

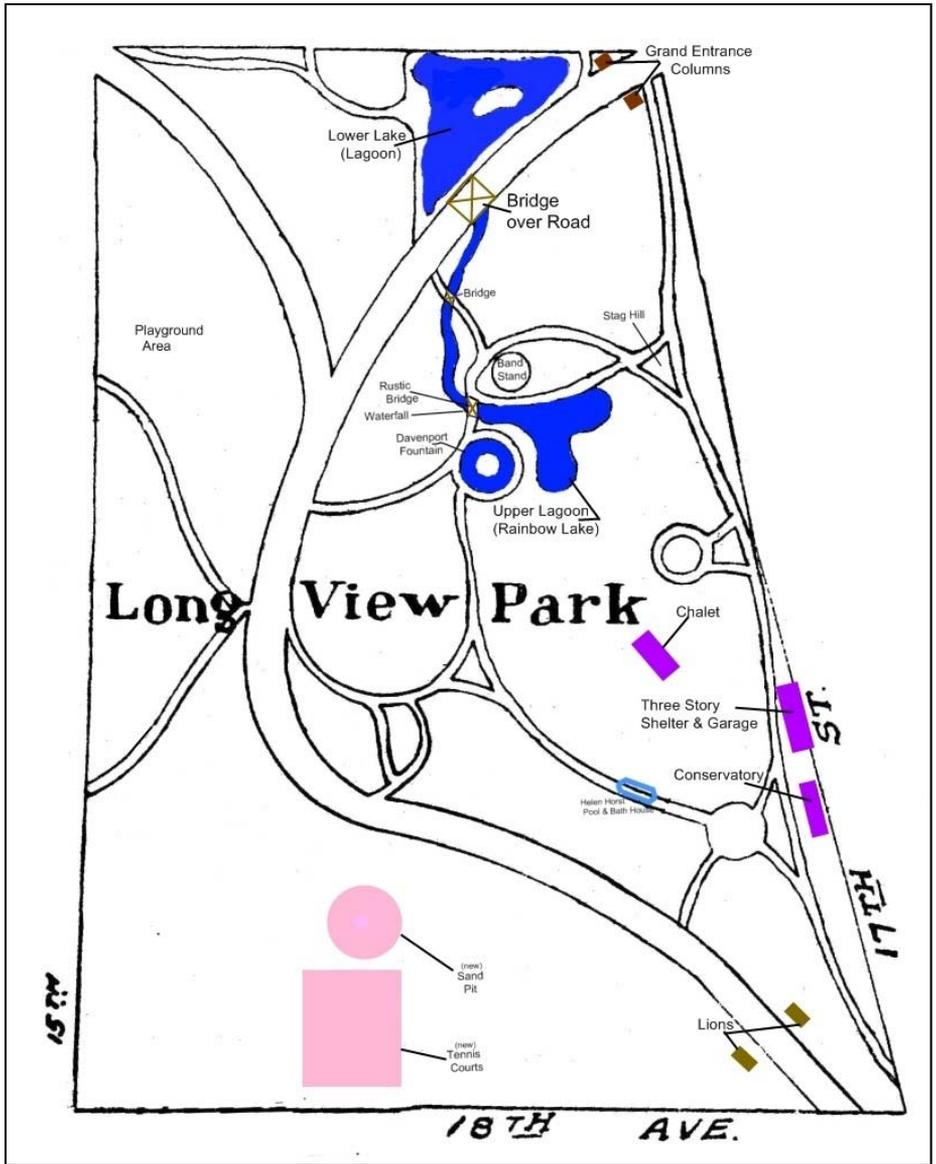
Long View Park

Rock Island, Illinois

1908-2008

A Pictorial History





Map of Long View Park 1947.

Cover: View of Lower Lagoon with 13th Avenue homes in background, ca. 1910.



*Lower Lagoon looking east, ca. 1910,
Grand Entrance Columns in background.*



17th Street Grand Entrance, ca. 1910.

For half a century the sloping hills of Long View Park were part of an estimated 2,500 acres of land owned by Bailey Davenport. Bailey distrusted cash, preferring land wealth instead, after his father, Colonel George Davenport, was murdered by bandits seeking money. Bailey owned large tracts of land on the Illinois side of the Mississippi, land which remained undeveloped as the city of Rock Island grew around it. In 1891, after his death, prominent Rock Island and Moline businessmen Frederick Weyerhaeuser, Charles H. Deere, Morris Rosenfield and T.J. Robinson, bought much of the Davenport land at auction. They intended to resell it, without profit, to help Rock Island grow.

