

**THE HALIFAX COMMON: AN EXAMPLE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY LEISURE
SERVICE DELIVERY**

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This paper draws upon the author's research project "An Investigation of the Development of the Common of Halifax, Nova Scotia: 1749 to 1979". That study investigated the development of the Halifax Common through three main questions:

1. Why was the Common granted?
2. Why were encroachments permitted and, in fact, promoted?
3. Why were recreation uses of the Common initiated and developed?

The paper deals primarily with the larger research project's third question – the planning and use of the Common for recreation purposes by both private and public organizations, setting this within the context of the other two questions.

Methodology

This study drew its documentation from three levels. Firstly, an overall review of the available literature dealing with parks and recreation history, history of landscape architecture, urban history, and the concept of common lands was completed. Next, secondary materials specific to the history of Halifax were reviewed, in particular in the writings of Thomas Akins, the first archivist of Nova Scotia; Phyllis Blakely, currently the Associate Archivist of Nova Scotia; and Thomas Raddall, historian and author; and Dalhousie University Master's Theses by David Howell and Nancy MacDonald. Newspaper accounts of events concerning the common were used whenever possible, either with the newspapers themselves or scrapbooks containing the articles being the source. Thirdly, an investigation of the primary materials at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and the City of Halifax was completed. The documentation was supplemented by numerous field visits to portions of the Halifax Common.

The primary materials used in the research were in the form of written and printed documents, photographs, sketches, and maps. These materials included pamphlets and programs describing buildings and events; minutes of the Wanderers buildings and events; minutes of the Wanderers' Amateur Athletic Club; originals and copies of handwritten dispatches between the government officials in Halifax and those in London, England in the period of 1749 to 1867; handwritten and typeset documents containing the Statutes of Nova Scotia for the period 1770 to 1979; petitions to the Nova Scotia Legislature regarding specific proposals and legislation; Annual Reports of the City of Halifax from 1857 to 1922; minutes of City Council from 1890 to 1979; staff reports to City Council regarding specific proposals; City Charters of Halifax from 1841 to 1979. Photographs from the Public Archives of Nova Scotia collection were sought to show buildings and recreation developments which have occurred on the Common. One pen and ink sketch depicting a skating carnival was found. The map collection contained several maps which focussed on the Common, showing the boundaries and the parcels which were given up for specific purposes over time.

Setting the Scene: Common Lands and Halifax

Common Lands in England

The Encyclopedia of Urban Planning defines Commons and Common Lands as "areas of land which are generally privately owned, but which groups of people or the population at large have certain specific legal rights to use or exploit" (Whittick, 1974, p.282). These rights can be one or all of the following:

The right of common pasture, being the right to graze one's animals over the herbage. The right to gather wood as a source of fuel (estovers). The right to dig turf for use as a fuel or for roofing purposes (turbary). The right to fish from common waters (piscary). The right to collect or cut bracken for cattle bed or fuel ... The right to use the land for recreation purposes, described as "air and

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exercise" (Whittick, 1974, p. 282).

All common land is technically private property which individuals can use. In the case of the Halifax Common, the original owner was the Crown and later the Corporation of the City of Halifax.

The concept of common lands can be traced to eleventh century England and the Saxon open field farming systems (Whittick, 1974, p. 282). In the early centuries, no individuals or groups attempted to remove common lands from use by the public. However, problems of "enclosure" began in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The act of "enclosing" a common means to remove it from use by the public by either fencing it or designating it as private property and to not let the public have any "common rights" over it. The common lands were being enclosed for two main reasons firstly, towns were expanding and the common was seen as being close, vacant land; and secondly, as the towns expanded, more farms were needed to grow and provide food for the towns folk, again the commons were a convenient source of land.

Pressure on the common lands continued. Whenever the population increased, the common lands decreased in size. Conversely, when catastrophic population decreases occurred, such as the "Black Death" in the fourteenth century, some of the marginal lands were freed from farming use and reverted to their former common lands designation. From Elizabethan times onward, the population pressure increased, with the result being the beginning of legislation to prevent the commons from being reduced through enclosure (Hoskins and Stamp, 1963, pp. 37, 45, 50-61).

As the need for food to feed the townspeople grew, various schemes were invented to increase the production of the farm land. One of these plans was to amalgamate fields into larger, more efficient holdings and to fence them. This plan was sanctioned by legislative bodies the 1700-1845 period came to be known as the "Age of Parliamentary Enclosure".

