

Presented to Mrs Isaac Lea Willis by Mr
Robinson. This is one of three copies.
The others going to the City and to the
Greater Des Moines Committee.

SUGGESTIONS

for the

BEAUTIFYING-OF-THE-CITY-OF-DES-MOINES

on a

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

By Charles Mulford Robinson

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"The greatest thing that could be done for any city
would be to show the people what they want"

-Joseph Lee.

Aug 20, 1909.

Appeared before the Council to argue the wisdom
of securing expert advice in city planning
before letting contract for retaining wall for
which bids were advertised. (for \$15,000) and urged
engage Mr Robinson and secured funds to
pay him for \$1,200 1909. Result of a few weeks com-
posed Daisy Willis
and Civic Com.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION	Pg. 2
-Topographical Conditions of the Problem .	
I. STREETS	" 7
-The Fundamental Framework of the City.	
II. RAILROADS AND INDUSTRIES	" 30
-The City's Dependence for Wealth and Power.	
III. CIVIC CENTER AND CAPITOL APPROACH	" 39
-Custodian of the City's Dignity and its Tribute to the Honor of the State.	
IV. PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS	" 56
-A Source of Health and Pleasure for All the Citizens.	
V. BOULEVARDS, PARKWAYS and NEW Parks	" 71
-Proper Attributes to a Prosperous City.	

INTRODUCTION,

-Topographical Conditions of the Problem

3

Introduction.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

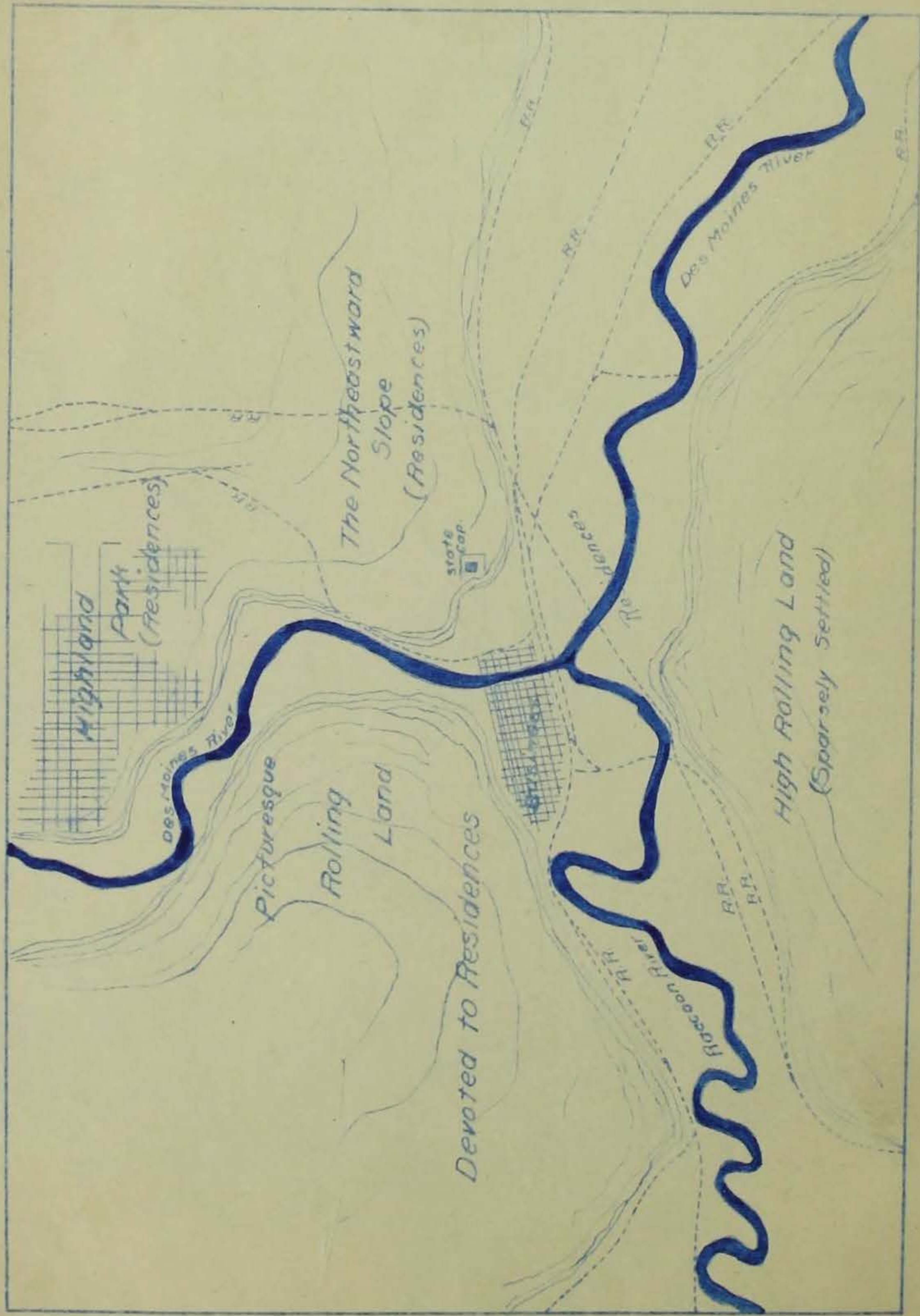
Des Moines, Iowa.

Gentlemen:-

Under the terms of the resolution passed by your honorable body, I have been asked to make suggestions for the beautifying of Des Moines on a comprehensive plan. On investigation, the task has proved to be unusually difficult. This is not because the opportunities for civic beauty in Des Moines are few. On the contrary, their number and variety are inspiring. But the city is cut by its rivers into at least three distinct sections, - counting the Highland Park district as belonging to East Des Moines - and these differ greatly in topography and manner of municipal development. So the problem is practically that of three cities instead of one, with the added task of tying them together, of making each complimentary to the others, welding the three into one homogeneous and beautiful municipality that shall be worthy of one of the greatest and wealthiest states. For as the capital city, Des Moines officially stands for Iowa.

Very briefly, let us consider what are the general topographical conditions: The Des Moines river, coming down from the northwest, takes at first an irregularly southeastward course, the section known as Highland Park being on its north bank. Then it turns southward, dividing most of the rest of the city into fairly even east and west sides. The Raccoon river, flowing with many twists and turns generally eastward, empties into the Des Moines just south of the city's business district, and the enlarged Des Moines river then proceeds eastwardly, leaving a considerable section of the city south of the rivers. The railroads on the north bank of the eastwardly flowing rivers, and paralleling in a general way their course, still further cut off the south side from the central portions - as, again, does the Raccoon's tendency to overflow the low land adjacent to it. The Des Moines river also is subject to flood conditions, the stage of water in the heart of the city varying from a few inches to ^{a maximum of over} ~~upward of~~ twenty feet.

Moreover, the land lying within these natural divisions of the city



Determining Features of Des Moines.

Rivers, Contours and Railroads

1 Mile



5

is of very diverse topography. North and west of the rivers a series of terraces are cut by picturesque little runs and ravines, from which the flow in earlier ages has built up a small flat table land. Upon this, enclosed on two sides by terraces and on two by rivers, is concentrated the main business of the city. On the east bank of the Des Moines, opposite the center of the city, there is a gradual eastward and northward slope so that three quarters of a mile north of Locust the river is hemmed in by a bluff and three quarters of a mile east of the river there is reached such an eminence that the Capitol has been placed upon it. To the southeast the land is so low that levies are required. South of the Raccoon, and the eastward flowing Des Moines, the land is again high and rolling, except for a small, comparatively level, space ~~usually~~ opposite the junction of the rivers.

There has been attempt to impose on this varying landscape a checkerboard ^{street} system. But necessarily the result is very irregular. Sometimes, where better counsels have prevailed, there are charming contour roads in residential sections - as on the terrace south of Grand Avenue, West. Again, there are long gaps which no streets penetrate - as at places north of Ingersoll Avenue; and all over the city, in greater degree than I have ever elsewhere found, there are innumerable streets that end in culs de sac, or make their connections only by jogs. Finally, large tracts, though regularly platted, present slight angles to the street plats adjacent to them.

Manifestly, it would not be possible in this Report to go over the whole city in detail, to pick out ^{all} the jogs that were better removed and note every street that it would be well to extend or widen. Nor do I understand that your injunction, "to make suggestions for the beautifying of the city on a comprehensive plan" involves such requirement. Rather, it suggests that the problem be faced in a large way. Here is the capital of a great State, a city rich, ambitious, enterprising, situated in a diversified country that offers a wide range of opportunities. What, in a reasonable way and with comprehensive grasp, can be done to make it a better city to live in or to visit?

We may divide our discussion between the following chapters: Devel-
opments on and along the Streets; Railroads and Industries; The Civic Cen-
ter and Capitol Approach; Parks and Playgrounds; Boulevards, Parkways and
New Parks.

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I. STREETS,

-The Fundamental Framework of the City.

I.

Developments on and Along the Streets.

The developments which I shall group under this heading are not the big things and thrilling things that lay hold upon the imagination; but they count for a great deal in the building of a beautiful and visibly progressive city. It is the old story of the little balancing the great if it be repeated often enough. Two hundred streets, well kept, may do as much for a town's appearance as would a costly Civic Center.

Necessarily this chapter must be unpleasant reading. It must be critical rather than inspiring; it must tear down instead of building up. The story of beautiful city planning for Des Moines lies in the subsequent discussions - any one who is looking for that must turn the pages. But this is the fundamental part. It may be more fun to train a vine on a trellis than to dig the hole for the original tiny plant. But without the hole, the vine could be only a painted and foolish decoration. And there is this word of encouragement to be said with reference to a ^{primal} discussion of these matters: No large expenditures are required for the realization of the suggestions. So far as these are good, the people can easily secure their execution. We will take up first the business section.

The business section of Des Moines is of exceptional excellence. Some regret has been expressed that the streets are not wider - sixty-six feet being the common width. There is no congestion yet; but when the city's population is two or three times as great, there is fear that the crowding on the business streets will be serious. To a degree, however, which is extraordinary in a city of a hundred thousand population, Des Moines is not a one or two street town. The business has spread with comparative evenness over half a dozen or more streets - a fact which, more than any other one thing, gives to the city its metropolitan aspect. There is no reason why this movement should not continue if properly encouraged. Further, throughout the business district there is an excellent alley system, which is of importance from the congestion standpoint since it can relieve the street traffic of the delay and impediment caused by loading and unloading heavy trucks at the curb.

But there is a precaution which it would be the part of wisdom to take; and there is need that the action be taken immediately. This is the limitation of building height - as Chicago and many other progressive American cities have done. This will tend in two ways to prevent congestion in street traffic. It will spread the business district over a wider area than would be possible were there concentration of very tall buildings - thus benefitting a great deal of property; and it will remove the chance of pouring into a sixty-six foot street the population, transient and resident, which an extremely large building holds. From these points of view, the most reasonable limitation of building height is that based on the street width - an ordinance limiting the height of buildings to one and one-half times the width of the street on which they face being one that has been widely tested and approved. Of course traffic regulations will also be needed. In fact, these are already desirable. With them, and with a restriction of building height, I do not apprehend that present street widths in the business district of Des Moines threaten so seriously to menace business interests as to justify costly widening procedure.

As to the appearance of the business streets, they are now, generally speaking, well paved; admirably curbed and guttered, handsomely lighted, freed from overhead wires, and are kept clean. Even the alleys in the business section are good. But the merchants, though they have shown much enterprise with regard to ornamental street lighting, are not quite so far above criticism as is the city. I am going to append a photograph which can tell its own story. To be sure, there is an ordinance, passed last year, which limits signs projecting above the sidewalk to three feet; but it would seem from the photograph not to be enforced. No street can be beautiful or dignified with such a medley of projecting signs, no owner can feel incentive to construct a beautiful building, or architect take pleasure in designing it, when the facade is certain to be so com-



pletely hidden. ~~When the municipal authorities have~~
~~the~~ ~~which~~ ~~the~~
~~mark.~~ In many cities any projection whatever is pro-
hibited. In the case of electric signs, since these help
to brighten the way at night, exception ^{however,} is generally made;
but even so the best ordinance requires that the electric
sign shall be so constructed, on hinges, that in daytime
it may fold back against the building - a requirement
which is perfectly simple and reasonable.

On the residence streets, again speaking generally, I find more to criticize than on the business streets. The most striking fault is, again, to be laid at the doors of the people themselves rather than upon the city administration. This is the generally shabby and neglected appearance of the parking between walk and curb. It should be an object of pride with the householders to keep this neat, trim, and well mowed - if nothing more. There are many cities in which this parking is beautified with shrubs and flowers. In two Iowa cities for which I have made studies similar to this, I have had occasion to speak of the side parking. One was Cedar Rapids, which had made itself well known all over the state for its beautiful street parkings - a little thing, requiring but a few moments care from the householders, to give reputation to a city. The other was Dubuque, which, having little side parking, had reason to regard with envy those places where the citizens had the opportunity that is presented to the people of Des Moines. If the latter are really in earnest, in wishing to make the city more beautiful, they will

An example of the
misuse of side parking.
The condition pictured
had continued for
many weeks.



begin with the parkings in front of their own lots. Occasionally I noticed instances in which a householder, seeming to have a little more ambition than his neighbors with reference to the parking, had put a fence around it. Of course any beauty it might have had was thereby destroyed and if the fence really was needed anywhere except at corners its necessity is a striking indictment of the community. At a corner, there sometimes is need of restraining the natural impulse to cut across. But there a low shrub will make a less expensive, more efficient and more suitable barrier than does a fence. Some of the churches, unhappily, are striking offenders as regards the care of their parking. To take so



Church grounds and "parking." Note also the brick walk. A Des Moines view.

little care of the front lawn and to preach that the Lord is in His holy temple is to seem insincere. Church property should preach civic righteousness to those who do not enter to hear the clergyman.

In this matter of the parking, and of the street trees - of which I shall speak - and of front lawns, I was much struck with the great good which district improvement societies could do in Des Moines. The way to "boost" a residential section is to make it beautiful, and the responsibility for that rests very largely indeed with the residents. The Highland Park section, just as one instance, is beautifully located; it is on high ground, away from the smoke of the city; is heavily wooded with oaks

and elms; its topography is varied, so that there are ^{both} terraces and ^{depressions} ~~recesses~~ ions, and if the people would get together to make it beautiful, they might make it one of the loveliest sections of Des Moines. So of other areas, east and west and south.

The improvement and careful maintenance of side parking, to return to that, is a matter of such importance in beautiful city building, that some cities put it all in the charge of the park commission. In yet others, the city, taking care of it, is allowed to make a special assessment against the property for care - a plan that, I understand, was advocated here in a bill before the last legislature. Again, voluntary associations of the citizens on a street or in a district are sometimes formed, for the purpose of insuring the care of the parking. A small sum - fifteen cents a front foot, for example - is paid each year into the common treasury, and with this sum a man, or men, are engaged to keep the parkings uniformly mowed, weeded, watered, and to do whatever else may be necessary for their beauty. The need that Des Moines bestir herself in this matter is very urgent.

Trees and poles commonly stand on the side parking. There are a great many street trees in Des Moines; but if they were planted half as regularly, were half as uniform, and had half the care that the poles receive they would make far more important contribution than they do to the city's beauty. Some of the best street tree planting in the city now is on streets sparsely settled with humble cottages on the low land in South Des Moines.



Tree Planting on Main Street, South Des Moines.

Yet there seems to be a widespread impression that the street trees all through the city are pretty good. Possibly the comparison is, more or less unconsciously, with nearly treeless prairie towns; and it may be admitted that Des Moines is fortunate in having maples and elms; and that she stands high in the forestration of house lots. It is the fact that so many of her homes stand in a greatly encompassing grove of oaks and elms that really gives to the city her well marked arboreal character. But the street-tree planting itself is very irregular and scraggling. Half a dozen trees of half a dozen varieties will be planted so close that every other one ought to come out; and then will follow a stretch of half a block without any trees. The city in its official capacity deserves and receives no credit for the trees on the houselot. Its responsibility is only with trees on the street. The proper unit in their planting is not the lot; but the street - or clearly defined section of street. This applies both to spacing and variety. The trees ought not to be less than forty feet apart, and of one kind in each unit. Old trees, as well as new, need to be protected from insects, advertisers, wire stringers and horses, and in addition to have their dead wood cut out and ^{hanging} low branches trimmed. Simply to plant new trees will not give a city fine trees on its streets. Finally, other cities have taken up this matter with great earnestness, and some day, unless Des Moines acts, she will find she has been left behind. Then there will be required a great many years of patient waiting before she can take the place she ought to have; and which is now within her reach. There is only one way to manage successfully the street tree question. That is by the municipality itself. A city forester, tree warden, or tree commission - the name makes little difference so long as there is expert knowledge, competent authority, and adequate funds - should act under the department of parks.

With reference to the poles, Des Moines has done so well in freeing the business section of overhead wires, that there is every reason to anticipate steady extension of the conduit area. But at best the progress must be slow where miles of streets stretch in all directions. The

building of the local city beautiful will therefore suggest two steps: First, the selection for conduit routes of those streets that are of greatest community importance - the boulevard links, etc. Grand Avenue



Grand Avenue, Des Moines - locally claimed to be "the finest avenue in the West." But note the poles and irregular tree planting in even its best portions.

now carries a line of poles on each side. Second, the co-operation of the people in getting poles off the streets even if, to accomplish this, the poles have to be placed in alleys or through backyards. A telegraph or telephone pole in one's backyard is not such a very dreadful thing - if by such means the street on which one lives can be freed from them. For more important than the detraction to the street's beauty which comes through the presence of the poles, is the resultant mutilation of the street trees, that their waving branches may not touch the wires.

The gardens of Des Moines did not on the whole, impress me as well planted. There has been lacking the encouragement and incentive of good landscape work in the parks - an example that always counts for much in the private grounds of a city. But at least Des Moines has few front fences, and plain lawns sloping up to the houses are so good in themselves and make such addition to the beauty of the streets, that bare foundation walls and trestle-like piazzas with underpinnings all unhidden may be forgiven. Let me quote, however, in this connection, as showing the possibilities of these fine stretches of adjoining lawns, what one of the great town planners of Europe has said: "The gardener, like the architect, has fixed his eye too exclusively on the individual plot; he has thought too much of the bulbs in his own individual beds. We need to think of the street, the district, the town as larger wholes, and find a

glorious function and a worthy guidance for the decorative treatment of each plot and each house in so designing them that they shall contribute to some total effect. For is it not a finer thing to be a part of a great whole than to be merely a showy unit among a multitude of other units?"

