

# Toronto's Nineteenth-Century Exhibition Parks “...free of admission to all peaceable persons...”

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Article abstract

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# TORONTO'S NINETEENTH-CENTURY EXHIBITION PARKS

*"...free of admission to all peaceable persons..."*

by David Bain

Toronto's two Exhibition Parks were rather unusual members of its nineteenth-century municipal park family. For a short part of the year, the space was set aside for an exhibition and for various other fairs and shows; for the rest the year, its landscape and buildings could be used and appreciated by the entire community at a time when the site would otherwise have been empty and barren. The arrangement made sense, as the exhibition authorities got an open space financed by the broader community and, as payback, the community got a public open space. How successful was the idea of a park whose main purpose might easily be rationalized as a way to justify the use of public money to support an expensive private enterprise? The primary goal here is to examine the history and character of Toronto's two Exhibition Parks in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition, as these parks were products of a partnership between the private and public sectors, a

second goal is to examine how the parks were developed and altered in search of a balance between the two poles. In the conclusion, examples from elsewhere in Canada will be used to offer some comparisons and contrasts to Toronto's experience.

From an early date, the Town of York, later to become the City of Toronto [1834], had open spaces that were also used for agricultural fairs. The most noteworthy of these was perhaps the Fair Green, a waterfront site used as a locale for travelling circuses and a mustering place for community parades. From the time of the earliest fairs, their increasing importance suggested a need for more space and permanent structures. In 1851, the Great Exhibition in London, England stimulated the growth of what were now to be called agricultural 'exhibitions'. The symbol of the London exhibition was Joseph's Paxton's Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, a huge glass structure sheltering almost nineteen acres of enclosed

space.<sup>1</sup> In Canada, as Fern Graham notes in her article “The Crystal Place in Canada,”

Agricultural and industrial arts associations across the country recognized the Crystal Palace as an appropriate symbol of their goals for the improvement of agriculture through technology, and the perfect focal point for their annual regional or provincial exhibitions.<sup>2</sup>

When the Town of York was founded in 1793, a fort with a military reserve was established some distance west of the community, guarding the entryway to the harbour. A large buffer, called the Garrison Reserve, was created around the fort, preserving all the land within a 1,000 yards radius, some 768 acres.<sup>3</sup> Of the government lands in or near York, this reserve was just far enough from town to remain unthreatened by developers for a few dec-

## Abstract

*Toronto's two Exhibition Parks were set aside for an exhibition and for various other fairs and shows. However, when the site would otherwise have been empty and barren, the space and buildings could be used and appreciated by the entire community. This could be rationalized as a way to justify the use of public money to support an expensive private enterprise. This article has three goals: to determine how successful this arrangement was; to examine the history and character of the two parks in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and to examine how the parks were developed and altered in search of a balance between the private and public sectors. In the conclusion, examples from elsewhere in Canada will be used to offer some comparisons and contrasts to Toronto's experience.*

**Résumé:** *Les deux parcs d'exposition de Toronto ont été réservés pour une exposition et pour d'autres foires et spectacles divers. Cependant, lorsque le site aurait autrement été vide et stérile, l'espace et les bâtiments pourraient être utilisés et appréciés par toute la communauté. Cela pourrait être rationalisé comme un moyen de justifier l'utilisation de fonds publics pour soutenir une entreprise privée coûteuse. Dans cet article, nous aurons trois objectifs : déterminer le degré de réussite de cet arrangement; examiner l'histoire et le caractère des deux parcs au XIXème et au début du XXème siècle; et examiner comment les parcs ont été développés et modifiés à la recherche d'un équilibre entre les secteurs privé et public. Dans la conclusion, nous fournirons des exemples d'autres régions du Canada pour offrir des comparaisons et des contrastes avec l'expérience de Toronto.*

ades and, when it finally became available, offered the possibility of large acquisitions. While the east side of the circle closest to the community was gone by 1845, about half of the original area still remained.<sup>4</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> John E. Findling, ed., *Historical dictionary of world's fairs and expositions, 1851-1988* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 4-8. Later the Crystal Palace was rebuilt in Sydenham and, “served (until 1936) as a pleasure garden and cultural center for South London... a successor to the defunct Vauxhall Gardens.”

<sup>2</sup> Fern E.M. Graham, “The Crystal palace in Canada,” *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin*, v 19 n 1 (March 1994), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Spelt, *Toronto* (Don Mills, Ont.: Collier-Macmillan Canada, 1973), 39.

<sup>4</sup> Aldona Sendzikas, *Stanley Barracks: Toronto's military legacy* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2011), 35 [hereafter Sendzikas]. See also, Vaughan Maurice Roberts, *The trail of the Canadian National Exhibition: an illustrated historical souvenir* (Toronto: Noble, Scott, 1925), 21/22 [hereafter Roberts]; For the use of the reserve by the native population, see, John P.M. Court, “The Lands of the Asylum,” *The Fife and Drum*, 25:1 (Spring 2021), 9-12.

was mostly no longer needed for military purposes and, thus, in April of 1845, the mayor of Toronto made an application to acquire much of the land for a public park and, by March of 1848, the City held a lease for 287 acres.<sup>5</sup>

This was an amazing windfall and a great opportunity, but there were conditions. Within five years, the land was to be levelled, fenced and landscaped and a bridge was to be built over the stream separating the new park from the city. All was to be done to the satisfaction of military authorities.<sup>6</sup> The City did indeed build the required bridge in late 1850, and city surveyor John Howard also drew up plans for a gate and fencing. But, by 1851, the military were contending that military pensioners should be allowed to settle on the common. Thereafter, the City balked, matters deteriorated, and, late in the year, the military was demanding that the lease be voided. Ultimately 500 acres were handed over to the provincial government in 1856, and the province, in turn, gave the City of Toronto two small packages totaling 56 acres, less than 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the original package. The larger plot, 33½

acres crammed between the railway and the sprawling walled asylum grounds, was of immediate use. The annual exhibition had moved around the province for years, being held in Toronto in 1846 and 1852, and was due back in the city in 1858. As the province's agricultural association had decided to require permanent buildings in the hosting communities, Toronto rushed to transform this property for the exhibition.<sup>7</sup>

Surprisingly, the Palace of Industry, erected in only a few months, was indeed ready for the fall 1858 exhibition. The impressive speed of completion and the willingness of the City to pay the bulk of the cost—some 80 percent—underlined the importance of the undertaking to Toronto.<sup>8</sup> The building, by Stanford Fleming and Collingwood Schreiber, was merely a small and flattened echo of the London palace. It only covered about half an acre of the twenty acres prepared for the 1858 show. Nevertheless, it was a most impressive achievement and the relatively small interior space was common sense, as most activities were to take place out of doors or in satellite buildings or tents.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Toronto City Council, *Minutes* [Hereafter TCCM], 21 April 1845; and, "The Garrison Reserve," *Globe*, 30 January 1857.

<sup>6</sup> "The Garrison Reserve," *Globe*, 30 January 1857.

<sup>7</sup> For the proposed park plan by John Howard, see, "Garrison Common History: The Western Park," *The Fife and Drum*, 9:4 (August 2005), 2-3; For the 1858 changes to the provincial exhibition, see, E.A. Heaman, *Inglorious Arts of Peace; Exhibitions in Canadian Society during the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 86. Heaman also notes that the provincial exhibition was now to be shared by Toronto, Hamilton, London, and Kingston. Kingston had its crystal palace in 1856. Hamilton [1860], and London [1861] soon followed.

<sup>8</sup> For the appeal of the exhibition to Canadians, see Heaman, *Inglorious Arts*, 13

<sup>9</sup> For background on the erection of the Palace of Industry, see, William Dendy, *Lost Toronto*, (McClelland & Stewart, 1993), 169; and Sendzikas, *Stanley Barracks*, 36; For costs, and sharing of costs, see, *Descriptive letter press: views of Toronto* (s.l.), 1858, 13; and Toronto City Council. *Appendix to the minutes*, [Hereafter TCCA] Report #11 of the Finance and Assessment Committee, 10 May 1858, 188.



*Crystal Palace, 1858-1879 [Toronto Public Library, JR 552 Cab, 18??, provenance unknown, reproduced in Landmarks of Toronto v.5, p.502].*

After the fair, as the City had largely financed the Palace and other structures to the tune of some \$20,000 and, as the site was a portion of the garrison land that survived the western park fiasco, it had already been decided that it was also to be a public park. In April 1858, the City's Public Walks and Gardens Committee had said that, "[the] permanent building [is]... at all other times to be used in connection with a Public park for the Citizens—It has long been a subject of deep interest with the Citizens to have secured to them a park in an eligible and healthy locality."<sup>10</sup> While this was no doubt the

politically correct thing to say, any deep interest seems more likely to have been for the city council to strengthen its role in the exhibition.<sup>11</sup> As this park marked a starting point for the idea of parks in Toronto, there was understandably uncertainty about their benefits, but an increased stake in the exhibition was seen as highly desirable.

