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A Study of the Historical Development and Horticultural Practices of a Public Garden

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A STUDY OF THE
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
AND
HORTICULTURAL PRACTICES
OF A PUBLIC GARDEN

by

Steven J. Nosal

This project was submitted to the Faculty of the University of Nebraska in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Horticulture.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**..............................................................................................................iv & v

**CHAPTER ONE:** Influences of the Garden Movement in Lincoln, Neb......................... 1

**CHAPTER TWO:** Historical Development of Gardens in Lincoln and the United States 16

**CHAPTER THREE:** Historical Horticulture.......................................................................... 34

**CHAPTER FOUR:** Horticulture Today .................................................................................. 42

**CHAPTER FIVE:** The Future of Gardening in Lincoln......................................................... 54

**CHAPTER SIX:** Interview with Henry Goebel ................................................................. 66

**CONCLUSION:** Looking at and working in Sunken Gardens........................................ 72
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project was to examine the historical development and the horticultural practices in the public gardens of the Parks Department in Lincoln, Neb. I have chosen to concentrate on one particular place to illustrate development and practice issues; the Sunken Gardens in Lincoln. This garden was built during the Depression in the 1930s as a place of beauty for all of the citizens of Lincoln. Although the Sunken Garden covers only 1.5 acres, it has remained a very important part of Nebraska's capital city for more than 64 years.

During the turn of the century when most of the western states were still struggling with Indian wars and lawlessness, Lincoln was developing a unique park system, which included several formal flower gardens. In years that followed, the city would become known as one of the leading garden cities in the west. This was largely because of the interest Lincoln's citizens shared for gardening.

Public gardens, a predominant feature in Lincoln, resulted indirectly from the lasting effects of the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. The fair helped lead the United States in the direction of monumental architectural development and lavish parks and gardens. The Chicago World's Fair had a strong influence on Lincoln's public landscaping and this effect was even more evident after the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition was held in Omaha, Neb. during the summer of 1898.

In the early 1900s, a trend began which involved civic organizations that helped plan the development of communities. This movement was called the “City Beautiful Movement.” Although the movement's lasting effect was mostly architectural, the movement's effects on the landscape in the City of Lincoln are still evident. Records show that many of Lincoln's prominent citizens contributed to this effort and helped preserve these ideas in the gardens we see today.

In Lincoln, creation of public gardens and city parks was promoted by many of its civic-minded citizens. A popular local movement, started by the City Federation of Women's Clubs, petitioned the city council to provide public open space to meet the needs of a young, growing population. Although Lincoln did not have an official parks department at that time, the desire
for gardens and tree-lined boulevards was so great that the mayor was convinced that a park board needed to be appointed.

There were many different stages of development in the parks system during the early 1900s. Mayor Francis W. Brown started one of the strongest programs in 1906 for which he sent a representative to the East Coast to study the parks systems. The mayor used the parks system in the city of Boston as a pattern of how Lincoln’s parks should be developed.

This thesis reflects the interest in gardens, parks and urban landscapes created by the local politicians and wealthy developers. It described the past successes of the Sunken Garden and how these came about, as well as the current horticulture programs used in the garden. Finally, the study examines the future of the garden and what safeguards need to be taken to preserve this resource.
Chapter One
THE ROOTS OF IMPROVEMENT

The Chicago World’s Fair of 1893: The Columbian Exposition

The history of public gardens in the United States can be traced back to its roots in our society. As a relatively young nation in the late 1800s, the United States had few public gardens. As a rule, the majority of the large formal gardens were built on large private estates. The major cities in the country were overcrowded and filthy. The general infrastructure of the city; sewers, streets and water systems did not exist at the time, adding to the problem. Without these amenities, the development of cities usually occurred on the outskirts rather than within the inner city. At the same time, on the other side of the Earth, several expositions opened in Europe, giving Americans a chance to see artistic landscaping and organized city planning -- something they had never seen before (Peterson 1976).

The larger cities in the United States wanted to display some of the same type of artistic talent they had seen in Europe. In an effort to show the rest of the world what America could do, a world's fair was planned to show the talents and skills that existed in the states.

The concept for the world's fair originated from an idea for a large exposition in the United States commemorating the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. A congressional committee was organized to discuss the project during the summer of 1886, and as a result, the federal government financed the fair. However, it was not until the enormous success of the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889 that the American movement gained momentum and many citizens began to support the idea of a fair.

A fierce rivalry developed between the leading cities in the United States that wished to hold the fair. Many larger cities challenged each other for the privilege, particularly Chicago and New York. During this period, Chicago's size increased by 120 square miles, bringing the population to more than a million people in 1884. The cultural and social life of Chicago blossomed with the organization of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the opening of the University of Chicago and several new public libraries. In addition, a group of inventive Chicago
architects had surpassed New York's lead in the development of tall commercial building, or proto-skyscrapers, by adding new aesthetic refinements to their city. All of this added to the city's tourist attractions.

By August of 1889, a Chicago corporation had been formed for the "World's Exposition of 1892." It issued $5 million in municipal bonds. Because of the impact the Exposition Universelle in Paris had on the original decision to have the fair, the city of Chicago sent representatives there. This final effort gave Chicago the leading edge in the competition to host the fair.

The contest between Chicago and New York formally ended in 1890 when the United States House of Representatives chose Chicago because of its industrial and commercial wealth and power. On April 25, 1890 President Benjamin Harrison signed the exposition bill into law and later in the year, he issued an official invitation to foreign exhibitors to setup buildings and booths in Chicago (Appelbaum, 1980).

In the summer of 1890, Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., famous for his design work on New York's Central Park, was hired as the fair's landscape architect. Olmsted, describing his role as designer and superintendent of Central Park, is given credit for conceiving the title of "landscape architect." He used it for the first time in the mid-19th century in reference to those who organized land and structures for human use and enjoyment. With the development of Central Park, Olmstead also initiated the first concentrated park and recreation movement in the United States. Olmsted believed that municipalities should link a series of parks into a working complex, developing the concept of a park system. He also created the parkway concept with a system of roads connecting Riverside and Chicago in 1869. As a result of his efforts, many people in Chicago were very familiar with Olmstead's work.

The buildings for the Chicago World's Fair were to be designed by architects Daniel H. Burnham and John Wellborn Root. Root was entrusted with the structural designs, while Burnham was involved with the construction of the exposition buildings. In 1890, Root drew a very informal plan for the principal distribution of landscape elements; a basin, canal and lagoon with an island. For the most part, this plan was definitive for most of the layout of the exposition. Burnham was credited more for handling the business matters and arranging the displays at the
fair rather than for his design ability. One example of Burnham’s influence was a memorandum he sent to the Exposition Committee suggesting how the construction of the buildings could be accomplished much faster. Under his plan, the designs for each building could be either assigned to a single architect or to several architects. To make it fair, he suggested that whoever won first place in a competition for individual building designs should be awarded the contract. The committee was convinced a competition would be much more efficient and expeditious. Consequently, the selection of individual architects won approval.

Several of New York's finest architects were contracted to design some of the more ornate buildings. Richard M. Hunt, designer for the Vanderbilts, was assigned the task of designing the main Administration Building.

In January 1892, Root, died of pneumonia. This left Burnham in charge as director of the works with the sole responsibility of overseeing the design and construction for the fair. The winter of 1892 was an extremely busy time for the individuals landscaping the park and constructing more than 200 structures. That particular winter would prove to be quite costly. Cold temperatures took their toll on the work force and caused more than 700 accidents. Nevertheless, construction continued. The show was scheduled to open on May 1, 1893. The end of 1892 finished several buildings, but that wasn't enough to impress several congressmen who had been visiting the site. Congress, obliged the fair committee as a result of their visit, to demonstrate that the work could be accomplished in a much shorter period of time.

The buildings at the fair were made from iron and lumber, which somewhat resembled large train sheds under construction. The “cladding,” or exterior surfacing of the buildings, and the varying architectural styles, were affected by the use of a construction material called "staff." It was invented in France in the 1860s and had been used extensively in the European fairs as a temporary surface. Staff was a lightweight, but firm and durable mixture of plaster, cement and jute fibers that could be easily applied and conformed into these ornate structures. The exposition buildings were designed to last for approximately six months, making staff an ideal material for this type of construction.

For the most part, all of the buildings in the exposition were painted white. But, the choice of white caused a heated debate. The original director of decoration, William Prettyman, a
friend of the late Root, had chosen several different color schemes for the fair. However, he was suddenly replaced and so was his color scheme. An eastern painter, Francis D. Millet, an instructor at Art Institute of Chicago replaced Prettyman. In December of 1892, Millet, the new director of the decoration had decided that white was the only suitable color for the Court of Honor buildings around the central lagoon. The necessity for speed in getting the job done was probably the leading factor in this decision. This decision led to the term "white city," in reference to the fairgrounds. One of the unique inventions to come out of this effort was a revolutionary new device used to apply the thousands of gallons of white paint on all of the exposition buildings. The new tool was called a called a compressed-air squirt gun, used at the fair for the first time on a major project (Appelbaum, 1980).

The spring of 1893 marked the opening of the Chicago World's Fair in a northern part of the city called Jackson's Park. The total area of the fair was 633 acres, compared to the 160 acres of the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Along with all the major buildings, there were also 19 foreign-government buildings and 38 state government buildings. It was estimated that to see everything in the fair, one would have to walk more than 150 miles.

The most significant feature of the fair was the architecture. So much that, many leading exhibitors complained it was not an industrial fair at all, but an architectural show. As an architectural show, however, the fair was very successful. For the most part, the white city was a novelty for the nation. It proved to be so attractive that its influence was immediately felt from coast to coast, and lasted for decades.

It was believed white city style was so easily accepted and desired because the public was ready for it. The cities in the United States were suffering from general ugliness and an extreme lack of order. Everything from unpaved streets to the absence of proper sanitary systems prompted larger cities to take action. Sewer systems and sanitation ordinances were developed, and soon, cities began adopting many of the beautiful architectural styles displayed at the fair (Newton, 1971).