The establishment of a building line is needed on all avenues that make special pretense of beauty - witness, the little store built to the sidewalk line on Grand Avenue, just where beautiful Tonawanda Drive leads south and where all the houses are set far back in spacious grounds. At some other point an apartment house may rise any day next to the sidewalk - not only breaking the fine present lines of the spacious street, but cutting off with a great wall the street view from several houses on either side of it. Thus is the establishment of a building line a protection to all the property on a street.

In the residence districts, again, the old brick sidewalk has persisted to a remarkable degree. It is a survival from times when municipal ideals were not as high as now. It almost belongs to the stage of the kerosene lamp on a wooden post, and progressive little towns everywhere are boasting of the miles of new, concrete, walks laid each year.

A similar survival, I have to suppose, that will give way before modern ideas of city building, are the hideously awkward straight curbs with projecting cages for catch basins at street corners. These are to be found in various parts of the residence sections. Sometimes the straight curb's place is taken by an arc of small diameter, which scarcely looks better and usually presents - very naturally - a battered and splintered appearance. In East Des Moines, I noticed also an extraordinary custom of stopping side parking sometimes at the extended property line of an important cross street and then throwing into the street paving the useless parallelogram thus created. While the excellence and up-to-date character of the recent city engineering work - in which the curbs make long and graceful curves at street intersections - suggests the reminiscent character of all such examples, yet they occasionally appear where pavements do not look very old. It cannot be urged too

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16



15" Woodland
An illustration of old-fashioned sidewalk, catch basin, and corner curb in a high class residence section of Des Moines.



Better handling of a like problem, though here the radius of the curb at the corner is too small. Photograph from Fort Wayne.

strongly, therefore, that to put in new pavements without replacing obsolete curbs would be like putting new wine into old bottles. Des Moines, whatever her other claims, will never be known as a beautiful modern city while these relics conspicuously survive.

A good many quiet residential streets have pavements of unnecessary width. That is, no traffic demand justifies the width, and in such cases not only good looks, but economy in construction and maintenance, cry out for a narrowing. To make a pavement on a residential street wider than need be, substitutes dust and noise for grass and trees, and puts on the tax payers an unnecessary burden for sprinkling and cleaning, as well as for the pavement's construction. The trouble usually arises from accepting a uniform width of paving as belonging to a uniform width of street, without considering the character or the volume of the traffic the street must carry. Arlington Street may be cited as one of many examples. Minneapolis, St. Louis and Milwaukee are among the progressive Western cities that have dared even to reverse curves when necessary to bring the curbs, already turned from intersecting streets, into narrowed roadways. And I noticed one good example in Des Moines itself, — the new curbs on Buchanan Street, East Side, providing for a narrowed road.

To be classed with the other "survivals" — Des Moines, for a notoriously wideawake city, certainly presents extraordinary municipal historical data — are, no doubt, the drinking troughs for horses. Of these I noticed several specimens at prominent corners. I do not know who is



responsible for them. They look as if nobody were; but it would help a little if the advertisements were ripped off, and kept off; and the streets properly paved and drained around them. That much, at least, might be municipal action. And among the rich citizens of Des Moines, are there not some who have love enough for city and for animals to make it possible for the humane work of these fountains to be done less meanly? What an opportunity for a really beautiful work exists, for example, at Cottage Grove Avenue and Twentieth Street, where there is a broad triangular space, a spreading tree, and, as at so many other points, a trough that would make an abandoned farmyard blush.



One other general criticism of Des Moines streets must be presented. This is not of their changes in direction - that is potentially one of the great charms of the city, for nothing is more wearisome than straight streets stretching away interminably, while a change in direction, by bringing housefronts into view, offers a terminus and presents interesting architectural views of facades - but it is of the manner in which these changes are made. Almost always it is by an angle, presenting

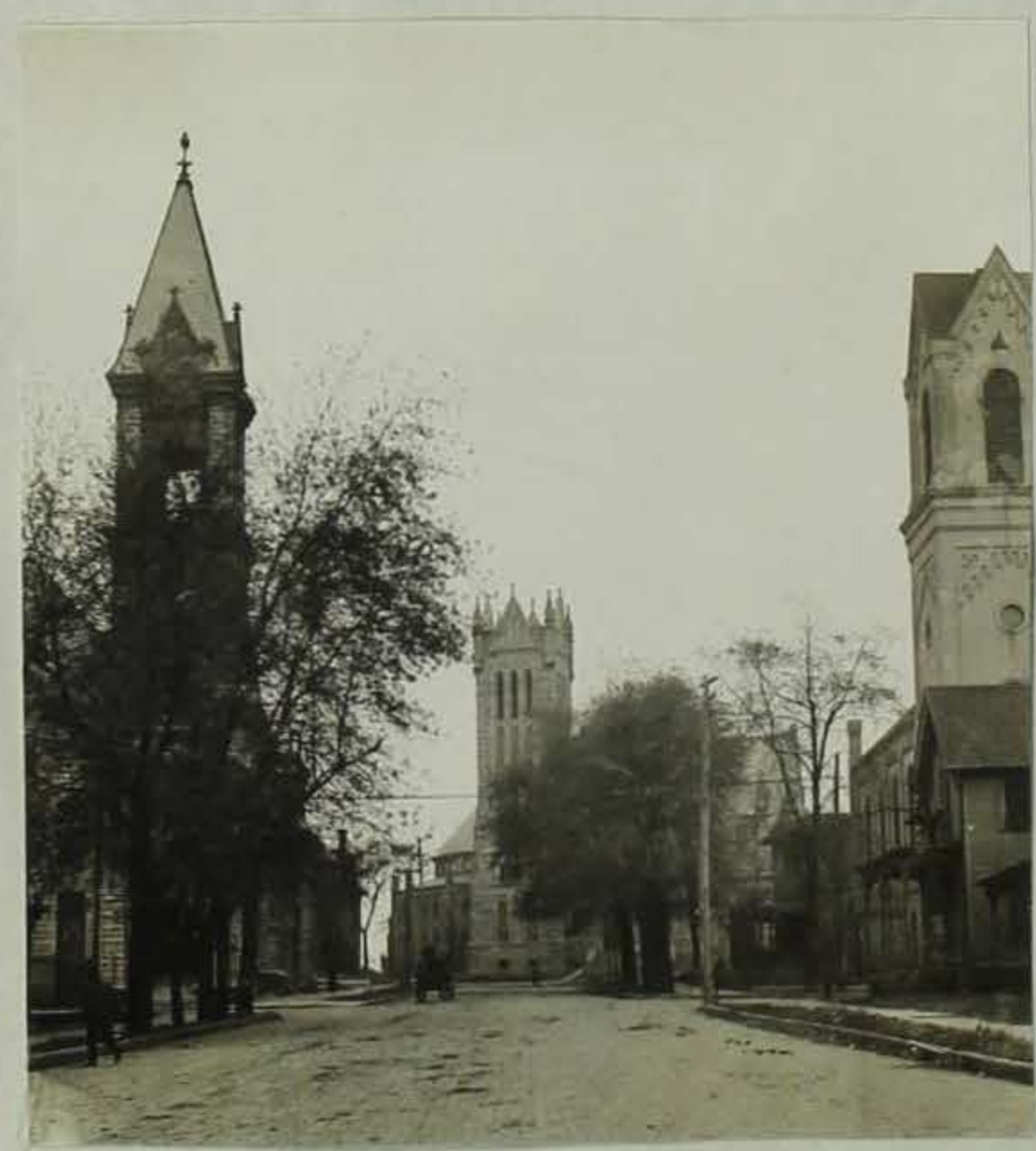




sharp edges that hurt the eye. It should be done by a curve. There is no need for an angle. Granted that the property lines form one, there is all the space from the property to the curb in which to lose it. And at what is possibly the most conspicuous fault of the kind in town, the angle in the approaches of the new Locust Street bridge, there were *few private* property lines involved in the matter.

But Des Moines streets are not wholly bad. There are some very good things about them. In fact, I have spoken of their notable excellence throughout the business district, and that is the district which the greatest number of people see and that all Des Moines uses in common. And the district has another attraction - one that bestows individuality on it and ranks it high among the business sections of American cities: This is the circumstance, rare with us, that an architectural accent closes the vista on so many of these streets. Such an accent, seen through haze or smoke, crowning the way in the distance, need not be fine to be interesting. We have the State House if looking east on Locust - and it is beautiful with the afternoon sun gilding all the windows; the Court House, when looking west on Court; the sham scenery-arch of the Rock Island station, looking south on Fourth; and looking north on the numbered cross streets the spires and towers of the churches gathered on High and Pleasant Streets. From a civic standpoint, the location of

these churches, - on the terrace, and at an angle that brings them into view from the business streets - is one of the very finest things in Des Moines.



Specific suggestions regarding changes for streets that have boulevard importance will appear further on in the Report. Here there is to be pointed out the great importance of breaking certain excessively long blocks, before expensive construction shall make the cost prohibitive. Such, for instance, are the long lapses of which I spoke, north of Grand Avenue on the west side; or the unbroken interval of four blocks from Sixth Avenue to Bluff Street between Franklin Avenue and State. There is one block on North Street nearly half a mile long, and one on Pleasant Street very little short of it. Many instances of this kind in well settled neighborhoods might be mentioned; but the point is very simple. The primary purpose of streets is to afford means of circulation. If that is interfered with, the business of the city is hampered, congestion is increased on those streets that are available, and the hours of labor are consequently lengthened - for where there is congestion there is delay, and there must be earlier start from the home and later return to it. In short, the city is thereby ill suited to the performance of its functions. The same comments apply to many, but by no means to all, of the small jogs. It is of transcendant importance, too, in the case of diagonal thoroughfares - actual or possible.

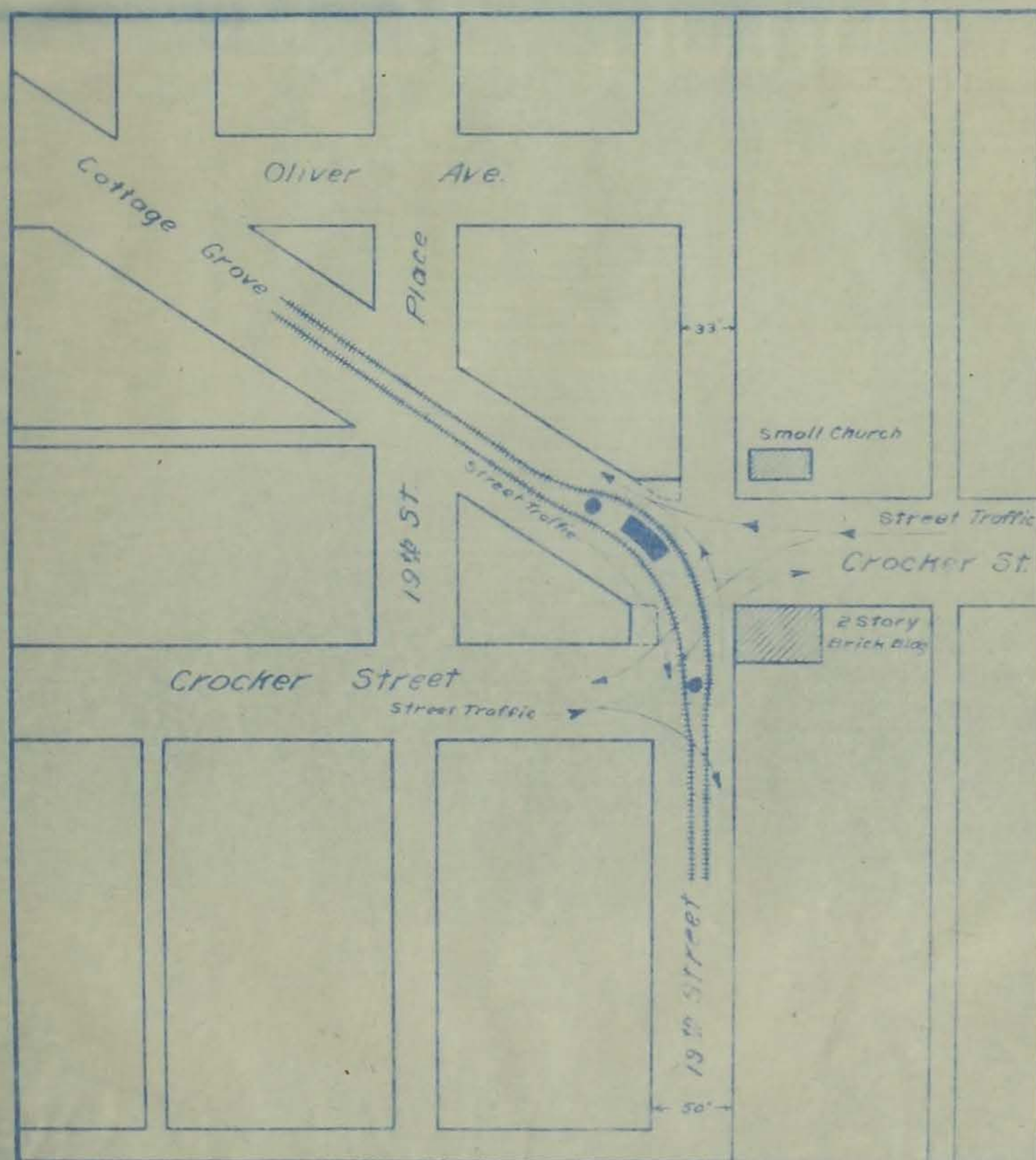
One would guess the value of Cottage Grove Avenue simply from the map. A sight of the traffic the street carries quickly confirms the guess. It is a great pity that the southeastern extension of this street seems now to be hopelessly beyond reach, such is the value of the property it would penetrate. But the circumstance should teach an emphatic lesson as to the urgency of extending it in the other direction, while there yet is time. An extension reaching up to ^WBeaumont Avenue - which is to say, into sparsely settled country - has been laid out beyond Forest Avenue, and this northwestern end of town is growing with great rapidity. To have a two-mile straight diagonal - which would be Cottage Grove Avenue's length if the connection between the two ends were made - would bring a great many homes nearer to the center of the city and would much increase the building availability of large tracts of land - a matter that is of interest to the city, it must be recalled, quite as much as

to the property holders. North of University Avenue, there is no great difficulty about making the extension, if it be done soon. The few houses that are in the line of it are not expensive. The two little blocks below University Avenue, however, have lately reached what is possibly their maximum development. It would be expensive to cut through them now, and perhaps no more expensive if there were a delay of some years. The detour around this small break would not involve much loss in time or distance, and here there might be adopted the Kansas City method of getting for a diagonal what can be got, and waiting for favorable chances for the rest. But above University Avenue there is no better chance to wait for. In that case immediate action is called for. On the East Side, the extension of Easton Boulevard at each end is most desirable.

Through crosstown highways have an importance second only to diagonals. I have spoken of the need of some additional streets north from Grand Avenue. There is great need of new east and west connections, there being now no traffic bridge between Grand Avenue and Sixth Avenue - a distance of a mile and a half, with possibly two-thirds of the city's total population lying on opposite sides of the river in that section. Maple and Crocker Streets and University Avenue and North Street seem to be the most natural crosstown thoroughfares. In the case of the latter pair, some widenings would be required - but the need for such widening is great, even for other reasons.

Referring again to Cottage Grove Avenue, its growing volume of traffic is poured into such a badly arranged little focus, that I have thought it best to append a sketch indicating what slight changes will make for its improvement. These are desirable not so much from the standpoint of city beauty - though the present arrangement is about as ugly as can be - as from that of traffic facilitation. It would be easy to take more property than shown, and plan for a large circle. But that would be expensive; there is no urgent reason for making this a show point, and the changes I have suggested - affecting only part of a little frame

store, yet providing an isle-of-safety where the cars shall stop; a light on the axis of Nineteenth Street, and another on the axis of Cottage Grove Avenue, both rising from ornamental standards - will satisfy all of the utilitarian needs and sufficient of the aesthetic. The arrows showing



traffic directions are interesting not only as giving the proffered solution of the problem but as indicating how the present congestion arises and how necessary some action is.

These matters of street changes, which as a whole are little more than touched on here, are unusually serious in Des Moines. I recommend

the creation of a local City Plan Commission, such as that at Hartford, Conn., which shall consider and pass on them.

A city which entertains so many visitors as ~~Des~~ Des Moines - at Fair time and other times - should certainly maintain for their benefit, if not for the health of its own citizens, public comfort stations. These are best underground, and therefore require little room; but if the entrances can be screened with shrubbery there are obvious advantages. From this point of view an excellent site - and one ideally situated from the standpoint of service - is offered in the broad turf space that surrounds the Court House. Admirable sites for other stations would be near the State House and on the river bank in proximity to the public buildings.

Another development which it seems proper to include in this chapter is the matter of a public market. A site has been bought for the purpose at Ninth and Park Streets, on the West side. It is not a very good market site, and I shall indicate another use to which it can be put. The principal objections to it for a market location are the character of the neighborhood, the grades of the streets, the lack of railroad facilities, and a degree of relative remoteness. To my mind, a much better market site would be found on the south side of Mulberry Street, beyond Ninth. A site here would be inexpensive, and it would have all the advantages and none of the disadvantages of the site which has been selected. If it be said, that there are not as many homes around it, the reply is that a public market is designed to have more than the local neighborhood trade of a corner grocery, that the Mulberry Street site is much the more accessible by the various car lines, is in closer connection with the shopping district, being only one block from Walnut, and is within more reasonable and convenient walking distance than is the other site to a considerable population to whom car fare is a serious matter. *can be brought to it by
Also, ferret out. A rail*

As to smoke, there were some days during my stay when the Des Moines business section was as bad as Cincinnati's and Cleveland's, and closely ~~re~~aled Pittsburgh's - not an enviable distinction. The newspapers had some articles in advocacy of smoke consumers; but the real secret of success in avoiding smoke lies further back - not in consuming smoke, but in failing to make it. It is most largely a matter of stoking, and a

well drawn ordinance, limiting smoke emission to five minutes at a time, if well enforced, will do more to secure good stoking and clean air than will anything else. That black smoke is not only disfiguring, but involves enormous economic loss, is now commonly recognized.