A small park shared in partnership with the exhibition was also an acceptable compromise for several additional reasons. Firstly, the idea of a public park was new and many city politicians were not only reluctant to fund an expensive soft

<sup>10</sup> Toronto City Council, *Appendix to the Minutes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> report of the Public Walks and Gardens Committee, 26 April 1858, 162.

<sup>11</sup> The park bylaw, #277, noted that, "The Provincial Agricultural Association shall have precedence [of use]... after which the several Electoral Division Societies, the County Associations, the Township Associations, the Board of Arts and Manufactures, and the Horticultural society." I

service, but were protective of territorial priorities. For example, the idea of a large and expensive west-end park had been an issue to east-end representatives in terms of cost and location, while a small Exhibition Park as an adjunct to the popular idea of an exhibition was certainly much less of a concern. Secondly, Exhibition Park would be an easily-controlled open space. When the Fair Green was used for gatherings other than fairs in the 1840s and '50s, it became a somewhat troubled public square, especially in light of the infamous 1855 circus riot.<sup>12</sup> City officials favoured a small enclosed spaces like the Government House Grounds which had had a short trial as a public open space in 1845 and 1846. For those two years, it had easily supervised open hours for garden visitors or picnickers and the occasional bigger public entertainments were only allowed with the special permission of the mayor.<sup>13</sup> At Exhibition Park, Toronto city council now took the idea of

a small enclosed public space a step further by putting themselves in charge and handing over the new park to reliable community groups who were expected to organize events, maintain order and protect the site from damage.

Groups applied to city council and, especially in the early days, there could be long debates over who might be trustworthy. In theory, all were welcome, but, for instance, the Protestant Orange Order was a favoured user, while a Catholic group like the Sisters of Mercy might face considerable opposition.<sup>14</sup> However, after the early years, there was less debate, and council's role in group selection became more of a rubber stamp.<sup>15</sup> It was perhaps not a very egalitarian approach to the idea of a park but, as John Ross Wright noted in *Urban parks in Ontario*, "The original public parks of Ontario satisfied a concept, rather than a reality, motivated by the altruism of the elite."<sup>16</sup> Once a supervising group was ap-

<sup>12</sup> "City Council proceedings. Result of the circus riot investigation," *Globe*, 27 July 1855.

<sup>13</sup> For background on the Government House Pleasure Ground experiment, see, 170-72, David Bain, "The Early pleasure grounds of Toronto," *Ontario History*, 91:2 (Autumn 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Although an application by the Sisters of Mercy was approved in May of 1864, it was preceded by a long animated discussion with the mayor saying, "It was wrong... to give the palace to a people who preached treason in their churches." The Sisters were also expected to, "pay for all damages done to the grass and trees." See, "City Council," *Globe*, 17 May 1864.

<sup>15</sup> While overseeing the use of the park was council's job, ideas for upgrades came from various parties, especially the Walks and Gardens Committee. Improvements acceptable to council were financed through use of the Exhibition Fund created by the Exhibition Park bylaw #277.

<sup>16</sup> John Ross Wright, *Urban parks in Ontario; Part 1: Origins to 1860* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1983), 84. Among the politicians, a reluctance to commit to parks was illustrated in 1851 when John Howard noted that the east-end politicians were unwilling to support his plan for the west-end Garrison Reserve Park. They seemed unwilling to commit to anything substantial, especially if it was on the wrong side of town. See, John George Howard, *Incidents in the life of John G. Howard, esq. of Colborne lodge, High Park, near Toronto, chiefly adapted from his journals* (Toronto: Copp, Clark & Co., 1885), 25. This issue cut both ways. A few years later, influential conservative alderman John Baxter illustrates this early reluctance when he declared his opposition, "to the expenditure of a large sum of money in making a park in the east." See, "City Council," *Globe*, 26 July 1864.



*1<sup>st</sup> Exhibition Park [detail, after P.A. Gross' 1876 bird's-eye view of Toronto] Gross gives a good sense of the site at a moment in time, including the location of key structures like the Palace, the railway station and the horse ring. Unfortunately, he did not indicate a location for 1871 grandstand or the 1872 cricket pitch. [for Gross, see: <<http://maps.library.utoronto.ca/datapub/digital/NG/historicTOMaps/1876%20gross%20birds%20eye%20view%20bev1876x.jpg>>].*

proved, there was generally no charge, a reward for its support of charitable causes, although an entry fee was sometimes charged. The park bylaw, #277, said,

when the grounds and premises are not in any other use... use... may be permitted... for any other purpose whatever, upon such terms as the Council may by resolution agree to... but at all other times the Park shall be free of access to all peaceable persons...<sup>17</sup>

However, the practice of group approval by council became the norm, while free access does not seem to have

been much explored.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the gates seem generally to have been locked between group engagements. Certainly, military occupation of the grounds for part of 1862, and for much of the period from 1866 to 1870, discouraged the idea of an open and available park, but, overall, the democratic use of this early park was a low priority. Eventually, in 1876, not long before the park closed, open access to individuals was removed by the revised park bylaw, #713.<sup>19</sup>

However, in the early years, despite

<sup>17</sup> See, Toronto City Council [Hereafter TCC], Bylaw [#277] to provide for the management and maintenance of an Exhibition Park, 11 April 1859.

<sup>18</sup> In 1859 an alderman had suggested that the park be open for recreation twice a week. See, TCCM, 27 June 1859, 277.

<sup>19</sup> For the issue of open access, see, TCCM, 27 June 1859, p. 277. For the 1876 park bylaw, see TCC, Bylaw [#713] to amend by-law No. 277 to provide for the maintenance and management of an Exhibition Park, 18 April 1876. For the military occupations, see TCCM, 10 Feb. 1862, 23; "Drill at the Palace," *Globe*, 12 February 1862; and Sendzikas, *Stanley Barracks*, 38. When the military finally left for good in 1869, architect James Grant's survey for city council highlighted extensive damages to the palace and the various outbuildings and noted that, "The Grounds have been much cut up by the horse's feet; a great deal of the sodding destroyed; large numbers of the young trees round the Palace have been cut down, and many injured." See TCCA, James Grant's examination and survey of the crystal palace building and grounds, 15 December 1869, 211. Grant's purpose was to "estimate the amount required to place the premises in the same order and repair as they were previous to their occupation by the Troops." Of the total cost estimated at \$9,590.53, \$7500 was later realized in 1870 from the Dept. of Militia and Defence. See TCCA, 4 April 1870, 36.

the periods of use by the military, bookings became increasingly popular when the park was available. In 1865, for example, it was booked by the Orange Order [in support of the Protestant Orphan's Home], which drew a crowd of some 6,000, while other users that year included the Templars, the Sisters of Charity, and various churches. Events often included races or games and, on occasion, as with the Sisters of Charity, team sports like hurling and football [soccer] were played.<sup>20</sup> The fact that the park was a destination also shaped its usage. As with the ferry to Toronto Island, Exhibition Park featured an interesting journey, a short [and cheap] train trip of slightly more than three miles from downtown costing five or ten cents each way. When you arrived, there was another special experience, a visit to the Palace. All in all, it was a fine way to enjoy one of the city's many half-holidays or community celebrations, an exuberant but safe family day away.<sup>21</sup>

In 1871, a grandstand capable of holding 2,600 people was built for the Caledonian games. It remained, and was available to park users such as the spectators at the cricket matches of the Asylum, the team from the Provincial Asylum, who were still playing there as late as 1878.<sup>22</sup> This was a first step forward for spectator sports at parks. Concerns about crowd behaviour kept grandstands out of other early parks, leaving such matters to privately-run grounds like the Cricket Club. At the Cricket Club Grounds, on College Avenue, crowds of 5,000 might be found and gatherings could be chaotic, even riotous. But, at Exhibition Park, the numbers were much smaller and well supervised and the success of this experiment can be seen as a forerunner of future spectator facilities in city parks like the east-end's Riverdale Park [1880] and Island Park [1888].<sup>23</sup>

In the early 1870s, the whole matter of a large west end park resurfaced with the remaining Garrison acreage to the

<sup>20</sup> For 1865 park events, see, "Protestant Orphans' Home [ad]," *Globe*, 23 May 1865; "City Council," *Globe*, 13 June 1865; "Pic-nic," [ad, Sisters of Charity], *Globe*, 11 August 1865; "Civic Holiday. Crystal Palace Pic-nic," *Globe*, 15 August 1865; "City News. The Crystal Palace," *Globe*, 31 August 1865; & "The County Lodge of York," [ad], *Globe* 11 September 1865. Especially after 1870, private sales, usually horses or cattle, were also allowed. See, for example, "The Horse Sale At the Crystal Palace," *Globe*, 14 May 1869.

<sup>21</sup> The special train fares to the Exhibition and the big park events were similar, about five cents in 1860, ten by 1870 and around twenty-five by the time of the 2nd Exhibition Park. See, for example, "Northern Railway of Canada," [ad], *Globe*, 22 September 1862; "Provincial Exhibition," [ad], *Globe*, 1 October 1870; "...second annual games..." [ad for Caledonian Society Games.], *Globe* 6 August 1870; and "House of Providence picnic & festival," [ad] *Globe*, 21 May 1881.

