

Assiniboine Park Zoo Polar Bear Enclosure
Concept by Torre Design Consortium LTD.
Sketch By Dennis Appler



Assiniboine Park and Forest

April 2004

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APPENDICES

"The year is 1882, and the pioneer conditions in Winnipeg were rapidly giving way to the forces of commercial, social ad civic growth. The young city, the capital of a new Canadian province, and strategically situated in the east-west flow of national development, was becoming more sophisticated and giving rise to a general boom in the civic pride of its populace.

Winnipeg had the rudiments of a thriving city centre along Main Street and expanding residential districts of comfortable and gracious homes.

Immigrants from eastern Canada and Europe were setting in Winnipeg, bringing with many of them the desire for some of the cultural graces of the long established cities from whence they came. In such a social environment, it was natural that the desire should be stimulated for the beautification of the city, with a network of green areas such as parks, squares and boulevards where the citizenry could enjoy their leisure time. It was indeed fortunate that this particular aspect of social awareness should develop while choice lands were still available.

A debt of gratitude should be realized to those far-sighted citizens who took the initiative in commencing the development of Winnipeg's Public Parks Board".

The City of Winnipeg Parks & Recreation Department. Dec. 1972
The History and Development of Assiniboine Park and Zoo in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada .



Footbridge from Portage Avenue to Assiniboine Park circa 1911

Even with immature development so far attained, large numbers of citizens frequent, and appear to fully appreciate, the advantage of these pleasant resorts .... Well kept parks are without question refining and civilizing factors, and to restrict or curtail their reasonable development, or proper maintenance, is decidedly short-sighted policy.

City of Winnipeg, Public Parks Annual Report 1982-1909

HISTORY OF ASSINIBOINE PARK
APPENDIX I

The Beginning

"In 1904, the City of Winnipeg purchased 283 acres of woodland and prairie along the south side of the Assiniboine River to the west of the City. Termed the "Suburban Park" for the first ten (10) years; Assiniboine Park, as it became formally named, was the first of the City's Regional Park system.

The Park quickly became the "jewel in the crown" of the City's growing park system, and the social "hub" of outdoor leisure and major events; and, has retained this status to the present time, almost a century later.

*The same year as the land was purchased, Mr. Frederick G. Todd, a prominent landscape architect in Montreal, was commissioned by the Winnipeg Parks Board to develop plans for Assiniboine Park. **
Frederick Todd, a former student and employee of Frederick Law Olmsted, created the Park layout consistent with that of the English Landscape Style.

The English Landscape Style was popularized throughout North America for the design of public parks at the turn of the century following the creation of Central Park in New York City by F. L. Olmsted and Calvert Vaux.

Olmsted and his predecessor, Andrew Jackson Downing, admired the landscape style developed in 19th Century Britain and adapted its principles for public park design in North America. Characteristic features of the English Landscape Style included; large open meadows and lawns flanked by border plantings of natural woods, naturalized plantings of shrubbery, free form or serpentine shaped water bodies, tree lined drives, broad vista type views, and strong emphasis on horticultural variety and flower gardens of all styles.

Movement through the landscape from the entrance gates to interior features was characterized by broad curvilinear roadways and pathways, separate and distinct from one another for the views offered visitors.

Quiet, secluded pathways were determined important as restful contrasts to rigid urban street planning. All architectural features were to be subservient to the landscape.

Elaborate geometrical flower gardens, flanked by naturalized shrub plantings as transition, characterized major

park entrances. Features such as botanical gardens, winter gardens (conservatories) and zoological gardens were to provide educational interest as well as enjoyment.

As a public Park offering a wide range of activities and interests to the spectrum of society, the English Landscape Park also provided diverse recreational opportunities; active and passive, organized (sports) and casual (skating, boating). All of the aforementioned characteristic features are still in evidence in Assiniboine Park, and aptly qualify the Park as a significant "historical landscape" in Winnipeg, worthy of preservation.

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However, successive public administrations have left their mark on the Park development, and while many of the changes and innovations in fact enhance the initial English Landscape quality, other less sympathetic changes adversely impact on the Style's integrity. Moreover, after nearly a century, many of the original plantings still in existence have long since lost their intended value and visual appearance in the landscape. As well, the majority of the natural wooded areas which predated the property purchase in 1904, are showing marked decline in vegetative quality, with many areas having deteriorated to a critical condition of survival."