The aura of the fair also seemed to suit the psychological needs of the newest group of millionaires. Many writers suggested that the neat and dainty whiteness of the exposition especially appealed to the wives of wealthy men.
One of the most universally acclaimed achievements of the fair that carried through to the present was urban planning. In contrast to the wild growth of cities in the United States in late nineteenth century, the layout of the exposition offered the first widely publicized, well-planned ensemble of public buildings, often referred to as the "Restoration of the Principle of Coordination." The general planning of the fair was a bold new approach to working within an urban environment. The massive display of original art, beautiful architecture and superb landscaping gave citizens of Chicago and millions of visitors from all parts of the world their first exposure to a splendid example of civic design in the classic architecture. It marked the beginning of orderly arrangement of large civic buildings and beautifully landscaped grounds in the United States. Many fair visitors wondered why their cities couldn't be as orderly and beautifully landscaped as the Chicago World's Fair.

Various individuals and civic groups who were closely associated with the fair helped keep the idea of municipal improvement alive, eventually giving rise to comprehensive plans for cities throughout the nation. Many of the tree-lined boulevards, groups of columned civic buildings, art museums and parks founded in American cities were a legacy of a beautification movement inspired by the fair. As a result, the fair became an inspiration for civic centers, urban traffic systems and city improvements around the country. Thus, many civic improvements, including those that occurred in Lincoln, can be traced back to the Chicago World's Fair (Peterson, 1976).

**Omaha Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition of 1898**

During the years following the Chicago World's Fair when the western United States became so prosperous in its progress and development, an expressed desire to hold an interstate exposition in Omaha developed. The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 was a revelation to the people of the nation. Its success inspired men from the larger cities in the western states to attempt a similar exposition.

Several states west of the Mississippi River attempted to organize some type of exposition, but their efforts never paid off. In 1894, California made an unsuccessful attempt to
hold a winter exposition in San Francisco. Kansas City tried to develop a mid-continent exposition, but it fell through. The city of Denver proposed a western states’ exposition. Large sums of money were raised for it, but the plan never made it off the drawing board. Texas planned an unexecuted western and southern states exposition in Galveston. Minneapolis and St. Paul promoted a northwestern states exposition, but it was also abandoned.

It was the spirited people of Omaha who noted the progress of the western exposition and became determined to involve their city in the process. During the 1894 Fall Session of the Trans-Mississippi Congress in St. Louis, the Nebraska delegation presented a formal invitation to the congress to meet in Omaha the following year. During the Omaha session, a select committee of Nebraskans led by William Jennings Bryan presented the congress with a resolution to obtain official approval to hold an exposition in Omaha. While still in session, the Trans-Mississippi Congress adopted a resolution paving the way for the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition to be held at Omaha from June to Nov., 1898 (Haynes, 1910) [Plate 1.1].

Plate 1.1. Main axis Omaha Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, 1998

The main purpose of the exposition was to exhibit the products, industries and capabilities of the states and territories west of the Mississippi River to the rest of the world. The
Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition was to be located on a plateau of 484 acres, well within the city limits of north Omaha. Construction started in November of 1898 and was completed in less than seven months, with the exposition opening on June 1, 1889.

This exposition was considered a success because of the highly skilled craftspeople that worked on setting it up. One newspaper reporter said that when entering the grounds through the main arch, one felt transported to a fairyland of splendor far beyond any conception of childhood. A Grand Court filled with art and sculpture was surrounded by formally landscaped gardens [Plate 1.2].

The displays the Omaha Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition were so luxuriant and beautiful, that visitors assumed the plants had been cultivated in those areas for several years. Actually, the plants had been set out just a short time before the exposition. There were more than 3,000 trees and 900 shrubs planted on the grounds with most being native to Nebraska. The entire lawn of highly maintained, lush, green turf was supported by an irrigation system containing more than 12,000 feet of pipe (Haynes, 1910).

More than 100,000 ornamental, perennial and annual flowering plants provided the perfect color scheme for the exposition. The plants were all matured in the greenhouses constructed on the exposition grounds the previous winter. It was estimated that more than 60 flowerbeds were planted throughout the area. Geraniums, oleanders, dahlias, cannas and arbutus (a flowering ornamental shrub) were some of the more common plants used on the exposition grounds.

One of the most noticeable features of the exposition was the Palace of Horticulture, which occupied a position in the center of the southern viewpoint. In front of the horticulture building was a pool filled with a collection of water lilies, including tropical species, such as "Victoria Regina." This tropical water lily has leaves that can reach more than 3 feet in diameter.

The landscaping at the Omaha Exposition seemed to resemble landscape designs used in the Chicago World's Fair. Similarities in design and planning played an important part in shaping the future of the parks and gardens in the capital city of Nebraska [Plate 1.3].
PLATE 1.2
Map of the Omaha Trans-Mississippi Exposition, 1898.
source
Nebraska State Historical Society
Philip Edinborough, a young nurseryman from England, was hired as nursery foreman for the exposition. Several years after the fair, Edinborough was appointed head gardener for the city of Lincoln Parks Department. Many of the photographs from the Goebel collection, taken in the early 20th century, reveal flowerbeds in Lincoln parks with a distinct resemblance to those grown at the exposition. The same can also be said about the large displays of water lilies in Lincoln's Antelope Park from the early 1900s. Photos suggest Edinborough brought to Lincoln many ideas for design from the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition [Plates 1.3 - 1.6].

The architecture at the Omaha Exposition was original and in perfect harmony with the rest of the structures in the city, a characteristic the event shared with Chicago World's Fair of 1893. Although the scale for the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition was much smaller than the Chicago World's Fair, it was able to benefit from its predecessor. The grand plan that was so successful in Chicago, it appeared to be repeated at the fair in Omaha.

Today, the former site of the fair is mostly residential area with very little exposition grounds remaining except a small park. The lagoon was filled in, and all signs of the oval landscaped area have been removed. Although the physical signs of the fair were removed, a
Plate 1.4. Waterlily display at Antelope Park, Lincoln, NE 1920

Plate 1.5. OTM&IE, Exhibition building garden, 1898.
large collection of photographs and written material is preserved at the Nebraska State Historical Society. The Western Heritage Museum at the old Union Station in Omaha also has a substantial collection of memorabilia from the exposition.

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Improvement Societies Rise

During the late 1800s, village improvement societies began to spring up around the United States. These groups were actively involved in doing small beautification projects within their community. Projects included planting new trees and preserving old ones, installing gravel walks for dirt paths, cleaning out weeds from vacant lots, improving public buildings and sprucing up old cemeteries. The Laurel Hill Association of Stockbridge, Massachusetts was considered the first village improvement society in the United States. It was established in 1853 and became the model for all that followed.

In its early days, the small city of Stockbridge was a neglected Berkshire mountain town with rutted streets, treeless roadides, a neglected cemetery and poorly maintained grounds around a few government buildings. However, by the 1870s, this town had become famous. The Laurel Hill Association had planted more than 400 trees in its first year of 1853. The association offered prizes for the most trees planted by citizens and it offered rewards for evidence leading to the conviction of anyone caught injuring the trees.

This village improvement effort began to crisscross the country, showing up at first as small piecemeal projects. Cleanliness, order and cultural activity as well as aesthetically pleasing landscapes gave substance and meaning to villages. This type of civic involvement initially started as a layman’s drive and flourished in small to medium-sized towns similar to Lincoln Nebraska. By 1880, Massachusetts had 28 associations while Connecticut had more than 50. This effort has been recognized as one of the roots of the “City Beautiful Movement” (Robinson, 1901).

The City Beautiful Movement was born at the end of the nineteenth century and faded as World War I approached. It was the first attempt in the United States at nationwide urban planning. It pioneered the idea of comprehensive planning in the regularity and monumental building design and in blending of naturalistic park systems with classic civic centers. This was the period that advanced the planning profession. It left a legacy of civic activism motivated by
concerned, politically aware people. The City Beautiful Movement also left a physical legacy of
tree-shaded boulevards, parks and graceful neoclassic buildings, rich in ornamentation and
technical achievement.

There were four major branches of the Movement:

**Municipal Art:** This branch encouraged cities to become patrons of the decorative arts,
i.e. sculpture, murals, and designs to complement the forecourt, facades and the interiors
of major public buildings.

**Civic Improvement:** The focus of this branch was to promote city planning.

**Outdoor Art:** City parks and gardens were the target area of this part of the Movement.

**Classical Design:** This branch supported the integration of traditional Grecian-Roman
architectural themes into large-scale city plans.

One strong influence on the City Beautiful Movement was an art movement that began in
New York in the 1890s. The art movement stimulated many essays on art placed in public areas.
Artists were calling for changes in the city landscape. Chicago Art Historian George Kriehn
criticized the artless conditions of American cities and the "hideous signs and billboards" that
disfigured the landscape. He advocated the enforcement of industrial smoke ordinances and the
judicious use of color in the city to enliven business streets. Kriehn's criticism motivated the
planting of street trees, the construction of water-fountain displays, the placement of statues and
other artworks in public place and the creation of splendid civic buildings adorned with murals
and massed in groups. (Peterson, 1976).

The monumental design principles made popular by the City Beautiful Movement
continued to be used through the 1930s for groups of government buildings and college
campuses. Examples of this style of architecture can be seen in the design of the Nebraska State
Capitol in Lincoln. The same can be said for the design and construction of the Sunken Garden
in the Lincoln Parks System, which was probably a spinoff of the City Beautiful Movement.
City Beautiful Movers and Shakers: The Founders

One of the more active participants in the process of educating the public about the City Beautiful Movement was Charles Mulford Robinson. His preoccupation with the form and function of cities was significant at a time when very little attention was given to city planning. The book, "The Improvement of Towns and Cities," written in 1901, was a summary of what had been done in many towns and cities across America and in Europe. The book listed more than a hundred individual "Improvement Societies" in the United States. In many cases, improvement societies in the United States became the first planning bodies for a city. Very few books were written at that time on the subject of city planning, and it would be at least another ten years before landscape architects would consider making planning a major part of their professional operation.

Civic improvement organizations helped support the City Beautiful Movement by urging owners of small lots to plant flowers, grass and trees in their backyards to replace the waste and rubbish customarily dumped there. The City Improvement Society of Lincoln went one step further by offering $150 to the family with the best kept lawn in the city in 1897 (Lincoln Improvement Society, 1897).

The success of Robinson's first book compelled him to put more of his ideas into print and produce a second and larger volume, "Modern Civic Art, or the City Made Beautiful." "City Beautiful" was the title of several short articles that appeared in different magazines and newspapers in 1903 and 1904. It would be from these articles that name of the movement was derived. Robinson was truly a pioneer in his essays about the planning of cities and their improvement with a special emphasis on appearance (Wilson, 1981).

