In his book, *Back to Nature*, Peter J. Schmitt discusses the movement that began in the second half of the nineteenth century in response to the increasing urbanization of American society. Noting the extensive social changes brought on by the rise of the modern metropolis, he focuses special attention on the way people's perceptions of the natural world outside the city changed. City dwellers, he observes, particularly the middle and upper classes, sought refuge from the hectic pace of urban society and began to turn "back to nature." 1 Schmitt stresses that people at this time turned "back to nature," not "back to the land," explaining that the movement was a departure from, rather than a return to, America's agrarian past: "simply put, this urban response valued nature's spiritual impact above its economic importance: it might better be called 'Arcadian.'" 2

This search for Arcadia, an idyllically pastoral, untroubled region, was encouraged by urban intellectuals whose "nature writings" espoused the need for city people to be exposed to the country. These middle-class journalists wrote essays calculated to appeal to urban readers. Their contribution to the back to nature movement was clearly not one advocating a return to the land for one's livelihood, for as Schmitt points out: "these writers were scarcely gentlemen farmers. They were college professors, merchants, clerks, men of distinctly urban interests who tried to make rural America the playground of an urban society." 3 Their writings found a receptive audience.

Those individuals who wrote of the Arcadian philosophy were not the only nature enthusiasts to encourage as well as benefit from the popular back to nature movement. Landscape designers, whose influ-
ence helped shape garden suburbs and country estates in the middle of the century, also benefited when the park movement swept through cities in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The ideas and efforts of the landscape designers contributed to the case against urban life. Due to increased industrialization, technological innovation, rapid growth, and increased migration, cities were criticized as being “too big, too built up, too crowded, diseased, polluted, artificial, overly commercial, corrupting, and stressful.”

Urban landscape designers planned to bring nature to the city. They believed this would provide respite from the negative aspects of increased urbanization. They became the most influential group in the early park movement in the United States. According to Galen Cranz in The Politics of Park Design, these sculptors of large urban parks were most powerful from 1850 to 1900 during the “pleasure ground era.”

The most famous landscape architect involved in the city park movement was Frederick Law Olmsted, creator of New York City’s Central Park. Critical of the unplanned urban setting, Olmsted disliked the grid system for city streets and wished to avoid urban problems he saw arising from inorganic growth and the abuse of space. He wanted to weave large areas of public parklands into the fabric of the city: “he tried, above all, to civilize the city; his parks simulated nature in response to the needs of an urban population. He recognized the necessity of extensive planning to provide for logical development of the city as an environment where a man could lead a meaningful life.”

Olmsted and other influential architects of the time rejected the symmetrical, rational, and geometrical model of European palace gardens. They favored an informal, picturesque approach to organizing the landscape as the best contrast to the city’s artificial environment. Actually, Olmsted believed that pure wilderness would serve as the sharpest contrast:

But because he recognized that the wilderness would be hard, if not impossible to simulate within a city’s boundaries, he decided that the picturesque — the pastoral middle landscape — was an appropriate compromise. Its informality was democratic, and it offered the right synthesis of serenity, and order, with an occasional reminder of the awesome grandeur of a mountain, a deep crevasse, long waterfall, or steep crag: . . . Accordingly the goal for the American pleasure ground was to heighten the

idea of naturalness with forms suggested by nature but not to rely on what
nature actually provided.6

The ideas of Frederick Law Olmsted and his followers about making
nature conform to urban tastes persisted into the twentieth century.
The concept of civilizing the city, along with the back to nature
movement and the City Beautiful movement,7 had an important effect
on “The Father of Pittsburgh’s Parks,” Edward M. Bigelow.

**Pittsburgh’s Parks**

As head of the Department of Public Works for fourteen years be-
beginning in 1888, Bigelow was in charge of a large program of public
improvements. His special interest, however, was in city parks, and
he concentrated his enthusiasm, talent, and power upon their acquisi-
tion and development for Pittsburgh. In May 1889, for example,
Bigelow petitioned the city council to appoint a committee on parks.
After the council approved his request, it passed ordinances that set
aside the ground around Herron Hill and Highland reservoirs for pub-
lic park purposes and authorized the Department of Public Works to
improve them. And, in November of that year, as a result of Bigelow’s
trip to England to work out an agreement with Mrs. Mary E. Schenley,
the gift of Schenley Park became a reality. The importance of
Bigelow’s influence on Pittsburgh’s parks was widely recognized in
the city, and “Bigelow’s good timing of these three events set his
venture of park acquisition on sure ground and thus [led to] the
creation of the Pittsburgh Park System.”8 During the next fifteen
years he continued to buy land to expand the size of Highland and
Schenley parks and establish other parks as well.9

