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Letter from Frank H. Nutter, landscape architect to Albert Wells Pettibone, chairman Pettibone Park Commission. 1902

Nutter, Frank H.

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Frank H. Nutter,

Landscape Architect and Engineer,

710 Sykes Block.

City Park Engineer.

Minneapolis, Minn. Aug. 11th, 1902.

Messrs A. W. Pettibone and Geo. H. Ray,
La Crosse, Wis.

Gentlemen:-

I submit to you herewith, my design for "Pettibone Park" and will add the following in the way of explanation and advice.

In planning a park of this size there is an opportunity to meet the needs and requirements of many different classes of citizens; the women and younger children wish a safe place for rest and the enjoyment of the quieter games, as croquet and lawn tennis and free from danger from carriages and bicyclists.

This is afforded by the broad lawns to the north and east of the artificial lake, while the pavilion near at hand will afford shelter and toilet facilities. This portion of the park will necessarily be maintained with greater care than any other and the terrace around the pavilion will afford opportunity for a display of the rarer shrubs and flowers which will be safe from any but the extremest stages of high water. The belt of large trees along the east side of island will afford welcome shade for a foot path and also a bicycle path overlooking the river and the city. Between this tree belt and the drive is a long open grade which should be made into a lawn affording a striking vista from near the main entrance to the park; a few intruding trees of little value should be removed to add to the effect.

West of the lake, the grounds need not be so carefully kept, being allowed to grow up with wild flowers and grasses, groups of small shrubs and tall wild plants as wood lilies, milkweed, native sunflowers, etc., being encouraged to grow. Portions of this area could be mowed with a scythe, three or four times in a season, so as to make it passable to pedestrians, and an occasional footpath and seats will make it accessible to those who do not care to "rough it".

It may be necessary to adopt some rules against the indiscriminate picking of the wild flowers if this portion of the park is to maintain its beauty.

The open ground south of highway and on west side of island offers the best location for an athletic field for the rougher sports, with bathing facilities close at hand; by grading against the side of the highway embankment, an elevated roadway and path may be obtained from which the games may be overlooked.

The balance of the lower section of the island with its many fine trees should be kept so far as possible as a wild woodland, with only such drives and paths as are necessary to open it up to the public.

The lagoons should be dredged so as to have a proper depth of water at its lowest stage, and the material used in making the required fillings; connection is furnished through these lagoons from the river into the lake; proper landings should be built at proper intervals, and promiscuous landing on the banks should be prohibited, to prevent their being destroyed. I think you will also find it necessary to regulate the fishing in the lake for the same reason.

One difficulty under which you labor is that of securing an adequate entrance to your park, on account of high bridges and narrow and elevated highway across entire island. I have endeavored to remedy this at either side of the island, in a way that will not involve any great expense but still add much to the dignity of the entrances. In course of time the present unsightly trestle bridges will probably be replaced, the highway widened as shown and stone parapet walls with wing walls and posts at the park gateways will be a great addition to its appearance.

I have arranged for two entrances on north side of highway as doubtless most of the travel will be in that direction; from both of these entrances driveways sweep around and pass under the highway onto the southerly section of the park, and a third gateway, midway between these two will afford direct access to the athletic grounds and bath houses. I have indicated in several localities necessary grading to be done; for the rest of the park I would recommend that the borrow pits along highway be eventually filled, and on the south section of the island devote attention to getting such a grade on the low portions of the ground outside of the lagoons proper that they will always drain dry as the water recedes, and making the land grade at the edge of lagoon about at the six foot stage; As this portion of the park is to be kept in a comparatively wild state, the occasional or even annual overflow of certain portions will work no especial damage.

In treating the trees and shrubs on the section south of the highway the first consideration of course is to preserve the old growth timber, and to do this it is sometimes necessary to remove good trees where they are so crowded as to begin to damage each other. Good shrubs should be preserved in many places, especially along the borders of the larger growths. This not only adds to the beauty of the landscape but by shutting out the drying winds helps to preserve the standing trees. The thick growth of willows along east side

of this section I would maintain as a protection against the current, to make the park ^wore retired and conceal the unattractive view of the rafting grounds.

North of highway the thick growth around the old borrow pits should so far as possible be preserved to screen the road. It would be well at many places along the east shore to encourage the growth of low shrubs along edge of bank to conceal the rip-vapping.

I have indicated in several places lines of attractive vistas which should be opened and kept open by trimming of large trees and removing of small ones if necessary.

Along the shores of some of the lagoons, and in some of the retired bays, as specified ^{ed} in plan, it will add to the scene if water lilies are encouraged to grow as they do at present, and without doubt the native lotus can be grown with success, and it might even be worthwhile to experiment a little with the Egyptian lotus and other rarer varieties of water plants which it may be possible to acclimate.

Of course these lily beds should not be disturbed in the dredging but ^e left as they are, and the excavating carried on in the center of the lagoons.

It will be noticed that I have changed the channel by which launches and boats will pass from the river into the upper lake, by cutting a new channel through the wooded point south of highway, and indicating a new and more central location for the opening under highway bridge whenever it may be rebuilt.

Near south end of island the driveway crosses entrance to one of the lagoons with a "low bridge", this would however allow row boats to pass under at ordinary stages of water.

On the plans I have indicated the borders of present woodlands to be preserved, also important individual trees, where they stand near enough to the drives or paths to effect the location of same. One of the plans is to be kept as more for exhibition than the other on which I have made notes and references to guide in the work of construction.

I think I have explained matters quite thoroughly, but if more information is desired on any obscure point, I shall be glad to hear from you in the matter.

Respectfully,

Frank H. Nutter

Landscape Architect.