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REPORT

TO ACCOMPANY PLAN

OF

PENNYPACK PARK

PREPARED FOR THE COMMISSIONERS OF FAIRMOUNT PARK

JUNE 5, 1916

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FOREWORD

Although imagination may carry well beyond the limits of vision, it is doubtful if so great a mind as that of William Penn could picture the present development of Philadelphia, when he appointed his Commissioners to found the city and sent Thomas Holme, the Surveyor General, to plan and lay out the townsite.

The stress of commercial activities in accomplishing the rapid growth of our modern cities is so great, that the outdoor recreation phase of social economics and its influence on human efficiency would be sadly neglected, were it not for the disinterested and unremitting efforts of such public-spirited, far-seeing, philosophical men, as have gathered together in the Park Commissions of the many cities of our country. Every shout of childish glee, every expression of visual pleasure, every relaxation of mind or muscle, every smite of contentment, which the recreation in Pennypack Park affords, will be a well-deserved tribute to the City Officials and Park Commissioners, under whose administration this Park has been secured to the people of the City.

The efforts of Mr. George S. Webster, formerly Chief of the Bureau of Surveys, Department of Public Works, and now Director of the Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, have been untiring in securing the valley of Pennypack Creek to the people of Philadelphia for a park and it is due largely to his foresight and his appreciation of future benefits, together with his unhesitating courage of conviction,

that so much has been accomplished toward the actual realization of the parking scheme.

In presenting to the Commissioners of Fairmount Park the plan for the development of Pennypack Park, the grateful appreciation of the writer is extended to Mr. Jesse T. Vogdes, Chief Engineer to the Commissioners, as well as to Messrs. George S. Webster, Chester E. Albright, B. A. Haldeman, Clement B. Webster and Leslie S. Marshall, for their hearty cooperation and interest in the carrying out of this work.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY

Upon authority given Mr. Jesse T. Vogdes, Chief Engineer to the Commissioners of Fairmount Park, by resolution of the Committee on Outlying Parks, adopted July 9, 1915, the writer was retained to prepare "a plan for the development of Pennypack Park, as now laid out on the City Plan, using the topographical surveys of the Bureau of Surveys as a basis." As these data were devoid of tree and other necessary locations, they were supplemented by surveys, sketches and observations made on the ground by members of the writer's office staff.

Pennypack Park lies partially in that portion of Philadelphia known as Holmesburg, so named in memory of Thomas Holme, the Surveyor General, who, under the direction of William Penn's Commission, laid out the townsite of Philadelphia in 1682. The name "Pennypack" is said to be derived from the Indian name "Pemapecka" or "Pemapecta" given to the Creek running through the Park and intended to describe the winding, crooked course it pursues. The Park lands include about twelve hundred and sixty acres in the valley of the Creek, as it winds its way from Pine Road to the State Road near the Delaware River. This is a distance of about seven miles in a straight line and almost eleven miles, if the course of the Creek is followed. Suburban characteristics are changing rapidly in this vicinity to meet the needs of the expanding City. Because of its varied topography, the land here has not been used extensively for agricultural purposes, nor would it be desirable

for building sites, but, with properly directed development, it undoubtedly will be of great value and beauty as a park.

The country hereabouts is redundant in history. The body of Thomas Holme is buried just outside the limits of the Park, on an avenue now in course of construction, to be named Holme Avenue in memory of the Surveyor. His grave is of especial interest, as is also the old Pennypack Baptist Church, founded in 1688 and still standing but a short distance from the entrance to the Park on Krewstown Avenue, between Oswald Avenue and Meeting House Road.

Pennypack Park is about eleven miles from the City Hall by way of Broad Street and the Northeast Boulevard. The Frankford and Holmesburg line of trolley, the Pennsylvania Railroad to Holmesburg Junction and to Bustleton by the Bustleton Branch, as well as the Philadelphia and Reading Railway to Bustleton, provide easy access to different portions of the tract. As the City expands, transportation necessarily will be extended in this direction and the Park will be accessible by other car lines, as well as by boats up the Delaware River. Construction already is under way for the continuation of the elevated railway from the City to Frankford Avenue and Rhawn Street, in close proximity to the Park, and it is hoped that the Philadelphia and Reading Railway Company will construct a suitable station for the accommodation of its passengers where its line crosses the Park.

