



The stormy beach became a placid park - Hamilton Spectator, The (Ontario, Canada) - July 18, 1992 - page C2

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'A **YOUNG alderman's** dream of a summer playground for Hamilton's industrial workers and their families became a reality today.'

-- Hamilton Spectator,

April 9, 1958

WHEN **THE** Hamilton City Council voted to **expropriate 86 acres of land on the shore of Lake Ontario, including Van Wagner's Beach and Crescent Beach**, Alderman John Munro was successful in initiating the development which became known as Confederation Park.

For years, the cottages at **Van Wagner's Beach and Crescent Beach** had taken an annual battering from vicious storms whipping off the lake. Not only had the cottages suffered, but the rocky and debris-laden shoreline was fast eroding.

In 1957, living conditions in the area were investigated by the city's building department, health department, fire prevention bureau, and the assessment department. As a result, several of the houses were listed as unfit for habitation.

Community-minded citizens, notably Mrs. Stanley Parker, Women's Civic Club president, along with others who cared about the **Beach Strip**, began to push for a shoreline park, a broad, clean expanse of bathing and picnic areas for average citizen.

Alderman John Munro had taken a personal interest in the scheme and took the idea to Mayor Lloyd Jackson, who enthusiastically endorsed the plan.

Munro called the beach park idea 'a wonderful thing for the people of this city, especially those who are unable to get away during the hot weather.'

'The beach could be cleaned up and the sand sifted. Properly-constructed, clean bathhouses can be provided to give people a proper place to change. Parking space for cars could also be provided,' **Munro** said.

About 700 people were eventually uprooted by the decision to turn **Van Wagner's Beach and Crescent Beach** into a recreation area, but most seemed to think it was a good idea.

Saltfleet Township councillor J.W. Haylock, whose home was on **Van Wagner's Beach**, termed the development 'a wonderful scheme for the people of the city. This means I will be eventually pushed out of house and home, but then we were expecting that. It didn't exactly come as a bombshell.'

In February 1959, an additional 87 acres were slated for expropriation as part of the beach park scheme. Controller Jack Macdonald had been successful in encouraging the provincial and federal governments to financially support the project, thereby reducing the costs of land acquisition and clearance.

At a February 1963 meeting of the Board of Control, Alderman Reg Wheeler, chairman of the beach committee, urged the city to 'get the project going.' He then moved a recommendation calling for the construction of a parking lot, and a building to house a restaurant, change rooms and washrooms.

On June 25, 1964, Hamilton's lakefront recreation area known as Confederation Park was officially opened at a ceremony chaired by Wheeler.

Munro, by then the federal MP for Hamilton East, told the assembled that 'all Hamiltonians could be proud of this beautiful park.'

In his speech that day, Mayor Vic Copps paid tribute to Munro and Macdonald for their efforts in making the park a reality.

Three years later, on Aug. 15, 1967, Wheeler unveiled a plaque at Confederation Park recognizing Mrs. Parker. Geraldine Copps was asked to read out the inscription which noted that Mrs. Parker's proposal 'eventually resulted in the establishment of Confederation Park.'

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

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