In 1897, Rock Island needed a site for a new water reservoir. Arrangements to purchase land located behind the Davenport home known as Bailey's pasture were underway when it was realized that the level portion of the land atop the hill was too small to hold the reservoirs. Mayor Thomas Medill saw other possibilities for the site. He approached the owners and asked them to donate it to the city for a park. They agreed and on August 30, 1897, Bailey's pasture was owned by the city. The deed came with two conditions. The first was that the land must be used for a public park. The second, proposed by T.J. Robinson, was that no intoxicating liquors could ever be sold on the property.

This was the first time that the city of Rock Island set aside land in the name of city beautification. The Sauk and Fox Indians, who once owned the land, were asked to help select a name. Their reply was that they had no interest in naming a park on land they felt had been taken from them unfairly. At this point Mayor Medill asked residents to submit name ideas. From these suggestions the name Long View was chosen.

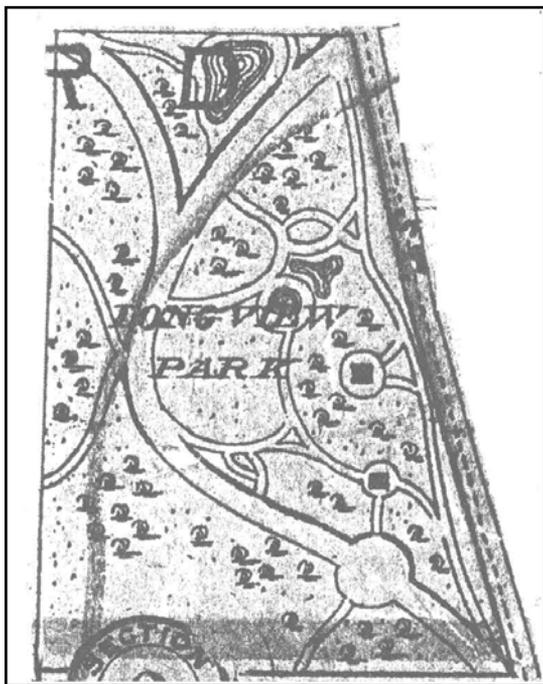
The next five years saw little activity, and barbed wire still surrounded the former pasture. But by 1902, improvements to other city spaces were finished and efforts were transferred to Long View. The Long View Improvement Association was formed and quickly moved to retain the services of Chicago landscape designer Ossian Cole Simonds. In July of 1902 he arrived to look at the site.

He recommended that the fence around the park be removed immediately so people would no longer turn their cattle out there. Then he asked the committee to build a tower so he could take aerial photographs of the entire park to use as he drew his designs. New park commissioner, Chris Gaetjer, who was appointed by the City Council to work without salary, began work immediately. The City's annual park fund was \$1,500 and with this sum Mr. Gaetjer began

building the 30-foot tower with donated lumber.

Two weeks later, the tower completed, Mr. Simonds returned to take his photos and make measured drawings of the park, aided by the county surveyor. On that visit he recommended that the dead and dying trees, many damaged by poachers, be removed, a task which Mr. Gaetjer quickly began.

Then Mr. Simonds returned to Chicago to draw his plans, which incorporated his belief that the park should be made more accessible by building walks and drives so the natural beauty of the area could be enjoyed.

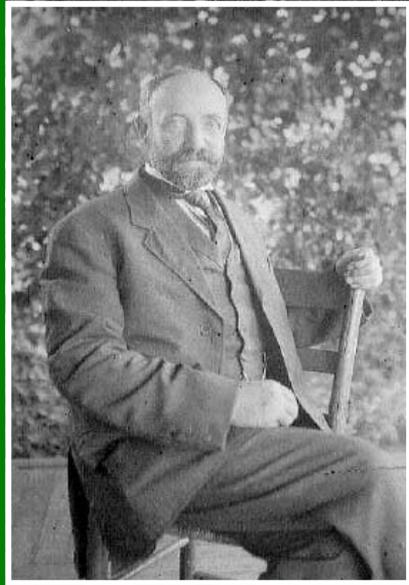


Map of Long View Park, ca. 1911.