As more common land became enclosed for agriculture, or built on for homes, legislators recognized that it was important, particularly in towns, to use the commons for "air and exercise" purposes (Hoskins and Stamp, 1963, p. 80). The first legislation which reflected this concern was passed in 1836, and declared that lands close to towns should not be enclosed. By 1845, the "General Enclosure Act" made a further step toward protecting the welfare of the residents when it stated that if a common was enclosed, an equivalent area had to be set aside nearby for "exercise and recreation" for the neighbourhood residents (Hoskins and Stamp, 1963, p. 80). As a result of continued lobbying on behalf of the local citizens against those who would enclose their commons, the "Common, Open Spaces, the Footpaths Preservation Society" grew up in London in 1865 and spread throughout England. Acts of the British Parliament throughout the past 115 years have attempted to manage and regulate the use of the common lands. Major encroachments upon the commons appear to have been decreasing, with the exception of the wartime use of common lands for food growing and defence purposes. Post World War II regulation had been the topic of a number studies and the "Commons Registration Act of 1965 (Denman, Roberts and Smith, 1967, p.8).

The Enclosure Acts of Parliament in Britain prompted an anonymous jingle:

They clap in gaol the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common;
But let the bigger knave go loose
Who steals the common from the Goose.

(Harden and Baden 1977, p. 46)

Commons in the Colonies

North American communities also have a tradition of common lands. The early New England towns often had a common at the centre of town, which served a number of utilitarian purposes. This was a place to graze cattle safe from attack by Indians; to use as a military parade ground; to have the local market; or to store gunpowder underground (if the powder blew up, no buildings would be destroyed).

The best known North American common is the Boston Common. It was established in 1634, when the town purchased forty-five acres of land from a Reverend William Blaxton (Whitehill, 1968, p. 241). The inscription on a 1684 monument on the Boston Common records its original purpose "The Town laid out a plan for a trayning filed, which ever since and now is used for that purpose and for the feeding of cattle" (Frye, 1964, p. 9). Early uses of the Common included a place to house and drill troops, to whip or hang criminals, to house the poor, to bury the dead or to have a duel. Cattle grazing was finally prohibited in 1833, when citizens interested in preserving and improving the Common finally won a sixty year campaign to remove the cows (Frye, 1964, p. 14).

The Boston Common had been used as a recreation ground since 1728 (Olmsted and Kimball, 1928, p. 14); however, it was not until 1824 that a proposal by Mayor Quincy to keep the area open and without buildings was approved. It was not until 1838 that recreation development began. In that year a group of amateur horticulturalists petitioned the city for a lease of land.

In 1839, they were incorporated as the "Proprietors of the Botanic Gardens in Boston" and established a large conservatory. Unfortunately, the conservatory burned down soon after and the land was viewed as marketable property. Between 1842 and 1850, numerous attempts were made to sell the land because of the prospects that one and one-half million dollars could be received from the sale (Whitehill, 1968, p. 156). The common was then secured and has not been eroded any further. In the twentieth century, a citizen's group, the Friends of the Public Garden, is working to preserve and protect the park (Kecksher, 1977, p. 158).

The concept of commons in North America was not restricted to the British colonies. King Philip of Spain issued Royal Ordinances in 1573 which dealt with the laying out of New Towns in the colonies. He gave instructions which provided for a common in every town. "A common shall be assigned to each town, of adequate size that even though it shall grow greatly, there would always be sufficient space for its inhabitants to find recreation and for cattle to pasture without encroaching upon private property" (Olmsted and Kimball, 1928 p. 4 citing *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 4, No. 4, November 1921 and Vol. 5, No. 2, May 1922).

Other North American communities were planned with open spaces. These spaces include "plazas" and "pueblos" in the southwest U.S.A. and "parades" and "squares" in the southeast U.S.A. Philadelphia was laid out by William Penn on a grid pattern with five open squares. When James Oglethorpe laid out Savannah, Georgia in 1733, he planned a nursery to supply the colonists with fruit and by 1736, it was reported that Savannah had a public garden and a common (Ommsted and Kimball, 1928, pp. 15-16). Mary Virginia Frye, in *The Historical Development of Municipal Parks in the United States*, summarizes the North American Commons:

In the early days of establishing a foothold in an unknown, unexplored, and often threatening and hostile new land, all who would survive had to band together for the common good . . . A tract of land belonging to everyone, to the community - whether in the form of a pasture or plaza - was a natural answer to a common needs for a place to pasture heep or cows; a place to train the local militia; and, either purposely or incidentally, for a setting where the needs of a social and recreational nature could be expressed (1964, p. 19).