The natural contour of the Park is that of rather steep sides, with here and there plateaus at the top, enclosing meadow lands which border upon the Creek. These slopes are for the most part thickly wooded with a variety of trees. The erratic course of the

Creek and its wide, sweeping bends give diversity to the scenery and unusual possibilities for landscape treatment. An extensive area of land is drained by this valley and in time of severe storm the flood waters have risen as high as twelve feet above the normal flow. Several dams have been constructed to impound water for the use of some small industries which get their power from this stream.

In the preparation of a layout such as this one, a great deal of time and careful consideration must be given to the bringing out and the development of the natural beauties of the landscape found. This is often accomplished through the treatment of adjacent points in a way to lend an indirect effect on the particular portion of the landscape to be treated and to fulfill the vistas desired from different directions. It is well-nigh impossible to render in the flat plan of a layout the picture the landscape engineer has in mind and a full appreciation of the details and the ensemble must be furnished by the imagination of the observer with the plan as a guide to direct the imagination in as great a degree as possible.

The plan of Pennypark Park has been carried into as much detail as seemed wise up to this time, it being the intention to give the general scheme for entrances, drives, bridle paths, waterscapes, plantations, playgrounds, etc., with the expectation that upon completion of this general plan, which is presented herewith, the Comissioners will order the further details, working drawings, specifications and direction upon the ground necessary for the execution of the work. The value of a park lies in its beauty, accessibility and utility for the enjoyment of the public. It would seem wise for the Commissioners to consi-

der this whole general plan for the purpose of determining, which portion should be developed first, and then to direct that the necessary engineering work be performed, so that tenders from contractors can be invited for such portions and a contract be entered into for the early realization of at least a part of the development of the Park.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN

Beginning at the State Road, the scheme of the plan contemplates parking the triangular parcel of land lying between the Creek and Holmesburg Avenue. No driveway is shown in this triangle, as it is proposed to enter the Park Driveway from Holmesburg Avenue just west of the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad, but foot-paths, forming entrances from the State Road and also, it is hoped, connections with the proposed Delaware River Park, traverse the meadow, passing the Disposal Station and a proposed park restaurant pavilion. At this point, the border of the Creek should be heavily planted to screen out the quarries and the Philadelphia County Prison. Between the railroad bridge and Torresdale Avenue the foot-path is continued close to the edge of the Creek and, passing the Canoe Clubhouse and the tennis courts, is continued under Torresdale Avenue, with a branch path leading up to Torresdale Avenue. The planting here and continuing north to Frankford Avenue should be heaviest on the west side, to obscure the tracks of the Bustleton Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

At present the outgoing tide exposes an area of mud flats in the bed of the Creek, unpleasant in both appearance and odor. It is recommended that this condition be remedied by the construction of a dam just north of the railroad bridge of sufficient height to eliminate the nuisance and to impound water to be used in winter for skating and other ice sports and

in summer for canoeing. The tennis-players could make the Canoe Clubhouse their headquarters also.

Passing under the bridge which carries the Pennsylvania Railroad, Holmesburg Avenue is continued as a Park driveway and with a curvilinear alignment meets and crosses Torresdale Avenue at grade. Holmesburg Avenue should be continued southeast as a connecting parkway from the State Road to the proposed Delaware River Park. It is recommended that the sidewalks of Holmesburg Avenue be continued to Torresdale Avenue in order to make less striking the change from formal to informal treatment. A screen of trees and shrubs should be planted here to screen from view the high wall of the Philadelphia County Prison.

Crossing Torresdale Avenue, the Park Driveway is to be kept on high ground to the west of the Creek and it swings, with long, sweeping curves and easy grades, to a crossing at grade on Frankford Avenue. Within the section between Torresdale and Frankford Avenues, on both sides of the Creek, are found playfields for smaller children, shelters, several more tennis courts and a club house. This house, at Enfield Avenue near Walker Street, is in existence now and in a fair state of preservation. Winding foot-paths and a branching drive are provided, with unexpected vista openings, some of which show delightful glimpses of the Creek in its most beautiful effect.

