

History of Bowring Park



Researcher: Gil Shalev (2009)
Design: Stephanie Dunn (2016)

Table of Contents

GENERAL HISTORICAL FACTS

The Land	3
The Design	5
Development	7

PARK FEATURES AND FACILITIES

Trees/Plants/Flowers	9
The Conservatory	10
Rivers/Streams/Ponds	11
Duck Pond	12
Slate Quarry	14
Shadow Pools	14
Fountain Pond	15
The Fighting Newfoundlander	16
The Caribou	17
Peter Pan	18
The Lodge	20
The Bungalow	21
Angels' Grove	22
The Bell	22
Horse Trough	23
Bridges	23
Fences & Benches	25

SPORT/LEISURELY FACILITIES

Old Swimming Pool	26
Tennis Court	27
Skate Park	27
Swimming Pool	27
Splash Pad	27
Playground	27
Bob Whelan Field	28
Sloping Field	28
Cabot Theatre	29

AERIAL MAPS	30
--------------------	----

REFERENCES/SOURCE	31
--------------------------	----

THE LAND



Archived photo

Rudolf Cochius was the original landscape architect who worked in the park for 5 years from 1912-1917.

The original area which was later to become Bowring Park, was a 50 acre piece of land obtained from the Newfoundland Government in 1847 by William Thorburn who, had turned it into a successful farmland. The Crown Grant Land was later leased to the Neville family who formally named the property Rae Island Farm. The farm's perimeter was largely encompassed by two main bodies of water the Waterford River and Southbrook River giving the

impression of a small island.

In 1911, The Bowring Brothers — an established and successful business, Newfoundland trade and shipping firm in Newfoundland and the UK — commemorated their 100th business anniversary in Newfoundland by offering the city of St. John's a recreational park as a token of appreciation to the local community. The firm purchased Rae Island Farm from the Neville family as the land on

which the park was to be built. The park's original design and construction, carried out by Frederick Todd and Rudolf H. Cochius, commenced the following year. The Park was officially declared open on July 15, 1914 by His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught who remarked, "May it ever be a source of pleasure and enjoyment to the citizens of St. John's and to Newfoundland in general."

It is believed that in

1583, while exploring Newfoundland, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, was shown by settlers an area which was locally referred to as 'The Garden. It was described as an untouched, uncultivated luscious green area with several rivers and streams running around it. While historians have looked at written evidence from Sir Gilbert's actual expedition which extols the beauty and

majesty of this area, the exact location of land they explored cannot be verified. It has however been suggested over the years that, The Garden was at least part of what is present day Bowring Park. Even if this has not been substantiated, the mere possibility that this was indeed the park makes the descriptions offered by Gilbert and his men quite significant.¹

“May it ever be a source of pleasure and enjoyment to the citizens of St. John's and to Newfoundland in general.

His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught



Archived photo

Sir Edgar Bowring and the Duke of Connaught July 15th, 1914.

¹ Historians however have suggested that there is no evidence to support this.

THE DESIGN

To design the Park's layout and supervise its construction, Sir Edgar Bowring had commissioned world renowned Landscape Architect, Frederick Todd from Montreal. Todd previously worked for the Frederick Law Olmstead firm – one of the most noted and reputable landscape architecture firms in North America. Though it is said that Todd was officially in charge of the project, it was fellow landscape architect, Rudolf H. Cochius who was responsible for bringing the park's design to light. Though historically, there has been some debate regarding who specifically was to be credited for the park's actual design² and layout, most have concluded that it was Cochius' handiwork and masterful creativity that spawned the atmosphere and design of the park. Cochius lived and worked in the park from May 1912 - March, 1917, and was in charge of all technical aspects of the parks construction. (Hiscock, 2008/09) His vision and artistry were and, still are, considered to be the heart and soul of the park.

Bowring had purchased Rae Island Farm due to

COCHIUS, RUDOLF HOGO KAREL (1880- ?). Born Amhe, Holland. Educated K. V. M. University, Amsterdam; Hohere Fachschule, Barmen, Germany. During his career as a landscape architect Cochius was associated with several firms in Holland, Switzerland and Canada. From 1912 to 1917 he worked as the landscape artist for Bowring Park *qv* and from 1922 to 1925 he landscaped Newfoundland's five battlefield parks (Beaumont Hamel *qv*, Monchy-le-Preux, Guedecourt, Masnieres and Courtrai). In 1925 he was appointed to a position with the Newfoundland Highroads Commission and in 1928 he was appointed a member of the St. John's Town Planning Commission. *Who's Who in and from Newfoundland* (1927; 1930?). ELGM



Rudolf H.K. Cochius

its natural beauty and lush scenic landscape. It was their hope that the Park's construction would not only preserve and maintain the park's aesthetic value but that its very design would also adapt to the landscape itself. This sentiment was clearly echoed in Cochius' design of the Park where the landscape architecture approach was, one of working with the terrain and not against it; an approach that is evident in many of his other landscape designs. (Versteeg / Hiscock 08/09) Unlike certain parks, where the existing landscape could be freely moulded and altered to the architects

designs, it was evident that Cochius' design conformed to and revolved around the present land topography. The park's design 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 homogeneous, 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.

Though its official opening was in 1914, the

² Landscape Architect Ed Versteeg, who has studied Cochius' work and the creation of the park, insists there is no reason to suppose that anyone other than Fredrick Todd was in charge of the park's original blue print and design. Cochius was in charge of overseeing all construction and subsequent Landscape design and was under his domain that the park by and by came to life, but the design itself belonged to Todd. This is of great importance seeing that while Cochius name is so well engrained into the parks historical essence – and deservedly so – Todd has become a rather hidden and unknown figure.



Rudolf Cochius

The Duck Pond.

full implementation and construction of the Park was not completed until 1921 at which point the Bowrings formally handed it over to the City of St. John's. It has been under municipal government supervision ever since. Bowring Park, as the only large open space of its kind in NL, was a monumental success from the very beginning, during the summers seeing thousands of visitors daily. For many decades, it has been a place for relaxation, scenic walks, swimming, boating on the pond, picnics and many other cultural and recreational activities. The ensuing decades following the park's opening, (1914-1940's), saw tremendous