The billboard we have always with us, and it is hard to control. But I must confess that it was a surprise to see the fence that conceals a University Stadium from an avenue set off into panels and painted with signs. Let us hope that if the University derives a profit from these billboards, that profit goes to "make culture hum". At any slower pace, the signs will do more harm than good - and I am not sure that in such a place they do not anyway.

The school buildings are improving, the new structures so far as I observed showing distinct aesthetic advances over the old. But more important still, the school grounds seem generally of good size, well



shaded, well adapted for play, and used for that purpose. Such a schoolyard is to be preferred to a more ornate but small frontage, which - being useless for play purposes - can be developed only as if it were a cemetery lot, being given closely clipped turf, concrete copings, and pretty flowers. And yet on the big yards, where the children romp beneath the trees, it is a good thing to instill lessons in tidiness and respect for public property. A receptacle should be provided for papers,

for banana skins and orange peels; if there is more than one variety of tree, the trees may well bear little metal name labels; vines may be put on the building; and if the yard is large enough there may be school gardens. Of course a High School, where the children are older and the building is distinctly of architectural pretentiousness, is rather a different matter. For example, the fine West Side High School - shown in



the photograph - should have some massed conifer planting on either side of the doorway. As the building faces north, the conifers will do well here, and all winter they will give a softening touch of beauty. In the case of new schools, care should be taken to make the yards as creditable as the buildings. The accepted minimum requirement of schoolyard space, where there is any attempt at adequacy of provision, is thirty square feet per pupil. Thus it is a perfectly simple mathematical proposition to know how much ground should be around a new school designed to accommodate a certain number of pupils. But schools in rapidly growing sections, as on the outskirts of the city, should have a more liberal allowance. This is merely good business sense. The land is cheap; the school will almost surely be enlarged later on; and there will be economy in reserving for it now the added land that with larger attendance it ought to have. The American people are not stingy in regard to popular education; but we need perhaps to appreciate more keenly than we do that

the schoolyard is part of the plant as well as is the school building. *In Des*

Moines
The firehouses, generally speaking, are neat and trim.

Perhaps this long chapter, which, in dealing with developments on and along the streets, has necessarily touched on many subjects, cannot better close than by referring again to the street plan of the residence sections - for the street system is fundamental. There is evidence that for a long period Des Moines had unimaginative development. Blind to the picturesqueness of site which nature had given, streets were opened at whatever cost of grades and fills in the conventional checkerboard style. Then a new spirit of enterprise, taste and appreciation appeared. In the latter period there were ~~planned~~ ^{planned} - as what may be called minor residential streets to distinguish them from the great through highways - those beautiful contour roads that wind and curve ~~through~~ ^{over} the hills, and dip into ravines. Illustrations are to be found in various places - Forest Drive, Allen Place, Center Drive, the Glen section, and some tracts still unbuilt upon on the far north edge of the city, beyond St. Joseph Street. This spirit seems lately to have revived, and as the checkerboard system necessarily preferred level tracts to rolling land, large areas of picturesque country yet remain to bestow, with artistic development, wonderful beauty upon Des Moines. For its picturesqueness of site is the city's great asset from the aesthetic point of view; and in turning to account the ravines and little runs, not hiding them by filling in, not using them as dumps; but incorporating them in the gardens, carrying streets over them by bridges, parking some that they may be kept for the public, and acting as if you were proud of them - as you ought to be - and not ashamed, ^{lies the best aesthetic opportunity of Des Moines.} The streets of a city should be laid out, indeed, as lovingly as one plans the walks in his garden - with the necessary directness, of course, and taking him where he wants to go, but turning to advantage the beauties of the way, ~~making streets through them~~ preserving its fine views, and if need be trimming high the trees or cutting vistas through them. In Des Moines to increase the number of good views of the State House, for example, would be to emphasize the importance of the municipality as a capital city. So throughout, if in all the

development there be this spirit, Des Moines will be not mere beautiful only, but beautiful with an individuality of its own. And that is the secret of civic charm.



*Suggestive types of residential streets adapted to Des Moines.
— Photographs from Brookline, Mass. and Schenectady, N.Y.*



An ornamental street light of Des Moines.

II. RAILROADS AND INDUSTRIES,

-The City's Dependence for Wealth and Power.

Railroads and Industries.

To the matter of tying together the Union and Rock Island stations, and of giving to the latter street car service, I have devoted considerable thought. But there is no solution as good as the perfectly obvious one of combining all the passenger service in one station. The absurdity, economic waste and public inconvenience of the present arrangement are manifest, the tracks of the roads being parallel, and the present stations almost adjoining - with the main separation nothing more than a death trap of tracks. There is no physical reason why one station should not be used. To secure that end, the city may well offer inducements and bring every pressure to bear. As the roads already combine in the exchange at a single place of dead freight, why should they put live freight to the inconvenience of transfer?

The present Union Station would have to be considerably enlarged, if the Rock Island business were to be added to that it now has. From a civic standpoint this would be a good thing, for the present station is so dwarfed and blanketed by the Court House that it does not count for what it should. The station now closes Sixth Street. Let us imagine, then, that ⁱⁿ its enlargement and remodeling, the main entrance were put at the foot of Sixth Street, and marked by a clock tower. This feature would be convenient to Walnut Street shoppers as well as to travelers, would finely balance the church tower at the other end of the street, and combined with the tower surmounted Court House, would become part of a very striking and interesting group. The poorly improved property on the west side of Sixth, across from the Court House, offers an admirable site for a city and interurban trolley station, which also should be designed in keeping with its neighbors. Then, coming down Sixth, which at this, (closed), end would become a plaza in effect, we should have a transportation center of real interest; or coming from the train would have, as our first impression, an outlook upon a very large and well ordered town - one of the most effective first-views offered by any city in the United States.

The beauty of the idea is its absolute convenience, its simplicity

and practicability. All the parts of the picture are lying there now, some of them in their proper places, and there is need only of marshaling the others into order. Not a single affected interest but would gain by the arrangement. That an adequate trolley station is needed, is proved to anyone who will visit the vicinity in the rush hours. At those times Sixth and Seventh Streets near the corner of Mulberry are practically closed to vehicular traffic by the crowds of people and lines of cars. In Indianapolis, Los Angeles, and other up-to-date cities, we have already the example, which must be widely followed, of great trolley stations. That one of the Sixth and Mulberry Street corners would eventually become - were this whole plan carried out - the site of a good hotel building and that the terminal plaza would be fittingly developed with ornamental lights, may be predicted with confidence, and so would be added the final touches to the scheme. The opportunity is directly at hand. The public convenience requires the suggested development, and the civic beauty - great as that would be - is just a by-product of a common-sense procedure. Indeed, the case is one of those happily illustrating the definition of art given by Professor Lethaby, of England. "Art," said he, "is the well doing of what needs doing."

In stating the conditions regarding the passenger station, I have let it be inferred that the site of the present Union Station is that on which the new ^{or remodelled} station might be constructed. This is the easiest place to put it, and for perhaps the next ten years or so it might do pretty well. But it would not be much more difficult, and would serve the city far better, to erect the new station a block further south, using the line of the Rock Island as that which the trains should use. In this thought the station itself is much enlarged, the Transportation Plaza greatly improved, and, since there is required the abandonment for track purposes of part of the Des Moines Union right of way, there are involved radical changes in the whole railroad situation. These are changes that necessitate facing the problem in a large way, with the realization that a future city, much greater than the present one, is now assured and

should be intelligently prepared for. Let us consider what such plans would include.

There are three great desiderata: 1, A really Union passenger station that will be adequate in size; 2, The removal of the nuisance, - the danger, delays, smoke and noise - occasioned by the hauling of the freight trains of many important railroads through the city, only two blocks from the principal business street. 3, The removal of the Chicago and Northwestern tracks from their present location. To secure these three ends appears not to be an exceptionally difficult matter, for one move will help another, if only the railroads will co-operate among themselves, as railroads more and more are doing, and if the city will meet the railroads half way, in recognition that the end desired is one that will be to the advantage of all parties.

Let us begin with the tracks of the Chicago and Northwestern. This company now has a siding that comes within a few hundred yards of the Chicago and Great Western line, and there is no reason why it should not extend that siding and pass through the Eastern portion of the city by paralleling the latter road. Both company and city would gain. From the standpoint of the former, the line would be of about equal length to the present line, it would cross less traveled streets, which means less danger of accident and of viaduct requirement - and in its present location, that requirement may be now considered fairly imminent - and there could be provided sufficient trackage space, in which respect the company is at present greatly cramped. From the standpoint of the city the gains - in ridding the direct approach to the State House of a railroad crossing, in freeing the East Side of the incubus which a need of crossing steam railroad tracks always imposes, and in setting free the beautiful riverside bluffs from Union Park to the business center of the city - are too obvious to need argument. To elevate the tracks, as may be necessary if they remain, would be, it may be noted, a sad remedy from a civic standpoint, for a viaduct at Locust Street would well nigh ruin the fine effect of the State House crowning the street. Finally, as to manufacturing industries on the present line, the street railway power

house can transport its coal and other supplies in its own cars, and thus suffer no special inconvenience. The tile works alone remain; but there is no reason why the river bank is a better place for them than is some ^{other} site, and in view of the great gain to the community in changing the location of the Northwestern tracks, the tile works must be induced to move. With regard to the section of the city which the suggested new route would penetrate, much further east, it would be little worse off than it is now. In short, to effect this change in the Northwestern tracks, everything possible should be done. To my mind it is one of the most important undertakings now before Des Moines.

With the Northwestern tracks joining the other roads where the Great Western now joins them, its freight sorting could be done in the yards where that of the other roads is done; and its passenger trains could run into the same station as the passenger trains of the other roads - a matter of great convenience to its passengers and of economy and dignity to the road. Its present little village-like station, plumped down where nobody wants it, is no credit to it.

The roads being together, then, at the transfer yards, in the eastern section of the city, may well stay together to such extent as they need westbound tracks for through freight. Most of them now proceed West by occupying three parallel streets, each one block from ^{its neighbor,} ~~the other,~~ while the Great Western, swinging off to the southwest, makes a short cut through territory where it does little harm. Yet at a point about opposite Thirty-Seventh Street, West Side, it is less than three-quarters of a mile from the Rock Island and the St. Paul tracks. Meanwhile the Burlington, having abruptly turned south, has actually joined it. By the construction of a three-quarter mile connection, then, and perhaps the double tracking of the Great Western from the transfer yards to a location opposite Norwalk Road, south of the Raccoon River, it would be possible to send all through freight south of the city, removing it - with its danger, delay and dirt - from proximity to the business section. This is a thing worth doing in itself. Incidentally, it sets free trackage needed for the suggested enlargement and change in passenger service.

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It is remarkable, indeed, how the satisfaction of the three needs ^{does} dovetail, each making the others easier to accomplish.

If the program seems large, it may be reflected that while it involves some railroad expense, -though not much; it requires from the city little more than encouragement and fair play. All freight traffic north of the Raccoon would not, of course, be eliminated. There are many manufacturing plants in that region which must have freight facilities, and practically all the freight originating in West Des Moines or destined thither would still pass between Cherry and Elm Streets. But the time is coming when such business will be done by means of electric switching engines. As it cannot be anticipated, however, that through freight will be so transported, there is no anomaly in removing the through freight and retaining the local. The tracks for the former, where they cut across a corner of South Des Moines between Clay and Jefferson Streets, would be elevated above street grades. Though the tracks north of the Raccoon may not be elevated, street viaducts cross them.

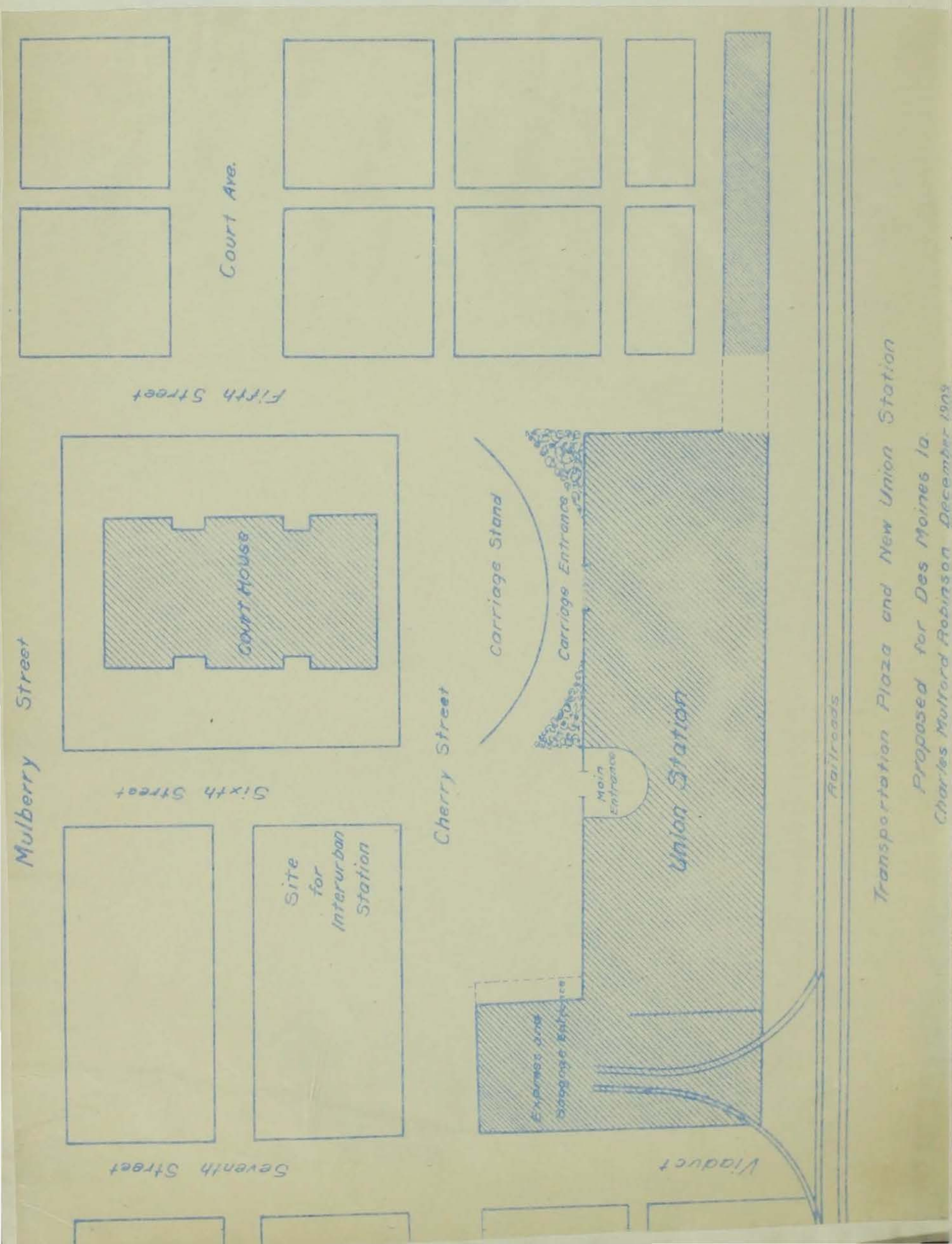
In locating the passenger station a block south of the present Union station, the large new depot might then extend from Seventh, where it could have a pedestrian entrance from the viaduct, to Fourth- Sixth being already closed, while the space between Fifth and Fourth could be used as the Rock Island now uses the space between Fourth and Third. This would give a platform length of a thousand feet- the length now adopted on main lines of important roads. The station would be on the north side of the tracks and would occupy the whole depth of the block- though set back from the street to give wide space for vehicular traffic. It would be so ample that tracks could be run into it under the Seventh Street viaduct, for loading express and baggage cars. Between Third and Seventh Streets, there would be no tracks north of Vine- the present Rock Island line.

In contemplating such changes, I find nothing of much importance to be removed. In fact, with the exception of one or two fair-sized brick buildings, all is very poor- and these structures would be bagatelles to great railroad corporations acting in unison. The program promises enormous benefit to the city, and important and compensating advantages to the railroads. It presents a logical and harmonious adjustment of a condition that has heretofore "just grewed" and that promises soon, in many of its

details, to become intolerable.

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36



In this connection something ^{must} ~~may~~ be said of the industrial section of the city. That seems pretty certain to develop mainly in the great bend of the Raccoon River south of Cherry Street, if sufficient immunity from flood danger can be secured. The site is fairly good from the civic standpoint. It is by itself, on land that would not be useful for other purpose, is central and yet is sufficiently isolated, and it is in remarkable proximity to considerable areas likely always to be given up to employees homes - as South Des Moines and the southern part of East Des Moines. To meet the flood danger, it has been proposed that the loop formed in the junction of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers be cut off. It is a somewhat expensive proposition, but if it is effective it may be worth its costs. To extend this cut off through the low lands westward, to the Eighteenth Street viaduct, - again cutting off a long loop - may also eventually be worth while. If the river improvement plans come to include the Des Moines River, it would be easy by means of such an artificial cut off to give to the industries located in that section canal facilities that might be worth the cost of the cut off quite apart from its value as a flood arrester. This, however, looks far ahead, and is hardly a matter connected with the beautifying of the city. But correction of the present railroad situation is very closely so related.

Much is to be said in favor of the system officially adopted in Germany, and illustrated in the United States by Los Angeles at least, of restricting manufacturing plants to certain districts. Thus in Los Angeles the City Council determines certain lines, the area on one side of which is designated an Industrial District and the area on the other side a Residential. The result of the demarcation is to insure to property holders in the residence district immunity from intrusion by any manufacturing plant. That is worth a great deal to a householder. But in apportioning Industrial Districts, care should be taken to include considerable tracts on the outskirts of the city, that there may be ample room for extension and a supply of cheap sites. Sociologically, also, it is of great advantage to a city to have manufacturing plants on the outer rim,

where the more poorly paid employees, who necessarily must live in proximity to their work, may have fresh air and room, and that the congestion in the city's center may be reduced. The natural location for such tracts is along railroad lines. In Des Moines, outside the center of the city, the location of the main roads is in this respect peculiarly fortunate as regards the relation to the rest of the city which such new Industrial Districts would have.

