FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT
COUNTY OF ALLEGHENY
BUREAU OF PARKS

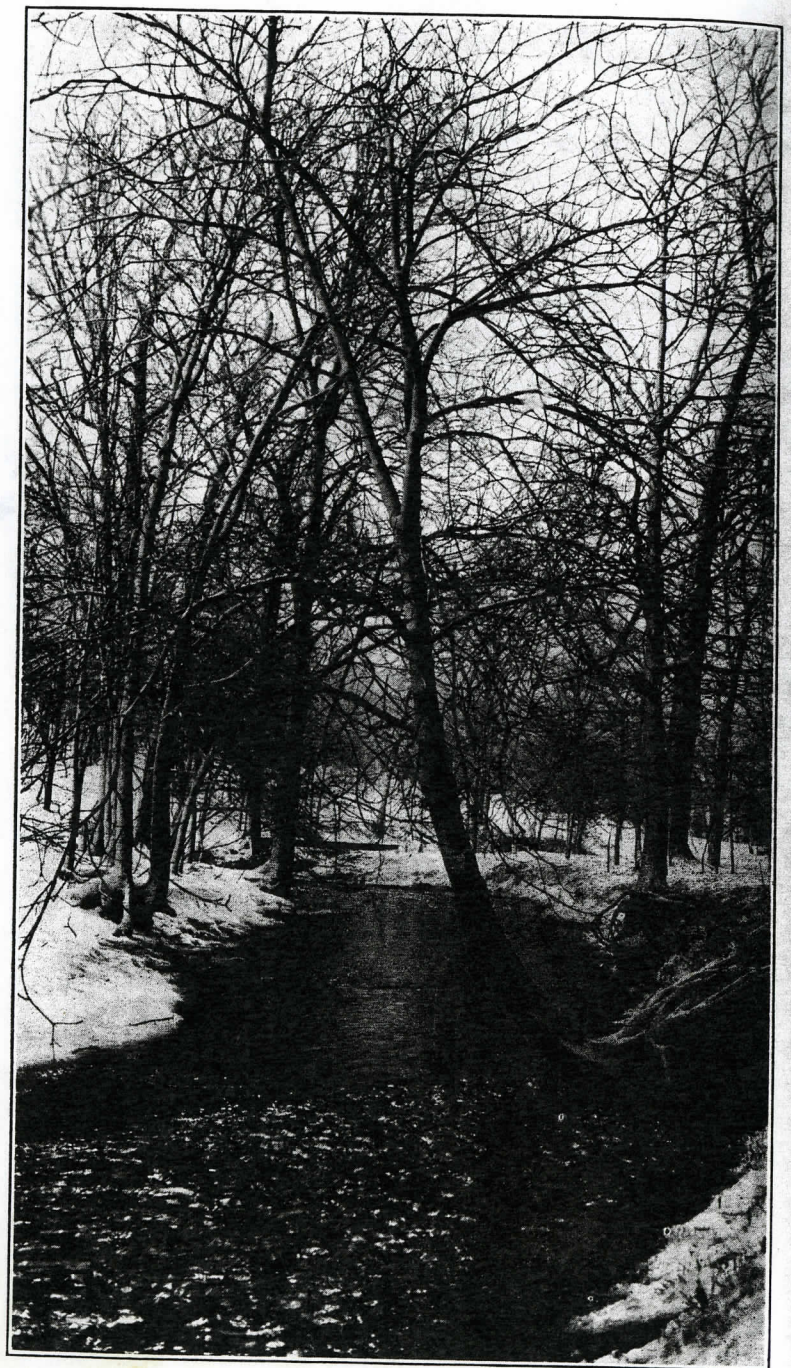
PAUL B. RIIS, Director



Board of County Commissioners

Joseph G. Armstrong, Chairman
E. V. Babcock
Chas. C. McGovern

1931



Board of County Commissioners,

Hon. E. V. Babcock, Chairman.

Gentlemen:

In accordance with your wishes and instructions, it pleases me to present, herewith, the Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Parks, outlining in detail the work contemplated, being constructed, or completed in North and South Parks, under my direction and supervision during the calendar year of 1931.

