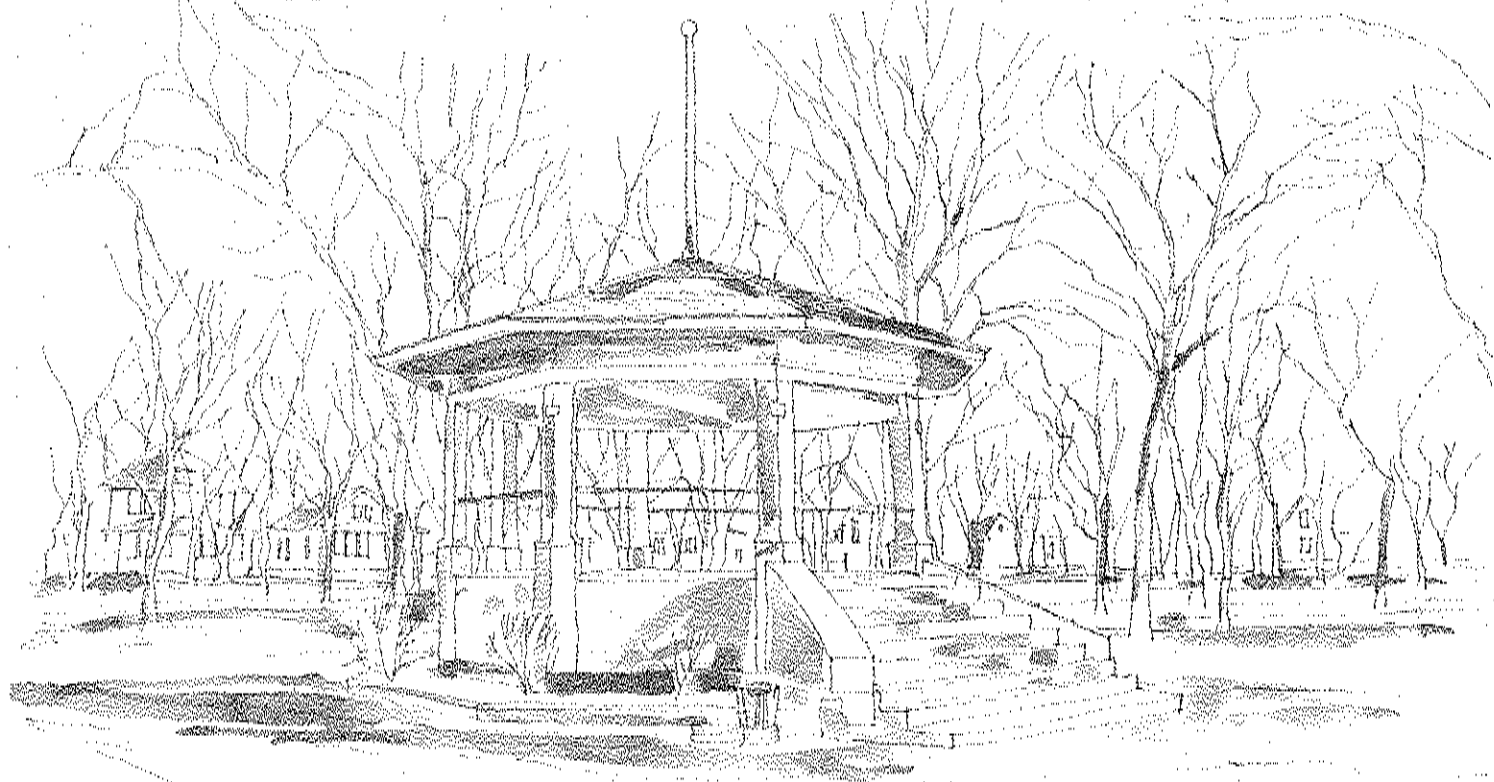


Aberdeen's Parkland Heritage 1881-1931



Aldrich Band Shell
Awaiting The Concert Season



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A SALUTE TO HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation works for all of us. It develops pride in place and sense of community, promotes economic development through tourism and a more eye appealing landscape and structures. Aberdeen and Brown County towns and rural areas have a varied and significant architectural, artistic and historical heritage which includes landscape as well as people and buildings. Some of the heritage has vanished due to fire, demolition and neglect. Other features have survived through careful maintenance, improvements and resourceful alternative uses of older structures such as Aberdeen's Christian Science Church and the Great Northern Depot renovated for law offices and the Capitol Theatre renovated as a community arts center. This partnership with community minded citizens and businesses is a positive factor in bettering our quality of life. Aberdeen has three historic districts and throughout the city and county many individual homes and farms are on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of these may be found in the Aberdeen/Brown County Landmark Commission's booklet Exploring Brown County published in 1994.

The Aberdeen/ Brown County Landmarks Commission was officially created May 11, 1978 as a subsidiary of the Brown County Historical Society with the purpose to promote a comprehensive program of historic preservation in Brown County and Aberdeen. This historic preservation purpose was continued and strengthened in 1985 when the Landmarks Commission joined the new Certified Local Government Program (C. L. G.). The Brown county and Aberdeen Commissioners adopted South Dakota Certified Law 1-19B again as they did in 1978.

As a C. L. G entity the Landmarks Commission functions to promote adaptive use of endangered structures and conservation of historic properties--business and residential, urban and rural. Through an educational and inspirational program the Commission aims to increase public awareness of our architectural and historical heritage. One objective is to help people apply for official recognition of their structures on the National Register of Historic Places with the hope that the visible remnants of our county's heritage will be cared for and preserved by present and future generations.

Persons interested in corresponding with the Landmarks Commission as to concerns or volunteering their services on the commission please correspond to Box 1420, Aberdeen, SD. 57402-1420. The Commission meets every third Thursday of the month at 3:30 p.m. in the first floor conference room at the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department or in the municipal building conference room once renovation is completed. Time and place of meetings may be found in the Aberdeen American News Bulletin Board.

PREFACE: ABERDEEN'S PARKLAND HERITAGE PARKLAND PRESERVATION

In the first decade of the 20th century tree claims of the 1880s served as the foundation of Aberdeen's two outlying parks--Melgaard, south of the city, and Wylie, north of the city. Within the city limits two acres of bare prairie land provided the site for Aberdeen's first major park--Aldrich. After 1904 the human touch transformed that site into a tree shaded sanctuary.

Our park heritage has grown over the years. This booklet examines the foundation years of three parks which serve as symbols of our park heritage and the relationships of parks to the wider community. The purpose of this account is to increase public awareness and appreciation of their city parks and the important role park boards and personnel have played in the creation, maintenance and improvement of these parks. Hopefully, it will stimulate a desire to preserve the integrity of park boundaries, design and natural beauty. In the 1980s the emergence of a long term master plan which blends and preserves the old and the new is a positive step in Aberdeen park history and development.

The Aberdeen/Brown County Landmarks Commission especially dedicates this booklet to Sophus A. Anderson who in 1915 at the age of 23 became an Aberdonian and a city employee who served as Superintendent of Parks until his death in 1945. Currently the Anderson Recreation Center built in 1945 and so named in his honor during the 1950s, reminds us of past efforts. However, as time passes and new generations appear it is so easy to forget those who passed on the important heritage of our parks. We hope the following account will strengthen that memory.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN ABERDEEN PARKS

The integrity of Aberdeen's parkland--boundaries, landscape and structures--has been somewhat compromised in past decades and conceivably could be in the future. Factors in damaging parkland integrity have been: economic development of the neighborhood in the form of commercial, school or residential expansion, vandalism, nature's fury in the form of tornadic winds, flooding drought, erosion and insects. Demolition in the name of modernization and quest for parking spaces have posed threats as have government wetland regulations and funding shortages related to city politics and budget priorities. However, positive changes in park design and land expansion have brought new vigor and imagery to some Aberdeen parkland.

The boulevards and residential areas of Aberdeen have benefited from the City Beautiful Movement of these foundation years when Melgaard and Wylie park nursery stock was distributed throughout the community. The playground movement of the 1920s is still reflected in all parks. Changes in transportation technology have impacted park attendance. Parks have attracted Aberdeen area people and tourists through their varied attractions. They have served as sites for patriotic and civic comemorations, musical concerts, craft and artistic displays and ice cream socials. They provide a setting for passive, large group and family picnicking, lounging and communion with nature. They also served as places to engage in active games and sports.

City residential expansion has brought Melgaard and Wylie parks closer to the city whereas at one time they were the "outlying" parks as contrasted to the close-in-parks such as Aldrich Park. Melgaard had been characterized as the park "south of the city" when in 1913 houses had reached the corner of 12th Ave. and south Lincoln and on south Kline St. houses intersected with 11th Ave. The Normal School grounds on south Jay St. extended southward beyond its intersection with 12th Ave. Lee Avenue east from Washington to State Street, known as 15th Ave. after 1942, had several homes in the 300 block, otherwise lacked residences. Land south of 12th Ave. between present State Street and Moccasin Creek was vacant. Wylie Park was not annexed to the city until the mid 1980s and from its beginnings was referred to as the park "north of the city".

In 1995 as one views the three parks listed in the 1913 Polk City Directory—Aldrich, Melgaard and Wylie—a few continuities remain from those foundation years before 1931. However, many changes are evident.

ALDRICH PARK - 1914 CIRCLE PATH



The boundaries of Aldrich park remain the same except they are open sided and no longer fenced or hedged. Its gates were opened to the public in 1912. The Aldrich bandstand of 1914 still stands but the park no longer echoes with concert music as Melgaard Park is now the sole concert park. The Aldrich fountain has vanished although a cement base remains. One walkway runs from the Southwest corner at 3rd Ave. and Main to the northwest corner at 4th Ave. and Lincoln. The circular center pathways of 1914 are no longer visible. A sand floored playground marks a portion of the park's southern edge along with two slides and swings for small children. Four bench-picnic table combinations are found amongst the over 75 trees scattered throughout the park. In the 1990s Aldrich comes alive at parades and marches, patriotic meetings and commemorative celebrations fulfilling a traditional function of its foundation years. However, except for these special occasions, to the casual observer the park stands somewhat forlorn utilized on a daily basis by small children and neighbors who seek shady space on its well maintained grass turf.

ALDRICH PARK - 1995 SINGLE SIDEWALK



MELGAARD PARK

The boundaries of Melgaard's southern four blocks remain intact, but there are fewer internal roads within the park. The central semicircle remains as a key design factor. However, in the 1950's Melgaard's northern four block area between 17th and 15th Avenues used for active recreation such as baseball was separated from its southern section. That land went to the state for what was then called a School for the Blind. Industrialists K. O. Lee challenged that decision to reduce what he called "the only recreation spot in the entire town." He posed the question: "Why ruin the only park we got that is worth anything?"

HEDGE - NORTH END OF MELGAARD PARK



Currently its northern border features a hedge which screens picnic shelters and bandshell from 17th Ave. traffic. Melgaard retains and has updated its tourist camp at the southeast border with 14 camping pads and a brick structure with combined garage and shower/toilet facilities. In the 1990s the park also retains its tennis court area of the 1920s. The bandshell of 1930 serves as a site for municipal band concerts continuing Melgaard's foundation role as a concert park.

CAMP GROUND 1995

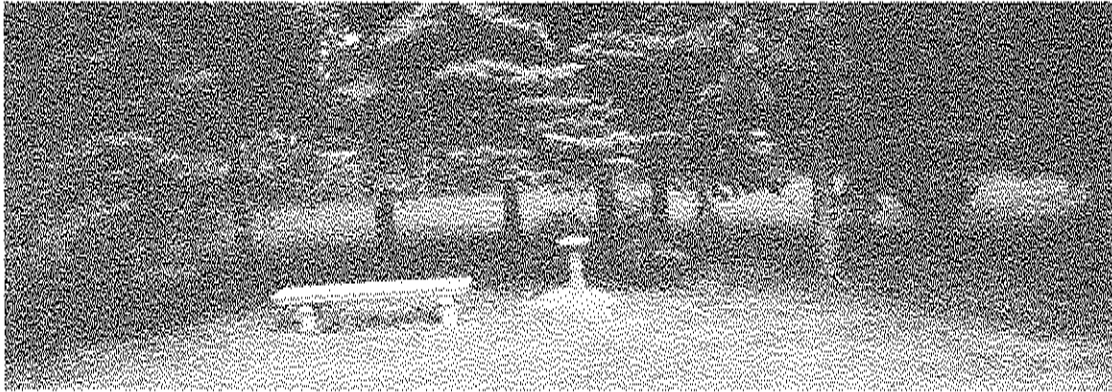


Melgaard continues its function as a prime picnic park although Wylie park has become an important competitor because of its size and ability to handle larger picnic groups as well as the variety of amusements offered. However, Melgaard Park no longer possesses its nurseries or superintendent's house established in the foundation years. The wading pool has also vanished due to health reasons; in its place stands a circular sand play area with slide. The screened picnic shelter near the southern edge has vanished to be replaced by varied open picnic shelters throughout the park. The concession stand along the central curve no longer provides treats for tourists and picnickers. In a secluded nook west of the tourist bath house lies remnants of a bygone era--a stone bench and cement base for a vanished fountain, probably of 1928 vintage.

FORMER WADING POOL-- NOW PLAY AREA

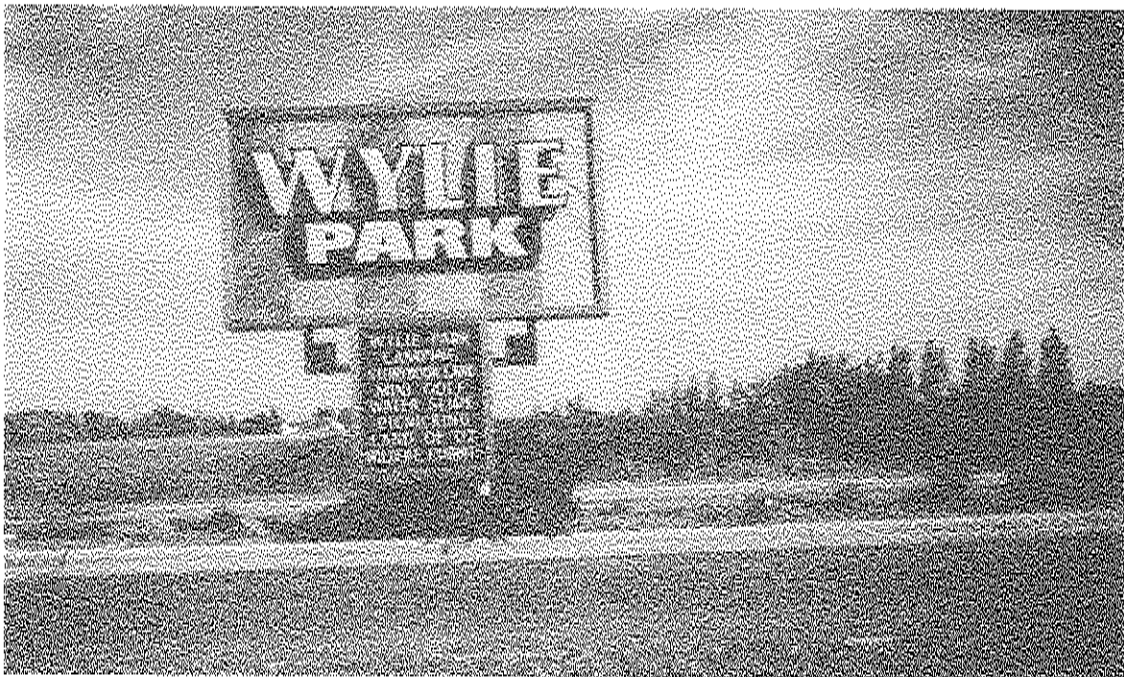


BENCH AND FOUNTAIN OF 1928



Melgaard's trees are more widely dispersed than the closer spaced, jungle-like appearance of an earlier era. Since the 1950s, neighborhood residential areas have occupied its eastern and western borders which has increased the park's daily use as playground and picnic area. Melgaard Park's proximity to expanding state educational institutions has continued its role of the foundation years as a retreat for students and faculty. Melgaard Park of the 1990s has increased attendance due to special attractions such as privately sponsored Arts in the Park, Chautauquas, ice cream socials and varied Park, Recreation and Forestry Department activities.

WYLIE PARK SIGN TODAY



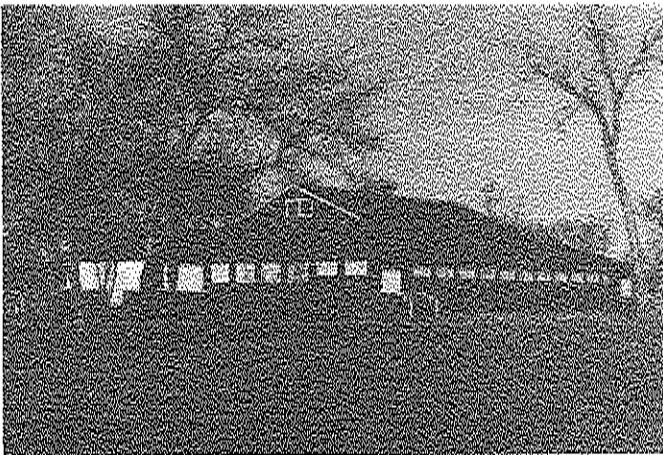
Wylie Park has experienced the most change although Wylie's Lake Minne-eho and the dance pavilion remain from the foundation years. Park boundaries have expanded from 160 acres to encompass well over 200 acres--the result of park department master planning and private, as well as city, initiative and funding. Within that space a variety of services exploded in recent years. Entry ways to the park have improved with more attractive and readable signage at the Lake Drive and at the northeastern entry from highway 281.

BOY FISHING ON LAKE MINNE-KHO

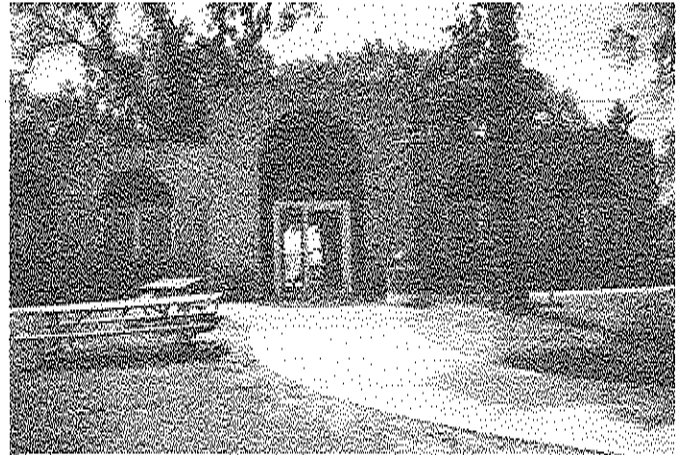


The lake area's south shore is rip rapped, shorn of weeds and features a wide bike and walking path which make it look more attractive than in the foundation period when the south shore road was in its infancy. Wylie lake no longer has its island or diving platform but is still a focal point of a circular roadway. Bathing beach, swimming, fishing and boating remain as key features of lakeside life. Paddle boats are new to the boat types of old. Today's 330 foot water slide offers some competition as it offers a more thrilling way to get wet. The lakeside water slide of the foundation years was puny compared to today's giant slide.