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Halifax was founded in 1749 by the British Government. The French were in control of the Fortress at Louisburg because the British had ceded it to them by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 (Raddall, 1971, p. 17). Thus, the British required a civilian and military establishment which could act as a counterbalance to the French base (Hamilton, 1974, p. 9). The British Government had operated from Annapolis Royal on the Bay of Fundy; but they wanted a location on the Atlantic coast to maintain the British influence and protect the fishing industry (Akins, 1892, p. 4).

The planners of Halifax originally intended that the new settlers would be military officers or enlisted men, or craftsmen (Raddall, 1971, p. 19). Not all of this plan came to

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fruition. In addition to the veterans of the Austrian wars, many new settlers were residents of London, "a rabble of cockneys" (Raddall, 1971, p. 20), who wanted to escape the slums and poverty and were not equipped with neither the skills nor initiative to work in the new settlement.

In 1760, Chief Surveyor Morris reported to Governor Lawrence that he had "admeasured and laid out ... for the inhabitants of the peninsula of Halifax ... two hundred and thirty-five acres" (PANS CO 217: 101, p. 376; Morris, March 28, 1960). The Common was to be used as a source of firewood and as a pasture. However, the condition of the land was extremely poor. The trees were small and scrubby. The soil quality was described by Lieutenant Governor Belcher as thin, mossy, rocky, and unsuitable for cultivation "without manuring at the public expense" (PANS RG 1, Vol. 37, Doc. 13, 11:1/1762).

In 1760, the parcel was bounded by the properties which correspond to the street lines which we, in 1981, call South Street, Robie Street, Cunard Street, North Park Street, Ahern Avenue and the Citadel, Bell Road, and South Park Street. The map which follows shows the location of the Common in terms of the 1981 street pattern. (To a Haligonian in the latter twentieth century, the phrase "Halifax Common" refers to only the top one quarter of the area - that part above Bell Road and Trollope Street, all that remains of the common in truly free, accessible open space for "air and exercise".)

The Common remained a rocky, swampy, thinly-vegetated dumping ground for the town from its designation in 1760 until 1818, when the first serious attempts were made to improve the situation. But the suggested improvements were to put the common land into the hands of private individuals. The common land was viewed as a place for dwellings, growing crops, and grazing - not for park purposes. Those thoughts came to Haligonians two decades later.

The Halifax Common and Nineteenth Century Leisure Service Delivery

Among the rights which the population may have in a common is the right to use it for "air and exercise" (Whittick, 1974, p. 282). This right is seen as the right to use the common for recreation purposes.

The Halifax Common has been the location of many recreation developments and activities. Most developments have not merely sprung up - there have been numerous exhortive statements by individuals and groups promoting recreation development; many community organizations have made proposals; there have been civic government proposals - all leading to the recreation activities and developments which have been and are currently present.

The First Development

Recreation development on the Common began in 1837. A private volunteer group, the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society, wanted to found a public garden which would promote the public's appreciation of horticultural production and display "in order to create and extend a taste for horticultural pursuits and to increase and improve the productions of the province" (*Statutes of Nova Scotia*, 1837, cap. 7). They obtained land from the city on Spring Garden Road on what is now the southern half of today's Public Gardens. The Horticultural Society Gardens were used not only for displaying trees and flowers; it also was a place for producing and selling plants in order to improve the stock throughout the province (*Statutes of Nova Scotia*, 1837, cap. 7).

Even though the society wanted to found a public garden, it was not totally open to the public. The Society was private and founded by shareholders and subscribers who had free access to the grounds with their guests. The public at large could come in for free only one day each week (*Journal of Assembly*, 1851, p. 263).

The Horticultural Gardens land was the site of the first covered ice rink in Canada (Regan, 1936, p. 83). Opened in January 1863, it was a "wooden edifice, 180 feet by 60 feet with arched roof, illuminated with coal gas" (Regan, 1936, p. 83). The rink was privately funded and



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described as "the greatest favorite of those who could afford ... it" (*Acadian Recorder*, January 17, 1863, p. 3). The limited membership, made up of individuals and their families who owned stocks in the company (*Acadian Recorder*, November 1, 1862, p. 3), was so popular that the memberships were sold out in three weeks. The Halifax Skating Club still exists, but now as a figure skating teaching and competitive organization rather than as a facility operator. The club claims to be the oldest figure skating club in Canada, operating since 1862 (*Mail Star*, October 29, 1964, p. 24).