Bigelow’s emphasis on beautifying the park revealed that his vision
of the design and function of parks was similar to that of other sup-
porters of the back to nature movement. He directed landscapers to
“improve” nature by reducing its irregularities and giving it harmony:
“Gently undulating contours replaced the sharp, craggy features
of undisturbed nature in a conscious effort to tame it and suggest its

6 Cranz, Politics of Park Design, 24-25.
7 See Sutton, Civilizing American Cities, 70, and Cranz, Politics of Park De-
sign, 84-85, for more on the City Beautiful movement.
8 City of Pittsburgh, Department of Public Works, Annual Report of the
Bureau of Parks 1944 (Pittsburgh, 1945), n.p.
9 Howard Stewart, Historical Data: Pittsburgh Public Parks (Ann Arbor,
1943), introduction.
benevolence." 10 Bigelow's motivation in creating Pittsburgh's parks came from his desire to bring beauty to the industrial city, but also from his belief that parks could serve the interests of his social and economic class.

Like the landscape architects in other cities, Bigelow shared the assumption that the environment significantly affected human psychology and behavior. He did not trust members of the working class and felt that parks were needed to counteract and restrain the disorder engendered within these individuals by ugly and chaotic cities: "Bigelow and other advocates of parks were interested primarily in promoting middle-class restraint. Hopefully, parks would induce a behavioral pattern for the lower class acceptable to middle-class values and interests." 11 Landscape designers and park commissioners believed that the atmosphere of city parks would elevate the conduct of the masses in all aspects of city life. They were untroubled by the class bias inherent in their concept: "The early park leaders felt no doubt or shame about elite stewardship and proudly accepted the responsibility. The proper role of the rich was to take care of the poor." 12

Other advocates perceived parks primarily as places where nature could bring both physical and spiritual refreshment in a relaxing atmosphere. Users, however, often had different concepts concerning the function of parks and wanted more than beautiful scenery. 13 As a result, pleasure grounds became the site of active, although largely unstructured, recreational use. But in this respect, too, most park activities catered to the interests of the upper classes.

In Pittsburgh, for example, Bigelow provided facilities for groups like the Schenley Matinee Driving Club, and for such sports as polo, tennis, and golf. He was also interested in using parks to promote piety or patriotism through activities open to all people, such as outdoor musical concerts and the annual Fourth of July celebration in Schenley Park. 14 For the most part, however, his development orientation largely ignored the more active leisure-time interests of the lower classes. Further, he overlooked that most of the working class could not afford to travel to the parks, which were located far from the working-class residential areas. Ironically, Bigelow and other park leaders did not see the potential that smaller, neighborhood parks more

11 Judd, "Edward M. Bigelow," 55.
accessible to the lower classes could have as instruments of social control.

Basically, Arcadian parks were understood to be rural-appearing and undeveloped. The landscape designers influential during the city parks movement, however, did not view parks in this way. They appreciated nature, but as Schmitt points out, they did not advocate a return to rural life. They "were far more interested in defining the landscape to suit their own ideas than in preserving any transcendental value in undisturbed nature." 15 Considering the development activities of these individuals in city parks, the Arcadian philosophy is more accurately called the Arcadian myth. 16 Bigelow’s focus was on large parks where the active leisure-time interests of the upper classes could be served. This reveals that the term "Arcadia" was actually applied to large, developed city parks rather than undeveloped ones, and why Bigelow is known as the creator of Pittsburgh’s Arcadian parks. 17

After Bigelow’s service with the Department of Public Works ended in 1902, less noteworthy figures took over responsibility for Pittsburgh’s parklands as superintendents of the newly created Bureau of Parks. Improvements were made to existing parks and new areas were acquired, perhaps the most important of which was Frick Park in 1919. This park became the largest in the city, and therefore may be viewed in relation to Bigelow’s interest in large parks. Frick Park, however, was to remain largely undeveloped and therefore closer to the Arcadian ideal. The donor was apparently less concerned with the function of parks as instruments of social control than Bigelow had been.

Henry Clay Frick

Henry Clay Frick is best remembered for his role as an industrial titan and one-time partner of Andrew Carnegie in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The "young steel prince," 18 or "Coke King," 19 was also involved in the development of railroads, particularly that of the Pennsylvania Railroad. In addition to these business in-

16 Ibid., xvi-xvii.
17 Judd, "Edward M. Bigelow," 55.
18 Pittsburgh Press, Oct. 5, 1931. This and other newspaper articles are in clippings file in Pennsylvania Division, Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh.
The 1938 pictorial map, originally printed in four colors, is a work of art, as well as a guide to the park's facilities and wildlife.
terests, however, Frick is remembered as a philanthropist. In New York, for example, where he also maintained a residence, he left the magnificent Frick Art Collection, housed in his home on Fifth Avenue, to the city along with a $15,000,000 endowment.

