Letchworth deeded an additional strip of land 90'x 200', to the Parks Commission in order to construct an outlet from the parkway between Rees and Grant Streets. The form of the total area was designed with a twenty acre enlargement of the Gala Water, a ten foot walking path at the waters' edge, a twenty foot ride adjacent of the hospital grounds, a forty foot main drive and appropriate plantings of trees and shrubs, This extension to the west carried Delaware Park closer to the residents of the Black Rock and Riverside areas of the city.

At Elmwood Avenue the Scajaquada Parkway curves along the north edge of the Albright Art Gallery and meets Lincoln Parkway. Crossing the stone bridge it continues along the northern edge of the lake area and the southern edge of the Meadow to Agassiz Circle. This node of the parkway system creates a formal entry to Delaware Park. The northwest quadrant is within the park and the remainder of the circle is flanked by residences and the property of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The area of Delaware Park, grounds of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Forest Lawn Cemetery and the Buffalo State Hospital combine to form an area of more than three square miles of greenspace. Today this living landscape is primarily intact and serves as an important resource of healthful recreation to the City of Buffalo. The fact that such a space was salvaged from development is a tribute to the wise forethought of Frederick Law Olmsted and his associates.

A short parkway begins at Parkside Avenue and ends at Main Street. This hundred foot right-of-way is an excellent example of a modest parkway with its curving form, shade trees and generous setback of the houses. Sherman S. Jewett donate the land for the parkway in 1872. The road was designed by George Kent Radford and Frederick Law Olmsted as a part of their plan for Parkside, commissioned by the landowners bordering The Park. Five drawings of the subdivision are in the Brookline archives. Olmsted and Radford thought the main park of the system should be bordered by a residential area with park-like qualities, winding streets, shade trees and generous lots. The landowners were prominent Buffalo citizens who



#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### a. The Parkway System

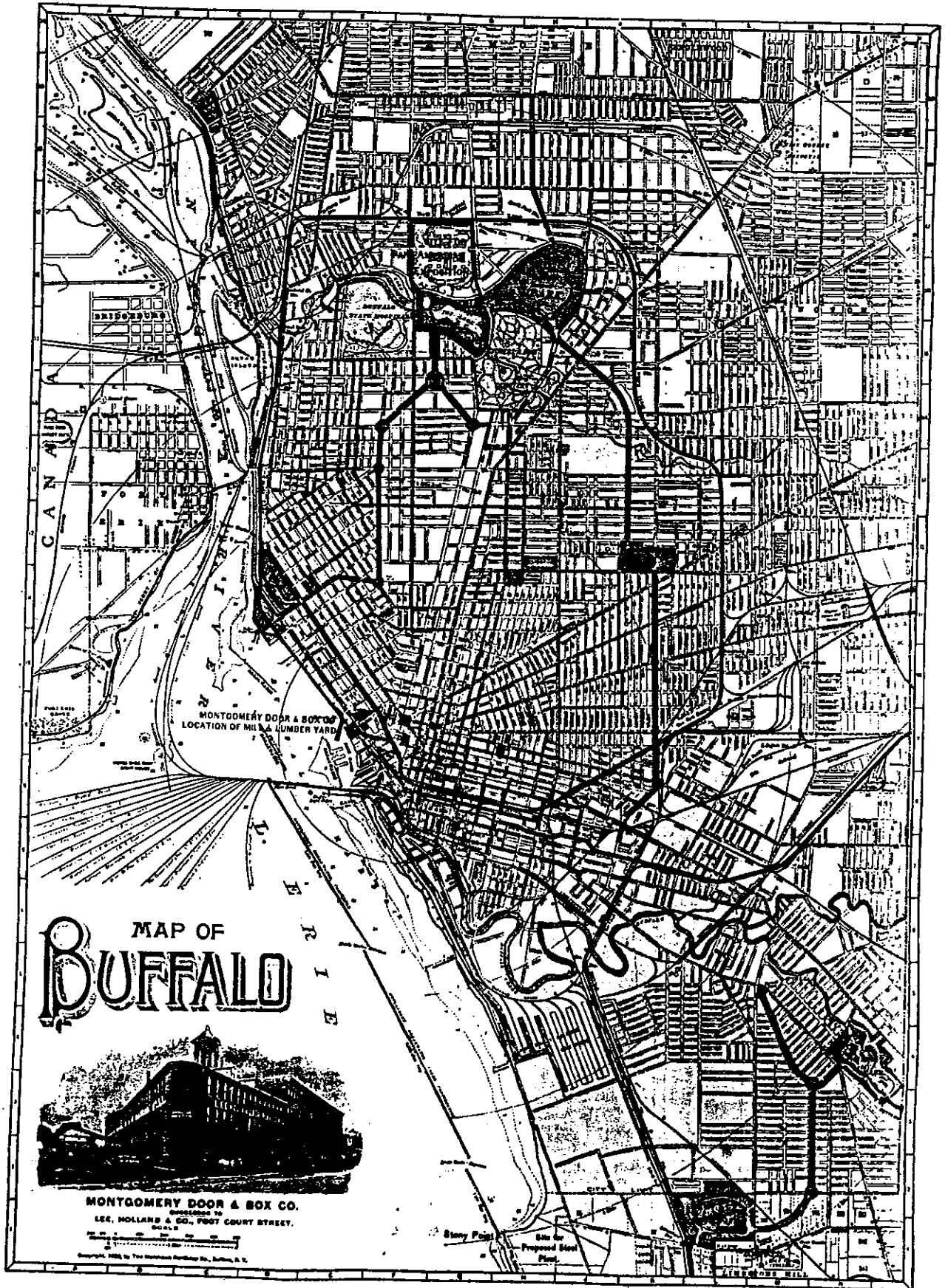
supported the development of the parks system and agreed with the park-like design of the adjacent properties. In looking at the contemporary key map of Buffalo the existing curvilinear street pattern of this area documents the implementation of the plans of Olmsted and Radford for the Parkside neighborhood.

Humboldt Parkway extends to the south and east of Agassiz Circle to The Parade. This broad, gracious parkway was designed with two medians and three roadbeds. It was initially planted with tulip trees which are too tender to grow successfully in the harsh climate of the Buffalo area. They were replaced with sycamore-leafed maples sugar maples which did somewhat better and were later infilled with elms. The trees used along the parkway system were native hardy varieties. As can be seen in this example of Humboldt Parkway, they were not all planted exclusively with American elms but with large trees that would afford a shady, pleasant passage. Photos taken of Humboldt Parkway in the 1950's show arching trees and spacious medians flanked by well appointed residential structures.

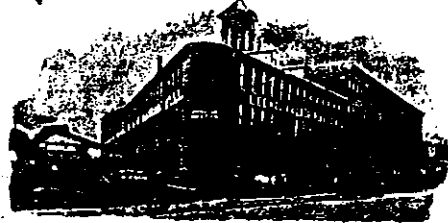
The two hundred foot right-of-way of the parkways from Grant Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Park were appropriated for the development of an inner expressway loop within the City of Buffalo in the late 1950's. This expressway system utilized the roadbeds of Humboldt Parkway and Scajaquada Parkway to create a four to six lane, high-speed thoroughfare. The construction of this system severed east side neighborhoods, split Delaware Park in half, filled a portion of the lake added in 1887 and necessitated the channelizing of the remainder of Scajaquada Creek on its course to the Niagara River. This expressway connected to a riverfront thruway built during the same period. The four-lane highway built on the bed of the Erie Canal, cut off public access to the waterfront by severing connections at Riverside Park and The Front as well as any informal routes. In one fell swoop the Humboldt Parkway, Scajaquada Parkway and riverfront connections to two Olmsted parks were destroyed. The planning and construction of this highway system spanned twenty years. Lacking any protective status or enough citizen outrage the process went on unchecked.

The parkway system was extended toward the southern portion of the city in the 1870's by the construction of Fillmore Avenue. On the 1901 map of Buffalo a strong parkway trunk along Fillmore Avenue connects to Abbott Road. As this route passes down to the south a blank area is seen which results from the proliferation of railroad lines and difficult crossings in this section of the city. Although considerable labor and money was expended to make this connection to the south it was not very successful. Based on a hundred foot right-of-way with a tree lined roadbed Fillmore Avenue today has only a few remnants of its original form. Abbott Road continued eastward to Heacock Place which formed a three acre greenspace link for the Southside parkway system. Heacock Place takes a diamond shape with a "Y" shaped road dividing the space. McKinley Parkway extends from its





MAP OF  
**BUFFALO**



**MONTGOMERY DOOR & BOX CO.**  
 BUILDERS TO  
 LEE, HOLLAND & CO., FOOT COURT STREET.

Scale  
 Copyright, 1905, by The Standard Printing Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

MONTGOMERY DOOR & BOX CO.  
 LOCATION OF MILL & LUMBER YARD

Stony Point  
 Site for Proposed Steel Plant

CANAL

RIVER

BRISBANE

WINDMILL

#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### a. The Parkway System

southern edge to McClellan Circle where it intersects Red Jacket Parkway travelling to the east to meet Cazenovia Park. This portion of the parkway system originally connected Cazenovia, South and Stony Point Parks to the remainder of the parks to the north. The land for these parkways was primarily donated by early residents in the 1890's who wished to have the benefits of a wide, gracious avenue in front of their homes.

McClellan Circle has a five hundred foot right-of-way. The small center is embellished with a bed of flowering annuals and the wedge shaped turf areas are planted with shade trees. A vivid remnant of the original lot layout is seen in the residence on the north side. It has a turn of the century house on a spacious landscaped lot that is surrounded by an iron picket fence. Travelling directly southward, McKinley Parkway continues through the City of Buffalo, over a bridge, and a short distance in the City of Lackwanna to intersect South Park at the formal entry in front of the conservatory. The key map of 1893 shows an additional connection from South Park to Stony Point Park along Ridge Road.

A later parkway along Niagara Street began to bridge the gap between Riverside Park and the remainder of the system. Niagara Street was developed from Hertel Avenue as a well paved, planted route to this park at the northern extremity of the city. A complete connection was never made to this park because the land was not available for use as a parkway by the late 1890's.

Today the strongest parts of the parkway system are the Lincoln, Chapin Bidwell complex and its connection through Richmond Avenue and Porter Avenue and the Southside parkway system including Heacock Place, Red Jacket Parkway, McClellan Circle and McKinley Parkway.

The death of the American Elms on the parkways as a result of Dutch Elm disease has caused considerable weakening of the visual image and pleasurable sense of the parkway system. The change from horse and carriage traffic to high speed automobile traffic has also weakened the meaning of the parkway connections. Over the past decade, each year a considerable allocation has been set aside from the city's capital budget for the reforestation of disease resistant elms and other shade trees on the parkways and throughout the city. The growth of these trees, slow at first, is becoming substantial. The trees now appear as they would have about ten years after their original planting. Additional work does need to be done in order to fully reforest the parkways. The careful planting of the nodes of the system is especially important to reinforce their significance.