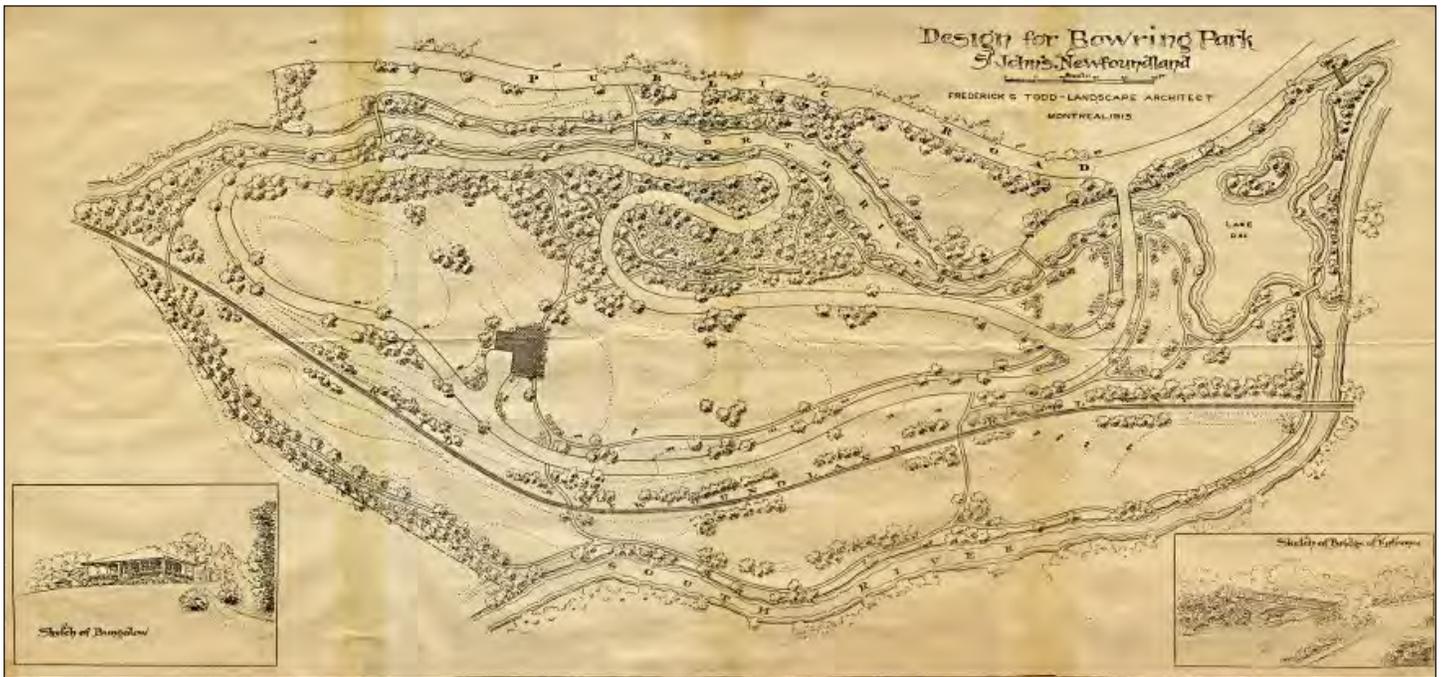
Harry Hamlyn, Park superintendent, 1947

“...The aim of the donors was to preserve these gifts and beauties of nature as completely as possible and to this end the removal of trees was carried out only in conformity with the overall design of providing inviting foot paths... An expert job of horticulture enhanced the forest appeal of the park and other varieties of trees were planted here and there. Every effort was expanded to preserve Nature's handiwork and to avoid the creation of just another series of botanical gardens. Floral displays have, however, been skilfully blended into the wood-land scene...” [Hamlyn, PGP, pg2]

development within the park, illustrated by continuous introduction of new plant life on park grounds, the development and maintenance of trails and footpaths, and the erection of several statues, monuments, bridges and other attractions. (See Next Section for Details) Much of the natural vegetative and greenery development

of the park is owed greatly to Cochius' botanical vision which was passed to and adopted by his successors; park supervisors Alfred Canning (1917) and Harry Hamlyn (1941). Though handed to the St. John's Municipality, the Bowrings continuously contributed to the park's development both financially and culturally.

DEVELOPMENT



Original Design for Bowring Park by Frederick Todd.

During the 50's much concern arose regarding the increased use of the park and the limited space provided for recreational, sports, cultural and group activities. This was also accompanied by ever increasing maintenance costs. According to Landscape Architect G. Van Ginkel, it was a City Clerk report in 1956 that had driven the Municipal government to purchase adjacent estates, farmlands, etc.³ Since its opening, the original 50 acre land has been greatly expanded and now covers an area of approximately 200 acres. The city had then commissioned the Van Ginkel Landscape Architecture firm to develop a plan for the new area of the park. The tone of the

report strongly expressed the dire need to develop the new area in order to maintain the rustic, tranquil feel that Cochius had created.

The document commonly referred to as the Van Ginkel Master Plan, contained comprehensive design and layout schematics as well as a plethora of suggestions for future development, such as recreational and sport facilities, maintenance, transportation, etc. Over the years different elements of the Plan have been implemented, depending on financial availability and other concerns; the usefulness and/or desirability of many parts of the plan have been debated by City Officials. Since then, there have been several other Master Plan propos-

als. — ex; Richard Seypka plan 1982.

The boundary division between the original and new areas is marked by a vehicle bridge overlooking the old railway tracks.⁴ The main recreational facilities found in the new area; the ball park, swimming pool and playground areas were built during the 1960's mainly by Federal grant money given for the 'beautification' of municipalities across Canada, to celebrate Canada's 100th birthday. The extended area on which these facilities were built was land once owned by former Newfoundland Prime Minister Richard Squires'. **[SEE END OF DOCUMENT FOR MAP]**

³ Much of the acquired surrounding land was privately owned by several families: McNab's, The Obrien's, Philip Stamp and James Coughlan, and Sir Richard Squires

⁴ The construction of this bridge was suggested by the Van Ginkel report.

Much of the Park's more recent development has come from the Bowring Park Foundation; A charitable foundation established in 1995 to assist the City of St. John's in the restoration, preservation and future development of Bowring Park. A goal of the Foundation is to ensure the development of a "public garden for quiet family enjoyment" as envisioned by its Honorary Patron, Derrick Bowring. The Bowring Park Foundation has had tremendous success working with the City of St. John's, and other organizations on restoration and development projects within the park.