In Pittsburgh, Frick's philanthropy extended beyond the donation of the park, most notably to local hospitals and to the Frick Educational Commission. He also made many other anonymous gifts to the city and to its people. His generosity was well-known by the turn of the century. A local newspaper commented: “Mr. Frick has been liberal in all that relates to Pittsburgh or its advancement. His donations of money and works of art to the institutions which are for the people have been extensive. His charities, while unostentatious, have always been large and to worthy objects.”

Despite recognition of Frick’s generosity and reports that he was modest, sympathetic, and unassuming in dealing with others, and sociable, happy, and affectionate at home, he was widely disliked. Indeed, many looked upon him as “an old curmudgeon, with a hunk of iron for a heart,” due in part to his opposition to labor unions and his forceful handling of the Homestead strike in 1892. One example of his generosity, however, provides an interesting account of how Frick won the hearts of many Pittsburghers. In 1915, when Frick learned of the financial troubles of the Dime Savings Bank, which contained the savings of 40,000 city schoolchildren, he guaranteed that their $169,000 would not be lost. Pittsburghers were amazed: “it wasn’t the amount that moved Pittsburgh almost to tears. Perhaps in part it was pride in the discovery that another of the city’s ‘iron men’ was human, after all.” Henry Clay Frick was clearly a complex man. He was hard-driving in business but also gave much of the fruits of his financial endeavors to the people of Pittsburgh.

The Donation of Frick Park

There is little to suggest that Frick had any special fondness for nature that would make preserving the natural atmosphere of Frick Park desirable. There is one reference to his upbringing that points out that “like many who have attained conspicuous places in the commercial and professional life of America, Mr. Frick was reared in the

20 Pittsburgh Post, May 7, 1899.
21 Ibid.
22 Pittsburgh Press, Dec. 21, 1952.
23 Ibid.
wholesome environment of the country." This statement, however, should not really be interpreted as if Frick's childhood necessarily instilled in him a strong love of the countryside. In fact, similar statements alluding to the benefits of rural life and to the great figures who came from such an atmosphere were common in the nineteenth century.

Henry Clay Frick's children provide more hints as to the possible influences that would make him more interested in natural surroundings and the need for their preservation in city parks. His son Childs, for example, developed interests in paleontology and natural history at Princeton and later became a trustee of the American Museum of Natural History and the New York Zoological Society. He was active also in such groups as the Conservation Foundation, the Boone and Crockett Club, and the American Committee for International Wildlife Protection. It is unclear, however, whether his interest in nature led Childs Frick to pay close attention to the condition of city parks, or to convince his father to establish a natural park in Pittsburgh.

Frick's daughter Helen, to whom he was extremely devoted, apparently had more of a link to the establishment of Frick Park. Although it is not evident that she was a nature lover, when Helen made her debut in 1908, her choice of a coming-out present from her father was a 150-acre park for children to be donated to the city of Pittsburgh. It was reported that both Frick and his daughter were concerned less about the park's natural setting than about the safety of children who often had to play in the street, and Helen's wish was indeed granted by her father. A 151-acre tract of land in the Fourteenth Ward — the original Frick Park — and a $2 million trust fund for its upkeep were left to the city in Henry Frick's will.

Despite the lack of definitive evidence concerning Frick's feeling toward natural parks or his family's influence on this subject, it is believed that he was extremely determined to keep the land he donated as an undeveloped wildlife center, and that it was expressly written in his will to do so: "It was Mr. Frick's hope that young and old would acquire health and a love for nature through rambling in this great stretch of natural forest at all seasons." In actuality, Frick put

24 *Pittsburgh Post*, May 7, 1899.
27 Associated Press Biographical Sketch No. 345 on Helen Clay Frick.
28 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 9, 1927.
29 Ibid.
future decisions regarding the park in the hands of the trustee, Union Trust Company, which was to supervise the disbursement of the trust fund.30

Frick Park and the Urban Park Movement in Pittsburgh

The plot Henry Clay Frick donated to the city upon his death was not immediately opened to the public as a park. In fact, little was done toward making it more accessible to the public for the next few years. This situation was concurrent with the public sector’s major emphasis during the early twenties on increasing park acquisitions: “Parks are among a modern city’s most invaluable assets . . . not a city of any consequence anywhere does not realize this fact and which is not straining every nerve to add to its park possessions.” 31 After Bigelow’s efforts at developing a system of parks, this took precedence over any comprehensive planning.32

