Preliminary Report

PARK SYSTEM FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

WASHINGTON REGION

NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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By

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I. Introduction

The future Metropolitan city about Washington, if it is to be worthy of its title as the National Capital, must be provided with open spaces for the recreation and health of the inhabitants and for the pleasure of visitors. How shall the areas to be set aside for these purposes be chosen? Where shall they be located? How much area is needed? How and when shall they be acquired or preserved?

Factors Governing Choice of Areas.

We naturally expect to include in the future Regional Park System areas of scenic beauty - intrinsic beauty of form, color, and composition. We wish our parks and open spaces to include areas of special interest - extrinsic beauty from historical associations or because they are notable for their geologic, botanic or other natural features. Choice of areas should be related to the probable use of the land after it is set aside, whether that use is dominantly for active recreation, education, or conservation. Finally, the areas considered must be studied in their relation to existing and expected conditions of land tenure, governmental jurisdiction, traffic and transit facilities and trends of population growth.

II. Physical Features of the Region

The chief physical feature of the Washington Region is a great Y formed by the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. Between the arms of the Y lies the old city, designed by l'Enfant with the President's Palace, or White House, looking straight down the River. The end of the left arm marks the turn of the Potomac River at Great Falls. The right arm follows Indian Creek and the route to Camp Meade and Baltimore. Mt. Vernon and Fort Washington form the base of the Y where the river broadens to receive Little Hunting Creek and the Piscataway.

Branching from the stem of the Y are numerous streams which cut deeply into the land leaving a series of ridges running parallel with the arms of the Y. The more important of these streams are Hunting Creek and Four Mile Run on the west or Virginia shore and Broad Creek or Henson Creek and Oxon Run on the Maryland side. The city of Alexandria lies just north of Hunting Creek.

Almost directly on a line with the stem of the Y, Rock Creek extends northward six miles to the north corner of the District of Columbia, whence it turns generally northwest. Other streams branch more perpendicularly from the arms of the Y, such as the Northwest, Sligo and Paint Branches northwest from the eastern arm and Little Falls Branch, Minnehaha Creek and Cabin John Creek branching northeast from the western arm. In a similar manner, Cabin Branch, Beaver Dam Creek and Briar Ditch cut into the hills east of the Anacostia and Pimmit, Turkey, Dead, Scott and Difficult Runs cut the Virginia Palisades of the Potomac.

Between these streams long ridges have been left in the Coastal Plain area and rolling country in the Piedmont Area. The most notable of the ridges east of the Potomac River are the Anacostia and Oxon Hills; while west of the Potomac, Arlington and Seminary ridges dominate. The ridges are fairly flat for a half mile to a mile across the tops and average between 200 and 250 feet above sea level.

Some of the rolling country above the "fall line" is also deeply cut in fairly defined ridges; particularly between the Paint, Northwest and Sligo Branches. From these ridges distant views are often obtainable.

III. Existing Open Spaces.

The map of Existing Open Spaces accompanying this report shows areas inpublic ownership and properties of semi-public institutions and country clubs. Practically all of the open spaces outside of the District are owned by the UnitedStates or by private institutions, with the single notable exception of the Alexandria Reservoir. The large areas owned by the Federal Government and by the District of Columbia outside of the Federal District are particularly impressive both for their quantity of area and for their scenic quality.

The distribution of existing open spaces is haphazard in the extreme. There are no connecting links to combine the scattered holdings into a system or to secure the advantages of combined use of public areas in the same general locality.

IV. Previous Regional Park Proposals.

Perhaps the simplest way to outline the areas of greatest scenic interest within the Washington Region is to briefly review some of the proposals previously made for Regional Parks. Any list of such proposals should start with Great Falls and the Gorge of the Potomac. Near the top of the list we should place the Mount Vernon Boulevard, which has been a live project since 1889 or longer. Since the War Department has been authorized to sell certain of the lands in its control, attention has been vigorously called to the park values of Forts Washington, Hunt, and Foote on the lower Potomac. At the same time, the possibilities of the large areas in public ownership at Camp Humphries and Camp Meade have been suggested.

In connection with Camp Meade, the proposal of Mr. William M. Ellicott of Baltimore for a National Forest in the area about Washington deserves some mention. Mr. Ellicott in conjunction with the State Forester of Maryland has studied the possibilities of a Forest between the Capitol and Camp Meade, with forest drives or a parkway by that route to Baltimore.

Mr. Ellicott's scheme also includes the acquisition of the rugged terrain along the Northwest and Paint Branches above the "fall line". The upper part of the area along the Northwest Branch is to be the site of a new reservoir of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. That Commission has exerted itself to preserve the valley of Sligo Branch and to get a parkway through the valley down to Hyattsville.

For many years the desirability of extending Rock Creek Park outside of the District of Columbia has been recognized. The growth of the suburban area in Montgomery County has emphasized the need of action. A list of other proposals in Montgomery County would include the valley of Cabin John Creek, the heights above Glen Echo, the vicinity of Chevy Chase Lake, and along Minnehaha Branch.

