

AUGUST 11, 1895—FORTY-FOUR PAGES.—WITH ART SUPPLEMENT.



HOW much real estate, suitable for park purposes, and on account of its location and size of the parcel not fit for any other purpose, is owned by the City of Chicago?

How much of this real estate is improved, where are the various parcels located, and why are they not all improved? How many "breathing spots" can be furnished the people at their very doors, making it unnecessary for them to traverse the long distances to the big parks?

Incredible as it may seem to no one in the City Hall can answer these questions, nor any one of them, nor any other questions bearing on the same subject. It is the general belief over there that the city does own some such real estate somewhere and that perhaps some of it may be improved—perhaps not—but nobody can swear to it. Presumably the real estate possessions of the City of Chicago are on record somewhere, but nobody can swear to that. Several hours were spent at the City Hall last week in an effort to find out how much real estate in the shape of small parks, squares, and triangles at the intersection of diagonal streets was owned by the City of Chicago, but the success attendant upon the effort was not particularly flattering.

The Street Department was chosen as the one most likely to be posted upon the matter. Assistant Superintendent of Streets Hemstreet was singled out as the person most likely to know. He gave it up right off. He did not know, he had no record of any such parks, squares, and triangles belonging to the city or cared for by it; he did not know of anybody else who had such a record, and he had no personal knowledge of any such pieces of ground. Two or three triangles on the North Side being mentioned to him, he recalled having seen them and stated it as his belief said triangles belonged to the city, but he could think of no others. Mr. Hemstreet was very obliging about it. He wanted to answer the questions but he simply couldn't, that was all. He said the chief clerk would know more about it than he did. The chief clerk was well posted on such subjects and could answer any and all questions with one hand tied.

But the chief clerk, it was found on investigation, knew just as much about it as Mr. Hemstreet and not a bit more. The search was given up for that day. The next day Mr. Hemstreet and the chief clerk were examined on the subject. They stuck to their original story; they were absolutely ignorant of any such parks, squares, and triangles belonging to the City of Chicago. A third try was made, at which Mr. Hemstreet and the chief clerk were subjected to a red-hot examination, at which they emphasized their ignorance of the subject. He was asked if the city had any real estate agent and if that real estate agent would know anything about the matter. The chief clerk caught at the suggestion as a crowning man, but he said that the real estate agent was the very man. He was paid a salary for knowing just such things.

So the real estate agent was hunted down. He was asked how many squares and triangles were owned by the City of Chicago and how many such squares or triangles were owned by the City of Chicago and were not used as parks or for any other purpose, but the real estate agent gave it up. He said he had just come into office and could

hardly be expected to answer such outlandish questions. If he tried to guess, he would keep his office, he was going to know some day, but just then—well, there was the chief clerk in the Controller's office; the chief clerk was fairly reeking, so to speak, with information on this very subject. He had been an officeholder for ages, and what he didn't know about the city's real estate possessions wasn't worth knowing. Why not ask him?

The chief clerk in the Controller's office was approached and asked to solve the real estate puzzle already mentioned. The chief clerk did not even try to solve it. He knew he couldn't do it and he said so. He would take great pleasure in answering any other questions which might be asked, but when it came down to the city's real estate he preferred to be excused. Now there was the map department. There was a large force in that department. They had nothing in the world to do but mark up nice clean papers and acquire information about municipal real estate. All one had to do was to go down to the map department and drop a nickel in the slot and enough information about municipal real estate would gush forth to fill an encyclopedia.

The map department was hunted up. Mr. Wullweber, the Superintendent, was asked the question before which so many department heads had gone down. Mr. Wullweber threw up both hands. Then he explained that he had just assumed his office. There were a great many things he did not know, and one of them was the number of squares and triangles belonging to the City of Chicago which were used, or could be used, or should be used for park purposes. He hoped to outgrow this ignorance if given time.

"What do you want to know for?" said Mr. Wullweber. "Are you going to stir up the authorities and make them improve these pieces of ground? It ought to be done. It should have been done years ago. It is a pet idea of mine to have those little spots beautified. I am glad indeed that the Tribune has taken the matter up. This Tribune should have my hearty moral support and any other support or assistance that is in my power to give. Now, then, what can I do for you?"