It is proposed that the old millrace found in this section of the Park be repaired and a rustic mill and wheel be constructed both for the purpose of adding interest and life to the picture and also to furnish sufficient power to pump water obtained from the Creek to a pool located near Ditman Street and Enfield Avenue, on the east of and about forty feet above

the level of the Creek. From this pool the overflow will dash down the thirty-foot rocky cliff in the form of a cascade, reaching a lower pool at the base of the cliff and escaping under the foot-path into the Creek.

Although in the future the necessity may arise for the construction of a viaduct to carry Cottage Street across the Park, it is hoped that this can be avoided and that the traffic on Cottage Street will be diverted to Frankford and Torresdale Avenues. Provision is now made for foot-paths to traverse the Park in this direction by means of a bridge over the Creek about on the alignment of Cottage Street, were Cottage Street continued.

At Frankford Avenue, the Park Driveway is to cross the Creek on the Frankford Avenue bridge and re-enter the Park on the east side of the Creek. It is recommended that a dam be built just far enough south of the Frankford Avenue bridge to impound the water to the foot of the dam north of Frankford Avenue.

On account of the contour of the ground it will be necessary to build a wall to support Holmesburg Avenue from Frankford Avenue to the tunnel and, in order to preserve the existing millrace, it will be necessary to build a semi-circular water carrier in combination with the wall of Holmesburg Avenue from a point where it leaves the dam to Frankford Avenue, passing under Frankford Avenue and emerging in a grotto on the south side of the Avenue.

Several perspective studies have been prepared illustrating this portion of the plan and they are submitted herewith. Study No. 1 shows a picture of Frankford Avenue bridge, looking south from a point on Holmesburg Avenue about one hundred feet south of the dam. Study No. 2 is taken from the same point

as Study No. 1, but looks north toward the Canoe Clubhouse and the old stone dam. Study No. 3 is a view of the tunnel and the Bustleton Railroad Bridge and is taken from the Park Driveway near Frankford Avenue Circle.

The Bustleton branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad crosses the Park diagonally a short distance north of the Canoe Clubhouse and bath-house. The present railroad bridge will have to be raised to a higher elevation on account of the new street grades and, when this is done, it is to be recommended strongly that there be constructed in its place a bridge of architectural features blending with the parking scheme at this point. The railroad bridge over Frankford Avenue also should be of pleasing design, as it will be a dominant note in that portion of the landscape.

Between Frankford and Welsh Avenues is found one of the very crooked sweeps of the Creek. At the dam site at the foot of the hill east of Wilgus Avenue the Rowland Shovel Works are now located and in operation. The power for the mill is developed by a turbine wheel, which, after the Shovel Works are removed, it is expected will be used for furnishing power to pump water to the children's wading pool in the playground near Holmesburg Avenue and Fairview Street. The playground and sand court here are on the highest ground in the vicinity and are to be furnished with a shelter and water-tower. The lookout from the top of the tower will afford a wonderful view of the surrounding countryside. Study No. 6, submitted herewith, shows the shelter for the children, with administration offices and water-tower above, and children wading in the pool below. The slopes below make fine playgrounds and surrounding these are rambling paths through the woods.

one of these paths a natural lookout occurs, which has been utilized for the location of a shelter, the view from which takes in the vistas of two stretches of the Creek.

On leaving Frankford Avenue the Park Driveway drops gradually, passes beneath the railroad at the diagonal crossing and from this point adheres rather closely to the alignment of the Creek. Because of the steep enclosing side slope, it seems more desirable to cross the Creek with the driveway at a point about opposite Crispin Street and recross again just below Wooden Bridge Run, then follow the Creek to Welsh Avenue, crossing that Avenue at present at grade, but, when the new bridge is finished, passing under it.

Several paths are laid out in this area, making all parts equally accessible and leading past the existing houses now used by the Shovel Works, which will be useful to the Park for keepers' lodges, etc., later on. There is a path leading to and surrounding an open meadow at the foot of the slope from Wilgus Avenue and connecting with the sidewalks of Welsh Avenue.