V. Areas of Special Interest.

In order to determine the areas of greatest interest, wellknown authorities in different fields have been asked to indicate the areas of most importance in their line. Thus, the President of the Audubon Society has indicated areas frequented by rare birds; Dr. Fred. T. Coville, has indicated points of dominant botanical interest; Mr. Horace Peaslee, Chairman of the Institute of Architects Committee on a Plan of the Federal City, through a special sub-committee, has indicated the architectural and engineering attractions in the Washington Region.

A series of maps at uniform scale have been prepared by the Staff of the Commission from the data thus received and these maps are supplemented by brief descriptive reports, with illustrations, by the authorities concerned. The reports and maps deal with the following subjects:-

A. Interest in works of man
   1. Indian Villages, Shops & Trails.
   2. Historic Areas
   3. Architectural and Engineering

B. Interest in works of nature
   1. Geologic
   2. Ornithologic
   3. Botanic

Each time a spot or area is indicated on any of these maps, an argument is added for the inclusion of that spot within the Park System. By superimposing the maps one over another, the relative importance of areas is shown by the concentration of these arguments or indications.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

As a result of these studies five major regional projects are recommended for your consideration together with a number of other proposals which are more local in their character. The five major projects are:

A. Lower Potomac

B. Upper Potomac

C. Indian Creek

D. Rock Creek

E. Northwest Branch

All of the projects discussed below and some others are shown on the accompanying "open space diagram".

Project A. THE LOWER POTOMAC:

Between Washington and Mt. Vernon, the Potomac River flows almost due south for twelve miles through a broad valley with high ridges a quarter to a half mile back from the banks. At Fort Foote and at Fort Washington the ridges on the east bank come to the water's edge. On the west bank Fort Hunt is situated opposite Fort Washington with Mt. Vernon just below around the bend in the river.

It has been proposed recurrently that a Mt. Vernon Boulevard should connect Washington with Mt. Vernon. The latest proposal of this sort, now before Congress, calls for a 200-foot right-of-way along what is known as the River Route. Choice of this route was dictated by the importance of the river scenery and by the historic sites in Alexandria. Choice of the river route suggests the development of the banks of the lower Potomac for public purposes.

The river is a natural open space of great extent. It is and will be the dominant natural feature of the region. It is, therefore, desirable to take advantage of this open space and to make it accessible and enjoyable. On the west bank we will have the Mt. Vernon Boulevard from the Memorial Bridge to Mt. Vernon or beyond. On the east bank we might have a corresponding boulevard connecting Fort Washington with the City of Washington. By use of a ferry or eventually of a bridge at Fort Washington, the two boulevards can be combined into one great lower Potomac Drive.

1. Virginia Shore:

Just east of the Key Bridge, a low-lying piece of land remains in private property which should be acquired for park purposes. East of this land, Analostan Island is included in the park projects for the District of Columbia. Except for these two areas the whole shore to the southern end of the Experimental Farm is now in public control.

The governmental jurisdiction over Alexander's Island must be determined by the courts, but however they decide, the area should be acquired for park purposes as one of the chief approaches to the Capital. Here was the Indian village of Nameroughquena and here the first of the defenses of Washington was constructed. It is suggested on the accompanying plan that everything between the Pennsylvania Railroad and the shore should be included in a park.

From Gravelly Point to Alexandria all lands east of the projected Mt. Vernon Highway should be held by the public. Immediately south of Gravelly Point, there is opportunity to provide a yachting basin to replace the facilities now located between the Highway and Railway bridges. Between this basin and the mouth of Four Mile Run, the filled land outside the highway might be developed as a commercial airport for the whole region. The bay at the mouth of Four Mile Run suggests the possibility of a Flying Basin for use of seaplanes. Near Alexandria the commercial waterfront of that city could be doubled in extent by additions to the north with rail and water service.

On the accompanying plan the Mt. Vernon Boulevard is shown approximately as recommended by the Bureau of Public Roads. West of the Boulevard the railroad yards are shown expanded to almost double their present size. An additional waterfront parkway is suggested close to the water's edge and outside the flying field. This outer parkway might some day be carried past the Alexandria waterfront at an upper level and thus avoid the traffic on Washington Street.

South of Alexandria the land between the Mt. Vernon Boulevard and the river should all be acquired for public parks. West of the boulevard line, there is opportunity by filling the flats at the mouth of Hunting Creek to reclaim a large area close to Alexandria for use as play-fields and recreation grounds for the inhabitants of that city. Still further south, areas have been indicated as having great botanic and ornithologic importance, both east of Dyke and along Little Hunting Creek. It is important that acquisitions between Dyke and Fort Hunt be made in connection with the development of the Boulevard because the Boulevard will materially affect land values.

Fort Hunt, 197.41 acres, is near enough to Mt. Vernon and yet far enough away to be suitable for development of hotel and tourist camp facilities for visitors to the home of Washington.

The approach to Mt. Vernon proper by the proposed boulevard needs further study, especially in relation to the possible extension of the parkway to a connection with the main highways to the south and by the old railroad right-of-way to Camp Humphries. It is specially desirable that the large area of National Forest about Fort Humphries be made accessible in connection with this lower Potomac Project.

