



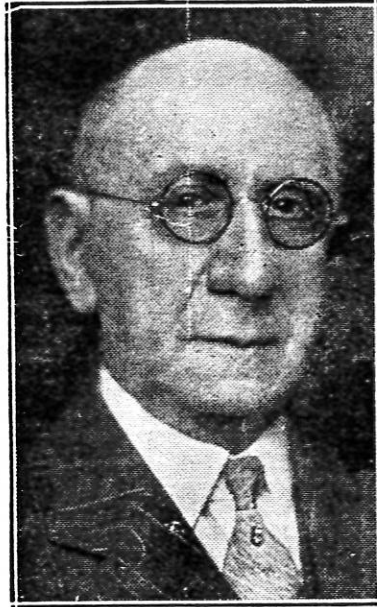
THE STORY BEHIND PUBLIC PARKS *and* PLAYGROUNDS IN GALESBURG

Blessing on thee little man
Barefoot boy with cheek of tan;
With thy turned up pantaloons,
And thy merry whistled tunes;
With thy red lips redder still
Kissed by strawberries on the hill;
With the sunshine on thy face
Through thy torn brim's jaunty grace;
From my heart I give thee joy,—
I was once a barefoot boy!
Prince thou art—the grown up man
Only is republican
Let the million dollared ride!
Barefoot trudging at his side
Thou hast more than he can buy
In the reach of ear and eye,—
Outward sunshine, inward joy;
Blessing on thee, barefoot boy!

—John Greenleaf Whittier.

1837 -- Galesburg, Illinois -- 1932





MAX J. MACK

Dedicated to Max J. Mack, whose public service, during a half century, constitutes a noble example of altruism.



PREFACE

This history of Galesburg's parks, compiled from deeds and records, tells of the investment made by Galesburg philanthropists of another day in the health and happiness of little children.

As from small acorns do mighty oaks grow, so do children rear themselves to sturdy manhood and womanhood under proper guidance in the gardens of Mother Nature.

This book, then, is written merely that these men, real benefactors to the city and to the people they loved, do not go unnoticed at an hour in which we are enjoying the fullness of the fruits of their kindly ministrations to posterity.

BEN J. HUFF, JR.

Galesburg's Public Parks and Playgrounds

The Story Behind Their Development

By BEN J. HUFF, *City Clerk*

TREES

(By Joyce Kilmer)

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing
breast;

A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

* * *

The Lombard elm, one of the great elms in the United States, and called by landscapers as the perfect tree, has been the symbol of strength and majesty for Lombard students of four generations.

That many great beauties of life are born of calamities and adversity is the story behind the beautiful shade trees that mark Galesburg as the city of wondrous foliage.

Ninety-five years ago, Galesburg, then a village, was in the throes of a panic. Farmers traded merchants' grains for food on shelves. To add to the misery of the times, the dreaded "borer" invaded the city to destroy the shade trees, and to cause inhabitants to suffer the blistering rays of the summer sun, and to expose them to winters without stately cedar and rugged pine as wind-breaks.

It then is inherent for Galesburgers to love and protect trees for the pioneers set a veritable Garden of Eden upon barren prairies. Galesburg's majestic trees are not survivors of virgin timber, but man-planted and man-nurtured.

In order that the reader may enjoy a fuller appreciation of the labors of our forefathers in the interests of the tree that inspired Joyce Kilmer, while a soldier in France, to write his immortal lines, we lift from the Knox County History, these paragraphs:

"There are in Galesburg no blocks especially devoted to residences, no crowded quarters, no tenement district, no squatters' shanties; but it is a city of pleasant homes, the comfortable cottages of the working man, and the handsome residences of the well to do, being alike, the pride of the people.

"It was the work of the early prairie



BEN J. HUFF

City Clerk and author of this article
on Galesburg Park Development.

settlers to plant the trees and shrubbery, rending the decay of the long roots of prairie grass which held together and compacted the soil below the reach of the plow, but few of these first transplanted from the forest survived. The substitute, however, was found in the beautiful black locust, with the delicate foliage and fragrant blossoms. Raised from the seed and with its lateral roots near the surface, its first growth was amazingly rapid. The village became in a few years so completely embowered, that, at a short distance, it appeared to the stranger and the pilgrim almost as charming as the groves of Daphne. Perhaps the most terse statement in all the Old Testament writings is that 'God prepared a worm.' In the history of Galesburg foliage only two years were required for the 'borers' to ruin all the beauty, and in 1850 no shade was left but that afforded by fruit trees, only a few of the denizens of the original woods remaining. Yet the early agriculturists were not easily discouraged, and no time was lost in the effort to renew the shade. The soft maple was at first the chief resource. It was discovered that some varieties of forest

trees could find a congenial soil and again the streets began to be shaded, and the parks and lands to become more illumined by the checkered, fitful, filtered light of the golden, flowing sunset of the splendor of the dying day, which was at once softened and rendered more beautiful by the leafy luxuriance."

* * *

Seventy-four years, almost to the day, has elapsed since Mayor Samuel W. Brown, strolling in the dusk of an April evening, gave thought to playgrounds.