O. C. Simonds (1855 – 1932)

Ossian Cole Simonds was one of the earliest American landscape designers to replace formal precision and non-native plantings of gardens with natural-appearing spaces holding native species. Sometimes called the American Romantic landscape style, its strong Midwestern roots are better reflected in the term “Prairie style landscape.”

O. C. Simonds was born near Grand Rapids in west central Michigan where he grew up on his family’s farm. He attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he studied civil engineering and architecture during the time when noted Chicago architect and planner William LeBaron Jenney was commuting to the university to develop a new architecture department.



Ossian Cole Simonds

After graduation, Simonds went to work for Jenney’s Chicago office, where his early task was surveying the even-then-famous Graceland Cemetery. In 1881, after Graceland expanded, Simonds was hired as its supervisor. With a goal of creating the ultimate restful landscape, he moved tons of earth and built a rolling topography, complete with small lakes. Then he planted native shrubbery and trees, using even wild roadside flora, with the final result appearing more like a park than a cemetery

His success at Graceland brought him acclaim as a master of cemetery design. But others noticed, too, and he soon had commissions designing parks and estates, primarily in the midwest area. He even developed a plan for his alma mater and, in 1920, wrote a book on landscape gardening. Closer to Rock Island, he designed Lowell Park along the Rock River in Dixon.

While he was the designing Long View Park, he was also a consulting designer for the northward expansion of Chicago’s Lincoln Park. Despite his success and prominence, Simonds always referred to himself as a gardener rather than a landscape architect.



*Upper Lagoon looking northwest ca. 1910.
Rustic Bridge at left and Band Stand at right.*

Mr. Simonds returned with completed plans in the fall. At that time, he led aldermen on a walk through the site explaining his design as they went. Then the group returned to City Hall for a formal meeting. The report of that meeting comes from handwritten City Council minutes dated September 11, 1902:

“On reassembling, Mr. O.C. Simonds addressed the Council in explanation of his plans for the improvement of Long View Park.

Ald. Anderson moved that Mr. Simonds amend the plans so as to show an entrance at the southwest corner of the park, and to connect with the main roadway at the nearest curve. Adopted.

Ald. Anderson moved that plans of walkways be accepted as planned by Mr. Simonds. Adopted.

Ald. McCaskrin moved that the plans be changed to show a chain of lakes as suggested. Adopted.

Ald. Anderson moved that the plan of the lakes as designated by Mr. Simonds be adopted. Adopted.

Ald Willis moved that the Council adopt the outline of walks submitted by Mr. Simonds and that Mr. Simonds be instructed to designate a walk entering from 16th Avenue & 15th Street to connect with walk that crosses the main driveway in central part of park. Adopted.

Ald. McCaskrin moved that the recommendations of the plans concerning the planting of shrubbery, etc. be adopted. Adopted.

Ald. Birkie moved that the plans for the park as amended be adopted as a whole. Adopted by unanimous vote.”

While this written confirmation of Mr. Simonds’ design exists, no actual drawings have been discovered.

Between 1902 and 1908 work on the park progressed rapidly. The City Council and the people of Rock Island shared the cost. One hundred ninety citizens donated money to the park in sums of \$10 to \$150 raising \$12,500, which was matched by the City Council.

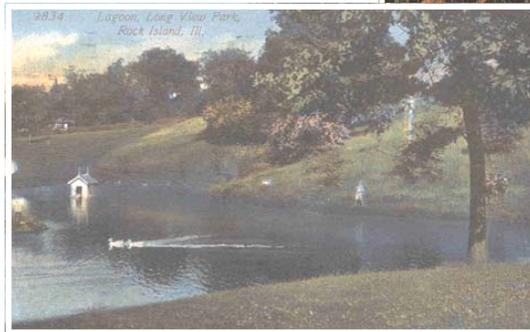
An early project was that of building two lagoons on different levels. A lake or lagoon located halfway up the hill near 17th Street was built. It was naturally filled with water running down from the hilltop, aided by springs and an artesian well.



The outlet over a waterfall dam at one end of this lagoon flowed into a winding brook that terminated in a second lagoon near the northeast corner of the park. This lower lagoon contained an "island jungle" in its center. Atop the waterfall was a rustic bridge woven of tree limbs, an O.C. Simonds signature design. Both lagoons had fountain sprays that kept the water aerated, as well as small floating houses for ducks, geese or swans (the occupants varied over the years). These avian creatures were introduced to add to the pastoral scene.