2. Maryland Shore:

The bluff at Fort Washington commands a wonderful view up the Potomac to the Washington Monument. Three hundred and fifty-four acres are now held by the War Department on this bluff which have been developed with barracks, houses and other facilities suitable for use by some institution. The fortress designed by L'Enfant and the steep slopes around the bluff should be held for strictly park purposes.

The Fort Washington Boulevard might descend the north slope of the bluff on the line of the present roadway and follow the shore to the mouth of Broad Creek. The present highway to Fort Washington goes so far back into the interior that no views of the river are obtainable from it. Since the highway will be needed for ordinary traffic purposes anyway, a parallel parkway may advantageously follow a different and more scenic route. The location along the river shown on the accompanying plan will follow the water's edge along lowland in contrast to the high location of the corresponding section of the Mt. Vernon Boulevard.

From Broad Creek a valley leads Northwest behind Indian Queen Point to Fort Foote, 66.6 acres, and the property of the Riverside Country Club. The Fort is now on the list of sites for sale by the War Department. It occupies a bluff overlooking the river and the extensive marshes along the Virginia Shore. By bringing the Fort Washington Boulevard out on this bluff

the relative positions of the roads on either shore will again be reversed, - this time with the eastern shore road occupying the higher elevation.

North of Fort Foote alternative routes suggest themselves. By one the shore would be followed all the way to and into the District of Columbia; by the other, the Boulevard would curve northeast along the ridge from which a variety of views are obtainable over the meadows, the river and Alexandria. Half way to the District line this route would enter the extensive holdings of the St. Elizabeth Hospital Farms. The value of this route depends on the acquisition of enough of the steep slopes of the ridge to protect the views. Possibly these slopes and the meadows and swamps below could be utilized for public purposes similar to the St. Elizabeth Farms.

Within the District of Columbia north of Blueplains two parkways corresponding to the high and low level routes between the District Line and Fort Foote have already been suggested as parts of the Park System of the District of Columbia. The Shore Route, called the Giesboro Parkway, would continue northeast along the Anacostia River and with a connection to the Capitol by the proposed South Capitol Street Bridge. The ridge route, or Shepherd Parkway, would include the sites of Forts Greble and Carroll and constitute a part of the Fort Drive.

Summary:

The lower Potomac project includes the public control of both banks of the river from Key Bridge to Mt. Vernon and the development of a Mt. Vernon Boulevard and a Fort Washington Boulevard to provide a great circuit drive 29½ miles in length, down one side of the river and back the other. The river banks would be developed partly for commerce,- by river, rail or air,- and partly for pleasure. In these ways, the largest natural open area,- mostly water, to be sure,- of the region, will be made accessible to and enjoyable by the people of the region and by the people of the United States.

The successful execution of the project involves the cooperation of the United States, Maryland, Virginia, Arlington, Fairfax and Prince George's Counties and the District of Columbia.

B. UPPER POTOMAC PROJECT.

Lord Bryce, in a paper on "The Nation's Capital" in 1913 described in vivid terms the scenic attractions and recreational opportunities about Washington. At one point in his address he remarked that

"The Potomac has two kinds of beauty--the beauty of the upper stream, murmuring over a rocky bed between bold heights crowned with wood, and the beauty of the wide expanse, spread out like a lake below the city into a vast sheet of silver." And again

"No European city has so noble a cataract in its vicinity as the Great Falls of the Potomac, a magnificent piece of scenery which you will, of course, always preserve."

In marked contrast with this rugged scenery, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal is a sleepy picturesque element in the landscape. The towpath along the canal or the canal itself offers unusual attractions to hikers, riders, skaters, or canoeists. The locks, in their disrepair are picturesque in the extreme.

The gorge of the Potomac is unusual from the biological view point. In the cool shade below the steep cliffs on the south bank you will find plants, bugs and animals in unusual variety. Here are combined fauna and flora of the upland mountain regions with those of the coastal plain. The river has brought the seeds and small animals from the hills and cut a cool gorge for them to develop in. Captain John Smith found in this vicinity "Beares, Deere and other beasts" and Argoll describes an animal which presumably was a bison. About Great Falls a large area should be acquired where animal life could be encouraged as in the National Parks.

Historically, the areas about the Chain Bridge and about Great Falls are of special interest. A group of fortifications were constructed in the vicinity of Chain Bridge during the Civil War, many of which are still traceable. At Great Falls the visitor may see the locks of the "Patowmack Canal" believed to have been designed by George Washington himself.

An area which thus combines so many of the qualities which we desire in the Regional Park System is naturally included as a project in this report. For convenience of discussion the project may be divided in three parts:

1st. The valley between Key Bridge and Chain Bridge.

2nd. The gorge between theChain Bridge and Great Falls, and

3rd. The Area about Great Falls.

1) Key Bridge to Chain Bridge.

Within the District of Columbia a park drive is proposed along the top of the bluff overlooking the gorge and the Virginia Palisades. "Merely to provide for a street at the top of the slope is not enough, for, although the land is for the most part too steep to have much commercial value, yet here and there ugly and offensive buildings are likely to creep in, as they have done somewhat in the past, unless the slope is all acquired with a view to a consistent treatment. Years ago New York showed the way in the Riverside drive, and it is high time that the example should be followed here, at least so far as concerns the acquisition of the land." The Commission has already authorized negotiations and consummation of purchases along the slopes of the bluff between Potomac Avenue and Canal Road. The prospect appears favorable, therefore, for the protection of the District side of the river.