<sup>22</sup> "Caledonian gathering and games," *Globe*, 7 August 1871; TCCM, 2 July 1872, 132; and *The Canadian gentleman's journal and sporting times*, 19 July 1878.

<sup>23</sup> In the 1870s, the historic Cricket Club Grounds had been leased to star bowler R.B. Blake, who turned the cricket club's financial situation around. His 1872 grandstand held 5,000, twice as many as could be seated at Exhibition Park. The huge paying crowds were not always easy to mollify. On one occasion, Mr. Blake was trapped by the "excited multitude" in his ticket office and had to be rescued by cricketers, bats in hand. See, "The Queen's Birthday. The Cricket Ground," *Globe*, 25 May 1872.



south of Exhibition Park once again under consideration. In 1873, a *Globe* editorialist summarized the matter, noting that, "We have already expressed a very strong opinion in favour of the city acquiring the Garrison Commons for the purpose of forming a public park...We do not ask for anything so expensive as the Central Park of New York; but at a mere fraction of the cost the same good might be secured as the Manhattanites enjoy..."<sup>24</sup> While the donation by John Howard of his west-end estate - soon to become High Park - now sidetracked the idea of a large park on the Garrison, another matter, the need for a bigger, better exhibition site, maintained interest in the common. Not only was the present park becoming too small for the exhibition, but the extension of King Street in 1876 had cut through the old grounds, leaving two thirds of Exhibition Park to the street's north, the remainder to the south.<sup>25</sup> It was clearly time for a change and Toronto's ambition for an annual exhibition pushed matters forward.

In September 1877, a special com-

mittee included five members of parliament, city politicians and businessmen like nurserymen George Leslie and chemist and druggist Hugh Miller investigated various sites. The possibilities included the old Keele Race Track ("too small") and High Park ("too much money to render it suitable").<sup>26</sup>

The favoured site, especially in light of its perceived availability, was the Garrison Common, and the committee approached the government concerning an agreement.<sup>27</sup> After negotiations with the military, a twenty-year lease was signed on 25 April 1878. The new site was located south down Strachan Avenue from the old site, just to west of the New Fort [1840], with rifle ranges separating it from that complex. At almost fifty-two acres, it was almost twenty acres larger than the original site, but its greatest asset was probably its 450-foot frontage on Lake Ontario.<sup>28</sup> The City of Toronto now had a property with a picturesque view that was accessible by boat as well as by train, and the new exhibition ground's potential as a public park seemed far

<sup>24</sup> "A new west-end park," *Globe*, 12 February, 1873.

<sup>25</sup> For example, an article in the *Telegram* of 21 July 1876 noted that, "The extension of King street through the crystal palace grounds to the Humber Bay is progressing slowly".

<sup>26</sup> "The provincial exhibition. Meeting regarding the erection of permanent buildings" *Globe*, 18 September 1877; and "Exhibition Park" *Globe*, 23 September 1877. The latter article lists other sites considered. An interesting sidelight to this whole search was the possibility of an international exhibition in Toronto. A letter from *Toronto* in the daily press celebrates this possibility: "...keep in view the International fair [proposed] to be held here in 1879[,] and secure such a site as will be in keeping with the character of the fair, and approach in some degree that of Fairmount Park in Philadelphia [site of the 1876 Fair], with its 1,000 acres of hill and dale and ponds, etc.... natural scenery... is essential to the surroundings of a Crystal palace as much as the building itself." See "The Proposed provincial exhibition," *Globe*, 14 September 1877.

<sup>27</sup> "The Provincial exhibition," *Globe*, 18 September 1877.

<sup>28</sup> Roberts, *The trail*, 31; see also Sendzikas, *Stanley Barracks*, 67.



*In preparation for the provincial exhibition of 1878, a larger version of the old Crystal Palace was created using materials and plans from the former and featuring a tower (seen here in 1884). Courtesy of the Toronto Reference Library.*

above and beyond that of its somewhat cramped predecessor.

Of immediate concern was the matter of preparation for the provincial exhibition of 1878. Like the first Exhibition Park, this one came into being in a matter of months. The centerpiece, a larger version of the old Crystal Palace, using materials and plans from the former and featuring a tower, had an appropriate setting on a “high knoll” at the west end.<sup>29</sup> The rest of the site trailed away to the northwest and was buffered from the rifle ranges by its stables and barns on the southeast. City Engineer Francis Shanly

had done a site plan with a main concern being drainage of the area around the Crystal Palace, a new wharf and key roads and paths. The main cedar and gravel road and an accompanying plank walk went from the east entrance at Strachan Avenue west across the site to the Palace, then north and west around the main structure to a western entrance on Dufferin Street. There was also a lake entry from the new dock at the west corner, and a railway entry from the north, about midway between Strachan Avenue and Dufferin Avenue, along the western boundary.<sup>30</sup> Although the site was still

<sup>29</sup> “The new exhibition buildings,” *Globe*, 12 April 1878.

<sup>30</sup> For details of the exhibition landscape, see “City News [hereafter CN]. The new exhibition build-

largely a muddy and barren construction site at the time of the 1878 exhibition, an ambitious start had been made.<sup>31</sup>

Just after the 1878 exhibition, in October, the Exhibition Committee hired a caretaker and gardener.<sup>32</sup> John Chambers [c1840-1913], a native of Canterbury, England, had a varied experience on British estates and at several leading nurseries before immigrating to Canada in 1871. Arriving in Toronto, he had spent the next six years working as gardener for leading Toronto nurseryman James Fleming.<sup>33</sup> At the exhibition, Chamber's duties, beyond the time-consuming maintenance of buildings and grounds, included matters like reporting to the Exhibition Committee once a month on progress, and acting as a special constable. His duties as a gardener were emphasized. The Report of the City's Exhibition Committee at the time of his hiring noted that, "He will be expected to advise the Committee generally as to the planting of trees and shrubs, etc., to

keep the roadways free from grass and weeds, the water courses clear, and to prepare and keep the grounds generally as a park..."<sup>34</sup> Over a period of more than twenty-five years, he was not only to manage what could often be a tug of war between needs of the exhibition and those of the city, but he was destined to be a key figure in developing Exhibition Park.

For its part, the City seemed determined that the public park would now be less of an extension of the fair and more of a park for the people. Prior to the 1878 provincial show, on 3 June 1878, Bylaw #851 had created the public park. Like the former, it was to be, "free of admission to all peaceable persons..." but now the concept of an open park was regulated and defined by posting regular hours seven days a week. In addition, exhibition buildings would be made available.<sup>35</sup> With its prime frontage and increased acreage, the park's physical setting was much improved. A big change happened

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ings," *Globe*, 28 February 1878; "The new exhibition buildings," *Globe*, 12 April 1878; "CN. The exhibition buildings," *Globe*, 6 September 1878; "Exhibition notes," *Globe*, 21 September 1878; and "Exhibition Park," *Globe*, 23 September 1878. To reach the east gate, there was a footbridge across the railway tracks north of the exhibition site from the end of Strachan Avenue.