The concept of improvement was also spread by several national magazines; The Atlantic Monthly, Forum, and Home and Flowers. The magazine Home and Flowers brought national recognition to the village improvement societies, which would eventually incorporate the City Beautiful ideals into communities. D.J. Thomas, who wrote about flowers and pet care, published the magazine in Springfield, Ohio. Thomas became interested in the village improvement societies in 1899. He began to print reports from some of the groups in the New England area and the South Atlantic states. The reports became increasingly popular and many
readers requested more information. Several readers’ letters suggested initiating a national movement for civic beauty. In response to the public's request, Home and Flowers held a convention for improvement societies in Springfield on Oct. 10, 1900. Organizations from all over the United States interested in the permanent improvement and beautification of American towns attended. Many left the convention with a common desire to beautify their homes and countryside by putting order into their existence (Peterson, 1976).

It was during the Springfield convention that participants formed the National League of Improvement Association (NLIA), which would attract reformer J. Horace McFarland, of Harrisburg, Penn., also a leader in the City Beautiful Movement. The NLIA urged all organizations interested in permanent beautification to join the national group. The league approached the improvement of cities like a crusade, making city improvement its number one priority.

McFarland had been active in the American Park and Outdoor Art Association (AP&OAA) before he moved to the NLIA in 1900. In 1901, the NLIA changed its name to the American League of Civic Improvement, and then merged with the AP&OAA to form the American Civic Association (ACA). McFarland presided over the ACA for the next 20 years. He enlisted the help of various experts to develop several "how-to" pamphlets, offering guidance on how cities could be cleaned up. With this information McFarland set out to lecture throughout the United States. He focused the ACA on smaller towns and cities.

McFarland carried the message of the Beautiful City across the continent in speeches, articles and organizational efforts. McFarland's ideas were concerned with proper urban development. He was one of the urban beautifiers who had a progressive sense of environmentalism, believing in behavioral control of ones surroundings. He felt that beauty was to be the tool by which City Beautiful reformers fashioned acceptable mental processes and moral behavior for lesser persons. If surrounded by public beauty, the masses would improve their private surroundings and by correct conduct, express their appreciation to the city (Wilson, 1981).

In his "Crusade Against Ugliness" lectures, he emphasized environmental issues and its conditioning.
He said, "People are always influenced by ones environment." He urged home beautification. "Can one expect children to grow up with an appreciation of the beautiful, or to become good citizens in a filthy backyard, beauty should begin at home." McFarland said. His persistent attacks on billboards stemmed from his beliefs that these signs were an education in ugliness and that they were constantly pressing their assaults on the landscape.¹

McFarland also believed that the beauty of a city had something to do with it being functionally aesthetic.

"The purpose of every civic organization," he announced in 1904, "is to make America a better and a more beautiful place to live in." He also stated "A city plan was an intelligent scheme for making a community convenient, comfortable, healthful, and beautiful.". He also linked civic beauty with industrial efficiency; he believed factories that were belching black smoke symbolized a "waste" of fuel.²

At that time, more than two-thirds of the population in the United States lived in cities with populations between 2,500 and 250,000. Most of McFarland’s lectures were geared towards smaller eastern cities and some larger, but more progressive communities farther west.

It was reported that McFarland spoke in Lincoln on one of his many lecture tours. Through the ACA, McFarland became the national representative for the City Beautiful Movement. He wrote hundreds of letters of advice to individuals and groups across the nation. His company also supplied more than a thousand photographic slides on several City Beautiful topics. These slides were also organized and printed into several different pamphlets discussing these topics (Wilson, 1981).

Another significant individual in the history of the City Beautiful movement was Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., landscape architect of the Chicago World’s Fair. His influence can still be seen in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Washington D.C. Olmsted's superior ability to blend roads, buildings and walks into existing landscapes without visible disturbance led to emulation by other outdoor area designers. Olmsted was one of the first people to comment that parks would raise the land values surrounding them, a comment that was well-founded and based
upon the completion of New York's "Central Park." Although Olmsted never professed to be associated with the City Beautiful Movement, his contributions arose from his creative abilities to appreciate the natural landscape and realize the importance of the developing urban space into multipurpose city parks.

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Lincoln, Neb.


Lincoln, Neb.


Women and Children Bring Order and Beauty to the Chaos

While men like Robinson, McFarland and Olmsted contributed to the City Beautiful philosophy on the national forefront, it was women who actually took up the torch in communities. Women dominated many of the social groups in the United States at the time, while men were admitted on an honorary basis only. It was truly the women's associations that appreciated beauty as an element in civic development. It was through their efforts that city beautification was pursued through trying to develop lovelier treatments of previously neglected small parks and public squares.

At a second convention in August of 1901, when the NLIA became the American League of Civic Improvement, the group defined its goals: the promotion of outdoor art, the development of public beauty and the improvement of towns, villages and neighborhoods.

The goals of the societies blended images of small-town beauty with order, cleanliness and moral uplift. Many local newspapers printed editorials that towns, with well-kept streets, beautiful parks, attractive home lawns, fresh air and favorable sanitary conditions were towns that had moral development and industrial progress. The league reported that dozens of committees had written in and told of their successes. The list included a report from the civic committee of the City Federation of Women's Club, from Lincoln. The report said the Lincoln group had started a vigorous campaign for public restrooms in their town, as well as forestry planting, vacant lot cultivation, improvement to the church exteriors and grounds, and cemetery improvements (Report of the Lincoln Improvement Society, 1901).

In January of 1897, during a meeting of the Board of Directors for the City Federation of Women's Club, the City Improvement Society of Lincoln, was conceived. This society was the result of a study undertaken by the civics department of the Women's Club. The study was conducted by the department leader Mrs. W.G. L. Taylor, on the subject of municipal government in European and American towns. With rise of artistic concerns in the city, and the aesthetic advantages of having beautiful parks and grounds, the improvement society was to
make a striking difference in Lincoln. In 1901, the City Improvement Society gained membership into the National Municipal League, an organization dedicated to beautifying moderate-sized cities throughout the United States. Literature had been sent out to the society about the league along with requests for delegates to attend the national meeting (Report of the City Improvement Society of Lincoln, 1901).

Thirty-seven subcommittees of the Improvement Society carried out the work of making improvements in the city. Their activities ranged from improving and cleaning up school grounds, organizing health ordinances, developing maintenance programs for city streets, repairing sidewalks, controlling weeds in vacant lots and removing paper trash from public grounds. They also drafted an ordinance against spitting in public and the suppression of obscene pictures on billboards (Report of the City Improvement Society of Lincoln, 1897).

The work of the members of the City Improvement Society was immediately apparent. During its first year, the society persuaded the city council to prevent the erection of billboards on street corners. These restrictions on billboards fell in line with areas of concern in the City Beautiful Movement. Members set out trees, and planted grass and created several flower beds at Elliot, Park and Capital school grounds. The society also placed 30 trash barrels on Lincoln street corners, and school children were enlisted to pick up trash from the streets. That same year, the society organized a City Improvement Program for Arbor Day. This program encouraged the planting of trees throughout the city. Without funds and with little support, the society began to offer prizes and rewards for the improvement of parks around poorer neighborhoods in Lincoln (Barbour, 1906).

The history of flower gardening in Lincoln coincides with the inception of the City Improvement Society. The Society had succeeded in encouraging school children in Lincoln to clean up their school grounds. The effort that motivated the development of school War Gardens that were started and maintained by the school children during World War I.

Home and school gardens became very popular in Lincoln around 1911. It was during this time that Judge Frost, president of the Social Service Club, wrote a letter to the Nebraska State Journal asking for assistance in inaugurating the Garden Movement in the city. Judge Frost's intention was to improve the conditions of the vacant lots and open areas that had been
neglected. The State Journal responded by offering $100 in cash prizes for the most outstanding garden or yard improvement for the current growing season. The two garden categories were vegetable/flower gardens and yard improvements (Donahue, 1935).

During the first summer, nearly 1,000 children became involved in gardening. In the second year, cash prizes were offered again and the number of participants increased to more than 1,200 home gardens. Six of the elementary schools that grew gardens were offered an additional cash prize from local businessmen. As gardening took hold, more organizations offered cash prizes for the best gardens in the city. This type of involvement and citywide encouragement of children in school garden programs had a positive effect on home gardens in Lincoln.

In the spring of 1915, Professor C. W. Pugsley of the extension department of the University of Nebraska was able to get Lincoln homes and school gardens recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Lincoln was named "The Demonstration City of the Middle West in the Children's Garden Movement." Under this new system of government supervision, the previously established classes of flower and vegetable gardens and yard improvements were retained, and a new category was added. This category was for girls and boys who were willing to enter the contest under a commercial proposition, keeping an accurate and itemized account of the expenses and income from their gardens. They were also required to keep written records on the whole process. This new concept gathered momentum and before long, enrollment in the school garden programs was well over the previous years’ totals. Almost every school had a gardening group that was growing a crop for a profit. Various schools reported that several thousand dollars were made selling their products during the summer of 1915 (Donahue, 1935).

One of the most significant programs started by the City Improvement Society was the opening of the city park located between D and F streets and 6th and 7th streets. Two years before Lincoln became incorporated, a 12-block tract of land was set aside for future park development. Unfortunately, the land had not been used for a park. It was apparently used for grazing cattle and horses for more than 20 years. The society's efforts eventually paid off when the organization was given credit for helping coordinate and develop the once forgotten city park.
Nellie M. Richardson was given the responsibility of coming up with some form of landscape plans for a new park. She succeeded in enlisting a landscape architect, Jens Jensen, from Chicago. Jensen's style of landscape architecture was famous for the use of native plant material in a way that resembled nature. After Richardson’s and Jensen’s first meeting, a full set of plans for landscaping the city park was furnished to the society with full details, compliments of the artist (Barbour, 1906).

In 1904, the society received $1,000 from the city council to hire a full-time gardener and maintain the park. Some of this money was used to purchase trees, shrubs and flowering plants for the grounds. A new street was opened on one side of the park, and sidewalks were installed throughout the area with help from the improvement society. The park formally opened on July 12, 1901. Mayor Fred E. Winnett and William Jennings Bryan were the featured speakers at the ceremony.

Another project the City Improvement Society was involved in was offering prizes for the best-kept lawn in Lincoln. The criteria for winning the prizes included general neatness of the premises, special care of the back yard, care of the alleyway and the area between the front fence and the middle of the street and cultivation of flowers, grass, vines, shrubbery, and general landscaping.