Speaking of the river, Lord Bryce said,

"A reference to the Potomac leads me to speak of the spendid ridge of rocks forming the face of the hills on theVirginia side. They have been sadly cut into by quarries, spoiling the natural beauty of the rocks; but nature will one day repair those blemishes. Perhaps she will not do so within the lifetime of most of us, but in the course of years, with rain and frost and vegetation, lichens, moss, and grass, Nature will soften the harshness of the rocks where the stone has been taken away, and you will again have picturesque cliffs along the banks of the Potomac, with the tall trees lifting their plumage into the sky behind. Those are very valuable elements in our Washington landscape."

At that point he ventured a few suggestions:

"One is that it is desirable if possible to stop any further quarrying on the Potomac cliffs and to preserve the trees on the top of those cliffs on the Virginia side, and to make a good path, a walking path or riding path, or possibly a not too obtrusive driving road, along the top, looking down onto the river, from which you could get fine prospects. The road might be kept a little back, so as not to be conspicuous from below."

The road he suggests will be difficult and expensive to construct because of the very rough topography in this area, but the taking lines for the park should be made with an eye to possible construction in the distant future. The rapid increase in land values along these heights in recent months indicates the need of prompt action if the purposes Lord Bryce had in mind are to be carried out. It should be possible to obtain the face of the cliff, a small part of the high ground and larger parts of the intervening deep valleys at reasonable cost. The ridges back from the river might then be expected to develop for private residences with all the advantages of park surroundings. Ordinarily, one might hope for generous donations of lands by owners who could see the advantages accruing to their remaining properties by furtherance of the project.

2) Chain Bridge to Great Falls.

Just above Chain Bridge a dam has been proposed for the development of water power and to supplement the water supply of the District of Columbia. As described in the "Report on Water Supply of the District of Columbia and Water Power at Great Falls," by Colonel Langfitt in 1913, "The elevation of the water surface of the lake, which would be created by the high dam proposed, is 115 feet above low water of the Potomac River just above Chain Bridge. The elevation selected for the lake surface is a compromise between the desire to obtain as high a fall as possible and the necessity of reducing to a reasonable amount the overflow damages occasioned by ordinary flowage or by back water of floods. Even with that elevation, a short stretch of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and part of the electric railway between Washington and Cabin John Bridge will be overflowed together with a small length of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad."

A lake at this level would have a water surface of about 3000 acres and would stretch upstream to the very foot of Great Falls above the pavilion on the Virginia bank. Lake Washington or Lake Meigs, as it is called in the report, would be a major element in the scenery of the region. It would provide an opportunity for boating on a huge scale if such use were not considered inconsistent with its purpose as a source of water supply.

Against the utilitarian advantages of the dam and lake as a means of securing water supply and power with incidental recreational use, must be balanced the destruction of the gorge scenery, parts of the canal and of the distinctive wild life of the area. The apparent height of the cliffs would be reduced by half, the cutting rush and roar of water would be stilled, and the wild character of the landscape would be destroyed. It may be questioned whether backing water up so far on Great Falls may not have a deleterious effect on the scenery of their surroundings.

The dam will change the character of the sport of the canoeing enthusiasts who find shooting the rapids and Stubblefield Falls a hair-raising but most enjoyable pastime. Having shared in this sport I have a keen appreciation of its pleasures.

The Washington Biologists Field Club has maintained a camp on Plummer Island for over 20 years which has served as a station for observation and record of conditions of wild life. The eminent naturalists of the Biological Survey and similar departments of the government service consider the records and continued activity of this station of very great importance. The construction of the dam would utterly change the characteristics of the area studied and would drown out all but a hundredth part of Plummer Island itself.

Under these circumstances, and pending further study, it would seem to be wise for this Commission to refrain from taking any stand for or against the project for a dam at Little Falls, and to accommodate its plans to fit either the continuance of existing conditions in the gorge or the construction of a lake. Accommodation of this sort should not be difficult because the basic policy of preservation of the river banks for public purposes should govern in either case.

The development of the area for park purposes involves the continuance of the drive on the Maryland bluffs from the District Line to Great Falls.

"The beauty of the scenery along the route of this proposed noble river-side improvement is so rare and, in the minds of the Commission,* of so great value not only to all Washington, but to all visitors, American and foreign, that it should be safeguarded in every way. No building should be allowed between the drives and the river, and no change should come to pass in the character of the canal that will tend to transform its primitive character and quaint beauty. The canal has a charm of its own, half disclosed and half revealed, it winds among the trees; and not the least part of this charm, so desirable to be preserved, is the slow, old-fashioned movement of the boats and of the people on and near this ancient waterway.

* MacMillan - Senate Park Commission Plan of 1901.