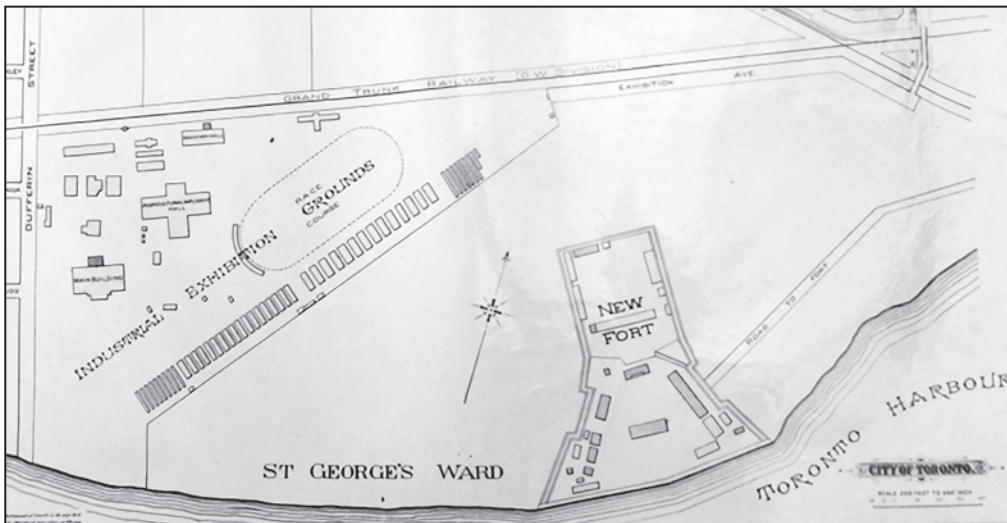
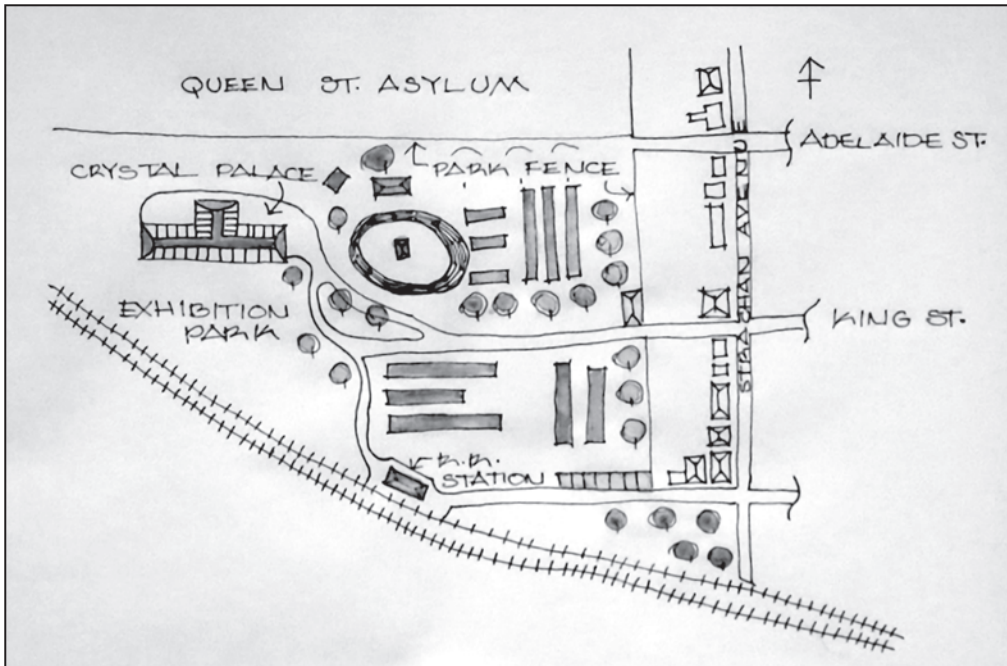
<sup>31</sup> "CN. The Exhibition buildings," *Globe*, 16 September 1878; and "CN. Exhibition Buildings," *Globe*, 7 October 1878.

<sup>32</sup> By early September, the committee had narrowed down a list of candidates from 57 to 9. See "Civic affairs. Exhibition Committee," *Globe*, 11 September 1878. John Chambers was hired in early October.

<sup>33</sup> "The American florists," *Globe*, 22 August 1891. This article notes that John Chambers was two years as a foreman at Belmont Park in Kent, an estate which featured a Lancelot Brown landscape, also at Hartsholme Hall, featuring an Edward Milner landscape. Other Chamber's employers in Britain were nurserymen Benjamin Samuel Williams and Hugh Low.

<sup>34</sup> TCCA, Report No. 16 of the Exhibition Committee for 1878, 5 October 1878, A699.

<sup>35</sup> TCC, Bylaw [#851] a by-law relating to the new Exhibition Park, 3 June. 1878. In 1881 another bylaw, #1059, stated that the Association had to be asked permission to allow the public to use a building and, thereafter, buildings were only occasionally a part of group activity. See, TTC, Bylaw [#1059] to provide conditions and regulations under which the Exhibition Park may be used by the public, 4 April 1881.



**Top: Horse-ring and general view of the buildings [1880] by F.M. Bell Smith.** This is a view of the earliest exhibition grandstand at the second Exhibition Park. At a time when no park had a mandate for spectator events, the expansive fenced grounds became the centre of the public park, one with plenty of seating for spectator sports and other activities. [*Canadian Illustrated News*, 18 September 1880, 189].

**Bottom: Industrial Exhibition Grounds, 1884.** The key to the early identity of the second Exhibition Park is probably not only the many open spaces near the wharves and scattered throughout the exhibition grounds, but the central focus provided by the grandstand and race course area. Lake frontage is still largely lacking, as most of it is occupied by the rifle range in the open space between the exhibition grounds and the New Fort. [Goad's].

in March of 1879 when the Industrial Exhibition Society was incorporated by an act of Provincial Parliament. The new annual exhibition was to be run as a large and far more efficient business.<sup>36</sup> This was also of benefit to the park. While some of the hard-headed businessmen might have had little interest in the proposed park per se, both park and exhibition were products of the rational recreation movement, and both the aldermen and businessmen were in favour of the sort of the orderly situation that it promoted. Exhibition historian Keith Walden observes that, while the new exhibition was to be run by a large number of representatives from various organizations, a much smaller group, the board of directors who advised the exhibition's general manager had "the real clout," and city council was well represented within this number. However, for the exhibition reps, the guarantee of \$20,000 and other economic provisions went a long way towards compensating for any misgivings

about city ambitions.<sup>37</sup>

In the early years of the Toronto Industrial Exhibition, John Chamber's duties appear to have focused on upgrading the landscape and establishing circulation patterns for the exhibition. In 1879, a *Globe* reporter noted that new roads were the major concern, but that, "The grounds themselves present a much better appearance than last year... Mr. Chambers appears to have made good use of the means placed at his disposal..."<sup>38</sup> In 1882, Chambers reported to the Exhibition Committee that two or three acres had been added to the grounds when the entrance gate at the east end was moved towards Strachan Avenue, and, in the west end, a new greenhouse was built, with the aim of supplying plants not only for Exhibition Park, but all city parks.<sup>39</sup> Given Chamber's own passion for horticulture and floriculture, the gardens at his own house [1880] were soon a showcase at the western gate.<sup>40</sup> Overall, street planting and extensive bedding now gave

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<sup>36</sup> 42 Vic c.81, "An Act to incorporate the Industrial Exhibition Association of Toronto," 11 March 1879.

<sup>37</sup> Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: the Industrial Exhibition and the shaping of a late Victorian culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 16 to 19, 227 and 248 [Hereafter Walden]. With regard to the finances of the new Association, Vaughan Roberts notes that, "The finances... were placed on a sound financial basis... a guarantee fund of twenty thousand dollars, besides which the Association had ten thousand dollars cash in hand. The latter amount consisted of grants from the City of Toronto [\$5,000], County Council [\$2,000] and Electoral District Society of Toronto, besides subscriptions from railways, steamboats, hotels and all those who benefited largely by the influx of visitors to the City." See Roberts, *The trail*, 36.

<sup>38</sup> "The Exhibition," *Globe*, 1 September 1879.

<sup>39</sup> TCCA, 12<sup>th</sup> and final report of the Exhibition Committee for 1882, 10 January 1883, 1167. This greenhouse became a glass complex between 1887 and 1889, allowing an ever-increasing supply of bedding plants and trees to fire-halls and public spaces, as well as to city parks.

<sup>40</sup> Of Chamber's past employers, Hugh Low's Clapton Nursery in London specialized in orchids and exotics from Australia and South America, while B.S. William's specialized in ferns, orchids and flowering plants. Chamber's own reputation as a gardener would become clear in a few years when he became the

the grounds the look of a prosperous community, albeit one with a particularly large landscaping budget.<sup>41</sup>

The larger public park was clearly destined to be a more interesting destination than the former park. The ferry service to the new dock made the trip a pleasant excursion and, for those interested in a quicker trip, trains on the lakeshore line stopped here, a trip of just over three miles.<sup>42</sup> The park itself provided the possibility of a day at the shore with picturesque views over Lake Ontario and a chance to visit the buildings. The grandstand, built in 1880, was a big draw for a variety of events and sporting activities. Big events used the whole park, as on 12 July 1881 when the annual Orange Games drew 25,000. All buildings were open, there were a number of bands present, and numerous vendors of ice cream, ginger beer, and beer.

This Orange event also used the 4,000 seats at the grandstand for field and team sports and races of various sorts.<sup>43</sup> Other organizations using the park in these early years included old regulars like the House of Providence, plus newer entries like the Toronto Bicycle Club, which held its first annual race meet at the grandstand in 1882.<sup>44</sup> By 1885, John Chambers was able to conclude that the new park was,

appreciated by the citizens as a place of public resort, as evidenced by the large number of cricket, baseball, lacrosse and football clubs which use it throughout the summer season, as well as the thousands who take advantage of its close proximity to the City to use it for picnic purposes.<sup>45</sup>

Sharon Zukin in her article *Whose Culture? Whose City?* notes that, by the 1860 to 1880 period, New York City's trend-setting Central Park had 'rapidly

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first president of the Toronto Gardener and Florists' Club in 1889, and the next year, a vice-president of the Society of American Florists. When this society met in Toronto in 1891, he gave a paper on "Begonias, Flowery and Foliage." See "The American florists," and "The Florists departing" in the *Globe*, 22 August 1891. See also, "A Civic Palm Garden," *Globe*, 18 May 1895, for an indication of Chamber's passion for greenhouse gardening and orchid growing at the Horticultural Gardens, today's Allan Gardens [1903].