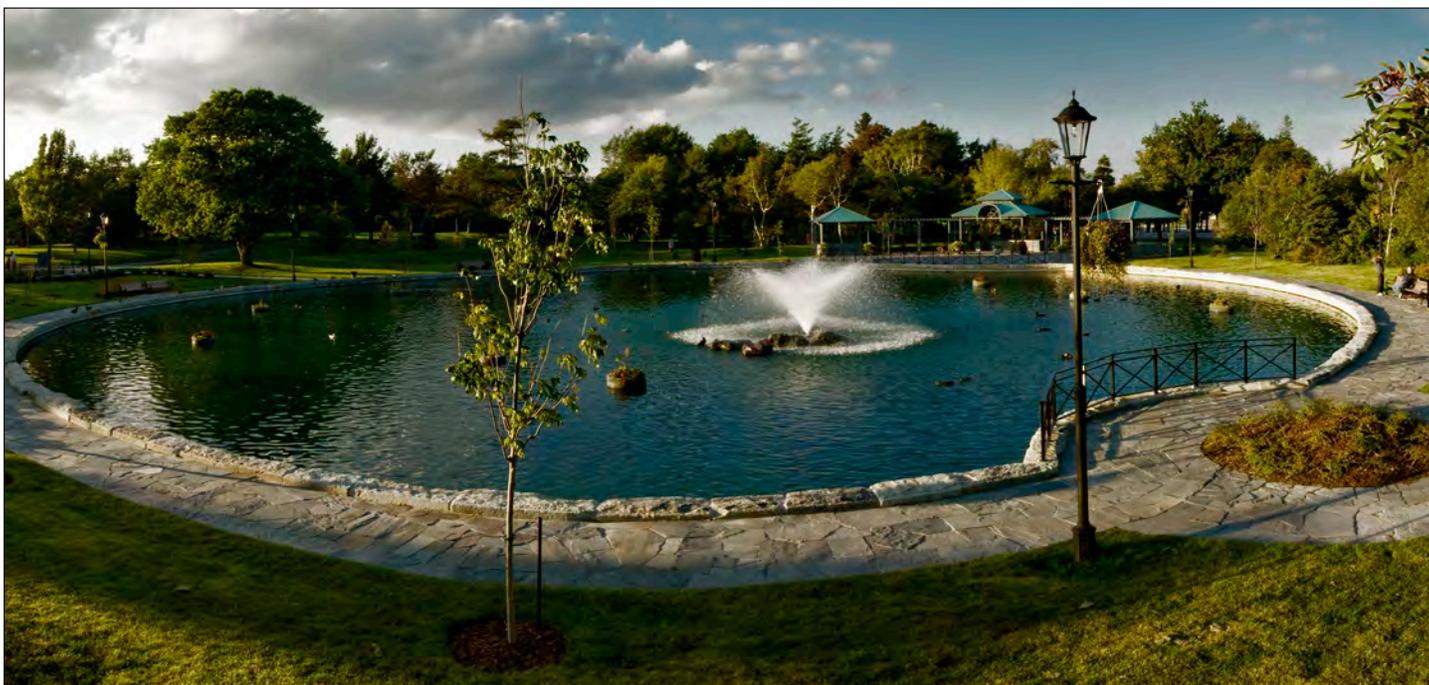
The Foundation strives to engage in park

From The Van Ginkel Report....

In the past half century the park has served the community well. But in recent years the demands made upon it have been far too great. Since it is the only park of any magnitude in the region, growth in population and automobile travel have greatly increased its use. On a fine summer Sunday there may be as many as 10,000 people visiting the park. This is hardly conducive to the tranquil enjoyment of the landscape. Furthermore, since so few public open spaces exist, Bowring Park had to absorb sports and group activities for which it was not originally designed.....The greater intensity of use and the changing activities have rendered Bowring Park quite inadequate as the major recreation facility of the St. John's area. It has lost its original character of quiet and repose; and over intensive use resulted in high maintenance costs.In 1958 Van Ginkel Associates was commissioned by the City of St. John's to design the new park and to outline a master plan for its development.

development projects in such a manner that always takes the original layout, design and atmosphere of the park as the highest priority. Projects include: upgrading and expanding the walkway systems, bridges, restoration of sculptures and monuments, as well

as the addition of programs and activities that can be enjoyed by all age groups. They have successfully brought to light many successful social and private events, activities, festivals, shows, etc.



Fountain Pond on a summer's day.

Doug Allen

TREES/PLANTS/FLOWERS

Historian Paul O'Neil dedicates a chapter of his classical textbook of St. John's History [The Oldest City] to the city's 'green spaces.' He notes that the late 19th century featured a growing demand for public parks in the city. Though St. John's was 400 years old, there were virtually no public open-space parks available for leisure and enjoyment. This was first remedied by Lord Bannerman, and the creation of Bannerman Park and was followed almost immediately by Victoria Park. Though these were much welcome additions to the city, it is was not until Bowring Park that the city saw a large traditional Victorian style park, with ponds, long walking trails, fields, rivers, streams, and a slew of trees, plants, shrubs, flowers etc.

The extremely fertile land purchased by the Bowrings, was teeming with old and new tree growth much of which was planted by W. Thornburn. Cochius and his superintendent successors, Canning and Hamlyn, expressed great appreciation of the botanical potential of the land that was key to expanding the Parks diversity. Since its early days, Bow-



Stephanie Dunn

The Weeping Beech tree is comprised of a Weeping Willow and a Beech Tree.

ring Park has continuously seen new flora introduced, while preserving and maintaining the old growth.⁵ The park is host to many fascinating and unique shrubs, flowering plants and trees. Of special historical note; Lime/Linden tree planted by Duke of Connaught, 1914 at park's inaugural opening; White Oak planted by Sir Edgar Bowring, 1920; Purple Beech, planted by Governor General Viscount Alexander, 1949; Red Oak, planted by Princess Mary, 1964; English Oak, planted by Prince Edward 1988.

The natural biodiversity within the park has been a point of attraction for the academic/non-academic.

Trees/Shrubs/Flowers

Bowring Park

(From Archives via Park Foundation.
Original Source Unknown)

- Black Spruce – 1915
- White Spruce – 1913
- Norway Spruce – 1916
- Snowball Tree – 1916
- Snowberry – 1915
- Spiraea Aruncus – 1930
- Syringa – 1917
- English Yew – 1916
- White Pine – 1913
- Balsam Poplar – 1913
- Highbush Cranberry – 1915
- Horse Chestnut – 1914
- Dogwood – 1916
- Copper Beech – 1915
- Weeping Beech – 1916
- European Larch – 1915
- Lime / Linden Tree – 1915
- Norway Maple – 1918
- Tulips – 1946

THE CONSERVATORY

The original park Greenhouse was built behind the park Lodge in 1947 and was a gift from Sir Edgar Bowring. In 1996 with support from a significant donation by Mrs. Doreen Hall, the

greenhouse was converted to a Conservatory, though some still refer to it as a greenhouse or an ornamental green house. It holds a variety of rare and exotic plants and shrubs from many parts of the

world such as Pony Tail Palm, Sansevieria Trifasciata, bromeliads, Birds of Paradise and others. The site has also been host for several botanical traveling exhibits and a butterfly exhibit.



Stephanie Dunn

The outside of the Conservatory.



Stephanie Dunn

An inside look at the Conservatory.

