Rock Creek Park

Report by

~Olmsted Brothers~
ROCK CREEK PARK

A report by

OLMSTED BROTHERS

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FOREWORD

The dominant consideration, never to be subordinated to any other purpose in dealing with Rock Creek Park, is the permanent preservation of its wonderful natural beauty, and the making of that beauty accessible to the people without spoiling the scenery in the process.

Its preservation differs radically from the protection of any unchanging thing of beauty in a museum in that it involves an unending watchful struggle to neutralize destructive forces inevitably acting on the scenery; to reinforce and supplement its natural powers of resistance and recuperation; and patiently, skillfully, and humbly to restore the actual deterioration. The scenery of the Park cannot remain absolutely static; it is always changing for better or for worse; in many respects it has for years been deteriorating. The great problem of its
management is to convert progressive deterioration into progressive restoration.

To clarify understanding of these basis principles, and to point out as far as possible appropriate ways and means of applying them is the prime endeavor of this report.

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The report is accompanied by the following drawings:

Plan No. 37. A general diagrammatic plan (scale 400' = 1") showing (1) primary landscape units, (2) traffic thoroughfares, and (3) a suggested system of park drives.

Note. Two prints of this plan are submitted:
1. A plain colored print without topography.
2. A colored print combined with topography.
Plan No. 39. A diagram (scale 1000' = 1") showing primary divisions of Landscape and Administration.

Plan No. 40. A diagram (scale 1000' = 1") showing proposed adjustments of boundaries.

Plan No. 51. A copy of the street map of the District of Columbia showing the relation of the proposed traffic lines across the park to the present and proposed street system of the District.

Plan No. 52. A detailed grading plan (Scale 40' = 1") for a park drive extending from Daniel Road at Rittenhouse Street to Beach Drive.

Plan No. 53. A profile to accompany grading plan No. 52.

Plan No. 54. A preliminary plan (scale 80' = 1") for the development of the area near the Brightwood Reservoir as a special recreation ground.
THE REPORT

1. THE JUSTIFYING VALUE OF THE PARK.

It is unnecessary to praise the very exceptional natural beauty of Rock Creek Park, because it is well known and widely appreciated.

But it is important to emphasize the fact that it is upon the subtle qualities of this essentially wild and natural beauty that the public value of the Park mainly depends. The real justification for this large park is unquestionably found in the recreative value of its natural qualities - large stretches of forest, the river valley, dark ravines, steep and rolling hills, and occasional meadow lands - and no use or exploitation or development of any sort can ever be right that is not based upon this fundamental conception. To recognize this fact may not make it easy to plan the proper development and use of the Park, but will make it easier to appreciate what should not be done; and in the nature of the case that is the more important.

But no matter how perfect the scenery of the Park may be or may become, no matter how high its potential value, that value remains potential except
insofar as it is enjoyed by large and ever larger numbers of people, poor and rich alike.

This conception leads to three fundamental considerations in accordance with which the Park must be developed and upon which our study of the situation has necessarily been based. First, its interesting, varied, natural scenery must be saved intact insofar as possible, must in some respects be restored or perfected by intelligent, appreciative landscape development, and must not be replaced by other and more or less foreign types of "treatment". Second, the Park must be opened up to the driving, riding, and walking public; but the roads, paths, and other accompaniments of intensive use must be so located and so built that the essential qualities of the Park are impaired in the least possible degree. Third, adequate transportation must be provided to and into the Park for people dependent upon street car service.

What is the innate character of this natural landscape? What are these subtle qualities which give it a beauty so distinctive and so precious? Definition and analysis are not easy. Nevertheless it is a clear appreciation and understanding of these very qualities that must now and for all time guide the maintenance and development of the Park.

Fundamentally the scenery is of two sorts.
First are the larger landscape pictures made primarily by the ground forms - the topography - but supplemented and enriched by the masses of woods and stretches of open field. In these pictures the individual tree, the shrub, the boulder, the flowering plant, or the happy grouping of plants plays only a very secondary part; they are merely some of the countless elements which go to make the infinite diversity and beauty of the texture of the larger scene. The land forms of the Rock Creek Valley - and this valley with its ramifications furnish nearly all of the larger scenery of the Park - are of considerable variety. Here the valley is narrow and gorge-like, with rocky forest-clad sides dropping abruptly to the Creek which breaks and tumbles along over a stony bed. Here the enclosing hillsides fall back and become less steep and rugged, the stream flows more slowly and quietly between overarching trees through a broader and more peaceful valley with an occasional open hillside or a bit of grassy meadow. The scenery becomes more restful and more simple in its beauty. Again there is the contrast of bold picturesque peaks on one side and gentle slopes or open fields on the other. These types of scenery are found in endless variety and beauty of form and detail; they vary with every point of view and again with every season of the year and every hour of the day. Best of all they are pictures
within the Park - the everchanging landscape of a
winding river valley and its tributaries, enclosed
and guarded by the forest-covered hills on either side.
This is the larger scenery of the Park.

The other is that more intimate and smaller
scenery which is based not upon the major formations
of hills and valleys, but rather upon the details of
ground form and upon the character and beauty and
happy combinations of the trees and shrubs and flowers
that grow there. Rugged gray ledges softened with moss
and contrasted with picturesque groups of Halmia; a
grayly old plane tree or group of hornbeams or of river
birches overhanging the water; the moist bank of a dark,
wooded ravine - carpeted with ferns; the spreading oak in
the open field; the crooked form of a dogwood arching
over a woodland trail; the sudden accents of the cedars
and their pleasing combinations of color and form with
sumac and sassafras and scrubby ground covers; and most
important of all, the everchanging picture as one wanders
through the forest: the forms and groupings of tree
trunks, the variety and intricate detail of the under-
growth of woodland shrubs and young trees, and the delicate
forms and infinite variety of the ferns, mosses, creeping
vines and woodland flowers, the natural ground cover of the
forest - these make the more intimate scenery of the Rock
Creek valley. And because it is a large valley with many different topographical forms and situations, it offers a great and unusual variety in this smaller scenery, these very precious details of the natural landscape.