<sup>41</sup> If all this was not enough, as caretaker, he contracted out and supervised painting, the repair of leaks, the replacement of floors, and managed the removal of old installations, even entire buildings.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, an ad in the *Globe* of 23 May 1885 announcing that the Humber Ferry Company "commence running to the Exhibition Grounds, High Park and the Humber today."

<sup>43</sup> For the Orange Order in 1881, see "Orange Games," *Globe*, 13 July 1881. For an idea of the comparable early activity at the grandstand during the Industrial Exhibition, see, for example, A.W. 'Bill' Leve-ridge, *Fair sport: the history of sport at the Canadian National Exhibition, 1879-1977 inclusive* (Toronto: Canadian National Exhibition, 1978), 74; and Walden, *Becoming Modern*, 74 & 263.

<sup>44</sup> For the House of Providence picnic, see their ad in the *Globe* of 21 May 1881; and for the Toronto Bicycle Club, see "Toronto Club Races," *Globe*, 9 October 1882.

<sup>45</sup> TCCA, 10<sup>th</sup> and Final Report of the Exhibition Committee for 1885, 14 January 1886, 1233. As a British garrison town, Toronto, sports like baseball, football, and lacrosse had been accepted, if not always embraced, in the city's most important nineteenth-century park, Queen's Park [1860]. As time passed, and this older park was increasingly at the center of an upscale residential neighbourhood, the nearby Cricket Grounds (after about 1870) and the east-end Jarvis Street Grounds (after 1872) and other privately run grounds hosted most of the large inner-city gatherings and sporting events.

yielded' its early restrictions on sports.<sup>46</sup> Changes in such prominent parks certainly had a ripple effect in Toronto. However, the new exhibition and its public park had the more direct and immediate effect of making sports and spectator sports acceptable in a park. While the first Exhibition Park had opened doors, the second park now accelerated the process.<sup>47</sup> John Chambers certainly benefitted by the popularity of the new park for more relaxed enjoyment. So pleased were the members of the Exhibition Committee with Chamber's early work that, in January 1884, Chairman Samuel Trees had supported his appointment as Toronto's first superintendent of parks with the following words:

Your Committee have pleasure in bearing testimony to the excellent manner in which the grounds have been kept in the past year by Mr. Chambers... it would be of great advantage to the City if Mr. Chambers' services

could be utilized as Superintendent of the several Public parks.

The appointment was made later that same year.<sup>48</sup>

In 1885, Exhibition Park also became the home of the first zoo in a public park in Toronto. The previous year, Alderman Harry Piper, who ran a highly successful zoo at Front and Bay streets, had requested that he be allowed to relocate to the park.<sup>49</sup> In April of 1885, his colleagues at city hall gave him the opportunity to lease two acres near the Eastern gate for ten years at just \$1 per annum, with the proviso that the exhibition association approved.<sup>50</sup> The association unanimously agreed, permitting Piper to charge an additional fee for entry to the zoo during the exhibition, but taking twenty percent of the profits.<sup>51</sup> It looked to be an ideal activity for both park and exhibition, combining a scientific showcase that would be welcome in a progressive

<sup>46</sup> For Central Park, see, Sharon Zukin, "Whose Culture? Whose City?" in *Common Ground? Readings and Reflections on Common Space*, eds., Anthony M. Orum and Zachery P. Neal (New York: Routledge, 2010), 110.

<sup>47</sup> For rational leisure at the exhibition, see Walden, *Becoming Modern*, 248.

<sup>48</sup> See TCCA, 8<sup>th</sup> and final report of the Exhibition Committee for 1883, 14 January 1884, 990; See also TCC, Bylaw [#1379] to provide for the appointment of, and define the duties of the Superintendent of Parks..., 7 July 1884.

<sup>49</sup> Articles in the Toronto dailies suggest that the idea for this move surfaced in September of 1884. At this time the zoo had just expanded, and the need for more room, as well as the annual 'crush' at the downtown location during exhibition time, apparently suggested Exhibition Park as a destination. See, "Zoo News," 9 September 1884; and "The Zoological gardens," *Globe*, 27 September 1884. For a sense of Harry Piper's downtown zoo, see "Harry Piper's great 'zoo,'" *Telegram*, 18 June 1918.

<sup>50</sup> TCCA, Report #1 of the Exhibition Committee, 13 April 1885, 248.

<sup>51</sup> "The Zoo to be transferred to the Exhibition Grounds..." *Globe*, 22 April 1885, which says, in part: "the following resolution on the matter was unanimously adopted: That the [Exhibition] Association offers no objection to the placing of the Zoo on the piece of land to the east [of] the present poultry building on the north side of the road of the Exhibition... during the Exhibition time the Association shall have the same control over property as they have over the rest of the grounds during the two months of the year as per lease... Zoo Society may charge an admission fee... they paying to the Association 20 percent of the receipts during Exhibition time [two months]."

Victorian park with a popular draw for the whole family. Its location, just north of the horse ring and grandstand, was an area of activity throughout much of the year. A *Globe* reporter noted details of its layout before the 1885 exhibition:

the grounds are being nicely laid out in small lawns, with flower beds, walks and a drive, with a duckpond at the south side... One building is the cage house, in which the lions, leopards, and a number of other animals in ordinary cages will be kept... The roof (of the western building which immediately adjoins the other) is a terraced gallery, and overlooks the bear pit.

The zoo was a successful addition to that year's exhibition.<sup>52</sup>

However, while the exhibition's success was not in doubt, there were starting to be some dark clouds hanging over the idea of a zoo and, more ominously, over the idea of a park. In his 1885 report to the Exhibition Committee, John Chambers noted that there was, "really not a piece of vacant ground left upon which any new buildings could be erected without seriously detracting from the general appearance of the grounds as a public park."<sup>53</sup> The bold experiment at the zoo struggled outside of fair time, and the bottom line was that not enough of the

population had the time to make a special visit to such a distant attraction. Harry Piper certainly tried his best. For a special event like Dominion Day, Piper would arrange more transit. When, for example, regular train service to the exhibition station proved infrequent and expensive, he established a zoo omnibus line on King Street to connect to the King streetcars. *The World* newspaper noted that twenty-five cents bought return transportation from downtown and admission to the zoo. "Ald. Piper is really giving a big quarter's worth these days, and the thing must 'take' with the public."<sup>54</sup> Dominion Day of 1887 featured a drill competition, a foot race and a number of bands providing entertainment, plus a grand parade with, "Ald. Piper on horseback, wearing a broad pink sash and carrying a bouquet of flowers." Thousands of people visited the park and the zoo that day.<sup>55</sup> Alas, it was never going to be enough for his isolated zoo. Towards the end, the directors of the Zoological Society and Piper tried instead to persuade the public and politicians that buying the zoo was a good idea. However, in 1888, a bylaw to do so was turned down and, in 1889, Piper's zoo closed down.<sup>56</sup> In his annual report

<sup>52</sup> "Canada's Great Fair. The Toronto Zoo," *Globe*, 4 September, 1885; See also "The Zoo," *Globe*, 8 September 1885.

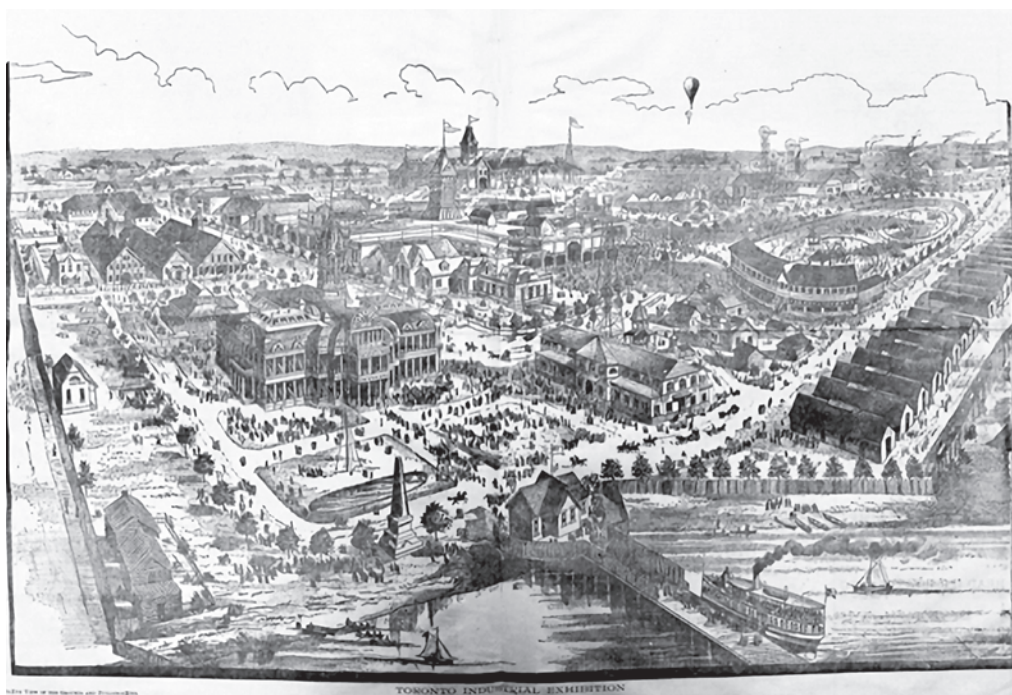
<sup>53</sup> TCCA, 10<sup>th</sup> and final report of the Exhibition Committee for 1885, 14 January 1886, 1233.