The overall system shows a disbursement of large and small acreages connected by broad parkways. In developing this system with the large main park, smaller parks and tree lined parkways throughout the city the Olmsted firm secured open spaces to act as lungs for the city. These resources have served to recycle our air and provide a legacy of healthful recreation for Buffalo's citizen for more than one hundred years.

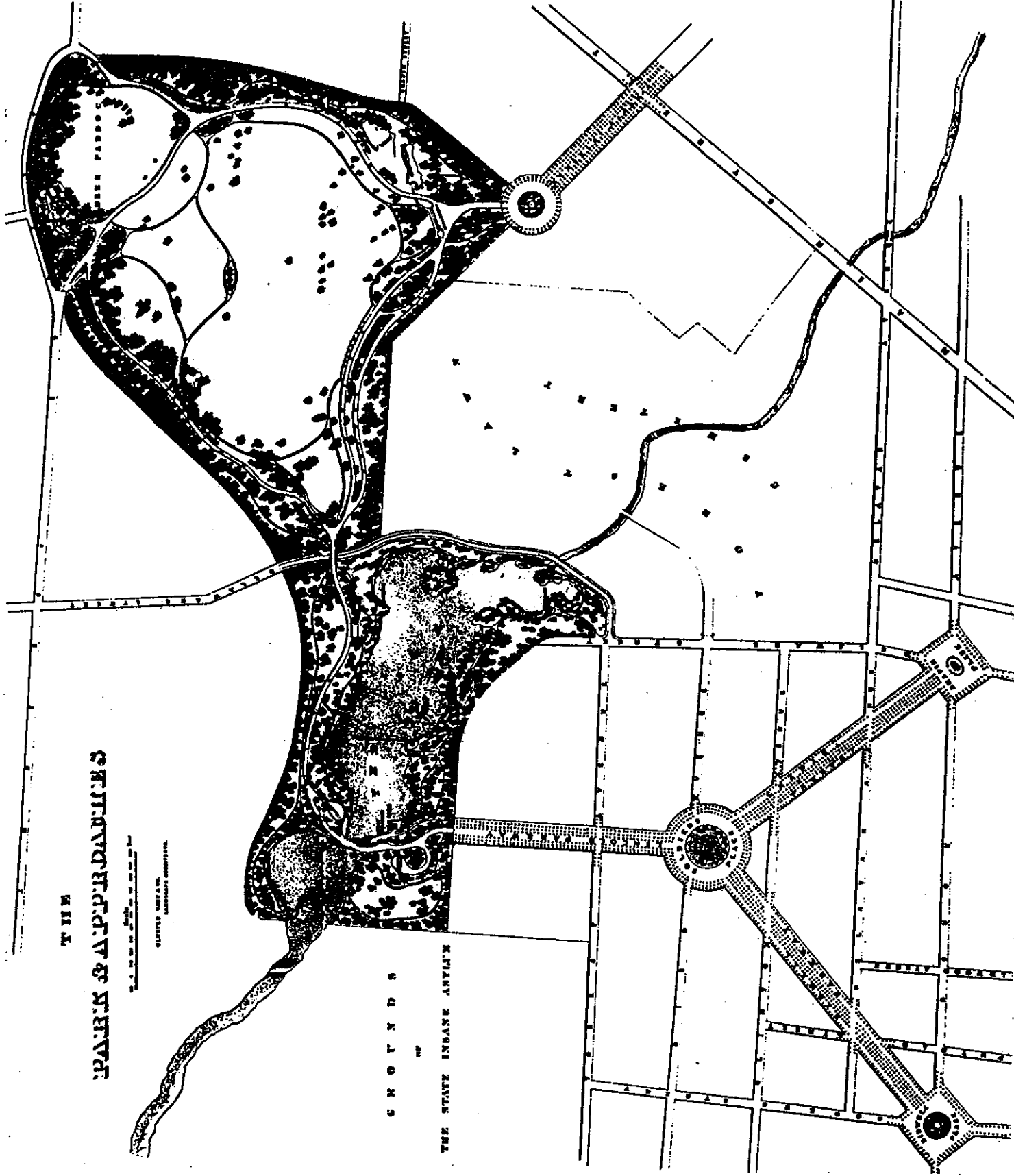
#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### b. One Park System, The Park

In order to secure a large acreage, the site for a sizeable park was suggested in the countryside north of the city. In August of 1868, Olmsted visited Buffalo and with Dorsheimer toured possible park sites. As they approached the area of The Park in the carriage, he stopped and said, "Here is your park ready-made." In the subsequent report to the citizens committee he describes The Park. It was an area with naturally sloping topography, and because of this, had not been cut through by roads or divided into house lots. Scajaquada Creek ran through it, meandering along. His plan was to construct an embankment and create a body of water, a lake, by widening out this creek. In this regard he says, "a body of living water might here be formed about 20 acres in extent with a very agreeable natural line of shore, the greater part of which would be shaded by groves of trees already on the ground, most of which are already in their prime and are very desirable species. This water would be well adapted for the requirements of ornamental water fowl, to skating and boating. The groves adjoining would furnish a cool place to be resorted to for rambling and for rest on a hot day." To the north and east of this area, a series of large open fields were found with groups of trees, mature and in fine condition. Olmsted wanted to use both of these areas, connecting them with a narrow neck, and thus created a very irregularly shaped park with two distinct portions, the Water Park and the Meadow Park. The Park contained 355 acres in its original purchase.

The plan for The Park was submitted in 1870 by Olmsted, Vaux and Company, Landscape Architects. The Water Park's main feature was a 46 1/2 acre lake with an irregular shore-line, several small bays and inlets and three islands. The edges of the lake are planted with masses of trees and shrubbery and at the western edge a bridge takes Lincoln Parkway over a narrow area and the Gala water is separated from the North Bay. The entire park is densely bordered in trees, several rows thick. The Meadow Park is to the east and north of the Water Park, and is edged with trees with an internal loop road, pedestrian pathways, a bridle path and a large open meadow. The Meadow, comprising 234 acres, had several clusters of trees, but was primarily an open greensward enclosed from view by the tree border. At the northeast corner there was an area described as a deer paddock. This area eventually became the Zoological Gardens. The early uses of The Park were boating, canoeing and rowing, picnicing, walking through the meadow, and enjoying the vast country-like scenery. No gymnastics, play equipment or active recreation facilities were included.

In 1870, under the direction of Radford and McMillan, topographical surveys of The Park were completed. Plans were received from Olmsted and Vaux for the roads and lake. Road building and



**THE  
PARK & APPURTANANCES**

SCALE  
1" = 100'

**GROUNDS  
OF  
THE STATE INBAKE ARMY**

#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### b. One Park System, The Park

excavation of the lake began. The existing woods were cleared. Two hundred and thirty acres were ploughed, harrowed, partially drain tiled and graded. Young trees, shrubs and other stock plants were purchased from Rochester and a nursery set out along the eastern border of The Park in anticipation of the need for numerous plants in the development of the plan. The initial year of the Parks Commission marked the first contribution from a citizen and took the form of a donation of a pair of young deer presented by Jacob Berkhold.

The work of forming the landscape proceeded with great energy for the first six years of the Commission. In 1876 a boathouse, superintendent's house and farmstead buildings were constructed according to plans received from Calvert Vaux. Open air concerts were held near the boathouse. The rental of row boats, which began in 1873, increased as the facilities were completed. Many people were resorting to this section of The Park for picnicing, boating and strolling. The Park Lake was becoming a place of scenic beauty admired by visitors. The variations of the banks half concealed and half revealed the vistas over the water. As early as 1875 the newly landscaped park began to achieve its potential. The report of that year notes the visits by parties from all over Erie County. Nine concerts were well attended in the Water Park during the season. The Sixth Annual Report states that although no accurate records were kept, the carriages entering The Park were counted and averaged 400-500 on a good day raising to one thousand on a summer Sunday. It is noted that public transportation to the area of The Park is non-existent. The distance is so great that few pedestrians make the walk and a significant portion of the population is hampered in their use of this public ground as a result. Request for better public access is made here and for several years until the belt line railroad and trolley service are provided.

As The Park developed, changes were made under the auspices of Mr. Olmsted, who was in regular communication with McMillan, the Superintendent of Buffalo Parks. The Seventh Annual Report, published in 1877, recounts the amount of the original plans for The Park, The Parade, The Front and the interconnecting parkways complete by this point in time. The allocation for purchase and embellishment of the parks system established by the original law was substantially used. The parks had primarily been completed with parkways and avenues opened as good dirt roads, trees and shrubbery planted, the grounds seeded and the parks in use. The Commission suggested at this point that further improvements could be left to the future. From 1876 through 1881, no substantial allocation was made. Work was pushed forward at whatever rate was possible, some improvements were made and general maintenance carried on. In the

#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### b. One Park System, The Park

Eighth Annual Report, the first mention is made of sewage being discharged into The Park Lake coming from Scajaquada Creek.

In 1875, Frederick Law Olmsted wrote a letter to the Commission asking that land to the south of the Water Park, graced with mature trees, be added to The Park. Requests for this additional land continued for several years. Finally in 1887, twelve acres were added to The Park, containing a native grove, sloping banks and a pleasant winding ravine. A stone bridge was built in this area to cross the ravine and still stands there today. By 1883, there were weekly concerts and the use of The Park was increasing greatly. In 1884, the beltline train let off passengers very close to the Meadow area. Up until this time, the primary use had been within the Water Park section, the Meadow being too distant. Now the Meadow was increasing in usefulness. In 1886, a police station was built in The Park, after several years of requests by the Commissioners for special park police force. Sleighing and skating were prominent winter enjoyments of the park land and are mentioned in several of the reports, especially in the one of 1888, which notes large numbers of winter park users. Sheep were bought and pastured on the Meadow to keep the grass trimmed. Quail were donated to The Park in 1889, and squirrels purchased for picturesque effect. During this year, new barns, stables and a corral area, were built for proper care and exhibition of the animal collection which had now increased to include buffalo, elk, deer and other grazing animals. They also provided quarters for the sheep, water fowl, quail and other birds. The tendency toward a zoological garden was growing. From the beginning it had been located in the farthest northeastern corner of the park property between the loop road of the Meadow, Amherst Street and Parkside Avenue. In 1893, buffaloes were grazing in the Meadow and creating an attraction for the visitors to The Park. In 1892, the 22nd Annual Report notes the use of the Gala Water by two to five thousand skaters when the ice is clear. The winter season of 1894 sees six to eight thousand skaters and skaters also using the partially excavated lakes at South Park and Cazenovia Park.

