
Report for 1909

(Extract from Message of Mayor Joseph Simon, dated January 5, 1910.)

THE PARK DEPARTMENT

In the matter of acquiring lands for park sites, I found it advisable to call a halt in the unreasonable rush to invest all the money that could be obtained in such a short time, and with such precipitate eagerness that speculators were asking far more for acreage than the usual market price would justify. It seemed to me to be unnecessary to invest all our available means within a few months or during a single season and wise to make use to some extent of the land we have acquired before adding all the park lands that will be needed in the next generation. We also need to have a regard for the taxpayers, who must take care of the financial side of these expenditures.

I am heartily in favor of ample park lands and playgrounds, which mean much in bringing out the healthful and beneficial recreation of our fellow citizens, the youths and children in particular, and have already advocated and approved of the purchase of a number of park sites in various sections of the City, aiming to provide every district with a reasonable allotment of parks and playgrounds, always requiring that the price at which the land may be obtained shall in itself be an inducement to the purchase. In this connection I desire to make mention that recently Mrs. C. M. Cartwright and others of the Terwilliger heirs have donated to the Park Department a long strip of land for a scenic boulevard. It would be well for the city if many other property owners should become imbued with a similar generous impulse, for such actions are really like the poet's idea of mercy, which "Blesses him that gives and him that takes."

It would undoubtedly be profitable to landowners if they should donate to the city the right of way for a boulevard of unparalleled scenic vistas, that would follow the summits of the hills to the westward of the Willamette River and extending from Oswego to Holbrook, for these villages, it is firmly believed by many, will some day be parts of this great metropolis.

In line with these ideas are the efforts which are well nigh accomplished, to induce the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company to donate land for park purposes. The local officers of this corporation readily acquiesced in the suggestion of the donation and those more directly concerned in the monetary consideration of the matter seem heartily in accord with the arrangement.

It is the intention of the Park Board to expend a considerable

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amount of money during the year 1910 for the purpose of improving, beautifying and making available for use and enjoyment the lands which have been already acquired by the city, and it is confidently believed that before the close of the year the citizens generally will feel that the Park Board is imbued with a most liberal conception of their duties and opportunities and that the wisdom of their actions will be measured by good results which will receive the approval of every one interested in the Park Department and its operations.

THE CITY OF PORTLAND

The Park Board herewith submits its annual report for the year ending December 31st, 1909.

Five hundred thousand dollars were available this year from the sale of the authorized issue of one million dollars worth of bonds.

The present Board was inducted into office with the incoming administration last July.

Of the authorized issue of one million dollars worth of bonds, half a million were sold and the proceeds used in acquiring new park property.

Peninsula and Sellwood Parks were acquired and part of Mt. Tabor when the present Board took office; since, Kenilworth and Ladd Park were secured and the completion of acquirement at Mt. Tabor is still in progress. A detailed statement of methods pursued, costs, areas, etc., of each new property is shown in Appendix "A."

By these several takings a total amount of approximately two hundred acres has been or is in process of being acquired. To this must be added in the case of Mt. Tabor, about forty-five acres, belonging to the Water Board. This property is bounded on three sides by Mt. Tabor Park and will ultimately be available for use as an ornamental feature of the park.

The Water Board has under way the construction of two additional reservoirs on its forty-five acre tract. The surface elevation of the water in the upper reservoir is one hundred and three feet above that in the lower. It is contemplated that by proper grading, masonry construction and supplementary planting, to utilize the large volume of water flowing from the upper to the lower reservoir in an ornate cascade display. Aside from the initial cost of construction, this feature can be arranged to indefinitely furnish a highly ornamental display of a very valuable and exceptional sort virtually without cost for maintenance.

The Board proposes to give this feature most careful attention and have the plan very carefully and ingeniously devised to foster the utmost aesthetic value the opportunity offers.

In general, the land takings conform to the recommendations of Olmsted Bros., submitted a few years past. These recommendations were specific as to areas, but necessarily not exclusive. The Board

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recognizes the desirability of acquiring property throughout the City with a view in the end to control the essence of the landscape offerings the community possesses. In supplying this principle to actual problems, it was found that at Mt. Tabor some of the marginal properties originally intended to be included had risen so rapidly in value as to be practically prohibitive. As a consequence, all such that were not imperatively essential to conserve the landscape character prompting the selection were omitted.

Other properties as a whole were intended to serve the recreative needs of a local populace and some of these were exceedingly costly, consequently they were abandoned for an alternative.

In two instances the original taking was extended, one by the preceding Board and the other by the existing members; the latter case was that of Ladd Park. To confine ourselves to the original recommendation would be to secure practically the swamp alone, whereas the extended taking includes many specimens of the grove of fine old firs, and it furthermore allows for providing that district with more reasonably ample and satisfactory park attributes.