<sup>54</sup> "Highland dancing at the zoo," *World*, 20 August 1886. The *World* also noted park activity in the grandstand area that day: "Saturday afternoon the large expanse of the horse ring was dotted with ball players, and more separate ball games were going on than it was easy to count."

<sup>55</sup> "Dominion Day," *Globe*, 2 September 1887. Piper and his directors also explored other ideas and events. See, for example, "Zoological Society," *Globe*, 12 December 1885; "The Championship of the police force," *World*, 22 July 1886; and "Highland dancing at the zoo," *World*, 20 August 1886.

<sup>56</sup> For an early article on the zoo debate, see, "At Exhibition Park," *World*, 20 September 1886. Prior to the bylaw vote in August 1888, 'Civis' seemed to represent the opinion of many in a letter published in





*Bird's-eye view of the grounds and buildings, 1888.* By this time, with many more buildings, the physical presence of the public park is most evident in the well-defined open spaces around the Crystal Palace and, further to the east, in and around the grandstand. [Life Exhibition Number, September 1888, Nichol & Caiger, 65 Yonge St, Toronto Reference Library 917.1354 L37/ B BR].

for 1889, John Chambers, who might have been expected to mourn the loss of a park feature, said, “The Zoological Gardens, I am pleased to say, have been done away with, and the buildings of the Society, so far as practicable, altered into poultry and other buildings.”<sup>57</sup>

By the late 1880s, exhibition officials

clearly saw the public park’s purpose as fodder for the exhibition rather than any sort of park for the people. In the Association’s report for 1888, a quote from President John J. Withrow underlined this attitude:

The primary use of the grounds was to provide accommodation for exhibitors and sec-

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the *Globe* of 11 August 1888, when he said, “The price is understood to be \$8,000 for the wretched collection of decrepid (sic.) animals... I hope every ratepayer will vote against this job.” An editorial in the *Globe* on 13 August 1888 added that, “It would be a very risky business for the city to purchase Ald. Piper’s animals except at a public auction, with a clear understanding that there is no liability attaching to them.” The bylaw to purchase the animals was voted down 982 to 248. For a useful brief history of the zoo, see Walden, *Becoming Modern*, 257-58.

<sup>57</sup> TCCA, 23<sup>rd</sup> and final report of the Parks and Gardens Committee, 15 January 1890, 2065. Interestingly, Chambers was later to entertain the idea of zoos at Riverdale, High, and Island parks, all more successful ventures.

ondarily to be used as a park. With a view to retain the park character, we have sought not to crowd the buildings together, but the time has come when its original intention and requirements have our first consideration.”<sup>58</sup>

In the same report, the Association’s directors, leery about the Parks and Gardens Committee’s spending on the grounds and buildings for the off-season park rather than the exhibition, asked for a more precise breakdown, noting that “in the past the whole of the money spent on the grounds appears in the city reports as having been spent wholly for the purposes of the exhibition, which is really not the case.”<sup>59</sup> However, in the ambitious exhibition environment, several key changes towards the end of the nineteenth century actually created a larger and more diverse public park, one that was embraced by both municipal and exhibition representatives.

First of all, in 1892, a big redefinition of the grounds took place with the acquisition of the eleven acres of lakefront rifle range lands between the new fort and Exhibition Park.<sup>60</sup> Much of this land was quickly filled with a new grandstand [1892] and related structures.<sup>61</sup> Greater improvements lay ahead. In July,

John Chambers had said, “We are going to make a splendid park of the newly acquired portion of the Garrison common” and he added that, “The Opportunity is now given for the construction of a fine boulevard along the lake front, between Dufferin street and the new wharf... [with] plenty of scope for floral decoration.”<sup>62</sup> John Hallam was key to this “fine boulevard.” Hallam was an alderman for most of the last quarter of the nineteenth century and an exhibition director from 1893 to 1899. While supporting the plans of his fellow directors, he now still managed to honour a broader calling as a public servant and as chair of the Parks and Gardens Committee. Mr. Hallam had long been a proponent of a park system for Toronto, such as that provided by Frederik Law Olmsted in nearby Buffalo, a so-called ‘parks and drives scheme.’ In 1894, the first step was a new road along the lakefront from downtown to Exhibition Park, which also had the benefit of increasing the park’s popularity. To move ahead quickly on this link, Hallam had worked to see that the money for capital expenditures of parks was spent on Exhibition Park rather than on “smaller schemes.”<sup>63</sup> While this idea perhaps took

<sup>58</sup> Industrial Exhibition Association of Toronto, Report for 1888, 6-7.

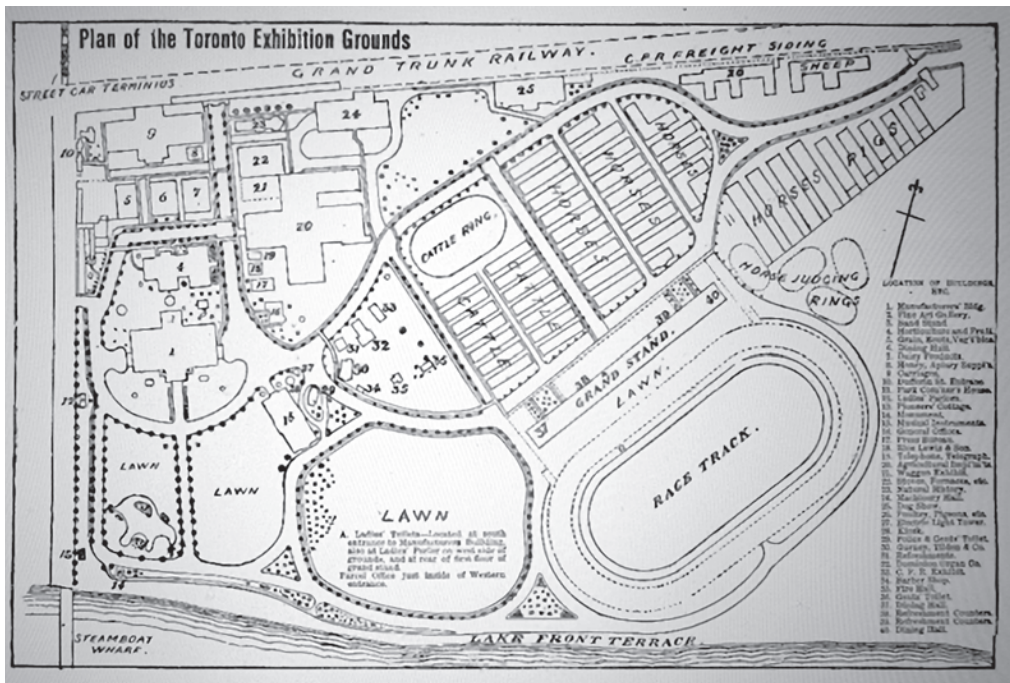
<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. A separate account was started the next year. This quote can perhaps also be seen as a reaction to the establishment of the Parks and Gardens Committee (1888-98), which had just absorbed the Committee on Exhibitions, perhaps concerned that the new committee might not be as focused on the exhibition’s needs.

<sup>60</sup> Roberts, *The trail*, 43.

<sup>61</sup> For Chamber’s contributions to the grandstand project, see, TCCA, 19<sup>th</sup> and final report of the Committee on Parks and Gardens, 4 January 1894, C31.

<sup>62</sup> “Park Improvements. The Park Commissioner will lay out a new boulevard on the lake front west of the new Park,” *Globe*, 19 July 1892.

<sup>63</sup> “Park improvement,” *Globe*, 26 October 1894.



*Plan of the Toronto Exhibition Grounds, 1895. Following the 1892 plan, the park had a stronger identity with the new grandstand and race track relocated onto the former Fort York land and the addition of the picturesque lakefront terrace linking open spaces along the lake, including a large new 'lawn' next to the Grandstand and track. [Toronto Public Library. Toronto's Industrial Fair...1895...606 T595 Hss FRA].*

advantage of Torontonians view of the big fair as the road to civic prestige, the important result was to create the first step in a linked waterfront system.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, the drive, which was intended to go onward to High Park in the distant west end, was to remain stalled for additional decades, but the seed had been planted.