First prize was $50; second prize, $25; third prize, $20; fourth prize, $15; and four prizes of $10 each [Photographs of civic improvements, Plates 3.1 and 3.2].

The City Improvement Society had become the first planning body for Lincoln. It advocated city ordinances and lobbied for the city council to get them approved. But most important, at a time when the city neglected or simply did not have the funds to develop the parks, the society took on the responsibility.
Plate 3.1. Civic pride is shown by home beautification at the home of Francis Svoboda, Schuyler, NE., 1908.

Plate 3.2. Civic pride is shown at the home of Francis Svoboda, Schuyler, Neb., 1908
Bibliography

Chapter Four

PEOPLE, PARKS AND POLITICS

Mayor Francis Brown's Influence in the Development of the Antelope Creek Basin

Aware of the City Improvement Society's struggle, Mayor Francis W. Brown led interested citizens in their efforts to build a park system in Lincoln. He set a goal to recover the wasteland along Antelope Creek basin and convert this area into a beautiful meandering park. The area he was trying to develop lay between the University of Nebraska campus on the north side, and Sumner Street, about two miles south. After his re-election, Brown began working to purchase the Sager land tract, a nine-block area located between 27th to 30th streets and A to D streets in the heart of the city. Upon convincing a reluctant city council of the area's potential use, Mayor Brown took an active role in the purchase negotiations. Through these efforts, the land was finally purchased in August 1905 for $13,500 (Parks Deal About Closed, 1905).

This was the beginning of the development of land that paralleled Antelope Creek, which later became Antelope Park. Over the next few years, several tracts of land were either purchased by or donated to the park system, which soon extended from O Street to Sheridan Boulevard, compiling more than 75 acres of land [1918 Map of Antelope Park, Plate 2.3].

Many prominent people in Lincoln became involved in the development of Antelope Park. Mayor Brown's dream started to become a reality. The park continued to expand north and south. In 1915, a tract of land was added when William T. Auld purchased and donated 16 acres located directly south of the park between 30th and 33rd streets, extending south to Sumner Street. In November 1921, J.C. Seacrest presented the city with the deed to the strip of land located east of a railroad tract extending south to Sheridan Boulevard. This was later named Memorial Drive.

Expanding the city parks along the Antelope Creek basin was reminiscent of the efforts that were taking place back east. Planning pioneer Charles M. Robinson wrote, "If it is possible, as it sometimes is, to skirt part of the river on either bank with a park, so that even in the city there may be preserved, in semi-balance at least, nature's softer treatment, the solution is happier.” (Robinson 1901)
PLATE 2.3
Map of Antelope Park, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1906
Source
The First Park Commission

The majority of citizens as well as the city council offered very little support for developing a park system in Lincoln. Fortunately for all those interested, Mayor Brown’s idea of rescuing the land along the Antelope Creek succeeded, and the conversion of Antelope Creek basin continued. The area turned into a beautiful meandering park similar to those in Boston proposed as models in linear park development (Barbour, 1906).

This move was one of the most significant during the infancy of the parks department. Mayor Brown’s insight into developing the green space surrounding the creek in the center of the city was reminiscent of the development taking place in larger eastern cities.

In his concern for growth in Lincoln's Park System, the mayor repeatedly looked to the city of Boston for guidance [1906 map of Boston, Plate 2.4].
One of Mayor Brown's most significant accomplishments was to create a park board. He had recommended the city council appoint a park commission to make decisions regarding the growth and development of the park system. On Sept. 11, 1905, a park commission consisting of 11 members was officially established by the City Council. It then became the mayor's responsibility to appoint the commissioners.

The first commission was as follows:

-- C.G. Crittenden, President     -- Erwin H. Barbour     -- L.E. Wettling
-- W.M. Maupin, Vice President    -- W.E. Hardy          -- W.S. Harlan
-- Thos. H. Pratt, Secretary      -- C.W. Bryan          -- A.S. Tibbetts
-- Herman C. Fox, Treasurer       -- A.J. Sawyer         -- W.M. Widener
-- J.E. Miller

On Sept. 20, 1905, separate committees were formed for Grounds, Amusement, Transportation, Finance and Extension.

The first responsibility of the commission was to select and hire a head gardener. Philip Edinbourne, who had worked on the Omaha Exposition, was hired and he retained the position until 1913, when the city adopted the commissioner form of government. Within the commissioner form of government, the responsibility of park management was assigned to the Department of Public Property. William Schroeder was appointed superintendent of this department. One of Schroeder's first decisions was to appoint Edinborough as the new parks director. Edinborough retired from the position in 1928 (Barbour, 1906).

Perhaps the greatest aid to Mayor Brown's mission of creating a park system for Lincoln, was a newspaper article published in the Sunday State Journal on Dec. 30, 1906. The article, by Prof. Erwin H. Barbour, compared the park system in Boston to Lincoln’s:

"One of the commonest errors is to set off a number of small squares in various quarters of a city. These always present a formal and stiff appearance. An error even more common is to believe in segregating tracts
of land. The size of a park has practically no relation to its beauty. The park system of Boston is probably the standard for American parks. Each winding stream is converted into a long continuous park narrowing to mere roadways and open to broad expanses. This irregularity only heightens the effect and beautifies and diversifies the landscape."

This article was intended to promote the expansion of Antelope Park beyond the university campus all way to the State Fair Grounds. It was believed Barbour’s article finally helped persuade Lincoln citizens to donate land and services to help build up the parks system.

**Philip Edinborough: First Park Director in Lincoln, 1905-1928**

Edinborough, as Lincoln's first park director, was born at WellinGford, England in 1859. From boyhood on, he was a lover of flowers, studying plant propagation and nursery care. While still living in England, he received the finest training available to be a landscape gardener. He worked as an apprentice at a nursery in Wellingford England, before coming to the United States.

Edinborough did not come directly to Nebraska from England. He first moved to Kansas in 1890. In 1898 he was offered the job of planting the nursery stock at Omaha's exposition.. He then became a supervisor of flower bed planting at Wyuka cemetery in Lincoln. Edinborough worked at Wyuka for seven years before becoming the head gardener for the parks department (Veteran Park Head Hands in Resignation, 1928) [Photograph, Plate 2.5].

As head gardener, the commission appropriated Edinborough $2,000 the first year for park development and maintenance. He was also expected to keep a team of horses and a wagon in running order. Edinborough had only one horse, so he was forced to buy another along with a second wagon. He planted the barren acres around the park house near 27th and C streets with grain crops to feed the team to throughout the winter (Coe, 1928).

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In his first years as head gardener, Edinborough had to maintain the park at 7th and G streets and the Sager land tract between 27th to 30th and A to D streets for a total 40 acres (Parks Deal About Closed, 1905).

Antelope Creek basin, in the Sager land tract, was lined with several old farm buildings and it had been used primarily as a city dumping grounds. (Barbour, 1906).

Edinborough began cleaning up the area by trimming trees and picking up trash. He also found time to plant bluegrass seed and a few ornamental shade trees during his first year. During the early part of Edinborough career, many city residents felt there was not much need for a city park. They believed that private yards were good enough for any one, and it was a silly idea to be developing a park with grassy places and for entertainment (Coe, 1928).

Apparently, Edinborough proved his ability to the City Council. In his second year, his annual appropriation was increased to $5,000. This money allowed Edinborough to purchase more plants and equipment. Having the skill of a nurseryman, Edinborough directed the
planting of every tree and shrub in the parks system. He also designed and planned every flower
garden and any other beautiful spot in the city parks. Edinborough's plan was to turn the newly
acquired Antelope Park into a beautiful park with nicely trimmed trees, beautiful flowers and
evenly mowed turf. By 1914, it was reported that the parks system had as many as 30,000
flowering plants, Philip Edinborough himself planted many of these.

Edinborough worked for the city for more than 32 years before he retired in October,
1928. In that span of time, he had seen the parks systems grow from a mere 40 acres to more
than 700. He moved from Lincoln to the San Fernando Valley in California and built a home in
Van Nuys. Edinborough died Nov. 2, 1942, at 83 years of age.

Fred W. Goebel: Lincoln's First Park Floriculturist

Fred W. Goebel became the first park floriculturist in 1906, and worked for the Lincoln
Parks Department for more than 35 years. Before 1906, he was the florist at Wyuka cemetery
(Philip Edinborough Dies, 1942). Goebel and Edinborough became acquainted at Wyuka. After
Edinborough moved to the city parks system, Goebel apparently followed as a landscape
gardener. Ultimately, these two men became responsible for designing all of the gardens in the
entire park system (Photograph Plate 2.6).

Goebel was born March 5, 1876, at Rodinghausen, Westphalia, Germany. He came from
a family of 13 children of whom five came over to the United States in 1884. He settled in
Clatonia, Neb., later moving to a farm near Emerald, Neb. He married Matilda King in 1903,
and from there they moved to Lincoln where he was employed at Wyuka Cemetery from 1903-
1905. He worked for short time at the Burlington freight house before going to work for the
parks department in 1906 (Fred Goebel Head of Park Department, 1949).
Plate 2.6 Mr. Fred Goebel, Park Floriculturist, Lincoln, NE, 1920.

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62


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Chapter Five
The Parks Flourish

Flowers Populate the Parks

During the early years of development, the gardens in Lincoln's parks became an important source of information to students. Excursions during the semester became a valuable source of information on ornamental horticulture. Antelope Park held most of the ornamental flower beds in the Lincoln Parks Department. The majority of flower beds were planted along C Street, the main entrance to the park and on the south side of Auld Pavilion. It was reported that in 1914, more than 30,000 annual and perennial flowers and shrubs were raised in the department’s greenhouse for the following spring. (Eleventh Annual Report of the Auditor of The City of Lincoln, 1914) [C Street island, panoramic photograph, Plate 3.1].

In 1915, the entrance to Antelope Park was then enlarged to form a wide, oval-shaped median with a circle drive around it. More flowerbeds were added to create a grand entrance. These beds would eventually be described as the “carpet beds,” because they were designed and maintained to resemble a decorative rug.

Lincoln’s gardens became so popular that nearby towns and communities requested information on them. Many letters asked for lists of plants and sketches of designs so their cities could reproduce the flowerbeds on their campuses and in their parks. For example, Nels P. Johnson, Chairman of the Norfolk Parks Board and Thomas LeRay, Superintendent of Parks, made a trip to Lincoln to survey the gardens in 1933. On their trip, they were reported to have inspected the Lincoln Parks System to get ideas for the North First Street Park in Norfolk, NE. This particular park was an old dumping ground that Johnson visualized someday would be converted into a Sunken Garden (Omaha World-Herald News Service, Aug. 22, 1936).