RIVERS/STREAMS/PONDS

The park is enclosed by two serene and beautiful rivers; the Waterford River on the north side, along several of the park's main entrances on Waterford Bridge Road, and the South Brook River to the southern edge of the park north of Pitts Memorial Drive and Bay Bulls Rd. The Waterford River begins in the Town of Paradise and flows southeastwards towards the St. John's harbour via Bowring Park where it meets South Brook River. South Brook River begins just south of the city of Mount Pearl flowing southeastwards towards the Waterford valley. The two rivers converge at the Duck Pond. On both ends of the park the rivers are accompanied by a network of scenic trails, footpaths, biking paths, bridges. The lower end of South Brook River was the location of the 'original' park swimming pool. For over 40 years, the pool was one of the main family attractions in St. Johns, offering a bathing location in a serene, lush green environment and was one of a kind in the city area. It was a place for gathering, socializing, sports activities, relaxation, picnics. In the mid 60's, due to rising



Stephanie Dunn

Cobble Stone Bridge has a nickname of "Lovers Bridge." An old tale used to say "If you kiss your significant other on this bridge you will marry."

concerns regarding water pollution levels in the river, the pool was closed by the City of St. John's who deemed it unfit for swimming. Remnants of the pool wall can still be seen upstream from the pink granite stone bridge. The natural pool was, shortly after, replaced by a modern swimming pool in the western side of the park. Though the modern pool is a very popular summer attraction for family leisure activities, for many people in St. John's the closing of the old pool had marked a dramatic shift in how the city as a whole viewed the

tional use of the park. (Kavanagh, 2008)

Much of the oral tradition depicting people's stories, tales and anecdotes about the park in the 'old' days, is anchored around the social and cultural significance of visiting the pool area. It is evident that while the park was still seen as a beautiful place to visit and a source of relaxation, a certain element of the park's allure – especially for family outings – had changed for people. Some claim that the number of visitors during summers in the post 60's era had greatly decreased because of this loss.

DUCK POND/BOAT LAKE/THE SWAN



Stephanie Dunn

Dusk at the Peter Pan Statue.

One of the Park's prominent attractions is the Duck Pond, originally called Boat Lake. The beautiful pond is almost completely man-made and is fed by the Waterford and South Brook River. It was designed by Cochius and completed in June, 1913. The pond, as its original name suggests, was created primarily as a place for leisurely boating trips. At the centre of the pond was a small island which has over the years been redesigned. After bathing in the river pool, boating around the island in the pond was one of the most popular activities in the park for many decades. The island was also home to many ducks, geese and other fowl. No longer a boating centre,

the modern day pond has seen many renovations and expansions over the years, with introduction of more wildlife, beautiful surrounding walking trails, seating benches, statues.

The pond has also become home to what is now the park's symbol – the Royal Swans; six white swans were acquired by Superintendent H. Hamlyn and released into the pond in the summer of 1946. The majestic, aesthetic beauty of these swans has been a source of great excitement for young and old alike. At the south west end of the park is a beautiful man-made stone step-platform that gives way to Sir George Frampton's famous Peter Pan Statue. [See Next Section on Mon-

uments/Statues] The Duck Pond is a central hub and meeting spot for many family and group gatherings and activities.

**Basil Kavanagh,
in his beautiful
description of the
pond says:**

“Surrounded by glowing masses of colour provided by various backgrounds of pine, spruce and fir amid the ornamental decoration of full-blooming flowers, the boat-lake sets a scene of exquisite perfection and deep inner contentment... for the enthusiast that like to take part or those who happen to stroll by, the charisma of the boat-lake is overpowering.”



Boat Pond - 1946



The Duck Pond - 2016

SLATE QUARRY

Another very attractive area is a beautiful serene and hidden spot known as the Slate Quarry. It is a natural formation and arrangement of old flat stones that has created a magnificent unique alcove-like area. This has historically been known as the 'secret hideaway' by locals frequenting the park. The area is of significant historical value not only for its natural beauty. It is believed that Cochius himself spent a lot of time in this area, for relaxation and reflection and it has been suggested that, possibly, many of his brilliant and creative ideas that further contributed to the landscape design, were conceived during his quiet time in this area.

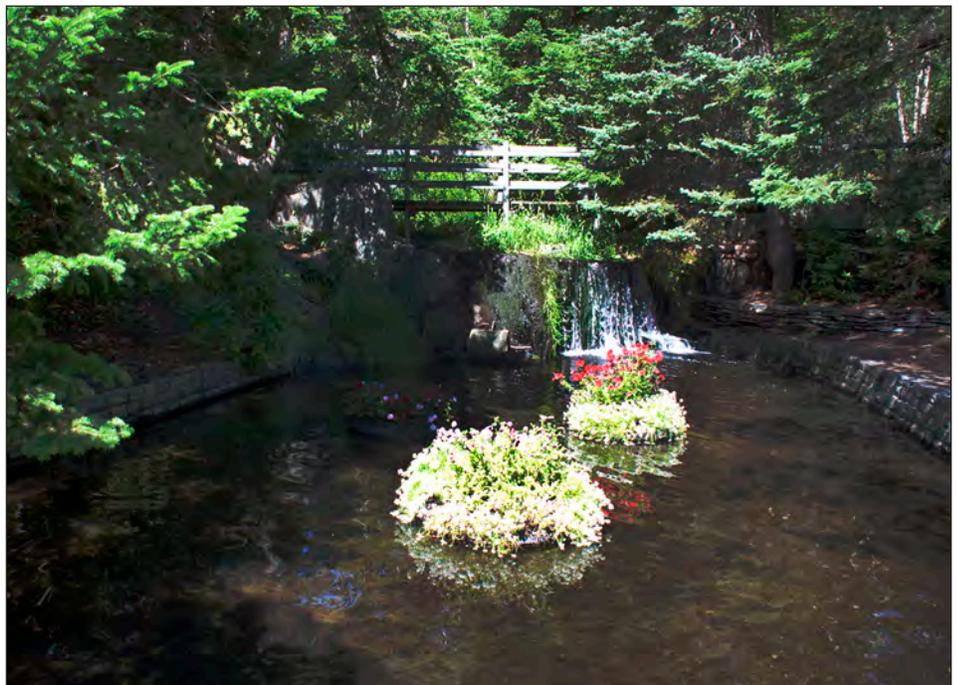


Stephanie Dunn

The Slate Quarry where Cochius spent time reflecting.

SHADOW POOLS

Another expression of Cochius' artistic landscaping genius is evident in the chain of crystal clear pools evident as one heads eastwards on the path from the Caribou Statue. The chain of pools commence further upstream by the vehicular path. The design and depth of the pools give a very pronounced light reflection, visible even when skies are overcast. The pools are also of great environmental importance since they are a spawning ground for local Brown Trout and home to many of the Park's ducks.