Every effort has been made to meet any reasonable demand, for the comfort and enjoyment of the public, and provide safety and protection, in their many pursuits.

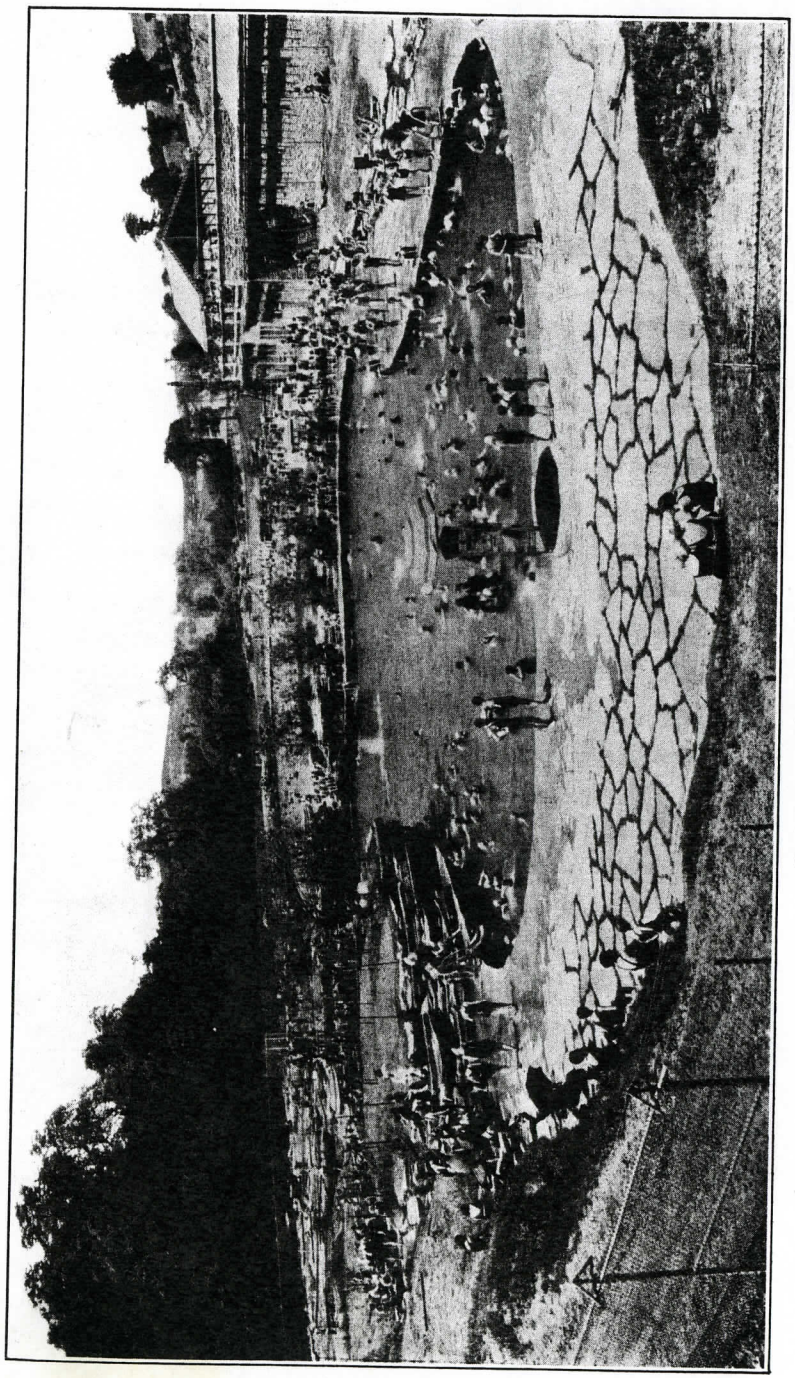
Not only were the two County Parks well and efficiently managed and the large throngs of visitors pleasantly and courteously entertained, with all objectives gained or well under way, but I, also, desire to state that at the close of the season, as in the previous three years of my administration as Director of the Bureau of Parks, the ledger showed a substantial cash balance; this year amounting to over $475,000.00 to our credit, on November 30, 1931, according to the records of the County Controller.