These two sorts of scenery are not peculiar to Rock Creek Park, but in this beautiful valley with its many ramifications they are found in a high degree of perfection and in almost unlimited variety. It is the extraordinary combination of this circumstance with the proximity of the valley to a great city that gives to the Park its unique value. This is the value which was first preserved by Act of Congress for the benefit of all people. It is now and always will be the only value that can justify the maintenance of this great natural park.

For Rock Creek Park represents a very large public investment, the size and importance of which are measured not alone by the great sums actually spent for land and improvements, but also by the steadily increasing economic burden of interrupting the convenient and normal movement of street traffic, and of withholding so vast an area of land within the city from residential and commercial use. It is held in trust for the purpose of securing to the people certain benefits obtainable by no other means. To justify this great investment it is
necessary first, to safeguard and restore its permanent
productive value for the peculiar purposes of the trust,
and second, to increase the current returns as much and
as rapidly as practicable.

Briefly there are four principal agencies which
already have worked serious injury to the scenery, - and
so to the permanent value - of this Park. They are (a)
lumbering, (b) plant diseases and insect pests, (c) fires,
and (d) weed growths. The first is no longer an active
source of danger; but in the past, mature seedling forest
has been cut off only to be replaced by a less interest-
and shorter lived growth of coppice, or by thickets of
quick-growing, short-lived or otherwise weedy trees like
the scrub pine. The other three agencies, active or
latent, are constant sources of danger, and incessant
watchfulness and intelligent appreciative care will al-
ways be required in order to minimise their degradations
and to repair, as far as may be, the losses incurred.

The damage which may be done by disease or
insects is clearly illustrated by the effect of the
chestnut blight, which has killed nearly all the chest-

ment in Rock Creek Park, and by the ravages of the gipsy
moth in the parks about Boston. Probably little could
have been done to check the chestnut blight in Rock
Creek Park, but prompt removal of the dead trees and com-
trol of what is to replace them are extremely important. It was only untiring effort and almost unlimited funds that finally saved the trees of the Boston parks from destruction. A quicker recognition of the danger and a prompter effort to meet it would have greatly reduced both the damage and the expenditure of funds. Fortunately Rock Creek Park has so far escaped this pest; but when it does come, or another like it, the organization ought to be such as to assure its prompt discovery and the immediate inauguration of effective measures to stop it. The destruction even of a single tree may spoil the beauty of some choice bit of scenery, and every such loss is a step toward deterioration. The inroads of disease and insect pests are so insidious, they so easily attain dangerous proportions before they are recognized, that the importance of a constant, keen watchfulness cannot be over-emphasized.

The damage from fire is perhaps more readily understood, and yet the full extent of the losses is probably seldom appreciated. Directly, the damage may be measured by the destruction of all the living elements of the scenery. It is difficult to exaggerate the direct injury that is done even by the smaller fires which kill or scorch the shrubs and the ground cover; for after all, it is the endless variety and intricate beauty of these lesser plants that make the rare richness of the woodland
scenery. Indirectly, the damage from a fire, large or small, may be measured sometimes by the scorching and weakening of the forest trees, and always by the loss of humus. And that means a very serious handicap in re-building the scenery whether by the natural processes of reproduction or by planting. It is the twigs and bushes and smaller plants that hold the fallen leaves which protect the seedlings and, by rottting, replenish the soil. Where fires have run, the leaves blow away and the ground tends to become increasingly dry and barren and bare.

There are many places in the Park where just this situation has developed; and a considerable effort and expense will be required to re-establish there the natural conditions of richness and beauty of the forest interior. The prevention and instant suppression of fires will not only save the original beauty of the woodland scenery, but will also save the costly and tedious process of re-creating that beauty which made the original value of the Park.

A rather more subtle factor in the process of deterioration is the growth of weeds. Broadly speaking the weeds are of three classes. First, are the plants — trees, shrubs or herbaceous plants — which are undesirable because of their inherent character. A tree of short life and of relatively uninteresting appearance
The text provided is not legible due to the quality of the image. It appears to be a page from a document, possibly containing paragraphs or sections of text. Without clearer visibility, it is challenging to transcribe or interpret the content accurately.
these divisions as they must necessarily merge one into
the other, but the outlines shown are intended to indi-
cate approximately the regions where the requirements
of one use or one fundamental value should give place
to those of another. The divisions may be described as
follows:

Of perhaps first importance is the Rock
Creek Valley - Division "A" in the diagram. This is
topographically and psychologically the backbone, as it
were, of the Park, and it would be a great misfortune
if any use should develop that would to the least
appreciable degree injure the present charm and beauty
of this valley scenery. Rock Creek Valley with its main
tributaries - Piney Branch and Broad Branch valleys and
the valley of the Military Road - forms an arterial
system of most beautiful valley scenes or landscapes.
This self-contained scenery has great variety and at the
same time a happy unity of character. Its linear quality
too adds to its charm by ever stimulating the desire to
explore beyond the next turn. It is this conception -
beautiful, varying, self-contained valley scenery -
which should be paramount in controlling the development
and use of Division A. Picnic groves by the creek,
wading pools and the like are entirely permissible and
desirable, for the water is a great drawing card for the
public, but such uses should always and unmistakably be incidental. Swimming holes, for instance, should probably not be permitted, for they inevitably require toilet and dressing rooms, and in some cases screens from the drive, all of which work distinct injury to the beauty of the valley scenery; while at best these "holes" can provide only inferior accommodations for swimming.

The next three divisions "B", "C", and "D" are each of a distinct type, but in all of them a decided- ly intensive use by the general public should be the controlling consideration of development and administration.

Division B is a section of plateau land separated topographically from the rest of the Park, easily accessible from adjacent residential areas and, by car, from other parts of the District. It is admirably adapted for more or less intensive recreation — tennis, basket ball, baseball, cricket, football, and band concerts — and has already been tentatively allotted for this purpose. A preliminary plan for the development of this area accompanies this report.