By the end of the 1920s, Lincoln had established itself as an authority and leader in the Garden Movement with its extensive number of beautiful flower gardens, tree-lined streets and spacious parks. In 1928, the Parks Department opened a nursery that allowed the gardeners to grow large numbers of trees and shrubs for the parks. Thousands of flowers were also started in the nursery. One comment in the Lincoln Journal newspaper stated the park nursery was a
valuable asset during the depression years, because in spite of the depression, drought, and decreased appropriations, tree planting continued (Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Auditor of the City of Lincoln, 1928).

Plate 3.1. Beside a C Street island looking northwest.

There were many flowerbeds in the parks. The following locations included flower displays:

-- Sunken Garden, 27th and D streets -- F Street Park -- Peter Pan Park
-- C Street Island -- Irvingdale Park -- Bethany City Hall
-- 30 to 40 beds along A Street -- Bethany Park -- Pioneers Park
-- The zoo, (now Folsom Children’s Zoo) -- Uni Fire Barn -- Havelock Fire Barn
-- Auld Dance Pavilion -- Tourist Camp -- Antelope Golf Club
-- 50th and St. Paul streets, University Place -- Muny Playground -- Antelope Memory Garden
-- 24th and Pear streets Fire Barn

(Twenty-ninth Annual Report of the Auditor of the City of Lincoln, 1928)

**The City Greenhouse**

The horticultural practices used in the Park Department greenhouse were much the same as any other plant growing operation, except the plants were not sold. The greenhouse was
specifically set up to overwinter the numerous species of tender ornamental plants that had been collected throughout the year. The majority of these plants could not be easily found or purchased through commercial garden catalogs. Several of these plants were gifts from citizens who had traveled abroad and returned with living souvenirs to share with the rest of Lincoln. Some plants did not produce seeds, so large specimens were potted and slip cuttings were taken from each specimen several times during the winter. This was one of the methods used to produce the large number of plants required for each year's designs. The majority of the cuttings for each year's crop came from the Sunken Garden, C Street Island and the south side of Auld Dance Pavilion, because these areas held the widest variety of most of the plants in the parks flower beds. The fresh cuttings were taken to the nursery or the greenhouse to be rooted, transplanted and raised for the following season.

Seeds were also collected from many plant species, and were stored until early spring. At that time they were sown and germinated in the greenhouse. The produced bedding plants were traditionally planted the day after the city's Annual Mother's Day Open House in the parks greenhouse.

The park's flower beds were usually designed during the fall and winter before planting season. Much thought and attention was given to the details of colors, sizes and flower varieties to be used. Very ornate designs were used at the C Street entrance of Antelope Park. The plants were sheared off at a 12- to 15- inch height to create the appearance of a carpet. The Goebel photographs exhibit the extraordinary detail that was used in the layout of these flower beds. The design information appears to have been very important because it gave greenhouse personnel the exact numbers of plants needed for the next season [Carpet bed designs, Plates 3.2 & 3.3].
Plate 3.2. Carpet bed designs along C Street island.
A Gardener in His Element

Tropical plants were some of Goebel's favorites. He had tried unsuccessfully to get a lemon tree to bear fruit for several years. Another very popular specimen of his was a large myrtle. This particular plant was described in the Lincoln Journal as one of a kind, which could be seen only in the Parks Department greenhouse. A bougainvillea, which was still growing when the greenhouse was torn down in 1988, attracted many plant enthusiasts. This red-flowering plant would bloom during the early summer, and it attracted home gardeners who came to admire it and take home a few cuttings. Goebel was particularly proud of this plant because he had heard there were only three types of bougainvillea.

Plants that were grown in the greenhouse were harvested every year for the future designs. For example, *Pennisetum setaceum*, or purple fountain grass, had to be harvested in the fall each year before frost, because it was not hardy in the area. The grass plants had to be divided into several small bunches and planted into clay pots, then allowed to grow during the winter months.

*Cerus*, or cacti, and agaves, were not native to Nebraska and could not survive the harsh winters. These plants had to be collected and brought into the greenhouse each winter. When planting season arrived, these tender specimens were combined with other types of arid plants in the C Street Island flower beds [Cactus plantings, Plate 3.4].
Plate 3.4. C Street island cactus bed in the 1920’s.

*Nymphacea* sps., or water lilies, were one of most unusual features in the gardens. These aquatic plants were placed in several areas in Antelope Park, in the Sunken Garden, the old Thompson Fountain, once located in the zoo, and in a large display area located off of 30th and A streets. The water lily collection contained several hardy species as well as many tropical one, which had to be overwintered in pools in the greenhouse. Many of the plants used today are the descendants of those water lilies.

One of Goebel’s favorite aquatic plants was *Hydrocleys*, or water poppy, a tender perennial from South America with thick, heart-shaped, floating leaves and bright yellow, three-petaled flowers reaching two inches in diameter.

The different types of plants used to create the carpet beds had to remain short and yet full of leaves after they were sheared. *Alternanthera ficoidea*, or Joseph’s coat, is a multi-colored foliage plant, which was commonly used in these beds. *Centurea* [Dusty Miller], and *Santolina chamaecypariss [lavender cotton], both silver-foliaged specimens, as well as *Vershaffeltii "Iresine herbstii,"[blood leaf], were also popular plants in the carpet beds on C Street Island.

More than 15 varieties of cannas were used in the flower beds, including Wyoming,
President, King Humbert and Queen Helen. Canna rhizomes were taken up each fall and stored in the basement of the headhouse, the main portion of the greenhouse, over the winter. During the first part of March, the rhizomes were potted and brought out of dormancy in the warm greenhouse so they could reach at least a third of their full height before they were set outside. The early growth gave the gardeners very strong and healthy plants for the first week of planting in May.

Other plants grown in the city greenhouse in 1931:
coleus, verbena, Achyranthes brilliantana, (a dark red plant used in the canna beds,) Helianthemum, or sun rose or rock rose, Naplium, (a border plant similar to lavender cotton,) lantana, blue flax, sempervirons (hens and chicks) petunias, delphiniums, tucker lilies, cushion mums, vinca, torinia, snapdragons, scabiosa, penstemon, strawflower, zinnias, salvia, celosia, allysum, dianthus, phlox, balsam, calendula, four o'clock, dahlias, gaillardia, star of Texas, celestial rose and calcalias (Antelope Park Florist Soon to Start Planting, 1931).
Chapter Six

SON OF A GARDENING MAN

Witness to the Evolution of a Garden

Henry E. Goebel was born in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1909. He was the oldest of two sons and one daughter born to Fred W. Goebel and his wife. He received his education in Lincoln, Neb. at Lincoln High School and he earned a bachelor’s degree in history at the University of Nebraska. He was hired as a history teacher at Irving Junior High School and remained there until his retirement in the 1970s.

Goebel said that it was common for family members of park officials to help out with events and projects. He said that there were many times when he would go down to the park's offices and do bookkeeping or type letters. Goebel said the initial concept for building a terraced garden with an electric waterfall and reflection pools full of ornamental water lilies was part of a plan he created. Historically the credit for designing the garden had been given to his father, Fred Goebel, and for the most part Fred Goebel did, in fact, determine the plant material that was used in the garden, as well as all of the gardens grown in the parks. However, the younger Goebel's work may have had a significant impact on developing the site at 27th and D streets into the Sunken Garden.

The corner lots of 27th and D streets were in need of landscaping because of the changes brought about by the adjustments made to Antelope Creek and the construction of the new bridge at 27th Street and Capital Parkway, Goebel said. Originally, the creek had passed through the center of the corner lot naturally forming the steep banks on the south side of the garden. E. M. Bair was head of the Parks Department as well as the city treasurer. Goebel said Bair was ultimately responsible for the growth and development in the entire parks system, and it was reported in the newspaper that he had envisioned developing a garden in this sunken area. Goebel said that up until that time no one had developed plans for the corner, and all that it had been used for was a children's play lot and a dumping ground for neighborhood refuse (citation).

Henry Goebel was in his mid-twenties when he approached his father with the idea of how to construct a sunken garden using terrace ledges for flowers, reflection pools to grow water
lilies and a cascading waterfall using an electric water pump.

The design was very much ahead of its time, he said, but his father liked it so much that it was immediately accepted. Goebel said that together they worked on the initial drawings for the garden, which eventually became a full set of working plans. He said that he had kept the full set of drawings of the garden, but they were unfortunately lost when he moved in the early ‘50s. The current owners of Goebel’s home were asked to look for the documents beneath the attic floor, where had been hidden. Apparently, during a remodeling project on the house, they were destroyed.

Goebel said he wanted to fashion the garden after the rock gardens he had read about in the East. The natural slopes along the south side did not require any major work. All that had to be done was to simply lay out the terrace areas. He said flower beds were placed on the south slopes, which were already a natural feature formed by years of erosion.

The banks along 27th and D streets, the north and east side of the garden, were another matter, Goebel said. Prior to construction of a bridge over 27th street, Antelope Creek ran right through the center the garden. Apparently, there were two bridges located on the lot that were removed when the new bridge was built. As a result of this construction, the main flow of the creek was moved to the north side of the area.

Modifications to 27th and D streets had left the area in need of a considerable amount soil due to the sheer banks next to the side walks along the street. This problem wasn’t resolved until the two lots on the west side of the garden were donated to the parks department. These lots were considerably higher than the bottom of the garden, so they were used to provide soil for the backfill needed along the north and east banks. The areas where the soil was removed became a gently flowing slope covered with Swiss pines and juniper shrubs (citation).

Native Nebraska wildflowers were Goebel’s first choice for the south terraces, but his father, a veteran floriculturist, pointed out that this area would require much more color than native species could provide. The location of the south slopes almost demanded the colorful schemes of flowers that were very popular during the ‘30s. Consequently, annuals were planted throughout the entire garden using several intricate patterns.

Goebel said he wanted the focal point of the garden to be the Wheel Beds, located in the
center of the garden. Originally, these flower beds contained several species of roses, and were known as Lincoln's first public rose garden.