He had visioned expansion of the infant industrial plants whose products were to be a boon to farmers. Galesburg, he believed, would also become an extensive railroad center, and a larger educational city, and a friendly marketing place for the grangers, who, in the fields not far away, were finding profitable crops.

Mayor Brown was gazing upon the branches of the beautifully shaping elms and maples above him. He was mindful of the scourge of a few years before. Thus did his generation catch the spirit of a former one and he carried on.

It was about this time that Galesburg folk, who wanted to picnic, sought out the grove of cedars in the northeast section. Not a vestige of these remains although the grove remains a tradition to those familiar with the early history of the city. Mayor Brown believed the grove inadequate for the growing city.

How amply fulfilled had been the dream of Mayor Samuel Brown back in 1858, even though the Council did not then concur in his request. He may have wished that Galesburg would be generous always in the way of recreation grounds. If the crystal-gazer of his day had predicted that one day Galesburg would have public recreation grounds to the extent of 612 acres Mayor Brown might have wondered if that was not being a little too extravagant. Ground in his day sold anywhere from \$15 to \$32 an acre. The Santa Fe railway system several years ago paid an average of \$175 per acre for 435 acres of undulating land on which children now play and grownups indulge their fancies in recreation.

The Santa Fe system created Lake Storey, named for W. B. Storey, current president of that railroad, that

GALESBURG'S PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS



W. B. STOREY
President of Santa Fe Railway after whom park was named.

its engines might have soft water. City reservoir water here was considered injurious to the boilers and pistons. The railway system graciously gave the city a 20-year lease on the park lands, in which transaction, Mr. H. S. Machen, local representative, was the central figure. Mayor Max J. Mack advocated the \$150,000 bond issue to complete the pavilion and driveways about the park. The aldermanic body worked harmoniously with him. The sandy beach at Lake Storey, one of the ideal public beaches of western Illinois, was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. O. N. Custer.

But Lake Storey is merely the culmination of a splendid system of

parks that had its inception nearly a century ago. To have and to hold and to enjoy beautiful foliage and verdant grandeur is then a heritage of a people whose forbears took up the battle for beauty and health in the wake of the devastating borer.

Develop Park Land at \$350 Per Acre

It is an interesting point that every man, woman and child in Galesburg has been richly endowed with playgrounds as the result of the philanthropic spirit of Samuel Brown and those following him. This spirit, singularly, has for many years permeated the city hall council chambers until the present day finds each of the 28,000 persons in Galesburg claiming 100

square yards, or 900 square feet of park development as his or her very own. Thus has Galesburg achieved the unique distinction of having perhaps more public recreation grounds per capita than any other city of the nation. Another reason that Edward N. Bok, late publisher, would have found to rate Galesburg as one of the four finest cities of the United States in which to rear children to sturdy and intelligent citizenship.

City Engineer, A. L. Richey, provides these figures to give the grand total of 612 acres of public playgrounds for the city's inhabitants and their neighbors, guests and friends. Standish Park is 3.3 acres, the first public Park. Central Park is 1.36 acres; Custer Park, 3.50 acres; Lincoln Park, 165.17 acres; Graham Park, 2.75 acres; Armory site and sunken garden, .67 acre, and Lake Storey, latest acquisition, is 435.32 acres.

For every 46 residents of Galesburg then, thoughtful administrations through a span of 75 years have set aside one acre of public ground for recreational purposes.

Galesburg, over a period of 75 years, has expended \$225,000 for the acquisition and development of happy lands. Having 612 acres of improved lands then has cost the taxpayer slightly less than \$350 per acre—an astonishingly low figure for so priceless an investment.

What the Records Show.

Turning to the musty records of 74 years ago, your chronicler finds terse and uninteresting language about the grants of land. For the magnanimity of purpose of these early aldermen one needs only go to Lincoln Park or Lake Storey to find the fruits of the seed planted in 1859 when an aldermanic body acceded to the wish of Knox college to create under college ownership, a park between Tompkins and South streets, and bounded on the west by Cedar street, and on the east by Cherry street. Thus was what became Standish Park of 3.3 acres established as the nucleus of a park system that has culminated in 612 acres of the finest rolling land in western Illinois.

On March 12th, 1850, the record shows that Mayor James F. Dunn, named Alderman Z. D. Haird and Elisha Field to confer with the Rev. George W. Gale with the object of making a park of the Public Square, but the files do not show that the details ever were consummated.

Came December 5, 1864, when a younger element turned to skating. The petition in council was for removal of a dam on Lot 7, owned by William M. Ferris. On December 9 the council, listening to public sentiment, decided to permit the dam to

GALESBURG'S PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

remain. Thus was skating afforded, perhaps still a dim memory to some. Mayor John A. Marshall occupied the mayoralty chair at that period.

On September 21, 1865, a proposition that the City purchase the block bounded by Cherry, Prairie, Waters and North Streets for a park was tabled, and on August 6th, the same year Colonel A. A. Smith, afterward Circuit Judge, asked the City to aid in the movement but nothing came of it. Against a favorable report by a committee asking for facilities for bathing, the Council held that a dam across Cedar Fork permitting this was objectionable and ordered all dams removed. Contrast that 1866 action with Lake Storey beach of today to determine how ideas have changed on the value of recreation grounds and essential to the well being of a community.