WYLIE PARK PAVILION



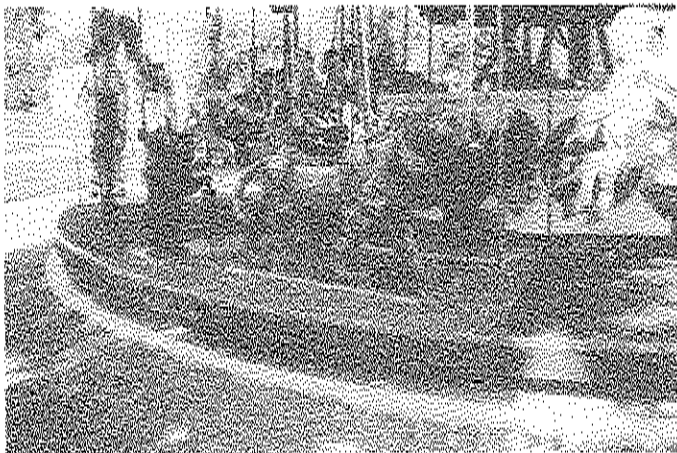
BIRD CAGE PICNIC SHELTER



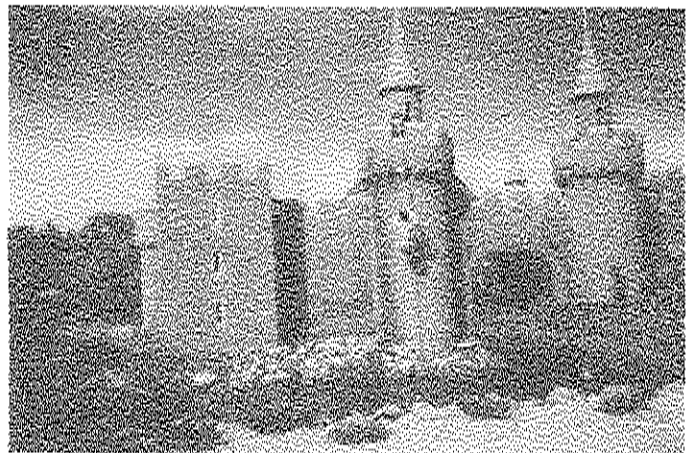
The pavilion survived an effort to demolish it in the late 1970s and make the site a parking lot--a notable victory for historic preservation. Private and city funds renovated it for more effective usage after a period of neglect. Public dancing featured at the Pavilion is no longer the attraction it was during the foundation years and beyond to 1950s. Square dancing in the pavilion is occasionally featured today as well as picnic dinners and other festivities. The picnic function appears to be confined more to the northwest corner with its several picnic shelters and to the south in the old park area with its picnic tables and benches, Bird Cage and Pavillion. The theme park area of Story Book Land and Oz have received priority in the new master plan. A few picnic tables may be found in Storybook Land but picnicking does not seem to be a major function of that area.

The fish pond, footbridge and zoo of the older park area disappeared from their previous location. Recently, the zoo idea revived and more space was allotted along the northern edge for animals in a natural habitat. Story Book Land with its castle and varied attractions will soon be expanded with a land of Oz theme. Recent mini golf reminds one of the nine hole golf course of an earlier era on the north end of the park. Go carts smack of a new era in appealing to the thrill-and- excitement quest of today's youth. A recently acquired carousel reminds one of a past era when a merry-go-round was an important attraction at Wylie Park. The birdcage enclosed picnic shelter of 1945 remains as a symbol of an even earlier birdcage. Wylie's tourist facilities on the park's western edge today constitute an improvement over the foundation years when Melgaard received funding and publicity for this service. Change and continuity are blended in Aberdeen's largest park still an "outlyng" park north of the central city but increasingly surrounded by expanding residential development and now within the city boundaries.

MERRY - GO - ROUND



STORY BOOK LAND CASTLE



ABERDEEN PARKS: SANCTUARIES & SOCIAL CENTERS

In May, 1995 the Aberdeen Park & Forestry Department publicists focused on the theme "Fun in the Sun" at eleven city parks: Aldrich, Anderson, Brown, Frontier, Lincoln, Manor, Melgaard, Nicollet, Prairie Veterans Memorial, Sunshine and Wylie. This booklet features three of these parks in their foundation years when the publicity theme would more appropriately be "Fun in the Shade".

"LET'S HAVE A PARK!"

In Aberdeen's first half century images of individual trees and groves strongly embedded themselves in the minds of prairie people. In the quest for greenness, coolness and shade Aberdonians gradually constructed urban parks and pleasure spots to augment the few natural beauty spots in the countryside. They sought communion with nature in such manmade parks where they might achieve a relaxing solitude with self, friends or family. They might also socialize with rural neighbors & city dwellers.

Over the years varied age and occupational groups gradually had the option of visiting their neighborhood or city parks in order to escape from confined hot interiors and from the routine of their everyday lives. Recognizing the importance of orderly park development the state legislature in 1909 authorized park boards for the state's larger cities. Mayor Alva Aldrich appointed Aberdeen's first park board in 1909.

In pioneer days of the 1880s and 1890s Aberdeen was a city of open places with few trees and no parks to link and lessen the impact of open spaces. As early as 1886 concerned citizens urged parkland for Aberdeen. One writer under the headline "Let's Have a Park" stated that due to five years of inaction and preoccupation with other priorities Aberdeen lacked park trees. He recommended buying

immediately a block or two in a central location before land prices rose and then plant trees. Under the headline "That Park" another citizen advocated that the vacant block between 4th & 5th avenues and between 1st and 3rd streets be purchased immediately for a centrally located city park before land prices skyrocketed. With the city's ample water supply it would be possible to have park fountains, trees and a miniature lake--an incentive for securing an even larger park further away from city center.

The reality of parks finally began to take shape. On August 8, 1904 mayor Alva Aldrich addressed the city council on the need for a public city park, which he described as a spot for tree planting, "where the people in their moments of relaxation can enjoy the pleasures that can only be obtained where treelessness is not apparent, where shade abounds."

Ideological support of parks increased. By 1913 the Daily News headline of August 27 recognized "Parks Essential to Growth of Aberdeen". As trade territory expanded so too must Aberdeen's pleasure resorts. The city park board requested \$15,000 to maintain the city park system with emerging "beauty spots" that would be the envy of Fargo and Grand Forks. The editorial page asserted "No up-to-date city can get along without an adequate park system....The parks are a city's breathing spots. They are as essential as paved streets, street railways & other modern improvements!"

By year's end 1914 the Daily News headlines credited Aberdeen with 263 acres of parks worth over \$50,000. Park sizes were listed at 25 acres for Melgaard, 2.06 acres for Aldrich while Wylie Park emerged as the largest with 160 acres and Wylie Park lake & drives as 22.08 acres.

Superintendent of Aberdeen parks, S. H. Anderson, except for a brief wartime absence in 1918, oversaw park operations in cooperation with the park board during the years 1915 through 1931 (and beyond to his death in 1946). His reports along with park board minutes reflect the concerns and actions to improve city parks and create an environment for varied recreational opportunities, healthy physical activity and strengthening of civic pride. His philosophy for places "where youth may play and age may rest" was expressed in his report of December 31, 1922: "We, as park officials like our parks. We like to live near them. We like to see them. We like to walk in them; and we like to have our children play in them. They have become as much a part of city conditions as paved streets, houses or large buildings. A city without parks is in the same class as a city without water supply or sewers." Parks must be popularized as "meeting places of friends, catering to the social gatherings and to the children". "To better serve the people", to bring joy to the visitor, to stimulate a love for nature, to build muscle and brain were the functions of parkland and park boards. "Recreation is the right of every man, woman and child."

Acting on such assumptions and despite funding difficulties, park boards and superintendents made crucial decisions during the foundation years 1904-1931. Three parks--Aldrich, Melgaard and Wylie--symbolize the expansion of parkland and the significance of parkland to the wider community which in 1931 celebrated its 50th birthday.

BLOCK 7--ALDRICH PARK COUNTY SEAT SITE

In 1904 Aberdeen secured its first major parkland which eventually became known as Aldrich Park, the old court house square, located in block

7 of North Aberdeen across the railroad tracks, rather than located in the city center as urged by the citizens of 1886. It was bounded on the west by north Main, by Lincoln on the east, Elm Ave.(4th Ave.) on the North and Oak Ave.(3rd) on the south.

City Engineer Washburn in 1905 outlined to the Social Science Club at Northern Normal and Industrial School a potential park system and landscape gardening for Aberdeen. One of the four locations described was the Northside Park, site of the vacated court house, and the most centrally located of the four parks. His plat of Block 7 revealed "diagonal gravel walks bordered by trees with circular flower beds at the center, a band pavillion on the south side" for weekly concerts.

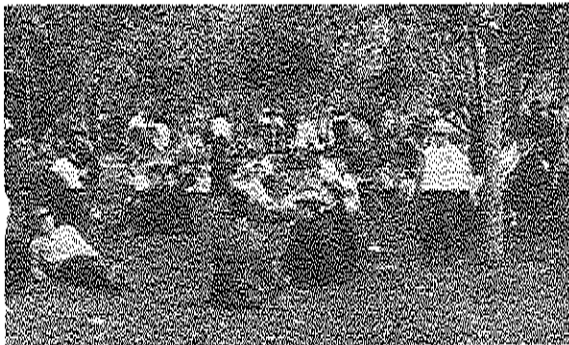
The Aldrich Park block had an interesting history. On that site in 1887 the city built a city hall, to be used as a county courthouse. This served as an inducement to secure the county seat for Aberdeen in competition with Columbia. When in 1890 an election had definitely decided that Aberdeen would be the county seat, Mayor Moody deeded the city hall building located in Block 7 to the board of county commissioners for use as a county court house. A contract clause stipulated that should the building no longer serve this purpose it should revert to city ownership.

By 1903 a new county court house arose south of the tracks, a block off the Main Street business district. This left disposition of the old court house and its site Block 7 to the city and to certain individuals, who controlled 7 lots fronting Main Street as a result of Block 7 no longer being the court house site. The Krueger Brothers bought the building in the winter of 1904-05 and dismantled it in the summer of 1905. This left that square block vacant for park purposes.

COMMUNITY BEAUTY SPOT

Aldrich Park became one of the "breathing spots" which Mayor Aldrich described as a place "where people can go for a quiet hour or two away from the noise and rush and heat of town". This idea of parks as sanctuaries even in the evening is substantiated by the reaction of workers in 1921 chased from Aldrich park by the police after the city declared a closing hour of 10:00 p.m. for city parks. The Daily News pointed out that the action aimed at late night lovers & mischief makers negatively impacted working men who relished fresh night air and who wished to escape their hot boarding rooms. With no front porch for relaxation they sought the benches of Aldrich Park and requested park hours be extended to at least 12 midnight. The News asserted: "The park is presumed to be a place in which to rest and nobody can rest with a policeman shunting him around from pillar to post".

PICNICKING AT ALDRICH PARK 1918



Parks also became crowded pleasure resorts where people congregated to hear concert music, to picnic and socialize with neighbors and friends. Aldrich Park, Block 7, the old court house square, also served this need.

In August 1904 Mayor Aldrich recommended to the city council beautification of the city by "planting ornamental parks and breathing places for the people". In

May and September 1905 the city council ordered park work which dragged on into 1906. More immediately they recommended plowing and fencing preparatory to planting trees at the old court house square the following year.

On Monday morning April 23, 1906 work began on Aldrich Park. The ground had been plowed in the Fall of 1905. Now a team pulverized the soil so that grass seed might be sown and trees and shrubs planted. City engineer Washburn designed the park plan which provided for four walks running diagonally across from the four corners intersecting in the center. At the intersecting center an artesian well serviced a proposed large fountain surrounded by flower beds which in turn would be circled by a walkway. The plan envisioned a band stand eventually on the park's south side. Shrubs were to be bunched along the walks. Trees were to line sides of the park. Ordered for that purpose were 137 elms, 93 golden willows, and 94 Carolina poplars.

Community pride in this "beauty spot" is revealed in the Daily American editorial of July 12, 1911: "Wayfarers out Main street north cannot help but be glad these hot and saltry days of the bright green oasis that exists in Aldrich park. For fresh greenness and a general air of crisp newness, this little park is about the daintiest thing of its kind that can be found. There is no one but who hopes for the day to specially come when humans may enjoy its coolness as well as the city's deer. As a breathing spot it is destined to be welcome whenever it can be deemed of use and as a sight to tired hot eyes it is now refreshing." Fenced in until 1912 in order to permit proper tree and lawn growth without danger of public trampling, Aldrich's gates were opened to the public in 1912 and its deer transferred to Wylie Park.

ALDRICH: WHERE THE BAND PLAYS

Aldrich Park became a concert site as early as 1912. Audiences such as that which attended the afternoon concert of May 24, 1914 numbered in the hundreds. Considered an innovation at the time the band members arose when they played the concluding "Star Spangled Banner. While playing, each band member doffed his cap as did some of the audience. Many previously seated listeners stood during this number. Concert etiquette gradually developed over the years.

As early as Thursday evening July 25, 1912 the park board had recommended to the city commission a band stand for Aldrich park and installation of more electric lights and appropriate wiring. It was not until 1914 that the band stand was finally constructed. Hopefully the new stand would enable audiences to hear at greater distances from the band. On July 23, 1914 the park board ordered more seats for city parks, especially Aldrich park where large crowds congregated for special events.

Architect George Fossum designed the bandstand plans which called for a wide and impressive entrance facing Main Street and ample electric lights. Octagonal in shape, the stand was 22 feet in diameter. Eight brick piers reached five feet from the ground to give support to roof supporting cement pillars. With a five foot foundation wall of stucco and cement covering a steel lath frame, the stand gave the impression of solidity. Above the floor an ornamental railing ringed the stand except for the spacious stepped entrance. The ceiling loomed eight feet above the floor which itself was 5 1/2 feet above ground level.

Thirty-two frosted lights rested on the 16 steel ribs which formed the cement, cream-colored ceiling. At ten foot intervals under the roof edge

outside the support posts hung forty colored glass lights in alternate red, white and blue clusters. Black iron ornamental lights with eight inch round globes thrust out from each of eight support posts. While the lights impressed the night time crowds, during the day the gold ball atop the flagpole reflected the sun and dazzled park strollers and afternoon concert audiences.

ALDRICH PARK BAND STAND



After two months of construction, the new band stand, located centrally on the Park's north side, rather than on the park's south side as in previous designs, was dedicated on September 11, 1914. Band director Dr. Putnam wrote the "Aldrich Park march" for the occasion and dedicated it to the Aberdeen park board. Contractor John Romans and builder J. F. Ballist along with architect Fossum could be proud of their work. The stand cost \$581.25 and the wiring and fixtures \$101.50. The 20 piece Aberdeen band began the dedication concert at 7:45 p.m. with R. M. Bisbee's march "Salute to Aberdeen".

A Daily American editorial of September 12, 1914 on "The New Band Stand" mixed praise for the park board with admonitions to properly care for the "beautiful structure" which so advanced community culture: "It is such a pity that beautiful and

convenient things cannot be free from the raids of vandals—boys or men, and sometimes only thoughtless children. Now let's be careful of this. Just because it is new and belongs to all of us as a city. Why bedaub its paint with mud, why steal its electric lamps, why carve initials in its railing? It is a new toy. Don't pull it to pieces."

Concern over damage to park landscape and structures persisted throughout the years. For example, in mid June 1930 the Evening News editorialized on mutilating of park trees, particularly at Aldrich Park. Major city parks were "set apart as beauty spots not specifically as children's playgrounds". Notching and carving hieroglyphics on tree bark endangered tree health. This and other "impish amusements" required drastic action. Consequently, the park board urged parents of children who played in the parks to save Aberdeen's heritage of shade trees and shrubery.

ALDRICH PARK WHERE THE BAND PLAYS



Aldrich Park where the band plays

Aldrich concert seasons usually opened in June during the ensuing decade. Most concerts ended with the "Star Spangled Banner" with the exception of some in 1915 and 1916 when the number "Uncle Sam" furnished the finale. Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings were scheduled

times for Aldrich Park concerts with an occasional exception.

Aberdonians heard a variety of melodies over those years: regimental marches, polkas, waltzes such as "The Wedding of the Winds", Scottish melodies, ballet, operatic music, popular songs, Billy Sunday's Gospel hymns, wartime tunes such as "My Soldier Boy" and "Uncle Sam", multi part suites such as "Atlantis: The Lost Continent", "A Day in Venice" and "The Death of Custer" with its bugle calls, comic operas of Victor Herbert, vocal solos and instrumental solos, fife and drum effects in "The Girl I Left Behind Me", gypsy music of the second Hungarian Rhapsody, melodies of the old south such as "Old Black Joe". The marches of John Phillip Sousa were frequent numbers.

By summer's end 1916 the Aberdeen band had played 12 concerts at Aldrich park. During the war year 1918 there were no municipal band concerts at that park. In 1919 many ex-members of the First South Dakota Cavalry Band joined the new salaried city band directed by Howard E. Bronson. This 25 piece band held its first official public concert at 3 p.m. on Sunday afternoon June 1, 1919. This salaried band played for dances at Wylie Park on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings as well as for concerts at Melgaard Park on Friday evenings and at Aldrich park on Sunday afternoons. In 1923 under bandmaster H. Bronson two weekly concerts alternated between Aldrich and Melgaard parks. By the early 1930s once-a-week concerts alternated between Aldrich & Melgaard Parks until summer 1979 when all concerts were held at Melgaard park.

Cars were parked closely about the square on Sunday afternoon July 13, 1919 for the 3:00 p.m. Aldrich park concert. It began and ended with the traditional marches but also highlighted the "Death of Custer", a descriptive American and Indian

fantasy. The narrative resume of the Custer piece indicated that awaiting the audience would be music symbolizing action in both the Sioux Indian camp and Custer's camp: war dance and whoops, bugles calling men to battle, approaching cavalry to the tune of a regimental march, clash of battle at the Little big Horn, Indian rejoicing with scalp dance music, burial of Custer and his men to the sound of taps and "Nearer My God to Thee". The Daily News reporter felt "The battle of the Little Big Horn" was portrayed vividly by the music and the effects of the bugle call out-of-doors from different parts of the park".

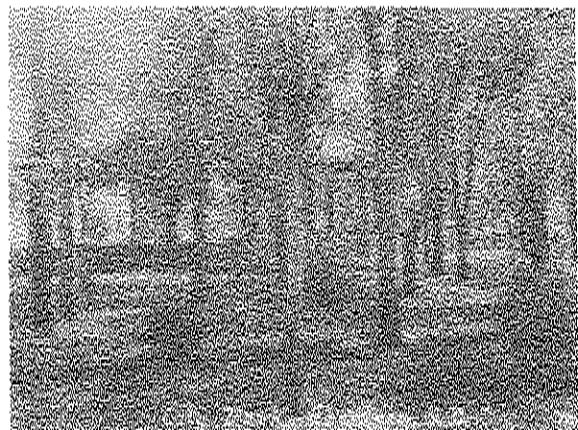
Aldrich--Aberdeen's north side beauty spot and breathing place--was the park nearest to the city's core. In the days of its concert glory--1914 through the 1920s before the Melgaard Park bandshell of 1930 impacted the concert schedule--Aldrich Park hosted automobile, pedestrian, & porch front audiences. At concert time a string of parked autos, having sought vantage points, anchored themselves curbside on streets closest to the bandstand. However, courtesy demanded they keep their motors quiet so as not to spoil the hearing pleasure of others. Early departures should be timed for intermission or between numbers.