Cascading waterfalls on the south slopes were part of Goebel’s vision for the garden, he said. The natural drop in elevation lent itself to such a design. In order to move the water up the slope and provide enough pressure to run a fountain at the bottom of the falls, a special type of pump had to be designed and built. Goebel said he really didn't believe the falls would ever be installed, because electric pumps were so expensive. During the depression, there was very little money for anything, let alone a motorized waterfall. Goebel said he was very surprised when the city commissioners approved of the plan for a waterfall and the geyser fountain. Two engineers from Omaha were hired to design and build a prototype pump.

For many years, there were several large water lily pools located in the area that is now the Folsom Children's Zoo. Goebel said he liked the pools, and wanted reflection pools in his design of the Sunken Garden. He said he felt they would add to the depth of the garden and enhance the effects of the waterfalls.

Aquatic plant displays in Lincoln parks were a tradition, and the Parks Department was one of the first cities in this part of the country to grow tropical water lilies. Tropical lilies were very difficult to find, and Goebel said most of the water lilies for the Sunken Garden pools were purchased from the botanical garden in St. Louis, Miss. (citation).

Goebel said he personally worked with the crews as the garden was being built. He said no more than 12 men worked on the construction crew at one time, although Commissioner Bair hired more than 200 men for park activities that winter. The garden was completed during the winter of 1930 and was ready for planting in the spring of 1931(citation).

Goebel recalled a poignant memory of the construction of the garden. At a house directly south of the garden, a little girl watched the workers out of her bedroom window every day. He said she never missed a day of standing in the window and waving at the workers down below.

When asked how people felt about having such a large garden built during the 1930s when money was so scarce, Goebel said, "Well, what was the alternative, a hole in the ground?"

"There were a few citizens who probably did not appreciate this garden but, for those who did, they came from miles around to see this thing of beauty."
Henry Goebel, a soft-spoken man, never sought credit for his participation in creating the Sunken Garden, because so many people were involved.

“They're still about the same,” he said, “the main thing is, and they are still there”.

**Bibliography**

Chapter Seven

THE SUNKEN GARDEN

The History of Sunken Garden

The Sunken Garden of Lincoln at the southwest corner of 27th and D streets has been the pride and joy of citizens for many years. This 1.5-acre lot was constructed over the winter of 1930-31, during the worst financial depression the United States ever experienced. This project was part of a program used by the city government of Lincoln as an incentive for unemployed men to earn money to buy groceries for their families and survive hard times, as there was very little money available for employment in any line of work.

In the early 1900s, Antelope Park extended from Sheridan Boulevard to O Street, following the meandering path of the Antelope Creek. The construction of a new bridge over 27th street and Capital Parkway required taming this creek, which resulted in straightening the mainstream and moving the flow of water several hundred feet to the north through D street [Antelope Park Map, Plate 2.3]

Completion of the bridge left a large depression in the middle of the lot with a very sheer bank on all sides, preventing any type of housing development. As a result, for many years the area was used primarily during the winter by the neighboring children for sledding (Park Gets Gift of Land, 1930) [Kids sledding in sunken park, Plate 2.8]

Incorporating the corner of 27th and D streets into an active part of the parks system had been wanted for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Frey donated the piece of land that is considered the base of the Sunken Garden in 1906. It was around this time that several lots in the this area were donated to the Parks Department to help add to the linear park along Antelope Creek. In the fall of 1930, it was decided to develop this area into a garden when J. C. Seacrest and A.O. Faulkner donated two adjacent lots on the west side of the block to the Parks Department (Parks Gets Gift of Land, 1930).

The driving force behind the acquisition of this parcel of land and its development was the city commissioner and park head, E.M. Bair. Many newspaper articles credit Commissioner Bair for being one of the main government officials responsible for much of the development in
the Parks Department. He stated in a newspaper interview in reference to the corner of 27th and Capital Parkway, “I expect to make this spot the most beautiful place in the city, either in or out of the parks. The ground lends itself perfectly to the making of a sunken garden, and at the same time a spot rich in beauty, at a small expense”\(^1\).

His term as commissioner ran during the years of the Great Depression. During this time, Bair created several different city improvements projects of which he was able to assign temporary jobs to more than 200 unemployed men. This government-sponsored program was put into effect to benefit those in need as well as the city itself. These positions were limited to married men or to those with dependents at home.

Plate 2.7 Children sledding in the 1920’s at the proposed site of Sunken Gardens.
Crewmembers could work only an eight-hour shift at the rate of 40 cents per hour, two
days a week for a grand total of $6.40 per week. These temporary crews were sent out to work in
Bair, E.M. *The Lincoln Star*, Lincoln Ne. 1931.¹

Plate 2.8 Excavation and construction of Sunken Gardens 1930.
many different areas of the parks performing tasks ranging from tree trimming to construction
projects. It was from this work force that at least 15 men were added to existing parks staff to
help construct the Sunken Garden (Lincoln Parks Being Beautified, 1931).

The construction on the Sunken Garden began during the winter of 1930 and was
completed in the spring of 1931. Although the credit for the original design of the Sunken
Garden had been given to Fred Goebel, it appeared that his son, Henry, had in fact been involved
in the general idea for the garden. During an interview with Henry Goebel, in 1991, I learned that
he had presented to his father the idea of landscaping the south slopes of this sunken lot into
terraced flowerbeds. Henry also proposed installing a waterfall, and two reflection pools at the
base of the garden that would hold several different types of aquatic plants. Henry mentioned to me that it was not uncommon for him to help his father at work. It was expected of family members to share in their father’s professional responsibilities during this era (Henry Goebel personal interview, 1991) [Construction of the garden, Plates 2.8 and 2.9]

Plate 2.9. Construction in Sunken Gardens 1931

Several newspaper articles called the future garden a “rock” garden. During the 1930s, in the United States, the idea of building rock gardens in progressive communities such as Lincoln was the popular thing to do. The only requirements for this type of garden were to use as many rocks as possible and to form a sort of garden skeleton with them. Many of these gardens contained rocks structures such as water fountains or memorials. Another common element of rock gardens was terraced levels using rock retaining walls stuffed with several types of ground-hugging sedum, a succulent perennial. This design element can still be seen in the rock walls of the Sunken Garden today. Rock gardens were often located along natural ravines, incorporating a pattern of winding areas with irregular widths extending to the edge of the banks (Antelope Rock Garden is open, 1931) [Post Card of Sunken Garden, Plate 2.11].

Because of construction along 27th and D streets, a sheer drop off existed between the
garden and the new street. To make these slopes more manageable, a considerable amount of fill dirt was needed. The solution came from shimming several feet of soil from the two lots west of the garden donated by Seacrest and Faulkner. The soil from these lots was used to fill in the banks and create a gentle slope down to the bottom of the garden (Park Gets Gift of Land, 1930).

Construction of the garden proceeded by first removing all the old disfigured trees that dotted the area [Plate 2.8].

Plate 2.11. Postcard of Sunken Gardens, 1940.

The next step was to lie out the terraces using several truckloads of rock. The rock used in the walls of the garden was harvested entirely from Lancaster County, of which Lincoln is the county seat. The only expense for building the walls was the cost of hauling and installing the rocks. White limestone rocks were used for creating the lower retaining walls. The reddish-colored rocks that provided the main color scheme of the walls along the southern terraces were collected south of the area where the Nebraska State Penitentiary currently stands (Rock Garden at Twenty Seventh and D, 1931).

Semicircular flowerbeds were used to decorate the slopes along the north and east banks of the garden next to 27th and D streets. These beds were placed to accentuate the bright hues of
the plantings on the bottom of the garden, while white gravel paths wound throughout the garden [Sunken Gardens, Plate 2.13].

A newspaper article in 1931 noted that the gardens were so beautiful their first year that the surrounding states sent representatives to Lincoln to get names of the plants used and to sketch some of the more interesting design patterns. The view of the brightly colored flowers reflecting off the surface of the pools was reported in the Lincoln State Journal and in the Norfolk Newspaper to be one of the most beautiful sights in the whole garden (Lincoln Parks are Beautiful, Norfolk Newspaper, 1931).


Three cement-lined pools were built in the bottom of the garden with the intention of creating the peaceful sights and sounds of water. The southern-most pool was used exclusively for water lily display. It contained several species of tropical and hardy water lilies. Henry Goebel mentioned during an interview that the majority of these lilies had been purchased from the Botanical Garden in St. Louis, Missouri.

The main attraction of the garden’s water display was the four-level waterfall, which flowed down the southern terraces. Water was pumped approximately 20 feet to the top, then trickled down four large steps into a pool, which was stocked with colorful fish.
The central pool under the falls contained the “Geyser Fountain,” which appeared as a small pile of rocks. This fountain was designed to operate like the real thing, that is, it was reported to be able to shoot a pressurized stream of water 20 feet into the air every few minutes, just like a natural geyser. The power for this fountain was supplied by pump located beneath the pool. The same pump operated the waterfall as well as the geyser (Antelope Rock garden is Open, 1931) [Photo Plate 2.11]

A second and larger fountain in the north pool was unique because it was designed to produce a solid sheet of water that would rise to a height of more than 15 feet, then fall back into the basin as a fine mist. This fountain was scheduled to shoot off every 15 minutes. An a main feature at night, it was planned to project colored glass slides on the sheet of water using the “magic” lantern pictures, making it possible to view the photos form both sides. Unfortunately, this fountain never delivered the type of display it was supposed to, it was eventually abandoned and the pool was filled with water lilies.

The fountain pumps were designed by two Omaha engineers, and it was believed that these pumps were the first of their kind to be installed anywhere in the United States (Fountains in City Rock Garden to be Completed soon, 1931).

By July of 1931, the garden was in full bloom and attracting visitors from all over
Nebraska, as well as neighboring states. A total of 416 trees and shrubs were planted in the garden with the final cost coming to $2,500. The largest expense was the cost of labor to move the rocks. Plant material for the garden was supplied by the city’s greenhouse and nursery. Clay tile from the old roof of the Federal Building and Post Office was donated.

**Designing the Sunken Garden**

From the beginning, the main design intent for the Sunken Garden was to create a large colorful display of ornamental flowerbeds. Different types of annuals, perennials, flowering bulbs and aquatic plants are still used in the flowerbeds in this garden.

The design process of creating the current color patterns has been used experimentally to identify those yielding maximum effects for a minimum amount of maintenance. These characteristics are kept in mind when new design patterns are created. New designs must also appeal to the general public, and meet the approval of the garden staff.

This first part of this section deals with the process used in designing the Sunken Garden.