Concern about the lack of systematic planning by the city as it acquired more parkland was the focus of the 1923 report, Parks: A Part of the Pittsburgh Plan, by the Citizens Committee on the City Plan of Pittsburgh (CCCP). The CCCP was a voluntary, nonprofit organization established in 1918 with the aim of creating awareness of the need for planning in Pittsburgh. The CCCP “usurped the responsibility for preparing a general physical plan” for the city from the City Planning Commission, established in 1911 and largely ineffective.33 The Citizens Committee criticized past efforts and urged a new approach in city planning: “The City of Pittsburgh should have an orderly, scientific and comprehensive program for its development . . . for it is clear that the traditional lack of comprehensive view and policy, together with the too prevalent attitude of expediency (whether

30 See excerpt from Henry Clay Frick’s will published shortly after his death on December 2, 1919, in the Pittsburgh Post (no specific date found). The suggestion that it is more accurate to pay attention to the fact that the Frick Park Committee made the decision soon after 1919 to keep the park mostly undeveloped was made in interviews with Frick Park naturalist Ford Parker and Frick Foundation representative Walter Cooley. Frick Park Superintendent Dom Cappodano believes Frick had strong feelings about keeping the park natural but according to Cooley, who has worked for the family for fifty years, maintaining the park as a nature preserve was never an iron-bound rule from Henry Clay Frick.
31 Undated article in clippings file (1920?), Pennsylvania Division, Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh.
32 For the list of properties acquired by the city in the early part of the century, see Stewart, Pittsburgh Public Parks, introduction.
This topographical map of Frick Park was included in the 1923 Citizens Committee report on parks. It was presented as supporting evidence in the committee's agreement to expand and develop the park.
political or otherwise) can only result in haphazard and ill-conceived city development."  

Recognizing that "there would be the forms and not the substance of planning until public power increased at the expense of private, entrepreneurial prerogatives," the CCCP encouraged a more active role for public agencies in the planning process.

The committee's six-part plan for Pittsburgh presented reports on each of the issues. The first two reports, "Pittsburgh Playgrounds" (1920) and the "Major Street Plan" (1921), were officially adopted by the Pittsburgh city council in 1922, and the City Planning Commission endorsed them as well. The later reports were published in 1923 on transit, railroads, and waterways.

In its 1923 report on parks, the Citizens Committee recommended the development of a distributional plan for a citywide system of neighborhood parks to be coordinated with playgrounds and athletic fields. It is a good illustration of widespread dissatisfaction in Pittsburgh with the large park philosophy and the neglect of small park areas for the working class, and it reflects the sentiments of a new phase of the park movement in the United States.

Galen Cranz identifies the second phase of the urban park movement — lasting from 1900 to 1930 — as the era of the reform park. During this time there was less focus on the beauty of parks than on their utility. Turn-of-the-century progressivism in urban parks brought a new approach to park planning, although it was not a complete departure from the idea that parks could serve as an escape from city living: "The keynote approach of reform parks was to organize activity, since urban park planners now considered the masses incapable of undertaking their own unstructured pursuits of the pleasure ground. Yet the organization motive parallels the restorative function of fresh air and landscape in pleasure ground thinking." Thus the ideas of landscape artists like Olmsted and his followers who greatly influenced Bigelow largely gave way to the efforts of reform park organizers, play directors, and efficiency-minded experts in recreation. This new group of professionals were natural allies of those who had earlier advocated the creation of small parks and playgrounds for children in working-class neighborhoods.  

34 Citizens Committee on the City Plan of Pittsburgh, Municipal Planning Association, Parks: A Part of the Pittsburgh Plan, Report #4 (Sept. 1923), 5.
35 Lubove, Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh, 89.
In Pittsburgh reform park leaders worked for the Bureau of Recreation, which had been created in 1915, and the Bureau of Parks, both of which were under the Department of Public Works.\textsuperscript{38}

Reflecting the broader developments in the urban park movement, the Citizens Committee on the City Plan was concerned about providing a recreational system of maximum serviceability and wanted the results of its recommendations to be efficient in order to assure "the greatest ultimate economy consistent with such serviceability." \textsuperscript{39} And although the CCCP criticized the almost exclusive focus on large parks during the earlier period, it still believed that parks should have an assimilative social role. In a section entitled "The Social and Economic Value of Recreation," for example, the report, referring to the racial and ethnic diversity of Pittsburgh's population, noted that "a proper development of municipal recreation should assist, almost more than any other activity, in the orderly assimilation of these diverse elements into the fabric of good citizenship and stable American-ism." \textsuperscript{40} The report continued, stressing that large investments in recreational facilities for the workers of Pittsburgh should be made because the investment would be a beneficial one in "public health, contentment and efficiency."