Notwithstanding the general financial depression, several major projects were completed in South Park; such as the Swimming Pool, building of the Service Group, certain utilitarian and pleasure drives, and a number of lesser improvements—all of which will be touched upon later. These improvements form a part of the general plan looking to the complete development of the two County Parks, which will offer boating, swimming, golf, horseback riding, baseball, football, tennis, mushball, bowling on the green, archery, horseshoe pitching, soccer, polo, overnight camps, a stadium for mass athletics, field meets and pageants, camp colonies, picknicking and many other lesser sports and recreation facilities, that when completed will serve the people of Allegheny County as public country clubs complete in every appointment.

The plan embraces the development of athletic fields of standard size and championship caliber, that State and Interstate Meets now taking place in other cities, may be brought to Pittsburgh, that its athletic spirit will find still greater expression with greater opportunities.

To outward appearances the Parks are increasing in popularity and while it is impossible to definitely count the number of Park visitors, checked records registered attendance in South Park alone for one day last summer of over one hundred thousand people, who were motoring, picknicking, or engaged in the various pastimes of horseback riding, tennis, baseball, golf, or swimming. Such estimates indicate an attendance for the season of well over two million people who visited the two Parks. A statement, supported by daily records of actual participation in swimming, picnics, golf, tennis, soccer, band concerts, and Hallowe'en dances, shows the following attendance for the year:

Boy Scouts	780 boys
Swimming	231,793 people
Picnics	137,500 people



Swimming Pool—South Park

Golf—	
North Park	30,213 people
South Park	53,519 people
Tennis	13,905 people
Soccer	21,475 people
Band Concerts	7,000 people
Hallowe'en Dances	1,500 people
Total	497,685 people

Conforming with instruction of your Honorable Board to make a nominal charge for the privilege of playing golf, season permits were issued to players on presentation of 1930 County tax receipts, at $10.00 for adults and $5.00 for junior players, a greens fee of $1.00 per day for non-taxpayers, and $5.00 a year for the use of lockers. These charges proved popular with the players. The permits were good on either course.

The money taken in at the Golf Courses during the season amounted to:

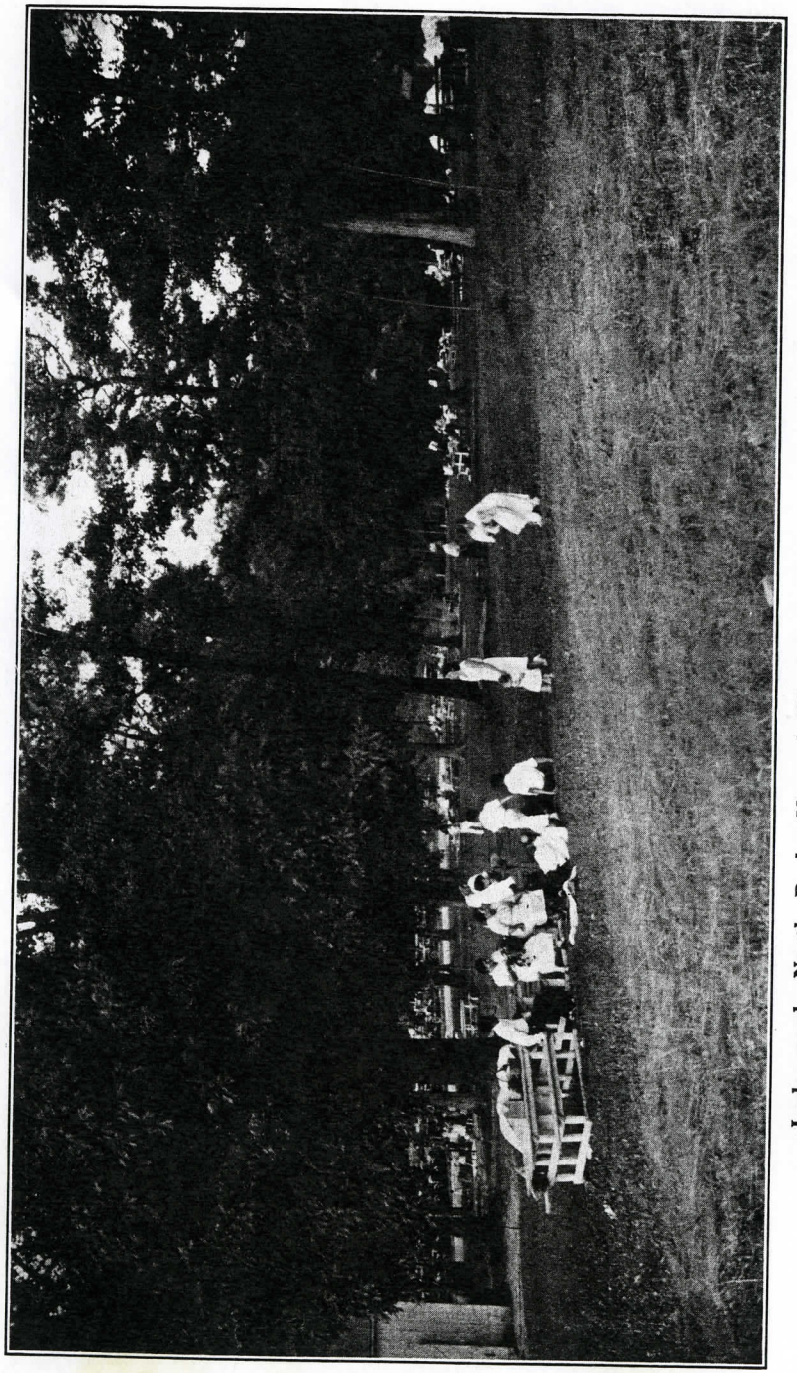
Greens Fees—North Park	$12,167.50
Greens Fees—South Park	21,427.00
Locker and Season Permits— (North and South Park)	14,120.00
Total	$47,714.50