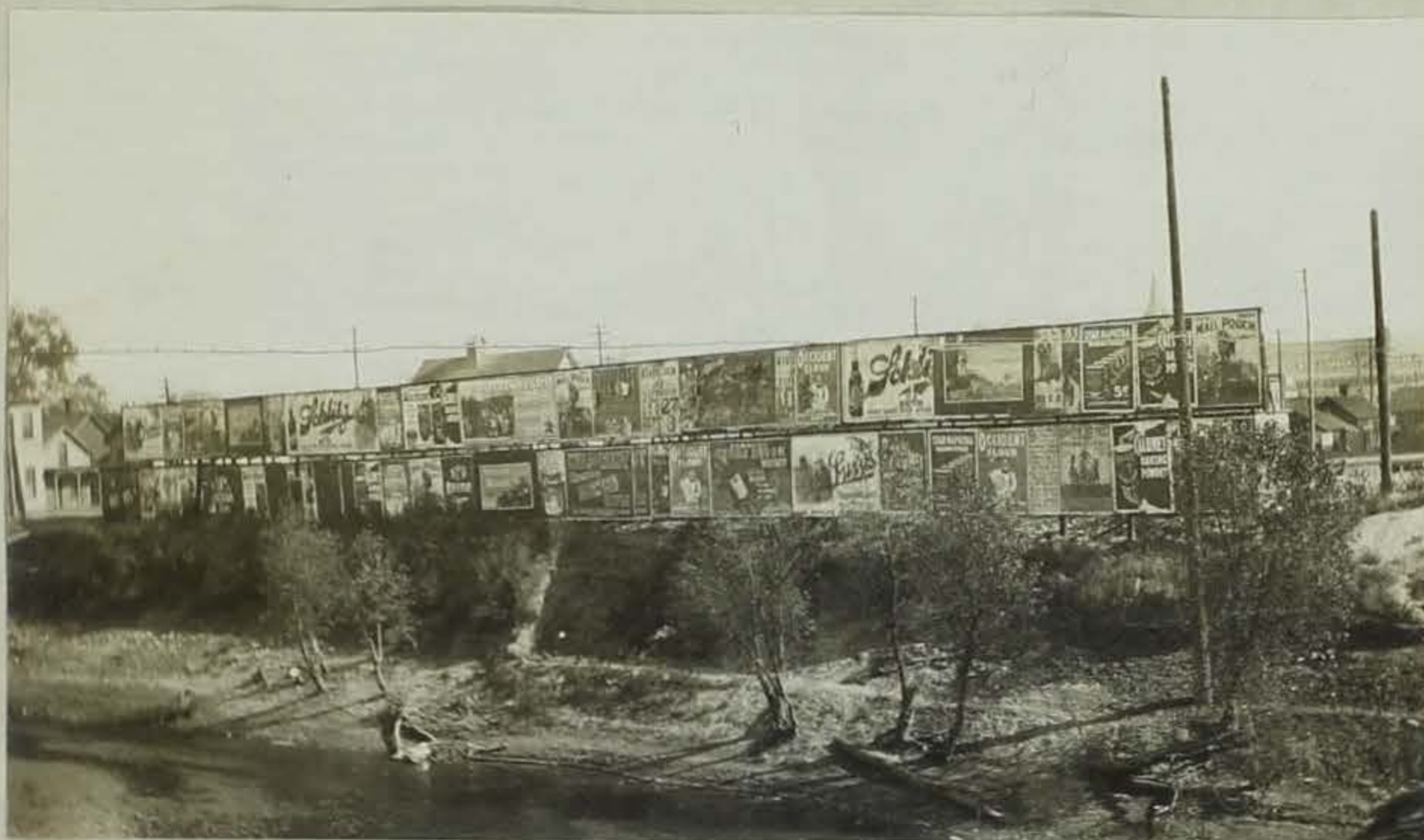
XX

III. CIVIC CENTER AND CAPITOL APPROACH,

-Custodian of the City's Dignity and its Tribute
to the Honor of the State.



The new Post Office, the Library, and the new Locust Street bridge,
Des Moines - the beginnings of the Civic Center.



North from
Locust St.



South from
Locust St.



South from
Walnut St.

The East river bank as it is to-day - at
the site of the Civic Center.

The Civic Center and Capitol Approach.

The people of Des Moines have done a rather fine and unusual thing. Without expert instruction and admonition, they have made up their minds that they are going to possess a Civic Center, and that they are going to have it take the river as its dominant feature. A large beginning has been made. The completed Library, Post Office, and nearly completed Coliseum are ranged in line on one side of the stream; on the other side, the new City Hall is being commenced; a considerable amount of riverfront property has been secured; and the contract let for nearly eight hundred feet of retaining walls.

The city planner, coming into Des Moines at this juncture, finds much more actually accomplished in the direction of a real and imposing Civic Center than in almost any other American city - his thunder quite successfully stolen. Yet the plan does need to be worked out to more definite and clear conclusion - for now no one seems to know just exactly what the consummation is designed to be - and it needs to be so tied into the rest of the city plan that it may not seem an isolated accident. In these matters he must try to help.

On the West Side, where the completed buildings stand, most has been accomplished, so we may begin with that. In addition to Post Office, Library and Coliseum, there are two warehouse structures - the Brown-Hurly Hardware Co. and the Warfield, Pratt, Howell Co., wholesale grocers. These buildings are new, and so admirable in reticence, scale and dignity that they are no intrusion upon the riverfront scheme but even add to the pleasing total effect. In conjunction with the public structures, they carry the improvement, so far as an orderly line of buildings can carry it, from the northernmost railroad bridge - which at present marks its necessary southern boundary^a - to Grand Avenue bridge, beyond which the big plant of the Edison Light Company seems to bar further progress. This is a distance of about a third of a mile. A marginal street extends on top of the bank from below the railroad up to Walnut Street; it affords entrance to the buildings, save to the Post Office which presents a side to it; and the sloping bank between the street and the river wall has all kinds of treatment - and none.

Practical considerations require the retention of this north and south street near the river, and artistic considerations require for the whole picture a harmonious, unified development. The present tendency to make each block a distinct unit in the riverfront development, treating each ^{section} ~~part~~ of bank simply as the ~~main~~ forecourt of the building at its top, can result only disastrously. The true motifs are uniform, for they are the three strong parallel lines: The walled river, the street, the row of buildings. Given these, we may observe two things: 1, It will not be well to conceal the buildings with a row of trees, for then we would substitute a frame that may indeed be beautiful, but is comparatively commonplace, for one that is architectural and unusual; we would be substituting apparent weakness for obvious strength in a frame that is better for strength; and would be narrowing and crowding a picture of which one of the great charms is openness and spaciousness. 2, The three dominating lines are architectural, clear cut, hard. If, for the sake of unity, we may not break them we shall yet do well somewhat to soften them. My suggestions, then, are as follows:

That surmounting the second retaining wall - where new walls are to be built, there should be only one - there be a low parapet, paneled, and given architectural character. It may have drain holes with removable plugs, though being solid, and the top of it at least two feet above the average high water mark, as reported by the weather bureau for the last twelve years, the river's rise above it will be a very rare occurrence. ~~In~~ Immediately on the landward side I suggest that the ground be graded slightly upward toward the parapet - the top of the slope reaching about a third of the way up. Beyond this slope, at the grade of the bottom of the parapet, I would have a path six feet wide. This should have a slight^{t=}ly sinuous character, waving irregularly, or making just enough of a sweeping curve to avoid ~~the~~ repeating the straight lines. The slope of the ground toward the parapet will vary in percentage of grade as the ~~path~~ path in its long curve is nearer or further from the parapet line. This slope will be in unbroken turf.

On the other side of the path the ground will rise more steeply toward the street at the bank's top. But it should be graded in reverse

curves, and ^{even} so with careful avoidance of that engineering precision which characterizes a railroad embankment. The steeper portion will be the ~~in~~ lower portion, near the path. This may rise approximately ten feet above the level of the path. That would bring it to about the mark of the highest water that is known. Beyond this ^ssteeper portion, the rise may be gentle and undulating to the street. Irregularly on this slope, turf covered, now in its ^ssteeper and now in its easier portions, there should be planted clumps of low growing shrubs that will break the lines made by the grade. Thus, masses of barbery, of prostrate juniper, of roses, etc. may be used, and now and then, at the foot of the slope close to the path, a clump of iris. At the street intersections, constructed in conjunction with the new concrete bridges, steps and walks should descend to the low-level path and should be the only means of access to it, except at the fountain in front of the library. Here, and in the balancing section across the river, it seems to be necessary, as the fountain has been established, to inject formal treatment. On the promenade at the top of the bank are to be placed the lights, on ornamental fixtures, and the seats - though now and again a seat may be placed on the lower path where the path, curving away from the retaining wall, leaves space for it. The idea is to confine the emphasis, so far as formal development is concerned, to the top of the bank, where the buildings dominate.

The treatment thus suggested can be carried along the whole stretch of embankment - broken only by the Library fountain and its terrace, and the section directly opposite them. It is not an expensive treatment; but its effect will be harmonious, unified and beautiful, and it will have practical park value. From across the river, or from the bridges, the bank will be a beautiful thing to look upon; yet it will not obtrude itself to detract from the stateliness of the buildings above. From the street at its top, the development will impose no barrier to the far view across the river, nor deny the sense of openness and freedom; from the lower path, the effect - in contrast to that on the walk at the top, - is desired to be one of enclosure, silence, and park seclusion, of plant-

ing, grass and flowers.

Little else needs to be done on the west side of the river, but unfortunately the little that ^{does} remain~~s~~ is important and rather expensive. It is the purchase and parking of the half block west of the Library, so that the Library may not seem to one approaching it from the business section to have a rear-lot tenement-like location; the acquirement and parking of the strip of land between the Coliseum and the river, for which the arguments are obvious and convincing; and the purchase of the half block west of the Coliseum, where there are now only old one and two story structures, for much the same reason that the land west of the Library is needed. With these two half-blocks acquired, it will be wise to swing the First Street drive well west of the Library and Coliseum, leaving the space east of those structures, between them and the top of the bank, for a promenade. This plan, while preserving the unity of the general effect, will conduce to quiet, comfort and pleasure for those using the buildings and the park. As to the cost of the proposed land acquirements, Des Moines has set out to do a fine and big thing in this river-front center, and it is to be remembered that such a thing can be properly done only in a fine and big way.

On the east side of the river, the same scheme can be carried out, as far as the river bank is concerned - that is, from the river to East First Street. In length, it can extend, on the East Side, from the railroad to the dam. The retaining wall is to go to the latter point, and the city should secure all the land between the wall and East First Street. South of Grand Avenue a good deal of it has been already secured. North of that point there are billboards and small detached dwellings that back on the river, none of the property seeming of much value to its present owners, though of great possible value to the city. All of this tract should be obtained and parked, in extension of the riverbank scheme below Grand Avenue. Across the river are the plant of the Edison Light Co., the Interurban freight station, and a medley of coal cars etc. But even so the view thither is not altogether bad. The river wall there is ripped in orderly fashion; at the top of it there^s is room for a row of poplars without trespassing on space of value, and through and above that

partial screen the typically urban picture of industry and power, seen against the sunset sky from across the river, would be too appropriate and fine to spoil the view. And this East Side park on the river's edge is to have a value some day, if Des Moines brings to pass all the dreams for its improvement, that cannot appear in its entirety in this chapter.

But it should be clear even here that the value of the riverbank parks will be great. For we may note that Des Moines is unusual among cities in the fact that it now contains no park in its business section. There is no place where those who live in the center of the city can go to sit out of doors on summer evenings and warm days, without taking a car to get to it. Those persons are very many. They include most of the strangers in the city, and among the regular residents they include large numbers who have no gardens of their own to sit in - or even piazzas, and who possess neither the time nor the money to take long car rides for the pleasure of having out-of-doors mean something else to them than a paved street. Thus a park on the riverbank, with seats and walks and flowers, is going to perform a distinct and active social service to a very considerable population quite aside from the aesthetic value it may have. And this social service will include a hygienic and a moral service. Because tuberculosis is a temperate disease and fresh air is its greatest foe, the park that gives to persons in the city's most congested quarters a chance to spend pleasant hours outdoors is going to put a strong remedial and preventive weapon into the hands of those who would fight "the white plague." As to its moral value, that is sufficiently indicated in the fact that to men it will offer a place of resort which does not involve temptation.

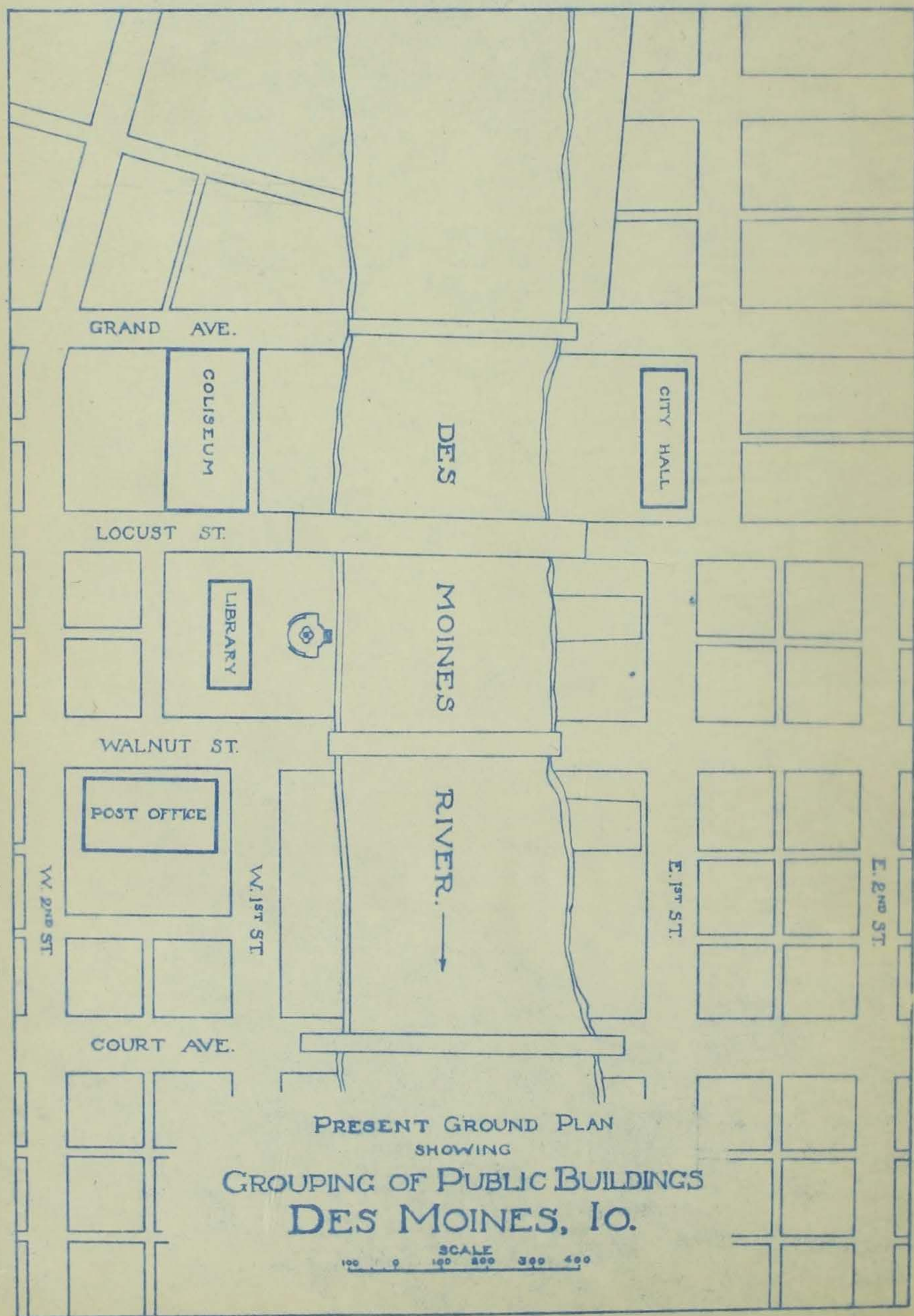
At the crest of the bank, where the park picture is to end and the architectural effect begin, we have as yet, on the East Side, only the plan for the City Hall. This building is to be opposite the Coliseum. Realization of a complete scheme will require a balancing also of the Library and of the Post Office, on the two blocks south.

