The Changing Face of Schenley Park

By Kenneth J. Heineman

NINETEEN eighty-nine marks the 100th anniversary of Pittsburgh’s Schenley Park. Edward Bigelow, the director of Public Works in 1888 who spearheaded the design and development of Pittsburgh’s park system, considered the 456-acre Schenley Park to be the system’s centerpiece. He convinced Mary Schenley, a Pittsburgh heiress living in London, to donate the crucial 300-acre “Mt. Airy Tract” to the city. Inspired by planned parks and urban development in American and European cities he had visited, Bigelow committed himself to recreating Pittsburgh’s cultural and physical landscape. Schenley Park would become, in the words of historian Peter Schmitt, an “arcadian park...a scene of simple pleasure and untroubled quiet.”

The development of Schenley Park and the city parks system, however, did not rest solely on Bigelow’s shoulders; rather it grew out of the constraints, resources and problems of Progressive Era reformers responding to rapid growth, over-crowding and burgeoning social inequities. In Pittsburgh and many other industrial metropolises, the middle and upper classes used increasing private capital and public revenue to consolidate and extend their influence socially and politically. The sentiments and rhetoric giving life to reform movements varied significantly, embracing high-minded altruism, concerns about exercising social control, and the eradication of urban squalor.

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Top, a lazy day, c. 1900. Right, pastoral beauty along serpentine drives offered relaxing passage for the minority who could afford transportation. The bucolic scenes were carefully scripted, principally along English landscape architect William Falconer’s lines. In this view, from 1897, the human touch is literal: tiny ink dots on the photograph’s negative make hillside foliage look lush. The photographer is not known.
Historian Barbara Judd observed that Bigelow empathized with the fears of Pittsburgh's "propertied classes," who viewed with alarm the city's 1877 Railroad Riot and the 1892 Homestead Lockout. In his 1889 *Annual Report of the Department of Public Works*, Bigelow claimed that his park could convince "men of all grades of life to forsake the saloons in favor of more healthful and innocent relaxation." Notwithstanding such egalitarian reform rhetoric, the park system necessarily reflected the values of its planners and administrators. Judd noted that "the effectiveness of the parks as instruments of social control was severely limited by Bigelow's inability to transcend his own middle-class background." Bigelow did not, for instance, push for trolley lines from working-class immigrant wards to his majestic park and promoted activities such as tennis and horseback riding, recreation the working class was unfamiliar with and could not afford. Thus, for its first 30 years, Schenley Park was the domain of the wealthy who lived in Pittsburgh's new, affluent East End suburbs. The inaccessibility of the park to the less wealthy decreased over time, in part due to the changes in the surrounding neighborhoods. In particular, demographic changes beginning in Oakland in the 1920s — away from Protestant, middle-class dominance toward a more ethnically and religiously diverse population — signalled a shift in the Park's primary clientele.

Pittsburgh's rivers, hills and bewildering array of blind alleys and one-way streets promote the cultural insularity and family-directedness of its neighborhoods. This has ensured that Schenley Park largely serves its proximate neighborhoods: Oakland, Squirrel Hill, and to a lesser extent, Shadyside. For instance, Northside and Southside residents seldom, if ever, venture into Schenley Park since their own neighborhoods have playgrounds and swimming pools. Consequently, with some significant exceptions — the Phipps Conservatory's flower shows, the park's public golf course and the ice-skating facilities — the offerings at Schenley Park in 1989, as was generally true in 1889, appeal to a neighborhood, rather than a city or regional, audience.

It is vital to recognize the important relationship between park and neighborhood, and that as Pittsburgh and Oakland's composition and values changed over time, so Schenley Park had to change in order to remain socially meaningful. The park became more plebian in nature, as indicated by new recreational facilities such as a swimming pool and an ice-skating rink, and the greater social diversity evident at Independence Day celebrations. This essay focuses on the evolving cultural landscape of the park to the present time, emphasizing the key transitional period of the 1920s.