Cautionary newspaper publicity had positive results as the Daily News reporter noted proudly on Sunday July 28, 1919 "not a car within a block was started before the last note died away." However, the noise complaint surfaced again in 1925 when Superintendent Anderson observed that Aldrich concerts were well attended but it was "impossible to subdue the noise and interference rising from busy streets surrounding the park." Also, in his report of Dec. 31, 1928 Anderson observed that "due to excessive noise and disturbance at Aldrich Park the concerts held there could not be thoroughly enjoyed."

Those at home fortunate enough to have front porches facing Aldrich park relaxed on hammock, chair or step to await the sounds of music and chat with neighbors and visitors who joined them for the occasion.

Within the park adults & juveniles, babies & dogs gathered to enjoy music, shade and each other's company. Hundreds covered the green carpeted lawn and lined the walkways. Occasionally, such as on Sunday July 29, 1917, rain and dust storm scattered thousands. Usually, they lingered to share the shade on warm summer days. Bench shortages, wet grass and mosquitoes were sources of complaint. With its flowering plants & blossoming shrubs the park beckoned to those who made their daily trek to smell the flowers, walk the pathways and seek the shade even without the magnetic pull of a concert. At such times reporters viewed the park as sanctuary and would find many in agreement with the judgement: "There is no more pleasant place in which to set for an hour as the days lengthen & enjoy the calm that prevails there"

ALDRICH PARK: A SANCTUARY



Then there was that sense of excitement & togetherness associated with an afternoon or evening concert. At concert time between musical selections a lady seated on the grass composed a letter. Elsewhere several

fellows engaged in an amateur wrestling match. Others posed for pictures by their photographer friends. Always children played. Mosquitoes dive-bombed human targets eliciting such remarks as "Have you got any mosquito bites, Maggie?" One might overhear a girlish remark: "Don't you think he is a cute fellow?" indicating the social aspects of a park visit. In time the crowds learned patriotic etiquette to stand erect at concert's end when the band played the "Star Spangled Banner". They had been compared unfavorably with Canadians who stood when bands played "God Save the King" or with regional U.S. cities where audiences rose at the playing of the national anthem.

From the Labor Day parade of September 1915 to the Gypsy Day parades and the Jesus marches of the 1990s Aldrich Park was either the terminal point for parades starting in the city center or the jump off point for parades marching southward down Main Street. The Labor Day parade of 1915 disbanded at Aldrich Park. Speaking began at the bandstand. Several thousand people lunged toward that stand. After hearing the program of band music and speeches the crowd adjourned to nearby streets for field sports which included 50 yard and 100 yard dashes by varied age groups and sexes, three legged & sack races, weight throwing, broad jump, rope climbing & a tug of war between the North and South sides. The park itself was not large enough for all this athletic activity. This was one justification for the Daily News remark of July 6, 1917: "Aberdeen is almost bare of anything even hinting at natural pleasure resorts, where people can go for a quiet hour or two away from the noise and rush and heat of town. The only available place is Aldrich Park which can accomodate few and is adapted to gatherings of a distinct character."

Birds also flocked to Aldrich Park where Aberdeen children had provided bird houses for the winged ones. However, in the hot summer of 1922 park hospitality for birds had diminished. The Daily News personified the blackbird and the robin conversing about prohibition and how dry it was. Speaking for other birds such as thrushes and woodpeckers, they complained about the park's water flow. Only one of the several park hydrants had water flow and it was used by loafing bums who did not contribute joyous song as the birds. We birds have to fly elsewhere to some stagnant water pool or go thirsty. Birds threatened to fly to Wylie Park if they did not receive equal or better treatment than park hoboos. They suggested that park personnel might provide a small tin basin near a hydrant; however, birds might as well hunt for "an ice plant in pergatory as to look for water in Aldrich park."

This reference to park loafers appeared to trouble Supt. Anderson. In August 1916 the park board rejected his request to prevent hobos, "grass loungers" from using Aldrich Park. In his report of 1925 he referred to "an element inhabiting these grounds where pleasure is to be troublesome & destructive--mutilate property, trees, shrubs and plants". As a result he suggested "little more surveillance by police to protect property."

Over the years the park board's yearly expenditures on Aldrich Park were in the hundreds of dollars whereas both Melgaard and Wylie parks received thousands of dollars for maintenance and improvements. Aldrich park's smaller size and the fact that it did not have income producing features may account for the difference in appropriations.

On July 8, 1915 the Daily American editorialized on "Drinking Fountain Needed": "The spectacle of a woman down on hands and knees trying to get

a drink out of a gas pipe hydrant in Aldrich park was an embarrassing sight to Aberdeen residents who have any pride in the conveniences afforded in this beauty spot. The park board has placed a big electric light there to scare away the spooners. Now let it have a bubbling drinking fountain put up. The city has done more for the horses at this park than the humans for there is an equine drinking trough at the curb."

In fall 1916 the park board financed a large drinking fountain. On July 22, 1916 a Daily News reporter quoted a park board member as saying "there is a fountain at the park for which it is quite easy for thirsty youngsters to quench their thirst. I spent some time at the park watching the little folks for that special purpose. All they have to do is to press a faucet & take a drink".

The playground movement gained ground in Aberdeen. Supt. Anderson addressed this in his report of 1926: "Because of the growing popularity of our outlying parks, there was not the crowds of people that patronized our city parks as compared with previous years. Automobiles and good roads have made our larger park more accessible, resulting in better crowds at the expense of our smaller city parks. Therefore, some radical treatment is necessary to maintain the popularity of our close-in-parks" including Aldrich Park. He suggested services oriented to smaller children such as sand boxes, a small wading pool and some playground equipment.

Supt. Anderson on Dec. 31, 1928 justified the fact that playground equipment was not located at Aldrich the previous year because neighbors objected to the playground idea at that time. However, equipment was ready for placement in the spring of 1929. The playground movement gained momentum in the 1930s as revealed in the picture of a youth playing horseshoes at Aldrich Park.

HORSESHOES AT ALDRICH PARK



From 1918 through the late 1920s Anderson's reports referred to the deplorable condition of the Aldrich Park bandstand, that it was dirty and unsightly needing a paint job. Finally in 1930 the bandstand was painted along with buildings at both Melgaard and Wylie parks.

Even a small two acre park like Aldrich required considerable maintenance. Tree pruning and removal focused on willows and poplars which impeded Elm and Ash growth. In 1917 & 1922 such work included tree, shrub and grass watering especially in dry seasons, raking and cutting the grass, edging, hoeing and graveling walks and paths, restocking flower beds, dandelion digging, rubbish removal, arranging park benches for concerts, raising and lowering the flag. In 1922 fence removal was recommended as the park hedges had grown thick enough to be a fence replacement.

Superintendent Anderson favored grandiose entrances to parks. In 1919 he recommended for Aldrich two entrances facing Main St. Ten foot long wooden arbors eight feet tall should arch above park walks. Two bench seats covered with woodbine should permit persons to be seated in those arbors. He also had grandiose ideas for entrances to Melgaard but there is no evidence these entry ways were implemented.

MELGAARD: "A PARK READY MADE"



PLAQUE HONORING MELGAARD IN 1931

Aberdeen's newly created park board of 1909 had eyed Andrew Melgaard's grove, established as a tree claim in 1881. In the spring of 1909 The city was pleased to receive Melgaard's gift of 11 wooded acres to be used as a park. The acreage was located south of the city just east of the Northwestern railway right of way. The offer insisted that the park be named Melgaard.

At its meeting of May 10 the city council ratified the park board's recommendation to accept this offer which included an opportunity to purchase 12 additional acres at \$250.00 per acre. Thus for a total of \$3000 a park of 25 acres could be created.

Press reaction was most favorable at the prospect of securing a grove of shade trees that had attained full growth. The Daily American on May 5 declared that the grove was "ideally situated to become the greatest beauty spot of our entire park system". The Daily News of May 6 focused on its size and the park ready made idea: "It would be years before as fine a growth of trees could be developed on unimproved park property, and no tract of land that would be secured in the city would be as large as this."

The park board directed that

workmen begin trimming the Melgaard grove trees and clearing out the underbrush as a first step to making it an attractive "pleasure resort". The park board announced in May 1910 that they would begin transplanting grove trees to untreed parts of the park. They had decided in April to do this and employ a professional landscape gardener for improvement ideas.

By May 12 and 13, 1911 the city park board announced they had finished planting thirty feet apart 600 trees in the 14 acres north of the treed 11 acre grove. Twenty-four foot driveways through the park had been surveyed. These ran from the roads to the interior 300 foot circle. Eventually shrubbery would edge the driveways and an artesian well sunk for a fountain.

MELGAARD ROAD 1914



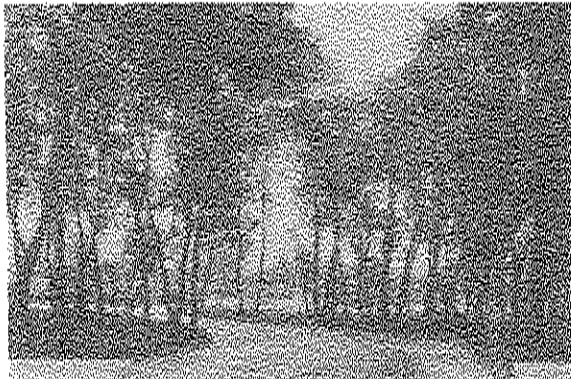
ACCESSING MELGAARD PARK: ROADS AND DRIVEWAYS

The original major access road from the city core was south Main street to Melgaard road eastward between Melgaard's claim shack on the road's south side and the grove proper on the north side of the road. With the city's acceptance of Melgaard's gift, which included a sixty-six foot drive way encircling the entire twenty-five acres, efforts were made to improve access to the park and within the park.

In May 1912 with the Chicago Northwestern Railroad's construction of a crossing over their tracks at State street & Lee avenue (future 15th street) improved access to Melgaard Park was possible. No longer was the sole route that long detour by way of Melgaard's road south of the park.

In the spring of 1911 park land had been plowed and sodded to a depth of 14 inches in preparation for tree growth. Park board member Andrew Hallweg supervised planting of 569 trees along designated drives and walks and the central circle. He expressed the opinion that for three years they should be cultivated before the area was opened to public use. Among these trees were 315 boxelders and 43 ash. Elms were 321, maples 12, cottonwoods 10 and Carolina poplar 62. This effort demonstrates implementation of an orderly design of drives and walkways within the park and the existence of the central circle which so marks the park of the 1990s.

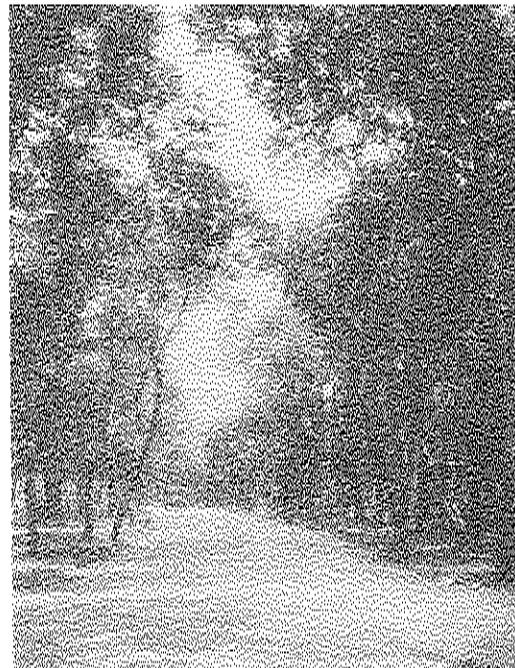
MELGAARD'S CIRCLE DRIVE



By 1923 a Northern college student's poem on Melgaard's park included reference to the circle drive and its trees: "A restful place; go visit it yourself,/And notice, bending o'er the road that winds,/the fine box elders and the ash..."

By summer 1914 the Daily News observed "the driveways are being graded from the southwest corner of the park through to the center and then out the southeast corner, making one continuous drive and right by the rest house and water pipe in the center." The Daily News pointed out additional driveways will be provided: one from the northwest and northeast corners as well as one westward from Arch Street.

MELGAARD ENTERS THE AUTO ERA



With the construction of new driveways in July 1914, the Daily News reported expectations were high: "by summer's end automobiles and buggys will be driving all over the park on those graded driveways." As of June 30 one could drive east and west through the middle of the park but that road would be closed when the others were completed.

In the 14 acre park area north of the original 11 acres a road had been graded from the northwest to the center and from the northeast to the center with another road from Arch street straight into the park.

A rest room located near the park's center was connected with a water faucet drawing water from a 1102 foot deep soft water well which had been completed in June 1914. The Norbeck and Nicholson firm had dug the well. A drainage pipe ran from the well to the rest room vicinity and then on to Moccasin Creek. Sixty to seventy gallons of water a minute flowed from this well furnishing water for humans and in dry years park trees.

As a city park Melgaard was visited by picnickers in 1911 causing the park board in July to authorize a "dining pavilion" so picnickers could eat their lunches free from insects. An infrastructure to service patrons becomes evident in 1911. However, by 1914 the access was so improved that the real beginning of wider usage of park grounds might be dated from 1914 under a reorganized city park board with C. N. Harris as president and Dr. Carl Fossum as secretary.

By 1919 illuminated poles for electric lights were erected in July. On May 1, 1920 the Daily American alerted Aberdonians that "within a short time Melgaard Park will be lighted at night; it will be bright every evening from dark until 10 o'clock". Amongst park advantages advertised in June 1921 were night lights and spring water. In 1922 Superintendent Anderson suggested electric lights be extended to the circle drive and to the drive leading north to the park boundary.

Over the years access to and from the park proved to be important factors in usage. Grading and gravelling of roads outside the park as well as inside the park was a frequent part of city maintenance. In 1922 Superintendent Anderson pointed with pride to the continuous paved and graveled road from the city center to Melgaard park via Main Street and east on the Melgaard highway--a road which had been

extended and gravelled north of the park as far as Lee Avenue and the Northwestern tracks." That portion of south Kline lying between 12th Ave and Lee Street adjacent to the Normal school property had not been graveled. Gravelling would have completed the cycle of boulevards to the park. In 1928 the park's bisecting north-south road adjacent to the playgrounds was widened to allow for better and more parking spaces. In 1930 a cooperative effort by the city street department which regraded the road leading north from the park and the park department's gravelling of that road created an additional well gravelled road leading to and from Melgaard Park.

MELGAARD TOURIST CAMP: FREE CAMP ERA 1919-25

In May 1919 the Yellowstone Trail travel office informed automobile tourists that Aberdeen, S.D. has a camp ground offering water, wood for camp fires, ovens, and shade free of charge for autoists on the east-west Yellowstone Trail. Travellers on the north-south Sunshine Trail from Manitoba to Kansas and points south also converged on Aberdeen and utilized its Melgaard camp site. This camp became the first such tourist camp grounds in Northeast South Dakota. The park's east end was reserved for this purpose. One of two reinforced concrete fireplaces serviced tourists by the 1920 camping season. In June 1919 the Commercial Club or Rotary were urged to secure painted signs so travelers might find their way to the park.

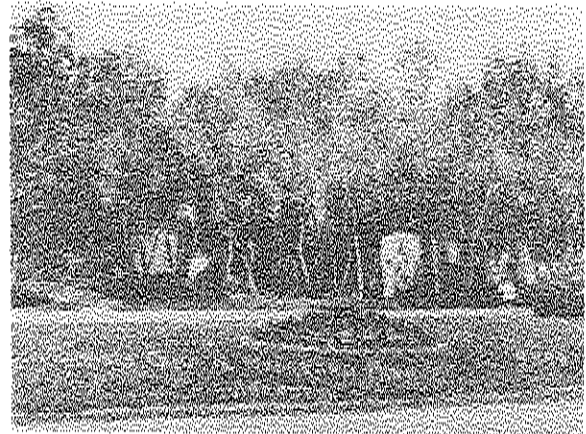
Yellowstone Trail guide books classified Melgaard as a class A camp site. The newspaper press reported the camp ground's popularity in 1921 and 1922. The Daily News in June 1921 described the advantages of stopping at Melgaard: shade trees, spring water, ample firewood for repaired fireplaces, cooking facilities,

laundry equipment such as clothes lines, tubs and soap, a bath house, lights at night, a writing table, and property protection as a result of constant surveillance by park police. From July 7 through August 30, 1920 409 cars carrying 1396 people stopped at the camp. The Aberdeen Journal cited figures for May 9 through July 25, 1921 as 929 auto parties with 3090 individuals using the camp grounds. In 1922 that number increased to 2055 cars with 6418 people.

A Daily News headline for June 20, 1921 asserted "Melgaard is best camp ground from here to Atlantic". Alfred B. Johnson, veteran tourist from Massachusetts, confessed that his good impression of Aberdeen originated with his Melgaard park experiences. On Thursday night June 2, 1921 nine tourist groups camped at Melgaard and the previous night five tourist parties stayed there. More were expected as the weather warmed.

The camp bulletin board included a notice describing road conditions east and west of Aberdeen. Recognizing the publicity value of satisfied tourists, Superintendent Anderson described how visitors were processed: "After registering the party is located in a place where it is convenient for them to pitch their tent and provided with a table and sufficient benches. They are directed to the wood pile often already cut to cook meals at nearby fireplaces. Directed to water taps, pipes extended this summer to camp ground. Adequate toilets. Shower baths screened in and electric lighted rest house open to them where they may visit, read and write letters without being molested by flies and mosquitos. Plenty of shade for our tourists." According to this report for the 1920 season some campers stopped for several days to rest and wash, buying auto parts and provisions.

TOURIST CAMPING IN MELGAARD



Increased usage of the tourist camp necessitated improved facilities and expanded space. In December 1922 Anderson reported the camp shower bath was inadequate. As a result a two compartment bath house was constructed. The old shower bath was retained for men; a new section was built for women only. The 1922 report asserted that in the tourist area "it has been necessary for us to park between 50 and 60 cars on some nights during the past summer. This required very careful systematic arrangement of these cars and tents. The campground at times has proven too small for the number of cars. Consequently some tourists, dissatisfied with crowded conditions, sought camping elsewhere while others were allowed to pitch their tents in other parts of the park."

To resolve the problem the superintendent recommended that the camp ground be extended to include "that area west of the park drive between the playground and the end of the park on the east." He suggested addition of a shelter and tourist kitchen with a range and several kerosene stoves for meal preparation.

Occasionally weather dampened camper spirits. One such occasion was Saturday night July 2, 1921 when tornadic wind and rain hit the Aberdeen area. Camper C. J. Olson of

Madison, Minn. described what followed:

"Twenty cars, with about forty persons were in camp, with tents not up. When the wind hit the park I started for the barn, for protection.

"A woman, with a baby, saw the storm coming, tried to make her way to the house to shelter the baby, but failed.

"I got a rain coat and shipped her to the women's rest room, where it was dry and comfortable. All of the women of the camp were gathered together there. The wind and rain were not so severe at Melgaard as in Aberdeen.

"A few cars which had been in town when the storm broke, began to pull into camp, reporting heavy winds and torrents of rain.

"Telephone wires were down, and a few of us who were curious cranked up a car and made our way to town. The roads were running full of water. The wind still raged. We got to the business district, looked over the damage and returned to camp. Last night...most of the tents were dry. None blown over. One tent with little pitch to the roof held too much water and collapsed."