Unquestionably, this amount will be increased considerably in 1932, since the full eighteen holes of both courses will be opened for public play no later than May 1.

Your Honorable Board further instructed me to make a charge of ten cents, (10c) per person over ten years of age for the use of the Swimming Pool, netting the County the sum of $18,773.30; bringing the total receipts from the Golf Courses and Swimming Pool up to $66,487.80, all of which amounts were turned over to your Honorable Board. A field accounting was made by the Controller of Allegheny County of above amounts and found to correspond with stub and ticket records.

The small entry fee for swimming, however, was insufficient to cover the operating and maintenance cost of the Swimming Pool, though there is every reason to believe that with the experience of the past season the income can be made to cover the outgo, if not actually showing a balance on the right side of the ledger.

An infallible barometer of the increasing favor in which the Parks are looked upon by the people, is the application for permits which in 1927, amounted to one hundred fifteen permits, eight hundred six in 1930 and twelve hundred ninety-nine in 1931, or practically one-third more permits than the preceding year. Unquestinably, the broader facilities offered on every hand has stimulated greater interest, while the depression has, also, been an incentive for the people to use the Parks where wholesome enjoyment could be had without specific outlay excepting for golf or swimming. In fact the greater



Ledgewood—North Park—Natural Woodlands Have Human Use Appeal

patronage of the Parks is traceable to the many unemployed who found here places to spend their time pleasantly and in various ways, free of charge, or at a cost within the reach of all.

Parks primarily are intended to counteract the effects of pent-up living in cities, the attending irritations and artificialities of civilization. Here the people may find their specific kind of recreation in the wholesome surroundings, atmosphere and spirit of Mother Nature, that even for short periods, will tend to recreate mind and body as nothing else can.

It is gratifying to note the marked friendliness and good fellowship of Pittsburgh's park patrons, their appreciation of the facilities afforded them, manifested in an orderliness and lack of vandalism not encountered as a usual thing. It is more than gratifying to state that not once during the entire year has it become necessary to make a single arrest for misconduct of whatever nature; a record that undoubtedly not only stands in the annals of park history of the United States, but, also, the entire world. Hence, it is possible for the Park police and officials to retain friendly relations with the Park visitors at all times, and at the same time maintain a most orderly enjoyment thereof.