Division C, an area of about three hundred acres, is primarily a forest unit. Topographically it is roughly of the plateau type, but it is generally rolling and is intersected with several sharp ravines leading down to Hock Creek and furnishing added variety
and interest for the recreation seeker. In addition to possessing many of the recreative elements to be found in a woodland park of this sort, the area is particularly well adapted for exploration and enjoyment by pedestrians, for it is much less subdivided into abrupt hills and valleys than most parts of the Park, avoiding thus the constant expenditure of effort not often appreciated or desired by people not looking primarily for exercise. Lastly, but of fundamental importance, is the question of accessibility. Assuming a thoroughfare with car line crossing the Park probably along the ridge immediately south of the Military Road (to be discussed later), area "C" becomes ideally accessible.

We cannot now go far into the details of development and administration for a division of this type. Suffice it to say that roads and bridle paths should be minimised, and there should be many picnic groves, springs, unobtrusive seats, summer houses, and other local objectives of interest. The spaces free from undergrowth should be generally larger than in other forest areas; in fact they should be large and frequent enough to encourage and accommodate a more or less unrestricted movement of the people about the woodlands regardless of fixed paths. There should be a considerable local variety in the woodland landscape. In general no attempt should be made to keep here the more delicate
and intricate details of the natural sylvan scenery, especially in the matter of undergrowth, for they can best be preserved elsewhere in the Park. This section should fundamentally be adapted to a freer and more intensive use.

Division D, about 150 acres, is primarily a unit of open land. It has an interesting topography of rolling hills; and it affords a sense of freedom, breadth, and outlook found nowhere else in the Park. It is accessible either directly from the adjacent district to the east or, with comparatively little effort, from the proposed thoroughfare and car line just south of the Military Road. It is old farm land, in parts overgrown with scrub pine and more or less cut up by hedgerows — not now very attractive. And yet by some cutting of hedgerows and pines and by a little careful planting we believe it can be made beautiful and interesting. Because of its quality of openness it possesses a recreative value so different from that of other parts of the Park that no use or development in any way detracting from that quality should be permitted. For instance the arboretum which has been started here would, if allowed to remain, tend to defeat this very quality. The open hillsides would disappear, and the views and the sense of breadth and freedom would be no
more. An arboretum would be an exotic element, and hence a very undesirable one.

We have spoken of this division as one primarily for intensive use. Its accessibility and the distinctive quality of its recreative offering have led to that conclusion. And for this latter reason especially, a free use by all classes of patrons whether riding, driving or walking should be encouraged insofar as this can be done without materially marring the simple breadth and beauty of its grassy slopes, and the great charm of the varying landscape as seen from these slopes and hilltops. Occasional groups and specimen trees are needed for shade and landscape effect; walks on easy grades, occasional unobtrusive seats, groves or simple overlook terraces at points of commanding outlook, and such roads and bridle paths as are required to reveal the beauty of the landscape - these are needed. Further than that, simple rolling pasture or mowed grass-land should prevail. Few defined walks will be needed, as pedestrians should be encouraged to spread over the turf at will.

North of areas "C" and "D" the Park becomes less accessible from transportation lines; and topographically it becomes more or less a series of smaller hills and ridges separated by steep narrow valleys or ravines. The bulk of this area -
- some 450 acres - is included in section "F."
Fundamentally it is a forest area, and the wild, natural character of its forests should be preserved to the highest degree. Impossibility and topographical character do not invite an intensive use by the walking public, and the preservation of the finer details of the natural woodland scenery requires that pedestrians be more or less restricted to the walks and other defined ways. Some picnic grounds and other objects of local interest will be needed, as in Division C; but essentially this division should be one where the wilderness of the forest will be enjoyed from the paths, roads, and bridle paths, and shall remain unmarred by the wear-and-tear largely unavoidable in areas of more intensive use, such as Divisions B, C, and D.

It is not our thought to discourage the enjoyment of this or any other part of the Park by the general public. But an intensive use, no matter how well provided for, is sure to mean the sacrifice of some of the elements of wildness which now contribute and always should contribute so largely to the beauty and charm and value of this Park; and it would be clear folly to allow the sum total of park value to deteriorate for want of a little regulation that would insure ultimately a far higher degree of service to the public as a whole - the owners of the Park.
Division F, the northernmost unit, might almost be considered a part of "A", but its size and its distinctive character would seem nevertheless to class it as a major division. It is, or is proposed to be, an irregular stretch of flat meadow land some four thousand feet long, varying from two hundred to eight hundred or nine hundred feet in width. Its value as a landscape unit, enclosed by woods, interesting in form and entirely self-contained, is very great and, in this park, unique. Like Division "D" (above) it should be defended jealously against any inharmonious encroachments upon the simplicity, breadth, and restfulness inherent in its very character. But any use of the meadow should be welcomed which does not disturb the simple breadth stretch of greenward.

Regarding a National Arboretum and Botanic Garden in Rock Creek Park, it seems best here to give attention to the proposition often put forward, to use the northern part of Rock Creek Park for a National Arboretum and Botanic Garden. The idea is in its very essence so full of danger to the fundamental purposes of the Park, that we take the liberty of quoting at length the arguments as set forth by the Commission of Fine Arts in their Report to the Committee on the Library, House of Representa
"If Rock Creek Park shall be given up as a park and used solely for a National Botanic Garden and Arboretum, much can be said in favor of this area, in spite of the predominance of excessively steep slopes. There are scattered areas of moderate slopes on the uplands and strips of level land subject to overflow in the bottom of the valley. There is a considerable variety of soils and exposures, and if every piece of land in the park physically adaptable to botanic garden purposes were to be regarded as available for such use, the total area would be ample. It is a serious practical objection, however, that the most available areas are so scattered and so separated from each other by deep ravines and steep hills as to make the layout and administration of a great botanic garden and arboretum on this site inconvenient and in the long run unduly costly.

Again, it is not possible to disregard the value of the land for other purposes. Congress did not authorize the acquisition of Rock Creek Park simply in pursuance of a general theory that a growing capital city ought to have a large general reserve of land available for public recreation and for kindred uses, to be "improved" and made available from time to time as the need for various specific uses might become apparent.