In September 1921 an Aberdeen Journal headline declared: "Melgaard Camping Site Shelters Wet Tourists". Rainy days before Sept. 16 had made roads impassable. Fifteen or twenty camping parties had the luxury of a refuge at the Melgaard site. On the park lawn the afternoon sun dried clothing and bedding which had been drenched in previous rains. One camper declared "This is one of the best camp sites we have struck in the cross-country drive and we almost forget the trials of a muddy road while we are here."

On Friday evening September 16, 1921 women of this group, no longer confined by the week long rain, gathered around an outdoor camp fire swapping stories of the road while

their men folk worked on cars and conversed about cars and travel.

A familiar scene for campers marked the evening of June 2, 1922. About 8 p.m. ladies washed dishes after the evening meal and men gathered firewood for socializing around the camp fire. One camper considered that an easier task than handling the home furnace.

On a Friday night June 9, 1922 thirteen tents gave a tent city effect to the east end of Melgaard park. Two days of rain caused campers to stay longer waiting for roads to dry. One family set up their victrola in the eating pavilion so as to have music for dancing. There were sixty tourists camped at the park, a large number for one night.

The Aberdeen Journal reported on July 12, 1922 that the Melgaard camp had made the national magazine "Motor World" which recognized Aberdeen as the leading U.S. city in promotion and success of its camp grounds. The story asserted that "Aberdeen, a town of 14,537 population on the trans-continental Yellowstone trail, a couple of years ago established a free public camp of four acres for automobile tourists, a mile and a half from the business center. There was camping space for 35 cars and 125 people under shady trees. No fees were imposed, no permits required. The town supplied shelter, fireplaces, stoves, ovens, running water, electric lights, firewood, toilets, a tennis court, cooking laundry and bathing facilities, police protection and a playground for children, all without cost to the gasoline wanderers. Camp chairs, cots and other furniture could be rented at nominal rates. A band concert was held every Monday."

That summer copies of the Aberdeen Journal were distributed to campers along with Tiffany Laundry and Dry Cleaning handbills which read: "Our driver will call tomorrow morning,

between 7:30 and 8 o'clock for any laundry, dry cleaning or hat blocking you may want done. Work called for in the morning delivered the same night, if you request it. Ask the driver for information and prices. You will find all our charges reasonable."

Tourist usage of Melgaard camp site peaked in the years 1922 through 1924. Increased numbers verified the need for more parking spaces. Some nights 80 to 90 cars were found at the campground. Plans were made to extend the campground into the nursery area at the northeast end of the park. The elm and ash trees there could be used to beautify the city and the ground seeded to establish a good turf for the campers.

In summer of 1924, 4501 cars with about 13,000 people camped at Melgaard tourist grounds. Superintendent Anderson observed on Jan. 15, 1925 what he perceived as a decline in the quality type people visiting the camp grounds. The obnoxious mingling of laboring and hobo types with traditional campers were resented by the more legitimate tourists. The new element's children monopolized the playground equipment to the detriment of others. The idea of two camp grounds—one free and one charge surfaced as a solution to this problem. A camp ground on Nicollete Ave. (future 6th Ave) had been in preparation since 1921 and could serve as the free camp ground after August 1, 1925 when a charge of 50 cents was assessed to those using the Melgaard camp. Anderson's report for 1925 showed disillusionment: "the tourist camp should be entirely separate from our public park. There is nothing in common between park visitors and camp ground arabs, the tourists wanting more seclusion and less disturbance, resenting to a great extent any visitations to their camp by those not belonging to their fraternity. Outside children monopolize the equipment."

MELGAARD TOURIST CAMP:

THE PAY ERA: 1925-1931

In 1925 tourist attendance at Melgaard decreased somewhat with 4068 cars registered and 12,451 people. A possible reason was the levy of a 50 cent charge effective August 1, 1925. Superintendent Anderson reflected that despite a few hardy protests most favored the change. Better people and less disturbance resulted in more satisfied campers. Yet in 1926 a sharp decrease was noted when only 1896 cars were registered. Explanations offered were the pay camp status which eliminated "a certain class of travel", and less auto travel due to economic downturn. The Sixth Ave. free camp was ignored by tourists in 1926.

The decline in tourist usage of Melgaard continued. During the 1928 season only 1612 cars registered. However, upcoming improvements of sanitary toilets, wash bowls and shower baths along with extension of the sanitary sewer to the park in 1928 were expected to remedy this downward trend. In 1929 the tourist camp's net earnings were \$435.50. In 1929 the tourist camp moved to a new location within the park and the old tourist rest house was remodeled into a public toilet building. Still the decline in attendance continued. Explanations offered were competition of cabin camps and general decrease of tourist travel in summer 1929. These observations were reaffirmed in Anderson's 1930 report: "well established cabin camps are being maintained on our important trails and seemingly these camps enjoyed a good business. Our tourist camp is a money-losing enterprise, and if patronage does not increase this coming year, I recommend our tourist camp be abandoned altogether." Net earnings for the tourist camp in 1930 were \$188.35 and in 1931 \$120.00

THE EVOLVING PARK: CHANGE AND EXPANSION BUILDINGS

In addition to improved road access and internal driveways, the park featured structures which helped to fulfill its service mission. In the park's center was a rest room and a soft water well completed in June 1914. City sewer was extended with a 6" tile to the restroom in 1928. The restroom was also remodeled by H.J. Moes in 1929 for \$595.85.

SCREENED PICNIC SHELTER 1935



In 1911 an enclosed picnic shelter or pavilion was built. In January 1918 it was valued at \$200.00 and as of January 1, 1923 its value had increased to \$300. In 1922 Anderson reported "we have but one screened-in picnic pavilion--always on demand. many parties must hold picnics elsewhere. During certain times of the season the flies and mosquitos are exceedingly troublesome." He recommended four small screened in "tea houses" (screened pavilions) containing a table for 12 to 15 people. However, the board minutes reveal no implementation of this suggestion. In January 1923 Melgaard park building inventory this picnic pavilion of 1911 was valued at \$300.

The superintendent's house was located at Melgaard and required maintenance over the years. In 1916

shades and screens were ordered and outside painting completed. In 1917 a barn-machine shed and garage combination was constructed with lumber from the Thompson Lumber Yards. In January 1918 the house was valued at \$1500 and the barn at \$500. The city sewer was extended to the home in fall 1928 with a 4" tile. The park board accepted H. J. Moes' bid of \$1469 to remodel the home in 1929. Architect George Fossum prepared the remodeling plans for the addition to that residence.

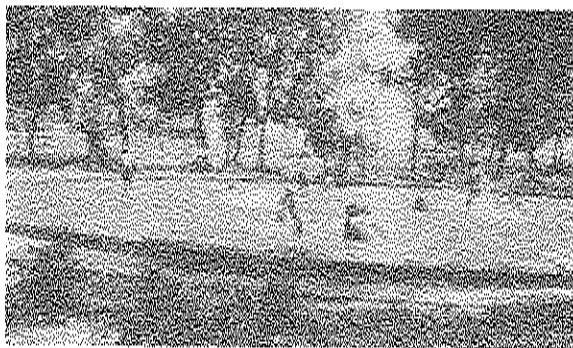
In June 1917 the park board approved funding for 2 fountains. In May 1928 the board accepted the American Legion's local 40 et 8 offer for a drinking fountain which was installed in a central location that year.

An older concession stand was replaced in 1930. For years the concession stand provided food and drink for picnikers & park visitors.

THE ACTIVE LIFE: MELGAARD AS PLAYGROUND

Special recreational features which attracted more people to the park were children's playground, a wading pool and tennis courts. In 1919 and 1920 the superintendent asked for more playground apparatus as the current playground had proven very popular. Superintendent Anderson's report of Dec. 31, 1922 recognized the importance of children's playgrounds. "We must include broader scope" to our beautiful and restful parks. "We have limited areas devoted for the use of children for play including such features as swings, teters and giant strides. We should make further provisions for the comfort and enjoyment of the rising generation. We find that our playgrounds are too small, that it is continually overtaxed with anxious children awaiting their turn. Our amusements are too confined and too similar." He urged varied equipment including a small wading pool. At the

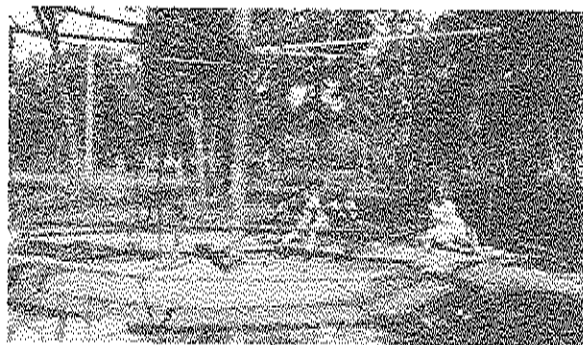
CHILDREN IN WADING POOL 1935



April 12, 1923 park board meeting a concrete wading pool was authorized. The superintendent reported that in its initial season of use the pool had been "extremely popular and in use most of the time". The pool and its installation cost \$1057.22. Because children often used other park buildings in which to don and remove swim suits, the park board authorized a dressing room near the wading pool at the cost of about \$500. Dressing compartments were provided for both boys and girls.

The presence of so many children at the playground and wading pool caused mounting concern for safety from traffic hazards. In 1924 the superintendent noted that "the playground was surrounded in part by three heavily traveled roads, with no protection against children using our playgrounds. These roads are hidden from view for a considerable distance by trees and shrubs". Solutions recommended were "an enclosed playground using a mesh fence 4 to 4 1/2 feet in height with a playground entrance at several places." In spring 1925 the playground was extended. For smaller children, a section was enclosed on 2 sides to protect them from road traffic. Still space was limited. A solution was to use space in the tourist camp and relocate tourists.

CHILDREN ON MERRY-GO-ROUND 1935



In 1926 Melgaard had been in "constant use" and at times was overcrowded, especially the playground and wading pool." Additional playground equipment was placed at Melgaard in 1928. The playground had been segregated from traffic. The tourist camp extension of 1922 with its road system had been relocated eastward. The resulting widened north-south road bisecting the park adjacent to the playground permitted more parking space.

At the the west end of the park trees were removed and two tennis courts constructed in 1925. Shortly, they were in constant use. Two more courts were authorized at the park board meeting of April 24, 1928. Tree removal preceded the erection chiefly by jail labor of the two additional courts in 1929.

GROUPS AND LANDSCAPING

Several nurseries were located in Melgaard Park. They provided trees and shrubs for city boulevard beautification and sickly tree replacement in the cemetery and parks. In 1921 Superintendent Anderson urged elm, maple, hackberry and ash growing west of the semi-circle be moved elsewhere including the Nicollet site on 6th Ave. During 1922 about 800 elm and ash were presented to city residents.

Some additional stock was purchased when the supply on hand was close to exhaustion. The inventory of Melgaard nursery stock on Jan. 1, 1923 listed trees worth \$8,775.00. These were 2900 hackberry, 4600 ash, 8500 elm, 750 popular, 2000 box elder and 350 soft maple.

Nursery areas gradually diminished in size. In 1925 and again in 1928 trees were removed to build tennis courts on the park's west end. Nursery space on the northeast was utilized in 1922-23 for an expanded tourist camp and in 1929 tree space was cleared in the southwest for the bandshell of 1930. Also vegetation gave way to horsehoe courts. Superintendent Anderson felt the park should be used more for recreational use and less space devoted to nursery stock. In 1926 he stated "Last spring a great many trees were given away from the nursery to residents of the city on condition they be well planted and properly taken care of. This along with trees used by the department in parks and cemetery reduced the total number of nursery trees materially, but those remaining are now of such size they are difficult to move successfully with exception of a few. These trees occupy a part of the park that should be designed and developed more along the park idea... Before this area can be used for further park development, these trees must be disposed of."

The nursery inventory & approximate valuation given on January 1, 1930 was 500 evergreens worth \$475, 1000 perennials valued at \$80 and 1000 shrubs worth \$200. A year later there were only 300 evergreens, and 500 shrubs. However, an increase in perennials (1500) was noted.

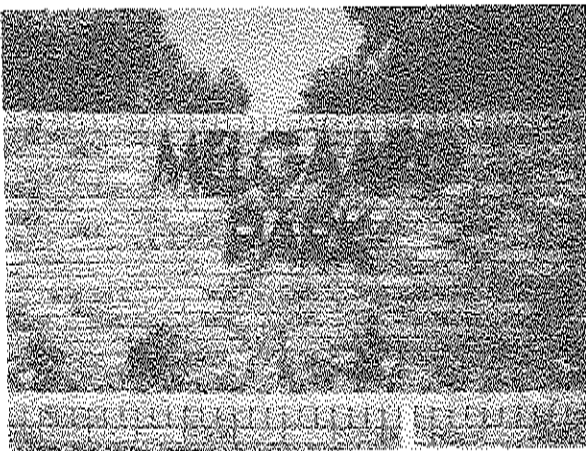
Maintenance work at Melgaard included hoeing and pruning the nursery and a general trimming of the trees in the main park, cultivating, dragging and hoeing drives, mowing and raking grass and hay. Labor to

accomplish these objectives made up a major share of the Melgaard maintenance budget which in 1917 was \$1363.96. In 1917 many improvements were instituted. Seven picnic tables and seats and rustic arches with seats were distributed throughout the park. Shrubs and trees were planted in the semi-circle and about 1000 shrubs were planted in the nursery. About 54 trees throughout the park were removed to give neighboring trees a better chance to spread their crowns and roots. In September 1919 Superintendent Anderson recommended removal of all trees in the nursery to a width of 40 feet from both sides of the road between the north entrance and the semi-circle in order to establish a formal rose and perennial garden. He suggested planting of flower beds bordered by white stone and intersected with gravel walks. Narrow, vine covered arch ways should mark the entry way to this garden. While it is not clear whether all of Anderson's recommendations were implemented, park board minutes of August 9, 1920 authorized the superintendent to remove the trees in the small circle between the drives at Melgaard Park south of the caretakers house and landscape that site with shrubs and flower beds.

S. H. Anderson advocated park entrances. In August 1917 he envisioned large substantial and beautiful arch ways at the entrances. He suggested an arch way of steel or wood at drive entrances with the park's name prominently displayed. Apparently these did not materialize as in 1919 he again recommended "a substantial and beautiful entrance way especially at the most important northern entrance. He suggested that stucco concrete, stone or brick be used to construct four pillars on each side of the road, connected by a ballustrade or wall 3 feet high and 1 1/2 feet wide.

Two additional pillars were to be 8 feet high and 3 feet wide connected by wall several feet high. Pillars should be topped by electric lights. The concept of grandiose entrances differs considerably from the simple wooden sign that marks the north entry in the 1990s. The southern entry today with its large black letters embedded in a brick wall planter is closer to Anderson's ideas of 1917 and 1919.

1995 MELGAARD ENTRANCE SIGN



Instructed as early as 1927 to find a memorial site to honor Andrew Melgaard, Anderson reported on Oct. 22, 1930 to the park board that he had located a site for the Melgaard Memorial north of the fountain in the circle facing toward the south. On that site a bronze statue of Andrew Melgaard was dedicated in 1931.

PICNIC AT THE PARK

Melgaard's grove before it became a city park served as a rendezvous for picnickers. Under city management it continued in this capacity but with improved facilities. One of the earliest structures was the popular, enclosed picnic pavilion of 1911. By that year the Daily American referred to Melgaard as "a favorite gathering place for picnicking parties". That

paper perceived the eating shelter as a welcome addition.

Educational and religious organizations, professional business, labor and farm personnel as well as fraternal societies hosted large group picnics at Melgaard.

RURAL DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL: PLAYDAY PICNICS

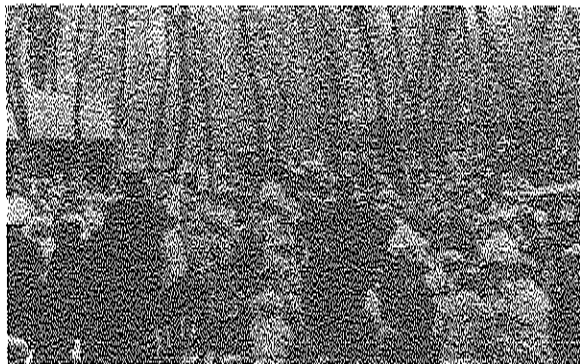
One annual picnic was that associated with the nearby Normal school. The Northern Rural Demonstration Schools earned a national reputation in rural education. From 1922 the Rural Education Department at Northern hosted annual picnics for the schools in the demonstration school district and even some outside the district. On a Saturday in late May or early June students and teachers from at least a dozen rural schools gathered at Melgaard in celebration of approaching summer vacation.

Newspaper accounts for 1925, 1926, 1929, 1930 and 1931 profile picnic attendance and activities. Prominent Northern faculty members, remembered later in Northern's history, chaired committees and supervised the varied picnic events--Arthur Seymour, Grace McArthur, Margaret Briscoe, Vernon Culp, Milton Tostlebe, E. L. Smith, M. M. Guhin and I. D. Weeks. In addition to students and practice teachers, parents and friends swelled attendance to nearly 1000 in 1925 and 1926, over 2000 in 1930 and 1200 in 1931. Over 400 school children from 11 schools were present in 1926. Thirteen schools and twenty classrooms were represented in 1929.

The Evening News in May 1929 characterized youthful and adult attitudes as picnic day approached. This annual event was "a time when studies, work and daily routine are entirely forgotten, and patrons, children, rural instructors and student teachers alike enter into a

day of joyful activity. Picnic day is looked forward to and conversed about by the children throughout the year. Picnic day means just a very few remaining weeks of regular school work before summer vacation begins."

1927 DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS PICNIC



Beginning about 10:30 a.m. preliminary baseball games selected winners to play in the afternoon all-stars game and playground activities were available for those not playing or watching baseball. At noon or 12:30 pm. with student teachers as guests each community ate together as a unit under an identifying banner similar to the annual community picnics at the Tacoma Park resort. Year-end awards were presented at this time. One or two of the rural towns furnished bands to play during the eating hour and provided numbers prior to the afternoon program. In 1926 the thirty piece band of Frederick and Savo students played. In 1929 Bath and Westport band members furnished music as did Riverside School in 1931.

Brown County rural schools in Northern's practice teacher system were the three Aberdeen township schools--Plainview, Brookside, and Riverside. Represented also were Mercier township's Trail school and Ordway's Thornton school; Banner

school of Bath, Warner school and Gem school, the Sunshine school 3 miles north of Warner along with Normal's campus school. In 1926 Sunshine and Ordway failed to attend but Wright, Banner, Eldergrove, Grote schools did in addition to the others listed. In 1930 along with the 13 demonstration schools, four other rural schools and teachers were invited: Rainbow, Gem, West Gem and Mansfield. Also faculty from neighboring towns as well as Northern faculty were invited guests.

Athletic contests occupied the afternoon. Generally, competitions were divided into initial track and field activities graded by age and sex followed by baseball all-stars in which winners of morning games clashed for the county championship.

In 1926 a tug of war between schools was the initial event followed by a variety of competitions: broad and high jumps, horseshoe pitching and girl's volleyball. Aberdeen dancer Jane Freely's toe dance provided an interlude before the boy's and girl's 50 yard dashes, the practice teacher races, and relay races.