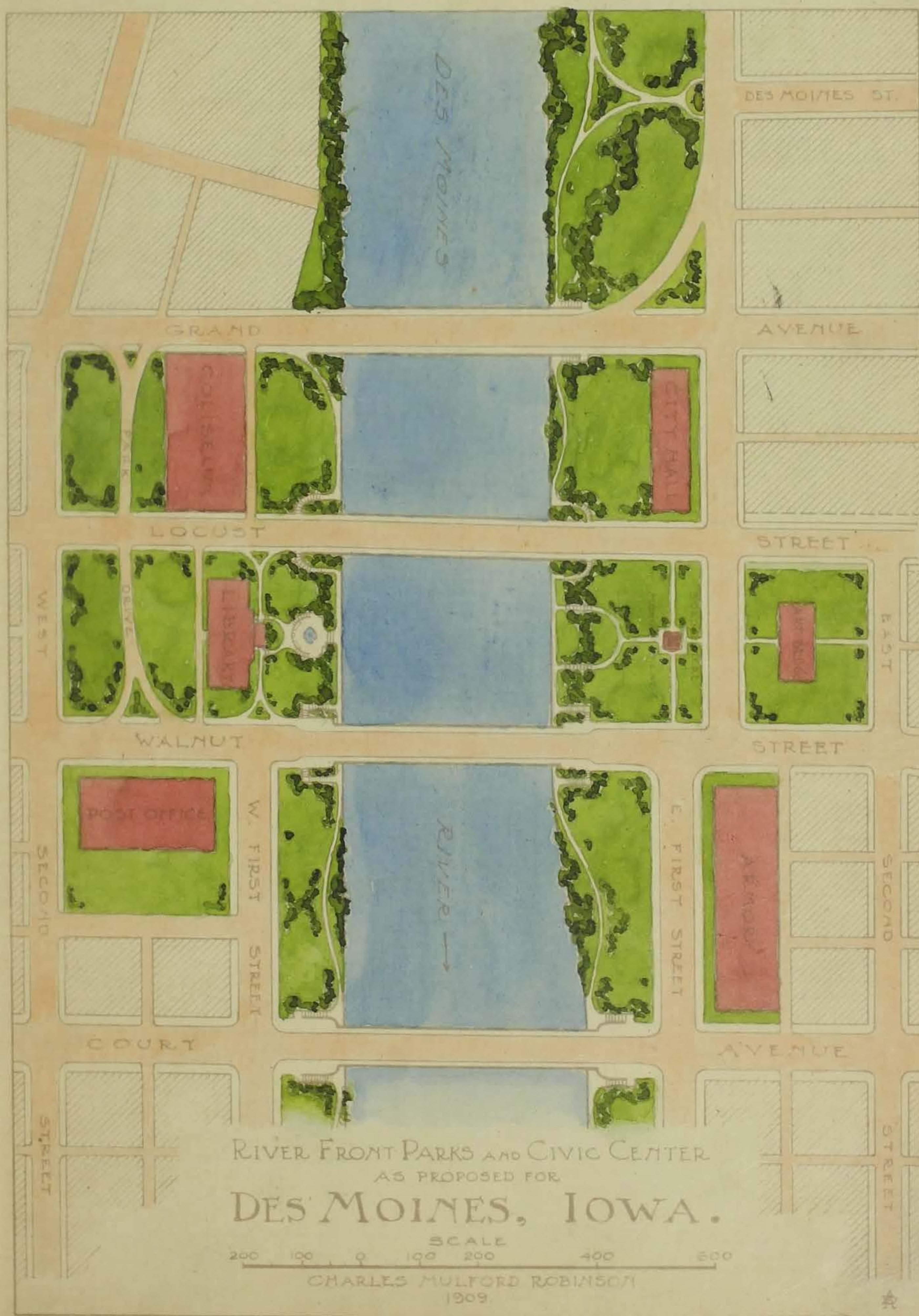
Looking over the city and its needs, we find a Soldiers' Monument so lamentably misplaced as almost to be an insult to the men whom it would

honor; the want of an Armory, to be situated with the dignity which may well be demanded for it in the capital of the State; and a reasonable hope that in the coming years there may be, in this center of many educational institutions, a gallery and studio building that shall stand for art in such sense as the Library stands for letters. Let us see how we may fit into the Civic Center scheme these rearrangements and probable constructions of the future.

The land to be utilized is cut by the street system and river into irregularly sized plots. My suggestions, shown best on the diagram, are as follows: 1, Continue East First Street south of Locust to Walnut, at least, in a straight line with that part of it which is north of Locust. This will broaden the park area on the riverbank opposite the Library; it will give to the Locust Street front of the City Hall a park outlook; and it will further reduce the already small block between Locust and Walnut, First and Second Streets, besides straightening out the jog in First Street at an awkward point for traffic. 2, To this broadened riverbank space bring the Soldiers's Monument. Seen here in conjunction with buildings that are monumental but not lofty, it will not be dwarfed as it must be if it be given the background of the Capitol; it will take its honored place at the heart of the city's official center, all the surroundings contributing to its effectiveness and dignity; and in its own turn it will make an addition, - interesting, impressive and appropriate - to the ensemble. Finally, we shall thus be able to balance with similar architectural effect the one break in the treatment of the opposite bank, where the Library fountain is flanked by steps.

But the realignment of First Street and location of the monument here has another advantage. There is thus created, on the curtailed building plat, a convenient site for the suggested Art building, directly across from the Library, with streets on three sides and the open space on the fourth. Meanwhile, until it is erected, the Monument will be so much more striking an accent than anything standing on the Art building site, that it will arrest the eye and screen the unfinished portion of the picture





On the block south of Walnut, I would, 3, put the Armory. This is a large plat, giving all the space that could be wanted; it is only a half block from the railroad, so that a siding could easily be run into it, if desired; and on the other, or front, side the Soldiers's Monument would be in appropriate proximity. This arrangement will give as a whole a very fine, even an extraordinary, total effect; one comparable to the best in Europe, and probably in the aggregate no where excelled in the United States. It seems, too, to be very practical. With all the riverfrontage secured, as almost all of it now is, there is need of acquiring only two other blocks of ground. Much the larger of these two will be utilized as the site of the Armory, and probably no other site equally convenient and spacious can be bought as cheaply; of the other block, a portion will be held for the site of the future Art building. As private munificence may be expected to construct the latter and State appropriation to pay for the former and its site, the city is required to do little more than simply develop what it already has. The opportunity is certainly remarkable. It exists because the city has done so much and so well already, and that is pretty good earnest that there will be done the little more which is required to make the present considerable investment adequately productive in effect. Finally the project is, to somewhat remarkable degree, utilitarian. None of the space is wasted. That which is not covered by needed buildings, will serve as a useful and much needed park.

Fine bridges are of course an essential part of the scheme, but their construction is now well advanced. Cleaning and clearing of the riverbed and a raising of the low water stage also will be required for the completest aesthetic success. The grouping of buildings would be effective, and the parked banks exceedingly useful even if these things were not done. But these things would add a great deal, and are comparatively easy to do. The water and gas pipes laid across the river bottom and protected by piles, perhaps contribute more than anything else to the stream bed's shabby aspect at low water. But those pipes should be buried, or - less preferably - they can be carried over the river on

the bridges. As to raising the low water level, there may properly be postponement of action until the outcome of the improvement plans for tributaries to the Mississippi is more clearly foreseen. Should that not result in action that would raise the low water level in the Des Moines, the construction of a folding dam involves no serious difficulties of either engineering or finance. Such a dam is raised to hold low waters, and lowered to let flood waters pass over it. In providing a sufficient stage of level water in the city's heart, with both banks public property, there would be created a rare space for aquatic sports and meets - with all the promise of popular pleasure that includes.

But to jump from a commonplace business street into a Court of Honor, and then back again into a commonplace business street, would not do. One would be impressed by the Court's isolation, and the street would suffer by contrast. The Civic Center must be made to seem a logical culmination or a natural step of progression.

We have discussed a Station Plaza. Taking that, for the sake of convenience, as a starting point, we may pass around the county building, which forms its east face, and come to Court Street. This proves to be a fine thoroughfare, ninety-nine feet wide - the broadest street in the business section of Des Moines - centering on the Court House tower, and stretching directly eastward. It is not a shopping street or crowded with retail traffic. It leads straight to the river, only four blocks away, which it reaches at the south end of the Civic Center. Court Street, then, should be developed, as it so easily can be, into a connecting link between, on the one side, the Station Plaza and the boulevard system that is to stretch away from the former, and, on the other, the Civic Center and Capitol Approach. With its wide roadway giving ample space, a row of center lights on ornamental poles will do much to give to it the required special and stately character.

Then the Civic Center reached, there will be the choice of drives northward through it, by streets on the West Side or on the East. Reaching Locust Street, the State Capitol will be seen crowning the eastern



rise, with the street exactly centered on its dome. Inevitably, therefore, Locust Street is the proper approach to the Capitol though unhappily it is now the narrowest of all the streets that lead up from the river to the State House hill.

To the matter of developing Locust Street in keeping with its important function, I have given much thought. That it should be widened goes without saying. Even with the addition of fifteen feet on a side, it would still be somewhat narrower than Court Street. But Locust, as far at least as the beginning of the hill, has developed into a business thoroughfare; the property is expensive and for the most part the buildings - though many of them are old and poor - are built to the street line at its lower end. An immediate and arbitrary widening of the street, desirable as such a step would be, would cost a very large sum. There is only one source from which an adequate appropriation could be made for such a purpose. That source is the one, however, that would be the main beneficiary from the act - the State. Iowa is rich, and if the representatives of its people wish to give to its Capitol building an adequate and noble approach - as the people of Minnesota, Colorado and Pennsylvania are preparing to give to their Capitol buildings, and as has been planned for the capitals also of California and Ohio - they can vote the appropriation that would make possible the street beautiful, leading up from the improvements at the river's edge to the beginning of Capitol Park. The decision as to that rests with the city only as it is a part

of the State.

Should the State fail to act - and as the distance is barely over a half mile, there is required to make such appropriation less courage and pride than the other commonwealths are showing in like matters - a less expensive but much slower method can be adopted. For the result is too desirable and necessary to be readily given up. This other method would require something of the city and something of the State.

On the city's part, there may be adopted an ordinance such as that which Philadelphia adopted some twenty-five years ago in the case of Chestnut Street and about fifteen years ago in the case of Walnut Street, when it was seen that the business of the city required the widening of those thoroughfares, lined though they were with costly buildings. The ordinance required the Department of Surveys "to revise the city plan" - on paper - so as to widen the streets named, and then proceeded: "After the confirmation and establishment of said lines, it shall not be lawful for any owner or builder to erect any new building, or to rebuild or to alter the front, or add to the height of any building now erected, without making it recede so as to conform to the line established." The ordinances have stood the test of trial, and though many property owners have claimed damages, the courts have either refused to allow the claim, or have granted only nominal amounts, basing their action on approval of the city's plea that frontage on the widened street conferred a benefit commensurate with the loss of building space involved.

It is to be expected that within the next few years there will be more rebuilding on Locust Street, East Des Moines, between the Capitol and the river, than there was in a like length of time on those solidly built up business streets of Philadelphia. Yet the latter are now widened - and at practically no cost. Of course objections are that, (1), for a while, the street presents a ragged appearance. But it does that now; and as the houses in its upper portion are already back from the street, perhaps the building line will soon become less uneven than it is at present. (2), That the State will be obliged to wait years for the worthy approach it ought to have to its Capitol. But the delay would be

of its own choice, and in the life of a State a possible ten or fifteen years is not a great while. As to the amount of widening, I have spoken of fifteen feet on a side, because on the north that is the distance the new City Hall is to be set back, and because we must be as moderate as we can. This would yield, however, a street width of ninety-six feet, which is sufficient to make a very handsome avenue.

On the part of the State, if it will do no more, there should at least be bought the two corners at East Ninth Street. One of these is now vacant, except for billboards on which the most conspicuous sign



reads with suggestive hopefulness, "These Lots For Sale." The other is the site of a small frame house. The purchase of these two corners, will make possible an outward curving of the street lines which would bring the whole State House facade into view from down the thoroughfare, instead of visually chopping it off, and which will make an impressive entrance instead of giving to the Capitol grounds the likeness of an accidental and blocking incident. Where the curves have swung out, at the line of Ninth Street, there would be space for a fountain.



Where Locust St. meets the State House grounds.

Northeast from the State House, across Grand Avenue at the Eleventh Street corner, is the pretentious building of the State Historical Society. Thus are present two elements of that architectural composition which may be formed by the creation here of a subsidiary group of public or semi-public buildings - such a group as is now being formed in Washington behind the Capitol, in which the National Library and the new office buildings of Senate and House have taken their place. If Iowa does not already need more administrative office room than the State House affords, she will eventually need space for those and other purposes. Meanwhile, the Capitol being definitely located, she should be forehanded to the extent of securing the ground that she will want. The blocks between Grand and Walnut, back of the State House, should be acquired.

We would then have, we may pause to note - as indication of how the plan for Des Moines unfolds - an entirely natural but very effective and convenient transportation center, about the plaza west of the Court House, West Side; a broad and stately avenue, leading from this to the Des Moines river. There a row of public buildings on either side, and park-encompassed, will create - almost is creating - a Civic Center of extraordinary excellence. Leading straight from this, a broad and handsome street, which is crowned at its summit by the State House, will come to terminus at the entrance to the latter's grounds with broad outward curving lines, so creating a fountain plaza. Then comes the State House, and back of that, in convenient proximity to one another, an additional group of public or semi-public buildings enclosing a beautiful and secluded little square. If there were no more of Des Moines than this, it would be the fitting and beautiful capital city and commercial center of a great State. But there is much more to Des Moines.

IV. PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS,

-A Source of Health and Pleasure for All
the Citizens.

Parks and Playgrounds.

57

The Civic Center, developed as suggested, will of course be a park, and one of exceeding usefulness. In the succeeding chapter also I shall speak of some larger park plans, to be realized in the course of time through slight extensions and small additions here and there to existing properties. As a whole, these are comparatively little. For the main duty which now confronts Des Moines, from the strictly park point-of-view, is not the acquisition of more property but the adequate development of that which the city has.

In fact, it is very unusual to find a city so rich in park property and so poor in parks. With a population of a hundred thousand, and with seven hundred acres in parks, of which the most remote is not a mile from a built-up portion of the city, and with the tracts distributed with ideal impartiality, there is the material in hand from which to make a park system of exceeding and adequate value to the community. Its social service now, however, is relatively little. The city is in exactly the position of a man who has acquired large tracts of unimproved property, to pay for which he has pinched and scraped rather than borrow on a mortgage, the tracts now lying idle when a little investment for construction would cause them to give large returns. He might have been enjoying such generous income for a long time, having the fun of being rich, had he not been so solicitous lest he be poor. The motive may have been good; but the policy was not. It is to be said, however, for Des Moines that this situation has doubtless been appreciated by a good many citizens and officials, and that the reason the usual course of paying for park lands by long term bonds was not adopted was because there was lacking the authority to adopt it.

To some extent the discussion of the matter is to-day academic. Most of the land the city needs for parks has been acquired, and by dint of leaving the land comparatively idle, by community self-denial and years of saving, practically all of it has been paid for and a new chapter in local park history - not the acquiring of land but the development of it - can now be looked for. Yet it is well to give a few figures in explana-

tion of the present situation. And the more so because, as the city grows, like questions of policy will probably rise again. The determination of the policy to be followed is fundamental. It is of far more importance as respects the city plan development of Des Moines than are concrete immediate questions as to what to do at any particular point in the parks.

I have said that the usual course which is adopted in the establishment of municipal parks is to finance the city's payment for land, at least in so far as this consists of large out-lying tracts, by bond issues. There is realization that the city cannot be wholly built from current revenues, any more than a railroad can, and that, similarly, there are certain expenditures for permanent improvements which are fairly chargeable to capital account. Of these none is more commonly or more justly included than the parks. School houses, city halls and all public buildings deteriorate with time. So do pavements, certain kinds of sewers, water works etc. But parks, of all the things for which city bonds are issued, are sure to be of greater intrinsic value as the bonds approach maturity than at the time when the bonds were issued. The parks offer, too, in the purchased land, a tangible security. Thus there could be no safer object of a bond issue than parks. The social, or community, value of the park also appreciates as the population of the city increases, as the houses crowd closer to it, and as money from the current revenues or tax levy is expended in ^{the lands} ~~the~~ development. In other words, as the life of the bond approaches its end, the purpose for which the bond was issued becomes more precious to the community. Thus it happens that there is no expense which can be more justly saddled on posterity than that for the purchase of park lands, which are inevitably to be of greater service to the next generation than they can be to the present. Again, this method of financing the purchase of the land, leaves free practically all of the current park funds for the development of the parks; and, as we have said, whatever money is thus expended on the purchased land increases the value of the security behind the bond. But it

has also another effect. As the parks are made beautiful and serviceable, people are attracted to them. As the parks are enjoyed and their community service is revealed, generous gifts are made - fountains, sculpture, imposing gateways, birds, animals, rare plants, conservatories, and additions of land. In cities that have developed parks, there is no more popular object of civic philanthropy than the city's parks. The municipality gets a great deal by gift.

With this condition, contrast the existing situation in Des Moines. In order to pay for the land out of current revenues the parks have been left almost undeveloped, relatively useless. The roads, generally speaking, would disgrace an agricultural country - yet their main purpose in a park is to afford pleasure. There are few walks, and as for beauty of flower and plant let me quote from the city's last annual report: With seven hundred acres of parks, for which a city of a hundred thousand workers are paying, the year's expenditure for "flowers" was given as \$3.50, for "cutting trees" \$12.50, for bulbs \$12.35, for fertilizers \$6.00, for paint 60cents, and, as more than equalling the total of all these items, for repairs to a mower, \$38.75! For land payment, on the other hand, there was expended from the current revenues \$11,370. Was there ever a clearer and more pathetic case of self denial and starvation for the benefit of the future?

But at last, as has been said, substantially all the Des Moines park lands are really paid for, and there may be anticipation that the park levy, realizing now something like \$60,000 a year, will go into park development. That it is sorely needed is manifest. The matter to be considered in this chapter is how in the next and subsequent years the available money can best be expended. The sum is small to begin with, but even a little, consistently spent year after year toward a definite end, will accomplish a good deal, and by degrees the annual sum will grow.

First of all, there must be the definite aim toward which progress can be consistently made. The determination of this is work for the skilled landscape architect, after careful surveys and thorough study. No portion of next year's park money could be spent more wisely than on

securing such detailed plans for those parks that now have no satisfactory landscape plans to guide the superintendent and his assistants. To make general suggestions and criticisms is of course the utmost that can here be done.

The first point that must strike a student of park matters, who examines the beginnings of park development in Des Moines, is the similarity of treatment given to the various larger pleasuregrounds. The roads winding through a thin grove, the watercourse, the zoo, the few beds of flowers are fairly uniform. If one has spent a day in one park, there is no particular inducement for him to spend the next day in another park. To some degree the uniformity results from similar topographical conditions, but the ^{general} ~~same~~ similarity ^{of these} imposes the greater obligation on the designer to secure a difference in effect. This can be obtained in several ways: By variety in road arrangement; by distinct planting schemes; by allotting to the different parks a different type of special social service. To emphasize, for example, the golf at Waveland, the river at Union, and a zoo at Grand View; to make Greenwood a landscape garden, and to preserve in South Park the romantic beauty of a foothill forest, would be to differentiate each park, and to secure from each individual contribution to the attractiveness of Des Moines, instead of mere repetition. Moreover, all kinds of people make up a city, and all kinds of people are not likely to be satisfied with only one kind of park.