Standish Park, owned by Knox College came into the possession of the city as the result of action taken in council on March 24, 1869, when the battle waged over removal of the county seat from Knoxville to Galesburg. Edwin Post was then mayor and aldermen were Marcus Belden, Andrew S. Hoover, Alfred Kitchell, James W. Cothren, Timothy Nash, and George Churchill.

The author digresses from park development in Galesburg to review the eleven year battle to bring the county court house to a site purchased for park purposes. W. Selden Gale and Henry R. Sanderson were probably the most active men in achieving this, the former of forceful initiative and the latter the painstaking assembler of facts that Gale was able to use to a successful conclusion of the litigation.

Court House History.

In 1862, W. Selden Gale, member of the supervisors, introduced a resolution to move the court house to Galesburg. His fellow citizens in 1865 pledged \$75,000 in good faith. In 1873 the court house plans hinged on the flip of a dollar. In this circumstance did the hoodoo '13' also play a part. In the deadlock in the Knox County Board of Supervisors, thirteen to a side, it was agreed that a chairman should be named on the flip of a coin. Galesburg won. But the court house problem was hopelessly knotted up. Knoxville fought to retain it. Galesburg cleverly increased its wards to gain one more supervisor. Knoxville used the same device to equal advantage and again there was a deadlock. Then W. Selden Gale went about it in another way. He became in 1868 the Republican candidate for the legislature and won the nomination by a scant majority. In the general elec-



JOE E. ANDERSON

Mayor 1931-32 and Chairman of Park Committee during much of improvement of Lincoln Park.

tion he defeated A. M. Craig, Democrat, by a small majority. In 1869 Mr. Gale's bill in the legislature to authorize removal of the court house from Knoxville to Galesburg was passed. Came the vote on the question before the people of the county in that year. It appeared that Galesburg had lost until election irregularities in Knoxville became evident. From the polls the quarrel was carried into the courts. Knoxville held the advantage in the legal battle until Henry Sanderson began to unearth important evidence. This he turned over to Galesburg's attorneys, Mr. T. G. Frost, E. P. Williams, A. Kitchell and B. F. Arnold. Mr. J. A. McKenzie took the place of Kitchell and Arnold in the Supreme Court presentation and the court decision favoring Galesburg came January 7, 1873. Knoxville adherents called another referendum in 1873, rather than submit, hoping by vote to keep the county seat at Knoxville, but the majority vote favored Galesburg. On September 1, 1886, the present court house was opened on a site purchased for park purposes by the City of Galesburg from Knox College. On the court house lawn are fitting markers to the bravery of Knox County soldiers of many wars. It is appropriate here to direct attention to the ennobling statue of Mother Bickerdyke in the east section of Court House park.

Turning again to city records in the order of events it is noted that on March 24, 1869, the City of Galesburg offered to furnish the Public Square for a court house site provided the county purchase the Square, or to convey the park between Knox Col-

lege and the Female Seminary for a court house, provided the latter plot be selected. On March 26, 1869, an ordinance was passed authorizing the payment by the City of Galesburg to Knox College the sum of \$6,000 for Block 39 of the College Park, to be conveyed to the county, provided that the county seat be moved and then a court house erected thereon, and accepted.

Action of Knox College on April 2, 1869, gave the City of Galesburg the option of purchasing College Park, comprising Blocks 38 and 39 for \$16,000 at any time within sixty days, to be used for a park and to erect thereon a court house, provided the county seat be moved, and provided the \$16,000 include the \$6000 already secured to the College by the city.

Council accepted the offer provided that subscription of at least \$4000 made by T. J. Hale, Henry Hitchcock, J. H. Sherman, E. C. Davidson, J. V. N. Standish, and others be applied to the part payment of the \$16,000, and at the proper time the council should take the necessary steps to complete the purchase, the agreement to be void if the county seat was not removed. This action was recommended by public opinion.

On September 3, 1872, the offer of Knox College to sell the College park to the city for \$21,000 was accepted. Mayor Field was authorized to execute a contract. It might be explained that the option given in 1869 had expired and a new agreement was necessary. On February 3, 1873, the deed for College park was approved. The city came into possession of the site for the court house. The building was completed thirteen years later. The east half is occupied by the court house. The west half has been maintained as a park.

Planting of Stately Elms.

Few of the thirty elms and hard maples planted in what is now Central Park in 1872 died or were cut out. They stand today the majestic monuments of a second generation of public spirited Galesburg citizens who served in the council. Loyal C. Field was mayor of that day, and aldermen were H. R. Sanderson, George H. Smith, William S. Gale, D. T. Dickson, James W. Boyd and James Cleary.

Men of Distinction.