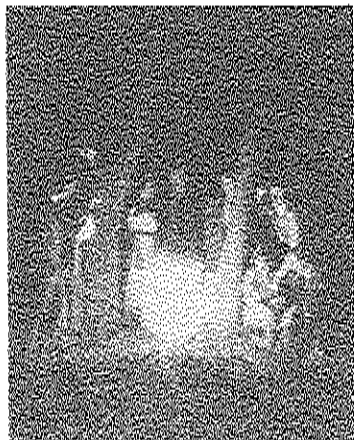
BY THE CAMPFIRE'S GLOW: MELGAARD BY MOONLIGHT

The proximity of Northern Normal to Melgaard park encouraged its use by students and faculty of that institution for evening outings as well as daytime picnics. Varied class parties during the initial quarter proved to be a get-acquainted affairs at the beginning of the school year. Yearbook class histories and calendars document these good times.

On Wednesday October 20, 1915 at 6 p.m. 80 members of the junior class hiked from Ladies Hall to Melgaard Park for a wiener roast. Around the camp fire they listened to "tall" stories and sang familiar songs. At 8 p.m. they hiked back to the campus with their 2 chaperones.

On October 5, 1916 seniors hosted a wiener roast at Melgaard in which guests nearly outnumbered seniors. Sophomores and juniors picnicked there on October 17 and 26.

1914 CAMPFIRE/WEINER ROAST



In 1917 the third year class held their first party at Melgaard's grove—"the big event of the autumn". It proved to be a "perfect evening" in which they played games until darkness set in. Then they lighted the camp fire and ate supper in two courses: "scorched wieners and singed marshmallows on twigs" and a second course of apples, buns, coffee and other eats. At year's end the class history recalled memorable moments: "plenty of moonlight", "huge blazing bonfires, good things to eat on the end of long willow sticks," and the singing of college songs led by class advisor Professor Woodburn. Then under the stars games were played followed by a walk up the tracks toward N.N.I.S., a walk which the Junior class history called "half the pleasure of the whole affair".

The 4th year class on November 5, 1917 also had a wienie roast at Melgaard's grove.

The 6th year class or seniors in Junior Normal looked back to early first quarter of 1922 to their wiener roast at Melgaard's park. Most memorable were the events after the roast when class members sang songs

and listened to stories by Mr. Seymour, Miss Bjorkman, Miss Evans and Dr. Foght. Also, the seniors in October 1923 and the third year class of 1925 remembered the good times and "lots to eat", the hot dog times, at the fall picnic in Melgaard Park with its "stately trees". By picnic's end "each student departed feeling well acquainted with every member of the group". Northern faculty picnicked at Melgaard as well as at Wylie.

Varied groups not in such proximity to the park as Northern students picnicked there. From the Norwegians celebrating with a noon picnic and music on Norway's independence day May 17, 1910 to the Epworth League picnic of August 27, 1931 and the Girl Scout rally and campfire court of honor ceremonies at Melgaard in May 1931, Melgaard earned a reputation as Aberdeen's popular playground and nature sanctuary.

Park grounds featured treasure hunts, baseball, foot races, volleyball, horseshoes, tennis, teters, swings and slides, pool splashing and wading, benches and tables under shady trees, eats at the concession stand, & weekly concerts.

Religious enthusiasts gathered for outdoor mission festivals with sermons, choir and hymn singing. Baptists and Lutherans gathered there for Sunday School picnics. Mellette seniors held skip days there followed by a theatre party in May 1927. The Farmers Equity and the United Commercial Travelers frolicked in Melgaard's green spaces. Several hundred school children of the Home Garden Army scheduled their first picnic party June 3, 1921—a reward for their vegetable gardening efforts. Court house employees ended the work week with a picnic frolic on Friday evening May 26, 1920. Melgaard hosted the Lions service club in August 1928 and the Pioneer boys group in May 1929. Over the years Melgaard increasingly shared its

clientele of young and old with out-of-town groves such as Tacoma Park and with outlying Wylie Park which had greater space and variety of amusements.

By 1932 Harold Melgaard offered for park purposes a tract north of Melgaard Park and east of the C & N.W.R.R. parallel to Lloyd St. on the east and extending to 15th St. He justified the offer with the argument that "Melgaard park is not large enough to handle average crowds seeking recreation during the summer months at present. As time goes on the problem will be acute." While the park board recommended purchase at \$8000 plus 1/2 the unpaid taxes, the city did not incorporate this area into an enlarged Melgaard Park.

CONCERTS AT THE PARK PORTABLE BANDSTAND ERA 1919-1930

Between 1912 and 1917 Aldrich Park was where the band played exclusively Melgaard concerts began in 1919 with the leadership of city band director Howard Bronson and the formation of the Municipal Band which alternated between Aldrich, Wylie and Melgaard starting on June 1919 at 8 p.m. on Monday night. In 1923 the city band increased weekly concerts to five instead of three as in previous years. By May 1923 Friday night became Melgaard's concert night. The band played at Aldrich on Wednesday evenings and at Wylie on Thursday nights.

A portable stage erected in the center of the garden bed circle served to bring the sound of music in 1921 and 1922. The Aberdeen Journal on June 23, 1922 judged that "the sound of music seems to carry better at Melgaard's grove than in any other locality in which the concerts are given." Each program featured an intermission preceded by five numbers and followed by four more. In 1923 the band featured varied solos: vocal

baritone and several instrumental ones: trumpet, xylophone, French horn, and cornet. The Howard Bronson era ended with the 1923 season having established a salaried city band with professional musicians and laying foundations which the new band director Carl Eilert continued from 1924 through 1934. As at Aldrich the band played varied musical types for each program: several marches, a waltz, a Victor Herbert operetta selection, an overture, an idyle such as the "Mountain Maiden's Dream" and often unusual descriptive pieces such as "A Hunt in the Black Forest" where the sounds of the hunt are reproduced according to a synopsis provided in the newspaper. Novelty pieces with the trombone and other instruments helped provide variety.

In 1927 the 22 member band played two concerts a week, Wednesday at Aldrich and Friday at Melgaard except that rain cancelled the Friday night concert which was rescheduled for Sunday July 2. The season began Friday June 10 and ended Friday August 26.

Popular numbers interspersed between higher class program numbers gave a unique flavor to Melgaard concerts in 1927. Some of these were dance hits. A sampler follows: "Sam the Old Accordion Man", "Take to the Sun, Fling out the Moon", "Honolulu Moon", "Sweet Marie", "I'm Looking over a Four Leaf Clover", "Moonbeam Kiss her for Me", "Where the Wild, Wild Flowers Grow", "Let Me Call You Sweetheart", "Mother of Mine", "My Bouquet of Memories" and "What do we do on a Dew Dew Dewy Day"

In 1929 there were two concerts weekly with the mid-week concerts divided between Aldrich and Northern's open air theatre while Sunday concerts were at Melgaard, still referred to in newspaper publicity as "south of the city". The band shell was not yet completed for the concert on Sunday afternoon June

22, 1930 so a temporary platform was located in a shady portion of the park. Publicity featured modern musical arrangements and modern instrumentation for 1930 season: "Saxaphones and other instruments playing in such a manner so as to produce the same musical effect as a thirty piece dance orchestra".

Between 1917 & 1929 Superintendent Anderson had recommended an electric lighted band stand for Melgaard park similar to that of Aldrich Park. He suggested a location in "the triangle south of the semi-circle at the junction of the 2 roads leading into the middle drive" This would facilitate automobile parking without interfering with people on the grounds. He called the temporary band platform inadequate and unsightly. A better musical effect provided by such a stand would keep band members and audiences happier. Band members felt the portable platform was too small for the size of the band. Anderson reported in 1922: "On some nights an estimated 300 to 400 cars along with the walking populace. Conservatively speaking from 1000 to 2000 people have weekly enjoyed these concerts".

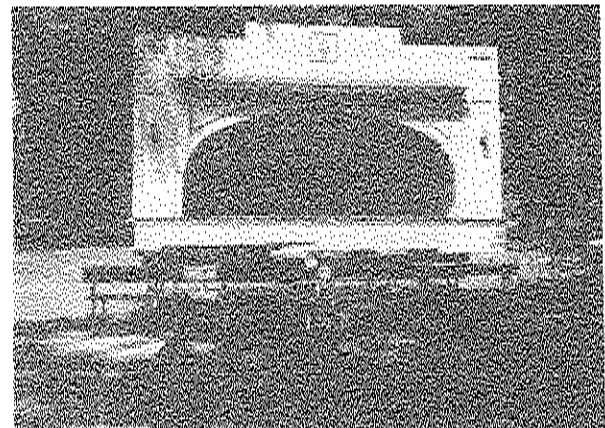
Anderson's 1922 report focused on traffic congestion on concert nights. Parking was poor. No plan had been designed to handle cars. Consequently, confusion and noise accompanied these concerts. He suggested that after a bandstand was built "the roads surrounding the circle and immediately adjacent to the bandstand be widened sufficiently to allow the parking of two tier of cars and yet have sufficient space for traffic to continue uninterrupted between musical numbers".

The Park board budgeted \$3500 for a bandstand in 1922 and again in 1923 but the city did not appropriate those funds. The superintendent admitted in 1925 that "the temporary platform served to give higher

profile to the band in park environment conducive to enjoyment of music"

In 1926 he noted audience appreciation of varied types of music played by Eilert and the city band in addition to classical numbers. He suggested more speciality and novelty attractions, vocalists, quartettes, choruses even a lawn dance to provide variety. In his 1929 report he still referred to the temporary grandstand as "not satisfactory". However, a change was in the offing. Workers cut down nursery trees in the northwest corner of the park to prepare a permanent site for a bandshell which the American Legion at their meeting of June 3, 1929 pledged labor and money to build for the city.

MELGAARD BAND SHELL BUILT IN 1930



SOUND OF MUSIC: 1930-31 A PERMANENT BANDSTAND

On Tuesday evening July 8, 1930 at 7:30 the dedicatory program took place at the park. Embedded in the cornerstone were names of all Aberdeen Legionnaires & the Auxiliary. Mayor John Wade spoke briefly. After the State Legion commander Morrison addressed the audience, park board member John Simmons accepted the 45 foot by 21 foot bandstand for the city. The Legion drum corps provided special music previous to the speeches and a municipal band concert closed the program with a selection of world war songs.

After the band stand was constructed in 1930 crowds flocked to hear the sound of music which "even the most technical music lover could understand". Anderson suggested that perhaps the policing and noise problem at Aldrich Park concerts may have been a factor in increased attendance at Melgaard concerts in the new band shell. The total cost of about \$2700 was paid by the Legion for that shell.

HERITAGE OF SHADE AND SPACE: MELGAARD MEMORIAL 1931

At a board meeting of October 22, 1930 Superintendent Anderson reported selection of a site for the Melgaard Memorial, located just north of the fountain in the circle facing south. In 1930 sculptress Alice Littig Siems had designed the statue of this Norwegian who had immigrated to Minnesota in 1869 and who on June 4, 1880 had filed a claim on land a mile south of future Aberdeen. The American Bronze Co. of Chicago were contractors for the 6 1/2 foot statue.

Two unveilings of the statue occurred. On Sunday June 7th, 1931 the Congregational, Episcopal and Lutheran ministers conducted memorial services at the park concluding Aberdeen's Golden Jubilee celebration. Since the actual statue had not arrived, a miniature version was unveiled at this time with John Wade presiding. The city band, Carl Eilert directing, provided music.

The larger statue arrived in mid July 1931 and was placed on a gigantic boulder foundation located at the north end of the landscaped green lawn near the park's center. John Kruger had donated the huge boulder. At 7 p.m. Monday August 3 the second unveiling occurred with a review of Melgaard's life by former mayor John Wade; Park Board chair John Simmons acceptance of the statue from Mayor Douglas; music by the Municipal Band and community singing.

STATUE OF ANDREW MELGAARD



Viewers might visualize this robust pioneer walking to Watertown 100 miles to the east in order to file his claim. Andrew's son Harold declared "It is so perfectly constructed that coming from any direction, one who knew him would instantly recognize the resemblance." The inscription plate on the rock foundation read: "This statue is erected in memory of Andrew Melgaard, pioneer, who presented this park to the city of Aberdeen."

Andrew Melgaard well before his death in 1911 had welcomed residents of a treeless prairie town to picnic at the grove even before acreage was given to the city. The words of John Wade affirm the importance of trees to prairie folk: "It was by his untiring efforts that these trees were grown. Many of you within the sound of my voice knew how difficult it was in those early days to get trees started on account of dry weather, hot winds and various other things. Many times he was tempted to give up to despair, but he had a will as adamant as the rock that supports his statue. He kept on with his work."

Here was a heritage—a natural beauty spot—that area residents continue to enjoy into the 1990s and beyond. An Evening News editorial of August 4, 1931 referred to pioneer Andrew Melgard as "the man who gave to the city its finest and most popular park and recreational place".

WYLIE PARK

"NOW IS THE TIME!"

ACQUISITION & EXPANSION 1910-1912

On August 29, 1910 the Aberdeen city council authorized purchase at \$100 an acre of Alva N. Aldrich's 160 acre farm. Ten of those acres were treed mostly with ash and box elders. Terms of the agreement required that the land be known as Wylie Park in honor of James Wylie, the father of Aldrich's wife. The legal location of the tract 1 1/2 miles northwest of the city limits was the southwest quarter of section 1, township 123, range 64. The Daily American on August 30, 1910 exclaimed "At last the Aberdeen park system had a park on a scale commensurate with the city's bigness!"

However, not until November 1910 was the deal fully implemented. An attempt to refer the purchase to a vote of the people was a major delay tactic. On November 25 opponents circulated a petition which with proper signatures was filed December 3 with the city auditor. The city attorney and council considered the petitions invalid. If a precedent were set every monthly budget item might be challenged in the future and impede government effectiveness.

A temporary court order held up negotiations until September 12 when the mayor and aldermen were to go before the court to explain why the contract should not be voided. Believing that the council lacked authority to establish parks outside the city limits, the plaintiffs charged there were insufficient funds to purchase the tract and that no taxes were planned to make up the \$9000 difference between the purchase price & the current \$7000 park fund.

Aldrich withdrew the offer and the council rescinded its action. Then Mr. Aldrich resubmitted his proposal to the city council on November 14, 1910 at a reduced price of \$15,000 but not including the railway right

of way across that 160 acres which had been part of the initial contract. His designated method of payment was \$5000 cash on acceptance of the offer and the balance to be paid on or before March 1, 1911. On November 22 Alderman Campbell moved acceptance providing a warranty deed and abstract showing clear title. A 6 to 2 vote adopted the resolution. Aldermen Hezel, Kruger and Giesen voted yes on the grounds that the land was easily worth the price, that many citizens were supportive of buying in the present to meet future needs and that adequate funds were on hand for park extension. John Wade opposed on basis that the public did not favor it. Citizens in attendance expressed views. Isaac Lincoln felt the city was not in a position to pay for the property and called the vote "the greatest mistake the city ever made". C.N. Herreid asserted "I am in favor of any move that makes for a better Aberdeen".

On November 23 the Daily American headline announced "Good Morning, We've bought Wylie Park". A sarcastic note is detected: "They wanted the park in. The people said they didn't. A cinch. No chance for vox populi, pro bono publico and the rest of the common folks who can only vote. Nix on that kind of foolishness." Positively the newspaper found a ray of sunshine in the referendum action. The city secured the property for \$1000 less than originally asked. The American hoped that "someday it will be a beautiful park".

The Daily News of November 23, 1910 referred to opponents as short sighted but would soon recognize the need to buy land when it is relatively cheap. "Now is the time to secure sites for parks and breathing spots which will become an absolute necessity as the town grows".

On Monday December 12, 1910 the Aberdeen Street Railroad donated to the city about 30 acres of sunken,

unsurveyed land at the southeast corner of Wylie Park to be graded and flooded for an artificial lake. In this separate donation the railway company proposed to build a drive way around the lake.

The construction season of 1911 was a transition time between the year of purchase and 1912, the year of more visible improvements at Wylie Park. Well digging was completed in August 1911. By July 4 there was already a good well and later the Street car company dug another well 3" in diameter with water flowing into the lake area. Costs of creating the lake were estimated at \$500 to \$600 because the natural depression which became the lake reduced excavation costs. Fourth of July fireworks were set off on the lake's island. The lake was not yet completely dredged and filled for July 4 festivities.

On Monday evening July 3, 1911 the street cars opened their special Wylie Park run for the regular city route price of 5 cents. The evening run was oriented to the curious who wished to view the electrically lighted park before the July 4th celebration. Passengers could expect no entertainment until Tuesday, July 4. A band stand, dancing pavilion, refreshment stand and cafe awaited them. Rails had been laid by a 60 man crew on Saturday July 1. "The Wylie Park and Normal" run during the summer season was in open sided, rather than enclosed, street cars.

Aberdonians were informed that park management had authorized free admission to the park, had leased the refreshment stand, cafe and the dancing pavilion to reliable persons who were expected to maintain a clean and moral environment with no liquor permitted on the grounds. At the concession stand visitors could refreshen themselves with soft drinks, lunches and even secure their favorite cigar. A thousand feet of pipe provided life-giving water to

park vegetation. Scattered throughout the park were forty benches. To help cool the air a central fountain serviced from the artesian well was promised in a few days. Band concerts were promised for at least twice a week and dancing every evening except Sunday until mid September.

The Daily American of July 6 editorialized on this "historic event" in which hundreds of Aberdonians participated: "It was the birth of Wylie park as well as the birth of the nation, and someday they are going to tell their children how they went out to that park the day it was opened. Then they will laugh over the park as it is today, because it will then be the nucleus of a great park system of a great city...it is going to be a very pleasant place to go for a ride across the prairie."

A week later surveyors completed the engineering work previous to actual deepening of the natural depression, building up its banks, and increasing its waters by flow from the artesian well. People would no longer have to travel miles to visit a natural beauty spot on the shores of a lake. On a hot day or night they could take a pleasant ride on the street car and find shade trees, park benches, dancing, refreshment and "delightful fresh air and rest with little expense of money or energy".

On the evening of July 24, 1911 the park board contracted with Norbeck and Nicholson for a 3 inch well which was to be used to augment rain water and snow melt which often accumulated in the natural lake bed. By early August lake excavations to deepen the lake were completed. Sinking of the well followed.

Around the shores of Lake Minne-ehoc years of a seasonal beach life with its swimming, boating and fishing loomed ahead for area residents.

By mid July 1911 the transportation schedule from the "double track" to

Wylie Park began with a morning run at 10 a.m. and in the afternoon every hour from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Between 7 p.m. to 11:20 p.m. the street car company offered 20 minute service.

Starting early in September through October, 1911 the dance pavilion serviced the public only on Wednesday and Saturday evenings and only during favorable weather. Private parties might reserve the pavilion on other evenings and street car service would be available for those special occasions.

The Ladies Aid of the Methodist Episcopal Church helped establish Wylie's reputation as a major picnic park when on July 20, 1911 members boarded the 3 p.m. street car for a picnic supper at 6 p.m. On that same Thursday the Degree of Honor organization departed at 2:30 p.m. from the Normal school streetcar terminal in a special car decorated with Degree of Honor colors. Their destination--Wylie park and a picnic supper at 6 p.m.

The transition year 1911 experienced a common public dance hall problem which surfaced from time to time over the years--disorderly behavior of certain elements who became obnoxious due to excessive alcohol consumption. On the night of Wednesday July 27 dance floor manager J.J. Cason requested police action. An altercation followed when Deputy Sheriff Fred Henning confronted several intoxicated men. The officer who was not wearing his official badge, was bruised. A stick wielder in the crowd hit him on the head.

