

BOWRING PARK FOUNDATION INC.

MILESTONES

1811

Most of England was suffering through a period of widespread unemployment and social unrest. It was at this point that Benjamin Bowring, a British businessman, started looking towards Newfoundland to continue and expand his business ventures. He and his descendants created a successful company on both sides of the Atlantic and by the turn of the century the Bowring Brothers had become one of the leading firms in the British Empire.

1847

William Thorburn obtained 50 acres of land under Crown Grant from the Newfoundland Government which he turned into a prosperous farm. Many impressive trees still found on this land today were planted by William Thorburn. This land was later leased to Mr. & Mrs. Neville and named Rae Island Farm.

1911

The Bowring Brothers Firm celebrated their 100th business anniversary. The Bowring Brothers purchased the 50-acre Rae Island Farm with the intention of developing it into 'a place for recreational and leisure pursuits for the citizenry' and presenting it to the community as a gift.

1911

Sir Edgar Bowring, Director of Bowring Brothers, Ltd., commissioned Landscape Architect, Frederick Todd from Montreal to design the Park's layout. Frederick Todd had trained in the offices of Frederick Law Olmstead, the pioneering landscape architect who co-created Central Park in New York City.

Todd's design for Bowring Park involved as little alteration to the land as possible. The general aim was to build trails, footpaths, ponds, etc. in a manner that truly incorporated itself into the land in a non-intrusive and non-destructive manner. This was also true of trees, shrubs and flowering plants which were all planted in a manner that seamlessly integrated into the park's natural biodiversity.

1912

While Frederick Todd was officially in charge of Bowring Park's original blue print and design, it was his employee, fellow landscape architect, Rudolph H.K. Cochius, who was assigned the task of bringing the park's design to reality. Cochius went to work at Bowring Park on May 8th, 1912.

1913

The Bowring Park Lodge was constructed as a residence for Rudolph Cochius and his family. They lived there until their departure in 1917. The succession of park superintendents (Al Canning, Harry Hamlyn, Hubert Noseworthy, and Chris Baird) have all occupied the Lodge at one time or another. It presently serves as offices for the Bowring Park Foundation and for the Bowring Park Foreperson.

1913

Rudolph Cochius designed the first concrete bridge constructed in Newfoundland.

It is the bridge next to the Bowring Park Lodge. This was started in 1913.

1913

The Duck Pond formally known as Boat Lake was completed and rental boats were a popular attraction. The beautiful pond is almost completely man-made and is fed by the Waterford and South Brook Rivers that run through the park.

1914

The Rustic Gazebo was constructed in Bowring Park. The unique aspect of the Gazebo is that its roof is self-supported.

1914

Bowring Park was officially opened on July 15th, 1914.

1914

A Linden Tree was planted by His Royal Highness, Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, the Governor General of Canada, during the park's official opening on July 15th, 1914.

1915

The 'Bungalow' was erected in the centre of the Park.

1916

The Weeping Beech, one of Bowring Park's most popular trees was planted on the Bungalow lawn in 1916. It stands out because it is a grafted tree. The root system for the Weeping Beech could not survive the Newfoundland climate so the top part of the tree was grafted onto the trunk and root system of a Green Beech.

1916

The tragic battle at Beaumont Hamel in France during World War 1 took place on July 1st, 1916.

1918

On February 23rd, 1918 the Florizel sank. Sir Edgar Bowring's stepson, John Shannon Munn, a managing director of the Bowring Brothers Ltd., and his daughter, Betty, were among the 94 passengers who tragically lost their lives in this terrible accident.

1920

Sir Edgar R. Bowring planted a white oak tree to the right of the linden tree.

Grass tennis courts appeared in Bowring Park.

The original pool in Bowring Park was built on the South Brook River. The river was dammed at the Stone Bridge and filled up naturally.

1921

Though its official opening was in 1914, the full implementation and construction of the Park was not completed until 1921 at which point the Bowring Brothers' Ltd. formally handed it over to the City of St. John's. The park was managed on behalf of the city by a committee known as the Bowring Park Committee until 1981. Since then, Bowring Park has been under the City of St. John's Parks Department.

1922

On September 13th, 1922, The Fighting Newfoundlander Monument was unveiled. It was donated by Sir Edgar R. Bowring as a tribute to the undying memory of The Royal Newfoundland Regiment 1914- 1918. Corporal Thomas Pittman posed in 1918 for the Fighting Newfoundlander Monument which was sculpted by Basil Gotto.

1925

The Peter Pan monument was unveiled on Children's Day, August 29th, 1925. It is a memorial to Sir Edgar's granddaughter, Betty Munn, who tragically died at the young age of 4.

1928

The Caribou Monument was unveiled as a tribute to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment on July 1, 1928. The Caribou was the official insignia of the Regiment. This Caribou is a replica of the monument at the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial Park which Rudolph Cochius designed. It was presented to the park by Major William Howe Green, a member of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

1931

The Gnome was unveiled at Bowring Park on August 31st, 1931. It depicts the little Gnome at his writing board just finishing an inscription which reads that the park opened on July 14th, 1914. It should read July 15, 1914. The Gnome is placed on top of a piece of native granite called the Connaught Stone. The stone was once used by Sir Richard Squires, a Prime Minister of Newfoundland, as a gravestone for his two dogs. One of the dogs' names, Humber, is still visible on the stone.

1931

The Stone Bridge was completed on September 1st, 1931. This bridge was constructed by Bowring Park personnel under the watchful eye of the designer, then Superintendent Alfred Canning. It was built in the form of an arch with bent railway tracks inside to give it its shape. According to a park patron, the stones used in the bridge were collected along the South Brook River. The Stone Bridge was restored in November 2010.