B.W Richards, The Parks & Recreation Department. Feb 12, 1993
Assiniboine Park Revitalization Program



* *... unfortunately, Mr. Todd's plans and recommendations are no longer in existence. Also, there was never a definite statement made as to the complete acceptance of Todd's plans and recommendations or portions thereof. In the Parks Board Annual Report for 1905, there is mention of the acceptance of it being Todd's plan. The fact that at least the major aspects of Todd's plan were carried to development is evidenced by reference to the preliminary construction in the Annual Report of 1907 that "following plans prepared by Mr. Frederick Todd of Montreal ..." and again in the Annual Report of 1908, "Improvements in accordance with Mr. F. G. Todd's plan ...".*

The City of Winnipeg Parks & Recreation Department. Dec. 1972
The History and Development of Assiniboine Park and Zoo in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

"The improvement of the Parks has been the means of great improvement of property in the vicinity of each Park. Not only has it been the means of employing labor itself, but has caused may others to employ labor and spend money, proving that the benefit has been far-reaching, and of great advantage to the City generally".

A quote from the Head Gardner of Assiniboine Park as published in The History and Development of Assiniboine Park and Zoo in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada The City of Winnipeg Parks & Recreation Department. Dec. 1972



Pavilion 1908

From 1904 - 1971

"… Just as social conditions and pressures brought about the creation of Assiniboine Park, they have been responsible for the rate of development throughout its history.

The first decade of improvement, 1904 to 1914, has been referred to as being the "Years of Progress". During this period, rapid development occurred.

By 1914, all the major roadways and path systems were created; all the major buildings and landscape features completed; all the major planting undertaken; and all the open lawn areas constructed. Ambitious recommendations were made for future development.

It is comprehensible why the park progressed so well, for Winnipeg and its suburbs were growing and prospering, and Assiniboine Park offered the only opportunity to the populace to partake in a wide variety of outdoor activities in a concentrated area.

The years 1915 to the late 1950's have been referred to as "The Years of Repose". These were the years, with a few notable exceptions, that development in Assiniboine Park subsided or came to a complete standstill. This condition, lasting approximately forty years, was neither the fault of the Parks Board nor the citizens of Winnipeg, who, incidentally, made greater demands upon park facilities than ever before.

Members of the Parks Board, and in particular, Mr. George Champion, Superintendent of Parks for twenty-eight and one-half years, yearly distressed the lack of improvements being made to Assiniboine Park.

In 1915, due to the War, three problems severely retarded any proposed development: decreased revenue for the Parks Board; increased labor costs and material costs; and a national necessity for rigid economy.

With the return of better conditions during the 1920's, the Parks Board was faced with the problem of meeting the demands for more parks and recreational facilities in a rapidly growing city.

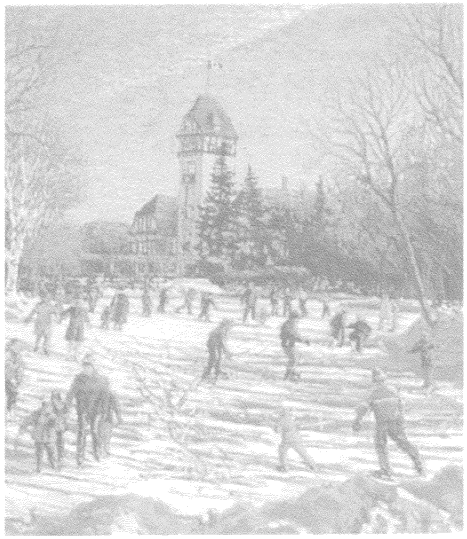
The creation of Kildonan Park in 1910, Sargent Park in 1911, Kildonan Park Golf Course in 1921, Windsor Park Golf Course in 1924, St. Vital Park in 1929, and numerous smaller parks, necessitated a dispersion of the parks' budget over a much greater system. Concentrated efforts of time and money had to be devoted by the Parks Boards, especially during the initial years of development of these new facilities.

The 1930's, of course, brought the Great Depression and major development throughout the Parks' system in general came to a standstill. The immediate follow-up by the Second World War brought a resumption of the problems during the First War, except that by this time the Parks Board had a much more extensive park system in its responsibility. The parks' system was just beginning to recover from this setback when the disastrous 1950 Flood occurred, and many parks, particularly Kildonan Park, suffered extensive damage.

Towards the end of the 1950's and up to the present (1972) are referred to as "The Years of Revival". The general increase in economic prosperity has again allowed for attention to be given to improving Assiniboine Park.

With the turning over of the Parks' system in 1961 to The Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, greater funds had been made available to the parks. During the ten years of the Corporation's existence, virtually every facility in the park has been either reconstructed or renovated, and many innovations were made."

The City of Winnipeg Parks & Recreation Department. Dec. 1972
The History and Development of Assiniboine Park and Zoo in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada



"Late Afternoon in Assiniboine Park"
by Roman Swiderek

During the Decade of the 1990's

From 1971 to 1990 capital improvements in Assiniboine Park were virtually non-existent. However, during the 1990's a committee of citizens took the initiative to design and raise the capital to build Phase I of the Leo Mol Sculpture Garden.