In 1896, greenhouses are built in The Park for propagation of flowering plants. Discoloration of the lake water is noted in the summer of '96, and weeds in the lake along with 23 years of deposits were making it shallow in some of the bays and inlets, posing a possible problem to health. During this year The Park is extended toward Grant Street by a donation of land for the Scajaquada Parkway and a piece of Scajaquada Creek from Elmwood Avenue to Grant Street, and developments are begun for the parkway itself in 1895-1896. The growing nucleus of the zoological collection enlarges and in May of 1895, Mr. Frank Thompson was

#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

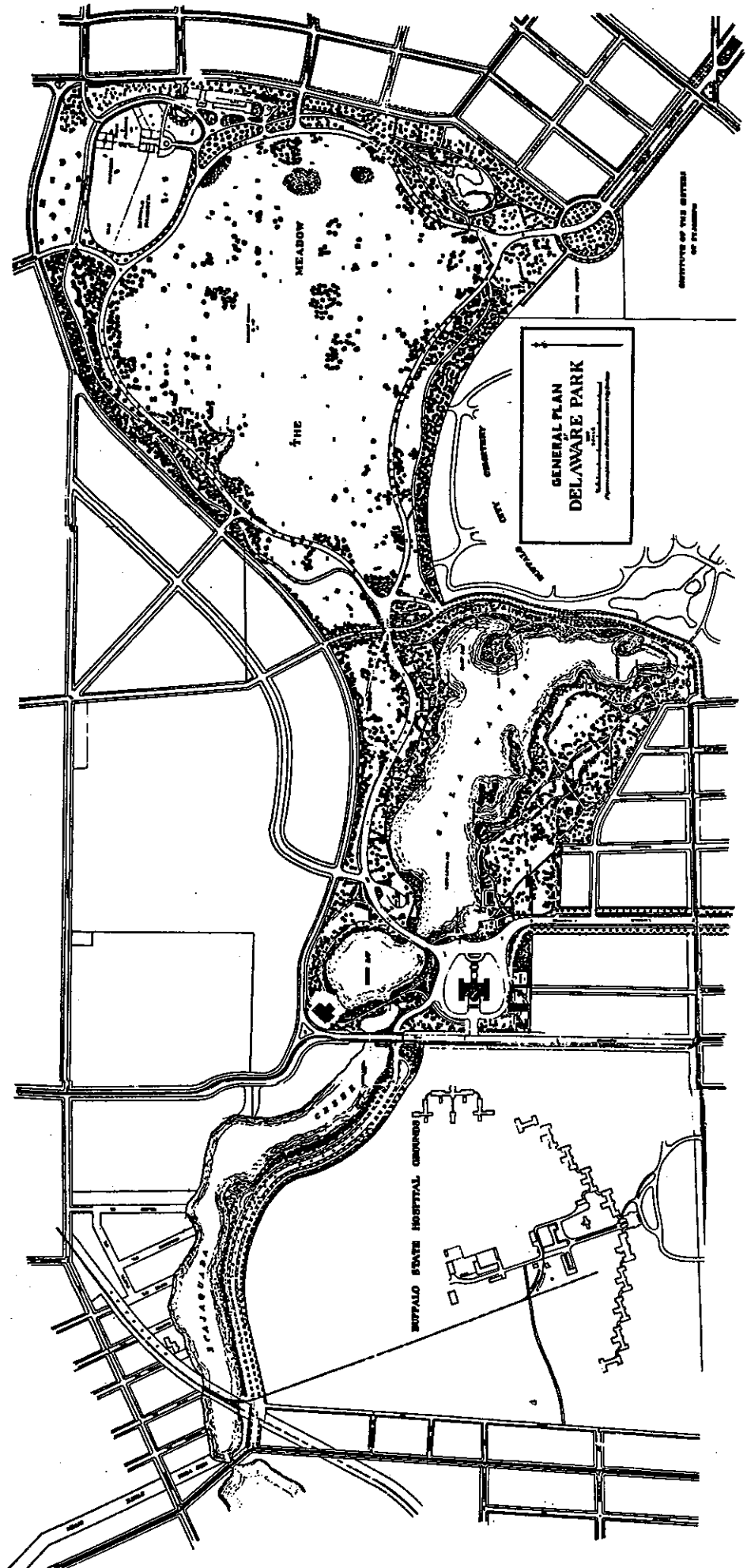
##### b. One Park System, The Park

secured as curator. Many people were resorting to The Park on horseback and the development of a better system of bridle paths was demanded.

In 1896 the name of The Park was officially changed to Delaware Park. For several years it had been referred to as either North Park or Delaware Park and with the extension of the city parks to the south a clear title was required.

In 1897, a bicycle path was constructed along the southern edge from the Water Park, over Delaware Avenue to Agassiz Circle. Bicycling was becoming a prominent means of pleasure transportation and paths were provided in the parks system. The Zoo report for 1897 lists forty-eight animals in the collection. Winter quarters for the animals were constructed and the following year bear pits were added. The Zoological Gardens are drawing crowds and use increases in the Meadow Park as a result. Near the turn of the century 138 animals are found in the collection, many of them donated by prominent citizens of the city. Bicycle mounted Police are used for patrolling the parks and parkways. In 1898 William McMillan, who had been Superintendent of Parks since 1873 and began in 1870 as Superintendent of Planting, steps down from the position and was replaced by John Brothers. The 1899 Report details the development of a greater range of active recreation facilities. Golf, football and baseball are all practiced on the Meadow.

A plan for Delaware Park published in 1899, just prior to the Pan American Exposition, shows the extension of the park and construction of a parkway from Grant Street with a small overlook along the creek. The Scajaquada Parkway, located to the west of the Water Park, is connected to the drives around the Albright Art Gallery. The small northern bay provides a gracious setting for the New York State Building, later to become the Buffalo Historical Society. The Gala water has two islands, an east bay and a south bay, and an irregular shaped shoreline. The boathouse and bandstand are seen across the road from the Albright Knox on the southwestern edge of the major portion of the lake. The meadow is densely ringed with several rows of trees and a bridle path and carriage path are seen, as well as pedestrian pathways. The quarry of the park is outlined on the eastern edge from which stone was taken, since the beginning of the development of parks, for road beds and buildings. In the northeastern corner, the area described in the initial plan as a deer paddock, now includes a buffalo paddock, elk paddock, deer paddock, bear pits and several other structures for animals. The park farmstead, used as the residence of the superintendent, is located just south of the area developed for the Zoological Gardens.





#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### b. One Park System, The Park

A beautiful stone bridge, carrying Lincoln Parkway over the lake was erected in 1900. Delaware Park received great attention that year in preparation for the Pan American Exposition of 1901-1902. The park was the major setting for the Exposition whose main buildings were constructed just north of its border along Elmwood Avenue. The Olmsted took great interest in this event. It is listed in the job file and the firm was involved in the siting of the New York State building and the Albright Gallery. The Brookline offices hold a thick photo album of Pan American Exposition shots taken by Frederick Sr., only two years before his death, and John Charles Olmsted. These photographs show the elaborate structures and site embellishments provided for the event and include shots of the park at this time. The Parks Commissioners were less pleased with the impact of the Exposition on the park lands and parkways. Several hundred mature trees were killed in the siting of the Albright Art Gallery and the New York State building. After the event wreckage of the temporary structures defaced the park lands and the parks work force spent the following months repairing the damaged lands.

In 1903 the American Parks and Outdoor Association held their convention in the Buffalo Parks. The following year saw the donation of Gates Circle by Mrs. Charles Pardee and a large copy of the statue of David by Michaelangelo was donated by Andrew Langdon. This statue was sited by John Charles Olmsted along the southern concourse overlooking the Gala Water. In 1905 a monument was erected to William McMillan the former Superintendent. It is a massive granite drinking trough for watering horses. It stands on a rise at the southern end of the lake at the edge of the former parkway, currently the Scajaquada Expressway. Although the fountains are capped this monument to the man who oversaw the creation of the parks system for twenty-eight years, sits regally in a setting of Norway maples.

The Albright Art Gallery was dedicated in 1906. The construction of the ornate, temple-like building had taken six years to complete. The elaborate dedication services are detailed in the 37th Annual Report. The gallery was enlarged with a modern addition endowed by Seymour Knox in the 1960's. The Albright-Knox Art Gallery is internationally known for its exceptional collection of contemporary art. The building is included in the National Register of Historic Places. Gallery grounds are embellished with a display of contemporary sculpture.

Additional land was added to the southern edge of the park in 1907 by a donation from the Rumsey family. This donation increased the picnic area along the lake with another stand of mature trees. Picnic parties are seen throughout the park with visitors from Lockport, Niagara Falls, Lancaster and other suburbs picnicing, taking part in sports and visiting the zoological collection. This report notes the number of visitors to the Zoo increasing to twenty or thirty thousand on weekends with good weather. In 1909, creation of a plan for

#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### b. One Park System, The Park

the development of the Zoological Garden was suggested. In 1912 an elephant house was constructed. Iron cages and fences eventually replaced the wooden types. The Zoo today is enclosed by a decorative iron fence and quarried stone gates, with animal sculptures on either side of the several entrances. The main building, most of the cages and animal shelters are stone and iron. Since the buildings and grounds were primarily constructed in the first part of this century the facilities are not entirely adequate today. The indoor and outdoor collections have greatly enlarged from their modest beginnings. The interior grounds are liberally landscaped with flowering trees, shrubbery and large shade trees. The character of the Zoo is rustic. Buffalonians, suburban dwellers and tourists enjoy the grounds and animal collections in great numbers. In the past few years the Buffalo Zoological Society has been reappraising there resources. Under the guidance of a design firm a new master plan has been produced. During the summer of 1979 the first phase of implementation was begun in the construction of a visitors building and new main entrance. As this master plan development continues, the modernization process should be carefully integrated with the historic resources of the original construction.

The 38th Annual Report details the beauty of the park Meadow, its slightly rolling topography, clusters of trees and dense edge enclosing the views. In 1910 gasoline lamps were installed throughout the park and replaced with electric lamp fixtures in 1923. The rose garden with a large pergola behind it, was laid out near the boathouse in 1912. Active recreation was on the increase. By 1913 sixteen hundred permit holders were playing golf on the Meadow. Bowling on the green, initiated in 1912, was popular and horseback riding had increased. Demand for tennis facilities was seen with park visitors playing without any courts. The Meadow greens were used for football and in 1914 regulation baseball diamonds were laid out. The Parkside Lodge was built the same year to provide locker rooms for users of the growing recreational facilities. In 1915 the golf links were enlarged to eighteen holes. In the 20's rustic bridges over the park quarry were replaced with stone bridges. These are now seen on grade to the west of the lodge, the quarry being filled in during the construction of the Scajaquada Expressway in the 60's.