Oakland, a bastion of upper-class Scotch-Irish Presbyterian respectability in 1900, became more ethnically and socially diverse within a span of 20 years. As early as the 1890s, Irish and Italian Catholics, in small and then increasing numbers, moved from the city core to Oakland. Two prominent Irish-American political leaders, William Brennen, a labor lawyer and Allegheny County Democratic treasurer, and Jimmy Coyne, Republican ward leader and close friend of machine boss William Flinn, made Oakland their base of operations. Coyne owned a saloon in Oakland which served as an informal meeting hall for ambitious Irish Catholic politicians. While most of the Italians who left the lower Hill District in the 1890s had relocated to Bloomfield and East Liberty, a few hundred, many directly or indirectly related to each other, settled near Panther Hol-
Schenley Park's pool and Mayor E.V. Babcock's move to provide free public transit into the park for kids made recreation more accessible for more people. Meanwhile, nearby neighborhoods were changing, especially Oakland, which by the 1920s was not only “cultured” and commercial but also working-class and residential.
nalled an important shift in the city and the park's attitude towards working-class ethnic citizens. Just as significant, the city awarded the Schenley Park pool engineering contract to a Jew, an unprecedented development, and the Irish Catholics in Oakland had acquired sufficient political clout to influence social reform, as evidenced by their presence in the Woman's Club of Oakland.6

In 1920, for the first time, Pittsburgh, under the leadership of Mayor E.V. Babcock, provided free city-operated transportation for women and children "from the car lines" into "the inner recesses of the parks." When Bigelow had built Grant and Beechwood boulevards "to connect Highland and Schenley parks with downtown Pittsburgh" in 1895, he constructed them, Barbara Judd noted, "without transit service so they might become 'the favorite pleasure way' of Pittsburghers who owned horse and carriage or a bicycle and had the leisure time to take scenic drives to and through the Arcadian parks." Babcock's decision to offer free transportation for women and children into the parks finally made Schenley Park physically accessible to the less affluent.7

Pittsburgh's playground and neighborhood park movement owed much to the reformers' realization that Schenley Park had traditionally served a largely well-to-do constituency. The Civic Club of Allegheny County, a leading reform organization, was responsible for opening the city's first playground on July 4, 1896, at the Forbes School. Within the next two years, playgrounds opened in the Hill District and Soho, among other immigrant working-class neighborhoods. By 1921, Pittsburgh's 12 year-round and 23 summer playgrounds totaled 50 acres and claimed an annual attendance of 2,593,193. That year, the city spent $400,000 on playgrounds, building five swimming pools and four ballparks for neighborhood children. At the Civic Club's prodding, Pittsburgh also established several neighborhood parks, such as the 19.9-acre Arsenal Park in Lawrenceville, dedicated on Independence Day 1907. Prior to 1910, the city had allocated more money to Schenley Park than to all of the other parks combined. In 1893, Schenley Park had received $123,000 for improvements, compared to $43,500 for the comparable 366-acre Highland Park. After 1910, the city invested greater funds in the establishment and maintenance of parks throughout the city. Consequently, in 1915 Pittsburgh possessed 19 parks with a total area of 1,328 acres.8

The reformers hoped that by providing neighborhood recreational facilities, working-class children would cease playing in busy, dangerous streets or, alternatively, be lured out of their dark and unhealthy tenement rooms into the "fresh air" and "sunshine." (In industrializing Pittsburgh, fresh air and sunshine were problematic.) Thus the proliferation of parks and playgrounds. But the Civic Club and Pittsburgh's newspapers recognized in the early 1920s that more and different types of recreational facilities had to be developed. During Pittsburgh's hot and humid summers, nearly 200,000 children and adults sought relief in the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers. In 1921, the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph sternly warned against swimming in the area's rivers, describing them as:

...virtually open sewers, polluted not only with sewage from hundreds of thousands of homes but also with the poisons and acids discharged by coal mines, tanneries, paper mills, chemical plants and other factories.... Some of the water in which persons swim inevitably finds its way into their nostrils and mouths and frequently into their stomachs.