That the Parks may prove more attractive to the people from the outset, your Honorable Board placed herds of buffalo and deer in both North and South Park where they were given a large range. Here they could live in a state of semi-domestication and yet retain to an extent their more natural mode of life.



Joe Black Man, Chief Big Beaver and Chief Eagle Ribs, the picturesque Blackfeet, who attracted thousands of visitors to the County Parks, in its early days.

Indians were brought from the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana to give a true color of a primitive past. As was hoped, they drew to the parks and entertained thousands of delighted children and adults. However, separated as these Indian groups were from each other, two of the families showed symptoms of nostalgia and were returned to the Reservation in 1929 and 1930; retaining the family of Big Beaver in North Park until May 1, 1931. This group, the more typical and attractive, composed of Chief Big Beaver, Princess Mudhead, Eddie Jr., George, Mary Josephine and Joey Armstrong—the latter born in North Park and named for the late County Commissioner, Joseph G. Armstrong—seemed better able to adjust themselves to the mode of life away from the Reservation.



Joe Black Man, a young member of promise of the Blackfeet Braves, whose fine horsemanship made him a favorite with our feminine younger set in South Park

Undoubtedly their three years' sojourn in North Park was influenced by the desire of Princess Mudhead to give her growing children the advantage of a better education, although, she, herself, was ailing and enduring considerable physical suffering. It is, of course, to be expected that the Redman sooner or later falls into the irresponsible ways of his people and in consequence, your Honorable Board readily consented to their wishes to return to their homeland in the spring of 1931, particularly in view of the fact that it was no longer necessary to attract people to the Parks, but rather to care for the hundreds of thousands who found there much interest otherwise. We regretted to see them go—they had meant much to Park visitors of Allegheny County, children and grown-ups alike.

Daring, dashing pictures, a breath of a vanished past, they possess a certain amount of native showmanship and homely arts, and a mode of life differing from our own, a physique and character peculiarly their own. Combined with a heroic background of romance, the love of the savage for gaudy things, Blackfeet fit well into the background of large parks and reservations.

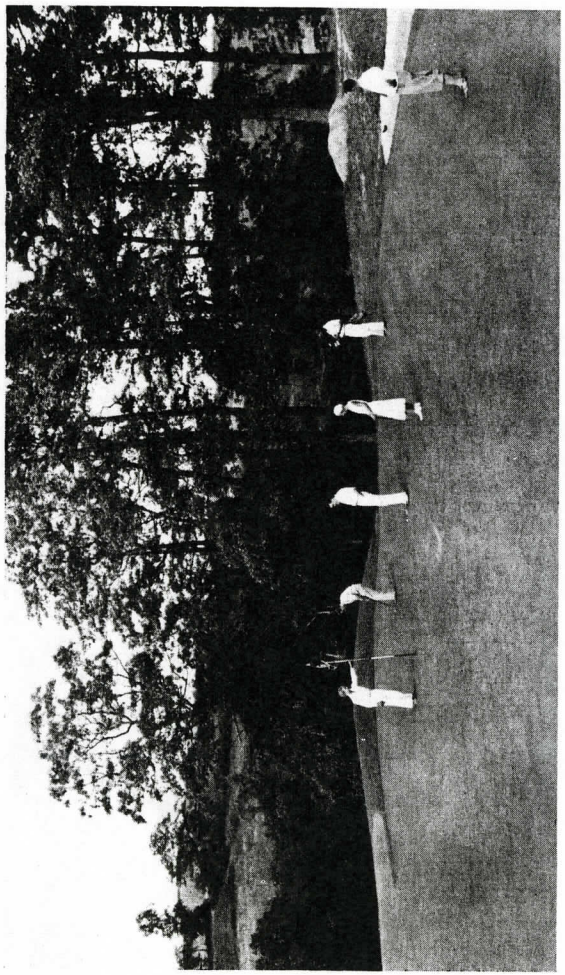
Allegheny County's experience with Indians, and more specifically with Blackfeet, has had its value and in many ways accomplished its purpose. Since the Mingo, of earliest Pennsylvania history, a denizen of the forested wilderness, is no more, Blackfeet of the cattle ranges presented a pleasing type, high lights of primitive America, and certainly a much more realistic presentation of our early days than found in the present day show and circus Indian.