In suggesting that a zoological garden be made a feature of Grand View Park, my thought is that the collection of animals now scattered among several parks be concentrated there, to constitute one large and really interesting zoo. When this is done the considerable duplication, which at present very naturally exists, can be advantageously reduced by exchanging duplicate birds and animals for specimens which are not now represented; and with concentration there can be given more adequate housing and economy obtained in care. Besides these practical considerations, which must appeal to the good sense of the community, there are questions of park aesthetics and service.

For example, given at Greenwood a tract of eighty-two acres, adjacent

to the most beautiful homes of Des Moines and approached by a fashionable street, a menagerie is not the most suitable feature to develop there. So far as Greenwood performs a neighborhood service, that is not what the people want; so far as the park serves the whole West Side, we have to observe that with Waveland given over to golf plus animals, and a third of Greenwood's acreage given to buffalo, elk and deer, the West Side is pretty well shorn of strictly park facilities. For in each case the animals are necessarily set off in an enclosure, and the acres apportioned to them can be only looked at through the fence. Grand View, on the other hand, is almost twice as large as Greenwood; there is no adjacent population so numerous as to give it intensive use unless there be provided a special attraction, such as a good zoo would present. Thus a zoo at Grand View would not only be comparatively unobjectionable, but it would bring more people into the park and so increase the park's usefulness.

As for the aesthetic phase of the subject, a zoo is not, from that point of view, a desirable feature in a park. If, because of its popularity, we must concede something to it, still there is no need to sacrifice the beauty of all the parks. Let us mar only one landscape picture instead of four or five, and Grand View has so ample an acreage that there may be, with even a good zoo, a good deal of park left over. Finally, one of the most valuable functions of a municipal park is to soothe city-tired nerves, and collections of animals, in so far as they are distracting and exciting, are antagonistic to that great purpose. It is doubly unwise therefore to scatter such a collection through all the parks. If we concentrate it in one, only those need go to it who want to see animals; and there they will see them all and to the best advantage.

In establishing a zoo at Grand View, there will be taken not only a long step toward providing for that park its own special attraction, that shall individualize it; but we are left much more free with respect to the ^{other} ~~many~~ pleasuregrounds. I have indicated the character which, it seems to me, might be most appropriately given to each. It may be add-

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ed, with reference to the park drives, that bad as they now are, there would be little wisdom in making large expenditures for their improvement until there is assurance that they are located right, as respects the ultimate plan of development, and until their proper grades with relation to such a plan are determined. The pressing necessity of securing the comprehensive design is thus indicated. Preparation of these designs will make an interesting study, demanding experience, imagination and skill. It is not work for a novice - the transformation of Greenwood, for instance, into a beautiful garden. For it can, indeed, be made beautiful, with the planting of the lakeshores, the development of the hill-sides, the proper alignment of roads, the harmonizing at the entrance of the sudden transition from avenue to park. In the end, Greenwood's development will probably be the most expensive of any given to the parks, as it is right that it should be; but it is not work that will all be done at once.

From a landscape point of view, Union Park is now the best of the city's larger pleasuregrounds, portions at the south end being very fine. Therefore it is essential that the greatest care be taken not to destroy the beautiful existing pictures and so to undo what has been done well. A question which, at the time of my visit, pressed for prompt settlement was the location of a new greenhouse. One of the suggested sites, the south lawn in the great circle in front of the Thompson house, would be about the worst place possible as far as the beauty of the park is concerned. A site that seemed to me ideal was east of the house, beyond the big tree. This had all the advantages of convenience to the public, of accessibility to the superintendent, of sufficient inconspicuousness in the landscape and complete separation from the landscape-picture, of adequate service facilities - there are roads on three sides, and of abundant sunshine. Another matter in this park that called for settlement was the reconstruction of the little bridge at the foot of the hill. It would seem that a boulder arch would blend best with the setting. To be spoken of also, in connection with Union Park, is the beauty of Birdland Drive; and it is interesting to note, in observing how large a part of

that beauty is due to the close tree-growth on either side of the road, that in Greenwood the trees have been cut down on the sides of the road, leaving broad bare swathes through which the drives pass. Boating at Union Park can be made attractive and feasible by constructing a low dam.

Turning now to the smaller parks, the area of Good is so considerable - some fifteen acres, - the topography so irregular, and the park's present condition so absolutely undeveloped, that it may fairly be classed with the large tracts. It is admirably located for great service. In the succeeding chapter, I shall speak of a use for the ravine that goes through it, and I must urge that a portion of the tract be made a children's playground. For Drake, which is in the vicinity, plans have been drawn. I would offer, however, two suggestions: First, there should be a strongly marked and formal entrance at the southwest corner. The reason for it is that this corner makes the terminus, the apparent goal, of Kingman Boulevard. For that long, spacious avenue to come to an abrupt end at a telegraph pole, a lamp post and a low but steep terrace, will



The terminus to Kingman Boulevard now presented by Drake Park

not do. My thought for the point is a concave arc, backed by a retaining wall which shall be cut by steps, and which shall have against its



curved sides a stone or concrete bench where persons waiting for the cars may rest. Lights, would, of course, be featured in the arrangement, and in my judgment it would be well so to locate the statue which it is proposed to put in the Park that there would be a vista of it, beyond this entrance, as one comes down the avenue. My other principal suggestion is that the present plans contemplate the crowding of too much into the little park. Nash Park, which is about equally distant from Good on its other side, has now an ^{un}usually interesting plan and is satisfactory except that in such a little, formal park, more graceful shrubs than the sumac should be used. In a wild garden, the sumac is perfect; but this is a most ladylike spot. Highland is a little triangle, flat and treeless, on Prospect Boulevard. There has been thought of putting a fountain in it. I append a photograph of a type of fountain which is not expensive and which is well adapted to such a plat.

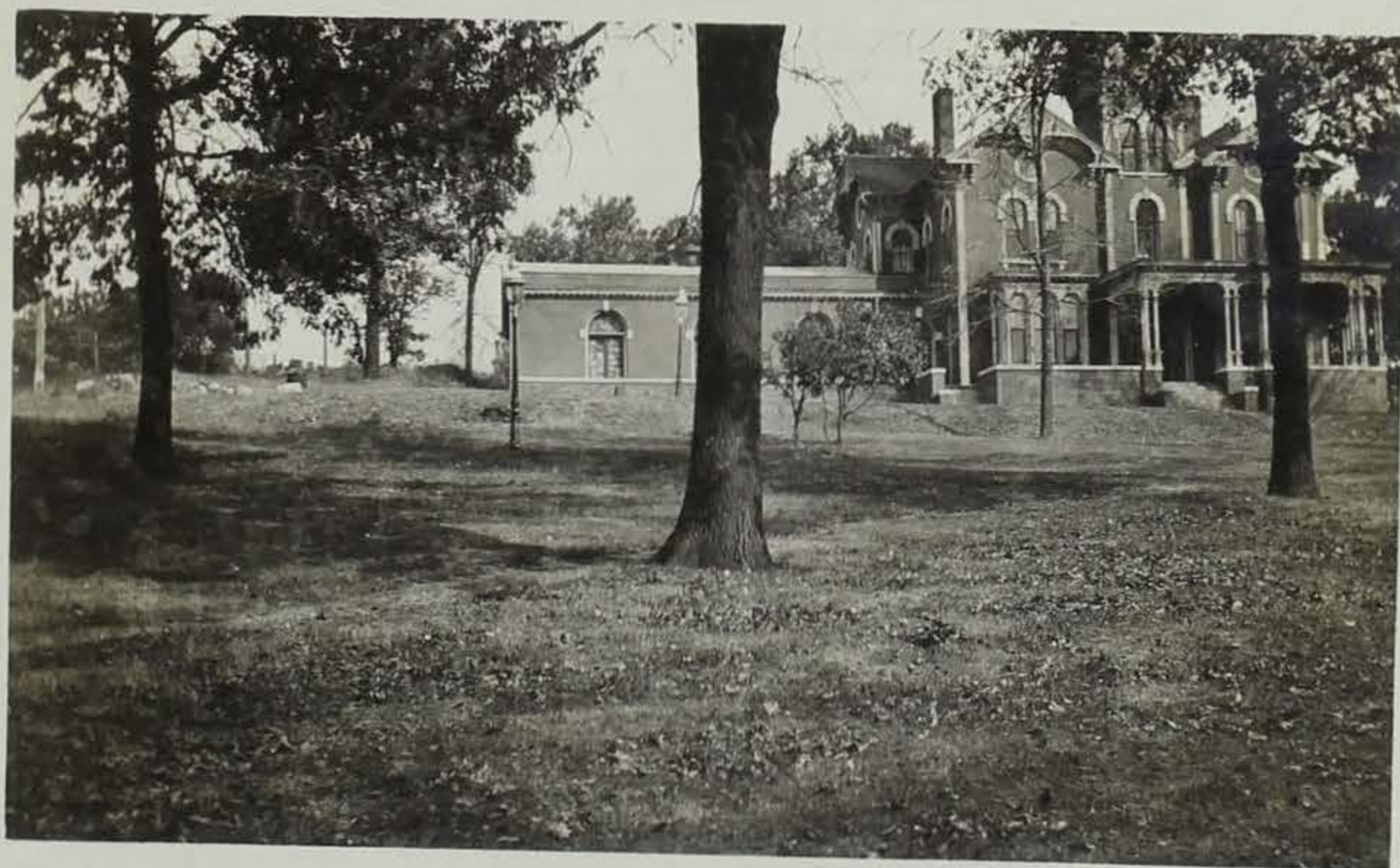


Fountain on a street triangle-park in Stockbridge, Mass.

Hoyt Sherman Place, also on the West Side, cries out for consideration. As the improvement of its driveway was pending during my visit, I spent considerable time in the park, and before leaving Des Moines submitted to the Department of Parks a plan embodying concretely my suggestions for entrance and exit drives and a turn. Since the house is

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historic and is valued locally for its associations, criticism of its architecture is out of place. But in developing the park there may at least be effort to offer something else than the house for the eye to rest upon; and as the city has entered into a very unusual contract with the Women's Club, in giving it a fifty year lease of the house, this club, which has been so notably identified with the civic progress of Des Moines, should, it seems to me, take pride in making the small plat of surrounding ground exemplify the principles which it advocates in developing the public property of Des Moines - make it, that is, an epitome illustrating civic ideals.



For example, if the planting of schoolyards and the beautifying of public grounds are advocated, I would have the Club see to it that the grounds about its own building are beautiful. It may be argued that the Club is not now responsible for the grounds, but the city which has given the use of the house would doubtless allow a wise planting of flowers and shrubs. And to make the grounds really beautiful, no large amount of money would be required. Again, I would have the Club, since it approves and urges playgrounds for little children, gain permission to conduct here a model playground. There is a good site for it under the three oaks in front of the house on the west side of the park. The ground can be leveled off for a space there, enclosed on the west by a hedge and screened

on the south by planting; and so the club, in the shadow of its own house and with much good to the community, can give proof of its faith by its works. In my judgment, Hoyt Sherman Place has great potential usefulness, and there is opened before the women an extraordinary opportunity to prove this. Example is more eloquent than pleading.

But the greatest playground chance for Des Moines is in the tract set aside for that purpose at Twenty-first Street, between Ingersoll Avenue and High Street. This is one of the very finest natural playground sites I have ever seen in any city. Its different levels, with sloping



The sloping bank - Chamberlain Playground.



Looking down on the lower field - Chamberlain Playground.

bank between offering a vantage point for the spectators of the games on the lower field, the degree of shade, the presence of water and the opportunity thus created for a wading place, the location of the tract with respect to the neighborhood and to street cars - in all these matters it is perfectly adapted. While other cities are crowding apparatus into small but costly vacant lots, it is a shame that such a tract, dedicated to the use of children and containing extraordinary playground possibilities, should remain idle. Some day that playground will bring fame to Des Moines and a reputation more than local to the official in whose administration its development takes place. As yet, there is not even a survey of its contour.

The little park tract, once a playground, at the junction of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers presents a problem. The spot is of considerable beauty and as the site of the old fort it has historical significance, so that, being already public property, one is not inclined to advocate its relinquishment. Yet, under present conditions, it can be of little use. It is not wise to develop a playground on a tract that no child can reach save by crossing the congested tracks of a steam railroad, or by a bridge that carries trolley cars over a river. Would any playground enthusiast wish his own child to go there? Moreover, the sewage of much of the city, emptying into the river at this point, makes the place unfit for play if the child survives the getting there. The city storageyard and tool house ^{occupy} ~~inhabited~~ a most picturesque spot, opposite this site; but until the sewage outlet is changed - as it ought at once to be, - and a better and wider bridge is thrown across the river - or the Raccoon's course is changed - I do not foresee much social service for the little park. With all Des Moines can do, to immediate advantage elsewhere, I do not consider this a good place to begin the spending of money. As a park for the South Side there are, under present conditions, much better possibilities - which I shall hope to make clear - in the South Side's own dyke. Yet in the longer future, this tract is likely to have great value. The sewage will be elsewhere disposed of and the Raccoon's course very likely will be changed. That closing of the

river's old channel will make a substantial addition to Riverside Park, and will bring it into connection with part of the South Side without the need of crossing a river to get to it. In this addition, it would be easy, by means of a culvert, to arrange a swimming pool, fed by fresh water and offering a public bathing place, supplementing the Natatorium up the Des Moines, and much more convenient than is that to the employees of the factories. It would be, also, more constantly available. In winter this swimming pool would be of use for skating.

On the East side, as well as on the West, there are several small open spaces. Franklin Square, with its fountain and jumble of trees, swings and benches, has an overcrowded and confused appearance that is not at all satisfactory. Similarly there is need in Redhead Park of thinning out the trees. Governor's Square is State property, having been designed to be the site of the executive mansion. It is a beautiful bit of ground, but there seems to be reasonable doubt as to its being put to the use originally intended. If it is not, it would have great park and playground value for the city. The extent to which Franklin Square - one block distant - is used by children, is evidence of this. Until the legislature determines the ultimate disposition of Governor's Square, it should be asked to allow the use of it for park and playground purposes.

I shall speak in the next chapter of park additions; but it may be well here to emphasize the general need of acquiring small park spaces - squares, half squares, circles, and the triangles at irregular street intersections - in those newer portions of Des Moines, especially on the East Side, that are now so rapidly building up. These could be secured now for a very small part of what they will cost a few years hence, when the necessity ^{for} them will be pressing. Careful scrutiny of lists of unpaid taxes may reveal immediate and surprising opportunities. For the most part, the topographical conditions are fairly uniform, and the houses are spreading steadily out, so that one plat will do about as well as another. But if a chance offers to get one with a noble tree,

or one that is especially adapted for playground purposes, or that has a fine outlook - such as that on the bluff overlooking the river at the end of Parnell Avenue, for example - special effort must be made, in thought of what its possession will mean to the future and greater Des Moines.

In the State of Washington a bill on this point, which was vetoed by the governor after passing both houses of the legislature and receiving the endorsement of the Chamber of Commerce in Seattle - where its effect would be most felt - is to be re-introduced this year, with every prospect, it is said, of enactment into law. It will require that:

No plat of an addition to a city of the first or second class or other city having a special charter, with sufficient population to authorize it to incorporate under the general incorporation laws as a city of the first or second class, shall be filed, accepted or approved unless a plot or plots of ground not less than one-tenth of the area of the blocks therein platted, exclusive of the lands set apart for streets and alleys shall be dedicated to the public for use as a park or common or for parks or commons and placed under the control of the city authorities for such use forever.

The theory of this bill is that ^{parks and} playgrounds are as necessary as streets, and should be provided in like manner; and that if it be not taking land without compensation when requiring that streets in a platted tract shall be of a certain width - since the land owner adds to the price of his lots the value of the land dedicated for streets - the same condition would apply in the case of park and playground dedications. In Massachusetts, practically all the cities of the State with a population exceeding 10,000, have recently, by referendum vote, adopted the policy of officially establishing a playground for the first 10,000 of population, and one for each additional 20,000. This policy would require in Des Moines to-day five "conveniently located" playgrounds "of suitable size and equipment," maintained by the municipality. This is not a Utopian and visionary ideal, as the number of cities and towns of Massachusetts that have put it actually in operation, by an overwhelming vote, is something like two score.



A city's virgin field. Looking west toward the State House from the eastern

A further suggestion must be added to this chapter. The Fair grounds are State property and as such are not strictly within the scope of the Report; but there may at least be pointed out the desirability of the State securing a careful and artistic plan for the permanent improvement of these grounds. No occasional Exposition nowadays, not even a small one, is created without first obtaining from artists, architects and landscape gardeners a complete and beautiful scheme to work to. In accordance with this plan there are erected buildings of staff, and during a few summer weeks a crowd of persons visit the Fair and on leaving carry away from it memories of beauty. The State Fair of Iowa recurs year after year. Tens of thousands of visitors visit it annually, and every year some portion of it is erected in permanent materials. If, then, it is worth while to get a plan for the temporary exhibition, which in a night may be carted away, it is abundantly worth while to do this for the state Fair - a permanent institution. And year by year, the one thing that is done permanently may be done in accordance with that plan, which will thus gradually - and with practically no additional cost to the State - flower into beauty. In the State of New York the Fair has nothing like the relative importance that it has in Iowa, but the Legislature has secured such plans. It has considered that the result of their gradual realization must be a greatly increased attendance, and that the educational and artistic influence on the cities and towns and villages of the State is likely to be not dissimilar to that which the nation experienced as a result of the beauty of the World's Fair in Chicago. It may, indeed, be even more marked, for the State Fair will reiterate its lesson year after year and to succeeding generations with growing power.

V. BOULEVARDS, PARKWAYS AND NEW PARKS,

- Proper Attributes to a Prosperous City.

Boulevards, Parkways and New Parks.