Shaping of the park land created a series of gentle slopes descending from southeast to northwest making even the steeper sites within the park accessible. Walkways were constructed with several access points incorporated into the design.



Photos top to bottom, all ca.1910:

*Upper Lagoon looking southwest.
Davenport Fountain at left, Rustic Bridge at right.*

Rustic Bridge above waterfall outlet.

Upper Lagoon looking southeast.

Rustic Bridge between Band Stand and Davenport Fountain.



A drive was constructed as described in the May 11, 1906, *Argus*: "...it will begin at the northeast corner, going west with a southern bearing for a considerable distance, thence to the southeast corner to the street. From the upper plateau of the park there will be an intersection road which leads to a circular drive, which affords the most beautiful view over the Mississippi river. Another intersection roadway will be from the northwest corner at 15th Street, southeast to the main drive. All of the drives will be 25 feet in width and macadamized".

Four square columns were built at the northeast 17th Street entrance to the park, which for many years was called the Grand Entrance.

Ornaments for the park were donated. The most impressive gift, a large fountain erected near the upper lagoon, was donated by Misses Naomi and Catherine Davenport in memory of their uncle Bailey, the original property



Lower Lagoon shelter built around dead tree, ca. 1910.



Davenport Fountain with Band Stand in background ca. 1910.

owner. As reported in the *Argus*, the fountain was built by Mott Iron Works and arrived by rail from New York. Standing in the top basin was a girl with her hand raised in welcome. The middle bowl contained eight small figures, each spraying a jet of water. All of the water eventually drained into a wide 16-sided pool.

Another early donation, now long missing, was the life size statue that gave its name to Stag Hill. Surrounded by a small fence, probably to keep children from climbing, it was located adjacent to 17th Street at the apex of a small hill. Although the hill remains today, there is no remnant of the statuary. Rather than a typical American deer, it represented an elk, which is a lookalike for the European red deer.

A band stand was built near the upper lagoon. The first flush toilets seen by many Rock Islanders were located in the basement area of the band stand. Rock Island resident Helen Marshall, recounted memories of Sunday afternoons in the 1920s and 1930s with her friends, "attending band concerts, wearing their best dresses and promenading around the lagoon".

Under the personal direction of Mr. Gaetjer, a trial garden was started in the southeast section of the park. Thousands of annuals and perennials were raised here and used to decorate Long View Park as well as other parks and city properties across Rock Island.

On July 10, 1908, Long View Park was formally dedicated. Mayor H.C. Schaffer requested that merchants close their stores for the afternoon in order to give their employees an opportunity to participate. Fifteen thousand people attended the festivities that were held both in the afternoon and evening.

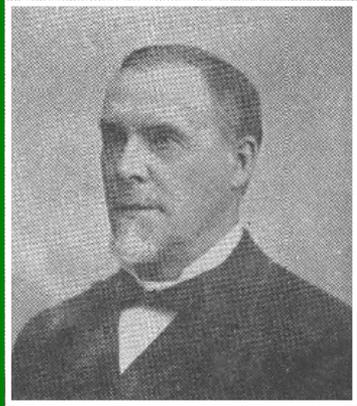
The afternoon exercises included orchestral selections, a ladies' chorus and speeches by Mayor Schaffer and Park Board President, William Jackson. During his address, William Jackson described Long View as "a place of rest for older people and a place of utmost pleasure for the children".



Two views of Stag Hill looking southeast ca. 1910. In the background is the Parish House of First Lutheran Church.

William Jackson (1834 - 1925)

William Jackson's appellation, Father of Rock Island Parks, is the result of his abiding belief that public parks, open to everyone, were a necessary amenity for all citizens. Born and raised in Liverpool, England, Jackson was once apprenticed to a grocer there, but with a married sister already in New York, young William couldn't resist the lure of the new world.



William Jackson

At the age of 17, he and his mother joined his sister's family for a few months until they all moved to Moline where Jackson worked in John Deere's factory. He also began the study of law and, in 1860, was admitted to the bar. He practiced law in Moline for two years, then came to Rock Island, with a new bride, former schoolteacher Jennie Sammis, whom he wed in 1863.