Then came a lull in park activities until 1876 when Mayor George W. Brown believed that a board of park commissioners should be created to give direct supervision to the recreation grounds of the city. On March 6, 1876, the archives contain an ordinance to create a board. On June 6

GALESBURG'S PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Mayor Brown gathered together citizens of the calibre of J. V. N. Standish, O. T. Johnson, B. F. Arnold, T. J. Hale, John McFarland and Prof. George Churchill. These men entered enthusiastically upon their duties to give succeeding park boards an enviable record of accomplishment at which to aim.

Dr. Standish, member of Lombard faculty, was a horticulturist of note,



GEORGE SHUMWAY

Mayor at time first steps were taken to purchase land for park purposes.

and a botanist as well, to whom many looked upon as the last word in that science. He was a devotee of everything that grew. So devoted and enthusiastic was he for the beautification of Galesburg that his services were demanded as a park commissioner until his death. It was fitting that the college park then be named for him by an act of the council in 1905, "Standish Park."

Mr. Johnson, founder of the store which bears his name, gave generously of his time to park development. He moved to California to spend the latter years of his life, but continued a lively interest in, and a warm affection for the city of his choice. Col. T. J. Hale, prominent and wealthy citizen, took a great interest in horticulture to imprint many marks of beauty in park development. Mr. Arnold, keen student of city affairs, made nursery work his hobby. He served four terms and a fraction as alderman and then was elected mayor. Prof. Churchill, member of the Knox faculty and principal of the Academy, served the city as engineer for many years. He gave to the park system here the benefit of his extensive travels, among which was the planting of elms and magnolias, on that section of South Broad street, which is a copy of the famous avenue of Berlin, Germany, called the world's most beautiful street. This improvement was ordered April 4, 1881, under Mayor B. F. Arnold.

The records of 1887 contain the ordinance for the driveway through the park from Tompkins to South

streets, at a cost of \$2,016.29 to property owners. Joseph Stafford was given the contract, but suit instituted by the county prevented the driveway on the theory that the county owned the east frontage along the proposed road. D. W. Aldrich was the mayor in 1887.

Benches were placed in Central Park in 1891, under Mayor F. F. Cooke by public demand although park commissioners were not in favor of this step. In 1892 the park was enlarged to include South Broad street, from the Public Square to Tompkins street.

Galesburg was experiencing rapid growth and after seven years of inactivity there appeared on the political surface in 1899 bushes to indicate that acquisition of a larger playground would be in favor with the body politic. The park board asked council to initiate the movement and Mayor Fletcher Carney appointed Max. J. Mack, J. T. McKnight and S. H. Felt as a committee. This marked the advent of Mr. Mack into park affairs and his activity continues until this day. On September 14, 1899, the referendum vote came in sequence. The proposition to levy an annual 30 cents on \$100 valuation for a fund to purchase land for park purposes was defeated by a vote of 735 to 680.

Four years passed with no attempt to purchase land when on July 25, 1903, there was again a vote on a proposition to acquire a city park. The referendum resulted in 1035 for and 575 against. Mayor George Shumway immediately organized a campaign for land to mark a big forward step in park expansion. In the annual appropriation bill following the vote, there was the item "for new park purchase, \$10,327." Mayor Shumway named H. H. Griffith, J. E. Conley and Charles H. Chamberlain to confer with three business men to seek out the proper recreational site.

For the ensuing year the principal civic discussion was park development. Mayor Shumway on one hand was urged to buy small plots about the city for playgrounds. Donations of \$400 and \$500 were offered. He visioned, however, a large area for play grounds and took a definite stand in the matter, declaring that small plots would merely postpone something that a progressive city would sooner or later have to meet as a problem. He urged that all donations be put into one central fund.

Vote Money for Park.

The council, in September, 1904, supported Mayor Shumway's \$10,451 fund for a new park, by retaining it in the tax levy ordinance.

Lake W. Sanborn came into office

as mayor in 1905, and he, too, was park-minded. Houses continued to spring upon all desirable lots, manufacturing plants were enlarging and Galesburg, more and more was becoming a great railroad center and a city of educational institutions. A busy and prosperous citizenry like Jack, with all work and no play, didn't want to become a dull boy. Sentiment continued to be for a large park. Mayor Sanborn, sensing the public desire, named a park committee with H. H. Griffith as chairman. There was the park nest egg of \$10,095, and in 1906, the city council acting in concert with the park commission, purchased the Blue farm of 78 acres north of the city at \$115 per acre to give the nucleus for Lincoln Park. Not long afterward 15 additional acres were purchased to make 93 acres of recreation ground.

The appropriation for the first big park was made in 1903, the purchase consummated in 1906, and in 1909, during the regime of Mayor Sanborn, the name "Abraham Lincoln Park" became the name in finality.

A park without a lake is like a meal without salt, was the thought that occurred to Mayor William O'R. Bradley in 1913. He named Alderman O. J. Johnson as chairman of the park committee. Construction of the lake was started under Alderman Johnson's direction and later completed by Alderman Joe E. Anderson, chairman of the Park Committee.