Already the canal is used, aside from the navigation of commerce, by pleasure seekers in canoes, and by excursion parties in various craft. More and more will the canal be thus used as an attractive route between the populous city and the natural charms of the picturesque region between Cabin John Bridge and Great Falls. The preservation and continuance of the canal in its original character will thus add elements of gayety and life to a scene much to be enjoyed by the passers-by on the neighboring and upper roadways. Beyond the canal lies an area of lowlands, here and there bowlder-strewn and set with clumps of trees. It is now available in part for pasture. As a whole it is in keeping with the uncultivated hilltops of the Virginia Palisades, and would best be left without formal treatment."

"As its construction was a mere incident to the installation of the water supply, the location of the Conduit road was not fixed with regard to aesthetic effect, but from the fact that in many parts of its course it follows near the edge of the declivity, presenting very fine views, and because its grades are generally good, it is more resorted to than any drive leading out of the District, except the one to Arlington. We believe that permanent provision should be made for the ends that are filled in a temporary and partial manner by the Conduit road,"

Beyond Cabin John Bridge the park drive might turn more to the south and follow along the Canal. In this part of the project, Conduit Road lies at some distance from both river and canal. The intervening land between Conduit Road and the proposed drive along the canal could either be left for private development or utilized for playfields.

The Virginia cliffs should be treated in the same manner as recommended by Lord Bryce for the lower section, but here a larger area could be acquired in advance of real estate developments. In places, such as at Swinks Mill on Scotts Run, the riverside park should extend back to the Leesburg Road.

In both this section and in the valley between the Key Bridge and Chain Bridge, the control of the river flats is bound up with the question of the future of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. A constantly increasing number of camps are being constructed on the river flats and along the canal which are further complicating the legal and park problems. Since the largest single factor in the future development of the gorge of the Potomac for either park or power purposes is the canal, a study of the engineering, landscape and legal problems connected with it is most urgently needed.

3. Area about Great Falls.

The report of the Senate Park Commission in 1901 contains the following paragraph -

"The Great Falls of the Potomac, considering their proximity to the Capital, are quite as well worth preservation for their grandeur and natural beauty as the greater passages of scenery in the national parks of the West. Even at present, when the only means of approach is by canal or over the hilly detour by which the road is carried around the most interesting scenery, the Washington public goes to the Great Falls in sufficient numbers to maintain the pay bridge to the islands, erected by private enterprise, and with

increased facilities of access the place is likely to become a deservedly popular resort. The falls form one of the greatest cataracts of our Atlantic watershed, and while they themselves cannot be injured, yet the great trees that once clothed their banks have been cut, and in private hands the surroundings may be so injured as to detract greatly from the beauty and grandeur of the scene. Without interfering with the future utilization of the water power, the surroundings of the Great Falls on both sides of the river should, in our opinion, be converted into a national park, to be connected with the city by a continuous river drive."

That statement has much force, but nothing has happened. Since nothing happened other groups suggested that if a National Park could not be obtained, perhaps a National Forest could provide protection of the surroundings of Great Falls. One other alternative is suggested by the growth of the State Park Movement and by the huge success of the Palisades Interstate Park on the Hudson River above New York. Why not a Great Falls and Potomac Interstate Park?

With the construction of a bridge at Great Falls and the development of a river drive as suggested above, the Virginia and Maryland banks would be equally accessible. The interstate park could be tied in with routes from Washington to the Shenandoah National Park and to Cumberland along the Canal

Summary:

The Upper Potomac Project contemplates the preservation of the natural conditions in the valley and gorge of the Potomac and at Great Falls and the development of drives along the bluff or near the Canal on the Maryland side and where topography will permit on the Virginia side. Two projects for water power dams, at Little Falls and at Great Falls, together with the problem of the future of the C. & O. Canal complicate the situation.

It is proposed that an Interstate Park should be created by action of the States of Maryland and Virginia in which would be included the whole of the Virginia Palisades from Key Bridge to Great Falls, the bluffs on the Maryland bank west of the District Line, and an area of several thousand acres about Great Falls. The District of Columbia should secure the bluff within the limits of its jurisdiction and should otherwise assist in the complete execution of the project.

Baltimore - Camp Meade Parkway

Project C.

Between Washington and Baltimore a number of parkway routes have previously been suggested. The valley of the Eastern Branch offers an opportunity to combine a parkway route with provision of park and play space for the rapidly growing communities along the present Baltimore Boulevard.

Within the District of Columbia, the improvement of the Anacostia River as undertaken by the Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, will include

the purchase and development of the whole of the swamp lands bordering the river as far as the District Line. The improvement cannot logically stop there. A parkway from Baltimore and Camp Meade through the valley of Indian Creek and the Eastern Branch might properly enter the Anacostia River Park at the District Line and lead the visitor to the Nation's Capital by the Training School and Arboretum to East Capitol Street, the Capitol and the Mall.

Just outside the District, the Fort Lincoln Cemetery Corporation has suggested the gift of river frontage for the entire length of its holding. The remaining swamps up to Bladensburg should not be difficult to secure. An entrance to this extensive area should be provided from the Bladensburg Road just north of the Cemetery where the taking would include the old Duelling Ground especially famous as the scene of the Decatur Duel. This land is also a part of the Battlefield of Bladensburg where Commodore Barney made his stand.