The rink was used year round, with natural ice for winter activities and a wooden floor for rolling skating and dancing in the summer (Regan, 1936, p. 83). A report of a dance during the exhibition week of 1880 stated that "in the skating rink in the Gardens the bank of the 66th Princess Louise Fusiliers 'kept the old building quivering and shaking and enabling the promenaders to indulge in giddy waltz or the calmer manoeuvres of the lancers and quadrilles'" (Blakely, 1949, p. 86, citing *Acadian Recorder*, September 23, 1980, p.3).

The Halifax Archery and Croquet Club used part of the Horticultural Garden for their gatherings (Blakely, 1949, p. 149). As well, later the Lawn Tennis Club used the "old archery grounds" on the west side of the Public Gardens (Horticultural Gardens) for their court until the 1890's (*Halifax Mail*, February 5, 1934, p.1).

The Horticultural Society operated the garden until 1874. After 35 years of operation and management, financial difficulties led them to sell their property and stock to the City of Halifax for \$15,000 (*Acadian Recorder*, July 31, 1874, p. 3).

Public Initiative

Public recreation development ideas and proposals were not evident until 1858, when a land grant to the Halifax Cricket Club sparked the fierce debate with Major General Trollope of the British Troops. Public calls for improved recreation use of the Common continued for well over a century from that point. The first 25 years of recorded statements are those promoting the concept of using the area for recreation purposes. From the 1880's until the 1940's, there was very little new recreation development. But our concern is only with the nineteenth century, so we shall draw an artificial barrier at 1900.

The question of how and why recreation development was promoted must look first to that 1858 Cricket Club incident. The club wanted to develop a cricket ground and gymnasium on the land which the city had leased to them (PANS RG 5, Series P, Vol. 17, 22/2/1858), land which the military claimed belonged to them. Insight into the reasons for the attempts to develop the Common as a recreation ground comes from the letters from a Dr. C. Cogswell to the British authorities. He played many roles in the incident, an alderman, a local philanthropist, and a member of the the Halifax Cricket Club (a situation which today would make him the subject of conflict of interest charges). Throughout the incident, he acted as an advocate of recreation development on the Common, particularly supporting the cricket club proposal. The first notions of recreation improvements to the Common are put forth when Dr. Cogswell's exhorting statement called upon the civic authorities to provide recreation opportunities as an alternative to unhealthy activities. However, the Common was in such poor condition that this was not a reasonable hope unless improvements were made.

... it is desirable after the example of so many wise and good in this country to hold out inducements to the public to seek recreation out of doors instead of wasting their means and health in drinking shops and like resorts. But an open barren common without trees offers but a poor attraction and it is with this view that besides exerting myself to assist the civic authorities in converting the common into 'a park', I was the means of inducing them to set apart a few acres beyond the exercising ground for an enclosed cricket ground and gymnasium. The cricketers have been in the habit of playing on the common, but had been much discouraged by the ground ... being constantly ruined by the feet of horses and cows (PANS RG 1, Vol. 125, Doc. 62, 27/9/1860).

Among his arguments in trying to convince the military authorities was that the recreation developments would increase the opportunities for competition between the citizens and the military and that funds would be available to construct the gymnasium as soon as the dispute

was settled (PANS RG 1, Vol 125, Doc. 109, 26/12/1860). The dispute was settled, but not to Dr. Cogswell's satisfaction, and the gymnasium was not built.

Dr. Cogswell fell from favour when the British authorities questioned his authority to negotiate with them and his motives in his campaign. One particular British dispatch questioned whether the pasturing rights of the poorer portion of the community were being removed by the enclosure by the cricket club and whether this was even more serious than the military use. This was not again discussed, but may have been a very valid observation (but downplayed by the affluent) as to what public use is more appropriate, pasture for the destitutes or recreation for the affluent (PANS RG 1, Vol. 125, Doc. 87, 24/8/1859).