The council by resolution ordered an inquiry into the feasibility of a transportation line to Lincoln Park, and a committee was appointed to



LAKE W. SANBORN

Mayor at time when first acreage for Present Lincoln Park was purchased.

confer with the Public Utility Board of Illinois. On December 3, 1917 the Council authorized the Park Committee to procure prices on buses. On May 20, 1918, the Finance and Park Committees were authorized to purchase a bus to be used for transportation to and from Lincoln Park.

Galesburg on May 18, 1914, added the armory site to its park system.

GALESBURG'S PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

The purchase price was \$7150, and Lots 11 and 13 of Block 67, at North Broad and Ferris streets were added to the recreational acreage. Construction of a beautiful sunken garden south of the armory adds a distinctive touch of beauty at this point.

In order to open the road to Lincoln Park, Mr. C. T. Childers and Wm. T. White asked permission of the Park Board to solicit for frontage on North Broad street from the city limits to the end of Broad street. This permission was granted and the frontage secured. Twelve feet in depth was donated by sixteen property owners on both sides of the street and deeds turned over to the City of Galesburg without any cost to the city. The Park Commissioners, Mr. D. B. Swanson, A. R. Anderson and Max J. Mack negotiated with the property owners and purchased from them the balance of the road, that is from the end of North Broad street to the Park. The property owners who made the above donation of property frontage to the City of Galesburg on the west side of North Broad street beyond the city limits were:

Mr. Geo. W. Brainard.

Mr. John Reed

Mr. I. L. Billington

Mr. C. T. Childers

Mr. W. W. Felt

Mr. F. C. Wilcox

Mr. Frank Conger

Mr. A. R. Anderson

Mrs. C. T. Hammer.

On the east side of North Broad street beyond the city limits:

Mr. B. F. Arnold.

Mr. T. W. Smith

Mr. I. L. Billington

Messrs. White and Childers purchased a piece of land from a non-resident and presented the same to the city.

On November 25, 1916, the deed passed to the city for Lincoln Park, the city paying \$8,970 for 67 acres.

Mack Gives Financing Plan.

Having acquired park lands the problem arose for the upkeep of these. Max J. Mack, whose duties in council was to look after financial matters, believed that a park fund should be created. He has always shared the opinion of some of America's greatest financial and industrial leaders that a city's wealth can as well be measured by its playground acreage. On January 25, 1918, the council passed the resolution to call a referendum for a three mills tax for the upkeep of parks. At the election April 2, 1918, property owners by a vote of 634 for and 246 against, approved the proposition.

Commentators have said that with

the death of Dr. J. V. N. Standish in 1918, the city lost a dynamic force behind park development.

Golf Appears on Horizon.

A new fad in 1919 began to sweep the country. A game conceived in Scotland and played in kilts had for years been the sport of kings. John D. Rockefeller and other venerable Americans in the Octogenarian class discovered that the game of golf gave a maximum of health at a minimum of cost and conceded knickers the compromise for kilts. But it required a great many acres to play the game. For that reason the pastime of the patricians was beyond the reach of the plebians. Golfers, not members of private clubs, wanted public golf grounds. In 1919 with Mayor Bradley in the Mayoralty chair there came one evening the petition with 199 names affixed asking for a municipal golf course. Singularly not a single member of the aldermanic body had become an addict of the game. The petition got scant attention, but golf grew in popularity and the politic body began to express itself in stronger tone. It required, however, nearly seven years to bring about the purchase of lands for golf, and into the picture stepped Dwight C. Bunker. He specialized as a golf course architect. He had built many private courses. Moreover, in the light of recent improvements, it is discovered

that he stepped into the shoes left behind by Dr. Standish as a horticulturist. Like Dr. Standish, the present parks superintendent has been imbued with the idea of planting and replanting to make publicly owned grounds even more beautiful and lasting.

What Dwight C. Bunker has done to beautify Lincoln Park, the golf grounds and Lake Storey will be more eloquently told when the several hundred saplings at Storey reach maturity.

Mayor Henry G. Hawkinson in 1921, a great lover of little folks, conceived the idea of a miniature zoo at Lincoln Park. He ordered cages built and had two cub bears installed there. A small menagerie came into existence to amuse children and grownups for several years.

In 1925 the only improvement to parks was the building of the grand stand in Lincoln Park, at which now are played each summer, the Sunday afternoon concerts by the talented instrumentalists who comprise the Murga Grotto band under the direction of Ralph C. Dixon. The city paid \$4,900 for this much valued improvement. Peter McL. Davidson was the contractor.

Golf, the sport of kings, of a variety, became the king of sports with Galesburgers in April, 1924. The Municipal Golf Course was opened by Mayor Mureen, being the first player to tee off with Alderman Joe E. Anderson, Chairman of the Park Committee being the second player. Both of these men drove the ball approximately 200 yards. They are very modest and of course claim this was an accident. George Clark, postmaster, bought the first ticket, Dr. Gaumer, the second, and Louis Sullivan, third. The first season found eleven season customers, and on August 13, 1932, there were 121 season tickets counted. Bunker, builder and manager of the course, has maintained the links as a paying proposition. Golf receipts, say persons familiar with figures, will eventually pay off the cost of the grounds and another generation may have golf as a courtesy of this generation.