The subject of this chapter constitutes almost always one of the most delightful parts of the study of a city's improvement possibilities. Its suggestion is all of ease, comfort and beauty; it concerns itself with the finer side of city development, taking the commonplace and matter-of-fact for granted; it is broad in its geographical sweep; broad in its social service - for the pleasure derived from parkways and boulevards is by no means confined to those who can motor or drive; and in this phase of municipal improvement a little outlay accomplishes more proportionately than in any other single creative phase. As a woman in decking herself for a ball selects this beautiful gown, and that and the other jewel, so we, in planning the beauty of a city, have in this chapter to select and combine the best of whatever is appropriate among the city's possessions, making where there is need addition to her store.

Yet certain common-sense rules are to be observed. First, whatever other claims to approval municipal art may have, it must be practical. Second, the familiar phrase "boulevard system" implies in itself coherency and co-ordination. Third, the drives must lead where people want to go, and there must be the greatest possible completeness in the system. Finally, to stop short of a natural goal, to have to traverse very disagreeable links in getting from one section to another, or to have all the boulevards and parkways crowded in one part of the town to the exclusion of another, will mean the loss of much of the system's effectiveness. With these thoughts in mind, we may take up concretely the study for Des Moines.

In discussing the Civic Center and Capitol Approach, it was observed that the so-called Transportation Plaza in front of the proposed Union Station made a very natural and desirable starting point. Suppose instead of turning East, however, we turn West. Street car tracks can be avoided by following Cherry and Eighth Streets to Locust. At Locust Street, the boulevard proper may be said to begin.

West from Seventh and Locust, no car tracks are on Locust Street, and there never should be any. It should be reserved for the purposes

of a boulevard penetrating into the very heart of the business section, precisely as in Chicago Jackson Boulevard has been reserved. This is not simply a pretty paper-plan, but it is a common-sense procedure, in adjustment of the street plan of the city to the work it has to do. There is a large population on the West Side, which drives to stores and offices. The number of these people is bound to increase. It is as important and reasonable that they be given a street on which their vehicles can move uninterruptedly and quickly, as that the street car patrons should have parts of the parallel streets devoted to their use. To attempt to combine the two must lead only to congestion and delay. Therefore to keep car tracks off of Locust Street west from Seventh, will serve also to keep a large amount of interfering vehicle traffic from the like portions of Walnut and Grand, and to that extent to benefit all the travel that is upon them. As to the effect on Locust Street values, of reserving the street for a driving highway, property owners who feel concerned may, if not convinced by Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, study the effect of New York City's similar experiment, in keeping the car tracks off of Fifth Avenue. The most beautiful stores in New York are gathering on that street and values are very high.

Passing west on Locust, one is soon out of the business section. The street is broad, well paved, has generous side parking, many elms and maples, and the houses are set well back. Somehow, in its quiet and old fashioned character, it has the aspect of an English street; and householders of this part of Locust Street, if they are interested - as they should be - in constituting it a link in the boulevard system of the more beautiful Des Moines, might well follow an English suggestion for the beautifying of a stretch of street. This is that a certain vine, as wisteria or the white clematis, for example, be uniformly planted on each house and trained along the front, to create a beautiful frieze of decoration, giving to the street an interesting and special attraction. Coming east on Locust Street, the State House looms finely at the end, in itself imparting to the thoroughfare a boulevard availability possessed

by none of the parallel streets.

Plans have been already prepared for extending Locust Street straight west, through the grounds of St. Catherine's Home. In doing this, there will be opened a fine view to the south, making further addition to the immediate interest of this part of the boulevard system. The plans provide for a triangular park just before the viaduct is reached, the way forking to right and left. I would urge strongly the omission of the south fork. Its purpose is to enable the teaming and trucking that comes into town by the viaduct to use Locust Street into the city. This is just what is not desired if Locust Street is to be a link in the boulevard system. If the business traffic continues, as now, to Grand Avenue, proceeding east by that, the city saves considerable construction expense, through omitting the south fork, and - what is of greater value - saves its boulevard. The trucking remains as well off as at present, and its necessarily long trip would be shortened only a few feet in any case by the building of the south fork and the spoiling of a main artery in the system of boulevards. I therefore urge that the south fork ~~may~~ be omitted.

At all events, ^{Westbound} boulevard travel will take the curve to the ^{right,} ~~left,~~ proceeding west on that broad and handsome portion of Grand Avenue which now constitutes it the show street of the city. As I have suggested in the case of Locust Street, it is necessary in planning a city to get away from the old and common method of considering each street by itself, and to take a broad and comprehensive view, determining in one's mind the relation of each street to the other streets and what is its most important function in the city plan, before we try to settle its special type of development. Now Grand Avenue in this portion is a great through thoroughfare to the west; it may carry a very heavy service-traffic; or it may, as a show street and a direct park approach, be reserved for boulevard traffic. As the city grows, the two uses cannot be successfully combined. We must choose one or the other; and in my judgment, the boulevard is here the more important.

But the service traffic needs to be taken care of. Ingersoll Ave-

-4-

nue is only a block from Grand, carries car tracks - which make it undesirable for boulevard use - and, though there are some lapses in its roadway that require considerable fills, or bridging, no other parallel street for a distance of a mile and a half is as fully cut through. I recommend, therefore, that in developing the boulevard system of Des Moines, Ingersoll Avenue's gaps be closed, and the street developed into the main service highway to the West. This does not mean that the street, ^{as a street,} will be spoiled. It is naturally extremely picturesque; the service traffic that will use it will be principally of the lighter kind, such as will hardly be noticed where heavy cars now roar and rumble. There are many pretty houses, and near Park Lane some very costly ones. But the volume of service traffic decreases rapidly as one gets out, and beyond Fortieth Street does not amount to much. For carriage and motor travel, the Park Lane and Ingersoll Avenue houses will, of course, use the boulevard. In a broad view, the development here proposed is the only reasonable one.

Grand Avenue goes directly to Greenwood Park. But for those who drive for the pleasure of driving, rather than for the mere purpose of reaching some destination, a main attraction of the avenue will be the access it gives to delightful detours that make charming variations. Such are the lovely roads that wind along the bluff to the south, as Forest Drive etc., and as again, very especially, beautiful ^{Tonawanda} Tonawanda Drive, with its connection, by way of curving Center Drive, with the park. Tonawanda Drive extends south from Grand Avenue, opposite Forty-first Street, following a ravine. The trees hang so thickly over it, that in Autumn the leaves almost hide the road; and although Grand Avenue with all its urban pretentiousness is just around the corner, I found the Drive too dark to give a very satisfactory photograph. The city owns a varying, but considerable, stretch of land in addition to the road itself, and we have here a parkway that needs only cleaning up and resurfacing to make a rarely romantic approach to Greenwood Park.



Autumn on Tonawanda Drive

It may be well at this point to note the distinction which in the Report will be attached to the terms parkway and boulevard. The former will refer, as its name suggests, to a ribbon of park, the road subordinated to the beauty of growth on either side and made as narrow as the traffic can bear; the latter to a broad, stately, formal way, with its borders subordinate to the artificially prepared surface on which the traffic moves. Each has its place in the city plan, but their names and characters must not be confused.

The center of Greenwood Park lies just three miles from the Court House, with which, we have seen, boulevards may connect it as straight as the crow flies. Beyond the park lies open country, and the boulevard, as such, will naturally change its direction. But before we leave the park, there may be note that some day the street railway company will want to sell Ingersoll Park, as too close-in and too small for trolley-park purposes. When that time comes, the tract's greatest usefulness will probably be as an addition to Greenwood. Its main value there, however, would be not only, nor even principally, for the topographical picturesqueness it would add; but because it would carry the park right to the Ingersoll Avenue car line, and would make the park the obvious goal of Grand Avenue - its terminus, instead of an incident at its side.

Turning north from Greenwood Park, Polk Boulevard has been laid out. Though still in the fact a country road, two eighteen-foot ^{drives} ~~roads~~ are ~~planned~~ planned, one on each side of a twenty-foot center parking, and beyond the drives there is to be left a sidewalk space broad enough for additional parking at the sides. This will make of it a presentable boulevard.

Half a mile from Greenwood, Polk Boulevard reaches a point opposite the beginning of Waveland Park, which lies on the open rolling land to the West, so near that wise planning would extend it to the boulevard. It is a very simple and obvious principle that it is better to have a park abut on a boulevard than on backyards. But whether extended or not, it is desirable that the drive, entering this park at its southeast corner, shall describe an irregular semi-circle, which will give a view of the links, and then pass out of the park at a point opposite Kingman Boulevard.

Kingman has been laid out with asphalt drives on either side of broad center parking. At its eastern end this has been put in turf.



Its western end still awaited development at the time of my study. The whole center parking should be beautified in a uniform way by clumps of low shrubs, decorative in flower or foliage, arranged on a ground of greensward. At the street intersections ornamental electroliers or gas

lamps, preferably with a single upright globe, should stand at the meeting point of the axis of boulevard and cross street. Here they will not only add much to the beauty and dignity of the way, but will be useful in sorting traffic at places otherwise dangerous. Stretching directly east, Kingman leads back to town, making possible a short boulevard loop from the center of the city to the west and back again. It has value, too, as a direct and pleasant park approach from a populous residential section. Thus it has a very useful function to perform. Yet in the larger view of a comprehensive plan for the greater Des Moines, Kingman Boulevard can be considered as only a subsidiary of the main boulevard system.

From the corner of Polk and Kingman Boulevards, an ideal system of city drives would seek, not to return at once to town, but, having included Greenwood and Waveland Parks, to reach next the parks on the banks of the beautiful Des Moines river, if, in avoidance of city streets, there can be found some fairly direct and attractive way of going thither. Such a way can be found.

In a northeasterly direction from this corner, the land lies flat and open ^{to University Avenue.} There is no physical reason why the projected boulevard should not be swung off diagonally to the right, so as to reach University Avenue at about Thirty-ninth Street. And property owners, far from opposing such a plan, ought to be willing to give the land for its realization. Crossing then University Avenue, there appears the upper end of a ravine



which, with increasing depth, with growing picturesqueness, and with many an alluringly romantic tributary, extends at easy grade northeastwardly all the way to Hickman Avenue near its beginning at Twentieth Street. I have walked practically all of this distance, and can recommend the trip to any one who loves birds, and natural pictures, unexpected twists and turns, pretty views, wild flowers and nature's peace. There are no obstacles more formidable than barbed wire fences, for the city has not intruded anywhere - save as now and then a highway crosses. On the very margin of the built-up portion of the city, there thus has been reserved a natural parkway site, leading, just as is most desirable, northeastwardly toward the river. There is little doubt that most of the ravine, being unavailable for building purposes, would be given to the city by its owners if there should be agreement to put a parkway through it. A strip wider than the actual road must be owned, however, for the beauty of the environment is to be made certain. Not only is the location ideal, the land probably obtainable for nothing; but, in the example furnished by other cities, ^{there is} ~~an~~ assurance that at relatively little cost a parkway through this ravine will be very beautiful and very popular. Consider, in illustration, the famous Wissahickon Drive at Philadelphia, or lovely Rock Creek Park in Washington.

At the point where the ravine crosses Hickman Avenue, that avenue may be made use of for the few rods that remain to Twentieth Street. To pass from here to the river, while avoiding coal mines and brickyards, proved a less easy problem. But a solution had to be found, and the result works out most admirably. Proceeding East from Twentieth Street, approximately in extension of the line of Hickman, there presently appears a graded avenue, now gradually going to pieces through long disuse, but probably never used to much extent. It is a remnant of a development scheme that included the laying out of a considerable tract, but resulted in no building. This avenue is so constructed as to reach the summit of the hill at a grade by no means prohibitive for park use. The top of the hill proves to be a tableland, and a turn of a few yards to the north brings one to the edge of the bluff, where an entrancing view



presents a wide stretch of country and the upper reaches of the river, gleaming beneath wooded shores. Then turning south, a road may be constructed to pass through a grove, then come into the open, and descend in to the ravine which is south of the Detention Hospital, between that and the Chautauqua grounds. The variety of such a drive will manifestly prove one of its greatest attractions.

There is some sentiment in Des Moines for adding the Chautauqua grounds to the park system. If this were done the parkway would thus link it to the other pleasuregrounds. As to the advisability, however, of such use of the land, I find the question rather one of financial expediency for Des Moines than of city planning. The grounds are very well located, well wooded, and are topographically attractive; but the city has now a large park acreage which the really necessary additions, that I have described and shall describe, will make quite generous; for the parks it has there is need of doing a great deal, to secure adequate returns from the investment they represent; and if this use of the Chautauqua grounds ^{were} ~~were~~ not made, their probable destiny would be division into lots of one or two acres, on which would be built fine homes in attractive setting. That outcome might be the better financially for the owners of the property, as well as for the city. But, on the other hand,

if the municipality should be able to finance the acquirement of the property in such a way as not immediately to feel the burden, the tract would certainly be an excellent one to hold. Possibly this could be done by gaining permission to acquire the property through a small bond issue, and then leasing it to the Chautauqua for a term of years at a rental sufficient to cover the annual interest on the bonds.

The Parkway, to go back to that, comes out at the foot of the picturesque road which, having left Shackelford's brick yard, now ascends the hill. At its top are the long numbered streets that lead south through the city, Ninth with street cars to carry pedestrians to the very beginning of the walk. For the parkway must be broad enough to include not only drive and bridal path, but a walk that will wind among the trees at its side. At the top of the bluff, the road will do more, however, than merely connect with the numbered streets. It passes little triangular Highland Park; it connects with the Sixth Avenue Bridge, which in its turn connects with Birdland Drive and that with Union Park; or, continuing its sinuous course along the southern side of the river, it becomes Arlington Avenue and curves around to cross Franklin Avenue. If we follow it to this point, and then turn to the left on Franklin, we reach in one block - at Bluff Street - the dyke.

This dyke swings along the river's edge for more than a mile. It is fringed with trees all the way. It needs only a little raising and



a little widening to continue very stunningly the long park drive we have been contemplating. For a few rods the houses of that small bit of Franklin Avenue which lies east of Bluff Street back upon it. Sewage must be provided here, and connections required. Then at the dyke's edge comes the interesting Natatorium, Boatman's Island which is already park, and across the river lies Union Park, for here the river is park bordered on both sides, and our circuit parkway has tied another pleasureground into the system. The great bend encloses on the dyke's west side a semi-circular plain, where the breeze, sweeping over a sea of tall



weeds, seems to drive them wave-like against the dyke. This plain should be added to the park to make a glorious athletic field. It will cost little; its location in respect to the houses is ideal; an occasional soggy or slight spring overflow will do it no harm; the city's established Natatorium provides baths in connection with it, and the bordering dyke drive gives a vantage point from which to watch the games. It is a great chance for the city, and in an industrial community the provision of facilities for healthful outdoor exercise, such as baseball gives, is desirable economically as well as physically and morally. An increase in the efficiency of labor is immediately traceable to generous provision of this kind.

For at least half of the total distance, the dyke is so wide now



that it supports a wagon road. Thus very little expense will carry our parkway to University Avenue and First Street where the dyke terminates. This is only a mile from Locust Street, and fairly completes a West Side boulevard-parkway circuit. University Avenue, which is broad at this end, can be taken to Second or Third Street, and thus the return made to the business center of the city.

There is nothing visionary, fantastic, impractical about the suggested circuit - long, surprisingly varied and interesting, and exceedingly beautiful as it is. There is simply a making use of what the city already has and the joining of good isolated units into a system. The link from Polk Boulevard to the river is the only really new construction - and for this the way lies open, nature has provided its beautiful park-like setting, and there may be anticipation that all of the land will be given. In its entirety, the circuit makes a show drive indeed. Visitors will be taken over it to be given proof of the picturesqueness of the site of Des Moines, of the attractiveness of the life there, of the taste and beauty with which the city has been built. But the circuit is not designed for the visitors only. Its great merit is its convenience to the citizens themselves. To them it means more than simply a pleasure drive. It offers beautiful approaches to the parks, beautiful connections between them, beautiful ways of getting from one section of the town to another. For one person who makes the whole round, even in

these days of the swift and tireless automobile - which, it may be noted, has imposed by its popularity, a new requirement upon municipal park systems, in demanding such circuit drives as this - a half dozen persons will be using it in part. That it is fitted to be not only an end but a means is evidence of its community value.

Before leaving the boulevard system of the West Side, certain other matters must be considered. Whatever may be thought regarding the relative merits for residential purpose of Des Moines's natural divisions, the fact must be recognized that most of the city's wealth - that is to say, most of the pleasure-driving population, - is on that side of the river, and the tendency in the city's growth points strongly to its continuance there. This is of vital importance to the city plan, for it means that here must be put the main emphasis in the provision of boulevards and parkways, since here they will be most used. Now our boulevard system as planned is, for all its convenience, circumferential; and a large driving population may well ask that the completed system shall provide attractive radii, leading out from the center to the circumference, and tying the two together.

Grand Avenue is one such radius; Kingman Boulevard another. Cottage Grove Avenue, when the gap between its two links is closed, will make a third. For though this diagonal will carry a heavy general traffic, its crossing of the suggested parkway in the ravine, will give it value as a direct approach to that from a pretty central part of town. Forest Avenue and several of the north and south streets will be utilized, though not included formally in the system nor restricted as to traffic. University Avenue will be used, though the break in its continuity - in the steep and narrow streets between Elizabeth and Fourth - rob it of much of the value which, with Nash and Good Parks on its borders, Waveland at its one terminus and the dyke-drive at the other, it ought to have had. In speaking in a previous chapter of the need of an additional bridge between the East and West Sides, north of Grand Avenue, I spoke of these breaks in University Avenue as requiring correction should the

bridge be located at its line. Costly as this correction would be, it is clear that in a broad view of city planning for Des Moines, they are almost essential to complete satisfaction - for pleasure traffic as well as for service traffic.

In that chapter there was note, too, of the great value of the diagonal. The northwestern section of the city is growing with special rapidity. In fact, the ~~West~~ **West Side**, hemmed in by river on north and east, by bluff and railroad on the south, and by large parks to the west, can hardly extend in any other direction. To require the travel between the business center and the northwest to traverse two sides of a triangle, instead of taking a hypotenuse, is waste. Cottage Grove Avenue will help a great deal, but it stops more than a mile from the Court House in an airline - and nearly two miles as one has to travel. To create a northwestward diagonal or radial, therefore, from the heart of town, would satisfy much more than simply the aesthetic and pleasure instincts of those who may seek the parkway. Happily, such a creation is not impossible.