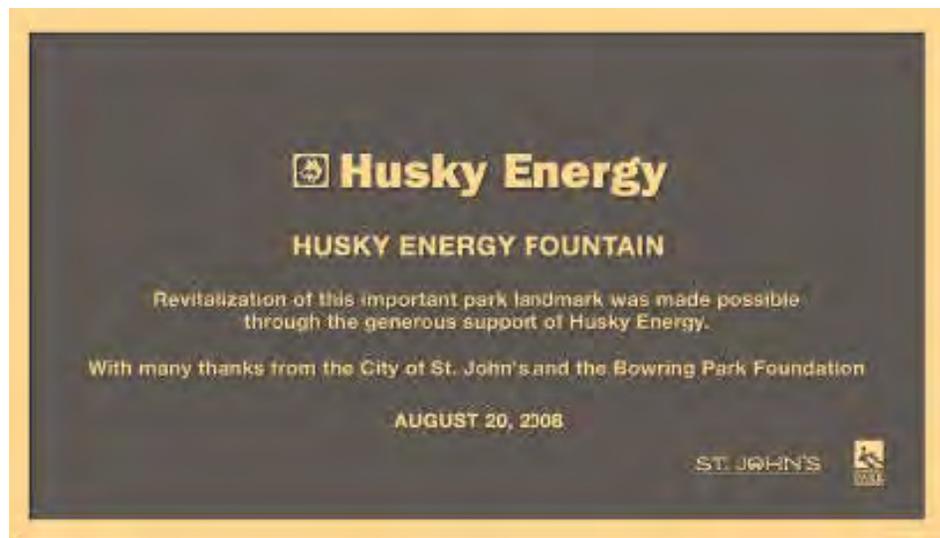
Stephanie Dunn

Floating flower pots in the Shadow Pool.

FOUNTAIN POND

Crossing the vehicular bridge and heading southwest past the modern swimming pool, one arrives at a beautiful Fountain Pond, surrounded by benches and a beautiful walking trail. The pond, man-made was originally a fish pond. In the 70's the pond was encircled with beautiful stone slabs and a gorgeous fountain originating from the St. John's Basilica during church renovations. The entire pond area has undergone major remodelling and reconstruction as part of a tremendous revitalizing project undertaken by the Bowring Park Foundation, Husky Energy and the City of St. John's. Husky Energy's contribution marks the most significant corporate donation to the Bowring Park Foundation.

The reconstruction project was completed in the summer of 2008 and the Pond area was reopened on



August 20th. The project was successful not only in terms of the professional and polished look of the actual reconstruction but also showcased both the commitment of the BPF towards park development as well as the commitment of the City and Corporate/Business sector to promoting the vision of the Foundation and the Bowring Family. To reduce water consumption, improve water quality and prevent stagnant water, a simple bio-retention system was installed at the Fountain Pond.

It is a terrestrial-based water quality control practice that uses the properties of nearby plants, microbes and soil for the removal of water pollutants. Water is drawn from the pond and distributed into a rock sump (or embankment) which slopes towards a heavily planted area. The plant material will bind nutrients and pollutants which not only contributes to the growth of the plants but naturally filters the water before it is redirected back into the fountain pond. (Eales)

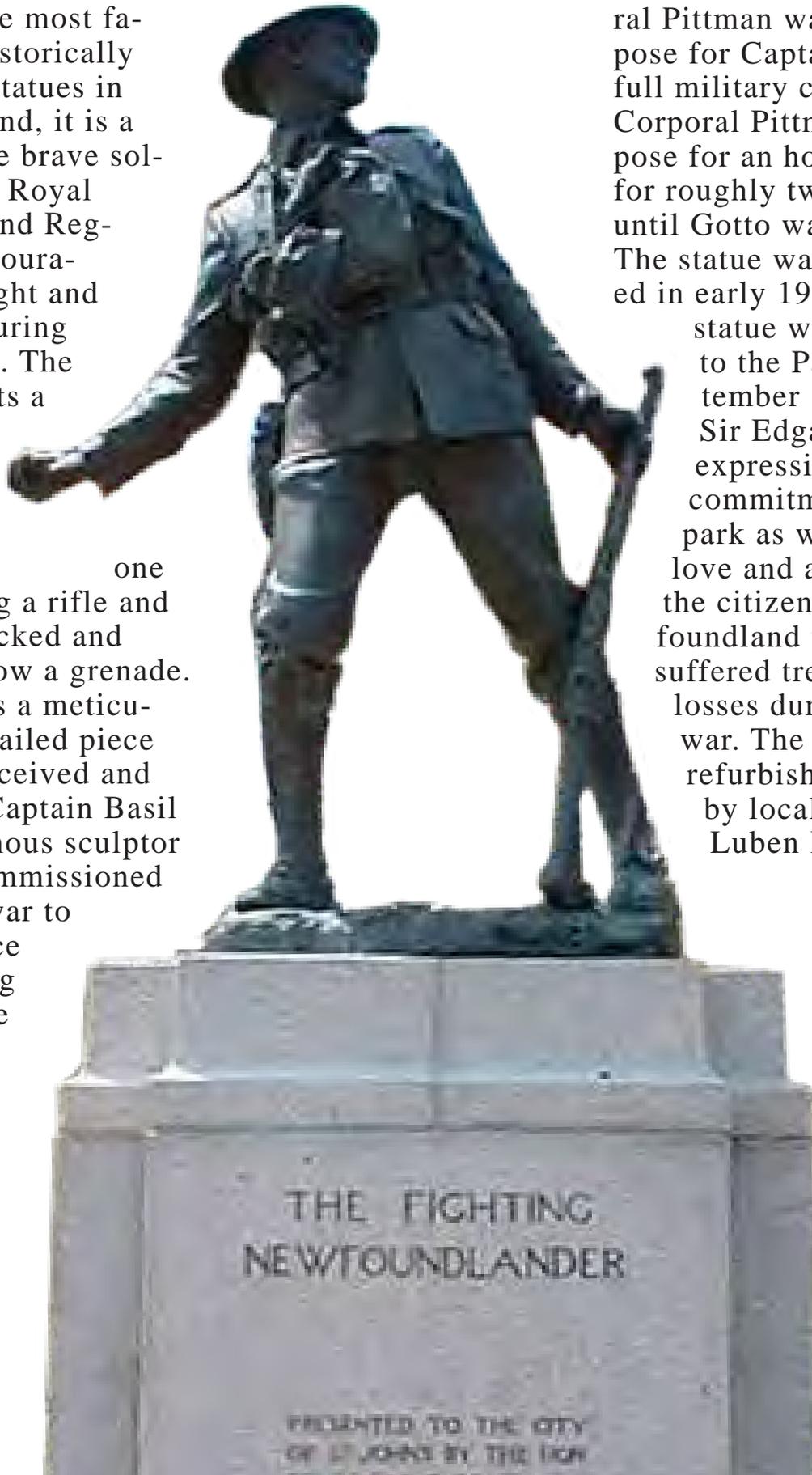


Doug Allen

A wide angle shot of the Fountain Pond.