Tennis courts were added under Bunker's direction and today the clays are maintained at the west end of Lincoln Park in tip top condition for the racquet swingers. There has been a constant demand for the courts during the playing seasons.

The wading pool at Lincoln Park was the contribution of the Galesburg Lions Club in 1930, during the presidency of Robert Pierson. It became an immediate hit with small children. Lincoln Park lake had receded to a marked degree and bathing had ceased



WAYNE M. CHRISTY
Chairman of Park Committee during improvement of Lake Storey Park.

GALESBURG'S PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS



OMER N. CUSTER

Who with Mrs. Custer donated the Beach at Lake Storey and the land for Custer Park.

there. Lake Storey had not been built. The Lions wading pool was a boon to the tots during the torrid summers of 1930-31. It continues to be the popular place for tiny tots.

Bunker mapped out the first nine holes from the 78 acres purchased for \$8,970, and the second nine holes in 1930 from the 64 acres bought in 1926 for \$24,000. Another 16-acre tract at the park cost \$2,500, and two acres for the lake, \$500. All of the beautiful Lincoln Park area, including the 18-hole municipal golf course, of a total of 158 acres, cost the taxpayers the quite reasonable sum of \$35,970, or \$228 per acre.

In 1916, Joe E. Anderson, present mayor, became the active head of the park committee of council. So valued were his services considered that he was continued in that important office from 1916 until 1925.

Build Golf House.

Golf continued to expand as a business. D. C. Bunker was operating the links from a small wooden building with scarcely enough room to accommodate all of the accoutrements of the game. The popular William L.

Boutelle was then mayor. When the resolution came before the city council to construct a more suitable golf house he favored this step. M. E. Sweeney was awarded the contract at \$4,960.40 and the present building was constructed. Council a year or two later, surveying the achievements of D. C. Bunker, at the suggestion of Max J. Mack, affixed to the city links the official title of "Bunker Links."

Mayor Boutelle was the directing force behind several important chapters of park development. On June 27, 1927, he initiated the first step on behalf of the city to convince Santa Fe railway officials of a policy of complete amity with the city. The resolution of the city council permitted the railroad company to flood Lincoln Park lands.

On November 18, 1927, Mayor Boutelle fostered legislation in the council to plant 20 hard maple trees when it appeared that some of the older trees would soon suffer the fate of the woodman's ax.

On June 3, 1929, it was the pen of William L. Boutelle that affixed the signature to the contract drawn up by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa

Fe railway company that placed in nominal possession of the city the 435.32 acres of park lands, including the lake, the site for which was purchased by that company as its soft water reservoir.

Galesburg was indeed very fortunate in having the Santa Fe Railway Co. purchase this site.

They had practically given up the proposition for reason of difficulty in negotiations for the property, when the Galesburg Chamber of Commerce through a special committee, headed by Mr. I. Ralph Willis and Mr. J. Ross McClure, working with Mr. Henry S. Machen prevailed upon them to make another attempt. These men offered their assistance and willingly gave much of their time and efforts in bringing about a successful arrangement. This produced for Galesburg, as it proved out to be, not only a wonderful lake as a soft water reservoir for the Santa Fe Railway company, but a beautiful recreation park for the people of Galesburg and surrounding communities. This is what we have to-day as "Lake Storey."

Not many weeks followed this noteworthy chapter of park development when word came of the sudden illness and death of the beloved William L. Boutelle, whose rule as mayor of Galesburg was whole-heartedly devoted in an endeavor to be kind to everyone.

Thus did fate decree that Max J. Mack, who back in 1881 first took his seat in council, was to sit in the mayoralty chair to conclude his most cherished ambition—a system of parks and playgrounds that equal the best topography and soil Illinois terrain affords. For almost a half century as an alderman he was actively interested in park expansion. Mr. Mack took the oath of mayor of the City of Galesburg on August 15, 1929, to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Boutelle. He was next in line of succession by virtue of his chairmanship of the finance committee. On December 2, 1929, the people of Galesburg had the opportunity of voting Mr. Mack in as Mayor and did this almost by acclamation.

It is to the credit of this faithful public servant that, as a candidate for mayor he made it plain that the more important thing for the people to decide was the \$150,000 bond issue he advocated that the beautiful undulating land of Lake Storey might feel the touch of the gardener's hand. He pictured to the voters a suitable pavilion and beach, winding driveways, beautiful groves for picnic spots to make the playground beautiful, and at the same time constitute a gesture of gratitude to the 45-year old donors,

GALESBURG'S PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railway. To what avail is a gift unless the recipient make of it what God should will a haven of safety and health for children.

The vote of 2527 for, and 888 against the \$150,000 bond issue carried with it the inherent love of the people for recreation grounds, and an undeniable confidence of the electorate in the man who generously gave of his time and talent for a half century to the public weal and asked nothing in return except the good will of his fellow man.

While Mayor Mack directed the expenditure of the \$150,000 fund he was favored by the excellent councilmanic park committee of which Wayne Christy was chairman, and Paul Claussen and Ed. A. Chalstran, members.