Mr. Wullweber was told that if he would give the information asked he would be doing a service that would be appreciated, but Mr. Wullweber explained that while the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. He was not in his power to give information which he did not possess. However, he would ask his chief clerk; he ought to know. The chief clerk had spent his life in that department, and if he didn't know all about it—Mr. Wullweber elevated his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders in a manner to indicate that while the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. The chief clerk was found to be ignorant on the subject that it would be an everlasting disgrace to the city government in general and the map department in particular.

The chief clerk of the Map Department grappled manfully with the fatal interrogation, but was ignominiously vanquished in the end. He slowly and sadly Mr. Wullweber turned away and sought out another old employee. The same old question was propounded and the old employee gave it up like the rest. Then Mr. Wullweber sat down and reasoned with him. The two consulted together and a third old employee was called in, but the whole Map Department put together could not tell where one square or triangle was located. Finally Mr. Wullweber was asked if it lay within the power of the Map Department to dig up the information sought. Mr. Wullweber said it was.

"How can it be done?"

Mr. Wullweber said that by beginning at the northern corner of the map of the City and proceeding thence over the entire map, square by square, and street by street, and locating every suspicious-looking square and taking the description of such

triangles down to the Recorder's office, and locating through the several card-indexes of records down there, that the elusive information might be run to earth. But Mr. Wullweber explained further that as this would require several months' work, and that as this was the busy season for the Map Department, he rather hesitated about undertaking the task if it was possible to obtain the information any other way. Now there was the Street Department. It was the especial and particular business of the Street Department, not only to know all about such property but to take care of it and so the deadly interrogation was carried back to the point from which it started on its eventful journey.

The chief clerk rolled up his sleeves, figuratively speaking, and went at those interrogations, determined to conquer or die. After some thought a plan of campaign was evolved.

I will write to the foreman of each of the fifteen districts into which the city is divided for the purposes of the Street Department asking them to locate all such squares and triangles belonging to the City of Chicago and to furnish me with a list of them," said the chief clerk.

An investigation was prepared for each of the fifteen foremen and distributed in fifteen boxes in one corner of the Assistant Superintendent's office. In due time the circulars were sent forth. Some of the foremen answered; some did not. Some said there were no such squares, triangles, or parks in their district; others mentioned one or more; still others were so zealous in their effort to answer the questions that apparently they included in their list every piece of vacant ground in their districts. Anyway it was found on investigation that several parks which they listed as belonging to the City of Chicago and as being kept up by the city were kept up by the Park Commissioners; other parcels of real estate which according to the street foremen belonged to the City of Chicago did not belong to the city and never have belonged to it, but the lists furnished something of a clew upon which a start could be made. A camera was called into requisition as being the best agency to furnish irrefragable proof of the condition of these small parks, squares, and triangles when they should be found.

Beginning over on the West Side at the junction of Canalport Avenue, Peoria, and Twenty-third Street, a triangle some 200 feet long on the longest side, which, according to the best evidence that could be found, belongs to the City of Chicago. It is used and has been used as a dump for refuse, old paper, tin cans, and everything else that the residents in that locality were ashamed to throw in the alley. The sidewalk on the southern side of the triangle is built upon stilts about four and one-half feet above the surface of the ground, and the ragged-looking rubbish does not add to the picturesque quality of the scene. The great main lumber district lies to the south of this triangle, and there can be no doubt but what it would be appreciated by the people who live there. The great parks along the lake shore are too far away, and transportation is too expensive for employees in a lumber yard.

At the intersection of Morgan Street and Fourteenth Avenue is a piece of ground which Foreman Fred of the Third District declared belonged to the City of Chicago and which might, could, or should be used for park purposes, but City Real Estate Agent Harrington, after spending several hours in the Recorder's office, announced that Foreman Fred was talking through his hat; that no ground in that locality belongs to the city or ever did belong to the city, except such as is used as

streets. The reader can take whichever side of the argument he chooses.