Much stress after the turn of the century was placed on the creation of smaller neighborhood parks with supervised play, but Pittsburgh's larger parks were affected by park reformers and the new group of professionals as well. During the pleasure ground era some of the large parks had playing fields for such sports as baseball and football, but they were relegated to the periphery of the parks and not integrated with the traditional landscaping.\textsuperscript{41} In this later period, however, facilities and extensive programming for these and other activities became the major focus of efforts to make both large and small parks the social centers of communities.

New Plans for Frick Park

In 1923 Frick Woods, as the park was then called, was still 151 acres (the fourth largest in Pittsburgh) with undeveloped land that

\textsuperscript{38} See Lubove, \textit{Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh}, for organizational responses to the playground advocates in Pittsburgh around the turn of the century. See also \textit{Bureau of Recreation Reports} 1916-21 and 1922-23 for specific activities and facilities in Pittsburgh illustrating the effect of reform park ideas.

\textsuperscript{39} Citizens Committee on the City Plan of Pittsburgh, \textit{Parks}, 13.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, 15.

\textsuperscript{41} Cranz, \textit{Politics of Park Design}, 40.
nature lovers found a "source of inestimable pleasure." Corresponding to new ideas on the local and national levels concerning the need for city planning and increased recreational facilities, however, the CCCP placed great emphasis on its growth and development. The committee had extensive plans to make the land an integral part of the city's park system. The park was indeed enlarged during the twenties, but its development did not proceed as the Citizens Committee had hoped.

The enlargement of the park was possible because of its unique financial situation. Unlike other Pittsburgh parks, Frick Woods was in its own division within the Bureau of Parks. The size of the trust fund accompanying the original donation of land indicated that Henry Clay Frick conceived of future expansion as well as maintenance needs: "This trust fund was set up to provide funds for capital improvements and operation, as well as new land acquisitions. There have been very few public benefactors who have had insight enough to ensure maintenance and operation of their gifts to the people. Mr. Frick was one of the few exceptions to the general practice." The trustees appointed by Frick played an important role in the city's decisions of how to spend the $2 million. The interest from the trust fund enabled them to buy pieces of land adjacent to the original acreage that had been donated to the city. By 1929, Frick Park had more than doubled in size to 370 acres.

The path of the park's development — guided by both the city and the trustees — was less compatible with the CCCP's vision. Reflecting an emphasis on the efficient use of land and the advocacy of a much improved citywide park system, the committee made recommendations involving extensive "improvements" of this large tract of land. Its report contains a detailed map of the area marking the location of the proposed new facilities. Two of the CCCP's highest priorities were incorporating Nine Mile Run valley into the park and creating a small artificial lake in order to increase the amount of water recreation facilities. It also made plans for the construction of pleasure drives, thoroughfares, recreation buildings or pavilions with restaurants, an open-air theater, a botanical garden, comfort stations, parking lots, and a swimming pool.

The CCCP report's recommendations were consistent with the

42 Pittsburgh Press, Dec. 9, 1919.
43 Stewart, Pittsburgh Public Parks, 4.
44 Ibid., 9.
45 Citizens Committee on the City Plan of Pittsburgh, Parks, 13.
broader movement advocating new recreational facilities and programs in urban areas. It did not consider the idea that the parkland could be valuable as a nature preserve. Other Pittsburghers, however, favored this option for park utilization. The years before the land was officially opened as a city park in 1927 were marked by a controversy concerning the function of Frick Park. One group supported the building of a new golf course on the property to ease the crowded course in Schenley Park. They claimed that it was beyond the means of most people to belong to private country clubs and argued that the city should respond to this demand for more facilities. On the other side of the controversy were those people, led by nature lovers and a women’s organization, who wanted Frick Woods to remain a sanctuary so it would “continue through the years to gladden the hearts of nature lovers and teach Pittsburghers of the nature of this region.” They maintained that such facilities as golf courses and the work of landscape architects should not be allowed to spoil the natural beauty of the land:

the forest should be preserved in its natural state as an example of the manner in which Nature clothes the land when not interfered with by man. Formal parks, with the trees planted in orderly rows and the grass carefully mowed may be found in many places . . . but Pittsburgh has no extensive tract of natural woodland outside of the Frick property, and it should be permitted to remain as the Creator made it, the home of wild flowers, birds, squirrels, rabbits, opossums and other small animals.