First Park Commission.

Believing that the administration of parks and playground should extend beyond the aldermanic body, and that helpful suggestions would come from a group of citizens who had indicated especial interest in the welfare for the community, and holding to the idea that where the interests of little children were involved women should have a governing hand, Mayor Mack named the first park commission in 1929. H. S. Machen, superintendent for the Santa Fe lines here, was appropriately made chairman, and had the excellent assistance of the following membership: Mrs. O. N. Custer, Mrs. Ray M. Arnold, J. E. Anderson, Harold Holland, P. W. Graham and Fritz Isaacson.

The present park commission named by Mayor Anderson in 1930 includes Harold Holland, Fritz Isaacson, Mrs. Ray M. Arnold, Max J. Mack, H. S. Machen, Mrs. O. N. Custer, and P. W. Graham.

The Galesburg Sand and Gravel Co. constructed the four miles of road at the park at \$2.69½ per cubic yard, giving the beautiful winding road. At the same time, and without making much ado about it, D. C. Bunker selected at Monmouth, many beautiful hardwood saplings he planted on the Lake Storey acreage. Aldrich and Aldrich prepared the plans for the pavilion erected by the Galesburg Construction Co. for \$44,848. Westinghouse Electric Supply Co. installed the electrical plant at the lake for \$4,508.75. Came the donation of sand for the beach by Mr. and Mrs. Omer N. Custer, and on August 28, 1930, with fitting ceremony the great municipal lake was fittingly dedicated Lake Storey in tribute to W. B. Storey, president of Atkinson, Topeka and Santa Fe lines. As many as 3,000 people enjoy the lake each day during the summer season.

Public grounds are for all the people was the doctrine amply set forth



MRS. OMER N. CUSTER

Who with Mr. Custer donated Lake Storey Beach and Custer Park; also a member of Citizens Park Committee.

in the Proclamation of Emancipation by the great American for whom a hallowed acreage is named. Mayor Mack, by official act, created at Lake Storey, a bathing beach and pavilion for the colored citizens. In great numbers have these people, respected as an important part of our citizenry, enjoyed the health and pleasure afforded by an adequate section of the Lake Storey beach. The park commission named in 1930 by Mayor Anderson to advise council in the matter of supervision there includes Mrs. Susan Allen, LeRoy Anderson, Preston Wallace, Rev. C. M. Webster, J. W. Britten and Rev. W. T. Green.

It always will be a pride of Galesburgers that Abraham Lincoln once trod its streets

Mindful that children of the Fifth and Sixth wards could not always trek to Lincoln Park and Lake Storey, Mayor Mack favored the creation of a public playground at the water works side on West Main street. Council authorized Contractor H. H. Gunther to construct the proper playground outlay there for \$2,955.90. It was christened Graham Park on Dec. 1, 1930, in honor of P. W. Graham, because of his large interest in children. Later came the gift of land on East Losey street by Mr. and Mrs. O. N. Custer, and that park has lately been

named Custer Park, recreation grounds for children and for boys and men in the evening who engage in baseball.

Two diamonds have been added at Lake Storey to accommodate all of the baseball players who nightly gather there.

Lake Storey was stocked in October, 1929, with catfish, sunfish, perch and crappies. On July 5, 1932, the City Council voted to allow fishing at Lake Storey, commencing July 15, 1932, for one month, between the hours of 4 a. m. to midnight and the limit to be 15 fish with the following restrictions: One line, pole and hook, limit of bass 10 inches, limit of crappies 15, 6 inches long, and no fishing from the dam.

Easy of Access.

Lincoln park has been made remarkable easy of access. Leading to it from the north end of Broad street is a broad boulevard that is the result of the action of the council on June first, 1914, authorizing the special park committee to procure land from the north end of North Broad street extending to the park, the expense to be met from the park fund. Through the co-operation of the local members of the Legislature an act had been passed by that body making this possible.

On September 10, 1914, the city attorney was instructed by the council to begin condemnation proceedings to secure certain lands needed for the boulevard. With the land secured, the special park committee proceeded with the building of the boulevard, and with the planting of trees. On Nov. 25, 1916, the city assumed full jurisdiction over this highway as a part of the park system, and on December 6, 1921, provided for the extension of watermains to the grounds so that there might be good drinking water and water for the plants. Another marked improvement was the extension of the electric light service so that all the grounds, including the Lake Storey addition, are now amply illuminated.

In addition, Henderson street, which passes by both these sections of the park, was made a state aid route and has been paved, with a wide section to the city limits and the rest of the usual concrete slab width, the pavement extending all the way to the tricities, and these two highways, the boulevard and Henderson street with the improved roads leading to them, make the park readily accessible to a great area, evidenced by the large parties that come from a long distance.

The Finished Picture.

And so in chronological order came first the trees planted on the sun-baked prairies, and later lands set aside for recreation, and still later, the

GALESBURG'S PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

waters, all strangely created out of necessity. These were the handiwork of man directing the forces of nature, and constitute philanthropies achieved by the people and for the people in the form of playgrounds. What the sturdy pioneers began for a few, have the public men of today completed for the many. The barren prairie with the howling wolf of nearly a century ago has been converted into a beautiful garden where may be heard the gleeful voices of happy little ones.