Delaware Park today retains much of its natural beauty. The Meadow, which provides an 18 hole golf course, four baseball diamonds, a soccer field and a running path for joggers, is a massive open space. It is densely bordered by trees of two heights and shrubbery. Within the loop road, the expansive rolling terrain is dotted with clusters of mature oaks, maples and other varieties. Several outstanding, century old specimens grace the landscape. The major change in the park in general was the replacement of the Scajaquada Parkway with the expressway. The original road bed was basically followed by the expressway construction with some of the graceful curves straightened,

#### 4. THE LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### b. One Park System, The Park

the right of way widened for four lanes of traffic and the exit and entry ramps severing portions of the park grounds. One of these ramps at Delaware Avenue precipitated the filling in of the north-eastern bay of the lake. The outline of the lake has also been altered by the elimination of the south bay and the islands. The shoreline, as a result, has lost much of its original variety and Olmstedian character.

The area adjoining the Historical Society at the edges of Mirror Lake contains plantings of dense shrubbery and a variety of trees. Pathways wind through this sloping depth of woods leading to an oak shaded greensward bordering Nottingham Avenue. Here a pedestrian and bicycle overpass carries park visitors over the expressway to the north shore of the lake. The sloping topography in this section is under the cover of mature trees of many varieties and overgrown shrubbery. The pathway at the edge of the lake has several picturesque overhanging trees. On the opposite side of the lake the southern edge, groves and meadows form a diverse landscape. The sloping depth of deciduous woods along the line of the original lake shore contains a rich native ecosystem. The ravine perpendicular to the lake is one of the most secluded and pastoral areas with winding paths and a variety of mature trees. The original stone bridge still carries pedestrians and bicyclists over the ravine. The rose garden and pergola have been restored in this section adjacent to Lincoln Parkway. The playground and picnic area behind the gardens is heavily used by park visitors. The slope of the hill as it descends to the lake provides sledding in the winter and a natural amphitheater for performances during the balance of the year.

In the early 1970's concerned citizens, seeing the deterioration of the park resources, joined together to form the Delaware Park Steering Committee. This committee comprised of citizen volunteers aided by public officials, worked initially to stop further encroachment on the park lands by the production of a master plan. Since 1972 they have continued their efforts through the phased implementation of the Delaware Park Comprehensive Development Plan. Funds secured through the Community Development Block Grant program, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and other federal, state and local public sources as well as donations from citizens and foundations have been utilized in the projects completed to date. Several labor intensive improvements to the park have been carried out by citizen volunteers and employees of the Youth Conservation Corps, Young Adult Conservation Corps, Mayor's Summer Youth and CETA Title VI programs. The accompanying master plan drawing prepared by the consultants to the park in 1976 details the full range of improvements completed and contemplated for Delaware Park at this time.

#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

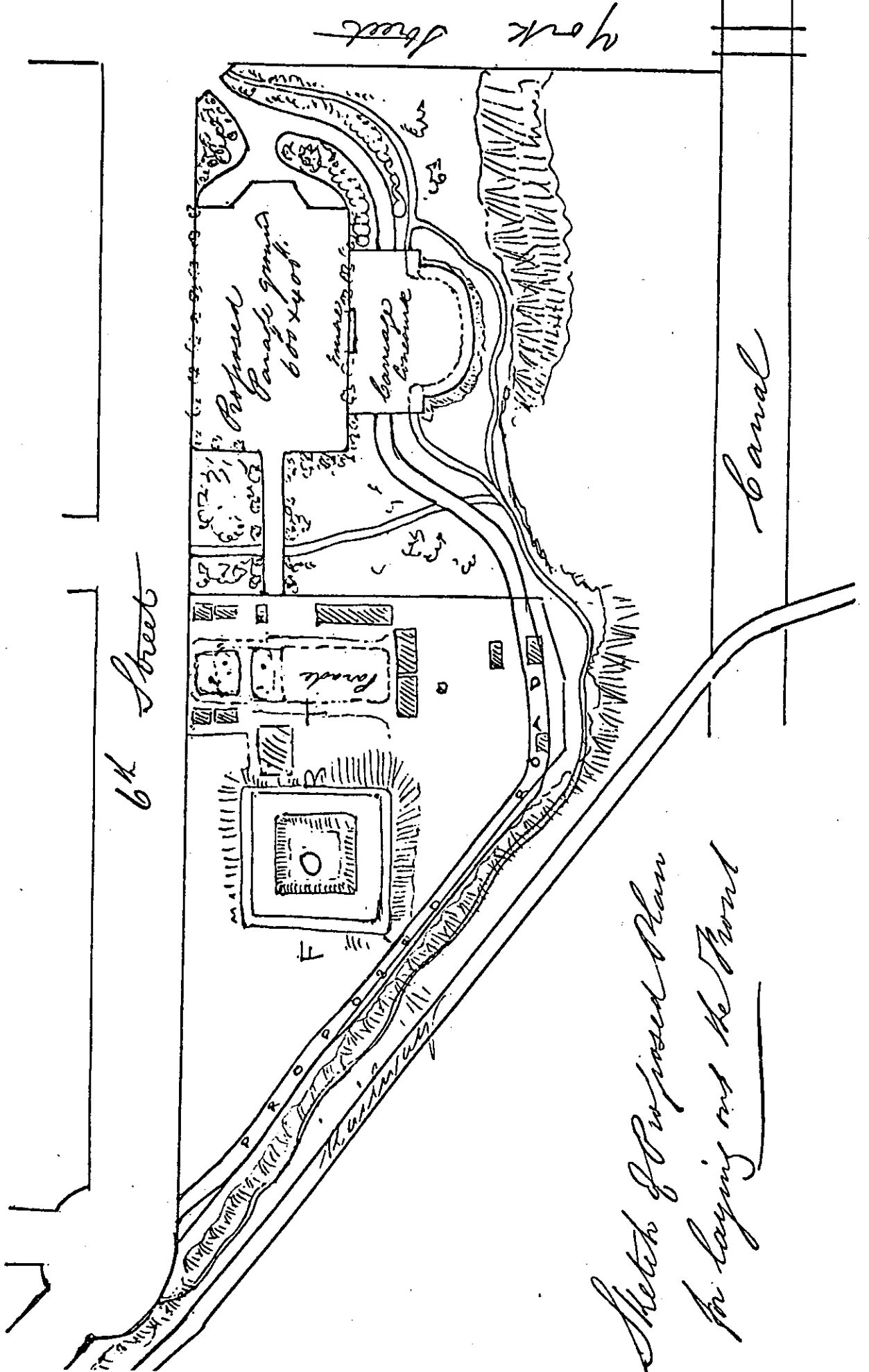
##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Front

The acreage of Front Park is located at the mouth of the Niagara River. The site was chosen because of its attractive view out over the Lake and the Canadian shoreline. Describing the site, Olmsted states, "The outer view thus framed and emphasized would be peculiar to Buffalo and would have a character of magnificence, admirably adapted to be associated with stately ceremonies, the entertainment of guests, and other occasions of civic display." The General Plan, received from Olmsted and Vaux in 1870, shows a neighborhood ground, about 35 acres in extent. It includes a large terrace centrally located with its major view directed out over the Erie Canal and the mouth of the Niagara River. The site was separated from the edge of the river by the Erie Canal and a small piece of land at a lower elevation. Adjacent to the terrace is a large, oval playground to the inland side and it is developed as an open expanse of grass without recreational equipment. The carriageways enter at opposite ends, one coming through the site of Fort Porter which was to the north of the site, and one coming from Porter Avenue. Trees are clustered in groves along the carriageways and at the perimeter of the park. The banks are planted with shrubbery and seeded in grass.

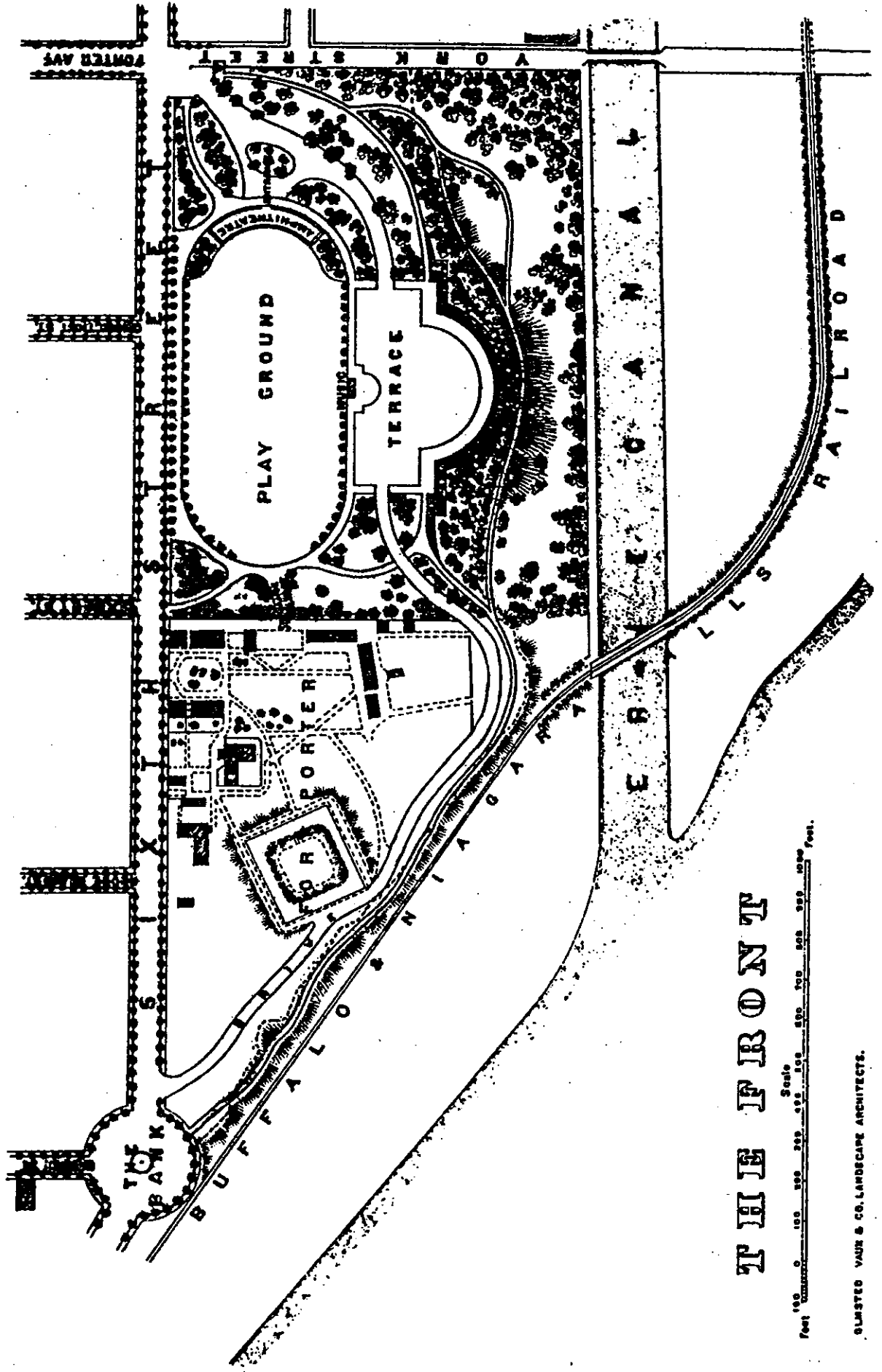
Work was begun on The Front in 1872 after an agreement was made with United States Government for constructing a drive through the grounds of Fort Porter. By 1874, much of the grading, planting, filling, and construction of roads and walks was completed and The Front was opened for use. Originally, The Front was bordered by Fort Porter to the North, Sixth Street to the east, York Street to the south and the Erie Canal to the west. Today it is bordered by Busti Avenue to the east, Porter Avenue to the south, the Peace Bridge to the north, and the New York State Thruway to the west.