William and Jennie with their two daughters moved into a spectacular Italianate house at 824 20th Street in 1873. Jackson was successful in many ways, as an attorney and as a businessman. Yet today we remember and honor him for his work building a park system.

Jackson's involvement in Rock Island parks began early in his career. When citizens became angry that downtown's Union Square was nothing but an unsightly mud pit, Mayor McConochie created a post of park commissioner and appointed William Jackson to it. Jackson wasted no time laying out a grand design for the square and raising money. By 1880, the square was graded and filled and streets and sidewalks leading to the square were paved, reportedly with rock quarried on the site. Over the next years, a band stand was erected, a fountain was installed and sculpture and plants were added. The new park, renamed Spencer Square, was dedicated in 1890. Jackson gave a speech that day, calling it a place of "pleasure, pride, and rest." An improved Garnsey Square in the west end of town soon followed this success, with Jackson raising most of the money for both ventures.

When it was decided that Bailey's old pasture should become a park, Jackson led the campaign and the fund raising. He was president of the Long View Improvement Association and later became president of the Park Board. In that capacity he gave a keynote speech at the dedication ceremonies. Jackson remained active his entire life. Even his obituary reported that, "He was remarkably well preserved, although 91 years old."



Swiss Chalet, undated photo.

The evening events were more exciting. They began at 8 o'clock and featured the unveiling and formal presentation of the Davenport Memorial Fountain. The ladies' chorus sang an original anthem written for the occasion by Robert Rexdale entitled "Ye Hills and Bright Vales", sung to the melody of the Star Spangled Banner. The festivities concluded with a fireworks display.

The next major addition to the park was made in 1917, when an authentic Swiss-style chalet was built at the highest point in the park, just above Stag Hill. Originally referred to as the Inn, its appearance soon had everyone calling it the Chalet. Plans were purchased from Swiss-born architect Frederich Ehrson of Reading, Pennsylvania, although local architect George Stauduhar is thought to have worked on the interior design. John Volk & Co. built the building at a cost of \$10,000.00. Typical of its Swiss antecedent, the picturesque building was finished in stucco with timbering and featured wide eaves overhanging broad porches. Beneath each window was a flower box.

Inside, the Chalet's large main room was used as public space. According to reports in the Argus, it had a very high ceiling with stained glass windows near the top. Interior walls were of a marble wainscoting and the ceiling was frescoed. The southern portion of the Chalet was fitted with rooms to house a caterer's family. This living space was designed with all the latest conveniences including city water, electric lights, and furnace heat.

In 1921 a special pool for children was built on the hilltop. It was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Horst of Rock Island in memory of their daughter Helen, who had drowned in the Rock River nearly a decade earlier. Mr. Horst, a prominent contractor, personally supervised the high quality construction of the pool and its surroundings. It was oval, 30 x 80 feet at the waterline, with the main axis extending northwest to southeast. The sides were at ground level with a water depth gradually tapering from 6 inches at the edges to 25 inches at the center. The bottom was a single slab of reinforced concrete varying from 6 to 10 inches thick that was poured on a thick bed of sand. Two fountains in the pool offered both cooling spray and beauty.

The 7-foot wide surrounding sidewalk, of mottled "English" brick laid in a basket weave pattern on a bed of sand over 4 inches of concrete, was tilted slightly away from the pool for proper drainage. Beyond the northwest end was a 20 x 30 foot concrete-bottomed sandpit with 18 inches of sand. Edging the sandpit were curved double concrete seats that faced inward to the pool and outward to the view. These seats were topped by a canopy on steel supports.

To the southeast, more curved concrete seats, these without a canopy, faced the pool. In the center of these seats an ornamental two-sided drinking fountain bubbled constantly. Above the fountain was a bronze memorial plaque. Horst also built a brick dressing room building southwest of the pool.

The photo below is from the northwest end of the pool, looking toward the southeast. The double curved seats, the canopy, the fountain sprays, even the fountain in the distance can be seen. The sandpit is not apparent, but would have been just on the far side of the double concrete seats.



Helen Horst Memorial—Long View Park, Rock Island, Illinois

Helen Horst Memorial Pool and Fountain ca. 1925.

