

**THE PLAN OF THE PARK AND REASONS FOR ITS ADOPTION**  
*Transcribed from an undated (c. 1872) handwritten manuscript by Henry Shaw*  
**ALSO KNOWN AS "HENRY SHAW ESSAY"**

In all ornamental improvements of land the purposes for which these improvements are intended are the first objects of the Landscape Gardener. A public park should be so planned as to afford recreation to the greatest number. Tower Grove Park is in form an oblong, the length many times greater than the width, the eastern end being 600 feet in the city limits, and running westward forty arpents or nearly one and a half miles, the main entrance or East Gate on Grand Avenue is about three miles two hundred yards from the Court House, nearly central between the North and South limits of the City. The form of the ground naturally suggested a central drive or road, which has been laid out of a suitable width to accommodate the numerous vehicles that will throng to the park; each end of the central drive being rather elevated gives a fine view of the park and its throng of visitors. Still, to afford variety, the straight line of a mile long is broken by two turnouts or oval spaces, round which right and left drives are carried. Arrived at the round point that terminates the central avenue, the drive is continued in curved lines round the West End of the park. At the extreme west is the third carriage entrance West Gate opening on the Kings Road, but continuing the drive back again on the south side, and exit by the North Gate, the whole gives nearly three miles of drives and three carriage entrances. The advantages of the central drive are 1<sup>st</sup>, giving visitors a better view of the park and of each other and 2<sup>nd</sup>, its decided adaptability to the form and nature of the ground. Under some circumstances curved drives are proper and desirable, as in situations where large sheets of water exist or prominent eminences; to drive round such objects is a pleasing necessity, but here the land is a rolling prairie, of rich loamy soil, without springs or ponds of water. These are my reasons for the plan adopted as to the roads or drives.

We now come to the class of park visitors the most numerous and most important, to whom the enjoyment of green grass, trees and fresh air is most essential, to those who will come probably not to ride in the park but to walk. It is for these that our plans have been carefully designed. The ample gravel walks at each side of the drive commence at the pedestrian gates and are continued from one end of the park to the other, without the necessity (except at one place) of ever crossing the drives or carriage ways. Entering at East Gate on Grand Avenue north side and continuing on a short distance are the children's play ground and croquet ground, which is also accessible by a covered gateway on Magnolia Avenue; here the vine-clad trellises and trees will, when grown, afford ample shade. The summer house in the midst will be acceptable shelter, and someday the elms, tulip trees and cypress will rear their lofty summits. Passing either of the two bridges to the west is the first ornamental well house and seats. The trees here are sycamores, lindens, and ash. Continuing a quarter of a mile further is the evergreen walk, planted with the hardiest conifers, hemlock and Norway spruce, which someday will be shady and agreeable; nearby is an ample well house, where seats will be found, the walk to this point is three quarters of a mile from the East Gate. Near at hand is the Music Stand, situated on a rising ground in the central park of the Park. The reason for the Music Stand being situated here was its central and elevated position between the East and North Gates. From hence proceeding on toward the gatekeeper's house and police station, the North Gate on Tower Grove Avenue is reached, when the walk can be continued on half a mile further to the west. The exit here is on the Kings Road in close vicinity to the county asylum, or, returning east by the curved drive, the exit by the North Gate leads the visitor to the Missouri Botanical Gardens, open at all suitable hours and seasons to the public. On the south side of the park, the same facilities as to walks and summer houses have been provided, as also at the west end of the park, the walks are continued on, from one end to the other, almost without the necessity of crossing a single drive.

## **Trees and Shrubs**

The trees have been planted with reference to shade, in lines, groups and single, and with regard to tints and autumn colors, looking west from the circle a vista is presented with trees on either side which I am pleased to think will someday have a fine effect, for the groups are so arranged that the light and dark tints will afford an agreeable contrast. The dark foliaged ash and elm, with the light foliaged sycamores and maples, the lofty tulip and broad-leaved cucumber threes relieved by the spiral Norways and lofty poplars, interspersed with groups of sweet gums, lindens, and scarlet oaks – but at present the trees are small, and the beauty of the view is of necessity reserved for the future.

In matters of taste, opinions are various. The plan of planting of Tower Grove Park is the result of 1<sup>st</sup>, my experience in the formation of the Botanical Gardens and arboretum at Tower Grove; 2<sup>nd</sup>, the public parks and promenades I have visited in England, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and other countries; 3<sup>d</sup>, from reading eminent authors on landscape gardening: Sir Uvedale Price on the picturesque, Repton, Gilpin, Loudon, Downing and the annual reports of the New York parks and Alfand's parks and promenades of Paris the last named work lately presented to our Mercantile Library by George I. Plant, Esq. The picturesque or strictly natural style I have never seen, except in the landscape paintings of Rosa di Tivoli, Salvator Rosa and others; wild nature is not what the landscape gardener aims to produce. The cultivated or gardenesque style has been followed in the park. Nature has not been outraged by abrupt curves or distorted forms, but the endeavor has been to unite utility, variety and beauty.

## **Natural Drains**

The ground was naturally drained by three runs crossing the park at nearly equal distances, afterward uniting and forming a branch of the little river of Mill Creek that passes through the city, with these runs or rivulets our drains for carrying off surface water are connected, therefore no expensive topographical engineering was required. Someday these runs may become offensive to the Park and require covering over, at a cost of some 12 to 15 thousand dollars.