On the North Side the search for triangles belonging to the city was more richly rewarded than anywhere else. The southernmost one, at Chestnut, Cass, and Rush streets, is known as Green Bay Park. It is not in as good condition as it might be, if just a little care was bestowed upon it. There is more bare ground than grass. Where there is grass it shows unmistakable evidence of neglect. The trees are in a flourishing condition, the walks are of loose cinders. There are four benches within the inclosure and four outside between the curb and the sidewalk. These benches have been repaired, but the appropriation must have run out when the benches were nailed on, for they have never been painted.

A few blocks farther north, at the intersection of Rush and State streets, opposite Bellevue place, is another triangle of similar size known as Oak Park. Here, too, the trees are in good condition, but the grass is in much worse condition than in Green Bay Park. In fact, there isn't any grass worth mentioning. What little green there is within the inclosure is furnished by rank growing sprouts from the trees. There are no benches here, though half a dozen could be placed to advantage. The streets on the east and south sides of this triangle are in a disgraceful condition. Several wagon loads of cinders were thrown along the curb months ago. Meanwhile they have been driven over and trampled down and mingled with the refuse from the seldom swept streets until they now present anything but an attractive appearance. Over part of the cinder heaps a quantity of oak has sprouted in an unsuccessful endeavor to hide the disgraceful sight from view.

Going farther north another triangle is found at North Clark and Eugene streets. This is also cared for by the city. The care consists in allowing waste paper to accumulate. The weeds here are growing thickly, except where they have been beaten down by people who prefer to walk through them instead of on the sidewalk. Still farther north, at the junction of North Clark and Wells streets, is another triangle, which is known as Park place. There are no trees here to shade the grass and tin cans. This makes it all the better for the purpose for which it is used—namely, a goat pasture. If there were trees in the way, the goats picked there would be continually getting their picket ropes tangled up with them, thus causing a ceaseless annoyance to the owners of the goats.

The next triangle is at North Clark street and Belden Avenue, just across the street from the beautiful grounds of ex-Congressman Adams. There are the ruins of two benches here, which in the past have been picked up and used as a seat by the public. This is a favorite resting place for people journeying to Lincoln Park, as is evidenced by the vast quantities of banana peels and greasy newspapers which have once contained lunches. The banana peels are never removed by the city. Doxey banana peels make excellent fertilizers, as is proved by the luxuriant growth of weeds. But the weeds do not have it all their own way, for people insist on walking all over the triangle until they have worn holes in the ground in places which in wet weather are transformed into large mud-puddles.

West of the river, at Armour and Ohio streets, is a piece of ground forty feet wide and a block long which is known as Bickerdyke Park. An old man was found here picking up scraps of paper, who said he was employed by the city to look after the park. His duties are not arduous. There is not a flower in the park, neither is there a bench for visitors to sit upon, nor yet is there any grass. The entire park is covered with a growth of low weeds. These weeds have been trimmed with a lawn mower recently. A near-sighted man standing at a distance would not have known what the park did have a luxuriant growth of grass. But to correct an inaccuracy in the foregoing statement there is grass in the park. The old man referred to being asked if there was any grass in Bickerdyke Park, proudly asserted, in his broken English, that there was, and leading the visitor to a spot near the north curb bent down and pointed to the ground. Sure enough there was grass, fully a dozen spears of it just as bright and green as one could wish to see.

Going from the North Side to Grand Crossing one may find another park at Seventy-sixth street and Greenwood Avenue—at least it is designated on the maps as Adams Park. Adams Park is a triangle some 250 feet long on the longest side. According to common report this park was given to the city a quarter of a century ago by Paul Cornell Sr., on the condition that the city should improve it as a park within the next twenty years, but common report and the records do not agree. Paul Cornell, upon being questioned, said the transaction had taken place so long ago that he had almost forgotten the details. City Real Estate Agent Harrington, wrestling with documents in his own office and in the Recorder's office, showed that Adams Park had been transferred to the City of Chicago Aug. 10, 1881, by Elizabeth G. Cornell, Helen G. Cornell, and Paul Cornell for the sum of \$1,500. Included in the transfer were Lots 9 and 10, just across Kinder court from Adams Park, now used for police and fire stations. There were no conditions whatever in the deed; nothing to show whether the \$1,500 was for and in consideration of the two lots and that Adams Park was thrown in for good measure or not. There was nothing whatever said about a park. Still the general impression in Grand Crossing and around the City Hall is that the ground has at some time in the past been set apart as a park and that it ought to be improved as such. At present the improvements consist of an open sewer on each of the three sides of the triangle and three buildings on the north side. One of these buildings is used as a coal shed by the Police Department. The other two are in fairly good condition, though they might be much better. In Douglas Monument Park the benches are sadly in want of repair.