At Bladensburg the parkway would cross the Bladensburg Road following the Northwest Branch and then fork with one route turning westward over the Railroad tracks and the other turning eastward to the Hyattsville Marshes. A second crossing of the present Baltimore Boulevard at this point is not of such serious moment as might be supposed for with the extension of Rhode Island Avenue and the development of a new through highway east of the marshes, as recommended at the December Meeting of the Commission, the present road between Bladensburg and Hyattsville will be of secondary importance.

From the new proposed highway a minor parkway would connect the east part of Bladensburg directly with the main Parkway at the Hyattsville Marshes. These Marshes, when drained or filled or both, are centrally located to provide much needed recreation areas for Hyattsville and Riverdale.

Directly east of College Park a knoll with fine oaks rises abruptly above the confluence of Paint Branch and Indian Creek. From this knoll a fine view may be obtained back towards Washington, and for these reasons the parkway lands are shown as including the high ground.

Developments at Berwyn require a narrowing of the parkway to little more than the banks of the Creek but opposite Hollywood it is again possible to expand and to provide areas for general recreation. At Beltsville we come to the U. S. Experimental Farm and just beyond to the District Reform School. From there to Camp Meade a route is indicated on the accompanying plan which swings east of the Patuxent Marshes--mentioned for their botanic interest--to the area now held by the government at Camp Meade. From Camp Meade to Baltimore a number of routes are available no one of which has as yet been sufficiently studied for a recommendation at this time.

D. Rock Creek Project.

One of the objects of Congress in establishing this Commission was to protect the waters of Rock Creek. The most effective method of protection that can be devised is ownership of the whole watershed. That is manifestly impossible, but a part of the watershed can and should be acquired for park purposes. The project is one of long standing, of which Lord Bryce said:

"I should like to go even further--although perhaps I am indulging in aspirations and not sufficiently thinking of appropriations -- and consecrate the whole of Rock Creek valley for 10 or 12 miles above Washington to the public. It is a very beautiful valley. If you will take the Chevy Chase car until it crosses Rock Creek and then follow the creek up toward the west for a few miles, and then turn back to the car line aforesaid and follow the creek down the whole way till you strike the Military Road, below Fort Stevens, you will pass through a variety of river and woodland scenery which it is extraordinary to find so close to a great city. Along one part of the stream there are places where the creek is deep and stagnant, with sandy pools; at other places the water runs swiftly, and there are ripples in the stream and many tiny cascades, where the water splashes over ridges of rock and twists round huge boulders. You will find an endless variety of beauty. Some day or other such a piece of scenery will be of infinite value to the people of Washington, who want to refresh their souls with the charms of Nature. All along the creek they will see a great many water-loving birds - kingfishers and ousels and others too numerous to mention. All along the slopes and in the meadows by the stream they can find a great many wild flowers. I have found some quite uncommon and most lovely wild flowers growing there in the spring. There are leafy glades where a man can go and lie down on a bed of leaves and listen for hours to the birds singing and forget there is such a place as Washington and such a thing as politics within eight miles of him.

These things you have now still left, though daily threatened, and what a pity it would be to lose them! At this moment the value of the outlying land I have referred to would not be very high. A good deal of it is not very suitable for buildings. A good deal of it is not used to any extent for agriculture."

E. Northwest Branch Project.

Just below Burnt Mills, some of the finest scenery in the Region is now included in the area owned by the Boy Scouts of America. Above Burnt Mills, a large reservoir is being constructed by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission for water supply. A considerable start has, therefore, been made towards a reservation in the valley of the Northwest Branch.

The project now suggested involves the acquisition of additional area about the reservoir, in the rough and tumble country south of the Boy Scouts and on the meadow lands below Riggs Mill where the valley broadens. A parkway through this lower valley is also suggested connecting with the Baltimore-Camp Meade Parkway at Hyattsville. Branches from this parkway would connect with the Fort Drive within the District of Columbia.

VII. Local Projects.

In addition to the five major projects just described, a number of areas should receive consideration from a local point of view. These local projects are very important to the Maryland and Virginia population and only less important to the people of the District of Columbia.

A. Maryland Projects.

1. Sligo Branch. As previously mentioned, a parkway has been

proposed in the valley of Sligo Branch connecting Hyattsville with Forest Glen. If this beautiful valley is to be preserved for this purpose immediate action is necessary. Real Estate activity along the route is making the successful accomplishment of this project constantly more difficult and expensive.

2. Little Falls Branch. To continue a circuit drive around the District of Columbia beyond Rock Creek, the valley to Chevy Chase Lake might be utilized together with the valley of Little Falls Branch to the Dalecarlia Reservoir.

3. Glen Echo Heights and Minnehaha Creek. The heights include the site of Fort Sumner and the steep hillside north of Conduit Road. Minnehaha Creek offers a possibility for a beautiful parkway connection from Bethesda and Edgemoor to Cabin John Bridge on Conduit Road.