This incident triggered official announcements that such rowdiness would not be tolerated: "there has been a good deal of disorderly conduct at Wylie in the evenings, and, if not stopped, the park officials are going to put enough officers on duty there to prevent any further occurrences of this kind."

William Owsley, head of the Park Pavilion Company, in response to what he called "annoyances caused by drunks and ruffians of the past week" declared that the company aimed to "keep the park a fit amusement place for a man, or his wife or his sister, to go and spend the evening." He promised sufficient force to keep out the obnoxious element, and terminate "all forms of rowdiness such as drinking, profanity, loud or abusive language" and all "roughneckism".

The unfavorable publicity of July 1911 as to disorderly behavior at Wylie was a forerunner of ministerial concern which surfaced in June 1912. Owsley confessed that during this first operative year the Park Pavilion Company had not been able to provide the quality and variety of amusement envisioned and promised such for the ensuing year 1912.

The park board approved many improvements for 1912. One was to build a home for the park foreman. Another was transfer of Aldrich Park deer and pelican to a newly enclosed space at Wylie. Also, water was piped to a fountain in the center of Lake Minne-eho. Furthermore, the board authorized lining the lake banks with stone from the old Lincoln school.

Previous to the mid June opening in 1912 of the Wylie baseball park, the grandstand, fence and bleachers of the east side Athletic Park were moved to the Wylie site providing seats for over 1000. Wylie ball park was located across the road south of Lake Minne-eho.

On Sunday June 23, 1912 the first summer game at Lake Minne-eho baseball park was called. A publicity slogan, "All Ho for Wylie Park" embodied images of cool shade under park trees, freshness of lake water, baseball excitement and the sound of band music. At 3 p.m. that Sunday a band concert preceded the 4 p.m. game in which the Groton team contested with the Aberdeen Red Men.

A steam merry-go-round carousel provided amusement as did clinker bottomed boats awaiting lake use. Large size gold fish swam in the lake. A fountain gushed water into the lake night and day.

Daily street car service in 1912 continued the 10 a.m. schedule of the previous year, but made one less afternoon departure for the park: 1 p.m., 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. The afternoon departure schedule from the park was 1:40 p.m., 3:40 p.m. and 5:40 p.m. Twenty minute evening services continued from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.

The 4th of July at Wylie began decades of competition with the attractions of Tacoma Park some 18 miles northeast of Aberdeen. On that special day street car service to Wylie was every 20 minutes from 9:40 a.m. to 12 noon and from 1:40 p.m. to 11 p.m.

For the Fourth of July a concert tent awaited music lovers with band performances at 11:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. Under the canvas of the tent theatre southern minstrels did plantation sketches and sung southern melodies. A baseball game between Watertown's team and the Aberdeen Red Men stirred excitement at 3 p.m. Evening fireworks on Lake Minne-eh-o's island at 10:30 p.m. a wrestling match in the ball park between Ordemann and Turner, and pavilion dancing concluded the evening.

WYLIE PARK: ABERDEEN'S PLAYGROUND PAVILION: 1911-1919

The dance pavilion's formal opening had been July 4, 1911 although pavilion dancing had taken place as early as Saturday night May 18 with Wright's Harmony orchestra providing the music. With the opening of the dance season in June, 1912 the Park Pavilion Company faced a moral challenge posed by Aberdeen ministers. Inspired by Rev. F. C. Berger's blunt words to a convention of the Young People's Alliance about

the corruptive influence of dance halls. Six Aberdeen pastors representing Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational and Sacred Heart churches called upon the city to get rid of the public dance hall at Wylie Park. They characterized it as harmful to youthful morals and a "public nuisance", "an evil", "a constant menace".

While calling public parks a blessing, they were convinced that "the public dance wherever it is held—in city or at the park—is a curse to be ranked with the saloon and the brothel as "allied evils". Questionable characters frequented the dance floor—"a constant peril to girlhood". The pastors were "amazed that the park board of this city against the earnest protest of the mayor and other respectable citizens, is willing to imperil the moral safety and purity of our boys and girls by giving their consent to establish a public dance hall at Wylie park and permit such a menace to be advertised as the chief attraction of what is held to be the principal park of our city."

They feared that the park was becoming a degraded resort instead of a place for wholesome recreation: "There is not a more dangerous and unwholesome place for boys, girls and young people to frequent than Wylie park until the dance hall nuisance shall be eliminated and clean environments obtain."

The protest of 1912 seems to have had little influence as public dancing grew in popularity. However, some concern for an orderly environment appears and provisions for chaperoned youth. Also the board had authorized in April 1912 hiring of a special policeman to be on duty at all times.

The opening performance of vaudeville troops on June 29, 1912 occurred in the dancing pavilion as the big tent had arrived too late to

be erected for that initial performance. Thereafter, the tent theatre provided music and acting for several weeks.

The dancing season often began in mid or late May depending on weather. In 1918 the opening dance began Saturday May 18 to the music of Wright's Harmony orchestra. In 1925 the opening was on May 19. In 1930 the dance pavilion opened on Tuesday May 20 to the music of Joe Goodrich and his 11 piece Merrymaker band noted for their red hot syncopation.

The municipal city band organized in 1919 played short concerts previous to servicing dances on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday nights at the new pavilion which opened in 1919.

The era of the first pavilion lasted into 1919. Newspaper advertising for dance nights was minimal in the years 1913-1918. Publicity called attention to the dance of Thursday July 10, 1913 when five youths entered the switch shanty and turned off the park lights for a hour between ten and eleven. The press reported "At the pavilion Mr. Keith secured a lantern by the light of which he collected tickets for each dance and lighted up the dance floor. The orchestra dispensed familiar old songs which every member knew by heart and made a hit with some of the renditions of old popular airs."

The Labor Day celebration of Monday September 4, 1916 sponsored by the Aberdeen Labor Union included pavilion dancing afternoon and evening with the Klitz orchestra as did Labor Day Monday September 3, 1917 which featured afternoon and evening dancing until midnight. On Monday September 2, 1919 the new pavilion was "crowded to capacity".

Some afternoon picnics continued into the evening and included pavilion dancing. The Rotary Club picnic of Thursday July 26, 1917

provided such dancing: "tripping the light fantastic toe will be the principal sport until a late hour".

Except for one advertisement Saturday July 10, 1915 the newspapers carried no publicity about pavilion dancing in 1915.

This was the year when the street car company was reorganizing due to financial problems & the year that S. A. Anderson became superintendent of parks. Advertised as the pavilion's "biggest public dance of the summer", fans were urged to be there about 9 p.m. to hear a full orchestra in a pavilion that had been cleaned up and extensively decorated. The pavilion also did not advertise in 1916 even though the street car company had purchased new cars and were urging Aberdonians to use them to attend baseball games, picnics, the bathing beach and the cool waters of Lake Minne-eha. In early July 1916 one more streetcar was added to the regular service due to increased popularity of the park for picnic and bathing purposes. "This affords an opportunity of getting away for two or three hours of pleasure in the evening after a hot day in the city." No mention of evening dancing. The last streetcar left the park at 9:30 p.m. Only automobile customers could dance to midnight as in later years.

Park board minutes and Superintendent Anderson's report of 1917 reveal the desire to remove the dance pavilion from the park because it was "an eyesore and a menace to the park", "no source of revenue" and "no good" accomplished by its presence.

In August 1917 Anderson recommended "a large suitable pavilion" with a bandstand, a roof garden, a screened in refreshment parlor and a dance floor 40 ' by 50 ' which could be converted to a cafe if circumstances warranted.

Minutes of March 8, 1918 authorized purchase of the dance hall

by the Kruger brothers for \$500 and ice privileges for 1918 and 1919 with ice to be taken from the lake at Wylie Park.

Jason Behan received the dance hall concession for 1918. The park board promised proper police protection at the pavilion. "Dance at Wylie Tonight" became the advertising slogan during the summer and early fall of 1918. Because street car service was essential for Wylie park attendance the park board paid the streetcar company \$30 a month for the summer of 1918, with \$20 of that sum to be paid out of dance hall and refreshment stand receipts and \$10 out of bathhouse and boating receipts.

In 1919 architects Henry and Fossum presented sketches of a proposed pavilion. Charles H. Cameron, pavilion manager through 1922, was offered his first pavilion concession contract in 1919 with 50% of the net proceeds of refreshment and checking and 25% of net from the dance area not to exceed \$1500. Policing of Wylie from noon to 12 midnight was authorized. The pavilion was not to be used for dances or entertainment which would profit private parties.

Anderson's report of Sept. 1, 1919 stated that with a new pavilion in place there is "no further use for the old pavilion or the women's rest building". The old dance floor should be moved north to the area bordering a new grove of trees and converted into a picnic building or shelter. The rest house should be moved to the extreme west end of the grove and used by male park employees. Once this was done walk and driveway grading would take place around the new pavilion. In 1920 the drives around the pavilion were completed. For moving the building Krugers were offered a five year lease on a tract of ice in Lake Minne-eha not to exceed five acres.

THE NEW PAVILION" 1919-1931

"WHERE ABERDEEN DANCES"

In June 1919 dancing occupied three evenings a week--Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday-- with the Aberdeen city band playing 45 minute concerts followed by dancing. Through partition removal the enlarged older pavilion was in use until the opening in July 1919 of the new pavilion -- the present pavilion which was involved in a fight for survival in the later 1970s.

Admission policy changed from ticket collection on the dance floor to ticket collection at the door. Charles Cameron, entertainment director, asserted that the 1919 season would be popularized as "convenient rendezvous" for small groups of chaperoned young people to enjoy an evening of dancing.

On July 22, 1919 Cameron also invited music lovers to visit the completed spectator's balcony, sit in its new chairs some evening to listen as well as dance to the city band's excellent music.

The Park Board had pumped \$15,000 into a new dance pavilion inaugurating a new era of public dancing as city approved recreation. "Rush Work on Park Pavilion" blared a Daily American headline on Friday June 27, 1919. The "shimmie palace of Aberdeen" was taking shape as twenty carpenters hammered "like an army of woodpeckers in a Brazilian forest". The side walls were being roofed. The hard maple floor had not yet been placed. Its 70 x 90 foot surface, larger than Anderson's suggestion of 1917, was to be planed and waxed to "glass-like smoothness". A row of windows marked the upper main walls with high ceilings and space for circulation of air. Road work--widening and grading--improved access to the park. Park promotion urged auto patrons to use 8th Ave. and others to ride the street cars.

On July 4, 1919 the Daily American headline announced "New Dance Pavilion Ready at Wylie Park". This \$15,000 structure had spacious dance floors which seemed "like the smooth side of a sunbeam" and was "clear of all pillars". This modern structure boasted restrooms, refreshment booths and checking rooms. That opening day streetcars serviced the park from 2 p.m. to 12 midnight. This was to be "the biggest day Wylie Park has ever seen". Refreshments were served in both the old and the new dance pavilions. Post-opening reporting assured Aberdonians that dances were "run in an orderly manner".

In 1920 the dance season began Saturday May 1. In that year drives around the pavilion were completed. Howard C Bronson, director of the Aberdeen City Band 1919-1923, reflected in August, 1920 on dance and music styles at the pavilion where his band played to huge crowds three nights a week: "I believe it is because of the beauty and pleasure of dancing and the music composed for the dances that draws the crowds." He recalled that a dancing professor back east had asserted that dancers learn to dance to promote their marriage chances and after marriage they danced to keep young.

Bronson believed that dancing was becoming more popular each year. He noted decline of jazz and wilder, more immodest fads. In 1920 dances had become "quite sedate, even the rhythm of the fox trot changing to a slower time and filled with more musical notes." Elaborating on the supposed "death" of jazz, he felt "no longer are the nerves of everyone within range of hearing, shattered by the loud crash of symbols and the blare of drums and traps. The saxophone has almost completely ceased its moans.. Wind and stringed instruments are taking the place of last year's popular instruments and music filled with melodies and

harmonies are the type of the latest popular dance programs."

Declining attendance at neighboring dance halls worked in Wylie's favor. Tacoma Park's dance hall had closed temporarily due to lack of enough dancers sometime after the tornadic winds of July 2. Dancing at Armadale Park had been reduced to one night a week. Harvest occupied some dancers and hot weather discouraged some at other dance halls. One dance hall manager declared "Young people this summer are just hopping into cars and driving anywhere. They seem to have lost nearly all interest in dancing...they are driving instead of dancing and we cannot tell when they will switch back again." At Wylie, however, crowds increased. By July 1922 on Wylie's three dance nights visitors from 40 to 50 miles away gathered at Wylie Pavilion to hear popular music from their balcony chairs or to actually dance.

Pavilion rental rules for 1921 stressed no private gain by those renting, maximum once-a-month rentals by any one group, private use once a week only, and measures to prevent damage to the dance floor--no chairs or benches to be dragged onto the floor. No unauthorized advertising was to be allowed. Meda Mason became director of the dance floor in 1921 and in 1923 became pavilion manager. She continued in that capacity through 1926.

The street railway company announced in 1921 and in 1922 they were thinking of suspending service to Wylie and elsewhere in town. Amongst the protests was that of Heinie Hanson in September 1921 who exclaimed: "People who have no automobiles want the street cars running so they can ride if they want and we had better pay 15 cents to go to Wylie Park in the summer to enjoy ourselves than not to be able to go at all...we who draw wages need the street cars."

In June, 1922 the company reduced street car fare to 7.5 cents "for such time as the cars continue to run". On dance nights 20 minute service commenced at 7:40 p.m. and the last car returned from the park at an unusually early hour 9 p.m. In mid July, 1922, perhaps as a reaction to loss of street car service, the pavilion offered three dance tickets for 25 cents in lieu of the 10 cents a dance policy previously followed.

After August 1 there were no street cars to Wylie. This impacted dance attendance which was "poorest of the season" according to manager Charles Cameron. Bus and automobiles brought those who attended. Thereafter, the public relied on buses, taxis and autos to visit Wylie park. Jerry Smith of City Bus Service on August 2, 1922 advertised service to Wylie on Thursday and Saturday nights from 8:30 p.m. until 12:30 every thirty minutes for 15 cents. For a year in 1924 bus service was discontinued but resumed in 1925. By 1927 a dance fan could board the Wylie bus at Buttz Drug every half hour beginning at 9 p.m. Also, Yellow cab advertised 25 cents a passenger with minimum charge of \$1.00 to Wylie Park. The automobile age had truly arrived.

As early as spring 1923 board minutes recognized need for a refreshment parlor addition to the pavilion's south side. Bids were advertised for a new porch at the pavilion's south end.

In 1927 an addition was added to the north side of the building. The resulting larger dance floor was made possible by extending the pavilion northward at the expense of a driveway along the north end. Flooring was to be removed from the floor of the old Kruger dance hall and placed in the new pavilion. Any other lumber that could be salvaged from the previously dismantled dance hall was recommended for use.

Henry J. Moes was the contractor to build a new wing on the North and South sides of the pavilion. In 1927 the pavilion was reroofed, the floor redone and the stage enlarged as was the seating area. The renovated band shell improved musical sounds reverberating through the hall. Refreshment stands were placed on each side of the stage according to Moes' daughter Shirley Moes Vail.

She wrote in the late 1970s: "Since many of the pilings had rotted out replacements were made under the floor; it was leveled and a new maple dance floor was laid. I remember this work was done by hand sawing and nailing. (there was no such thing as electric saws, buffers, nailer, sanders). When the floor was laid a power sander was used run by a small gasoline motor. My father did all the sanding and I helped him put on a special finish and wax after it was completed. This finish had to be hand buffed with a heavy iron bristle buffer and this was hard and back breaking work. For dancing a Boric Acid Crystle & corn meal were used."

By the mid 1920s local orchestras provided the dance music and the city band played for concerts only. Tickets sold three for a quarter or ten cents each. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings were dance nights. A soft drink concession serviced thirsty dancers. Greater newspaper advertising appeared. "Where Aberdeen Dances" was a slogan frequently found in boxed ads. Three hours of dancing from 9 p.m. to midnight marked Pavilion dancing as a late evening event appealing to "night owl" types. Specialty dances frequently were featured. At Hard Time Dances women wore kitchen aprons and men overalls. At Electric Doll Dances dolls on August 28, 1930 lighted the dance floor to the tunes of "The Doll Dance" and "The Wedding of the Painted Doll". Fox trot and waltz contests were also popular.

The years 1925 through 1929 were profitable but less so during the 1929 to 1931. Dance receipts for the 1925 season through September 1 totaled \$7,059.75. Receipts for 1927 season of 55 dance nights from May 14 to Sept. 29 were \$5830.60. The check room took in \$115.70. Orchestra costs, however, were \$4420.00. This and other costs resulted in net earning for 1927 of \$23.48 for dance and check room, \$211.27 for concessions and one rental at \$15.00. Net earnings for 1928 totaled \$1861.65 as \$800 less was paid for orchestras than in 1927.

In 1929 the pavilion made a profit of about \$900.00 out of \$7,208.10 in receipts during a dance season of 52 nights from May 11 to Sept. 14. Orchestra salaries amounted to \$3850.50. Compensation, also, had to be paid to checkers, ticket sellers, gate keepers, a floor manager and police security.

In 1930 the dance pavilion with a dance season of 49 nights May 20 to Sept. 13 took in \$5,083.5 and check room \$65.70. Orchestras received \$3,666. The pavilion made a small profit but unfavorable weather lessened attendance. In early summer evenings were too cold and later in the season evenings were too hot for ideal dancing. Also, a decline in business conditions impacted the dance hall patronage. Receipts from the dance hall and check room during the dance season of 1931 from May 16 to September 12 totaled \$3576.35.

Orchestra salaries were \$2594. The pavilion lost \$108.58 while hosting 34 nights of dancing that year. These figures of 1929 through 1931 help understand why the park board welcomed dance hall management by the American Legion for the 1932 season and why Legion supervision continued into the 1950s.

LAKE MINNE-EHO:

ORIGINS: LAKE BED AND BEACH

By August 1910 dredging had deepened the natural depression in the acreage given to the city by the street railroad. The process had begun of lining lake banks with stone from the old Lincoln school. A new well funneled water into that lake bed and Lake Minne-Eho emerged. By 1917 there had evolved a revenue-producing complex featuring swimming, boating and fishing with bathing beach, diving platform and springboards, bath house and locker system, guard house for sanitizing bathing suits, a coaster slide to provide the big splash. As early as July 4, 1912 the lake's island served as a site to launch Fourth of July fireworks.

ACCESS ROADS

Shoreline drives gradually evolved to improve access to the lake's bathing beach and dance pavilion. In 1919 Supt. Anderson was directed to widen the drive on the lake's west side. In 1920 the drives around the pavilion were completed; however, in 1927 the north drive was terminated when the pavilion was extended on the north end.

In December 1922 Supt. Anderson supported a move to make the south shore road public property to be maintained by the county. The county offered to widen the grade and gravel the road on the south side of Lake Minne-eho and make it "a splendid highway". Not until May 1926 was the county construction, which had begun in the fall of 1925, completed on the south shore lake road to Wylie park. Ready for all types of traffic, this road provided a second route around the lake to the park. In addition county construction and graveling on the

Eighth Ave. road a mile west and a mile south from Wylie Park provided another good road to the park by 1926.