In 1883 the 13th Annual Report states that it was unfortunate that when the land was taken for The Front, the strip of land between the canal and the lake beach was not also acquired. At the time it was vacant, and at this point there were several businesses occupying the land interfering with the public enjoyment of The Front, and it was suggested by the commissioners that steps be taken to add this property to The Front.

The 17th Annual Report lists three areas; The Front play green of seven and one-half acres, the terrace concourse of three and one-half acres and The Front border and the Fort Porter bank of 24-1/2 acres totaling 35-1/2 acres attributed to The Front in 1887. This same report records the purchase of the lands lying on each side of Porter Avenue between the canal and the lake. The Olmsted firm was consulted to make a plan for the addition to The Front. In 1888 the Annual Report states that little work was done on the newly taken grounds opposite The Front because possession of the whole property



Sketch of Proposed Plan  
for laying out the Front



# THE FRONT

Scale  
 Feet 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 Feet.

OLMSTED VAUS & CO. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS.

#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Front

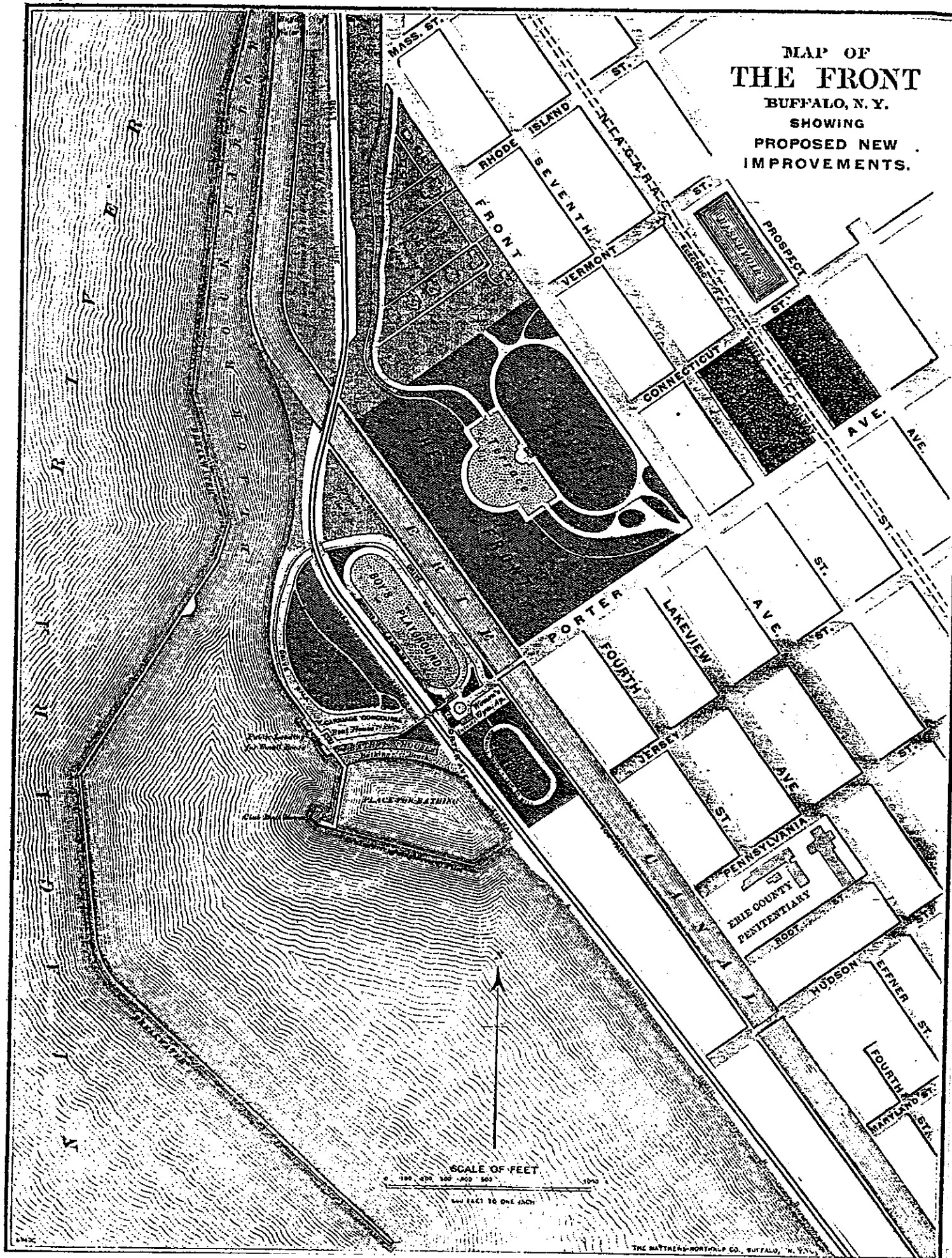
was not obtained. The 1889 Report lists litigations still pending regarding the award of the portions of the land taken for park purposes opposite The Front. A decision adverse to the city was rendered by the general term of the Superior Court and the corporation counsel was asked to carry the case to the Court of Appeals. There were two owners who accepted the awards on the lots, but some lots were still pending.

This report for 1888 also states that the government had rebuilt the officers quarters and barracks. The old stone Fort Porter was demolished and the demolition of these structures added in landscaped effect to The Front nearly one-half the area of the post.

Finally, in 1891, the lands were secured through a mutually acceptable agreement and payment was made to the icehouse owners in addition to the original awards. The total area considered here was about 20 acres measured by the original lot lines, but one-third of that was under water owing to the erosion of the shore of the lake. There would be needed a great deal of work to bring this into the park system. Plans were received from F.L. and J.C. Olmsted & Company in 1891 for the addition to The Front. It included a boys' and girls' playground, a lawn, a bathing beach, a long pier and a walk overlooking the edge of the lake. These playgrounds had gymnastics apparatus included in them. The playgrounds were located in the area between the canal and the railroad, and west of the railroad, the bathing beach and anchorage for small boats and row boats. It was proposed in this plan to cross the railroad by a subway for carriages at the north end of the grounds, and by an overhead foot-path from Porter Avenue for pedestrian traffic. The 24th Annual Report in 1884 states that substantial progress was made on utilizing the waterfront near the foot of Porter Avenue. Piles were driven to outline the perimeter and topped with a strong stone wall. A twenty foot wooden pier was extended diagonally into the ship canal and the ground began to be filled.

The 26th Annual Report lists 12-1/2 additional acres of new lands west of the canal bringing the total of The Front acreage to 48 acres. In January 1901 no real work had yet been done to bring the additions to The Front close to the landscape architects plan. The lands were simply graded and seeded before the Pan American Exposition opened so that the railroad approach to the city and this view from the edge of the lake would be more attractive. In 1908, the Waterworks were constructed on the south end of the park between the Erie Canal and the River. The buildings and valve tower, of ornamental architecture, are still standing today as the Colonel Ward Pumping Station.

MAP OF  
**THE FRONT**  
 BUFFALO, N. Y.  
 SHOWING  
 PROPOSED NEW  
 IMPROVEMENTS.



SCALE OF FEET  
 0 100 200 300 400 500 600  
 ONE INCH TO ONE HUNDRED FEET



#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Front

In 1915 The Front was listed as having two grass tennis courts, two clay tennis courts and five baseball diamonds. This report lists the construction of a new road at The Front and the foot of Porter Avenue. Much shrubbery was planted with usual care and attention given to the plantations. In 1926, the last troops were withdrawn from Fort Porter. Due to increasing demand for travel to Canada, the Peace Bridge was constructed and opened to traffic on June 1, 1927. A naval militia building was constructed on the addition in 1930. The pier and boathouse were used by the Buffalo Yacht Club since their construction. By 1931 recreation facilities in the park included eight baseball diamonds, four tennis courts, two football fields, a cricket field, a tobaggan slide and an ice skating rink.

Work undertaken on the Prospect Parks is detailed in the 5th Annual Report. They consist of two block-sized spaces, one street to the east of the grounds for The Front. They were included on the early maps of the system and were under the care of the Parks Department during the development of the park system under the direction of Mr. Olmsted. In 1907, the 38th Annual Report, The Front and Prospect Parks are listed together with an area of 48 acres. They are subsequently discussed as a unit. The Prospect Parks, just east of The Front, still serve the public as open grounds. They appear to be fairly close to their original intention and design as being open greenswards within the city. On the south end of the block bordered by Porter, Niagara, Connecticut and Fargo, a small Public Library and parking lot have been built. The opposite block has a monument to Christopher Columbus on its Porter Avenue side and is referred to as Columbus Park. These two blocks need some replanting with both trees and shrubbery. They are estimated to be seventy-five percent intact. They also act as a link in the parkway system coming from downtown from Niagara Square. Niagara Street carries you right out to these open spaces as it joins Porter Avenue.

The original site of The Front has been compromised in several ways. At the Porter Avenue entrance access routes to the Peace Bridge, located on the site of Fort Porter, have been cut through the eastern edge of the Front. These roads remove about seventy feet from the edge of the park. The large, open playground still dominates this part although it is slightly smaller than the original. Along the northern edge are tennis courts, a picnic shelter, several playground components and a monument to Civil War soldiers on sloping lands with a scattering of mature trees. The original form and extent of the terrace can still be seen. In the center is a monument of Commodore Perry, but at the edge to the west, with a view out to the lake, an unattractive brick building, used as a superintendent's house and restrooms, obstructs the line of vision. In addition to this building, the park visitor looks over and through four sets of expressway lanes at several heights in the path of the old Erie Canal. The southern end of The Front includes

#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Front

many mature trees flanking a winding entrance road with pleasant, shady walks with grassy banks sloping down to what would have been the edge of the Erie Canal. An old shelter of quarried stone, built in the early days of The Front, is located in a grove in this area. In the southeastern corner a rectangular brick building used as a recreation center is at the foot of the bank. In front of it is an ice skating rink surrounded by a chain link fence. The medians and wedges, isolated by the Peace Bridge access roads, are nicely planted with small and large trees and shrubs.