The money to bring them here, their wages, and return to the Reservation was well spent. Our people have been given opportunity, under almost ideal conditions, to once more see buffalo and Indians in the living flesh, primitive Americans of a heroic past.

North Park has been enlarged by the purchase of two parcels of land comprising 54 acres, bringing the total acreage of this Park up to 2,253.97 acres. No additional purchases were made in South Park which, at present, has an acreage of 1,803.24 acres. This brings the present area of the two County Parks up to 4,057.21, as against 3,196.37 acres in 1927. While these areas at first glance may seem large, it must be remembered that the County Parks are supplementing the park system of the City of Pittsburgh, at the present time wholly inadequate to care for the needs of its citizens living within the corporate limit of the city, and which the County Parks to a very large extent are serving.

When one further considers the population of the County as great as that living within the city, many of those using the Public Parks at some time or other, these Parks become the virtual recreation center of Greater Metropolitan Pittsburgh, with a population of nearly two million people. It may reach still further since autos from eighteen different states were noted at the Swimming Pool in a single day. The time, therefore, is not far distant when additions must be made in other parts of the County to care for a steadily growing patronage.

Few accidents occurred, and of a minor nature only, in either Park. The Golf Courses, too, were found unusually safe, due to complete visibility everywhere, and only a few reports came to this office of temporary injury by driven balls.



The Sixth Hole at North Park Provides Technique and Sportiness and is a Challenge to the Best of Golfers; the Contoured Green in Its Shaded, Hillside Setting Makes for a Fitting Finish to a Perfect Hole

It is pertinent to note here, that the technique and construction of both courses has solved many objections and ills usually encountered on public links, their architecture and technique being the sum total of eighteen years' personal experience in both building and maintaining public courses.

Oakmont, the St. Andrews of this country, ceded to be the last word in private course construction and technique, a proud Pittsburgh possession, represents the highest art of the private golf course. North and South Park links, on the other hand, represent the best examples in the United States of public courses; their technique, too, is intriguing, but all similarity, otherwise, stops there. Oakmont tests the skill of the best, while the County Courses offer play to beginners. They fall short of exacting tests of highest skill attained at Oakmont and other exceptional local private clubs, since they were built for utmost safety and to speed up play, that they may accomodate a maximum of players every day, and yet furnish a thrill to the eighty-five percent of public linkers who will ever shoot over a hundred for the eighteen holes. And yet, to date, par on either course has not been broken by the three times public course champion, Carl Kauffmann, or anyone else.

The County Courses, in addition to their adaptability to public links play, were largely a grading and landscape problem, that they, in the final scheme, would become an intimate part of the surrounding park landscape.

Seven hundred twenty golfers played over South Park Course Decoration Day and if they had continued to arrive after 2 P. M. as they had up to that time, another hundred could have been accommodated without crowding—surely a concrete example of the course's ability to absorb maximum crowds.

In keeping with the general trend of our municipalities and political sub-divisions, your Honorable Board instructed the Bureau of Parks to equip itself with additional technical personnel and mechanical equipment, to make possible outdoor operations usually confined to the open season. In keeping with these instructions, about five hundred men were given employment throughout the winter at such work as clearing woodlands and picnic groves, removing stumps and down timber, transplanting large trees, operating quarries for building material and flagstones, construction of rock and ledge work around the Swimming Pool, installation of storm sewers, rough grading of Park Drives, improving existing old roads, tearing down buildings, construction of service groups, building of ovens and oven shelters, repairing buildings necessary in the management of the Parks, and opening up additional bridle and nature trails. Most of these matters are more minutely referred to in other parts of this report.

In order to make possible the wide range of work done, your Board sanctioned a procedure to do all possible work without advertising or contract, to employ as many people from Allegheny County as could be handled advantageously. There is, however, a limit to what may be done with hand labor. Hence, it became necessary to offer partial relief by week-about employment of such labor not essential to operate and maintain the Parks efficiently. The relief thus afforded, nevertheless, has been a godsend to the families living in the Park communities depending upon the labor of their hands for a livelihood.