1937

A bronze statuette of John Cabot was unveiled on September 15th, 1937 at the Bowring Park Bungalow. This was a gift from Sir Edgar Bowring.

1944

Hard tennis courts appeared. They were also popular in the winter months when the park staff would flood them to create a skating rink.

1946

Six swans were released into the Duck Pond on July 1st, 1946. Harry Hamlyn, Park Superintendent, acquired them from the personal collection of King George VI while on a visit to England.

1947

The Greenhouse was constructed as a gift from Sir Edgar Bowring.

1947

A bronze statuette of Sir Humphrey Gilbert was unveiled on July 20th, 1947 at the Bowring Park Bungalow. This was a gift from Sir Edgar Bowring.

1950S

The City expanded Bowring Park with the acquisition of 150 acres west of the railway.

1960S

In the mid 60's, due to rising concerns regarding water pollution levels in the river, the South Brook Pool was closed by the City of St. John's who deemed it unfit for swimming. The natural pool was replaced in 1968 by a modern swimming pool in the western side of the park. The Pedestrian and Vehicular Bridges were erected as part of the Van Ginkel development plan.

1964

On September 19th, 1964, Princess Mary who was the colonel in chief of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, planted a red oak tree to the left of the Linden Tree that had been planted during the official opening of Bowring Park on July 15th, 1914.

1967

1967 was Canada's 100th Birthday and in celebration the Federal Government established a Civic Beatification and Development Fund for municipalities across Canada. Many of the park's recreational facilities including the outdoor pool and ball field were put in place thanks to this special funding.

1970S

The Fountain Pond site was constructed on land once owned by Sir Richard Squires who was Prime Minister of Newfoundland from 1919-1923 and 1928-1932. During the 1920s, he had a summer residence, 'Cherry Lodge', at the Mid-Stream section of the Park. The Squires' property had been designed by landscape architect, Rudolph Cochius, who had overseen the construction of Bowring Park. 'Cherry Lodge' was demolished in the 1970s but the Squires Well still stands in that area.

1995

The Bowring Park Foundation was established, as envisioned by Derrick Bowring, Honorary Patron of the Bowring Park Foundation, and descendent of Benjamin Bowring, to undertake the restoration and further development of Bowring Park in St. John's.

1995

The Royal Bank Bridge was constructed. This bridge built over Captain's Falls, at the western most area of South Brook River, allowed patrons to walk the perimeter of the park.

1996

The Greenhouse was constructed as a Conservatory, a display showcase for exotic vegetation, through the generous bequest of Doreen Hall to commemorate her lifelong love of nature.

1997

On June 25th, 1997, Queen Elizabeth II visited Bowring Park and during that visit, there was a special ceremony at The Bungalow where Derrick Bowring presented a cheque to the Bowring Park Foundation to create an Endowment Trust Fund for Bowring Park.

1998

On October 4th, 1998, the park provided an area near The Bungalow to commemorate the passing of children whose lives were tragically ended before they began. This area is known as 'The Angel's Grove'.

2000

The St. John's Cabot 500 Amphitheatre in Bowring Park was officially opened.

2005

The Bowring Park Foundation, in partnership with the City of St. John's, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), and the Grand Concourse Authority, commissioned a study of Bowring Park. This Master Plan is used as a guide for the City's and Foundation's work in the park for the next fourteen years.

2008

The Fountain Pond site was restored and the fountain is now called the Husky Energy Fountain.

2009

The Beaumont Hamel Replica Plaques, were unveiled next to the Caribou Monument on July 1, 2009. These plaques bear the names of 820 fallen members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the Royal Navy Reserve, and the Mercantile Marine, who have no known resting place.

2009

Fully Accessible Playground & Splash Pad were opened.

2010

The 97 year- old Linden Tree planted at Bowring Park's official opening in 1914 was destroyed by Hurricane Igor on September 21st , 2010.

2014

Bowring Park turns 100. Bowring Park Foundation holds year-round Centennial Celebrations.

2015

Bowring Park's new Entrance Sign is installed. It is the Bowring Park Foundation's Legacy Gift for Bowring Park's Centenary

2016

A storyboard about The Fighting Newfoundlander Statue was unveiled in a World War 1 Commemorative Ceremony in Bowring Park on June 2, 2016 by The Honourable Frank Fagan, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador. The family of the soldier who posed for the statue, Corporal Thomas Pittman, were in attendance at this event.

2016

29 solar lights were installed throughout the park as well as floodlights on two of the WWI monuments, The Caribou and The Beaumont Hamel Replica Plaques as part of "Lighting the Way", Bowring Park Foundation's WWI Commemoration Project.

2017

Bowring Park Pool House was officially opened.

2017

Two interpretation panels, Midstream Section of Bowring Park and The Growth of a Park, were installed. These were gifts from the Bowring Park Foundation.

2018

Bowring Park Pool turned 50. At the City's Celebration Ceremony, the Bowring Park Foundation presented three canvas panels of photos related to swimming in the park. These are displayed in the Pool House.

2019

With the completion of the 2005 Bowring Park Master Plan, there was an interest in seeking information from the public on "what comes next". St. John's & Bowring Park Foundation held Public Engagements.

2019

On July 10, 2019, there was a Naming & Dedication Ceremony to name the Park's Pool House for Susan Harvey Patten and to dedicate the Park's Splash Pad to Nevaeh Denine.

2019

A storyboard about the much beloved Peter Pan Statue was installed in the park. This was a gift from the Bowring park Foundation.

2020

Bowring Park Foundation's 25th Anniversary. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, a Legacy Project, an interpretation panel about The Origins of Bowring Park, will be unveiled at a later date.