The intact areas of the original design include the open green area for playing fields, the formation of the original terrace, the mature trees, the winding paths, the gently varied topography of the north end, and the sloping banks of the south end. I would estimate that the landscape is approximately forty percent intact.

The Front was originally chosen for its scenic value. The juxtaposition of the New York State Thruway and the loss of the additional acreage do cut it off from the Niagara River and Lake Erie. Land at the lake edge to the south of the Pumping Station is now La Salle Park. This acreage could be linked to The Front in the future.

It would be possible in various ways to bring the land that is now available to The Front into more congruence with its original design, while maintaining or improving the usefulness of the park. The access drives to the Peace Bridge could be rerouted so that some of the severed land could be reattached. One of the double entry drives could be eliminated and the parking areas reduced. The structures could be removed or redesigned. The skating rink could be improved and partially hidden by shrubs and trees and the edge abutting the Peace Bridge truck terminal heavily planted. Other plantings could be renewed in accordance with the original design.

The Front and Prospect Parks still serve the surrounding community as neighborhood pleasure grounds. They also act as amenities to the international entrance to the United States from the Peace Bridge.

##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Parade

In August 1868, an area to the northeast of the center of the city on an elevated site was viewed. Of this site, Olmsted says, "The first is the most elevated ground in the city on High Street, near the old Potter's Field. From this a finer lookout may be had over the city than from any other point, and the distant wooded plains, backed by blue hills, make a beautiful background to the view on

#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Parade

the south. It is nearer to the more densely populated parts of the city than any other site having distinctive natural advantages." The general plan of the Parade shows a slightly L shaped site with the proposed Humboldt Parkway feeding into the grounds on the northwest corner. The major acreage is an open grassy expanse surrounded by a carriage concourse containing about 20 acres. The city streets were not cut through the site, but take broad curvilinear forms in its interior. The Parade House Plaza, an area of about four acres, was a concourse in front of an ornate refectory building. Just above the refectory, in the northeast corner, a semi-circle of trees enclosed the playground with gymnastics equipment, a picnic area and concert grounds. The perimeter of the site is bordered by trees and the streets abutting it edged in rows of trees. Walkways and carriageways are provided, separating pedestrian and vehicular traffic. There are two main entrances to the Parks, one off of Humboldt Parkway which had a median and a double roadway as it entered the park. The second one was at the intersection of Best and Herman Streets, later known as West Parade, formed a major entrance with two stone gates. The plan called for the severing of Walden Street, now known as Fillmore Avenue, and picking it up on the opposite side of the Park. This ground was designed as a neighborhood recreational pleasure ground, including the playground and open greensward. The total acreage was 56 acres.

The development began in 1871 with drain tiling, grading and seeding the grass. Trees and shrubbery were planted throughout the Park and the ground was dressed and enriched with good soil. By 1874, the footpaths and carriageways were completed. North and East Parade Streets were opened and the former line of Walden Street was ready to be closed. The plank walks were laid on the side next to the Parade. During the year, baseball clubs played on the open greensward with a superintendent noting the damage to the large portion of the turf as a result. In 1876, plans were received from Calvert Vaux for the Parade refectory. They went out to bid and construction was begun. The building was 270 feet long, 50 feet wide, and two stories high. It was to be used for societies, clubs and all organizations that might gather in the summer and the winter to celebrate festivals, banquets or anniversaries, with the advantages of proximity to grounds for gymnastics, athletic games, team sports or a pleasant picnic grove. The Parade afforded ample space for military displays. In 1874 troops were displayed on the broad, open grounds. The ornate Parade House of Vaux's design burned on August 26, 1877. It was rebuilt under a plan by C.K. Porter with a smaller, less decorative structure.

In 1886, the junction of Best and Herman Streets was paved in asphalt. The original area of the roadway in this square, which forms

LINE OF BUILT RAILROAD

# THE PARADE

Scale: 1" = 100' 0" 200' 300' 400' 500' 600' 700' 800' 900' 1000'

- 1. Trapeze
- 2. Horizontal Bars
- 3. Horses
- 4. Parallel Bars
- 5. Giant Strides
- 6. Ships
- 7. Carrousel
- 8. See Saws & Swings
- 9. Aviary
- 10. Bear Pit.

AVENUE

CONCOURSE

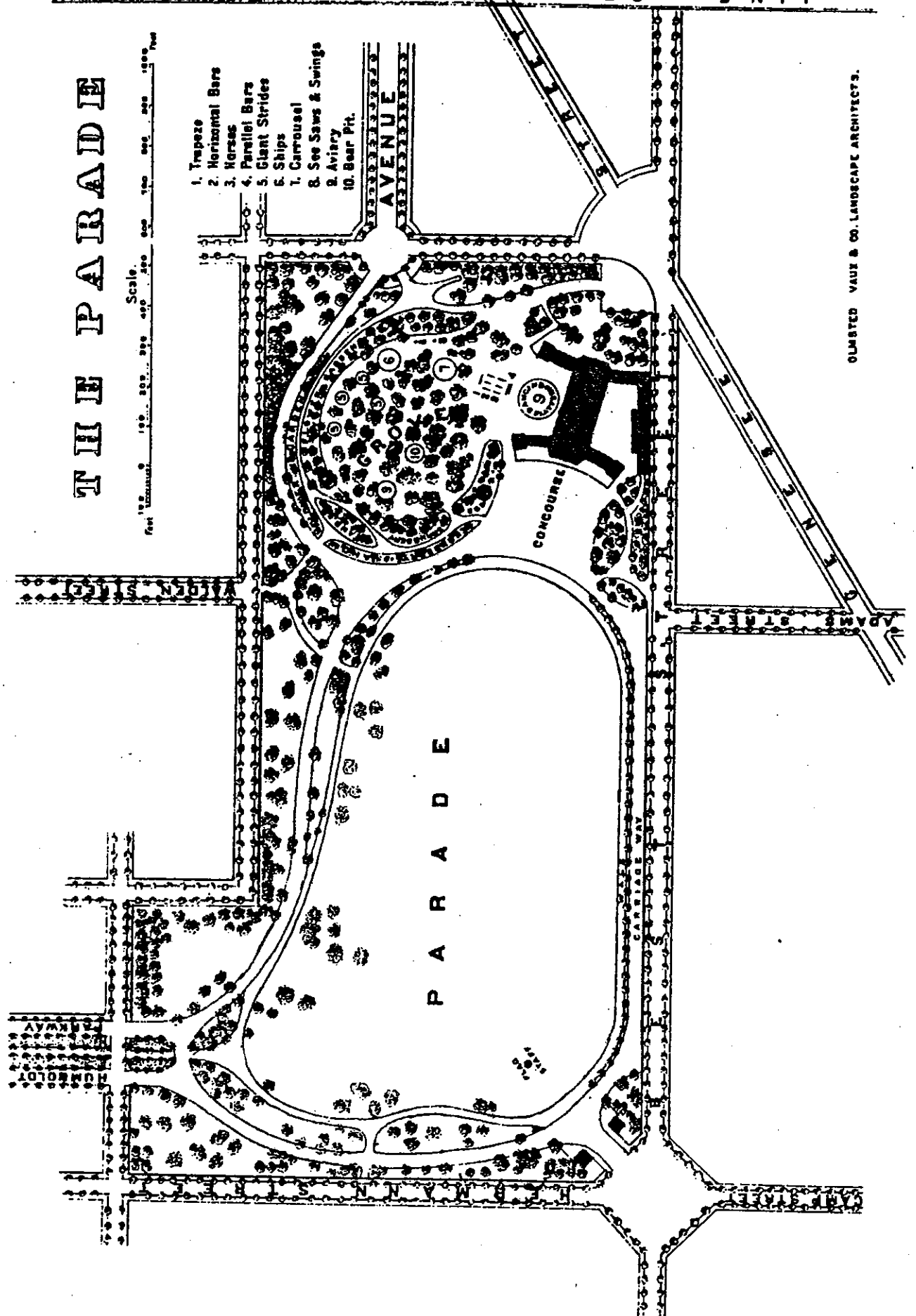
P A R A D E

AVENUE  
CARRIAGE WAY

ADAMS STREET

HENRY STREET

OLMSTED VAUX & CO. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS.



#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Parade

the southwesterly entrance to the Parade, was considerably reduced by enlarging the borders and rounding the curblin at the intersection. In the center of the square, a circle of 25' in diameter was reserved as a site for a large ornamental lamppost with five globes. At this time, Best Street, North Street and Porter Avenue were well paved, providing a direct line between the Parade and The Front. In 1888, the lamp district was extended into the Parade and on Best Street, large ornamental lampposts were set up. The third entrance into the Park was opened in 1888 on Avenue A on the eastern edge of the Park about two-thirds of the way up from Best Street.

The 14th Annual Report of 1884 notes the repair and painting of the post and board fence. Five years later, the construction of an iron picket fence was requested. The wood fence was being continually jumped over or broken down by unruly park users. Several years later, in 1896, a wrought iron picket fence, four and one-half feet high and 6,928 feet long was placed around The Parade. There was quite a bit of discussion concerning surrounding the grounds with fences in the reports. The fence was seen as a tool for proper utilization of parks by directing users to intended pathways and preserving turf and plantings from random activity.