Public opinion was apparently largely in favor of the plan to leave Frick Park undeveloped. As an editorial in the Pittsburgh Post noted, “the plea has struck a sympathetic chord in the hearts of thousands and there is reason to believe that the city authorities will be going counter to public sentiment if they ignore it.” This position was in agreement with the trustees’ wishes to keep the park largely natural, and was evidently heeded by park administrators. In 1927 the trustees approved $50,000 for development of the land by the Bureau of Parks to make it more accessible to the public, but the money went toward cleanup and the breaking of new nature trails rather than the construction of facilities for active recreation needs. On June 25 of that year, undeveloped except for its entrances and a walking trail, and still

46 Pittsburgh Sun, May 19, 1926.
47 Pittsburgh Post, Mar. 1, 1924.
48 Ibid., Aug. 3, 1925.
49 Ibid., Mar. 1, 1924.
50 Pittsburgh Gazette Times, May 22, 1927.
considered “an almost primitive Mecca in the heart of a big metropolis,” Frick Park was officially opened.

There was further discussion of driveways, playgrounds, and a golf course later. The increased size of Frick Park, said the golfing enthusiasts, made it possible to serve the interests of both nature lovers and golfers. Although this argument did not produce its desired results, the park nevertheless was affected to some degree by the urban park movement and the increasing public demand for recreational facilities. In 1929, for example, a contract had been let for the building of two playgrounds with athletic fields. These recreational areas, however, were on the edges of the park’s boundaries, and it was emphasized by the park supervisor that construction of such facilities was only a side issue: “We want to keep the park just as natural and just as wild as we can . . . It is planned for nature lovers, for people that love to ramble around in picturesque outdoors.”

Subsequent Developments

By the thirties municipal park facilities in the United States had become an expected feature of urban life, and the park movement entered its third phase. During this era, lasting from 1930 to 1965, park administrators shifted their efforts from the programming of athletic activities and the creation of new, smaller parks to the expansion of the physical system inside the existing areas. This increase in the amount and size of such recreational facilities as clubhouses, swimming pools, and playgrounds was in response to rising public demand. This was due in turn to an increase in leisure time from unemployment during the Depression, and later from the shorter workweek, long weekends, earlier retirement ages, daylight-saving time, and improved road systems.

The work of park leaders during the era of recreational facility development moved away from the idealistic concept of the park. These efforts eventually led to a general loss of interest in the purposes of parks and of park services, and: “With the loss of idealism . . . came a loss of authority and prestige, and this was reflected in park budgets, which failed to rise during the era in a way commensurate with the expansion and diversification of park programming.”

51 Ibid.
52 Pittsburgh Press, July 9, 1927.
53 Ibid., July 25, 1929.
54 Cranz, Politics of Park Design, 105-6.
55 Ibid., 107.
budgeting for park programs came to characterize this era.

Most of Pittsburgh's parks did experience a loss of prestige in the public's eye and budgetary problems in the thirties. The 1939 annual report of the Bureau of Parks noted that for the previous five years park appropriations had been arbitrarily cut along with other public services to meet a general public protest against higher taxes, and expressed the bureau's dissatisfaction with the situation: "We believe that the taxpayer's valuation of park services has not been reflected in the proportion of tax funds allocated to these services. Not until the attitude of the taxpayers, who expect certain services, and the attitude of those who control appropriations are reconciled can this Bureau render a completely satisfactory public service." 56 Lack of maintenance meant that most of Pittsburgh's parks could not be used to their capacity.

Frick Park was in relatively good shape during the thirties because money allocated from the trust fund, approved by the trustees, was used for maintenance. The 1939 Bureau of Parks annual report praised this situation: "The maintenance, operation and development of Frick Park under the Frick Park Trust Fund by the Frick Park trustees is a practical demonstration of efficient, far-sighted park administration which might well be followed by the City Administration." 57

The Bureau of Parks reports listed the work done on the park with these funds. The entrances at Forbes Avenue, Beechwood Boulevard, and Homewood Cemetery were improved and there were a few more small playground areas and lawn bowling greens built. But again, the trustees approved the money for this construction by the city as long as they were kept on the periphery of the park. Only walking trails, of which Frick Park had more than any other city park, were built in its interior. 58

There were additional indications during the thirties that Frick Park's major attraction was its natural setting and that this atmosphere was firmly established. First was the purchase of ninety acres comprising the old Pittsburgh Country Club property. The 1936 acquisition, the largest single piece of land purchased since the park was donated, "sealed the doom of Pittsburgh's first and most exclusive Country Club," and golf was never played there again. 59 In 1939 the country

57 Ibid., 3.
59 Stewart, Pittsburgh Public Parks, 4.
club building was razed and the tees and traps were leveled and graded to return the land to its natural state.