THE FIGHTING NEWFOUNDLANDER

One of the most famous and historically significant statues in Newfoundland, it is a tribute to the brave soldiers of The Royal Newfoundland Regiment who courageously fought and sacrificed during World War I. The statue depicts a life-like scene of a soldier during battle, with one hand holding a rifle and the other cocked and ready to throw a grenade. The statue is a meticulous and detailed piece of work conceived and created by Captain Basil Gotto, a famous sculptor who was commissioned during the war to create a piece of a 'fighting soldier'. The statue was posed for by Corporal Thomas Pittman of Fortune Bay, NL. In 1918, while stationed in Hazley Down Camp, England, Corpo-



ral Pittman was asked to pose for Captain Gotto in full military combat gear. Corporal Pittman would pose for an hour each day for roughly two months until Gotto was finished. The statue was completed in early 1919. The statue was donated to the Park in September 1922, by Sir Edgar Bowring, expressing both his commitment to the park as well as his love and affection to the citizens of Newfoundland who had suffered tremendous losses during the war. The statue was refurbished in 2007 by local sculptor Luben Boykov.

THE CARIBOU



Submitted photo

The Caribou.

A further tribute to The Royal Newfoundland Regiment is the bronze statue of a woodland Caribou. Another masterful creation by Captain Basil Gotto, the statue was presented to the park in 1928 as a gift from Major William Howe Green, who had served with the Newfoundland Regiment during WWI. A replica of the original located at Beaumont Hamel, France, the statue's erection and location within the park – just east of the Bungalow - was supervised by park architect R. Cochius. Five other such statues can be found in France and Belgium. The Newfoundland Regiment had chosen the caribou as its official emblem during the war. The original life-size bronze caribou in Beaumont Hamel overlooks

the place where hundreds of Newfoundland men lost their life. The Royal Newfoundland regiment was the only regiment in the British Army to receive the 'Royal' prefix in WW1. Days after the Battle on the Somme, the Corps Com-mander told his soldiers that they were "better than the best" which has remained the Regiment's motto. There are 5 other Caribous – one at each battlefield site in Europe (Gallipoli, Beaumont Hamel, Gueudecourt, Monchy-le-Preux, Masnières and Courtrai). When the caribou was unveiled in Bowring Park it was specified that this was not to be considered a memorial like the ones in Europe, but a tribute to the regiment's loyalty and spirit of comradeship. (Eales) Beaumont

Hamel Memorial Replica Plaques were unveiled on Memorial Day and Canada Day, July 1st 2009. They are exact replicas of the plaques in Beaumont Hamel Park in France. The Beaumont Hamel Park opened in 1925 and is the largest Newfoundland memorial site in Europe. When the Battle of the Somme began on July 1st, 1916 at 7:30am, the Newfoundlanders were the only unit from outside the British Isles. They crouched in their trenches near the little town of Beaumont Hamel – awaiting their orders. The call came at 9:15am and 801 young Newfoundlanders headed out into enemy machine gun fire. It was over in 30 minutes. 68 men answered roll call the next morning. The memorial effort began soon after the war ended in 1918. Cochius' vision made the Beaumont Hamel Park in France the only place on the Somme where the trenches and battlefield were preserved. On these plaques there are 820 names of Newfoundland soldiers, seamen and sailors who died in WW1 and have no known graves. This is a significant site for Newfoundland and Labrador – finally, these men can be commemorated on their native soil. (Eales)

PETER PAN

Arguably the most celebrated, loved and visited landmark of Bowring Park is the Peter Pan statue located at the southwestern side of the Duck Pond. The playful yet striking character of this statue is the work of renowned sculptor Sir George Frampton. Frampton was commissioned by Sir Edgar Bowring to create a statue that embodied the spirit and playfulness of childhood. The statue was unveiled during a special “children’s day” event in the park, August 29, 1925. It is a memorial to Sir Edgar’s granddaughter, Betty Munn, who tragically died at the young age of 4. Betty and her father, John Munn – one of the directors of the Bowring Brothers – were aboard the SS Florizel ship bound to Halifax, which set sail on Feb 23, 1918. On the very first night of its voyage, the Florizel was struck by a violent storm that forced the ship to crash against rocks off the coast of Capahayden. Betty and her father were among the 94 passengers who tragically lost their lives in this terrible accident. Though its inception was based on a memorial to this sombre and tragic event, the impetus behind the statue’s presence in the park was a joyous cel-



Archived Photo

The sculpter George Frampton unveils the Peter Pan statue August 29, 1925.

bration of childhood. The statue, depicting a young Peter Pan playing his flute while fairies and animals joyfully climb towards him, was unveiled in front of approximately 3000 eager and happy children and has been a source of joy for children

ever since. Frampton, at the inaugural ceremony had expressed his own sentiment towards the children for whom the statue was for. In explaining the theme of the statues he noted that “... the animals and fairies on the statue are listening

to the pipes of Pan, one of the mice is completing his toilet before going up to listen to the music, (and) the squirrel is discussing political matters with two of the fairies. Though several similar statues of Peter Pan exist around the world, the most notable one in Kensington

Garden, Frampton himself has commented that the special character of the park and its compatibility with the spirit of the literary figure of Peter Pan makes this statue very unique. The statue was refurbished in 2007. An annual summer outing – The Peter Pan Festival –

began in August 29, 2000 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Sir. Edgar’s wonderful gift to the park. Though no longer active, the festival was quite successful for several years, with food vendors, musical and theatrical performances and other family summer activities.



Archived photo

Harry Hamlyn who was a superintendent of the park pointing out that Peter Pan’s flute is missing.



Stephanie Dunn

Present day photo of the Peter Pan Statue.

THE LODGE

At the eastern entrance of the park, adjacent to the concrete bridge, is the Bowring Park Lodge. The Lodge was originally erected as the residence for park landscape designer Rudolf Cochius. Cochius and his family had lived there from 1913 until his departure in 1917. It has since been either a part-time or full-time home for ensuing superintendents after Cochius,

(Al Canning, H. Hammlin etc.). Though the Lodge has been remodelled and renovated over the years it has maintained its original location and rustic feel. At present the Lodge no longer serves as a home for superintendents but is rather the main office for the Bowring Park Foundation as well as some of the members of the City of St. John's Parks Services.



Stephanie Dunn

The Bowring Park Lodge was originally Rudolf Cochius' home when he worked here overseeing the construction on the park.

THE BUNGALOW



Stephanie Dunn

The Bungalow is now leased to Red Oak Catering.