The Leo Mol Sculpture Garden went through three development phases in the decade of the nineties. The funding committee evolved into "Partners in the Park", and within that organizational structure, redeveloped the Pavilion and built the Lyric Stage. These facility additions have significantly broadened the activities and events that occur in the Park.

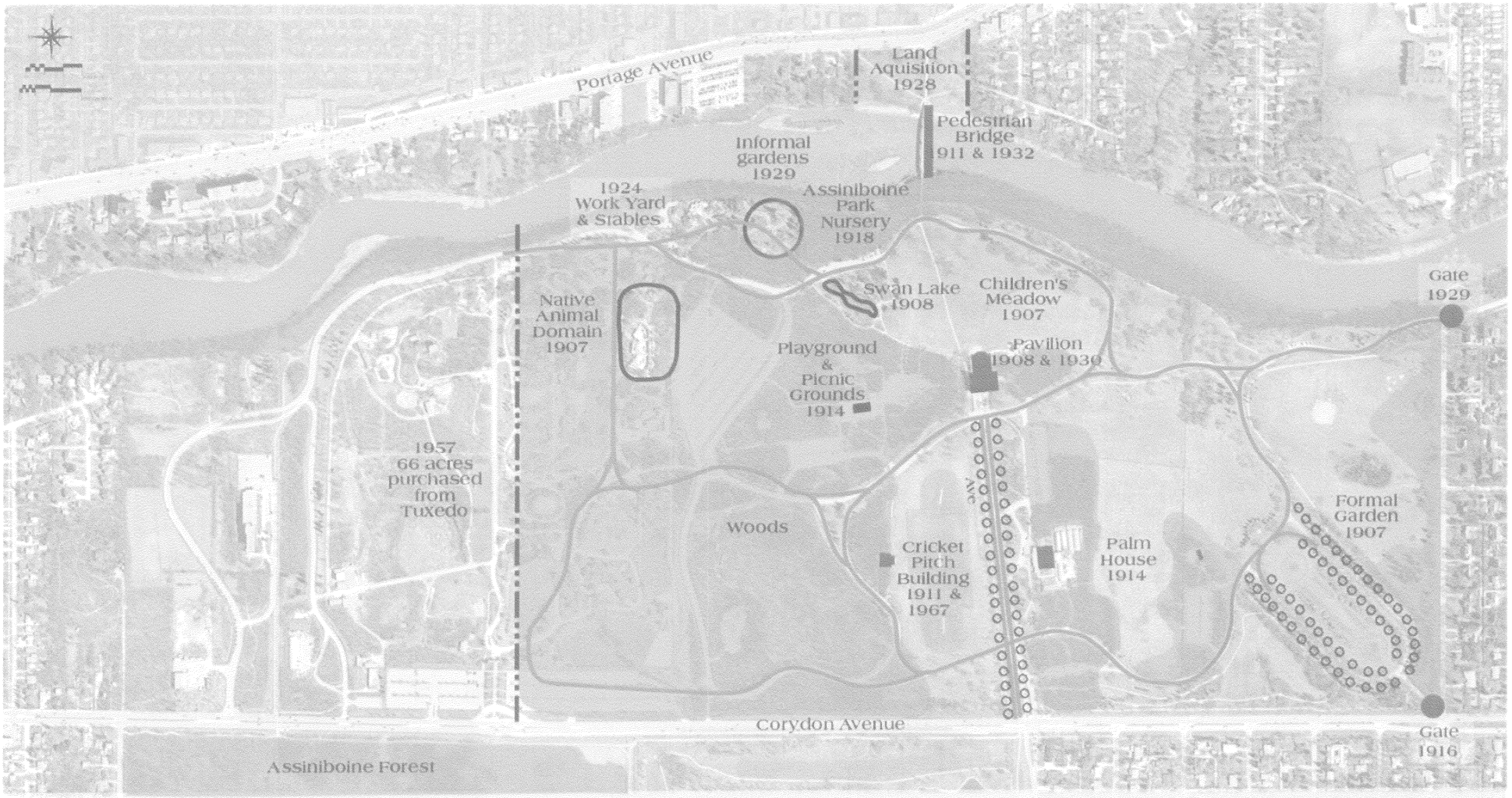
Assiniboine Park has an infrastructure in serious need of major re-investment. While the necessary investment represents a significant challenge to the City, volunteer organizations such as the Zoological Society of Manitoba, The Friends of the Conservatory and Partners in the Park, continue to bring energy, resources and commitment to the development and operation of the Park.



Leo Mol Sculpture Garden



The Lyric 2003



Assiniboine Park Framework Plan

Winnipeg

City of Winnipeg
Assiniboine Park Enterprise

Friends of The Assiniboine Park Conservatory
Partners in The Park
Zoological Society of Manitoba

Legend

Assiniboine Park Official Opening
Victoria Day 1909
283 Acres Acquired1904
Weekend oneway traffic introduced 1951

Significant Historical Features

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April 2004

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