4. Cabin John Creek. The valley of Cabin John Creek in many respects compares favorably in scenery with the famous valley of Rock Creek. The valley lies about half-way between Great Falls and the District line and bisects an area which is now developing with country clubs and fine estates. A parkway here might some day connect Rockville with the Potomac River and form a return route for a circuit via upper Rock Creek and Rockville.

5. Paint Branch. The Powder House Bogs and land near Stewart Chapel have been indicated as important botanically. The valley of Paint Branch above the bogs has much the same rugged character as the valley of the Northwest Branch. No other wild areas of such extent near the communities along the Baltimore Boulevard can compare with the Paint Branch country as a site for a large reservation.

6. Cabin Branch. Parts of the valley of Cabin Branch should be acquired for park purposes to serve the growing communities of Capitol Heights and Seat Pleasant.

7. Oxon Run. Similarly the upper valley of Oxon Run can be developed with a parkway and recreational facilities.

B. OTHER VIRGINIA PROJECTS:

1. The most important of the Defenses of Washington constructed during the Civil War lie in Virginia. The ruins of these forts, with all their historical interest, occupy some of the most commanding viewpoints in the Virginia portion of the Washington Region. Because of the sweeping views which can be obtained from these sites, it is natural to suggest their preservation and their connection by a Fort Drive. Beginning at Arlington Cemetery such a drive might follow the lines of trenches and forts to a connection with the Mt. Vernon Boulevard at Dyke. At the more isolated forts, small parks for neighborhood use might be provided.

2. The Valley of Four Mile Run from the mouth to Glencarlyn offers possibilities as the location of a park drive and for development of playing fields and large scale recreational features. At Glencarlyn three minor valleys converge, each of which could be used for parkway connections.

One parkway would lead to Munson Hill and the Alexandria Reservoir Grounds, another would continue up Four Mile Run to Toneyson and a connection with the Lee Boulevard, while a third would use the valley of Lubber Run as a route towards Ballston and eventually perhaps to the Potomac River near Chain Bridge. Several references have been made in the first part of this report to the importance of the Valley of Four Mile Run from the point of view of the natural sciences. The project here outlined would include the areas at the mouth of the Run, at Green Valley, and near Glencarlyn, which were specifically mentioned.

3. Munson Hill was indicated as of special interest to the geologist, ornithologist and botanist. It is also important as a hilltop commanding a sweeping view. As such it was used as an outpost during the Civil War. Three quarters of a mile south of Munson Hill lies the Alexandria Reservoir with a reservation about it of over 1000 acres. The boundaries of the reservation are artificial and meaningless in relation to the topography. When the boundaries are expanded and adjusted, Munson Hill might well be included within the Reservation area.

4. The Valley of Pimmitt Run. The valley runs back into the wooded hills from Chain Bridge and is very attractive because of its vegetation and abruptness. Since it occupies such a conspicuous location along the approach to the bridge, a park treatment would be appropriate.

8. Uses of Proposed Open Spaces.

The projects just described are intended to provide areas for recreation of many sorts, and for other uses.

For enjoyment of recreation by movement, motor roads are suggested in pleasant surroundings and in locations commanding views of the finest scenery of the region. The lower Potomac Circuit, the drive to Great Falls, a circuit parkway to Rockville via Rock Creek and back by Cabin John Creek, a road around the District through Sligo Valley and along Little FallsBranch and a new route to Baltimore - these are the chief motor routes proposed.

In all of the reservations opportunities should be seized for the construction of bridle paths and hiking trails and particularly along the Virginia Palisades of the Potomac, at Great Falls and along upper Rock Creek. On the upper river and canal there is now a canoeist's paradise which would be protected by park purchases and control. And on the lower Potomac there are unexcelled opportunities for pleasure craft - both sailboats and speedboats.

For those who seek active recreation in the form of games, areas are suggested in the foregoing along Four Mile Run, Little Hunting Creek, on the Hyattsville Marshes, in the broad meadows of Northwest Branch, between Conduit Road and the Canal above Cabin John, and in the upper valley of Rock Creek.

Picnic groves, observation towers, and properly ordered tea houses and refreshment places should find a place in the program at places where visitors to the parks will wish to stop and enjoy the scenery or contact with natural beauty in a more passive manner.

Besides these kinds of recreation, the reservations and parks proposed are also to serve to protect or conserve natural beauty or points of historic interest. Within the regional parks areas should be set aside for the special purpose of protecting the wild life and the natural wonders of the area.

From an educational standpoint the parks may be very useful in the teaching of botany, zoology etc. - The "study walk" is a forced example of such use. No better educational use of parks can be cited than that typified by Lord Bryce who has already been quoted in this report. He was a naturalist of no mean order and a most inspiring walking companion for that reason. His keen observation and knowledge of natural history, made a hike with him an educational adventure as well as a test of endurance.

The projects advocated in this report are distributed throughout the region with consequent variety of character. They are alike, however, in that one and all have been selected as areas in which contact with Nature can be enjoyed. Whether that contact comes in admiration of a sweeping view overthe broad expanse of the lower Potomac, in marvel at the power of water as it cuts the gorge above Key Bridge or in enjoyment of the smaller scale scenery in the valley of the Northwest Branch, or in study of individual plants or birds, - the enjoyment of the contact is the thing that matters. To provide opportunities for such enjoyment we must preserve the finest examples of scenery and wild life still available and make them accessible to the public.