A depression that is called Bird Run extends from about Seventh and Chestnut Streets northwestward to about Twentieth and Carpenter. Its



Seventh Street terminus is at what promises to be one of the most important business thoroughfares of Des Moines. The Seventh Street grade

between Grand and Chestnut has been just cut down, and the street leads, as a modern and admirable business thoroughfare, directly from this corner to the edge of the Transportation Plaza, a half dozen blocks below. Northwestward, from so ideally located a starting point, Bird Run extends as a natural hollow - partly vacant, partly built up with poor, and cheap



The Bird Run Depression at its best.

houses - a belt of neglect and poverty, cutting across important streets, taking exactly the direction that is desired, and traversed now by nothing but a sewer, though that of course is good and desirable. At Fifteenth Street, a block north of School, it traverses Good Park, so this much is already public property. Then comes University Avenue, which a Bird Run thoroughfare could go beneath, for University would be better here for a little raising that would lessen its grades to east and west. At Twenty-First and Forest the diagonal thoroughfare might properly cease,

To transform Bird Run, with its strategic location, its present economic waste, and its potential value, into a boulevard, is one of those steps in city-making that require courage, patience and money, but it is worth those things. Financially, it would almost immediately pay for itself in the values it would create. From the standpoint of city beauty it would substitute order and dignity for squalor and negligence. To traffic it would be, in its easy grade and short cut, an incalculable

convenience. Its construction is not, of course, to be accomplished at once. There are great numbers of small properties to be acquired, and that is always a slow and tedious process. But in Good Park and the contemplated market site very important sections have been already secured, - how much better and more suitable a use would this be for the market site! - and little by little the process of acquirement can be continued toward consummation. The right, which has been obtained by legislation for the cities of the first class in Pennsylvania, and for the cities of Ohio, to buy property abutting on a proposed improvement and resell it with restrictions and at the enhanced value which the improvement creates, would facilitate greatly this undertaking, if the legislature can be induced to grant it. This is the means by which the important street widenings and extensions that are so notable in Europe and South America are financed.

We may turn now to East Des Moines. The western boulevard-parkway circuit has brought us to the Sixth Avenue bridge, a handsome structure that would be strikingly improved if the concrete stubs on either side at the ends of the bridge ^Ew_Are transformed into pylons. As not simply a general traffic bridge, but a boulevard bridge, it is deserving of the added adornment. East from Sixth Avenue, on the north side of the river, extends Birdland Drive. West of it, as seems to be little known in Des Moines, the city acquired for park purposes late in 1907 the wooded strip beside the river up nearly to Zoo Lake. One ice house, standing on property owned by the ice company, alone breaks the continuity of the city's ownership on the extreme upper end. This, of course, is a very serious break, and when the time comes for developing this park, the ice house will have to be acquired. But the two points to be emphasized here are that Birdland Drive should be continued above Sixth Avenue, passing under the north approach of the bridge, though having as now connection with the avenue; and that the city already owns property for this purpose. The further a drive xx can be then carried up the river, on both sides, the better for the future and Greater Des Moines. It may be noted incidentally that a large population in the Highland Park section

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is adjacent to this property west of Sixth Avenue and that street cars touch it, so that, quite apart from its value in adding to the enjoyment of Union Park and to the use of the river, it has a potential immediate usefulness which makes it at least as deserving of improvement as is Grand View.

But taking up again discussion of the boulevard system, we may turn to the right after crossing Sixth Avenue bridge and proceed through Birdland, which is one of the most beautiful park possessions in all the Middle West, and so reach Union Park. From here a link of the outer circuit should go across country to Grand View. With the country fairly level and for the most part open, there is nothing about the construction which is particularly difficult.

From Grand View a boulevard should be laid out to the Fair Grounds. Thence return can be made by Grand Avenue until the State House is reached, and then we shall go down the Locust Street approach to the Civic Center. East Grand Avenue, with an important triple function to serve - as a link in a circumferential boulevard system, as a radial connecting with a more extended system, in reaching from State House to Fair Grounds, and as an approach to the Fair Grounds - should be "boulevarded." Its generous proportions give ample space for handsome center parking. Formal and distinct development would be appropriate and interesting in view of its special function. ^{as the approach to the main entrance of the Fair grounds.} Thus, in its long stretch of center parking there might be gradually assembled works of sculpture typifying stock raising, husbandry, and those basic industries that have made Iowa rich and great.

As offering a longer circuit, a boulevard may extend through the Fair Grounds to the entrance of Laurel Hill Cemetery. The view from the summit of that hill is so striking, ^{and} the place is so pre-eminently a scenic attraction and, as yet, so little of a cemetery, that, considering too the municipal ownership of it, the inclusion of the tract as one of the jewels on the ring of boulevards seems to be justified. From here the return via Broad Court Avenue would be direct and admirable.

But perhaps the most interesting possibility of the East Side, in

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89

novelty, scenic interest and popular usefulness, is the chance to get a radial along the east bank of the river from ~~Union Park~~ to the Civic Center. ^{to Union Park} Following the beautiful road that curves up the bank in the park, as one comes cityward, we may swing the drive closer to the brink, as the road nears the top of the hill opposite the park's main entrance. It ~~can~~ ^{few} can pass back of the houses that have been built on the west side of



Pennsylvania Avenue, without - as a strip of park - doing serious injury to them. In the hollow just north of Washington Avenue there is an ice house; but the drive, continuing its easy grade, can pass above the roof of it, on viaduct construction. Still following along the brink, and not interfering with the houses on Pennsylvania Avenue, there is shortly reached the present line of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, where, sweeping in from the east, the railroad comes now to the river bank. The attractiveness of the view from this point, either north or south, is suggested in the following photographs, which thus indicate the natural charm of the route to be taken. It would be possible to carry the drive over the gap by which the track of the railroad reaches the river bank, and so continue it on the bluff - something as Riverside Drive in New York is built, with the railroad below. The termination would be above the tile works, on the great bluff, of which ^{also} I append a picture, taken



Des Moines River, looking north from the bluff near Washington Ave.



Des Moines River, looking south from the same point.



The great bluff above the tile works.

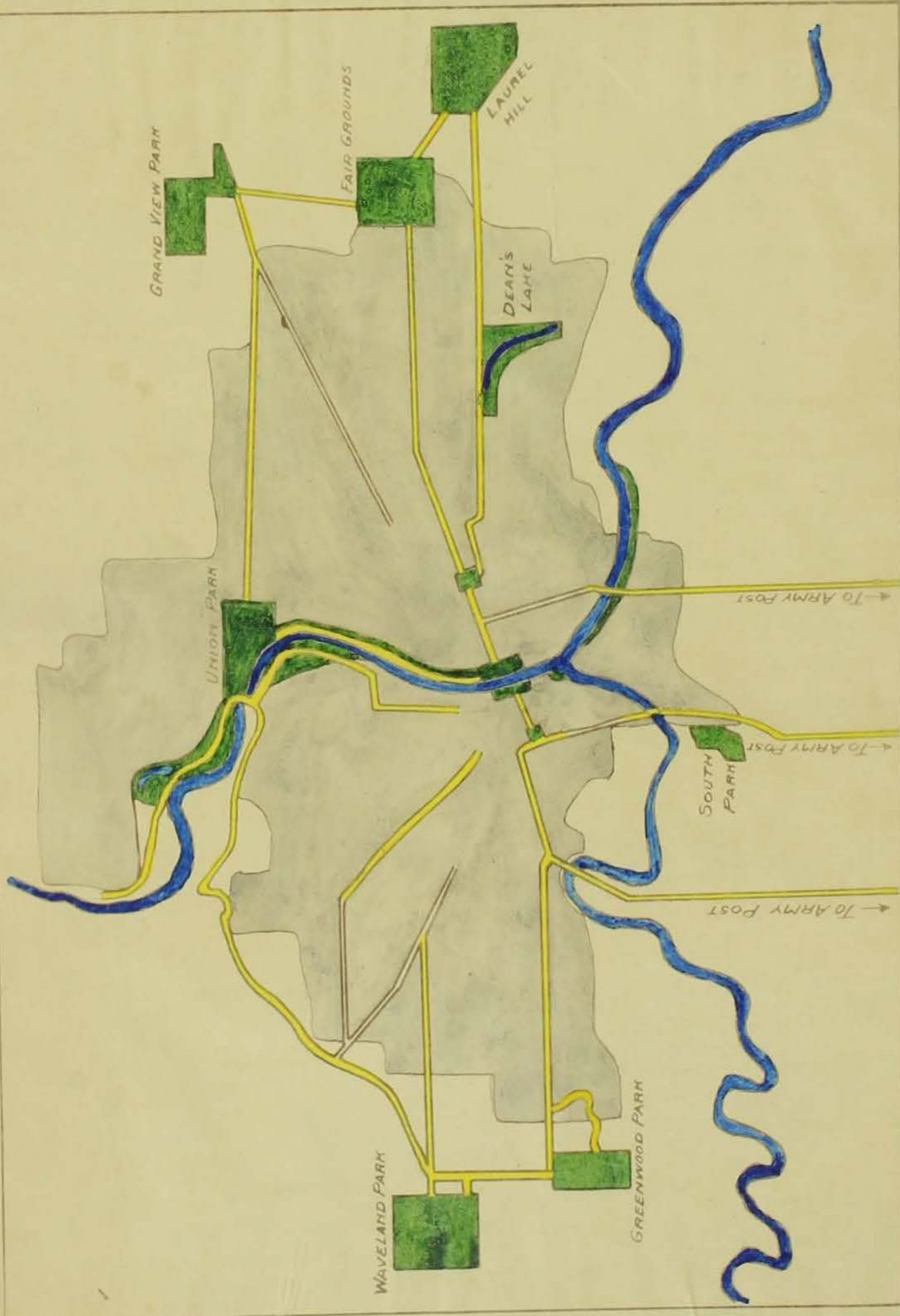
-18-

from the opposite shore. Here the turn would be made into Sixth Street, from which the riverbank park below the dam, or the Locust Street approach to the State House, are only a half dozen blocks away.

But we have been discussing the advantages, for other reasons, of getting the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad to enter the city by a route much further east. This would set free its graded right of way - giving to us a riverside drive ready made, lifted sufficiently above the river to be safe, yet near enough its waters to have them contribute to its charm. The steep banks on the landward side can be terraced and beautified, and so the drive ^{would} ~~will~~ make a continuation of the riverbank improvement at the Civic Center, carrying the latter up through Union Park, Birdland, the Zoo Lake section and beyond. This drive would be much less expensive and in itself easier of accomplishment than that on the bluff, where there would be many property-holders to deal with; and from a city-plan point of view it would be better worth accomplishing because of its greater completeness. The descent from the crest of the bluff to the railroad grade opposite Park Avenue can easily be made. Thus there is added, in these considerations, a further and overwhelming argument for the change in location of the Chicago and Northwestern entrance.

In South Des Moines the existing park is so near the river that boulevard access to it is incidental, needing no special arrangement. The driving goal on this side would be the Army Post, some miles away. There are three main roads to the Post. The central, or Ninth Street, road is likely to be eventually improved by the government, as the most direct approach. If this be made a broad, military road, and be planted on either side with trees, it will serve admirably as a driving link. The West Eighteenth Street and the Indianola roads would therefore, perhaps, be the best for the city and county to take in hand. They are connected at the Post by an excellent crossroad, so creating a good loop drive; and the Eighteenth Street Road, coming into Grand Avenue, ties up well with the western boulevard-parkway system. All the roads offer pleasant country views, the Indianola being particularly attractive in that respect.

In giving title to this chapter I added "new parks" to the terms



BOULEVARD-PARKWAY SYSTEM

SHADING REPRESENTS
BUILT-UP SECTIONS OF THE CITY

FOR
DES MOINES, IA.
AS PROPOSED BY
CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON, 1909

GREEN
PARKS AND PUBLIC RESERVATIONS

YELLOW
BOULEVARDS AND PARKWAYS

~~71~~

boulevards and parkways. The reason must be clear, for in planning the latter there have been included suggestions for several park additions — in fact, the diagonal drive from Polk Boulevard to the river would itself be practically a strip of park. Yet the title imposes an obligation to speak here also of other tracts, the acquirement of which for park purposes is desirable, whether or not they would be in the boulevard system.

I find one such in Dean's Lake. With the suggestion that a drive be thrown around this lake, I do not sympathize. Except from the east, whence practically no pleasure driving comes, it can be approached only by crossing a network of railroad tracks. But that eastern section is filling up with little homes, a large and park-needing population is gathered there, and the appropriate destiny of pretty Dean's Lake, as I see it, is to be a neighborhood park. For this purpose the shore all the way round should be secured. Boating should be encouraged by a concession. The place should be one for family picnics; for rest after the day's work, a playground for the neighborhood, — adults and children together.

In South Des Moines also there is a great opportunity. This, as in West Des Moines, is on the dyke. But here there should be developed not a drive but a promenade. Informally, there is almost that already. The walk is very beautiful. Tall trees — old sycamores and willows — line it on either side. It makes long, graceful curves, following the line of



of the river, and at one such turn there is suddenly revealed, through a broad avenue of the high trees, a view of the Court House tower and of the tall buildings of the city that is little less than thrilling in its unexpectedness, its contrast and its completeness. The picture is one for an artist. I regretted that the softening haze of smoke spoiled it for photographic purposes. But that simply adds greatly to its beauty, making it Turneresque.

There is just one short gap to be filled. This is west of the railroad crossing. For the rest, the park has been created. There is need only of widening the walk; of making it more easily accessible by placing steps at intervals; of putting lights upon it, that it may be safe at night, when the people have most time to promenade and the walk will be most beautiful; of providing rest benches; and, on rare occasions, of sodding the bank. The product will be quite foreign in its aspect and in its usefulness, as it is in its origin - for promenades on dykes are much more common in Europe than with us. A large adjacent population, which has no park, will find it a great factor for pleasure in their lives.

There is need of hardly a word in summary. With all its large pleasure grounds secured, Des Moines has only to make them pleasantly accessible, to tie them into a system by connecting parkways and boulevards, and to develop them. The biggest and most expensive thing, the securing of the tracts of ground, has been done. The drives between the parks will cost little; the proposed additions are slight and inexpensive; and yet the anticipated result is amazing in its completeness, in the impartiality of the system's distribution, in its scenic attractiveness and variety - as astonishing, in fact, as is its practicability and simplicity. Surely the Des Moines that "does things" has, in the creation of its boulevard system, a rare chance to become the "Beautiful Des Moines."

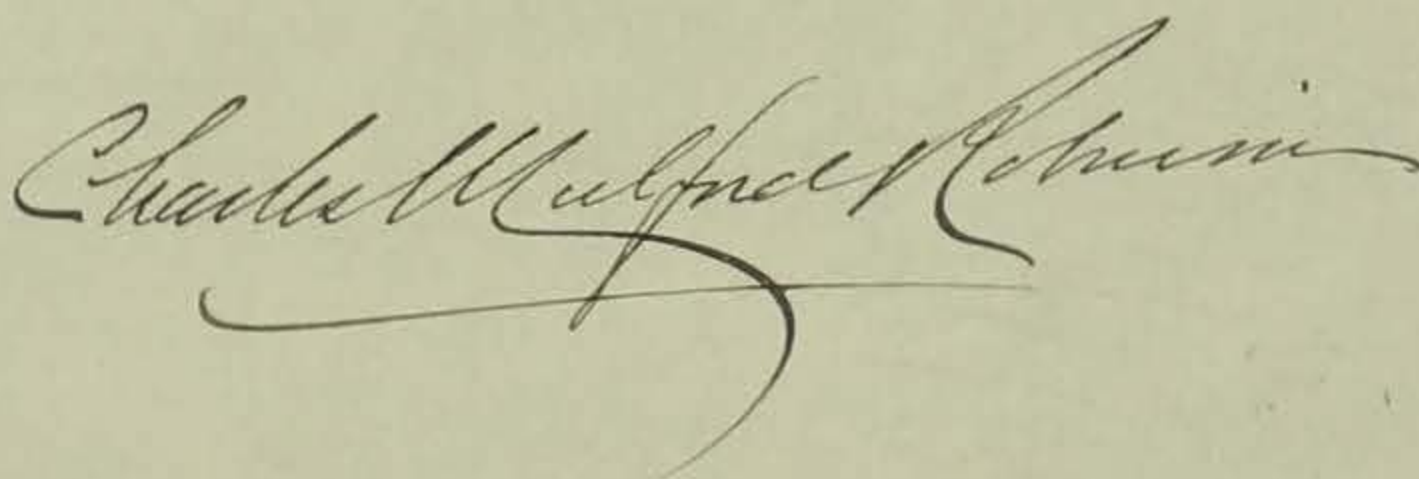
It will be, however, more than simply beautiful. We have seen how boulevards and parkways and new parks are to serve other than simply ornamental purposes - how they are to be convenient, as well as attractive, ways of going, and how they are to facilitate the recreative enjoyment of

-23-

the people. The length of this Report and the thought that has gone into its preparation has been in vain if it has not made clear ^{the} ~~the~~ fact that its ideal for the Greater Des Moines is a city which is, indeed, better to look at; but is primarily better to live in and to do business in—better adjusted to its purpose.

The residents of the city cannot always strut about enjoying the scenery, cannot ~~all~~ work all the time nor play all the time. They are men and women and little children, passing here the precious years of life. The true ideal for the Greater Des Moines is, by the improvement of environment, to render that life, in all the manifestations of its healthy activity, richer and fuller; and to do this sanely, avoiding municipal extravagance and municipal stinginess alike. More suggestions have been made in the Report than ^{can} easily be kept in mind. But turning back over the pages, I believe there will be found no feature of the long constructive program which from that point of view is impractical or inadvisable, or any one that a united and loyal people, assured as they are of the future of the community, may not expect to bring to pass.

Respectfully Submitted,



December 16, 1909.

CITY PLANNING REPORT

FOR

DES MOINES, IA.

-BY-

CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON

Gift to the Des Moines Women's Club

By

Mrs. Isaac Lee Hillis

Chairman Civic Committee

Des Moines Women's Club

1909 - 1910