LAKES: BLESSING OR MENACE?

In 1915 safety concerns were highlighted after the drowning of 14 year old Frances Stablein in Lake Minne-eho on June 25. Four girls waded along the shore when they stepped into a 12 foot hole. Three youths rescued three of the girls but did not reach the fourth in time. About an hour previously another boy who had developed cramps had been rescued. In 1914 a young farmer had been drowned.

The park board imposed a temporary ban on lake swimming until lifeguards and designated safe areas could be established. By July 1, 1915 the park board hired Carl Hanicker life saver. Swimmers could once again dip into the waters from 1 pm. to sunset and on Sundays from 10:30 a.m. to sunset. Mandatory wearing of bathing suits was established. Separate bathing areas were designated for boys and girls. Girls were to use the northwest corner and the woman's rest room for dressing purposes. The boys were assigned the southern section and use of the men's room for dressing.

LAKE MINNE-EHO: DOCK & DIVING



The Sunday American of June 26 editorialized on "Make the Park Lake a Friend". Lakes could make life happy rather than be a source of anxiety. Safety measures would make "this little body of water a blessing and a delight for the people of Aberdeen. It is too small for much successful boating, but it can be developed into a resort for bathers ...This idea of the use of the lake has not been made prominent in the past, but between the park board and the street railway it ought to be featured as one of the pleasure spots of the community. Every boy and girl in this city ought to learn to swim." Swimming lessons and life saving instruction became a fact of beach life in future years.

From time to time the park board had to reassure patrons that the lake waters were not polluted as in 1917 when the board response to rumors was: "there is probably nearly a million barrels of water in Lake Minne-eho and that if every soul in Aberdeen took a bath in a bath tub and then emptied the water into the lake the percentage of such bath water would be so infinitesimal that no one could fear any evil results". In June 1919 the city health officer reported that the strong odor from lake water was due to algae growth but was not poisonous if swallowed by swimmers.

In order to clean the lake of bullheads and improve bass fishing the park board authorized a week's hook and line fishing in Lake Minne-eho on Monday July 14, 1917 and repeated that for a week in August. Bass were to be thrown back if caught. One day's limit for each fisherman was set at 25 bullheads. To protect swimmers from flying hooks no fishing was allowed in the safety zone near the bathhouse. One lady during bullhead week sensed a fishy smell on the streetcar and discovered two passengers carrying strings of

bullheads. Bullhead week was again promoted in June 1919. By June 1928 the bass had reproduced to the point the lake was overcrowded and a fishing season was established for bass fishing by those 16 and under with a limit of 5 fish per person. Only bank fishing with pole, hook and line was permitted. Some 500 youths applied for permits testifying to the delights of Lake Minne-ehoo.

THE BIG SPLASH:

BOATING & SWIMMING CONTESTS

While the lake's surface was not geared for boating activities found on larger lakes, boat races and water carnivals were held. The first recorded boat races occurred on July 4, 1913 after the baseball game. The park board provided the boats and cash prizes of \$1.00 and 50 cents for first and second prizes respectively.

Entry was free. Row boats each carrying one passenger plus the oarsman competed in races segregated by sex and maturity (girls and women, boys and men). Boat races were included in Labor Day celebrations such as that of 1916. Fishing rules of July 1917 permitted fishing from boats in specific areas while anglers in 1928 were required to fish from lake banks only.

However, the swimming and diving competitions during water carnival time in 1919 and 1920 garnered more press attention. In the afternoon and evening of August 1, 1919 the first water carnival enlivened the swimming season. Sponsored by the park board, children's events began at 2 p.m. and concluded about 4 p.m.--ten, twenty and thirty yard dashes along with distance and spring board diving. Relatives and friends watched from their cars along the beach. The city band provided 45 minutes concerts for both afternoon and evening events.

At 7:00 p.m. short and long

distance swimming competitions for older swimmers began: men and women's 20 and 40 yard dashes with an extra 50 and 100 yard dash for men. The program also included demonstration and fancy high diving from ten oak spring boards mounted on the new diving platform which extended 175 feet into the lake. At 9 p.m. long distance swimmers raced about 750 yards from the lake island to the boat landing raft.

In 1927 the Aberdeen Y.M. C.A. sponsored what was called an annual Wylie Park swimming contest. Age categories were those under 15, 15 to 17 year olds and those 17 and over. Exhibition numbers between regular contests were: pillow fights, plain and fancy diving stunts, and a life saving demonstration. Girls' and boys' divisions in regular events included varied swimming distances and many styles of diving. The park board joined in sponsoring competitive water sports on July 4, 1928. Age, weight and sex classifications governed the contests which encompassed swimming, diving and life saving competitions using the Schaefer method of resuscitation.

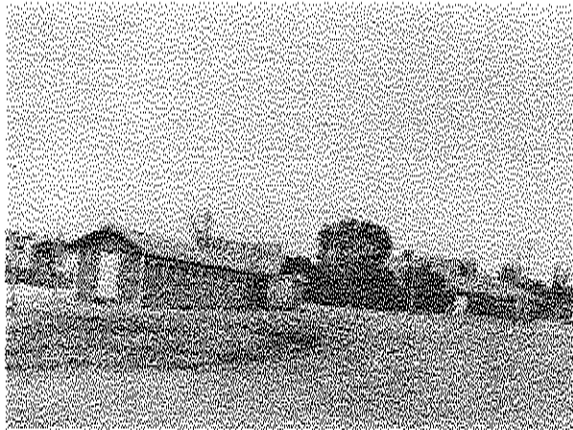
YO! HO!

FOR MINNE-EEHO!

BATHING BEACH & BATH HOUSE

By 1917 Wylie Park bathing and eating facilities filled "a long felt want". At the new refreshment stand a light lunch might be secured. Furthermore, a more permanent bath house was built in 1917 with lumber from Thompson Yards and forty eight new lockers were placed in the bath house. A new ventilating system was placed in the guard house where bathing suits and towels were sanitized. Swimmers utilized a new diving pier and springboards in 1917. Improvements as of June 18, 1917 amounted to \$863.98. A water safety zone was designated and roped.

WYLIE BATH HOUSE



The Bath House manager supervised numerous personnel and varied duties associated with beach and bath house maintenance. To assure swimming safety lifeguards were needed and safety zones established. The 90 bath towels and 294 bathing suits of 1918 and locker keys were distributed by Bath House employees. An inventory valuation in the January 8, 1918 park board minutes assessed the bath house at \$2000. Bath house hours in that year were 11:00 a.m. through 9:30 p.m. with a noon closure from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

A permanent coaster slide was introduced to the bathing beach in 1919. Located near the shore, swimmers climbed to its 10 foot high apex and slid 14 and 1/2 feet downward into the the water creating the big splash.

The diving platform of 1921 was valued at \$650.00 but it had to be replaced as a result of the tornadic winds of July 2, 1921. Improvements of 1922 were a new diving platform placed within the safety zone and two oak diving boards. In 1922 the diving platform separated two sections of the beach. The west side was well covered with sand and gravel out to a depth of five feet; the east side, reserved more for men, saw little use and had little gravel, a deficiency

to be remedied in 1923.

The high lumber prices of 1923 deferred a recommended bathhouse extension for more men's dressing rooms. In 1925 workers erected a tobaggan slide which cost about \$1000. It proved to be very popular for a time but the novelty wore off later in the season.

Cold weather in June and July of 1926 contributed to a decline in attendance and usage of the slide. In 1927 a 25 foot dock extension to the regular dock doubled the dock space for swimmers.

Lake bottom and beach maintenance required frequent loads of sand on the beach; gravel and sand placed on winter ice sank to the lake bottom with spring melt.

On one hot Sunday in 1926 the bathhouse took in \$130.00 from five cent admissions, suit and towel rentals and locker use. Several thousand are estimated to have crowded the beach on hot days.

Receipts for use of the bath house was the best in 1925 when from June 7 to September 1 bathers spent \$2290.92. Receipts fell in 1927 when maintenance costs of \$1552.23 were more than receipts of \$1111.20 giving a net loss of \$441.03. The net loss for 1928 was \$208.41 with receipts \$1314.430. In 1929 the net loss was minimal at \$33.84 followed by a deficit of \$130 in 1930 when gross receipts were \$1279.80.

LAKE AND ICE HOUSE

In the winter of 1918-19 the park board experimented with a Granary bin full of ice which helped reduce concession expenses that summer. However, the ice supply proved to be inadequate. Therefore, Superintendent Anderson recommended a larger ice house be erected for the winter of 1919-20 at the park's west end. The board contracted with Ira Kruger in 1919 for a five year lease on a tract of ice not to exceed 5 acres in

return for moving the old pavillion building. This ice shed was valued at \$200 on Jan. 1, 1930.

WYLIE GOLF COURSE

In 1925 a municipal golf course at Wylie Park emerged as a result of preparations made in the fall of 1924. The idea had surfaced as early as September 1920 but at that time had been rejected based on the feeling that the country club golf course satisfied demand. A golf professional from the Minneapolis Recreation Department made suggestions for the Wylie course. In August 1925 the course opened free of charge until August 22 when the fee was ten cents a round. Improvements in 1925 amounted to \$1,017.58. Anderson reported at the end of 1925 the course was often "taxed to capacity", that further expansion was needed--bunkers and sand traps and more trees to develop hazards which added variety to the barren links.

In 1926 board members discussed enlargement of the 9 hole course to 18 holes. More ground would have to be cultivated but adverse weather delayed the effort. The board purchased 6500 pounds of grass seed but sowed only 10 out of 70 acres. In 1926 thousands of players visited the course bringing in receipts of \$4803.43. Charges per round were raised to 20 cents. Week ends attracted large crowds. One Sunday 325 paid admission creating congestion and some grumbling about improper golf etiquette. The 1928 budget alloted \$1749.58 for the golf course. Net earnings for 1927 at the Wylie golf course revealed a loss of \$270.31. Cost of maintaining the course was \$1379.86.

The course suffered a loss of \$190.56 in 1928. In that year 4966 players paid 15 cents each. Other sources of income were sale of tennis balls and tees and club rentals.

Total income for 1928 was \$948.35 but maintenance costs were \$1138.91. Players in 1929 numbered 6015. Receipts were \$1128.85, expenses \$1,092.16 with net earnings of \$36.69.

In 1930 the golf course earned a profit of \$52.57 during an adverse season. Golfers continued to pay 15 cents each. Total receipts from the 6,283 golfers were \$1,108.45. Maintenance costs were \$1,055.45. Compared to activities at Lake Minne-eh, the dance pavilion, the picnic grounds and the neighboring baseball park across from the lake, the golf course received little press publicity.

PLAY BALL!

THE MINNE-EGO BALL PARK

The Kruger brothers, active in the ice business as well as other enterprises, operated a private enterprise ball park established in 1912 across from Lake Minne-eh. The game between Aberdeen Red Men and Watertown was one of the features of July 4th, 1912 at Wylie Park.

Lively contests on the Wylie Park ballgrounds occurred over the years. Park board minutes provide little information as the ball park was not under their supervision. Newspapers provide insight through advertisements and descriptions of game results. Heavy spring rains might impede road access to the ball grounds as in August 1915 when managment felt that "baseball bugs would have to go to the game in boats".

The ball park hosted other exciting sports such as afternoon auto polo in 1915 and 1916. Publicity announced: "To watch them is like looking at an auto wreck happening every minute". For 50 cent admission the Aberdeen Auto Club offered "Motor Insanity" and arranged for special street car service to these dare devil displays.

Grandstand behavior prior to 1922 allowed freedom of seating once gate fees were paid. Restless youngsters roamed grandstand bleachers interfering with adult concentration on the game. In 1922 an experimental plan began. Young boys were admitted free but were under careful observation. Misbehavior resulted in ejection. Unattended boys were barred from the field. As a protection from curious and energetic boys the grandstands had been wired off in order to "protect them from falling pop bottles and to disband the noisy games that formerly played underneath the stands to the distraction of the fans." By May 1916 the grandstand of 1912 showed wear and tear. New netting stretched across the front of the stands as one improvement. In May 1922 there emerged an enlarged grandstand in which 2000 people in shaded seats viewed the game with Sioux Falls.

Even though the ballpark was not under park board supervision, ballpark events became associated in the minds of area residents as part of Wylie Park's variety of amusements.

WYLIE ZOO:

BIRD & ANIMAL SANCTUARY

However, the zoo with its barn, animal house, duck pond, elk's shed, wolf den, buffalo shed, granary of 1915 and bird house were attractions within the park boundaries and often visited by picnickers. Park personnel showed concerns over injury and death of zoo animals and occasionally injury to humans. In November 25, 1916 an elk bull accidentally gored and killed a four-year adult cow while feeding. A coyote died in October 1917. A monkey injured Jacob Gese during feeding on Nov. 6, 1916.

Improvements of 1917 were construction of a duck pond and exhibition pens. In November 1917 the board instructed Superintendent Anderson to build a buffalo shed

enclosed on three sides with a roof 14 x 6 feet. Winterizing the bird house was a concern in fall 1917. Animals had to be shifted to winter quarters, a stove set up in the bird house, hay hauled for deer, horses and buffalos. In 1918, 1919 and 1920 the zoo barn was valued at \$300, the wolf house at \$525 the bird house at \$1200, the buffalo shed at \$75 and the Granary at \$700. In 1922 \$2000 was budgeted for a new barn. By 1922 better animal quarters were needed as cleaning had worn down the tin lining around the animal house. The bird house of this era was eventually replaced in 1945 by the bird house currently anchoring the southern section of the park.

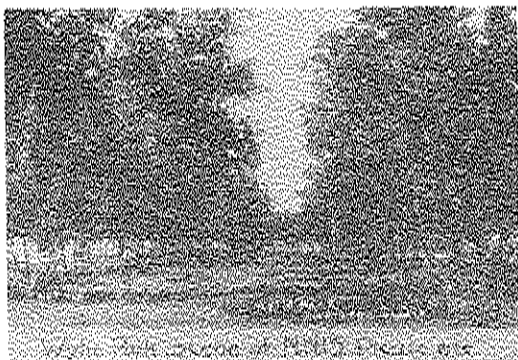
Many birds homed in Wylie trees. In June 1919 the Daily News noted blackbirds, robins, woodpeckers, wrens, king birds, thrushes had attracted attention through song and movement. These birds seemed fearless as they winged their way among the trees and hopped about on the grass within a few feet of picnickers. Also English sparrows and king birds scrapped with each other to the entertainment of park visitors.

Wildlife listed in the zoo inventory for 1929 were five buffalo, one elk, one bear, four monkeys, one badger, one blue heron, two American eagles, 3 horned owls, 2 coyotes, 9 chinese pheasants, 18 wild ducks, 2 wild geese, 3 crows, 14 spotted pigeons, 10 brown pigeons, 8 tan pigeons, 28 white pigeons, 1 fox and 2 rabbits. Their total assessed value was \$1105. The zoo's presence and the natural bird life dwelling in the trees added to the enjoyment of a picnic at the park.

WYLIE AS PICNIC PARK

Like Melgaard, Wylie became a major picnic park. It had space, a balance of shade and open spaces and a variety of amusements to entertain picnickers.

1914 PICNIC OF N.N.I.S.



NORMALITES:

RIDING THE RATTLER & HITTING THE BREAD LINE

Northern Normal and Industrial School developed close associations with Wylie as at Melgaard. Wylie Park was located a longer distance from the college, but the streetcar terminal, located at the gates of Northern, encouraged student trips to town and northward to Wylie Park. Perhaps that distance and the streetcar (1911-22) or automobile ride to Wylie made a picnic seem more adventuresome and more in communion with a natural sanctuary away from city heat and daily routine.

MORNING PICNICS:

BREAKFAST AT THE PARK

On the morning of June 1, 1912 over 200 Normal students boarded four street cars to picnic at Wylie Park. Upon arrival they formed what became traditionally known as the "bread line" where they were served biscuits, cookies, doughnuts, wiennies, bananas, oranges and coffee. Competitive races followed. As they returned at noon to the Normal, they practiced varied college yells and songs.

This morning outing was repeated on May 29, 1913. The four car loads of

students disembarked and immediately ate a breakfast of wiener-wursts, sandwiches, cookies, coffee and bananas. Outdoor sports activities followed. There were separate faculty men's and ladies races, three legged races, throwing contests, nail driving and rowing. One student fell in the lake, a conversational topic to spice up stories of that year's Wylie venture. They returned to the Normal in time for a campus baseball game between Ellendale and Northern.

On June 1, 1914 once again students heard the call "All aboard for the school picnic", paid their dime and rode the "rattlers", a student synonym for streetcars. Before breakfast and forming the bread line, some wandered about the park, along the shores of Lake Minneho. Several junior girls found themselves adrift in a boat. Several athletes chose to rescue them at the risk of being late for breakfast. All returned in time to hear the call "fall in line and help yourselves". Participants recalled "hitting the line" twice or even three times to weedle "just one more sandwich or another cookie". There followed a fat man's race, hoop race, ball throwing contest and swimming race. Most boarded the rattlers to return to the Normal but a few paired up and drifted away on their own.

In 1915 300 attended the annual morning frolic at Wylie. Students boarded at 7 a.m. for their Wylie breakfast. Thereafter, fellows focused on a ball game between faculty and YMCA. The faculty won 7 to 6. The return to the Normal and school work came too soon when at 11 a.m. the faculty supervisors directed them to the streetcars.

By 1917 automobiles helped transport students from the Normal on a Saturday morning in late May after seeing the Senior Class Day exercise "1917-1918 at the Normal" predicting a manless year ahead at Northern.

BREAD LINE AT SCHOOL PICNIC 1914



A student version of the "Great Day" appeared in the Exponent of June 1, 1917. At the campus edge autos picked up students in groups of three or four to convey them to Wylie Park. Some auto parties were so jammed they likened their condition to sardines in a can. Upon arrival the normalites wandered to the zoo, slid down the elks' hay stack and battled the windy gusts sweeping the park. Cries from the bread line drew them to that location where fellows running interference for their girls squirmed and pushed their way to the front of the line to secure sandwiches, cookies, ice cream and coffee. Windblown dust had settled on coffee cups and blended with the coffee when cups were filled.

Baseball followed with the "Facs and Studes" crossing bats. A chilly, grimy and dishevelled crowd finally boarded the autos for the return trip to Northern on that windy and chilly picnic morning. One last such picnic when travel by streetcar was possible occurred on Monday June 6, 1921 during commencement week when almost 250 graduates and upper classmen with visitors boarded the cars to engage in the usual Northern activities at a Wylie frolic.

N.N.I.S AFTERNOON FROLICS

Northern's summer school also offered afternoon and evening picnic occasions at Wylie Park. On August 26, 1916 at 3:50 p.m. students headed for the park where sports, lake bathing, drives, walks and swings provided variety. A ball game highlighted the afternoon. Girls participated in a 50 yard dash, high jumps, and baseball throwing. One girl threw the ball 112 feet. Then the park wanderers headed for the lunch line. Afterwards for thirty minutes they witnessed a clever vaudeville sketch in which strangely garbed "immigrants" told of humorous experiences, sang solos and merged into groups for chorus singing. A "Farewell" song singled the rush to the street car station. While waiting an hour for the "rattlers" the picnickers filled the air with happy songs.