Another main attraction, found right at the heart of the park is a large bungalow-style house, which is indeed as old as the park itself — constructed during 1913-1915. It was built both to serve as a meeting-gathering place for park patrons and other members of park authority, as well as a location offering several amenities for the public, such as refreshments, snacks. Many of the trees on the edges of the Bungalow Lawn have been planted over the years by royal visitors and other important public figures. The serene atmosphere of the landscape and the rustic feel of the bungalow itself, have made this location a local St. John's favourite, for weddings, ceremonies,



Archived photo

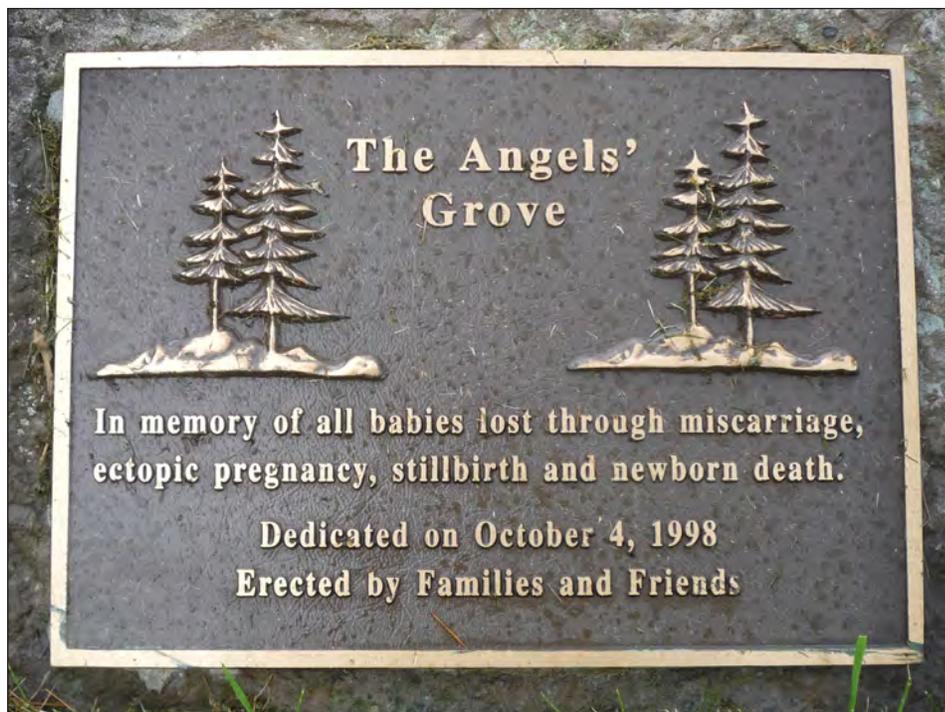
The Bungalow in 1916.

etc. The management of services offered at the bungalow have exchanged hands several times over the years – since 1999, food and catering services have been taken over by Red Oak Catering who offer elegant catering services to weddings and other events and ceremonies. The wide-open lawns are

also a great place for reading and sunbathing. On the lawn grounds is a beautiful rustic Sundial surrounded by colourful flowers. The sundial was donated by Sir. Edgar Bowring. During sunny days with unobstructed skies the dial is quite accurate and draws many curious visitors.

ANGELS' GROVE

Adjacent to the Bungalow Parking lot, is a grove of trees overlooking the Waterford Hospital. As displayed on the memorial plaque, this area called the Angels' Grove is dedicated to all babies lost through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth and newborn death. In the same location, there are 2 old posts standing in the ground. These were used to support a net for racquet games and were erected before the Angel's grove was planted. This area used to be locally known as Flag Pole Hill – the City used to fly 3 flags – Canada, Newfoundland and the City of St. John's. They could be seen from a distance driving towards the



Stephanie Dunn

Angel Grove is a beautiful place where many sit and take in the ambience.

park. The City removed the flag pole because it was deteriorating and was a hassle

to maintain – they had to get a fire truck in to paint it! (Eales)

THE BELL

The bell mounted on a large boulder in the shade of a tree behind the Conservatory used to be rung by the Park Superintendent to tell patrons that the park was closing at 10pm. It used to be up high in a tower and a rope was pulled to make it ring. In 1998 the Park Foreperson, Melanie McLeod, had it removed from the basement under the lodge and mounted in its present location. There's still a bit



Stephanie Dunn

Still one of the most prominent sounds of the park.

of uncertainty about where the bell originally came from – some believe it's

from a ship and others believe it might be from the old railway. (Eales)

HORSE TROUGH

The old red horse trough on the north side of the paved road leading up to the Bungalow is the last of its kind. It was originally located at the east end of Duckworth St near the War Memorial and Hill O' Chips street where it provided water for horses in the City when horses were the main mode of transport before cars. The cobblestones in the adjacent retaining wall were once part of Water Street's main thoroughfare and the stone steps a little further up the road came from the old Water Street sidewalks. Both of these features can be seen in other parts of the park including the Caribou site. (Eales)



Stephanie Dunn

This old horse trough was a life saver to many horses and dogs years ago.

BRIDGES

Surrounded by two main rivers and woody hills it is only natural that the park is home to many bridges. Many of these are, however, not only functional but of aesthetic and historical value. At the east end of the park, by the Duck Pond as well as along the Waterford river heading westwards towards the shadow pools, are several rustic bridges constructed out of black spruce wood. Several such beautiful bridges can be found at different locations along the Waterford River allowing visitors to cross the river. Most notable of these,

is what has been termed Whale's Back Falls, which crosses the river at an ideal location for observing the shadow pools, and the many brown trout found in this waterway system.

On the other side of the park, adjacent to the tennis courts is a unique Pink Granite Stone bridge that crosses over Southbrook River and is the eastern entrance point to the Southbrook River Trail. The bridge was constructed during the late 20's under the supervision of its designer and park superintendent, Alfred Canning and was complet-

ed September 1, 1931. The bridge is historically significant in its relation to the old railway tracks. The internal structural framework of the bridge is built with arched, bent pieces of actual railway tracks. The outside exterior layer of the bridge is made up of thousands of small stones, which were collected along the railway tracks by Canning's workers. The quaint look of the bridge and, its historical connection to the old NL railway, which no longer exists, makes the bridge a very popular attraction point.

Along the Southbrook

River Trail is a popular bridge that crosses the river further, and gives a spectacular view of Captain’s Falls, usually referred to as ‘The Capsules.’ As displayed on the plaque, this bridge was constructed on the Royal Bank’s 100th anniversary of business in Newfoundland and Labrador, December 21st, 1995. (Eales)

The steel bridge over the South Brook River on the southern side of the Duck Pond was part of the old Canadian National Railway line which was abandoned in 1988. Now it is part of the Newfoundland T’Railway Provincial Park which is a multi-use recreational trail based on the old railway. It extends 883 km or 548 miles from St. John’s to Port aux Basques and forms the Newfoundland section of the Trans Canada Trail. Many park patrons remember when the railway staff used to throw candy over the fence to the children (where the railway line extends under the Cantilever bridge). Another popular activity was to lay a penny on the track and watch it get flattened by the train. The pedestrian overpass above the T’Railway path is an award winning cantilever bridge – a unique engineering design where the bridge is anchored only on one end. If you walk under the stairs closest to river you will see that the bridge does not touch the ground



Stephanie Dunn

Cobble Stone bridge contains the old railway tracks from the railway that ran through the park.