The procedure in land takings is to first secure advice as to the site, area, boundaries and market value of the property under consideration. Contemporary with this and wherever possible so to do, alternative tracts are investigated, and preliminary negotiations entered into. When sufficiently far advanced to permit of full consideration of each parcel in its various aspects, conclusions are reached and recommendations made to the Council to acquire.

The Council's action customarily has been to authorize the Mayor to acquire by friendly negotiation the various properties, at prices not to exceed the respective amounts approved by the Board, and failing to conclude such negotiations, to start condemnation proceedings.

Every reasonable effort is made to ascertain the actual value of property sought to be acquired, but this is not always readily accomplished, because in a community increasing in population rapidly, land values are apt to show quick and material change. In such cases the most satisfactory way of determining values for all concerned is by condemnation proceedings.

Authorization exists for the sale of the remaining half of the million dollar bond issue. In this connection the Board desires to say that it entertains some doubt as to the wisdom of offering these for sale for the purpose of further park land purchases. There are now eighteen distinct park properties, and these should be developed and some of them should be connected by parkways. In the judgment of the Board, much more intelligent selection of additional sites could be made, were some of the outlying territories allowed to become more densely occupied, and thus give a clearer indication of just what provision would best supply the localities' needs. Particularly is this

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so since such remaining additional properties which it would be desirable to acquire in the near future are even now subject to lot prices.

It is deemed best to exert every effort in developing parkway connections. Should it prove necessary to procure more funds for acquiring property necessary for parkways or to hasten their construction, the sale of bonds will be considered.

The Board has not deemed it to be wise to unduly hasten a new undertaking, such as parkway development is, without having first satisfied itself that the public's interest is being safeguarded.

Caution at this time regarding assessment of betterments is exercised in the belief that the community should be assessed locally for the land takings and bond funds should be applied to improvement. Manifestly it would be unjust were land and improvement costs paid for out of bond funds at this time, and later a statute passed, assuring betterment assessments on future work.

Proceedings are under way to test the validity of the assessment feature in the case of Macleay Boulevard. Should the decision be favorable to the City, it is intended to push parkway development with all possible speed to the extent of the amount of the remaining authorized bond issue.

With the establishment and improvement of parkways and the improvement in partial degree of park properties, the Board wishes furthermore to record its sense of the importance of establishing playgrounds.

The girls' section of North Parkway has been equipped with apparatus of the best modern type, the boys' section, as also Peninsula Park and Brooklyn playground, are to be put in readiness for next season's use, and if not prevented by unavoidable delays in securing title to the necessary land, a first class and fully equipped community center is to be established in South Portland.

The Board has prepared plans for the Hillside Parkway and will start its construction in 1910.

The extension of parks has been made the subject of careful investigation. That more parks should be created from time to time is fully believed, but with the limited funds available, it is deemed that some construction is likewise eminently proper and timely.

When property is secured, there is usually policing to be done. The present organization requires little enlargement to care for considerable improvement, and this it is proposed to do.

The three principal activities of the Board as now determined upon are (1) Parkway extensions, (2) construction of parks and parkways, and (3) development and extension of playgrounds.

The development of our park system is now experiencing an awakening after many years of quiescence. That energetic steps are necessary to make amends for past procrastination seems clearly self-

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evident. The advisability of being certain as to the wisdom of its procedure is largely responsible for the caution and the consequent slow procedure of the Board. It is expected that after the first stretch of boulevard has been put under construction, affairs can be very materially hastened.

Topographical surveys are being made of all park properties, and thereafter plans will be prepared and expenditures made only in conformity with them. Until each park or other property has reached that state of preliminary preparation, it is proposed to do no considerable work of any sort in any of them.

The principal work to be undertaken in 1910 is as follows:

Grading Hillside Parkway from South Parkway to Slavin Road;

Construction of a drive through Macleay Park, connecting a proposed street in King's Heights with Cornell Road.

Of minor importance, there is to be some improvement made in several of the parks and in some playgrounds. As to distribution and extent, the Board has not fully determined.

Maintenance work of the past year is indicated in the report of the Superintendent, and the cost thereof in the tabulated statement transmitted herewith.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

THE PARK BOARD.

(Extract from Report of Treasurer for 1909.)

PARK FUND

Balance as per report December 31, 1908.....	\$23,914.86
Received taxes, J. M. Lewis, County Treasurer.....	82,717.82
Received Star Drilling Company, donation.....	1,000.00
Received guinea pigs sold	5.50
Received S. H. Burnett, park privilege.....	800.00
Received James J. Hill, donation.....	483.02
Received sale of bathhouse	40.00
Received A. K. Fish, concession	10.00
Warrants paid and returned.....	\$71,810.28
Balance	37,160.92

\$108,971.20 \$108,971.20

Tax levy for 1909, .40 mills on assessed valuation of \$215,836,410.

PARK AND BOULEVARD FUND

Balance as per report December 31, 1908.....	\$510,945.00
Transferred to general fund	\$ 45.27
Warrants paid and returned.....	404,980.95
Balance	105,918.78

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