On Thursday afternoon at 3 p.m. August 16, 1917 over 200 students and 25 faculty boarded street cars for Wylie park swimming, boating and games. Between six and seven p.m. they concluded with supper, volleyball and indoor baseball returning about 9 p.m.

FIELD DAYS AT WYLIE

Educational institutions on other levels found spacious Wylie Park the proper place to occupy youthful energy. In 1927 Central High School began what became their annual Field Day to counteract "unauthorized and free-for-all color fights" between seniors and juniors. The Field Day of 1928 began at 1:30 p.m. May 11 with varied competitive sports to prove the superiority of Juniors and seniors in the eyes of underclassmen as well as themselves. Scheduled were thirty minutes of tennis for both boys and girls but golf for boys only. Both boys and girls engaged in three inning baseball for forty-five minutes. Three legged

relay races for boys and horse shoe contests occupied those not involved in baseball as these activities were scheduled for the same time period. Featured highlights were the race around the lake by junior and senior boys at 3:30, a tug of war by two 15 man teams at 4 p.m. and the seven minute color fight at 4:30 p.m. with 35 men supposedly on each side. However, parents of only 25 signed permit cards for such activity. Also, weather permitting, fifty yard dashes in swimming were planned for both boys and girls.

Central High's Field Day for 1929 Friday afternoon May 17 included time for autographing the "Arrow" yearbook as well as group contests covering baseball, tennis, golf, horse-shoes, and racing. Featured again were tug of war, a running race around the lake and the color fight. New was the "fliver race". An evening picnic lunch climaxed the event.

CHURCH PICNICS & CAMP MEETINGS

Church groups and Sunday schools spent picnic time at Wylie every year. During the street car era they often used that means of transportation. They often began at mid or late afternoon with picnic supper in the evening. Working fathers were urged to join their families after work. Families usually brought their own lunch baskets. Numbers ranged from nearly 100 children at the Salvation Army picnic of June 1915 and the 150 Christian Church picnickers of August 26, 1915 to the 450 Methodists who came by auto and streetcar on Friday July 27, 1917. Because of increased reliance on auto transportation, the Methodists, in order to secure street car service, offered free ice cream and lemonade only to street car passengers.

In June 1913 even a Holiness camp meeting was held. One Sunday night's

meeting attracted over 800 persons many of whom openly accepted conversion. Families from six states camped on the grounds in order to attend meetings three times daily: 10:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Catholics as well as protestants picnicked at the park. The Knights of Columbus on Monday August 15, 1921 utilized street car service, viewed a ball game at 4 p.m., shared their basket lunches at 6 p.m. & at 8 p.m. danced to the music of a 10 piece orchestra. On Monday June 26 1922 they invited out of town folks as well as in town people for a get-acquainted picnic. Street car service was provided between 1:45 p.m. and 12 midnight. Swimming and boating at 5 p.m. followed 4 p.m. baseball. After the 6:30 lunch of ham and wieners, cake and ice cream games and boy scout drill began at 7:30 p.m. with dancing beginning at 8:30 p.m. to conclude the evening.

"NOT A DULL MOMENT!" FRATERNAL FROLICS

Fraternal groups and service clubs also picnicked at Wylie. The Moose annual picnic of Sunday June 26, 1921 brought 150 members and their families for a program of sports, foot races, quoit contest and a 5:00 p.m. lunch. The Shriners on Thursday August 22, 1929 had a "Big Outing" in which there were varied golf competitions on the 9 hole Wylie course. Abilities in putting, distance and accuracy were tested. Boys and girls in age groups under 10 and 10 to 15 competed in 50 and 100 yard dashes and three legged races. After picnic dinner pavilion dancing occupied many adults. There was "not a dull moment" for the Rotary club when about 75 members sampled the lake waters, played games, ate and danced in July, 1917.

CHILDREN'S REWARD

On Sat. July 28, 1928 the PTA hosted about 100 boys and girls who had participated in the 6 city playground programs to a picnic ending the playground recreation season. Leaving from their respective playgrounds by auto at 10 a.m., the children played ball in the forenoon, raced and swam after a noon picnic. Instructed to bring their own suits and towels, they were admitted to the beach free of charge.

LABORERS' REWARD: ESCAPE TO WYLIE

Labor Day picnics were occasions for large numbers of workers and their families to visit Wylie. All day and evening street car service was arranged in 1917, 1918 and 1919. In addition to ball games, speakers on labor issues were featured. Balloon ascensions and double parachute drops were featured in 1916 and 1917. Cash and clothing prizes were awarded for varied competitions: 50 yard dashes for girls under 15 and 100 yard dashes for boys under 15. Men participated in three legged races. Three bicycle races with an intervening tug of war between North and South side men occurred after 4:30 p.m. Men over 18 vied for prizes in the high jump. Potato races and races for married men only were available as were slow motorcycle races and swimming races for ladies and men over 16. Prizes were offered for the largest family. The Klitz orchestra played in the dance pavilion. The programs of other years were similar except on Mon. September 2, 1918 a cold wind caused postponement of a water carnival; however, in the evening the dance pavilion was "crowded to capacity".

Wylie park offered more space for large group picnics than Melgaard; yet, at least on one occasion in June 1919, the Baptists scheduled a picnic at Melgaard Park "to avoid the anticipated congestion at Wylie".

WYLIE: THE QUEST FOR SPACE AND SHADE

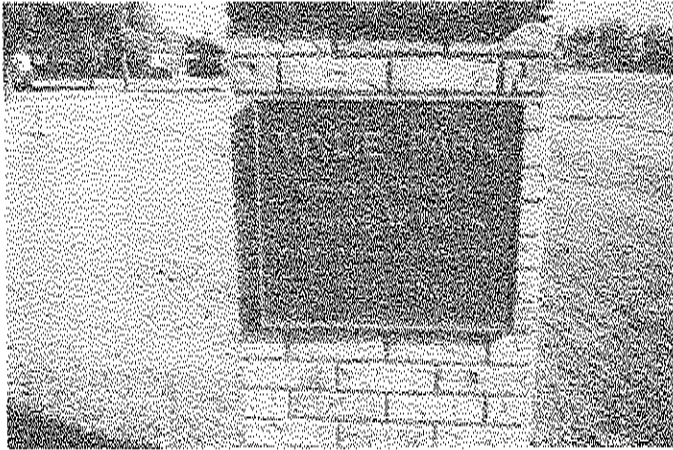
Wylie's reputation as a picnic park with its zoo animals and bird sanctuary, its bathing facilities, the neighboring Kruger baseball park, its dance pavilion, concession stands, its tree and shrub nursery since 1916, its spacious lawns and shade as well as the playground apparatus appealed to children, teenagers and adults who probably agreed that Wylie Park had earned the right to flaunt its publicity slogans as "Aberdeen's Playground" and "Where Aberdeen Dances."

Behind the scenes decisions of park board and city council members and the daily, landscaping and maintenance work of park personnel made possible this spacious "beauty spot" and helped mould the heritage which has blossomed into the magnificent Wylie park of the 1990s.

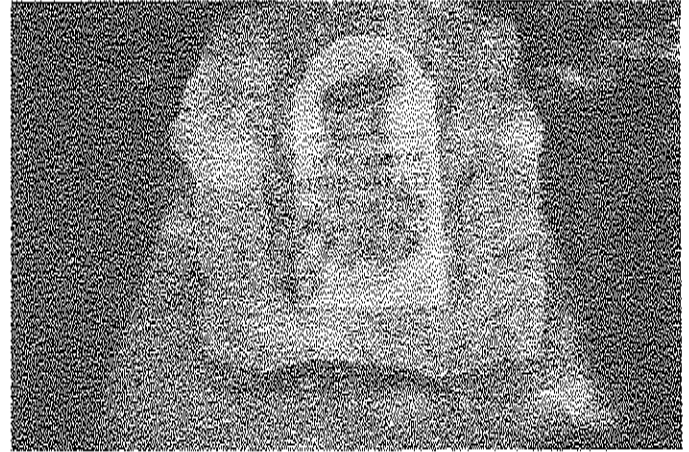
Aberdeen and its neighbors in Parkland's foundation years and into the 1990's sought shade and space to relax from everyday cares and to celebrate special occasions. In 1995 this shady lane at Wylie exemplifies that quest for shade and space which was part of the Parkland Heritage bestowed upon the present generation.

SHADY LANE AT WYLIE PARK IN 1995

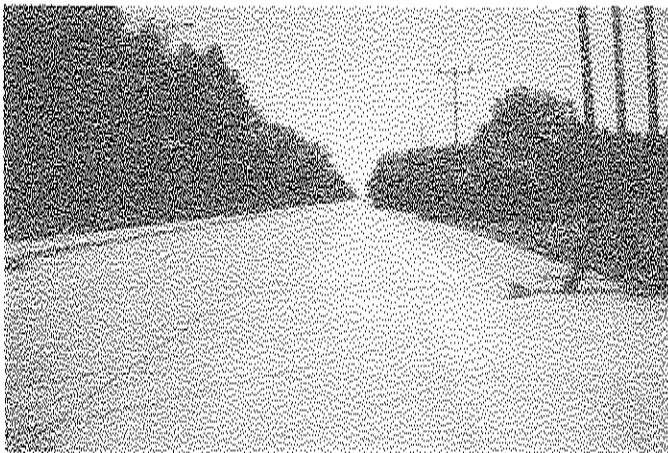




WYLIE PARK PLAQUE
HONORING JAMES H. WYLIE



ALDRICH PARK PLAQUE
HONORING CITY MULES

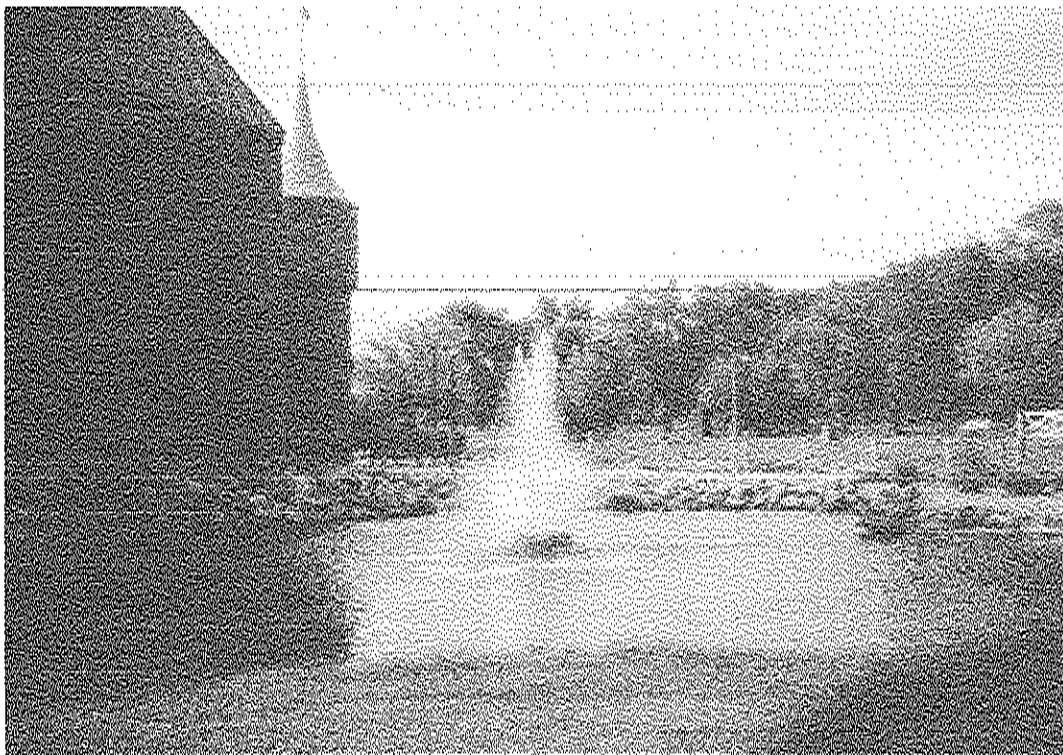
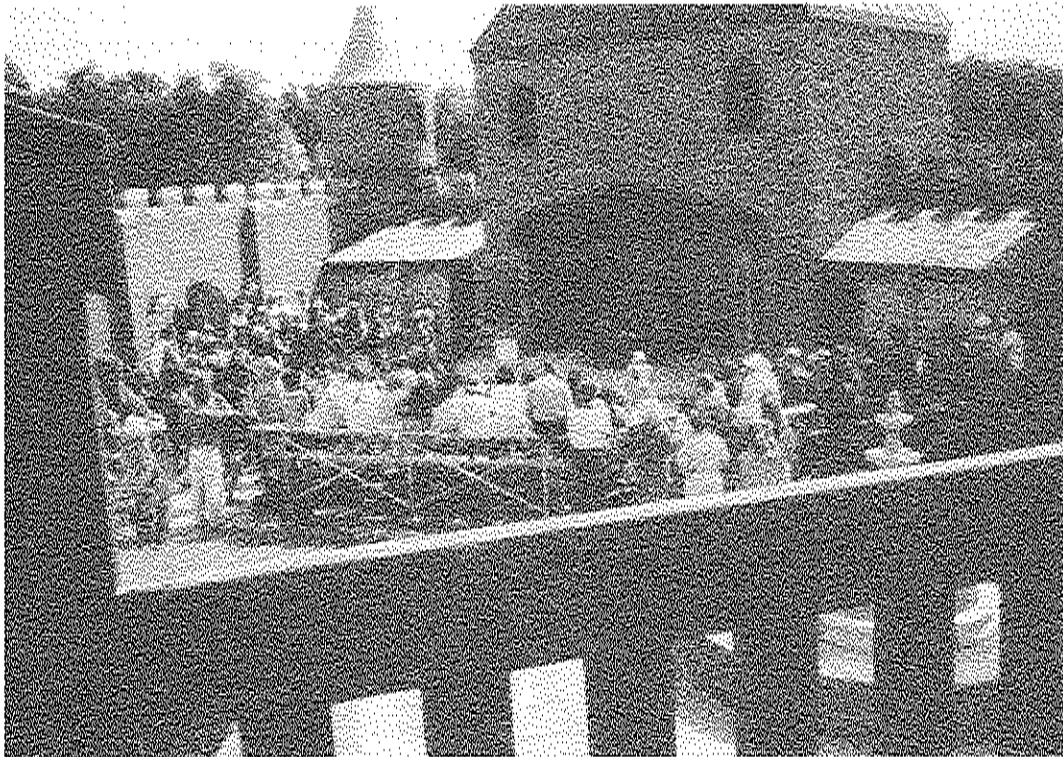


MELGAARD ROAD IN 1995



WYLIE PARK PAVILION

STORYBOOK LAND AT WYLIE PARK IN 1995



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RECOGNITIONS

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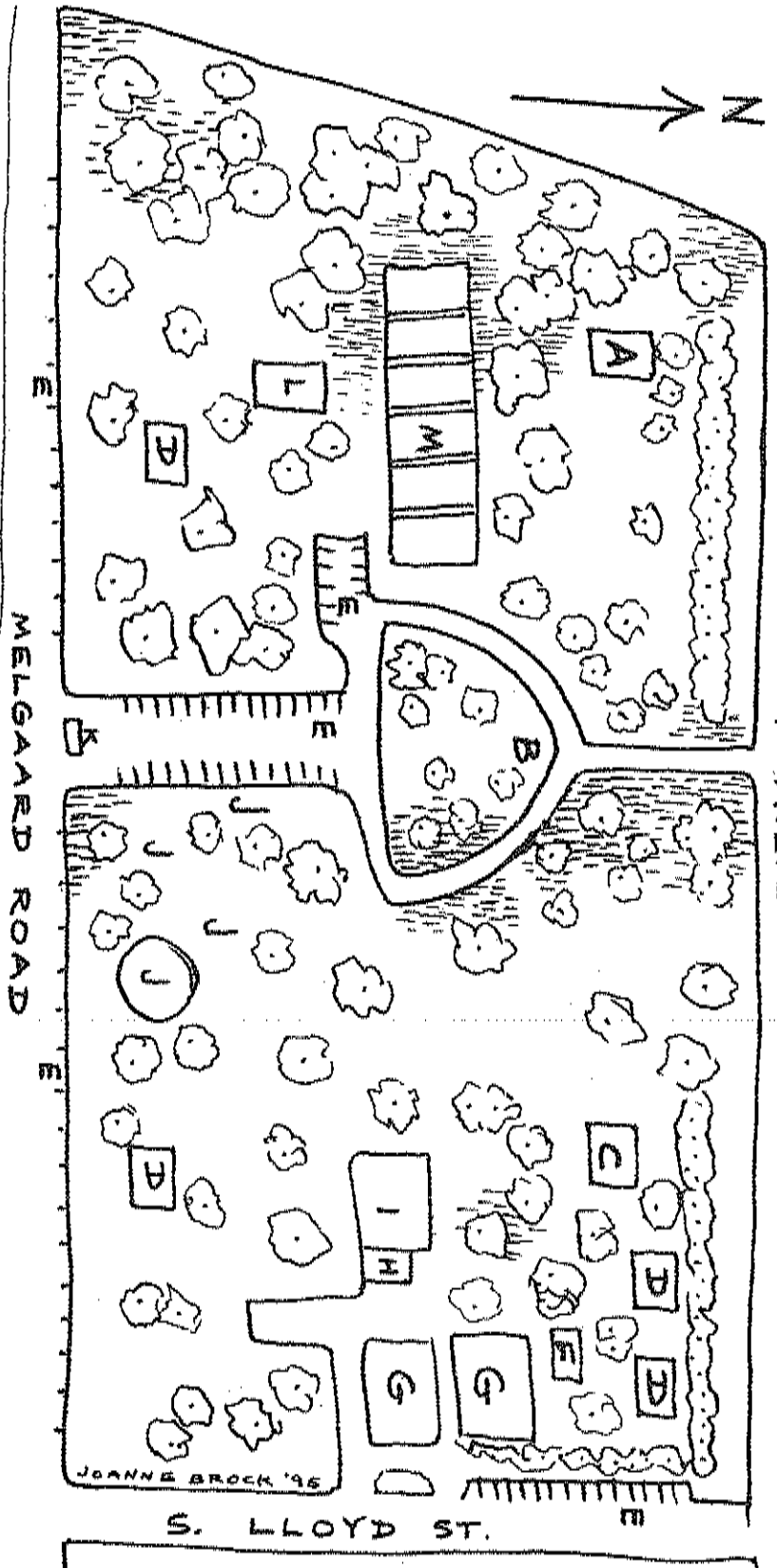
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Dr. Art Buntin, chair of the Aberdeen/ Brown County Landmarks Commission, takes full responsibility for the narrative, interpretations, and format of this booklet along with any inaccuracies that might surface in a work of this magnitude. Readers who have corrections or additional stories and pictures of parks and their patrons please notify the Aberdeen/ Brown County Landmarks Commission, Box 1420, Aberdeen, SD 57402-1420.

MELGAARD PARK 1995

17TH AVE. S.E.



- A. BAND SHELL
- B. ANDREW MELGAARD STATUE
- C. VOLLEYBALL COURT
- D. RENTAL PICNIC SHELTERS
- E. PARKING AREAS
- F. HORSESHOE PITS
- G. CAMPGROUNDS
- H. RESTROOMS, SHOWERS
- I. MAINTENANCE
- J. PLAYGROUND SWINGS, SLIDES
- K. PARK ENTRANCE PLANTER
- L. BASKETBALL COURT
- M. TENNIS COURTS