In marked contrast to these two parks kept up by the city is Campbell Park, at Flournoy street and Oakley Avenue, on the West Side. This, the foreman in that district said, was kept up by the city, but upon investigation it was found that the West Park Board looked after it. The Park Board is covered with different standards of excellence for parks. Campbell Park is a perfect fairyland. The trees are in splendid condition, every inch of the ground is covered with luxuriant growth of grass, carefully trimmed and watered, with here and there a bed of brightly-hued flowers; the walks are kept in the best condition and a pretty fountain plays in the center.

Four blocks away, at Flournoy street and Hoyne Avenue, is a triangle kept up by the city. The municipal idea of "keeping up" the park may be gathered by the accompanying illustration. There is nothing whatever upon this triangle except a very few bunches of stunted weeds and a flag pole. The rest of it is an expanse of bare ground. This is in the heart of a nice neighborhood, the residents in which would no doubt furnish a precedent something better if they could get it. But they are better off than the people who live around Congress Park. No one would dream that this latter was a "park" unless they were told. They would rather incline to the belief that it was a

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dumping ground for rubbish. But Congress Park has one great advantage over similar pieces of ground. The man who gave it to the city, J. L. Campbell, an Alderman. He is not only determined to make the city comply with the conditions of the gift, but has unbounded faith in his ability to do so. He asserts, with all the confidence of positive knowledge, that the ground will be sodded next year and trees set out. He says further that walks will be laid next year, and even hints that a fountain may be found playing in the center of the park at some time in the future.

Out at Millard Avenue and West Twenty-third street is another little park, occupying about three-quarters of a block. This is kept up after a fashion by the city because the property-owners kept after the authorities. The flowers, though, present a very forlorn appearance. A great deal more attention could be bestowed upon this park much to its advantage.

**BICYCLES REDUCE LAUNDRY BILLS.**

The Craze for Wheels Is Cutting the Receipts of the Washermen.

What is food for one man, is poison for another, and the bicycle craze is bringing despair to the heart of the laundryman. With the popularity of bicycle suits and outfit comes the white shirt and the starched collar and cuff have fallen into disfavor. Summer is usually the harvest time for the laundryman but this year his trade is much less than usual and is hardly up to the winter standard. And he puts all the blame on the bicyclist who wears his knickerbockers and his negligee shirt all day and all the evening, and though the weather is scorching refuses to molt starched collars and ruin shirtings, bosoms which have been laundered with care.

The difference caused by the bicycle is felt strongly by the laundrymen which have depend largely on the "boarding house trade" for their work. Nine-tenths of the patrons of these laundries are young men employed in downtown offices. Last year and before that they appeared at their work with linen of immaculate whiteness and as stiff as the laundryman's starch could make it. In the sweltering summer days it cost money to preserve the appearance, for it required two collars, a pair of cuffs, and a shirt each day. As a consequence the week's laundry bill on these articles alone amounted to at least \$1.50. With bills of this sort for each of the thousands who live in boarding-houses the laundrymen prospered.

This year it is different. The young man no longer wears starched linen. He goes to his work arrayed in a negligee shirt, and in the evening he does not change his costume unless for some special event. Instead he keeps out in two but not all of them. It is the bicycle that has done it, there is no doubt of that. The negligee costumes that are so much worn now have largely done away with starched goods.

**Single Men Chastised.**

Plato condemned the single men to a fine, and it is reported they were driven at stated times to the temple of Hercules by the women, who there drilled them in true military style.