At this part of the Park also there has been introduced into the plan a bridle path, most desirable to equestrians in these days of hard motor roads. This path rambles through the trees and shrubbery, under railroad tracks, across fields and into unexpected glades. It enters at Wilgus Avenue and Albion Street, traverses a very interesting alignment and is further diversified by a ford across the Creek just above the Shovel Works, continuing on the south bank both up and down the Park. Among the features which it passes is a large rock just off the shore of the Creek west of the dam at the Shovel Works, well known in the neighborhood as the Sally Cook Rock.

Passing under Welsh Avenue, the driveway follows closely the foot of the cliff-like slope and finally branches. The main or west drive passes the athletic field, then under the Rhawn Street south viaduct, continuing around the children's playground and finally passing beneath the Rhawn Street north viaduct.

To the east of the Rhawn Street south viaduct, in a flat meadow, baseball grounds are located. This, together with the running track, football field, tennis courts, skating and boating pond and children's playground, will form one of the two groups of athletic grounds and will be easily accessible from Rhawn Street, which is bound soon to have adequate transportation facilities. The opportunity for the combination of sporting fields is most unusual.

Although baseball is the most popular sport in the country and is enjoyed equally well by boys and men, yet it seems rather selfish to permit eighteen people to occupy several acres of land for several hours to the exclusion of all other sport. For many years there will be sufficient open meadow in the Park for the enjoyment of baseball without inconvenience to the general public, but, looking to the future, it does not seem wise to establish definitely as part of the plan more than two regular baseball fields, where perhaps there may be arranged interesting games and the public can be entertained as observers, if not as players. To this argument may be added the fact that this Park, with the exception of the two places selected for baseball, is not a suitable place for such sports. It might be wise for the Commissioners to secure land outside the Park limits, should the need for more ball-grounds become increasingly apparent.

A canoe-house and bathing pavilion have been located at the base of a very steep and picturesque slope north of Rowland Street and west of Rhawn Street. The tennis courts are a little farther upstream, on the meadow-land east of Hartel Avenue, and are provided with a clubhouse.

The large open meadow on the higher land between the viaducts and south of Rhawn Street has been utilized as a playground, with shelter and sand courts, and is to be decorated with specimen trees.

The north branch of the driveway climbs gradually up the slope and connects with Rhawn Street, from which point it drops again through a natural glade and connects with the main Park Driveway just above the Rhawn Street north viaduct, a connection being made with Colfax Street. This connection will be of considerable importance, as it will form the only outlet toward the City for the territory on the east side of the Park, between the Welsh Road and Holme Avenue, and it will form a short cut to Rhawn Street and the Northeast Boulevard at the main entrance to the Park.

The property, on which the main entrance to the Park from the Northeast Boulevard is laid out, was not acquired by the City until after almost all of this plan had been made and therefore it has been put on the plan as an insert. This entrance, however, promises to be one of the most interesting features of the Park, much study having been given to make its design herald the naturalistic park within the gates.

A driveway from this main entrance follows the valley of Sandy Run and, passing over the Creek, joins the above-described main Park Drive a short distance

south of the Rhawn Street north viaduct. The entrance is located on the east side of the Northeast Boulevard, about a mile south of Holme Avenue, at a point where Sandy Run at present passes under the Boulevard. It is proposed to carry Sandy Run as a winding brook through this sunken meadow and to let it widen out into a pool at the end within the curved wall used to retain the two entrance roadways where they join the main drive. This retaining wall is carried along the Boulevard and adjoining streets, terminating in the semicircular treatment of the entrance at the end of the picture or vista. In this way the entrance becomes a feature of prominence in the landscape treatment of the section.

Another result of this form of treatment is the creation of a sunken garden and, at its further end, a splendid location for a group of statuary. Study No. 4 shows a view of such a group taken from a point in the sunken meadow-garden. A view of this garden can be had from both the Boulevard and the two entrance drives, and the only reason for walking through the meadow will be for a more intimate view of its formation, flowers and statuary: it is in no way a thoroughfare. No foot-paths have been designed for this particular part of the Park, it being the idea to allow visitors to roam over the greensward and among the horticultural specimens. Sidewalks however are provided along the driveways and from these sidewalks is obtained a view of the meadow-garden in good perspective.