The land was bought because the valley of Rock Creek within the District of Columbia had certain peculiar and extraordinary characteristics which gave it a special value for one particular purpose, a value unattainable elsewhere, a value which would be destroyed if Congress did not act to preserve it, a value which if faithfully preserved would give incalculable enjoyment and healthful recreation to the people of the District in future generations. This special value was and is dependent on the peculiar beauty of the natural scenery of Rock Creek Valley.

This is not the place to attempt any analysis of that beauty, but clearly it has its own distinctive qualities; very precious; very easily destroyed. It was primarily these qualities which justified the acquisition of the park and nothing ought to be permitted within its borders that will tend to subordinate or sacrifice them.

The character of the native vegetation is one of the important factors in making this scenery what it is. In places the woods had been cleared before the park was acquired, the location of these clearings being wholly accidental as far as concerns their effect on the landscape. Some of these openings, left as simple
Δηλαδή, αν το έστρωσαν, η υπόλοιπη έρευνα θα μπορούσε να έχει καλύτερα αποτελέσματα. Εάν η κόρη μου θα απέκτησε την ευκαιρία να συνεχίσει τον προγραμματισμό στην Βραδεία, θα είχε πολύ καλύτερα αποτελέσματα. Εάν προήγησε την κύρια, θα είχε πολύ καλύτερα αποτελέσματα. Εάν έμεινε έτοιμη, θα είχε πολύ καλύτερα αποτελέσματα. Εάν δεν είχε δει τον πινακίδα, θα είχε πολύ καλύτερα αποτελέσματα.

Αν το έστρωσαν, η υπόλοιπη έρευνα θα μπορούσε να έχει καλύτερα αποτελέσματα.
If the original intention of Congress in this instance is to be observed, the introduction of such a foreign element as a botanic garden is too dangerous to be ventured. Therefore, the use of Rock Creek Park for this purpose cannot be recommended.

3. DISTINCTIVE LANDSCAPE TYPES.

After determining, at least tentatively, the primary landscape and administrative divisions as above described, we next studied the landscape units more or less in detail in order to fix, insofar as possible, wherein they should be maintained without essential change and wherein and to what degree their present condition should be modified. To a very large extent it has seemed unquestionably best to preserve and foster the existing growth or condition, but in many minor instances, and in some more important ones, we have proposed radical changes where the accidents of the past have produced conditions of lesser interest and beauty, and where there is opportunity to restore or create more appropriate and more beautiful types of landscape. These landscape units have been reduced to four fundamental types; and these findings have been embodied in a diagrammatic plan (Fig. 37) herewith submitted. The types may be briefly explained as follows:

Type I is natural forest, and has been indicated...
by the number "I" on the plan. In most of the areas thus marked natural forest conditions now exist; but in a few, almost always near the Park borders where dense high screening plantations are desirable, they are proposed. Most of these forest areas are now and always should be a mixed deciduous wood composed chiefly of an extensive and interesting variety of oaks with undergrowth of young trees and dogwood, laurel, and redbud. Some hickory, tulip, maple, and beech are found with the oak, also a few pines and other evergreens, and occasionally small groves or groups of beech occurring in almost pure stands. These last are hardly frequent or extensive enough, to be indicated here as distinct types or subtypes. Tulip, however, often occurs in considerable stands in the bottom lands near Rock Creek and in the branch valleys. These areas have been marked "I-F", which indicates that tulip either predominates there now or should be encouraged by the gradual thinning out of other trees. "I-E" indicates evergreen forest growth; and for the most part these areas are now covered wholly or in large measure by scrub pine. In some instances the "E" areas have been extended into adjacent areas of poor hard-woods or into border areas now open, the purpose being to get ultimately a somewhat larger proportion of evergreen woodland as a contrast to the hard-wood forest and for its foliage effect
in winter. The present scrub pine should gradually be
replaced by hemlocks and by better varieties of pine.
A third subtype, "I-B", comprises the close-wood growth
on the bottom land along the creek; it is composed mainly
of river birch with now and then a slight admixture of
tulip and sycamore and occasional tupelo, and with some-
times an understory of hornbeam.

**Type II** is a distinctly open type of woodland, or
rather tree growth. In areas marked "II" it is intended
that the trees should be in groves or groups or some-
times single specimens; they would, in the aggregate,
shade perhaps from one-half to three-quarters of the
ground, permitting light and air enough almost always to
maintain grass as a ground cover. A somewhat special
case, however, is found in the "II" areas along the creek;
for here the sense of openness would often be secured
by trimming off the lower branches of a bordering fringe
of trees rather than by cutting the trees themselves.

Trees growing practically in the open and without crowd-
ing will not be so tall as the forest trees; they will
be low-branched and broad-spread, furnishing an
interesting contrast to the same trees growing nearby
under forest conditions. The attached letters "E" and
"F" signify evergreen or river subtypes as explained
above.

Very few of the "II" areas exist as such now,
but in most cases the present growth is such as can easily be developed into the desired type by judicious cutting, and occasionally by supplementary planting. For the most part this type is indicated (a) on the edges of unwooded lands where it forms a sort of transition between the open fields on one side and the dense forest growth on the other; (b) on knolls or on flats near the creek where picnic groves will be appreciated; and (c) perhaps most important of all, on the edges of Rock Creek where more frequent glimpses of the water and occasional views up or down the creek from the nearby drive can be readily secured by thinning the present dense growth on the banks here and there into groves, groups, and specimens, or in some cases by leaving the trees close together and thinning out only their lower branches.

Type III is a growth composed primarily of cedar, but interspersed with sassafras, locust, and occasional pines, also with sumac and generally low bushy ground-cover. The type is well started on the ridge and slopes east and south from Fort de Rosay. It is not a fast-growing type and it is not tolerant of shade and interference from other trees, so that systematic cuttings and weedicings to remove inharmonious or injurious growth will be essential to its proper maintenance. This type of growth will contribute an interesting and valued varia-
tion in the general landscape of the Park.