Plate 2.14 Sunken Gardens circa 1933.

identify those yielding maximum effects for a minimum amount of maintenance. These characteristics are kept in mind when new design patterns are created. New designs must also appeal to the general public, and meet the approval of the garden staff.

This first part of this section deals with the process used in designing the Sunken Garden.
This process includes focal points as well as form, texture and color.

**Focal Points**

The preliminary stage of flowerbed design is to establish the focal points. To simplify this process, the garden is separated into two different areas—the sunken area and the upper rim surrounding the garden. The upper level of the garden has been designated as a passive area for seclusion and privacy. This part of the garden contains several perennial beds filled with collections of shade tolerant plants, including hostas, hardy ferns, flowering ornamental shrubs and trees are scattered around the remainder of the area.

The lower sunken portion of the garden has always been considered the main color display area. Since its inception, it has been planted with thousands of colorful annuals. The intent of the designs used in the area is to evoke feelings from visitors through the use of strong colors arranged into different patterns. Focal points in the sunken area are set off by specific color patterns. The idea is to direct the visitor’s eye to different points of interest, such as the water lilies in the reflection pools, then perhaps the monochromatic terraced ledges.

The main focal points used in designing the garden include “Rebecca at the Well”, a sculpture, the “Cascading Waterfalls,” the “Wheel Beds” and “Reflection Pool”. Wheel Beds are usually designed with a sort of spoke configuration the reflection pools containing several different species of water lilies. [Sunken Garden Photographs, Plate 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3].
Plate 4.1. Sunken Garden’s Rebecca At the Well is a focal point at base of the cascading falls.

Plate 4.2. Reflection Pool and Wheel behind it,
Form, Texture and Color

Having established the main areas of focus, the next step would be to determine the form and texture of the plant material. Form involves the shape and structure of the plants used in a particular grouping. In the sunken portion of the garden, the forms of various plant species are used to create different accents. For example, taller background ornamental grasses in the upper ledges create the illusion that the garden is much deeper than it actually is. The horizontal pfitzer juniper, which line the banks of the garden not only create an appearance of depth, but help soften the sharp lines of the steep banks and screen the city streets above. It is important to determine just how the to use plants with similar forms. When the technique is used properly, it can give a visitor a sense of harmony among plants in the design.

Texture is a surface quality of any plant material that can be seen or felt. Different flowering plants are arranged according to the size of their leaves and flowers. These textural nuances can help create the illusion that an area is either closer or farther away according to how well the area is designed. The use of texture is very important in areas of the garden that have small amounts of space available for planting. In order to create the illusion of large flowerbeds,
a selection of coarse-textured plants are placed close to the edges with a variety of tall, fine-textured plants placed in the background. This coarse-to-fine texture sequence of plants in a given area creates the sense of expansion. The narrow ledges in the garden are designed using this technique, making the garden appear larger.

*Color* is one of the most important design features used in determining the type of plants used in the Sunken Garden. The selection of different hues is very important in creating the feeling that the design is intended to achieve having a definite effect on the people who visit a garden. The harmonious color patterns placed in the terrace beds are used to stimulate the viewer. Every year, the garden staff searches for new and different varieties of plant material that will flower throughout the growing season. Field trips to botanical centers in the region have been one of the best methods used to find new and different types of plants as well as cultural information on them [Wheel Bed, Plate 4.2].

Psychological effects of bright colors tend to draw the most attention, even from passerby from their cars. Cool colors along the walks form patterns with restful or quieting effects.

The background plantings of shade trees and ornamental shrubs are used to create peaceful areas in the upper portion of the Sunken Garden. During the summer, the green foliage in the background sets off the bright reds and yellows in front. These colors are primarily used to pull one’s attention to the garden each year. The choice location for the brightest colored annual plants has traditionally been the Wheel Bed, and the upper terrace on the west side of the Waterfalls. These areas are most easily viewed from all sides when walking along the garden paths as well as passing the garden on 27th street. (Plate 4.4)
Plate 4.4. Viewers focus on color and texture entering from the southeast.

**Planting the Sunken Garden**

Through the last 64 years, the Sunken Garden has traditionally been the first flower garden planted in the Parks Department in the spring. Because of the many weddings and special events that take place there, it’s important to get an early start. Planting these flowerbeds usually takes place around Mothers Day, which lands on the second Sunday of May each year. Installation of all of the garden in the parks adheres to a very tight time schedule and must be completed in less than 5 weeks. The reason for this is because of the limited amount of resources such as people power and equipment.

The planting crew is a short-term assembly of people who are called upon from different districts within the department. This crew is broken down into 4 groups with specific tasks. One group roto-tills the soil in the beds, another delivers the plants to the necessary locations, and another installs the plants and the last group mulches, fertilizes and waters the new transplants. An experience member of the full-time horticulture crew leads each group.

Preparation for planting actually begins in the fall of each year, when all of the annual flower gardens are hand-spaded and the perennial gardens are mulched in with wood chips. The hand spading exposes the sub-soil of the flowerbeds, which contains many harmful pests, to the elements of freezing temperatures in the winter, thus helping reduce their numbers. Hand spading also makes it easier to apply compost in the fall. After spading the beds, a 2-3 inch layer
of composted material is applied to each bed. The large clumps of exposed soil allow spaces for the compost to fall down between the clumps and naturally blend into the soil. Several years of amending the soil have created a planting medium that is unlike the native soil in this area. The advantage to this practice is improved soil air, better drainage and superior plant performance from readily available nutrients.

The till crew is responsible for preparing the soil by deep cultivation with a root-tiller. They must stay ahead of the planting crews by preparing all of the flowerbeds sites in the Parks and Recreation Department. This activity can be one of the most physically demanding jobs during flowerbed installation. It is important to select a crew that is very healthy and physically able to do the job. Before tilling occurs, the flowerbed is sprayed with a non-selective herbicide such as Round-up to kill all existing weeds. The crew then removes all of the debris from the planting areas before tilling.

The first step for the till crew is to dig an edge around the perimeter of the flowerbed. Edging defines the shape of the bed and keeps it from growing beyond its desired boundaries. The second step is to roto-till the soil in the bed. Several passes through the soil allows the crew to reach a desired depth of at least 6 inches. The freshly tilled soil is then raked smooth to remove deep ruts. The third step is to apply a granular fertilizer that is incorporated into the soil by simply raking it into the top few inches. The best type of fertilizer for this purpose is a slow release, 10-10-10 formulation applied at the rate of 5 pounds of nitrogen per 100 square feet.

Ideally, the tilling process begins about three weeks before planting starts. It saves time during planting if the beds have already been tilled in early spring, but because of labor shortages throughout the parks districts, the till crews usually go out with the rest of the planting crew.

The delivery crew follows the till crew. This crew picks up the plant material from the shade house holding area and delivers it to a designated site according to design. Field guides are handed out showing the planting scheme so that the delivery people can easily determine the number of plants needed at a specific site. This can also be a very physical job because crew members are lifting and unloading virtually thousands of plants each day. This crew must also possess enough knowledge about the plants we use to identify the proper material in the specific
designs.

At the end of the day, when a sufficient number of plants have been dropped off at each site, the delivery crew will join one of the other crews. This helps to create the team effort necessary to plant the gardens during the 4-week planting period.

After the design patterns have been marked out at a particular site, the plants are carefully removed from their plastic tray inserts by the planting crew and set down in the spot where they are to be planted. Unskilled hands can easily damage the small, delicate seedlings, so care is taken to train each member of the planting crew in the proper handling of new plant material. After removal, it is important for the members of the planting crew move swiftly to insert the seedlings into the ground. The soil around the roots has a tendency to dry quickly out of the pot. Next, the small transplants are installed manually into the ground with garden trowels. A slight firming of the soil around each plant helps remove air pockets and bring the soil in contact with the root ball.

The main responsibility for the last crew is to water in the new transplants then apply a liquid fertilizer 9-45-15. This type of fertilizer is commonly called Starter Fertilizer or Up-Start. The advantage to this step is the reduction of transplant shock through the addition of high levels of phosphorous. The final task for this team is to apply a 2-3 inch layer of grass-clippings mulch on the bare soil on the flowerbeds. This helps keep the soil cool and helps prevent the soil from drying out during to quickly during the warm spring days.

**Evolving Maintenance Methods**

The requirements for maintaining flower beds in today’s public gardens is not the same as it was 64 years ago when the Sunken Garden was first constructed. During the last 20 years alone, the city’s gardens have seen significant changes because of the reduction of staff size and consequently, the reduction of high maintenance practices. Traditionally, the parks gardens were very formal plantings with meticulously manicured plant material defining areas within the garden. Some of these plants grew very fast and required frequent hand shearing, Photo Plate 4.5 illustrates one of the high-maintenance styles of carpet beds on C Street island in the 1920s. These beds needed countless hours of shearing to keep them in proper form. In 1931, manpower
was plentiful and there were always enough staff members to care for this style of gardening. Today, the survival of the public garden depends on utilizing a minimal approach to maintenance. During the last five decades, the over-all square footage of the flower beds has increased while the number of maintenance personal has been reduced. As a result, garden maintenance in the Lincoln Parks Department has evolved into a science that doesn’t allow for many errors.

Over the years there have been several changes in horticultural practices. I interviewed Henry Goebel in 1991, I questioned him about the maintenance techniques used in the 1930s. He told me that when the new seedlings were planted into the garden and lived, the crews would continue to plant them year after year. But, if a new variety of plant died, they would try something different the next year. He also said the gardens soils at that time were not prepared in any special way. Apparently, there was no soil amendment program or any soil preparation used in the 30s.

In the gardens today, one of the most important maintenance process is the rebuilding of the soil structure through the addition of organic material. This process is very important because many of the new plants on the market today will not perform well in Lincoln’s heavy soil. As I mentioned earlier, soil amendments are added to the flowerbeds each fall. The garden staff applies several inches of composted organic matter to each flower bed after it has been hand spaded. This usually takes place right after the first frost and the removal of dead plant material. Addition of this material helps loosen the soil by adding pore space, which allows for free air movement and proper percolation of water. It also adds important macro and micro nutrients to the soil mix. The main ingredient of the compost is well aged horse manure. To this we add, if available, rotted leaves collected from the previous year and rotted grass clippings. Horse manure is preferred because of its low pH as opposed to cow or pig manure. It is also better to use bedding manure that has as its base, wood chips. Some of the stables use straw in their mix, but we have found that the hollow shaft of straw gives a home to over-wintering pests, a dangerous risk for a formal garden area.