9. Other Proposals

As described in the "Report on a Park System for the District of Columbia", presented to the Commission at its December Meeting, a complete park system includes a number of areas devoted to a great variety of purposes. The projects described in this report are not intended to serve all those purposes. These reservations will have to be supplemented with public grounds, playgrounds, small landscape parks, neighborhood centers and other larger park areas for the service of local needs.

There should also be added "special purpose areas" and private and semi-public open spaces. Two or more special purpose areas are included in the projects recommended above - as, for instance, a commercial airport, Mt. Vernon, and the new reservoir on Northwest Branch. Others should be provided for in the plans. A list would include a site for the Experimental Farm now located at Arlington, wild flower sanctuaries at the Suitland Bog and at other points of great botanical importance, bird sanctuaries, possibly an experimental forest, and, in particular cases, the sites of historic monuments, old houses or points of antiquarian interest.

The areas for private and semi-public institutions and for country clubs cannot be definitely set aside for those purposes, but as opportunity arises, attention may be called to the advantages of locating such private "open spaces" in accordance with the plans for the distribution of parks and highways.

10. Methods of Procedure

The open space diagram accompanying this report shows in dark green those areas already withdrawn from urban occupation and in light green those areas which it is suggested might well be withdrawn. By "withdrawn from urban occupation" is meant parks and other areas in public ownership, cemeteries, institutions of permanent character such as colleges and large hospitals, and grounds for protection of water supply. The areas proposed to be withdrawn, would not necessarily be all in public ownership. Institutions, golf clubs or agricultural or forest use might be encouraged.

The methods of withdrawing land from urban occupation may be listed as follows:

1. Purchase of land for park purposes.

2. Purchase of land for public institutions, water supply and other public purposes.

3. Purchase by private funds for institutions, golf clubs, etc.

4. Purchase by the public of easement or right in land providing such restriction as would secure open development in the future. The easement would be taken by condemnation and compensation would be paid for the taking of a future expected profit rather than for any present hardship or restriction. Under these conditions the cost should be negligible. In brief it is suggested that we might apply to open spaces generally the principle now known as the "Massachusetts Method" advocated by Mr. Phillip Nichols for the reservation of mapped streets.

5. Zoning of areas for agriculture or forest with generally open use under the police power. It is very doubtful whether such zoning would be legal or up-held by the courts.

6. Control of land through tax rates and assessments. At a recent meeting in Philadelphia, it was proposed that Country Clubs should be encouraged to retain their holdings near or within the built-up areas by giving them a preferred tax rate or by assessment on a lower basis of value. A condition of such preferred treatment would be that in case of sale for urban use the difference between the regular rate and the special rate of taxes should be made up for the whole period during which the special rate was enjoyed. In this way it was hoped to balance the pressure to sell country clubs by forcing an increasing amount of payment of back taxes in case of sale, and by offering a preferred rate of taxes if no sale was contemplated.

Philadelphia differentiates in its tax rate between the urban, suburban and rural communities. There is, therefore, nothing particularly novel in this suggestion. The application of this principle to forest or agricultural lands is as reasonable as its application to country clubs.

II. Division of Costs and Responsibility.

In order to stimulate discussion and as a base from which to depart, the following suggestions are offered on the vital questions of finance and responsibility:-

1) That community of interest in the larger regional projects be acknowledged by all parties from the start. Interest means sharing responsibility and costs.

2) That each group undertake to be primarily responsible for the projects assigned to it below while recognizing the obligations of all other groups to assist.

a. That the Federal Government be urged to undertake the Lower Potomac Project as roughly outlined in this report. The interest of the Government in navigation, air port, Mount Vernon Boulevard and Forts Foote, Hunt, Washington and Humphries, as well as in the St.Elizabeth Farms and Arlington Cemetery, makes it particularly appropriate that this field of activity be assigned to Federal responsibility.

b. That the States of Maryland and Virginia establish an Interstate Park at Great Falls and along the Palisades of the Potomac above Key Bridge. Towards such a project the District of Columbia should preserve the bluffs within the District and assist in the construction of a park drive both within and beyond the District Line.

c. That the State of Maryland, Prince Georges County, with the assistance of Federal or District authorities, sponsor the Baltimore-Camp Meade Project.

d. That the Counties of Montgomery and Prince Georges together with the District make themselves responsible for the Rock Creek and Northwest Branch Projects.

12. Conclusion.

In this way, it is hoped that a start may be made at an early date towards acquisition of the areas mentioned in the report.

"Some day," Lord Bryce said, "people are going to set the true value upon all these things-- these spots of beauty around Washington and all the tract behind the Rock Creek valley and these woodlands I have spoken of. When that day comes one of two things will happen: Those who come afteryou will either have to pay far more for these pieces of ground than would have to be paid now, or else men will mourn in vain over opportunities of enjoyment forever lost. This is the favorable moment. The value of land near this great and growing city is rising every day. If you can but convince those who hold the purse-strings, it will be good business to buy now and dedicate to the public for all time to come."