**Type IV** is open grass land. There would be occasional trees singly or in groups, to provide shade and for effect in the landscape, but primarily the areas would be open mowed-lands or pastures. The Park as a whole is essentially a woodland park, but for that very reason occasional open areas of breadth and extent are needed if merely for contrast, to accentuate the wilderness and beauty of the forest. Besides, they have a very real recreative value of their own; for in them one can feel and enjoy a sense of openness and freedom which is quite different from the call of the forest.

In general, except on or near the boundaries all present open lands should be kept open. It is proposed to extend some open lands near the creek clear to the water, and to enlarge others slightly on account of views. Besides these minor changes we have proposed to clear most of the woods on the plateau southwest from the Brightwood Reservoir as an extension of the present playfield. And in the northern end of the Park we have proposed restoring the open meadows in the bottom land north of the creek, from the most northerly drive, crossing to the District line, and slightly extending the present meadow land on the other side of the drive.

These clearings in the northern part of the Park will
sacrifice only second-class, rather uninteresting growth, while they will provide a meandering meadow, some fifty acres, in extent bordered by the creek on one side and by dense forests on all sides — an element of extreme beauty and interest in the landscape.

Without going into elaborate detail regarding means and methods of securing and maintaining the types of landscape outlined above, it seems important, if only for explaining more clearly the effects we have in mind, to offer some more or less general suggestions as to the necessary operations. It is out of the question to depend upon written directions for detailed guidance in landscape forestry work of this sort, for after the general aims and methods have been determined comes the delicate and very important work of fitting these methods to the local detailed conditions as they exist. And this can be done only on the spot. In other words, the success of this sort of work must ultimately depend upon a thorough appreciation and understanding, on the part of those actually directing the work, of the essential character and quality of the effects sought after. Slight variations in the manner of doing the work, variations due even to the differing judgments of skilled men, are liable to make such immense differences in the quality of the results that a one-man control of this work seems a distinctly wise policy. Though much
of the most pressing work should be done within the
next few years, every year as long as the Park is kept
up, must call for a careful, intelligent, appreciative
and above all consistent maintenance of the landscape
details.

In Type I, the normal forest conditions
should be maintained as far as possible; and that
means primarily a policy of hands off. Dead and dying
trees, however, should be removed instead of being
permitted to accumulate, as at present, to the point
of adding a distinct note of unhealthiness and neglect
to a landscape which should by all rights be inspiring.
Type I areas, not now covered with forest, should be
planted. Further improvement cuttings or thinnings
should be made only with caution, removing here and
there an old, decrepit or uninteresting tree to give
place to a more vigorous, valuable or interesting
growth. By way of example we would cite the north
slopes in Division "A" lying next the creek just north
of Division "D". Here is Kalmia in great profusion;
but much of it is already shaded out by the pine and
other fast-growing trees that have sprung up amidst it,
and some is from time to time being broken down and
destroyed by the falling of dead trees. To save these
wonderful Kalmia slopes - and they certainly should be
saved - careful intelligent cutting is needed, and it
is needed soon. There coppice or sprout growth occurs (it does not appear to be extensive) it should be gradually removed in favor of seeding trees, for the sprouts as a rule make less interesting and less healthy trees.

Undergrowth should in the main be kept intact, at least where it is not too dense. But careful reduction of the undergrowth is needed here and there, just enough to let the eye penetrate from the walks or roads into the wood. It is hard to say how extensive or how frequent these cuttings of undergrowth should be, but at present the effect of dense impenetrable walls of foliage, especially along the roads, is much too continuous. The driveway now is all too much like a tunnel passing through the forest, and too little like a way within it. Hardly ever should this cutting be extensive enough to open the view from one road or walk to another, but it should be carried far enough and only far enough to invite the eye - and so the interest - away from the path or road as such and into the surrounding woods. Without such subtle assistance the beauty and the value of these wonderful forests will remain only half known and less than half enjoyed. This opening should probably be carried farther in the areas of more intensive use (outlined above) than in the wilder parts; but in all cases it should be done little by little and with extreme caution. After all it is largely one of these matters
some means of developing such conditions as will lead great numbers of people to wander in comfort and safety through the pleasant labyrinth.

In the subtypes - "I-T", "I-R", and "I-E" - in addition to the work above outlined, the development of the dominant species of each particular type should be encouraged by cuttings where necessary, and in some cases by plantings. It should be remembered, however, that tulip need not be the only tree in "I-T" areas, but it should largely predominate. Similarly with "I-R" and "I-E". In the evergreen areas a somewhat special condition exists. Where pine is already growing it is usually the local scrub pine (Pinus virginiana) of small growth and short life. Our advice would be to remove this tree gradually by clearing small areas each year and planting them with white pine, (Pinus strobus), short-leaf pine (Pinus echinata), and with both northern and southern hemlock (Tsuga canadensis and caroliniana). The hemlocks should be used more especially on the north or cooler slopes. Where the evergreen areas are to be extended it will be necessary to cut the existing growth almost entirely and to plant up with pines and hemlocks, though the latter could be started under a deciduous wood if the shade is not too heavy.

In Zone II areas, where the present growth is comparatively dense woodland, radical cutting will be
needed. Groups and specimens comprising the most vigorous and well-branched young trees, or broad-branched old trees of specially good and interesting character, should be carefully selected — enough to shade in the aggregate, when grown, from one-half to three-quarters of the ground. The other trees and undergrowth should then be removed by successive cuttings, and the selected trees allowed to develop. In order to avoid the danger of too sudden exposure these cuttings should not be made all at once. Growth next to the selected trees should be removed first, then as these trees develop in spread more cuttings should be made each few years until the ultimate effect is attained.

In the "II-R" areas the basis of selection is somewhat different. Here the end to be secured is, primarily, better and more frequent views of the creek. The quality and picturesqueness of the trees and other creek-side growth are of course very important; but the aspects disclosed of the creek and of the creek valley are no less important, and should probably be the controlling factors in the determination of cuttings. And in many cases, especially where the creek gorge is narrow and abrupt, it will be found that cutting out some branches, or a bush or two, or removing an obstructing tree here and there, will secure the desired result.
better than thinning as outlined for other "II" areas. It should always be remembered that much of the present beauty of Rock Creek is due to the bordering and often overhanging foliage, and no cutting should be permitted which would perceptibly sacrifice this beauty. The point is, however, that much of this beauty of the creek is in effect latent - it is never seen. The cuttings suggested should be just enough to bring that beauty to light, and never enough to injure it.