The 25th and 26th Annual Reports include a detailed discussion of the problems at The Parade. It was stated that the "rescue of The Parade from general ruin...has engaged our attention for the whole year." The damage of the grounds steadily proceeded. In 1895, the matter was addressed to the firm of landscape architects, of which Frederick Law Olmsted was the senior member. In response to the city's invitation John Charles Olmsted came to Buffalo, observed the conditions of the Parade at the time, and was informed of the aims and wishes of the commission. In January of 1896 a revised plan, which was quite different than the original, was received. The open greensward was replaced by several water features. The main one was a large circular pool which was to be used for bathing, toy boating, wading, and in the winter, ice skating. This large pool is over 500' in diameter, is located at the edge of Fillmore Avenue, which in this plan is cut through the Park, in a curving route. To the west of this pool was a large water plant basin of rectangular form and a little farther to the west, a circular fountain. These features were connected by a series of diagonal pathways, along which trees were planted in rows. The large Parade house was to be adopted as a public bathhouse. The plan for the eastern portion of the Park was to remain basically the same as the 1870 plan. When these features were constructed during 1896, the Parade was renamed Humboldt Park. The reason for its original name, military displays on the grounds, was no longer appropriate. Electric lights were placed around the large basin and near the pathways. Water was supplied to the park from street washers and stone walks were laid

CITY OF BUFFALO — PARK COMMISSION

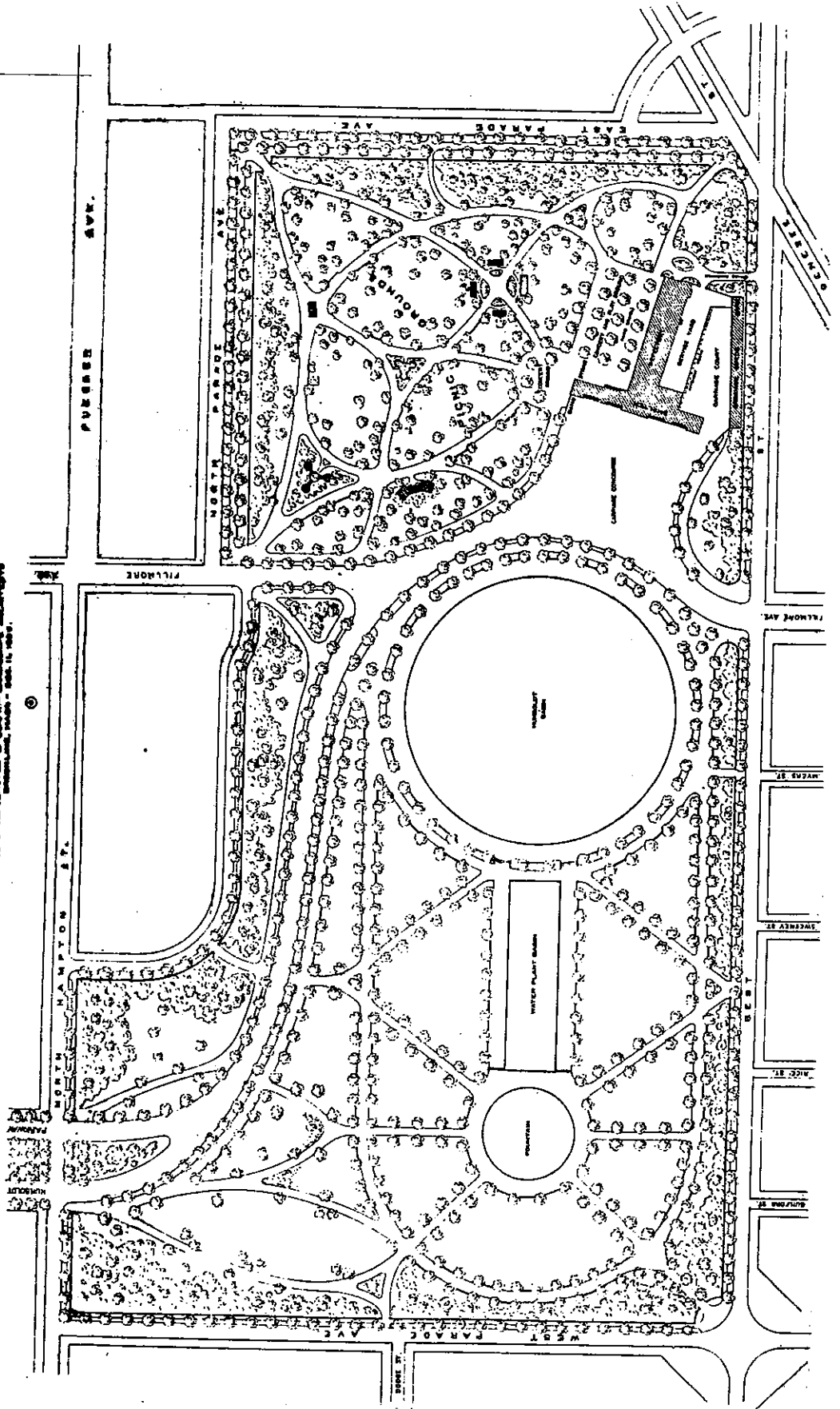
# HUMBOLDT PARK

FORMERLY THE PARADE

REVISED PRELIMINARY PLAN

SCALE OF FEET

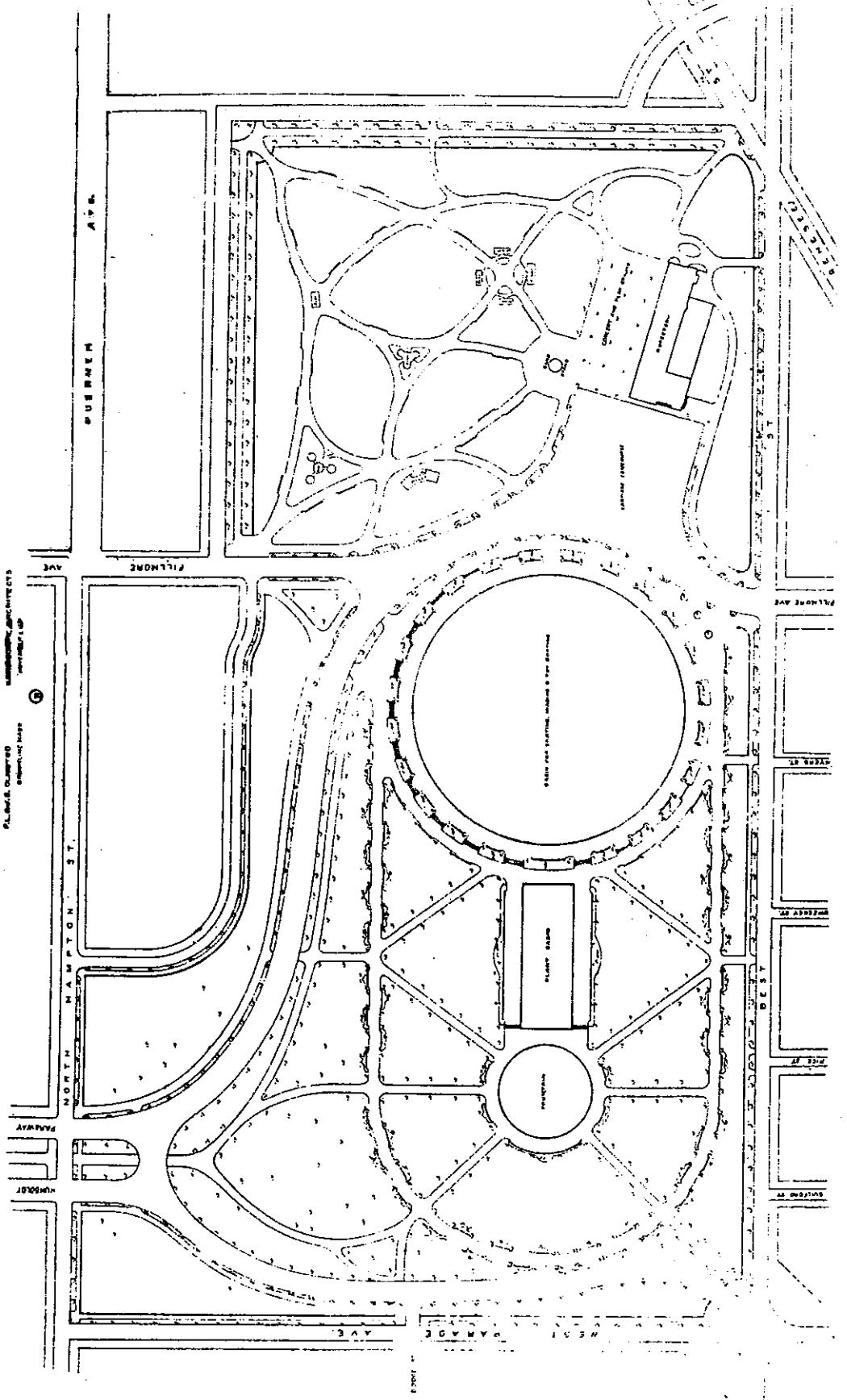
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
JANNEY, BURTON & QUINN - BUFFALO, N.Y. - DEC. 11, 1927.



CITY OF BUFFALO—PARK COMMISSION  
**HUMBOLDT PARK**  
 FORMERLY THE PARADE  
 General Planting Plan

PLANNED BY  
 ARCHITECTS  
 1922

- 1. PLANTING
- 2. DRIVEWAYS
- 3. SIDEWALKS
- 4. BUILDINGS
- 5. FOUNTAINS
- 6. STATUES
- 7. MONUMENTS
- 8. BENCHES
- 9. LIGHTS
- 10. SIGNAGE
- 11. UTILITIES
- 12. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Parade

on the Best Street Circle approaches. The wading pool area was embellished with shrubbery plantings of barberries, plantings of three thousand perennials, and the grading and seeding of the slopes. The 29th Annual Report in 1899 states that the elaborate and beautiful design for the improvement of the park created by Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot was carried out. As a result the park was one of the most attractive spots in the city.

The 35th Annual Report notes improvements made by the removal of unnecessary gravel walks and older deformed trees. The grounds were further embellished with the planting of three hundred and fifty evergreens interplanted with shrubs as a snow break along the north border of the park. The former Parade House was entirely removed and a shelter house with a lavatory erected in its place. This building, constructed in 1904, is small and pleasant with a steeply pitched roof that curves up at the edges. It still serves as an office and lavatory in the park. The large basin was used extensively for ice skating from November to March. It was about five acres in extent. Due to the fact that it was only thirty inches deep, it stayed frozen and safe and was easy to clear of snow.

The 38th Annual Report of 1907 notes the construction of a large propagating house next to the shelter house and extensive repairs to the aquatic plant basin. The original brick foundation walls were replaced by concrete ones and the granite copings were placed on the new walls. In 1908, the park was very much in favor. The residents of the area visited it frequently. Band concerts were held often and much picnicing occurred. A new concrete foundation was built on the one hundred and seventy foot fountain basin and other minor improvements were made. The 40th Annual Report notes changes made in the eastern portion of the park by moving the bandstand into the grove in order to fulfill a 1904 plan by John C. Olmsted. The greenhouses were enlarged in the next two years, and the flowering plants provided were used to embellish the parks and minor places in the eastern section of the city. A quote from the report of 1910 shows the popularity of this park. "Additional flower beds have been placed in Humboldt Park and serve greatly to enhance the beauties of this public pleasure ground which is now one of the most frequented of the city's possessions, principally because of its attractiveness and proximity to a densely-settled section of the city."