The water in the local rivers, taken internally without having been filtered, can scarcely be healthful. The railroads will not use it even in the boilers of their locomotives.

To make matters worse, the city occasionally had been lax in stationing lifeguards at the "river front beaches," prompting the Pittsburgh Post in 1921 to hire three lifeguards to prevent further drownings in the Allegheny River.9

Cultural change could also be discerned in the annual Independence Day celebrations. At the 1920 festivities in Schenley Park, the Irish-American Athletic Club competed in the Panther Hollow Lake aquatic events against a University of Pittsburgh team. In addition to the presence of Irish-American athletes, the Satisfaction Coffee Company sponsored an airplane "dogfight" above Schenley Park, marking the passing of the park's "solemn" celebrations and the beginning of the commercialization of the Fourth of July. On Independence Day 1930, the Duquesne Library Club, with a number of Italian athletes, challenged the elite Pittsburgh Athletic Club in the canoe tilting contest and swim meets. By 1940, Slovak athletes, and a black female runner from the Blairsville Athletic Club, Isadore Gibson, took part in Schenley Park's Independence Day track and field meet. Gibson won the 880-yard novice and the 880-yard open races. Schenley Park also arranged for that Independence Day a "Greater Pittsburgh All Nations Festival." Dressed in "native costumes," Italian girls danced the "tarentella" while Lawrenceville Lithuanians sang songs from the "homeland."10

In the early 1920s, Schenley Park began to host dance contests sponsored by the Hill District's Irene Kaufmann Settlement House. At these contests, working- and lower-middle-class Jew-
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The park’s merry-go-round — shown here in 1913, the year it was built — dazzled youngsters for decades at Panther Hollow Drive and Greenfield Road. Below, city Bureau of Recreation records call it a “Police Meet” in the park, 1922.

ish children, such as Ruth Tracht, performed the Butterfly dance. Tracht’s family played tennis in the 1920s and 1930s on Schenley Park courts once reserved almost exclusively for affluent Protestants. And the Schenley Oval, formerly the gathering place of wealthy horse racing fans, began to be used in the 1930s as the Central Catholic High School football practice field. Anthony Schmeck recalled the arduous trek from the Central Catholic High School to the Schenley Oval. On occasion, this trip became exciting, particularly when walking through Panther Hollow. As Central Catholic High School drew upon students from all over the city, the “Oakland boys,” a crew of local ethnically Irish and Italian children, regarded the football players as “outsiders” invading “their turf.” Keenly aware of the reputations of such Oakland legends as “Maniac” McDonough, “Hooks” Farrell and “Jeep” DePasquale, the Central Catholic football players wisely ran away at their thundering approach.11

Schenley Park’s baseball diamond and merry-go-round underscored the increasingly plebian nature of the park in the 1920s and 1930s. Although baseball became “professionalized” by the turn of the century, historians Robert Ruck and Francis Couvares observed, it was not an elite sport. Equipment, frequently shared among amateur baseball enthusiasts, was relatively inexpensive, and the game could be played in the most humble sandlot or park ball diamond. With the advent of World War I, larger numbers of Americans were introduced to the game and continued to play long after the war’s end. By 1926, there were 223 baseball clubs in Pittsburgh, and legendary Pirates star Honus Wagner could be found on any number of sandlots and ball diamonds coaching working-class children on the finer points of the game.12

Pittsburgh’s merry-go-rounds, free to the public, were particu-
larly popular park attractions. In 1938, the park’s merry-go-rounds gave 164,740 rides. The Schenley Park ride, constructed in 1913 and located at the corner of the Panther Hollow Drive and Greenfield Road, exerted great appeal to wide-eyed children. When there was no money for a movie ticket in the Depression years, little Gerry Katz of the Hill District would venture to Schenley Park in her father’s truck to ride the merry-go-round. It also attracted Catholics and Jews who had begun to move into Squirrel Hill. As a young child, Celeste Silberstein, whose family enjoyed the park’s merry-go-round and ice skating and picnic facilities, thought it quite natural that everyone in Oakland, Squirrel Hill and Schenley Park was either Catholic or Jewish. She “never knew that Protestants existed.”