The second indication was the activity of the Nature Center in Frick Park. Pittsburgh by this time had a popular and large nature education program headed by the Nature Recreation Division of the Bureau of Parks. The bureau's 1939 annual report notes, for example, that "this is one of the most outstanding nature educational programs conducted by any park system in the country and has received national recognition." 60

The publication of Nature News by the Naturalist Society of Frick Park from 1937 to 1939 shows that in this respect Frick Park was one of the city's most important information and educational centers. The monthly newsletter contained a few references to the use of such facilities as the tennis courts, but its emphasis was primarily on encouraging the participation in such activities as nature walks and the attendance of lectures on plant and animal life. The Naturalist Society took great pride in the special character of this park, which at that point was the largest in the city:

The unique fact that we have a large territory of primeval land in the very center of a highly artificial and industrialized area affords all who are interested in nature the fullest opportunity for the utilization of our leisure time in a pleasant and profitable manner . . . [Frick Park contains] 460 acres where nature may be seen at her best, affording a great outdoor laboratory where observations are made easier because of the absence of all the formal settings of a park.61

The Naturalist Society of the late thirties anticipated the environmental programs at other Pittsburgh parks when Frick in later years became the major nature education center in the city.62

The problems facing the rest of Pittsburgh's parks worsened during the forties when the war exacerbated the economic problems of the late thirties. Echoing the dissatisfaction of the Citizens Committee in 1923 with city park planning efforts, criticism this time came from within the public sector. The 1944 Bureau of Parks report pointed out that philanthropy and the private sector had been beneficial in encouraging planning efforts, but it was time for the city to act:

The decline of Park development after Bigelow's death shows the short-sightedness of depending on one man's enthusiasm. Following his death

60 Department of Public Works, Annual Reports of Bureau of Parks, 1938, 1939, Nature Recreation Division report.
62 Interview with Frick Park Naturalist Ford Parker, Apr. 25, 1984. Frick Park was made the major nature education center for the city a few years ago.
there seems to have been a steady falling off in the quality and quantity of park planning with no evidence of any vision or continuity of purpose. . . . We cannot continue indefinitely to rely on private philanthropy to develop an adequate park system for this city. It must be systematically planned and coordinated with the other public improvements of the City.63

In addition to programs planned for the postwar period, the report called for the reorganization of the bureau’s administrative system, recommending the establishment of a Parks and Recreation Commission. The report noted that many activities normally thought to be under the Bureau of Recreation were the responsibility of the Bureau of Parks, and a reorganization would lead to a more effective policy.

Restructuring the park system occurred in 1947 when the City Department of Parks and Recreation was established after the consolidation of the two bureaus under the Department of Public Works. (Frick Park remained in its own division in this new department.) Overall, however, the situation did not improve. There was mention of the need to create new parks but, according to a study in 1971, “this spurt of talk and action in the post World War II sphere on parks and recreation has failed to keep up with the demands of a large mass of people.” 64

The Frick trustees firmly established the direction of the city’s policies concerning the maintenance of Frick Park’s unique character, but the park was not completely sheltered from broader developments affecting urban parks in the 1940s. During World War II, for example, land was plowed near the Braddock Avenue play area and the Kensington Street entrance for victory gardens. In addition, a study conducted in 1947 by Frick Park Naturalist William LeRoy Black noted that the park’s ecology was not in a good state. It is significant to note here, however, that his call to limit the harmful effects of development came not as a result of efforts of park reformers, but rather from storm and waste sewers built before the park was opened for nearby residences, schools, and industries. These sewers emptied their contents into the park’s stream channels, and hunting, picnicking,

63 Department of Public Works, Annual Report of Bureau of Parks, 1944. In addition to the Citizens Committee already discussed, this report makes reference to the earlier private planning efforts of the Greater Pittsburgh Parks Association, later called the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. This group, however, was mostly involved in studying and purchasing land that became state parks. See Earl R. Schmidt and D. B. Schmidt, eds., Pittsburgh Regional Ecology (California, Pa., 1971), 45-46.
64 Schmidt and Schmidt, Pittsburgh Regional Ecology, 46.
View in Nine Mile Run Valley, looking east toward Swissvale