Work proceeded on "improving the Common". References in the *Annual Reports* of the City give an indication of the work being done and of the pride felt by the civic authorities. The 1862/63 improvements were attempts "to make it a source of recreation and pleasure to the public" (*Annual Report*, p. 48). The 1863/84 report described the Horticultural Gardens as being "a place of recreation and pleasure for the public" (*Annual Report*, p. 38) and recommended funding "to make a park and pleasure grounds of the fields of the north common, as it would add materially to the health and comfort of our citizens and the prosperity of our city" (p. 39). The Common was seen by some in 1864 as an attraction for the elite.

In every city where there is a park and pleasure grounds for promenading, it also makes an attraction for strangers and frequently induces gentlemen of skill and capital to come and settle ... to establish manufactories and ... build handsome residences ... give employment ... and their capital will circulate through the whole community and be likewise the means of increasing the population (*Annual Report*, 1863/64, p. 40).

While this is not a view favouring the masses of commoners, it was a very pragmatic approach to using the land resource of the city. A more populist view was communicated the next year, when the committee desired to make improvements to make the grounds attractive as a recreation opportunity for the "health, comfort, and prosperity of the public in general" (*Annual Report*, 1864/65, p. 26).

The 1865/66 report again requested funding for work on the fields of the Common. The committee was firmly convinced that "it would be an inducement for strangers to make this city their residence and be a source of recreation and pleasure for the public in general" and believed that future generations would see the common as "the centre and pride of the city" (*Annual Report*, p. 36). By 1872/73, the mayor was requesting that drainage work be done on the North Common military exercising ground "to make the common a really handsome piece of ground" (*Annual Report*, p. 49). The Common was not mentioned again in annual reports and documents until the twentieth century.

In the meantime, in 1868, the hue and cry concerning the use of the South Common for an asylum for the blind had arisen and abated. The main rallying point had been that the encroachment should not be permitted and "steps should be taken to improve it so as to make it an ornament to the city and a place for exercise and healthful recreation for the citizens" (PANS RG 5, Series P, Vol. 20, 11/2/1868). However, the commitment for public improvement soon faded.

The campaign for recreation use had two emphases - one was to use the Common as a place for healthful recreation activities and the other was to beautify it as an ornament to the city. This latter philosophy is in keeping with the early park movement - formal, stylized, and ornamental gardens permitting strolling, viewing, and "taking the air". There was very often more spoken and written exhortation than constructive initiative exhibited in recreation development on the Common.

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Return to Private Initiative

A major recreation development on the Halifax Common was The Wanderers' Amateur Athletic Club. The club, which had been formed in 1882, acquired their grounds in 1886 (*Statutes of Nova Scotia*, 1886, cap. 59) when the city was authorized to lease that part of the Common bounded by Bell Road, Sackville Street, Summer Street to the W.A.A.C. The ground was in poor condition, described as being an "ash heap", with the workers having the "seemingly hopeless task of levelling this waste stretch" (*Halifax Mail*, February 5, 1934, p. 1). The club developed the grounds from the ash heap to a major athletic facility with a field, running track, bleachers, and clubhouse. Reports of competitions in the 1890's refer to "electric light sports" where "the illuminations were grand, numerous chinese lanterns being hung all over the ground" (*Morning Chronicle*, August 15, 1895 and August 24, 1898). Each occasion was a major athletic competition with track and field events and bicycle races.

The Wanderers' Grounds have been the home of championship competitions, athletes, and teams in baseball, cricket, football, track and field, bicycling, and lawn bowling. The club was one of the time. The club operated on this site as an independent operation, improving the grounds and renewing their leases with the city until 1958, when the city took over the grounds and the buildings.

Public Recreation Developments

The numerous improvements to the Common began in the 1810's. These improvements were primarily for aesthetic reasons. It was noted several times in the review of the annual reports of the Committee of Common that they were attempting to transform the barren, swampy, rocky land mass into a handsome ground. As well, the civic authorities constructed on particularly handsome building for public purposes - the Exhibition Building. While the building was used for many activities, it did house an ice surface for skating - a public opportunity rather than a private club. The building, on the site currently occupied by All Saints Cathedral, was opened in 1879.

It was oblong wooden building, . . . it had square towers on each corner, a mansard roof of red slate colour and an octagonal roofed tower in front. The main part of the building, which was entered from the hall in the front tower, had a clear space 210 feet by 60 feet wide for the skating rink and was surrounded by a gallery 11 feet wide. "The building is lighted by day by large windows running from ceiling to floor and so close as to give the appearance of crystal walls", commented the *Nova Scotian* (October 4, 1879, p. 2). At night it was lighted with gas burners every three feet in the large iron pipes supported by handsome iron brackets in the shape of flowers. The interior was thought to be "light and handsome", the arched rafters and pillars being a light drab faced with vermilion and the body of the roof and walls a light blue tint. The outside was painted a light drab with darker facings (Blakely, 1946, p. 85).