In Type III, the work to be done both in making and maintaining is largely weeding out of foreign or inharmonious growth. Cedar should be the dominant tree, and with it might some cassafraes, some locust, some persimmon, and some pine. Among these trees should be sumac, honeysuckle, barberry, wild roses, and other wild shrubs and ground covers of that general character. In extending or perfecting areas of this type occasional planting, and in some cases cutting, will be necessary. Elsewhere it is merely a matter of weeding out trees that are incompatible with the character desired. Most large-growing deciduous trees should be removed, and the scrub pines and other weed trees must be cut before they injure and then destroy the whole character of the type. Already much damage of this sort has been done, and prompt use of the axe is urged.

In Type IV, where weeds now exist, it is
The text on the image is not legible. It appears to be a page of text with no clear formatting or structure. It is difficult to determine the content or context of the text due to the quality of the image.
into place as part and parcel of the scenery and should never stand out as objects complete in themselves with the surrounding landscape becoming merely a background. The split rail fences along the roadsides and many of the foot-bridges now found in the Park are happy examples of this fitness of design.

The roads, bridle paths, and especially the footways present similar though more subtle questions of design. For while serving their obvious purpose of enabling people to get about the Park, they should always and unmistakably fit into the landscape as harmonious and subordinate parts of the scenery through which they pass. Like other park construction they are primarily a means to an end - they merely enable the people to enjoy the refreshing beauty of the park scenery. If in the process they inflict injury upon that scenery or distract attention from it to their own assertive qualities, by just so much do they fail of their primary purpose.

These "ways" of travel, therefore, should first of all exhibit to the maximum the beauty and variety and charm of the scenery. Next, and no less important, they should be so planned and studied in detail as to "seem to belong" where they are. In the case of roads their lines and grades should harmonize with the major lines and forms of the scenery through which they pass; they are seldom beautiful in themselves, wherefore it is
the more necessary they become the cruder is the design.

In the Park development, these elements are not
artificial elements much or necessarily important and
least resistance.

...
of serious injury to the landscape of the Park. It is
of utmost importance, therefore, that such works be
planned and carried out and maintained with a skill no
less appreciative and intelligent and with a control
no less consistent than that required for the landscape
forestry work.

We have not been asked to study a system of
park roads, but the roads bear such a close relation
to the development of the landscape types that we have
necessarily made numerous notes, during our general
studies, regarding road locations, commanding view
points, etc.; and for our own satisfaction these notes
have been developed into the tentative road scheme
which is indicated on the accompanying plan No. 27.

Arrows here and there indicate points and angles of
more or less important views, many of which cannot be
fully realized without some slight cutting. The present
roads are already becoming crowded and in many cases —
along the creek and on steep hillsides — they cannot be
widened without unreasonably serious injury to these
very landscape beauties for the appreciation of which
the roads are primarily built. This condition suggests
at once narrow roads and more of them; a general policy
which has influenced us in planning the system here
presented. We have had in mind also that in many cases
a one-way traffic regulation may sometime be necessary.
The roof is not pointed enough to be
repaired, and the roof of the store is
leaking and needs to be repaired. It is
very important that the repairs be done
immediately.

Additionally, the foundation is not
strong enough to support the weight of
the building. It is necessary to
strengthen the foundation before
beginning any major repairs.

Furthermore, the electrical system is
not up to code and must be updated.

In conclusion, the time has come to
take action and make these necessary
repairs.
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whatever goes on outside the boundary will not obtrude itself from any view-point where the park unit as such may be enjoyed. As an example, the wooded hill southwest of the junction of Bread Branch and Rock Creek from one enclosing side of the main Rock Creek Valley. This hill is private property. What would be the effect on the Park were this hill to be covered not with rich forest but with the backs and back yards of apartment houses or rows of commonplace dwellings, not to mention worse possibilities of private development or neglect? It could not be hidden and would certainly be a very sore spot on the Rock Creek Valley drive. It would not merely ruin the considerable section of the Park in which these private lands form a conspicuous integral part of the landscape, but by interrupting the continuity of character between the portions of the valley above and below would seriously depreciate the cumulative value of the great Park as a whole.

There are four cases of this sort about the Park which it is highly important to rectify before it is too late. These and a few other lesser adjustments are indicated on the accompanying diagram No. 30, and are described briefly below in the order of their importance. All these recommended takings are such essential parts of the park landscape that they have been included in the general plans accompanying this Report.
1. The largest taking recommended is along the west boundary from just above where Broad Branch Road leaves the side of the Park south to the ridge just west of the old Klingel house. Here the more or less open slope west of the Pierce’s Mill section, the hill northwest of Pierce’s Mill, and the west bank of the Broad Branch valley are all now in private hands and are all essential parts of park landscape units. The new limits suggested are future streets proposed on the highway extension plan or tentatively studied out on the basis of the topography. In anticipation of possible serious difficulties in securing all this land, we have divided it into three parts marked “la”, “lb”, and “le” in the order of their importance. Though “la” is by far the most essential of these takings, they all play large parts in guarding the value of this great park. The approximate areas of these proposed additions are: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Area (acres)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107.8</td>
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</table>

As a possible alternative to the “lb” taking (above proposed) it would be fairly satisfactory to secure simply a strip along the west side of Broad Branch Road to protect the chief valley scenery. A strip with a minimum width of about 175 feet would accomplish this. If such procedure were followed we would suggest that the adjacent proposed street system be re-
studied, partly with the idea of a row of lots backing on this proposed new strip of park land, and partly to secure a better adjustment of proposed streets to topographical conditions and the requirements of good suburban developments.