One thing that hasn’t changed much since the 1930s is the weather for the city of Lincoln. It continues to be as unpredictable now as it was in the past. Annual rain fall amounts
and the average mean temperatures change from season to season. Flower beds are thoroughly watered immediately after planting and then followed up once a week thereafter. To help prevent water loss during dry conditions and reduced the amount of time needed to water the garden, the staff apply two to three inches of grass-clipping mulch to each bed when they are installed. Fresh grass clippings are preferred because the moisture in them makes them much easier to handle. Grass clippings are one of the most abundantly available and one of the most economical materials. Approximately one month after the initial application of clippings, another layer is applied to cover all bare spots.

Although weeds have always been a problem in the garden, back in the 1930's, there were many hands available to do the job. Unfortunately, today’s staff is much leaner and they must rely on modern methods of horticulture including the use of herbicides. On some of the select beds a pre-emergence is applied to prevent the germination of weed seeds. There are several selections in this category of chemical weaponry. So, it is important to chose one the does not inhibit the growth of the new seedlings, many of these chemicals are growth inhibitors and can easily harm newly transplanted seedlings by coming into contact with the root system.

Applying fertilizer to the flowerbeds is another important aspect of modern day flower bed maintenance. Two different types of fertilizer are used in the gardens. First, a granular formulation of slow release, 10-10-10 fertilizer is incorporated into the soil immediately after tilling. A complete fertilizer that contains all of the essential minor and trace elements is used. The second type is 9-45-15. This formulation is used to help small seedlings overcome transplant shock and become established.

Fungicides, unheard of in the gardens in the 1930s, are used to help maintain mums, roses and other plants susceptible to fungal diseases. The key is using a fungicide is to set up a regular application program on a 7-10 day schedule. Research has demonstrated that it is best to rotate between as many as five different fungicides each spray period to prevent pests from becoming immune to the chemical.

Crop rotation is another tool used in today’s lower maintenance gardens. Planting the same or similar specimen in the same plot of ground year after year can invite many soil-borne pests and diseases. Rotating crops helps reduce these problems, this method was first used for
agricultural crops in the 1930s. When a pest does find its way into the garden, measures are taken to prevent it from spreading. If a pest is found in the soil, a soil sterilizer is applied in late fall. A relatively safe form of short lived granular sterilizer is preferred because this form doesn’t have the nasty side effects of the conventional types. In a public garden, appearances are everything, and it can be very unpleasant to have dead birds all over an area directly after sterilization.

Disease-resistant plants have given contemporary gardeners many more plants to choose from than their 1930s predecessors. Replacing popular colorful plants, with different species, less susceptible to disease, is an ongoing effort with the intention of keeping the displays filled with flowers throughout the entire season. Many of the early restrictions about using plant material associated with unsuitable soil conditions and limited seed stock, have been overcome. In 1994, the sunken garden contained more than 150 plant varieties. Much of this versatility is due to the availability of F-1 Hybrids. Along with this supply of new plant material, the garden undergoes an extensive soil modification program each fall. Coupled with different fertilizers used in the garden success with a large number of plants is possible. (Table 7.1)

Table 7.1 Plants used in Sunken Gardens 1993.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Variety</th>
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<td>Marigold ‘Nugget series’</td>
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<td>Digitalis ‘Foxglove x mertonensis’</td>
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<td>Echinacea ‘Purple cone flower’</td>
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<td>'Meadow sweet'</td>
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<td>'Goblin'</td>
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<td>Hosta plantagenia</td>
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<td>Yarrow 'Moon Shine'</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zinnia angustifolia linearis 'Star series'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Eight
CONCLUSION

The Antelope-Triangle Park Area has become known as one of the main tourist attractions in Lincoln, partly because of the Children's Zoo and the brilliantly colored flower beds along 27th and A streets. The Antelope-Triangle is centrally located, unique and accessible to almost everyone.

Adjacent to the triangle, the Sunken Garden, itself, contains more than 35,000 flowering annuals and perennials, attracting thousands of visitors from May through October. This garden is chosen as a location for more than 40 weddings each year. It also attracts tour groups from all over the United States as well as Japan, Germany, England, France, Canada and Australia. In addition to these groups, students from area high schools, universities and garden clubs use these gardens for studying horticulture, design and grounds management.

Presently, there are more than 60,000 square feet of ornamental display flower beds in Lincoln's parks and public golf courses. These gardens provide beautiful areas for passive relaxation plus a culturally favorable area to help relieve the stressful reality of daily life. Respect for the gardens and the relatively few occurrences of vandalism could be considered one of the of characters Lincoln's residents appreciate about the gardens.

From the early 1900s through 1970, ornamental flower gardens in the Parks Department were much more numerous then they are today. Unfortunately, a large number of these gardens have been removed because of budget cuts. During the 1920s, one of the largest planting areas in the city was the south entrance to the Auld Dance Pavillion. Nearly 20 years later, these flower beds were removed and replaced by a parking lot [Auld Pavillion, Plate 5.1].

The Carpet Beds in the original entrance to Antelope Park have also been removed. During the ‘20s, this was such an impressive display, that photographs of the area were published in the local newspaper during the growing season ['C' St. Island, Plate 5.2]. In 1988,
this garden was removed and replaced with an open grass area to reduce the number of
floral displays.

There are no plans at this time for future expansion in the gardens. If any new flower
gardens are to be created, it will depend solely upon donated funds because of a policy to
“downsize” the gardening program. This policy has resulted in the elimination of six full-time
gardening positions in the last 10 years. Even though saving money on garden maintenance is the
primary reason for removing these gardens, but there is neither enough money to buy plants for
all of the existing gardens, nor to maintain them.

Lincoln's public gardens are social binders, which help to create and sustain a coherent
and inclusive public culture. When people want to relax or find a calm place to reflect, they
usually choose a central public space with the most appropriate setting. These settings usually
include beautiful flower gardens, tree-shaded benches and the sound of running water.

For more than 90 years, the gardens in Lincoln's parks have been an integral part of the
city’s cultural image.

Every effort has been made to create low-maintenance flower beds that can survive
Nebraska’s severe changes in weather, and ultimately help reduce the cost of maintaining the
gardens. Design techniques using native plant materials are currently being used to enhance our
limited abilities without losing the positive approval of Lincoln's residents.

There is also a trend in designing public areas that calls for more environmentally safe
maintenance programs through naturalizing many of the open areas in the urban park system.
Planting native forbs and grasses in areas that have relatively little recreational use creates
minimal-maintenance sites, and it gives residents the opportunity to learn about natural prairie
plants.

In 1988, the Parks Department’s 80-year-old greenhouse was torn down and replaced
with a parking lot for the Folsom Children’s Zoo. This action required the Parks Department to
go to a system of purchasing the bedding plants from contractors for about $19,000 a year.
Unfortunately, the annual price for purchasing plants has continued to rise, and fewer plants can
be purchased each year. The effect of this price inflation is that several of the larger flower beds
have been eliminated.
To help prevent this trend from continuing, local groups such as the Lincoln Rose Society and Lincoln Garden Club have donated money for plants. Donations help, but they fall short of saving the many flower beds from being eliminated.

This thesis was intended to promote an understanding of how the public gardens in Lincoln Parks developed. Construction of the Sunken Garden in the early 1930s seemed to be a sure sign that the city believed in its garden program. Under the careful guidance of Floriculturist Fred Goebel, this garden became one of the most attractive gardens in the region. Goebel along with his son, Henry, were able to convince the city leaders at that time to accept their design of the garden and invest money in it during the peak of the Great Depression.

The city has continued to grow, and people have elected to move to the suburbs, where a detachment to the inner city has developed. Historical landmarks, such as the Sunken Garden, have lost funding because of the pressures of limited budgets and a lack of manpower to maintain them. This project revealed much of the heritage of Lincoln’s public gardens and their importance in the history of the city and in its quality of life. The future of this history depends upon the will of Lincoln residents, lest the words of Henry Goebel become a memory, and the beautiful gardens of Lincoln are no longer there.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

It was my desire that through completing this paper that an understanding of how the public gardens in Lincoln's Parks system historically developed in the early part of the century and the reason these gardens are so popular today. Through my research I concentrated on the early years in the parks system especially 1900-1930, placing the final emphasis on the conception and development of the Sunken Gardens. The Improvement Society of Lincoln, a branch of the Federated Women' Club was by far the most influential organization in the promotion of gardens and in general beautifying the city. As I have read in several different papers prepared on this topic, I agree that the Improvement Society ladies were probably the first city planners in Lincoln. This research also supports the fact that there was a relationship between the efforts of the Improvement Society and the rest of the United States who were very much involved in the City Beautiful Movement.

Mayor Francis Brown listened to the concerns of the citizens of Lincoln and helped to develop a parks system that resembled some of the more advanced park systems that existed in the Eastern United States. Mayor Brown was also able to convince the city council that there was a need for the establishment of a Parks Board, which was appointed in 1906. With the Park's Board approval, Mr. Edinborough, one of the landscaper foreman involved in the Omaha Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition was hired as the head gardener for the Lincoln Parks Department. Edinborough took the lead in developing the Antelope Park basin into a flowing park with new plantings of shade trees, turf type grasses and of course ornamental flower beds. The research in this paper also shows the relationship between the design style of the flower gardens in Lincoln and those that were planted at the Omaha Exposition, which was a spin off of the Chicago Worlds Fair of 1893. Edinborough continued in his capacity of Park Director for 23 years. While in that time he laid out the ground work for the park system as it exist today.

The development of the Sunken Gardens in the early 1930's was a sure sign that the city believed in its garden program. Under the careful guidance of Fred Goebel this garden was developed and became one of the most attractive gardens in the region. Mr. Goebel along with
the assistance of his son, Henry, were able to convince the city leaders at that time to accept their design of the garden and put money into an area during the peak of the Great Depression of the 1930's. This in itself was thought of by many as a positive effort on the part of the city to lift the spirits of the city's citizens.

The future of the gardens in the city of Lincoln greatly depends upon the wishes of its citizens. As the city continues to grow and larger numbers of citizens move to the suburbs, there becomes a detachment to the inner city. Many public gardens across the United States have fallen to the pressures of limited budgets and overall lack of manpower to maintain them. If this paper in anyway can show the heritage of these gardens and the gardens ability to make Lincoln a much better place to live, then I accomplished what I set out to do.