The sketch which follows by Francis Jones of an 1880 skating carnival at the rink shows the skating surface the gallery.

The building stayed on the site until 1907, being used in its later years for the storage and maintenance of city equipment. The sale of the building and property were contemplated as early as 1896 (*Statutes of Nova Scotia*, 1896, cap. 30) because of the need to slow the rising tax rate by bringing in revenue (Blakely, 1949 p. 87). In 1907, the building was bought and moved, and the site was bought by the Church of England for All Saints Cathedral. When the sale of the land took place, no mention was made of this being part of the Common, rather the site was referred to as the "old exhibition grounds: which were available for sale.



FIGURE 2: Skating Carnival, 1880

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parade at 11:00 a.m., followed by the circus activities on the Common at 1:00 p.m. The Big Top was filled one evening with 8,500 in the audience (Blakely, 1949, pp.147, 148).

Other Activities. Other recreation activities which have been reported include lacrosse, cricket, and horse shows. In 1868, it was reported in the *British Colonist* that "the LaCrosse Club of Nova Scotia ... (would) play on the common, every fine afternoon during the summer" (May 19, 1868, p. 2). Even though the Halifax Cricket Club did not get its cricket ground after 1858, they did play on the Common and newspaper reports note this throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Playgrounds. The Central Common has been the traditional location of the city's largest summer playground. These activities began soon after the first playgrounds were organized in Halifax in 1907 by the local chapter of the National Council of Women. In 1915, the Halifax Playgrounds were incorporated and in 1917, hired George Taylor from Springfield, Massachusetts as Playground Supervisor. His early duties on the Central Common's playground are recorded as having to deal with 700 children with four staff members on a facility with swings, sand piles, one the Egg Pond (*Halifax Herald*, August 2, 1917, p. 1 and August 10, 1917, p. 4).

Role of the Common

The historical development of the common illustrates the growth of the parks and recreation movement in Canada. There are several distinctly different park designs exemplified by the Common. The Public Gardens represent the influence of European park design upon Canada's parks, conducive to passive recreation. The Wanderers' Grounds and North and Central Common are designed to promote active recreation. The multiplicity of activities that have occurred over the history of the common exemplify the changing recreation and leisure attitudes and behaviors of Canadians.

The Common has not only reflected parks, recreation, and leisure patterns, but it has served in a leadership posture by providing space in a central city location for a number of recreation facility developments considered to be the first of their type in Canada.

The reduction of the Common's area available for "air and exercise" illustrates the need to preserve and protect open spaces and recreation areas. The idea of the common, conceived by the Saxons and implemented in Britain and elsewhere, was to provide common space for residents' activities. The Halifax Common has served this function. It has been encroached upon, but it remained a significant space providing for recreation and leisure activities or past, present, and future Haligonians. The common is a significant historical area - a foundation of the parks and recreation movement in Canada. It remains today a living example of the heritage of the recreation and leisure movement (Markham and Edginton, 1979, pp.16, 17).

Summary

The use of the common land for "air and exercise" purposes has been promoted and developed since the 1830's. The ground has been the location of a number of private and public recreation developments, the most prominent having been the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society Gardens, the Halifax Skating Club and Rink, the Wanderers' Amateur Athletic Club Grounds, and the Exhibition Building. Numerous statements have been made exhorting the committee, council, and citizens to develop the Common for aesthetic and social reasons. The Common has been the site of numerous active and passive recreation pursuits. Past recreation development proposals have been many and varied. The results of these past activities and successful proposals are the 70 acres of open public recreation space which remain of the original 235 acres of common land.

Halifax as an Example

The rather lengthy description of the numerous components of Halifax's nineteenth century leisure service system (a term they surely would not have thought to use) served several purposes. It outlined the kinds of activities in which nineteenth century Haligonians were interested. It showed the variety of settings in which activities took place – from sculptured gardens to ice rinks. It showed the wide diversity of providers of recreation experiences – from the military to the horticulturalists.

Finally, from the numerous providers, we are able to piece together some of the motives for promoting the creation of parks (and in them, recreation activities) in Halifax.