Submitted photo

Another section of the railway that runs through the park.

at this end. The bridge was designed by Ove Arup, the structural engineer who made the construction of Australia’s Sydney Opera House possible. (Eales)

Two of the most used bridges in the park are found one at the eastern entrance, by the BPF lodge and the other, the vehicular bridge separating the old and new parts of the park. The former, crosses the joining point of Duck

Pond and Waterford River and is historically significant in being the first concrete bridge in Newfoundland.

The vehicular bridge further into the park was built in the 60’s according to plans laid out by the Van Ginkle report. It connects the original parkland to the new extended property where many of the facilities such as playground, pool, fountain pond etc, are found.

FENCES & BENCHES



Submitted Photo

Rustic Benches in the Park.

Old rustic style fences and benches can be seen in various locations within the park. Two good examples include: The park's boundary fence along Waterford Bridge Road between the Conservatory and the Western entrance and the benches under the Purple Beech tree planted by the Governor General of Canada, His Excellency Viscount Alexander of Tunis, on his first visit to Newfoundland

in 1949 (visible from the Capital Cities monument and the north side of the paved road leading up to the Bungalow). Historical photos show that all the benches, fences and bridges in the park were once constructed with this old rustic style. Park Superintendents used to go to great lengths to source the young spruce needed and even had it shipped all the way from central Newfoundland, a

long way back then. They were all made freehand by craftsmen working for the park. Two men who have worked in the park for more than 30 years, Tim Raymond and Gerry Porter, remember when most of their time at work was spent building and maintaining these structures. Eventually most of them were replaced with more safety conscious materials like steel. (Eales)

SPORT/LEISURELY FACILITIES

From its first days, the park has offered great walking/hiking trails, boating on the pond, open fields and lawns for playing etc. Over the years several sport facilities

were introduced in the park, many of which continue to be a major draw to the park by the physically active. The physical expansion of the park beyond its

original area, specifically the old Squires' property – ‘Midstream’ – has allowed for the development of more trails and fields and other recreational facilities.

OLD SWIMMING POOL

In the 1920's a section of the eastern side of Southbrook River by the Stone Bridge was dammed to make a 'natural-like' swimming pool. This Swimming Pool was considered by many of that generation to be the main attraction of the park for family and social outings and had served the city for over 40 years. The narratives that can be drawn from old stories and memories about the pool are almost endless and appear to be an integral part of St. John's folklore.



Archived photo

Enjoying the old swimming pool on a hot summer day.



Archived Photo

Locals swimming near the old swimming hole in Bowring Park.

TENNIS COURT

Also built in the 20's were several grass tennis courts that were very successful in drawing a good crowd. The demand was so overwhelming that new hard courts were added during the 40's. These courts are presently managed and operated by the City of St. Johns who offers a wide range of training programs for kids and adults at all levels.



Stephanie Dunn

Several tennis courts located just off the trails of Bowing Park.

POOL/SKATE PARK/PLAYGROUND



Stephanie Dunn

The Skate Park.

The 1960's saw great development in the Mid-stream area of the park. The original pool on South Brook River had closed due to water-contamination concerns and a new modern pool was built just past the vehicular bridge west of the bungalow.

Since its construction the pool has become one of the most popular summer attractions in St. John's. Adjacent to the pool is a Skate Park that is very popular with many of St. John's youth. Just slightly west of the pool and east of the Fountain Pond, is a

playground that has been popular with kids since the 60's, when it replaced the older original playground, which was by the Tennis courts. Over the years the playground has undergone several reconstruction projects. The most recent in May, 2009.

BOB WHELAN FIELD

Heading slightly west of the pool, in front of the playground, is a gorgeous lush green field - Bob Whelan Field – which has become a popular location, for picnics, kids playing football or Frisbee, reading, relaxing etc. Another attraction for summer physical activity is the Lawn Bowling Green found at a small field adjacent to the main western entrance gate on Squires Ave.



Submitted Photo

The sign to Bob Whelan's Field.

SLOPING FIELD

During winters the large green sloping valley space below the vehicular bridge, as seen below, is a very popular spot for tobogganing and sledding. During summer and fall months this is a very popular area for picnics, Frisbee, and sunbathing. Through strong commitment from the City of St. John's and the BPF, the park has expanded not only in size but in the construction and upkeep of several leisurely-resources. Much work has already gone and, is still going on, in the development of the Midstream area of the park. It is important to note that some community members do however lament the loss of two sport facilities that were popular in the past;



Stephanie Dunn

The sloping field is beautiful for relaxing the summer and for tobogganing in the winter.

the baseball field, present location of Bob Whalen Field and the old soccer pitch, which was torn down and replaced by the current Lawn Bowling facility. However, a newer and more modern soccer field – The Jamie Morry Soccer Field – was built at the western entrance of the park by

McNab Lane in 2003. In relating his fond memories of the park, University Phys Ed professor, Basil Kavanaugh has stated the while much work has gone into improving the sports/recreation aspect, the park still has a huge untapped potential for much larger array of sport facilities.

CABOT THEATRE

Located on land where Sir Richard Squires and his family used to garden and grow vegetables, is now a small, quaint picturesque yet very functional Amphitheatre. (O'Neil). Its location is immediately south of the Fountain Pond. The amphitheatre construction began in 1997 during the

Cabot 500 celebrations in St. John's and it respectfully bears the title, commemorating the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's magnificent discovery. The project of erecting the amphitheatre was made possible via the help of several corporate, municipal and community-based contri-

butions. It was officially declared open in June 24, 2000 and has hosted several theatrical performances, most notable of which is the very successful 'Shakespeare by the Sea Festival.'



Stephanie Dunn

The Cabot 500 theatre, home to many plays and events.



Stephanie Dunn

Many gathered to celebrate Bowring Park's Centenary in July 2014.

AERIAL MAPS



Google Earth

Aerial Satellite View of Bowring Park 2016

REFERENCES/SOURCES

- I)** Jennifer O'Brien, Bowring Park, The History and Restoration, 2004/2007
- II)** Basil Kavanagh, The Historical Research of Bowring Park, March 1980
- III)** Doug Crane (Research Document(untitled), 1995)
- IV)** Jane Eales (Bowring Park Foundation Researcher) 2009
- V)** Ed Versteeg, Rudolph H. K. Cochiu and the Creation of Bowring Park: A Preliminary Exploration (October, 2004).
- VI)** Paul O'Neill, The Oldest City: The Story of St. John's, Newfoundland. Boulder Publications, 2003.
- VII)** Peter Bowring, A Thicket of Business, Memoir Club, 2007.
- VIII)** Assorted Documents; St. John's City Archives / Provincial Archives.
- IX)** Assorted Documents; Center for Newfoundland Studies/Periodicals, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

INTERVIEWS

- A)** Dr. Philip Hiscock, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Department of Folklore.
- B)** Dr. Basil Kavanagh, Memorial University of Newfoundland, School of Physical Education and Athletics.
- C)** Dr. Arn Keeling, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Department of Geography.