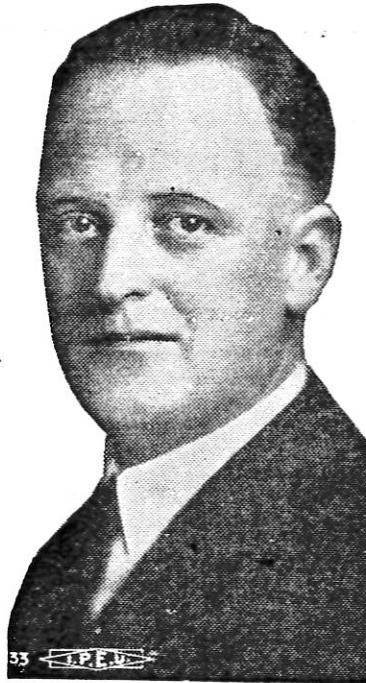
This has not been created out of one great philanthropy, but is the aggregate of many philanthropies from the humblest of citizens.

The unexcelled recreation grounds enjoyed by Galesburg's 28,000 people and her 50,000 neighbors scarcely could have been achieved had there not been citizens of the fibre of the Gales, others who were lovers of natural beauty as typified by Dr. Standish, and still others with a high sense of public service as performed by the man to whom this book is dedicated.

School Playgrounds.

The Board of Education sensing a public opinion relative to providing adequate school grounds had to depend entirely upon gratuities in the way of playground equipment, as the school law did not permit tax funds to be expended for playground purposes. However, they provided acres of public playgrounds for the children of the city, which is used during the school hours by the students for recess periods and during the summer months the grounds are maintained to allow growing children the pursuits of happy and healthful exercise under proper guidance. They have also generously opened up their auditoriums of the schools in various wards for community gatherings, which has brought the parents and Board of Education more closely together for a common cause.

Mr. Eloy Mureen, who was ex-officio president of the Board of Education during his terms as mayor of the City of Galesburg and later as a director of the Galesburg Board of Education covering in all eight years, and now a member of the Illinois legislature, introduced into the legislature a bill that would authorize school boards



E. W. MUREEN
Mayor, who opened the municipal golf course.

to equip playgrounds from moneys in the building fund and to provide supervision for these playgrounds from the educational fund. This bill was passed by both houses and approved by the Governor on June 26, 1931. Needless to say that Mr. O. O. Young, present superintendent of schools, was in hearty accord with the provisions of the bill as presented, passed and signed by the Governor.

The present members of the Board of Education are:

J. E. Anderson (Ex-officio)—President.

Ben J. Huff, Jr. (Ex-officio)—Clerk.

Dale Crandall (Ex-officio)—Treasurer.

O. O. Young—Superintendent of schools.

Directors.

Mrs. Louise O'Connor—First ward.

C. J. Lagergren—Second ward.

R. A. Chandler—Third ward.

M. G. Sandburg—Fourth ward.

C. L. Hinchman—Fifth ward.

R. W. Hinchliff—Sixth ward.

E. W. Mureen—Seventh ward.

Soangetaha Club.

The Soangetaha Country Club, one of the finest of its kind in the state was organized in 1907 having leased from the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad company 186.68 acres, known as Lake Rice, which was created primarily for a water supply for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad company. The present club house was rebuilt in 1925 representing an investment of \$35,000. At the inception of the club, there was a nine hole golf course constructed and in 1922 another nine hole course was added to complete the present eighteen hole course. On July 19, 1895 the Soangetaha club was granted its charter and the first board of directors included: H. C. Spear, R. J. Howard, A. E. Jacobi, J. G. Beadle and E. A. Gunnell. The current officers are C. I. Twyman, president; J. F. Gretta, vice president; C. N. Bandy, secretary; W. C. Wetherbee, treasurer. Soangetaha in Indian lore means strong-heart and legion has it that the Potawatomie Tribes once roamed this section of the country.

Lake Bracken.

Beautiful Lake Bracken created by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad company, offered grounds for recreational development and in 1923 another group of men applied their energy and talents to bring about the Knox County Country club, equal to the best and second to none in the state. Temporary directors elected July 14, 1922 were: Max J. Mack, Fred Peterson, O. N. Custer, J. G. W. Dopp, H. H. Gunther, C. O. Lewis, W. E. Doyle, W. C. Frank, E. R. Drake, George Churchill, S. A. Waggoner, R. V. Field, J. Ross McClure, James E. Slater, Hubbard Huggins. At the annual election held October 3, 1923, the temporary organization was made permanent. The club in 1923 received its charter and leased the 666 acres of land, which includes the lake from the railroad company. The club house was constructed and 75 cottages have been constructed to give owners a delightful summer resort. The lake is well stocked with fish, and there are no motor boat restrictions. The golfers have a nine hole golf course. The present officers are Fred Peterson, president; J. Carl Hart, vice president; John C. Kost, secretary and treasurer.