2. East of Rock Creek in the vicinity of the old Blazion Hill the upper half, or more, of the bank of the creek valley is under private control. Enough property should be taken here to place the boundary at or near the top of the ridge. This is second in importance only to "1a" above. The area of the proposed addition is about 5.0 acres.

3. Much of the present irregular north boundary cuts into and across the large meadow unit ("F" on diagram 29) leaving parts of the low land and most of the wooded slopes which naturally enclose the unit in private hands. It is recommended that from a point near Holly Street around to the District line the park boundaries be extended at least to include the principal slopes enclosing this flat meadow unit, and preferably to Sixteenth Street and to the other proposed streets, Linden and Juniper, as indicated on the accompanying diagram. The area of this addition would be about 50.5 acres.

4. From the Military Road south to the proposed Madison Street thoroughfare the property line is irregular and comes well down into the bottom land of the Park.
It would be desirable to take this entire property out to Sixteenth Street, but it could hardly be called essential. Instead, therefore, we recommend making the Park boundary follow the line of Seventeenth Street extended, from Madison Street to Oregon Avenue. This adjustment would involve the addition of about 6.5 acres to the park lands and the release of about 0.5 acres.

5. The strip recently acquired along Piney Branch, from the Park Road entrance to Sixteenth Street, is not wide enough to control effectively the fine wooded hillsides enclosing the valley. On the south especially this park holding should be extended up the bank as far as existing developments will permit. As we have studied it out this addition would have an area of about 9.0 acres.

6. North of Piney Branch and extending around as far as the proposed Taylor Street thoroughfare we suggest that Randolph Street, slightly adjusted to the topography, become the Park boundary. This taking is subdivided into two parts, 6a and 6b, the former being by far the more important. This rectification involves the acquisition of about 9.0 acres of land (6a being 4.2 acres and 6b being 4.8 acres) and the release of about 4.7 acres. It is not necessary, of course, to abandon any of the present holdings, but if for any reason it should be desirable to do so the land here indicated could be aban-
doned without material loss to the Park.

7. The present park line between Klinge Road and Twentieth Street is very broken, and at two points the private property comes too far down into the valley. We suggest a revised line that will eliminate these salients and will provide a reasonable location for a possible boundary street. Land acquired would be about 0.6 acres, park land released about 0.6 acres.

6. THOROUGHFARE CROSSINGS.

The question of thoroughfares crossing the Park is a complex one, and even after thorough study it has been difficult to reach other than tentative conclusions. It is primarily a utilitarian traffic problem - to secure adequate and convenient cross-town thoroughfares between the portion of the District lying east and west of the Park. And the park area is so large that the obstruction to traffic is rapidly becoming serious.

Looked at as a park problem there are two main requirements to be borne in mind; first, to carry the traffic across the Park in that manner and in that location which will obtrude least into the natural landscape; and second, to locate the thoroughfares so that the car lines may give the maximum of service as approaches to and into the Park.
On these premises many possible routes have been studied and the number of crossings to be needed has been carefully considered. Fortunately the length of the Park is radial, as it were, in relation to the city, and it forms practically no obstruction to radial traffic, but only to the less important cross-town traffic. On the whole, therefore, it seems likely that two thoroughfares, supplemented as they will be by the numerous park drive crossings for pleasure vehicles, will be sufficient. Granting this much, we next investigated the general street system of the District, existing and proposed, the present locations of car lines, and the proposed extensions, especially those recommended in the report of the District Commissioners entitled "Street Car Lines in the District of Columbia" dated March 30, 1912 and printed as Senate Document No. 441.

We have also considered carefully the pros and cons of low grade versus viaduct thoroughfare crossings. The grade crossings (climbing down into the valley and up again) would be cheaper, and in their role of park approaches would have the real merit of bringing people down and into the very heart of the Park - the region of the creek itself. On the other hand the obstruction into the "very heart of the Park" of the noise and tangle of heavy trucks and electric cars - conditions of the city - would be a very serious detriment to the
Park. Furthermore, grade crossing routes would of necessity be more circuitous or of steeper gradient than high-level routes—conditions not desirable in District thoroughfares. A careful balancing of these arguments has led us finally to recommend the high-level viaduct type of crossing.

Regarding locations: a thorough consideration of the adjacent street systems present and proposed, of the established car lines, of the topographical conditions of the Park, and of our tentative studies for the park development, has led with little hesitation to the ridge immediately south of the Military Road as one thoroughfare location. On the west it connects with two important proposed thoroughfares, Utah Avenue and Keokuk Street; on the east it connects most easily and directly (as shown) with Madison Street at Sixteenth Street. Madison Street is narrow, but it could be widened as a cross-town thoroughfare. As an alternative route the thoroughfare might be deflected to Kennedy Street, which already has a car line to Fourteenth Streets; but this location would be less direct and would work more injury to the Park. The Fourteenth Street car line when extended could branch into Madison Street, thence across the Park and out Utah Avenue, a street which is ideally located to serve the district on the west between the Park and Connecticut Avenue.
detailed plans for specific improvements within the Park.

Plan No. 35 is a detailed location and grading plan for a park road from Daniel Road at Rittenhouse Street down the valley to Beach Drive. This appeared to be a more or less urgent construction project; and we have prepared the accompanying plan after careful study of conditions on the ground and with the aid of a detailed topographical map which we have had prepared for the purpose. It is hoped that this plan will not only serve for this particular piece of construction but will be looked upon as a typical grading plan - the sort which should be prepared in the same way for all new roads and for all other grading or construction projects in the Park. For it is only by such careful adjustment to existing conditions and features, and careful preparation of detailed plans incorporating those adjustments, that park construction work can be carried out with the best results, with the maximum of harmony, and with the minimum sacrifice of park assets.

Plan No. 36 is a preliminary plan for the utilisation, for certain play purposes, of the plateau about the Brightwood Reservoir. Unlike the grading plan above, it has not been carefully adjusted to grades, trees, and other topographical conditions; it presents merely an organization and arrangement of
recreation units adapted to the limits of space and condition. It should not be carried out, of course, until trees, grades, and other topographical details have been accurately determined and the general scheme carefully adjusted to them.