It should be pointed out that although Oakland and Schenley Park were no longer considered off-limits to Jews by the 1920s, the area was not the favorite haunt of Hill District Jewish children. Such children came largely from Russian and Eastern European Orthodox Jewish backgrounds whose parents, mostly impoverished peasants, had emigrated at the turn of the century. Oakland’s Rodef Shalom temple, the Cordia Club and other Jewish cultural facilities were operated by and for a largely middle-class, assimilated German-Jewish constituency. Gerry Katz recalls that to “fit in,” Oakland’s German Jewish community expected the Hill District’s more recent Jewish immigrants to forsake Yiddish and to embrace mainstream American cultural values.

Even as greater numbers of working and lower-middle-class ethnic Pittsburghers made use of Schenley Park in the 1920s and 1930s, some Protestants, removed to Shadyside and the suburbs, continued to use and attempted to shape the park’s facilities. In 1932, Rev. Robert McGowan of the Bellefield Presbyterian Church dedicated a bowling green in Schenley Park. The game of bowls was Scottish and dated “back before the time of Shakespeare.” That same year, members of the Daughters of Betsy Ross chapter planted trees near Schenley Park’s golf course. And in 1936, Mrs. Helen Clay Frick donated money to Schenley Park for an azalea garden on Flagstaff Hill.

Such actions were the exception by the 1920s and 1930s, as Schenley Park became increasingly less important to wealthy citizens, both in terms of cultural and recreational activities, and as a locus for private philanthropy. The latter development placed a greater economic burden on the city’s tax payers who had to pay for Schenley Park’s maintenance. At the turn of the century, the Bulletin, Pittsburgh’s society newspaper, featured front-page coverage of club picnics and Independence Day celebrations in Schenley Park. Throngs of well-dressed prominent citizens were pictured at the Schenley Oval while chaperons escorted young couples through the park. By the 1920s, the Bulletin had little to report on Schenley Park. Society music recitals, art exhibitions and college and preparatory school commencement exercises were held in the Schenley Hotel, the Carnegie complex, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, the Syria Mosque and the Twentieth Century Club, rather than in Schenley Park. In 1922, the Open Championship of the Pennsylvania Golf Association and the Western Pennsylvania Tennis Championship took place, respectively, at the Allegheny Country Club and the Pittsburgh Athletic Association courts. Pittsburgh’s wealthy had generally ceased using Schenley Park’s golf course and tennis courts.

The coming of the Great Depression in 1929 both harmed and ultimately benefited Schenley Park. In the short term, use of the city’s recreational facilities and subsequent revenues dropped precipitously from 1929 to 1934. One may possibly infer by the declining attendance rates that the city’s less affluent comprised the bulk of the park’s patrons, as they suffered far more economic hardship than the wealthy during the Depression, and consequently, had less disposable income to spend on recreational activities. The city parks’ revenues incrementally improved as the New Deal stimulated economic recovery, so that by 1938 they were double the 1934 figures. Seeking cheer and color in the depressed and drab city, 125,000 people in 1938 went to the Phipps Conservatory’s annual flower shows while 175,000 enjoyed Schenley Park’s matinee races, social dances and football games. A conservation exhibit in the Conservatory, Sunday morning nature walks, and botanical lessons attracted 74,700 patrons. As some measure of the fortitude of Pittsburghers in the 1930s, despite widespread poverty and a high unemployment rate — 31.4 percent city-wide and 56.8 percent in the Hill District, in 1934 — vandalism and other forms of criminal activity were negligible features of the parks. In Pittsburgh’s parks in 1938, only one person was arrested for manslaughter, one for solicitation and 10 for juvenile delinquency. The most popular crime in the parks was drinking. But there were just 50 arrests for drunkenness, an insignificant figure in a city with a remarkable number of taverns and a population of over 500,000.