The motives which were most prominent in Halifax were aimed in two, at first seemingly different, directions – social welfare and visual and financial improvement. But both views have in common the desire to upgrade the "look" of the city and make it attractive and respectable. The social welfare motive was first mentioned by Dr. Cogswell when he was advocating commons improvements in 1860.

... It is desirable after the example of so many wise and good in this country to hold out inducements to the public to seek recreation out of doors instead of wasting their means and health in drinking shops and like resorts (PANS RG 1, Vol. 125, Doc. 62, 27/9/1860).

The visual and financial improvement motive was noted in the 1863/64 *Annual Report*.

In every city where there is a park and pleasure grounds for promenading, it also makes an attraction for strangers and frequently induces gentlemen of skill and capital to come and settle ... to establish manufactories and ... build handsome residences ... give employment ... and their capital will circulate throughout the whole community and be likewise the means of increasing the population (p. 40).

The issue of using recreation activities and park lands for social welfare purposes has been explored by a number of authors in their writings about Britain, the United States, and Canada. They all point to a movement in major centres in the middle decades of the nineteenth century toward increasing the amount of publicly available open space. From the rather lengthy list of relevant authors, a representative of each of the three countries has been chosen.

Britain

In describing the work of John Arthur Roebuck, a philosophical radical of the early nineteenth century in Britain, P. J. Smith cites some of his writing of the 1828 – 1835 period.

By providing the town dweller with the means of an alternative form of recreation from the public houses and the gin palace, you could improve his mind, increase the sum total of happiness, and so make him a better citizen (Smith, 1979, p.204, citing Hyde's analysis of Roebuck's writings).

Smith describes Roebuck's planning thoughts when he notes that:

Nature, to Roebuck, was not solely an antidote for the physical diseases to which urban man was so horrifyingly exposed: it was also an antidote to social diseases of all kinds – crime, drunkenness, prostitution, pauperism, social disorganization, and violence all could lose their force in the city of Roebuck's vision. It was therefore a moral obligation of government to ensure that ample amount of open space, of many different kinds, should be freely available in all parts of the city and beyond. The preservation of common lands, which were then being enclosed in an unprecedented scale, became one of Roebuck's special causes ... (Smith, p.205).

How similar these thoughts are to those echoed 30 years later in Halifax by Dr. Cogswell.

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United States

As early as 1785, New Yorkers were advocating the development of a park for the residents. In a letter to the *New York Packet*, Veritas complained of the lack of

any one proper spot where its residents could enjoy ... the exercise which is necessary for health and amusement" and reminded the mayor and aldermen that "the size and consequence of this town must one day arrive at, ought strongly to impress the necessity of attending to this object (a park), as well from a desire to contribute to the comfort and health of the inhabitants, as from the propriety of adding to the public ornaments if the city (cited in Olmsted and Kimball, 1928, p. 18).

More than 60 years later, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux designed Central Park for New York residents' recreational pursuits, to

supply to the hundreds of tired workers, ... a specimen of God's handiwork that shall be to them, inexpensively, what a month or two in the White Mountains is, at great cost, to those in easier circumstances (cited in Udall, 1963, p.174).

Many of these same thoughts and exhortive statements are contained in S. Hardy's analysis of park development in Boston from 1870 to 1915. He cites one alderman's support, in 1877, for a park system based on its use as an antidote to daily living.

This recuperation and recreation can only be obtained by presenting to the senses and imagination scenes entirely different to those with which they are daily associated (*Council Minutes* cited in Hardy, 1980, p.8).

Canada

In Toronto in 1859, the Chairman of the Committee on Public Walks and Gardens advocated provision of public areas for a number of reasons.

In the first place, they furnish to the wealthy places of agreeable resort ... so conducive to the promotion of health and morality ... in the second place, to the mechanic and working classes generally, public gardens are of incalculable advantages ... How are such and kindred operations calculated to elevate and refine the mind and improve the condition of all? (Cited in McFarland, 1970, p. 14).

Conclusion

To the author it would be most pleasant to be able to delve into the social, economic, and, of course, political motives for park creation and development in much more detail - however, that is not the prime purpose of this paper. Suffice it to say that the Halifax Common did serve as a fine example of nineteenth century leisure service delivery - with patrons whose motives for development paralleled those in other cities and whose users were able to participate in activities similar to those in vogue in other centres.

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