With its new grandstand, Exhibition Park now blossomed further as a destination for lacrosse, cricket, and baseball and other sporting activities. The cricket pitch was near the Crystal Palace, while other sports were played at the grandstand, or, in a pinch, anywhere else where space was available.<sup>65</sup> As John Chambers noted in his 1895 report, "This park is probably

<sup>64</sup> In the early 1880s, the idea of an ambitious city-wide scheme had been initiated by Mayor William McMurrich, after exposure to Frederick Law Olmsted's Buffalo system. See, "Cordon of parks," in the *Globe* of 7 November 1882. In the late 1880s, John Hallam proposed a drive of some ten or twelve miles in the Don Valley and Rosedale ravines [see, "Rosedale ravines," *Globe*, 28 June 1886]. John Hallam's plan to harness the enlightened private sector to create parkways began and ended with the Rosedale Valley Road from Riverdale Park to Yonge Street. Other schemes faltered, but 'parks and drives' now found new life along the waterfront. To get a sense of Hallam's overall influence, see "The Men Who Rule Toronto," *Globe*, 27 April 1895.

<sup>65</sup> For some idea of the creative use of open spaces for sports, see, for example, "Orange Games," *Globe*,

used by our boys and young men more than any other in the City. Every available space on Saturday afternoons and holidays is taken up by them.”<sup>66</sup> Players from the Parkdale neighbourhood, just to the west of the park were prominent users, although teams also came from across the city.<sup>67</sup> From 1894 onwards, the park was also the site of enormous school field days. In 1897, a *Globe* reporter observed that, “The combined Public School and Separate School games were held on the lawn in front of the Main Building... [with] larger events in the big ring.”<sup>68</sup> The church groups, lodges, companies, and clubs also expanded their sporting repertoires. In July 1897, for example, the Massey-Harris picnic for 3,000 featured games at the grandstand with baseball “outside the ring,” while, in October, the Sun Bicycle Company, the John Macdonald Company and the Knox Laundry all held bicycle races in the horse ring.<sup>69</sup>

Not surprisingly, with the park’s popularity, the exhibition directors continued to grumble about its off-season role:

A large proportion of the expenditure on these grounds is for keeping them as a park for the use of the citizens during the summer, and in maintaining the green-houses in which the plants required for the whole of the parks of the city during the season are propagated and grown.<sup>70</sup>

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Exhibition Park lost the influence of an influential builder, longtime ‘caretaker’ John Chambers. In 1907, during a public enquiry into the department, a *Globe* reporter noted that, “For ten years, progressive citizens have been trying to get Mr. Chambers to modernize his ideas.”<sup>71</sup> In 1908, Chambers resigned.<sup>72</sup> The bottom-line reason was that perhaps it was time for fresh ideas at the municipal level, but, at Exhibition Park, his horticultural and site planning

13 July 1896; and “New Athletic Field for Exhibition Park,” *World*, 3 November, 1911.

<sup>66</sup> TCCA, 24<sup>th</sup> and final report of the Committee on Parks and Gardens, 10 January 1896, C35.

<sup>67</sup> Examples of baseball teams playing at exhibition Park from 1888-97 are Alexander, Arctics, Cigar 9, Cooper & Smith, Corny, Echos, Ewing & Co, Gordon MacKay, Gouldings, J.D. King Co, Marlboros, Maroons, W.A. Murray, Parkdale CI, Rossin House, Shamrocks (Parkdale), Tinker 9, Universals, Waverleys, and Wellingtons; Cricket teams from 1888-95 included Agricultural Insurance, Canadians, Gouldings, McMaster, W.A. Murray, Parkdale, St. Cyprian, Toronto, and Toronto Junction; Football teams from 1889-93 included McMaster, Darling & Co., Hurons, Junior Rovers, Kensingtons, Marlboros, Parkdales, St. Albans, Wellingtons, Willows, W.R. Brock & Co., and the Young Torontos. Team names are largely drawn from the sports pages of the *Globe*.

<sup>68</sup> “School boys’ games,” *Globe*, 23 June 1897.

<sup>69</sup> “Massey-Harris Picnic,” *Globe*, 12 July 1897; and “General News of the City. Games at Exhibition Park,” *Globe*, 2 October, 1897.

<sup>70</sup> Industrial Exhibition Association of Toronto. Report for 1892, 10.

<sup>71</sup> “The Park Commissioner and the people,” *Globe*, 18 September 1907.

<sup>72</sup> He defended himself with these words in the *Telegram newspaper*: “[I] labored to produce the best possible results for the money expended, and working always under the difficulty of insufficient assistance to administer the difficulties of a rapidly growing department, I have, I think I can fairly claim, organized a creditable park system.” See *Telegram*, 21 January 1908.

abilities had generally been well employed, and his personal and professional skills had allowed him to succeed in a complicated political environment. No doubt the directors would now miss his loyal support of the growth of the exhibition.<sup>73</sup> A few years later, Chamber's son, Charles Edward Chambers, became Toronto's third parks commissioner [1912] remaining in the position for thirty-five years, until his retirement in 1947.

At the time of John Chamber's departure, new green space at the exhibition created the framework for another revitalization of the public park, its last successful era. Just into the twentieth century, the influence of the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago [1893] and the city beautiful movement that it had helped spawn were key to another major makeover of the exhibition.<sup>74</sup> A new design by Toronto architect George W. Gouinlock

[1861-1932] transformed the west end of the grounds between 1902 and 1912. This plan added fifteen buildings around a central open area, with the Gooderham Fountain [1911] at its heart.<sup>75</sup> In addition, when the Horticultural Building [1907] replaced the Crystal Palace that had been destroyed by fire in 1906, the area to the south of this building was revitalized. A new square was later developed just inside Gouinlock's 1912 Dufferin Gate. Of this square, a *Globe* reporter noted, "[there is] an attractive open space where formerly the dilapidated green-houses stood and the old building [that had been] used as a restaurant. In the middle of this space is a grand [band] stand." The reporter also noted that John Chambers was responsible for 1906 plans for this new square, with his replacement as park commissioner, James Cameron, overseeing implementation.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> For John Chamber's legacy, see his obituary in the *World* of 2 September 1913. After stepping down, Chambers still had his defenders. In 1910, for example, Alderman McMurrich claimed "that the city parks had cost \$100,000 more in the past two years [under new commissioner James Wilson] than in a similar period under Mr. Chambers" See "Liked Old Regime Best," *Globe*, 5 February 1910. He now became a gentleman, living near High Park, even turning down a chance to run for city council in 1909. In 1911, he was appointed as gardener at the Central Prison, just north of Exhibition Park. While Exhibition Park was perhaps his greatest success, his work at Queen's Park, Allan's Gardens, and Island Park were also important parts of his legacy.

<sup>74</sup> Keith Walden observes that the city beautiful movement, "sought to restore urban unity through monumental structures and grand thoroughfares," adding that, "From a purely intellectual standpoint, City Beautiful was not consistent with the park movement: the emphasis on natural beauty in the parks was at odds with the desire to fill the city with sophisticated cultural monuments. In practice, however, as Chicago proved, park and City Beautiful were easily meshed. Both represented solutions to the same problem of how to recivilize urban space." See Walden, *Becoming Modern*, 237.

<sup>75</sup> See "Parks with lake fronts," *Globe*, 29 September 1905 f<<https://www.historicplaces.ca>> [accessed 2021] On this Internet site, the observation is made that, "The building campaign transformed the Industrial Exhibition of Toronto... from a makeshift collection of temporary buildings into a sophisticated complex of elaborately designed, permanent exhibition pavilions set in an attractively landscaped site. The building project reflected the development of the Toronto exhibition from a 19th-century municipal fair into a nationally recognized exhibition of industrial, manufacturing and agricultural development."

<sup>76</sup> See "Canada's great annual show," *Globe*, 24 August 1910; and Industrial Exhibition Association of

Other improvements followed. In 1909, Exhibition Park gained a children's playground. Playgrounds had appeared in San Francisco in the late 1880s and, thereafter gained great popularity in New York City, but it was only in 1908 that urban reform pioneer J.J. Kelso had started the Toronto Playground Association. Now, Exhibition Park paved the way for playgrounds in the other parks of the city. The new playground was centrally located just to the west of the grandstand and south of the new Manufacturer's Building. At exhibition time in the years that followed, it also served as the location for citywide playground games.<sup>77</sup> That same year, another park success was the expansion that added some forty acres west of the line of Dufferin Street, land that had been acquired from the Gwynne family

in 1906. About 1914, a new athletic field appeared in this area, just to the west of the new Transportation Building on the waterfront.<sup>78</sup> It did not replace the popularity of the grandstand facility, but was more of a daily activity area for team sports. Later, when the Ontario Government Building was built on this site in 1927, the field was relocated a short distance north, and a variety of sports, especially soccer and baseball, were played there.<sup>79</sup> Thus the Victorian park eased into the twentieth century, and, with the growth of west end population, blossomed into a community park. Overall, it was a complex and successful city park. It had certainly moved far beyond any goals set for the first park in 1859.

Into the twentieth century, the Toronto Industrial Exhibition, now called

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Toronto. Report for 1906, 34-35. No landscaping plans were found for this work by Chambers, Wilson and Cameron.