Pittsburgh’s parks, and Schenley Park in particular, entered an intense phase of concerted maintenance in the 1930s, due in large measure to the New Deal and the city’s emerging ethnic Catholic Democratic political leaders. In Schenley Park in 1938, the Works Progress Administration constructed seven stone foot bridges across the Panther Hollow stream,
Left, the 1920s were years of transition. At track and field meets like this one at Schenley Oval in 1924, the children of established American immigrant families began competing, for the first time, with the children of recent immigrants, mostly from Southern and Eastern Europe. Other parkgoers foreshadowed more dramatic changes. Thousands of overnight adventurers, often part of cross-country motoring clubs, took advantage each year of Schenley’s “tourist camp.” The year was 1928.
removed 10,017 small trees and stumps, redressed and raised 15,500 linear feet of road curbing and renovated the Panther Hollow Boat House. The WPA, and the National Youth Administration, the federal government agency designed to provide job training and financial aid to high school and college students, also restored the historic Martin's Cabin. This cabin later became "the nucleus of the David L. Lawrence Camp, a day camp for children." In 1939, the WPA replaced Schenley Park's "inadequate and broken down sewers," fashioned four new bridle trail bridges, planted 3,650 trees and graded, topsoiled and seeded play areas devoted to baseball, football and mushball. The WPA also spent $306,367 on the rehabilitation of the Phipps Conservatory's superstructure. This list of WPA reconstruction from 1938 to 1939 represents just a small fraction of what the New Deal accomplished in the revitalization of Schenley Park. Without this federal aid, a nearly bankrupt municipal government, which could no longer count upon private philanthropy, would not have had the financial resources to save the park from decay.18

World War II brought an end to the WPA and the enormous federal assistance to Schenley Park. But the war, and the triumph of industrial unionism, also brought a general prosperity to the Pittsburgh District that continued into the 1960s. Part of this prosperity, and municipal munificence, could be seen in the 25 swimming pools, 53 tennis courts, 17 baseball diamonds and 23 softball diamonds the city operated by 1948. The declining tuberculosis death rate, from a 1908 level of 145 per 100,000 population to 35.8 per 100,000 in 1948, provided further evidence of the improved quality of life in Pittsburgh.19

Ironically, prosperous times were a harbinger of Schenley Park's future difficulties. Independence Day celebrations, once a popular feature of Schenley Park, became decentralized, with a greater emphasis on neighborhood park festivities and recreation. By the 1960s, redevelopment of the Point drew hundreds of thousands of people downtown. Downtown offered the enormous Three Rivers Art Festival and well-received concerts, and became the focal point for Pittsburgh's Independence Day celebrations. Further, the destruction of Forbes Field and the Pirates' and the Steelers' relocation to Three Rivers Stadium from the Point in 1970 eliminated Oakland's chief regional recreational attraction. The upward social-economic mobility of ethnic Catholics had a significant impact on residential and recreational patterns. Having moved by the thousands to suburban Allegheny County after World War II, ethnic middle-class citizens chose to recreate in the North and South county parks, rather than contend with Oakland and Squirrel Hill's legendary traffic jams to get to Schenley Park. Kennywood amusement park had always been a favorite recreational spot for Pittsburgh-area ethnic citizens, mainly industrial workers. Kennywood also continued to sponsor ethnic celebrations, including Italian and Slovak Days, thus maintaining its lock on its traditional constituency. Finally, the influx of blacks from the Hill District into Oakland, and tense race relations — highlighted by the 1968 uprising and reflected in the University of Pittsburgh's "concrete fortress" architectural style of that era — made the neighborhood and Schenley Park unattractive to suburbanites.20