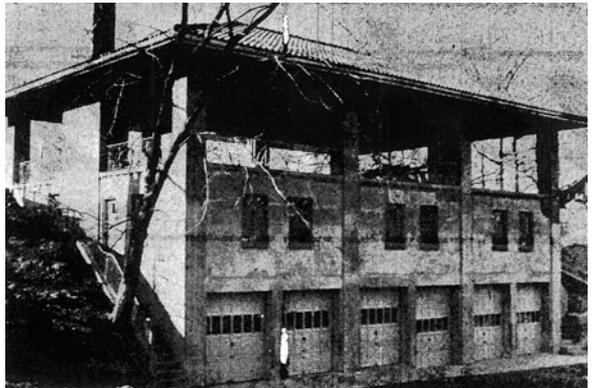


Unidentified lady on lion. Neither the location nor the lion is identified. This lion is not one of the historic entrance lions.

The next major improvements in the park were made in 1936 as WPA projects. The largest was a shelter, toolhouse and garage building built into the hillside adjacent to 17th Street so that the shelter would be at park level, but the garages, two stories below, could be entered from 17th Street. The middle story housed a large toolhouse. The open shelter, which could seat 500 at picnic tables, had a large fireplace at the south end. In November of 1936, there were 65 men working on WPA projects in the city of Rock Island. In the summers the number reached as high as 125.

The following year the Long View Conservatory or greenhouse was built just south of the shelter. The proposed conservatory was described in the *Argus* on December 31, 1936, as a building of glass walls and roofs to be built in three sections. The center would be a palm house measuring 22 feet by 22 feet and 5 inches with a roof 22 feet high. On either side would be greenhouses 15 feet high measuring 18 by 25 feet.

Over the next decades the park saw changes intended to enhance recreational facilities for Rock Island citizens. In the late 1930s, the island in the lower lagoon was removed. However, the lagoon was still used every winter for ice skating.



View of 3-story Shelter and Garage building from 17th Street, ca. 1936.

Long View Lions

The Long View lions have guarded the southeast entry to the park for decades, yet their origin is shrouded in mystery. Today, as the pair are among the few pieces remaining of vintage statuary, they are emblematic of Long View.

One oft repeated legend has it that the Long View lions originally came from downtown's Spencer Square, where they were a gift from Frederick Weyerhaeuser. But old photos document that those lions, although also reclining, were different from the Long View pair. Their fate is unknown.



Another story says that the Long View lions were moved here in 1931 from the garden of Ben Harper's former home on 18th Street, when it was razed to make way for the phone company. This may be true. The only problem is that the report continued by noting that those lions were made of "crockery," a ceramic material. Moreover, when one lion was cracked during the move, it was supposedly replaced by a metal twin. Yet, neither of the historic Long View lions is ceramic; rather they are both formed of a soft tin-lead alloy, a metal that is quite fragile.

In the mid 1940s, vandals pushed the hollow lions from their Long View pedestals, resulting in major damage. The local Lions Club assumed the task of repairing them. During the repair process, they were filled with concrete, which made them much heavier, but also caused internal corrosion over the years. Annual patching and painting by the Rock Island Parks have kept the well-loved lions presentable from a distance, but up close their cracks and patches show.



Lions from Spencer Square, downtown Rock Island. Despite legend to the contrary, these are not the Long View lions.

The Long View Centennial celebration will see the unveiling of new bronze lions, very similar in size and appearance to their deteriorated predecessors. Like historic park statuary, the new lions are a gift to the park.



View of Conservatory ca. 1955.

In 1954, the bandstand and upper lagoon were replaced by an Olympic sized public swimming pool. Over the years, tennis courts, a frisbee golf course, shelters and playground equipment have been added.

A walk through Long View Park 100 years after its dedication reveals an area consistent with the vision of O.C. Simonds, Chris Gaetjer and William Jackson. There are playgrounds, picnic areas, tennis and basketball courts. And there are large open areas for leisurely walks. The Davenport fountain is gone, but another fountain, now dry, and the iron fence surrounding it were rescued from Garnsey Square and now sit atop the main hill of the park. The Horst pool is filled in, but the outlines, the surrounding walkway and some of the double-sided benches remain. Children's laughter, exuberant in cooling waters can still be heard here, but now they emanate from a new aquatic center.