In the low area lying south of Rhawn Street there occurs another very decided change in the natural alignment of the Creek, which here traverses a marshy meadow. In order to eliminate this swamp and at

the same time provide material with which to bring the driveways to grade, it is proposed to dredge out the lowland above the old Calico Works and to improve the old dam, then, by widening the Creek, it will be possible to create three islands, which will be connected to the mainland by bridges. These islands can be used by the public as picnic grounds and should be popular. Study No. 5 shows a view of the bridges at the north picnic island, taken from the Rhawn Street north viaduct.

Little landscape treatment is needed to develop the natural beauties found in that portion of the Park upstream from the Rhawn Street viaduct. It is necessary only to provide, by drives, bridle paths and footpaths, means for reaching the various points of beauty and interest.

There has been arranged a dual entrance at Poquessing Avenue, the right drive keeping to the high ground and overlooking some beautiful meadows, then joining the main drive after crossing Bensalem Avenue at grade. The left drive drops gradually to the main drive, which will follow the Creek and pass beneath both the Poquessing and Bensalem Avenue bridges.

Much attention and study has been devoted to the location of these drives and paths in order to provide for the visualization of the many interesting views which are possible.

One of the particularly striking vistas is the view from the bridge to be constructed to carry Bensalem Avenue across the Park. It will be hard to find a more fascinating picture than the view westerly from this bridge. Looking down, the Pennypack Creek, sixty feet below, is seen with the old Axe Factory

Dam a short way upstream. The old Axe Factory Road is maintained as a Park drive from Lexington and Large Avenues down the beautiful ravine bounded by a forest of magnificent beech trees, crossing the Creek on an arched bridge a little above the dam and connecting with the main drive, which runs on the north side of the Creek at this point. Between the factory dam and the Park drive bridge is located a canoe house and bath house, adding a pleasing note of life and color to the already beautiful view.

In continuing still further upstream, it becomes economically advantageous to carry the driveway across the Creek south of Bustleton Avenue. Several small tributary streams flow into the valley at about this point and make interesting diversions. A branch drive is carried up to Bustleton Avenue and forms an entrance for the Bustleton district. Some very beautiful hemlocks at the edge of the Creek below Bustleton Avenue shade the path, which here leads under overhanging rocks interesting in formation. The Creek from Bustleton Avenue upward has a swifter current and is more winding and picturesque than the portion below.

Some tennis courts, a baseball field and a children's playground are located in the meadows just south of the Philadelphia and Reading Railway tracks. These athletic fields are easily approached from Bustleton by a foot-path through a fine forest and a bridge over the Creek, also by the Park Drive. On the west side of the Creek the bridle path follows the old abandoned grade of a railroad track in its straight course for some distance. The driveway here is also on the west side of the Creek, crossing it at a point between Bloomfield Avenue and the tracks of the Philadel-

phia and Reading Railway, with a branch into the old Krewstown Road, in all a combination of bridges which will make this one of the show places of the Park, including, as it does, the railroad viaduct, which is an imposing arched structure, the new Bloomfield Avenue bridge and the very ancient Krewstown Road stone bridge.

Krewstown Road, as it now crosses through the Park, is unsafe, where it passes under the railroad tracks, and, when the Bloomfield Avenue construction takes place, this condition will be exaggerated, since it will be necessary to keep the grade of Bloomfield Avenue high. To overcome these conditions and provide a more direct route to Fox Chase, the drive leading from Krewstown Avenue north of the railroad tracks has been laid out as a curvilinear prolongation of Krewstown Avenue, as it exists near the old Baptist Church, continuing as a Park drive after it crosses Bloomfield Avenue. It then makes a junction with the main Park drive, widened somewhat to meet the requirements of greater traffic across the Park. The old alignment of Krewstown Road from Algon Avenue to the Creek has been maintained, connecting with the Park drive just across the Creek.