LAND ACQUISITIONS

In order to make possible access to the plateaus and hills of the Pearce, Wagner and Guyton properties—approximately five hundred acres of wooded hills and ridges to the north and east of the Pearce Mill Road in North Park—your Board purchased 53 acres of land from the Evangelization Society of the Pittsburgh Bible Institute at $250.00 per acre. This new purchase not only possesses geological unity and is partly covered with a fine stand of timber, but offers the only easy access to the adjacent Park properties, now a bird sanctuary, coursed with primitive trails, and, also, containing the beaver meadow.

Negotiations were completed for the purchase of one acre of land from George F. Grubbs at $500.00 per acre, primarily intended for an easier township road connection from the relocated Kummer Road in North Park, with its continuation outside the Park.

These two purchases complete all contemplated additions to North Park and make possible the completion of a general plan, comprehensively dealing with its driveway system and location of major recreational groups and features.

PERMITS ISSUED

As stated elsewhere in this report, 1299 permits were issued for picnic groups in the two Parks, 770 for South Park and 529 permits for North Park. No change has been made in the prevailing policy that all groups numbering less than twenty people may avail themselves of any grove not taken at the time and without a written permit.

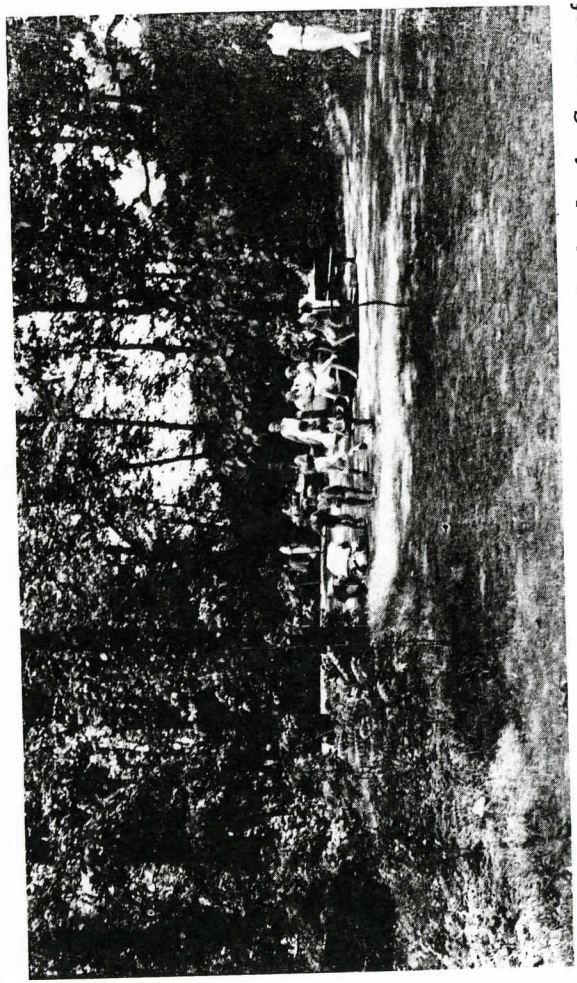
The approximate attendance at these picnics, and as estimated by the permits, show a number of nearly one hundred thirty-seven thousand five hundred people, an increase of more than fifty thousand over the year 1930.

Unquestionably, much of this increase is due to the greater facilities offered in golf, swimming, tennis, bridle trails and other sports, which impress the groups favorably as to the use of the Park facilities, in that they are offered a wider range of recreation than may be had elsewhere. Thus, it becomes possible to cater to the wishes of any group and to the individual members of the family.

The addition of several groves in South and North Park, too, undoubtedly has stimulated a greater patronage as it has been possible to assign groves to individual groups in practically all cases.

RECREATION

Much progress has been made in the year 1931 in building up broader recreational facilities in North and South Parks. Not only have more groves been opened up, additional bridle and nature trails built, horseshoe courts, ball diamonds and tennis courts added, but, also, two golf courses, and a swimming pool in South Park, have been turned over to public use.



Edgebrook—South Park—Gently the Sun Steals Through the Leafy Canopy of Ancient Elms, Lighting the Sylvan Glade with Cheery Laughter