The bicycle paths in the park were removed in 1913 because there was no demand for them. The popularity of bicycling had been strong for a number of years early in the century, but had fallen off. In 1914, the first cement walks were laid in the park, replacing ones



#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

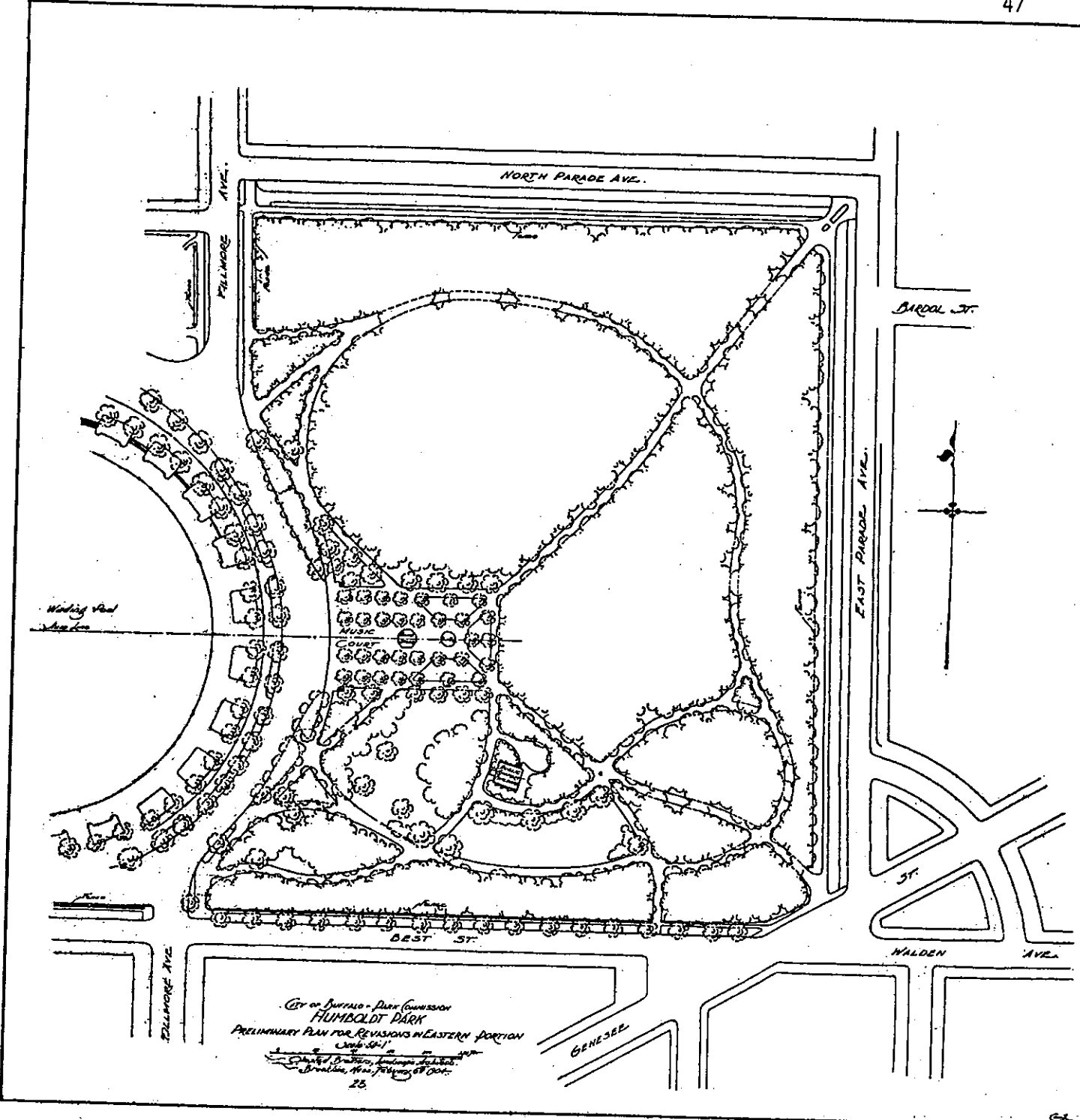
##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Parade.

of gravel or stone. A flower bed fifty feet in diameter was made around the flag pole on the old carriage concourse. The final Annual Report of 1915 notes the addition of two clay tennis courts and a general increase in demand for outdoor sports facilities in city parks.

In 1925, five hundred and ten thousand dollars in city bonds were issued for the construction of a Natural Science Museum. The cornerstone was laid in October of 1926 on the former site of the tennis courts. In the same year, a new park casino was constructed on the west side of the large basin between it and the sunken lily pool. By 1930, the park was equipped with four tennis courts, a toboggan slide, bait casting pool and large wading pool, which doubled as an ice skating rink in the winter. Visitors to the park enjoyed the new Science Museum, floral shows at the greenhouses, ice carnivals, picnicing, and social gathering in the casino.

A 1975 aerial view of the park shows many of the features intact. The basic shape and area of the park is the same. In the northwest corner, the last remnant of Humboldt Parkway is found at the front entrance to the Science Museum. A small portion of this corner has been cut off by the construction of the Kensington Expressway along the route of the parkway. A large parking lot for the museum takes up approximately 120'x600' along the western edge. Three areas of turf and trees along this edge are isolated from the major body of the park by roads and help to buffer the impact of the expressway. Along the northern edge a beautiful grove of a variety of mature trees with turf and some shrubbery separates the park from the residences on North Parade. On the eastern side of the museum, a large informal rose garden with several thousand bushes arranged in curved and rounded beds are surrounded by an iron picket fence with Sandstone gates and detailing. In the major western portion of the park, the 520' wading pool, now with a concrete bottom, still dominates the area. The casino is centered on its western side and behind it in the former location of the aquatic plant basin is an ice skating rink. A beautiful granite wall of about 100' with a large Buffalo head sculpture built into its center is flanked by granite steps at the western end of the former pool. Behind this wall, two and a half basketball courts with bleachers take the place of the fountain basin. Many mature trees line the radial path system of the 1896 park plan.

The eastern portion is primarily a picnic grove and open greensward. Several varieties of mature trees and some new plantings are found in this area. The northern and eastern edge is bordered by the original iron picket fence. The two remaining fence posts are of very nice design. The southern edge of this portion has a very lovely feeling. It is well shaded by many mature trees and retains clusters of shrubbery, that were probably planted at the turn of the



City of Buffalo - Park Commission  
**HUMBOLDT PARK**  
 PRELIMINARY PLAN FOR REVISIONS IN EASTERN PORTION  
 1911  
 Charles D. Brantley, Landscape Architect  
 Buffalo, N.Y., February 19, 1911.  
 25

CL

#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### c. The Pleasure Grounds, The Parade

century. The quaint shelter house is centered on the original concourse and the greenhouses are just to the north. A decorative garden with sandstone walks embellish the front of the propagating house complex. The only active recreation facility in this portion is four tennis courts and bleachers. One picnic shelter is found to the west of the courts.

In 1976, Humboldt Park was renamed as Martin Luther King Jr. Park at the request of the surrounding community. In 1978, the Martin Luther King Jr. Park Steering Committee was officially installed. It is comprised of interested citizenry and public officials. The purpose of the committee is to oversee and coordinate both short and long range planning in the park. The park is heavily used by the surrounding community.

In general the current state of Martin Luther King Jr. Park is close to its original designs and intention, as a neighborhood pleasure ground. It is approximately seventy-five to eighty per cent intact. The expressway and parking lot are the two most blatant infringements. Although Olmsted and Vaux did not approve of buildings in parks, the Museum of Science is a valuable community resource and the building itself is quite pleasing with some very beautiful stone work and iron ornamentation. The park is badly in need of comprehensive reforestation. During the course of this project, a copy of the general planting plan of the 1896 design was purchased from the Olmsted Archives. A solution for the wading pool needs to be considered in order to meet recent filtration requirements of the public health laws. The park circulation paths, both vehicular and pedestrian, should be reviewed and measures taken to prevent automobile traffic within the park grounds. Fillmore Avenue brings heavy traffic through the park. The areas along the street could be planted to lessen the effect of this traffic. Along the southern edge of the park, Best Street and the park road run parallel with a small median separating them. One of the Olmsted plans shows the park road eliminated, and a border of trees along this edge. Eliminating this road bed would add about thirty by twelve hundred feet to the park and buffer this edge more successfully from the traffic on Best Street. A master plan for this park is currently under development. This plan should be able to address the integration of historical designs with the contemporary needs of the community.

#### 4. LUNGS OF THE CITY, DESCRIPTION OF PARKS

##### d. The Outer Ring, Introduction

Discussion began in 1887 regarding a proposed extension of the park system. Nineteen years after Frederick Law Olmsted was first secured to select park sites for Buffalo he was again requested to advise regarding additions to this park system. In his letter transmitted to the Common Council on April 11, 1887 he strongly suggested locating a new park on the lake front. This letter expresses in several ways the positive benefits of a park site on the lake. He states, "There is nothing so refreshing and grateful to a man escaping temporarily from the confinement of ordinary city life as an unlimited expanse of natural scenery, such as would be provided without cost in any situation overlooking the lake; and second, it is a great advantage to the city to have a park approachable by water." He elaborates by stating that when he first proposed parks for the City of Buffalo he thought that a large park at the lake shore would be advisable. At the time no large acreages were available and a small acreage, The Front, was secured.

In 1887 Olmsted made a tour of the entire lake front area and found one possible site for a park at the southern edge of the city. A year later at the request of the Board of Park Commissioner, a large report on the development of this site was printed and bound. The Projected Park and Parkways on the South Side of Buffalo, Two Reports by the Landscape Architects, detail the scheme for the 242 acre site and alternate proposals for routes to it. The full text is included in the appendix.

The 1889 design map shows a basically triangular site with the smallest edge to the lake. It includes a pier, bathing beach, large green, system of canals with irregular edges containing a large island and three smaller islands, a rifle range and a tree lined approach. The eastern edge of the site is cut through by two lines of railroad tracks. The land was primarily low-lying and Frederick Law Olmsted had devised a scheme of excavating some 520,000 cubic yards of land and piling it up to create the islands, canals and shore line of an integrated land/water park site.

Mr. Olmsted was very involved in the development of this scheme. During my research at the Brookline Archives I found a whole series of small sketches and figures for the development of this canal system, with excavation estimates and alternative schemes in plan and elevation. I also found a 5' x 8' design map of the scheme and a 4' x 4' water color which had been commissioned by the firm or the city showing the site in a bird's-eye perspective. These large graphics were probably displayed in Buffalo or used at public meetings to describe the proposal. This water color painting is very beautiful and shows all of the features of this park proposal.

In 1889, the Commissioners report describes the site straddling the city line and containing 85 acres east of the railroads for rifle range and winter sports and 240 acres of park proper between the railroad tracks