Additionally, the city's parks confronted the problem of sustained population decline in the post-World War II era. From 1950 to 1960, Pittsburgh's population decreased 11 percent, from 676,800 to 604,332; there was no net gain in the metropolitan area, indicating that people were leaving the city far behind. This decline continued, so that by 1970, Pittsburgh had 520,117 residents. As the city's population decreased, so did retail sales, which plunged 16 percent from 1963 to 1972. Population loss and worsening retail sales pointed to the city's shrinking tax base and to its inability to maintain adequately the parks and playgrounds. This situation became particularly acute in the 1970s as Pittsburgh struggled to operate a park system designed for a population of 700,000, nearly twice the city's actual size by 1989. Economic hardship and municipal impoverishment guaranteed the deterioration of Schenley Park as well as the city's entire park system.21

The maintenance and administration of the city's parks have always been highly politicized. An entrenched patronage system within the Department of Public Works, beginning early in the twentieth century, ensured that most park expansions hinged upon the political orientation of city government. Perhaps the most notorious example of patronage politics occurred in 1935, when Public Works Director Leslie Johnston at first refused to allow WPA-sponsored projects to be built in Schenley Park. Johnston, a political crony of Democratic party leader David Lawrence, realized that the rival administration of Mayor William McNair would take credit for the infusion of federal money. Given this history, it was fitting that one of the last major construction projects in Schenley Park, the creation of an ice skating rink in the early 1970s, should become controversial.22

In 1971, Mayor Peter Flaherty sought to make Schenley Park a more "active" recreational area, allocating $1.5 million for an ice rink and "warming building" to serve the community and city. Immediately, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Greater East End Citizens Alliance voiced their opposition. The Alliance ar-
Top, Panther Hollow Lake, c. 1950. 
Left, forces of disunity in Oakland’s residential neighborhoods also have been evident in recent decades, with major street and highway improvements, hospital expansions, and a campus building boom at the University of Pittsburgh. The exact site in Oakland for this photograph, c. 1955, is not known.
gued that Schenley Park “should be used for flying kites and having picnics” and not for mass entertainment which would turn it into “a noisy, crowded, polluted playground.” Oakland Development Inc., comprised of representatives from the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, Carlow College, the Oakland hospitals, and “community leaders,” joined the opposition in 1973: “The primary policy toward park management should be to conserve it as a ‘soft park’ with an informal but comely order, where in a natural setting people can spend leisure time as they wish....” That year, the Sierra Club’s Pittsburgh chapter also came out against the ice rink.

At issue was a contrasting conception of recreational activity, in large measure shaped by class perceptions of appropriate forms of leisure. The middle and upper middle class, whose members filled the ranks of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Greater East End Citizens Alliance and the Sierra Club, preferred Schenley Park to be used for solitary nature walks and calm reflection. Less affluent residents viewed recreation as an active and mass pursuit and were particularly attracted to skating and swimming. Imposed on these differing “world views” was an ethnic dimension. The University of Pittsburgh had engendered a great deal of community hostility by destroying sections of Little Italy as part of its expansion program. It could have only appeared hypocritical to Oakland’s ethnic community that the same university which opposed disrupting Schenley Park by providing mass entertainment had shown no such solicitation in expelling long-term residents from their homes. Mayor Flaherty had gained the good will of Oakland’s ethnic community in the early 1970s by trying to block further university expansion. His decision to provide community residents with recreational activities socially meaningful to them underscored the cultural evolution of neighborhoods adjacent to Schenley Park.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Schenley Park readily adapted to changing recreational tastes and social mores. After the riding stable burned to the ground in May 1971, it was not replaced, thus ending 80 years of equestrian pursuit in the park. By 1977, the bridle paths had become cross-country skiing trails. The Schenley Oval area evolved into a recreational spot for gay people. Swimming, tennis and the Phipps Conservatory remained popular park attractions. In 1985, 100,000 people came to swim, 50,000 to play tennis and 200,000 to visit the Conservatory. Thousands of
University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon students and residents come each year to the Smoky City Folk Festival at Flagstaff Hill to watch the Coal Country Cloggers and to listen to Appalachian and blues music. Flagstaff Hill, a favorite locale for sun bathers and frisbee enthusiasts, also offers free movies on summer nights. Sensitive to mass tastes, Citiparks shows decidedly commercial releases, rather than artistic foreign films. All of these recreational offerings, free folk festivals and movies, or swimming and skiing, bring to Schenley Park a socially diverse audience. Blue collar and white collar, Catholic and Protestant, black and white, and young and old venture comfortably into a park once culturally accessible only to the city’s elite.