Looking up Fern Hollow from its junction with the main Nine Mile Run Valley
and the dumping of garbage and industrial waste further damaged the park's water supply and hurt its plant and animal life.65

Black's report was not a completely negative statement on the condition of Frick Park. Rather, it includes praise of park authorities in trying to correct former mistakes that had damaged the delicate balance of its ecology. Because of the trust fund, budgeting for maintenance in the park was affected less than other parks in the 1940s by the public's resistance to higher taxes. Moreover, Black acknowledges that it is impossible to maintain a completely natural environment within city limits. Referring to the park's history, he points out: "As the park acreage increased, certain changes became necessary in an effort to rectify the damage already done. An attempt was made to reach a compromise between the maintenance of a completely natural area and the formal ordinary city park." 66 A compromise was necessary, but this area was still unique compared to other city parks; Black called Frick Park "an oasis within a city." 67 During the next decade attempts to curtail the harmful effects of public neglect and to make the land more accessible were limited chiefly to routine trail maintenance.

Throughout the rest of the United States, the urban park movement had entered its fourth stage by the mid-sixties. Park policy in the "open space" system permitted a wider range of activities than in previous eras. The focus changed from parks providing recreational "experiences" instead of facilities.68 Advocates of both passive and active recreational activities agreed that a balance between the two types was necessary and desirable. They disagreed, however, about what proportion would be best for each park.69 By the mid-seventies the balance had shifted to the side of those who worried about overuse and overdevelopment of parks. In Pittsburgh, Frick Park's open space provided for both kinds of recreation, and, corresponding to the latest trend, development continued to be limited. The balance was clearly in favor of its unique distinction as a nature preserve.

Family involvement in Frick Park increased in the sixties and seventies, ensuring the continuation of the park's natural orientation. When consulted on the possibility of building a new playground area in 1963, the Frick family and trustees made sure the play area was kept

66 Ibid., 74.
67 Ibid., 2.
68 Cranz, Politics of Park Design, 141.
69 Ibid., 143.
on the perimeter along Beechwood Boulevard, and that it could not be seen from the interior of the park. Childs Frick donated money for the construction of a new nature center, replacing the original that had been donated by his sister Helen, to continue the important nature education programs in the park. Action on the center was held up after his death in 1965, but when plans were finally drawn up, Helen Frick was influential in the decision to make the building fit in with the contours of the surrounding landscape.

In the early seventies, due to pressure from the family in response to mounting public complaints, the city led a large clean-up campaign for the park. Streams and picnic areas were cleared of litter, and underbrush cut back from trails so that the public could better appreciate the natural wonders of the park. Groundbreaking for the new Frick Park Nature Center finally took place in 1977, and the two-story structure with a nature library, lecture rooms, a laboratory, a workshop, and exhibit areas now stands just off Beechwood Boulevard in Squirrel Hill. A new physical fitness course, the first of its kind in the city, was opened in the park in 1979. This most recent addition to the park is a one-and-a-half-mile course with exercise stations, but it does not interfere with the park’s surroundings because its path is similar to the other seventeen miles of trails in the woods.

At present, the city is maintaining Frick Park in a largely natural setting. The Nature Center is active with many community groups and city schools, and it is supervising such activities as the planting of an urban garden near the Beechwood entrance, and the planning stages of a seventeen-acre nature preserve which will include a wildflower meadow tract. There is also a proposal being considered for a five-year plan to guide the future of the park, which may include the construction of a new baseball field and a new trail by the Nature Center that would be accessible to the handicapped. Whether the trust fund left by Henry Clay Frick will be able to pay for such development without cutting into its principal, however, is doubtful. In any case, even if the park should undergo any such changes in the future, one would expect the character of the park to be maintained based on strong trends from the past. Any baseball fields would most likely be kept on the periphery of the park, and the trail for the handicapped would be a boardwalk, not a paved path.

71 Interview with Ford Parker, Frick Park Naturalist.
Conclusion

It is not clear that Henry Clay Frick was strongly opposed to the construction of recreational facilities on the land he donated for a park, but it is evident that efforts to develop it as conceptions of park functions changed during the different eras of the urban park movement were unsuccessful in drastically altering the face of Frick Park. With its relatively undisturbed environment, Frick Park provides more of a contrast to city living than the reform parks and recreational facilities of past decades. It is even closer to the Arcadian ideal than the pleasure grounds of the nineteenth century. With the current concern about the overuse and overdevelopment of urban land, as well as the environmental movement that encourages respect for nature, Frick Park fits into the contemporary climate better than ever before. The uniqueness of this addition to the city goes far beyond its size, and it remains a special part of Pittsburgh.