The upper lagoon, the twig bridges and the ducks are gone, but the sloping hills and beautiful vistas remain. The Chalet and original shelter house are no longer public spaces, but are used by park employees as support structures. The Conservatory, a jewel in the park, features the original palm house as well as seasonal displays. Long View, the 100 year old grand dame of Rock Island parks continues to reflect William Jackson's vision as a "place of rest for older people and a place of utmost pleasure for the children."

Long View Park Timeline

- ◆ 1855 – From George Wickstrom, circa 1941: “Where the chalet stands and north of there on the knoll...there once was a burial ground...”
- ◆ 1904 – Band Stand built
- ◆ 1906 – The children’s playground was located on the west side near 15th Street and 16th Avenue. There were 14 or 15 pieces of apparatus for use.
- ◆ 1907 - An ordinance was considered to rename the park to Jackson Park in honor of William Jackson. City council apparently never ratified this change.
- ◆ 1913-14 Hill path was paved in late 1913 or 1914. The bid award for the paving project went to Valley Construction on August 10, 1913.
- ◆ 1926 - Public horseshoe courts were added. In addition, 31 electroliers (lights) were installed
- ◆ 1931 – Park commissioner E.B. McKowen suggested both Long View and Lincoln Parks needed a municipal swimming pool.
- ◆ 1956 – The Olympic-size swimming pool officially opened on June 20. William Stuhr was the architect.
- ◆ 1956 - Hollis Hegg was the first pool manager and would remain such for 30 years. Pool attendance was 56,809
- ◆ 1959 – Dutch elm disease caused the removal of hundreds of trees in the years after 1959
- ◆ 1962 – First year of the Long View Open Swim Meet
- ◆ 1968 – The swimming pool was named in honor of Mel McKay, Rock Island mayor when bonds were sold to build the pool
- ◆ 1970 - The floral calendar was started by head gardener Emil Wenninger. The words LONG VIEW used to be planted in an arch above the date
- ◆ 1974 - Sixth annual sled derby and snow carnival set at Long View Park. Contests were held by age, with 200 children attending
- ◆ 1975 - Swim fees were 75 cents for adults and 40 cents for children
- ◆ 2003 - Whitewater Junction Aquatic Center opens on May 24, 2003.



Mel McKay Pool ca. 1960.



Childrens' playground on the west side of park near 14th Avenue ca. 1910.



Ice skating on Upper Lagoon, Band Stand in background, undated.



View of Waterfall below Rustic Bridge, ca. 1910.



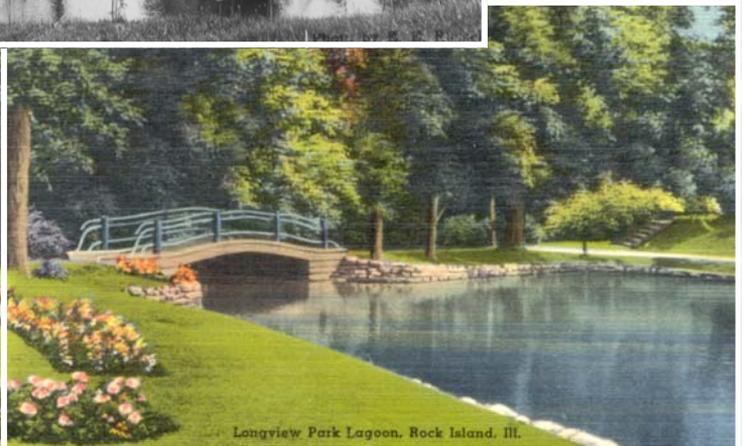
*Lower Lagoon looking northwest
ca. 1910.*

*View from above upper lagoon.
Band Stand at left, Lower
Lagoon in distance, ca. 1910.*



*Pedestrian Bridge
over stream between
upper and lower
lagoons. 13th
Avenue homes in
background, ca.
1910.*

*Upper Lagoon,
Rustic Bridge
replacement,
ca. 1940.*



Thanks to all who shared memories and illustrations for this booklet, especially

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*Lower Lagoon looking west,
island “jungle” and duck house in foreground.
Stone bridge over road at left, background, ca. 1910.*



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This history is presented on the 100th anniversary
of the dedication of Long View Park by
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Friends of Long View Park
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Donations to the Friends of Long View are tax deductible and are used
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the 17th Street Grand Entrance columns are welcomed.

LAKE SCENE—LONGVIEW