## **Maintenance of the Park**

Is limited to \$25 thousand dollars per annum, which will barely pay superintendent, gate keepers, police patrol, gardeners, laborers, some annual painting, keeper of horses, material for repair of drives and walks, repairs of pumps and drinking fountains, harness, carts, wagons, etc. Trees, grass and shrubbery will be the chief adornments of our park, and the work of the gardeners and laborers will be the keeping of these in order and good trim. The gravelling, sprinkling, and rolling of the walks and drives will also require constant attention.

## **No flowers or Foliage Plants**

Flower gardening can form no part of our work; the planting of palms and other exotic foliage plants to be put out at the annual return of warm weather would incur a large additional sum for plant houses and annual maintenance. Of late years these luxuries to the parks of Europe have been introduced, and combined with architectural embellishments have a magnificent effect, but for the present would be inexpedient at Tower Grove Park. The collection of foliage and flowering plants at the Missouri Botanical Garden is close at hand.

## Selection of Trees

I have thus stated my reasons to my fellow Commissioners and to the public for the plan of the park and its ornamentation. The plan is adapted to the form of the ground, and the buildings and ornamental structures were erected with strict regard to the amount of the improvement fund placed in our hands for that purpose. With respect to the planting of the trees and shrubbery I have used such judgment as a long experience in arboriculture has enabled me to form. The finest and best trees adapted to the soil and climate of Missouri have been planted, those available for use here have been tried and are now well known, with little probability of much further addition to the Sylva of our country. Next to our native trees Northern Europe has furnished us the greatest number of hardy healthy species, also a few from Siberia, China, and Japan, but of the vast number of trees and plants introduced to science in the last fifty years, from Australia, Southern Africa, Northern India, and South America, none have proved available here, the cedars, cryptomerias, araucarias and eucalyptus have all failed, except as greenhouse plants; the cedars of Lebanon and India (so much prized in Europe) have died after repeated trials at Tower Grove, and the conifers of California, from which such great expectations were formed twenty years ago, are with few exceptions laid aside as failures, the beautiful Pinus insignis of California dies right out and Abies Douglasii of Oregon ekes out a puny existence, while it is lately announced as having grown at Castle Kennedy, one hundred feet in altitude and nine feet in circumference of stem in forty years. The trees planted in Tower Grove Park are of the hardiest and healthiest kinds, consisting of –

### Deciduous Trees

Oaks, various kinds  
Elms, various kinds  
Platanus or Sycamore, 2 kinds  
Maples, various kinds  
Alders  
Poplars  
Magnolias, various kinds  
Birch, various kinds  
Liquidamber or Tulip  
Taxodium or Cypress  
Linden or basswood  
Willows  
Wild cherry and crabs  
Judas or Red Bud, etc., etc., etc.

### Conifers and Evergreens

Pines, various kinds  
Firs, various kinds  
Spruces, various kinds  
Junipers, various kinds  
White Cedar  
Arborvitae  
Cypress and larch  
Holly  
Mahonias  
Pyracanthus  
Libocedrus  
Thuopsis  
Prinos, etc., etc.

Permanent iron labels will designate the names of all of the trees and shrubs, with the intention of interesting the public in the knowledge of arboriculture, the scientific or botanical names under the inspection of our learned fellow citizen Doctor George Engelmann, as a guarantee of their correctness.

### Planting the avenues around the Park and in the City Suburbs

The intelligent Superintendent of City Parks, in his late report calls the attention of the city authorities to widening of our suburban avenues, and planting the same with trees, forming drives and promenades; more useful and available to the greater number of our citizens than distant parks, and at much less cost. Another highly respected citizen coincides with these views and considers it both proper and practicable that the different tracts of land owned by the city, occupied by various public institutions, situated most favorably for embellishment and accessible conveniently from all portions of the city, should good earnest be taken hold of, and beautiful and made available for park purposes, and as he observes, why not open and improve Grand Avenue in its entire circuit around the city by planting trees in Boulevard style and paving the roadway with limestone, covered in Meramec gravel, thus securing the best of roadways, as free at all times from

both mud and dust. Then commence if you please at the river, improve the yard occupied by the water works, buildings and reservoirs, then follow the course of Grand Avenue, westwardly and southwardly in or join successively, by shaded avenues, the various plats of ground on or near the route reserved for park use until you reach Lafayette Avenue, which should be improved to Lafayette Park. Then comes the reservoir grounds at the intersection of Lafayette and Grand Avenues; then the Botanical Gardens and Tower Grove Park fall into line, extending to the county asylum; thence good drives and shaded avenues to Arsenal Park, United States Marine Hospital, and all public grounds in the southern part of the city until you reach the river.

Now by this plan suggested, the tax payers of the city will not be burdened for the purchase of ground, and every part of the city would for years to come possess cool, shady and accessible grounds for recreation and comfort. These improvements could be made advantageously, under proper supervision of the municipal authorities, without incurring a debt of a million to purchase localities, and millions more to prepare upgraded grounds for the first work for planting and adornment and moreover these localities must soon be improved, and why not accomplish two objects by one expenditure.

Shady and pleasant retreats are desirable and necessary and due to the public, but cannot this be accomplished in the way proposed with less cost and more satisfactory and beneficial results, than by the various expensive and remote localities recently proposed at Jefferson City? In pursuance of these suggestions Captain Silas Bent and others are putting the matter to practical test by widening two avenues running west from Grand Avenue to Tower Grove Avenue, and each a mile long, to one hundred feet wide, and being without sink holes to serious inequalities, will incur little expense in grading.