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2 City of Pittsburgh, Department of Public Works, Annual Report of the Department of Public Works 1889 (Pittsburgh: 1890), 17; Judd, 53-56.


5 Susan P. Ruben, ed., Thistletalk 14 (Summer 1986), publication of the Winchester-Thurston Alumnae Association, 7; Weber, 12; Ruth (Clarke) Williams, Pittsburgh, telephone interview with the author, 22 June 1989. Like many older city neighborhoods, demographic changes were occurring in the 1920s in Oakland for a variety of reasons: over-crowding, the development of newer, more attractive suburbs and improved transportation, to name a few. At first glance, it would appear ironic that reformers, many of whom were among the established elite leaving Oakland, in part, because of ethnic Catholic in-migration, should also be concerned with improving the cultural and physical environment of the city’s poor. It is ironic. The key to understanding this tension is that such reformers most often limited their efforts to ameliorating the ethnic Catholics’ condition, as opposed to solving the causes of their impoverishment: e.g., subsistent wages, the open shop, and subsequent inability to acquire higher education and upward social mobility. To rectify these problems, reformers would have had to advocate a profound restructuring of the economic system and labor-management relations. Such a restructuring would have required reformers to forfeit their political, social and economic advantages, or at least to accept a somewhat lower standard of living.


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Phipps Conservatory has long been a park beacon. Its November 1982 “Fiesta of Fall Flowers,” dedicated to flower-loving Mexico, marked a rare occurrence of Spanish culture in otherwise ethnically diverse Pittsburgh. The first Phipps flower show ever devoted to one country, the event drew 45,000 visitors and featured 33,000 chrysanthemums of 300 varieties.
the author; 22 June 1989; Gangewere, 26; Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks, Annual Report of the Bureau of Parks, Department of Public Works, City of Pittsburgh, for the Year 1938 (Pittsburgh: 1939).


15 Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, 18 May 1932; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 28 Oct. 1936.

16 The Bulletin (Pittsburgh), 8 July 1899, 13 July 1901, 24 Aug. 1901, 13 May 1922, 20 May 1922, 3 June 1922, 10 June 1922, 17 June 1922, 21 June 1922.

17 Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks, 1938 Annual Report; Stave, 46.

18 Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks, 1938 Annual Report; Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks, Annual Report of the Bureau of Parks, Department of Public Works, City of Pittsburgh, for the Year 1939 (Pittsburgh: 1940); Gangewere, 28.

19 Willis, 152, 175.

20 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 3 July 1950, 5 July 1950, 5 July 1960; Bodnar, et al., 275; Lindel Gum, “Turning Thirstysomething: The Three Rivers Art Festival Settles Down,” In Pittsburgh, 24 May - 30 May 1989; Roy Lubove, Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business and Environmental Change (New York: 1969), includes an excellent discussion of race relations in Pittsburgh during the 1960s. Lubove characterizes the buildings constructed by the University of Pittsburgh during the 1960s as being in the “concrete fortress” architectural style. I am suggesting this was, in part, a response to the encroaching black ghetto.


22 Stave, 86-87, 125.


24 Lubove, 129, 140; Templeton, “Schenley Park: Where Mother Nature and Human Nature Co-exist.” Godfrey Hodgson, in America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon, What Happened and Why (New York: 1978), 401-404, 407-408, 411, observed that the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and such lobby groups as the Sierra Club, drew their support from a college-educated and generally upper-middle-class population. From the environmental movement’s perspective, mass culture went hand-in-hand with corporate culture to destroy precious resources. Conservation, the activists argued, required changing the forms of mass leisure pursuits so that man and nature can co-exist. Invariably, this meant people should forsake snowmobiles and recreational vehicles and heed the environmentalists’ counsel.