6. GENERAL NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

The rectification of the Park boundaries is a matter which should not be delayed many years. It might be long before serious damage is done to the Park or before any rise in price or any development of private property occurs to jeopardize the recommended takings; but on the other hand one or the other of these things might happen any time, and then the damage would be done and in some cases it would be beyond repair.

But important as the matter of boundaries appears, it should not be permitted to interfere with the prompt undertaking of certain matters bearing upon the maintenance and improvement of the forest areas. First of all comes the removal of dead wood from the forests, and the general guarding against fire. For about two and one-half months each winter, for the last three or four years, almost the entire park maintenance force - about twenty men - has been used removing dead timber and doing a little incidental thinning of underbrush. But only some thirty-five or forty acres
of woodland have been cleaned each year. There appear to be about six hundred and fifty acres of park forest still to be cleaned - a job which at the present rate would take some fifteen years. As long as this dead timber remains it is a constant fire risk, a serious blemish to park landscape, and a drawback to the building up of new and vigorous forest. For the last few years, the average yearly expenditure for dead timber work has been about $1650, or about $44.00 per acre of woodland cleaned. At this rate it would require about $30,000 to complete the work. We would urge, therefore, that a special appropriation be made in order to have this work done without further delay.

In general, other landscape forestry works outlined in this report are not so pressingly urgent, though in some specific instances prompt action is much to be desired. One case is that of the Kalmia thickets north of Division "D" (mentioned above) which are being shaded out and broken down more and more each year. Only prompt action here will avoid a very serious loss of wooded beauty and interest. In Type "III" areas scrub piñon or large-growing deciduous, trees foreign to the character of the type, are now checking the cedars and other desirable growth, and in some cases even killing them. It would be a great pity not to begin the corrective cuttings in these areas promptly. In Type "II" also, the sooner
management. The position is an important one and it should be made to satisfy a man of the desired ability.

Regarding the general maintenance of Rock Creek Park, there is clearly need for more work than can be accomplished with the funds which have been available hitherto. The yearly cost has averaged, for the last few years, only about $6.75 per acre plus $1.00 per acre for dead timber work. It is impossible to figure out with accuracy what the maintenance charges should reasonably be; but the following figures relating to parks somewhat similar in size, character, or location relative to population, should be at least suggestive.

**Blue Hills Reservation, near Boston**

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yearly maintenance cost about</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly cost of fighting the gypsy and browntail moth pests, about</td>
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**Middlesex Falls Reservation, near Boston**

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<tr>
<td>Yearly cost fighting the gypsy and browntail moth pests, about</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Blue Hills is a large forest reservation, more remote and less frequented than Rock Creek Park, very simple in character, and undeveloped, (like the "T" areas in Rock Creek Park) so the maintenance cost would tend to be low. Middlesex Falls, however, is not unlike Rock Creek Park in size, relation to population, and character of development; it would seem reasonable, therefore,
to expect the maintenance costs in the two parks ultimately to be more or less alike. In estimating present and future maintenance costs, however, it should be remembered that the above cited figures are averages for some years preceding 1917, and that substantial increases must be allowed for the rapid rise in wages since that period.

Appropriations. In Rock Creek Park there is immediate need for more adequate policing, partly for the protection of patrons, but chiefly for the protection of the Park itself from thoughtless and, in some cases, wilful vandalism, and from the very damaging effects of fires. There is immediate need for the complete removal of dead chestnut and other dead and diseased timber. There is immediate need for determining and carrying out, as above noted, numerous corrective cuttings of weed trees and the like. In reality these are extraordinary items of maintenance which have been accumulating for years because they could not be met out of the very inadequate annual appropriations. To make up for the neglect of the past therefore, and to stop at the earliest possible moment further deterioration of the special beauty of this Park, a substantial increase in appropriations is urgently needed. It would seem that these appropriations ought to be exceptionally large for the next few years or until the arrears of work have been attended to. After that they would reasonably be expected to return
still, however, in excess of the appropriations of the past.

In general we would not urge a sudden and large expansion of activities and "Improvements"; for it is conceivable that the Park development might easily be carried too fast and too far. The inherent value of the naturalistic "undeveloped" qualities of this Park cannot be overestimated. For in those qualities lies the essential justification for all that has been done and spent, for all that will be done and spent to give this great Park to the people. In its development the guiding policy should be distinctly one of restraint; in its maintenance the policy should be liberal, in order to meet the continuously increasing needs of the patrons and still more to protect and insure the permanent values of a great public investment.
ROCK CREEK PARK
WASHINGTON D.C.

DIAGRAM
SHOWING
PRIMARY DIVISIONS
OF
LANDSCAPE
AND
ADMINISTRATION

SCALE OF FEET

REPORT OF OLMSIED BROTHERS
SUBMITTED DECEMBER 1918

PLAN NO. 29
LANDSCAPE UNITS - The Park area has been divided into four fundamental landscape types or units which are indicated on this plan by the numbers I, II, III, and IV. Subtypes are indicated by the letters A, B, and C.

I. Describes areas where the general character and character of the natural forest should prevail. Subtypes should be encouraged and designated as follows:

1. Areas where evergreen should predominate.
2. Areas where deciduous should predominate.
3. Areas where trees should be dominant.
4. Areas where shrubs should be dominant.

II. Describes areas where open tree growth with usually a grassy ground cover should prevail.

III. Describes areas where a dense open grassland should prevail.

IV. Describes areas where a dense open shrubland should prevail.

THOROUGHFARE CROSSINGS - Two proposed thoroughfare crossings are shown crossing the park, one between Madison Street to the east and York Avenue on the west, the other between Bay Street and Main Avenue on the east and Venice Avenue on the west. Tentative controlling grades are indicated on these thoroughfares.

PARK DRIVES - A tentative system of park drives is indicated on the plan. These roads have been generally located to serve the future needs of the city and the requirements of the topography, the landscape beauty of the park.

ALLEY STREETS - Proposed elevations are shown on the map. They are planned on the street pattern for the area existing at the District. The proposed elevations will appear on prints combined with the topographic.

Proposed elevations are indicated on the plan.