North of the tracks of the Philadelphia and Reading Railway a dam is recommended to provide water for winter sports and summer recreation. The natural alignment of the Creek has been changed north of the Philadelphia and Reading Railway bridge to permit of the more satisfactory location of the driveway both for safety and beauty. The swampy meadow near this point is to be dredged and, with the Creek, is to form a lake. The material thus recovered is to be used for constructing the Park Drive-

way. This lake will accentuate a pleasing panorama. The marsh, being excavated to the foot of the thickly wooded slope on the south, with a dam built north of the railroad bridge, will form a lake and open vistas both to the north and to the south. The southern vista will have the mammoth arches of the railroad bridge in the background and the northern vista will have a gentle rise with the existing farmhouse, surrounded by a fine grove, for a background. Taken together from all points of view, the lake and its surroundings will be one of the most strikingly beautiful land and waterscapes to be met with in the Park and the lake, moreover, will furnish recreation.

The widest part of the Park is at this point, above the railroad, being about a mile from side to side. Part of this area might be occupied to advantage by a nine-hole golf course. The land is well wooded with tulip and oak and is delightful. The arrangement of roads and paths through this district has been so carried out, as to realize the best effects and give the greatest pleasure with easy accessibility and without monotony.

East of Verree Road and between Bloomfield Avenue, Meeting House Road and Tabor Avenue there is a wooded portion of the Park well suited to camping and extensively used for that purpose today. This is an attractive spot and needs but little development other than provision for access. The high ridge partially surrounded by the Creek is one of the most interesting rambles found in the Park. The lake above mentioned, the great sweeps of meadow above it, upon which are located the tennis courts, and the exquisite wooded approach to the entrance at Solly and Tabor Avenues vie with the north or upper side, where

a long, narrow meadow, beside the still water above the ford, loses itself in the great wooded slopes of the east bank, covered with magnificent beech trees, and the west side, covered with oak and tulip. Here in this latter wood is a charming old house, which fits into the mysterious picture and gives it romance.

It is proposed to restore the dam at the site of the old Verree Mills, not for the power obtained therefrom, but to maintain the old mill-pond for canoeing and beauty. Also, it is recommended that old Verree Road, Meeting House Road and Shady Lane, where they now exist in the Park, be eliminated as streets and utilized as bridle paths.

The hemlocks found on the slopes in this section of the Park are very attractive and effort should not be spared to conserve them. One of the features of interest in this Park is the change in tree growth encountered as its length is traversed.

A baseball ground has been located at a convenient distance from Grant Avenue and a few more tennis courts are proposed, as there are here meadows well graded naturally for such sport and it is intended to have another athletic centre in this place. This area is near the upper end of the Park and will supply the demands of the local population centred near this point, as well as the people from more distant localities.

Here the Creek again assumes a crooked alignment and, as it is followed upstream, is crossed and recrossed by the driveway both for economy in construction and to preserve certain vistas, which otherwise would be obliterated in its projection.

The treatment of this upper end has been handled in a broader manner, as the area is greater and the

Park assumes almost the dimensions of a forest reservation. The existing woods are fine in themselves and the possibilities of adding to them by reforestation are interesting and the work should be undertaken in the near future.

Near the Park entrance at Pine Road and Grant Avenue an aquatic garden is proposed to occupy the uninteresting open meadow now found. The water for this garden is obtained from the small stream coming in from the west and passing under Pine Road, appearing again in a small pool in the plaza formed by the diverging entrance drives and then flowing under one of these drives and into the aquatic garden. Rambles have been laid out to follow the outline of this garden and to connect conveniently one side with the other, as the outline forms small lakes.

A driveway entrance to the Park is also furnished from Pine Road and Bloomfield Avenue. This drive crosses the Creek and follows along the edge of the woods, forming a junction with the entrance drive from Grant Avenue and Pine Road.

The old farmhouse on Bloomfield Avenue is in a good state of repair and could very well be utilized as a restaurant and provide service for diners at tables in the Park close at hand, if so desired.

Attention is called especially to the fact that in this Park layout, while there are many City streets planned to cross the Park site, it has been possible to provide a Park drive traversing about seven miles of the Park, from Frankford Avenue to Pine Road, without a grade crossing.

The great variation in the unusual natural scenery of this Park and the many uses, to which it will be put, make clear the necessity for proceeding with the execution, which will make possible the realization of the plan, and there is urged upon the Commissioners the further necessity of having the work carefully superintended. In this way there will be obtained a result worthy of the opportunity afforded by nature and so developed that it will provide for the people of the City such recreation grounds, as tend to produce the best citizenship.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES W. LEAVITT,

Consulting Engineer.