<sup>77</sup> For the early history of children's playgrounds in Toronto, see, See, Roberts, *The trail*, 45. See also, John Lorinc, "The Birth of Toronto's playgrounds," *Toronto Star*, 3 August 2017. During Charles Chambers time as Commissioner, the *Globe* reported that 121 Toronto playgrounds were established between 1912 and 1947. See, "Served 35 Years as Commissioner of City Parks," *Globe*, 21 February 1956. For the Exhibition Park playground, see, for example, "Four kiddies," *Toronto Star*, 30 August 1909; "Band for the children," *Globe*, 28 July 1910; "Playgrounds meet," *Toronto Star*, 16 September 1914; and "Playground games were popular feature," *Globe*, 5 September 1916.

<sup>78</sup> The need for a field was promoted by the Board of Trade in 1911. See "New Athletic Field for Exhibition Park," *World*, 3 November 1911. For an early example of this field's use, see "Yorkshire 65; St. Marks, 23," in the *Toronto Star*, 6 July 1914, which notes, "The [cricket] game was played on the new crease laid by the city on the west lawn of Exhibition Park." Other park-related additions built in the west end were a superintendent's house, just west of the new Dufferin Gate, and greenhouses at the far west end.

<sup>79</sup> For soccer, see, for example, "'Y' declared champs," in the *Globe* of 17 November 1922, when the Ravinas played St. Georges in the City Football League, Junior Section; Within a few years, c.1925, baseball was predominant here. See, for example, "First ball pitched in Railway League," *Globe*, 25 April 1925; as well, women's softball was to remain a constant for many years. See, "New ladies league at Exhibition Park" *Globe*, 28 May 1925, when the *Globe* reporter noted, "The diamond will be one of the best, if not the best in the city..."; also, "Danforths victors," in the *Globe*, 31 August 1925, when the reporter observed, "The playing field between the Transportation and Manufacturer's Buildings was surrounded by spectators six and eight deep." The west end field was a particular home for local teams.

the Canadian National Exhibition [CNE], slowly began to displace the public park with big new ideas. Grand buildings now housed popular off-season events like the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair [1922], the National Motor Show [1932] and the Sportsmen's Show [1948]. Green spaces gave way to the need for parking lots. Finally, in 1975, Exhibition Park officially faded into history, replaced by Metropolitan Toronto's Exhibition Place, a regional destination for huge indoor events and for major league teams like baseball's Toronto Blue Jays [1977-1989].<sup>80</sup> The time for a public park had seemingly passed.

However, for over one-hundred years, both Toronto's exhibitions and public park system had benefitted from the partnership. While the exhibition's gain was straightforward and could be summarized as financial and community support, the first Exhibition Park offered new ideas and possibilities for Toronto parks. While other early examples had adopted the more pleasing physical appearance of early British parks, they were more constrained and inclined towards passive activities. In contrast, Exhibition Park had a direct connection to the popularity of fairs and exhibitions, offering park users some of the high-spirited activities and sporting competitions that characterized such events. In addition, it also had its Crystal Palace drawing on the interest that people for such a special building and the indoor activities that it

provided. Like nearby Toronto Island, it also made the most of being a special destination for citizens who wanted to celebrate half holidays and special occasions. This Exhibition Park was a rather unexpected early glimpse of the sort of park that featured a less high-minded sense of users' needs.

The second Exhibition Park built on the successful features of the first and worked as both an exhibition open space and as a public park. It was larger than its predecessor, developed a more interesting and complex landscape and benefited from its picturesque Lake Ontario setting. While the first park had an inclination to ignore the importance of open access, this one had free access and regular hours outside of exhibition time. Its growing usefulness as a west-end community park was a link between the city and its ex, but its great strength was as an active recreational park that was geared to respond positively to the sporting boom of the late nineteenth century. It was improved by exposure to the thoughts of park pioneers like Frederick Olmsted, the success of other early Toronto parks and, in particular, its partnership with a fast-growing exhibition. Before the exhibition slowly but surely displaced the park in the twentieth century, it was perhaps the most interesting of Toronto parks: a community park, a recreational park, and a special destination for Torontonians of all backgrounds.

Was this evolution typical of other

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<sup>80</sup> See, "Exhibition Park eliminated by Metro," *Globe*, 6 November 1974. The City of Toronto took control of Exhibition Place in 1998.

exhibition parks in Ontario? In many ways yes, most notably with the growth of more energetic activities and sports, but differences, especially with regard to the size and location of the exhibition, meant there were also variations. In the small city of Guelph, Ontario, the exhibition ground was located closer to the centre of the community. The site doubled as a park after 1871, and, when the exhibition ended in 1915, Exhibition Park was well positioned to become a spacious centrally located open space of more than thirty acres with an emphasis on concerts, public events, and sports.<sup>81</sup> At the Western Fall Fair in London, Ontario, the fairgrounds developed as a suburban site at Salter's Grove, well away from downtown. In this setting, local decisions meant that a recreational park and the fair ground evolved side by side as two important open spaces with distinct identities. Today, the fifteen-acre park may benefit from cross-fertilization with the still-surviving fair, but remains a separate recreational setting that also hosts public events.<sup>82</sup> In Hamilton, Ontario, the Crystal Palace Grounds [1859] did not partner with a park, but did

host off-season attractions like baseball and racing. As these activities came to be considered disorderly, when the site was no longer used for the exhibition, a rather sedate park filled the space, rather a reversal of the other situations. Today Hamilton's Victoria Park, is a fifteen-acre neighbourhood park that features a pool, tennis and baseball facilities, gardens, and a large playground.<sup>83</sup> The bottom line with all of these examples is that, one way or another, they produced successful parks that continue to evolve, whereas the large and successful CNE in Toronto ultimately decided it had outgrown the need. Does this suggest that perhaps that the largest exhibitions tend outgrow any necessity for a public park?

Looking at several of the larger surviving exhibitions in Canada, it does appear that park development is, in fact, still considered an important part of a mix of uses that can create stability, part of a sound base for survival in an increasingly competitive environment. At the Pacific National Exhibition [PNE] in Vancouver, there are plans to expand the affiliated public park to almost seventy-five acres featuring active recreational pursuits with links to the

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<sup>81</sup> Ross W. Irwin, *Guelph: parks and recreation 1830-1960* (Guelph, Guelph Historical Society, 2002), 6. Irwin notes that, "By 1894 Exhibition Park had [a] half-mile speeding track in back, a 1/3 mile bicycle track projected, a cricket crease and 1<sup>st</sup> class baseball diamond. The palace and grandstand afforded every facility for demonstrations and excursionists..."

<sup>82</sup> See Robert S. Kossuth, "Spaces and Places to Play: the Formation of a Municipal Parks System in London, Ontario, 1867-1914," *Ontario History*, 97:2 (Autumn 2005), 160; and Chapter Two, "The Western Fair Moves to Queen's Park: Stabilization and Expansion, 1875-1900," in Inge Vibeke Sanmiya, "A spirit of enterprise: The Western Fair Association, London, Ontario: 1867-1947" (Doctoral Thesis, Waterloo Lutheran University, 2002), 48.

<sup>83</sup> See, *The Canadian Parks Movement: The Hamilton Experience* (Hamilton: Hamilton Public Library, 1996) [accessed 2021 at HPL.ca via the following links: Home>Collections>LH&A online collections]



surrounding neighbourhoods.<sup>84</sup> At the Calgary Stampede, a sixteen-acre public park, Enmax Park, has become a part of the Stampede Trail promoting activities that support the year-round health of the longtime event.<sup>85</sup> Given such examples, it certainly seems possible that the country's biggest fairground may also decide that

reintroducing a public park within the exhibition grounds might help provide local support for regional and national aspirations. Public parks have proven themselves worthy allies in the past and such a relationship still seems a sound way to help secure the backing of the local community.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> For modern improvements at the Pacific National Exhibition, see, PNE.ca [accessed 2021].

<sup>85</sup> "Stampede unveils brand-new Enmax Park," *Calgary Herald*, 18/20 June 2016.

<sup>86</sup> An article by Wendy Gillis, "*Seeing Exhibition Place with New Eyes*" from the *Toronto Star* 21 March 2013 gives a sense of the CNE's search for a modern mission. Here is an excerpt: "The chance of a gambling house at city-owned Exhibition Place has prompted some citywide soul-searching about the grounds, which are both historically important and chronically underused... aside from [the] 18-day fair—and a handful of other events such as the Honda Indy, Caribana and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair—the average Torontonians is not regularly drawn there... The grounds have been increasingly defined by trade and consumer shows, thanks in part to the construction of the Direct Energy Centre in 1997... [Councillor Gary] Crawford, who is undecided about the casino, sees some benefit: '...I have reservations and serious concerns... [but] it turns those parking lots into something real for 12 months of the year, as opposed to the 18 days'... 'How can we have animated space that is publicly accessible and usable 365 days a year?' Said [Brian] Ashton [president of the Canadian National Exhibition Association]. 'That's the big question.'"