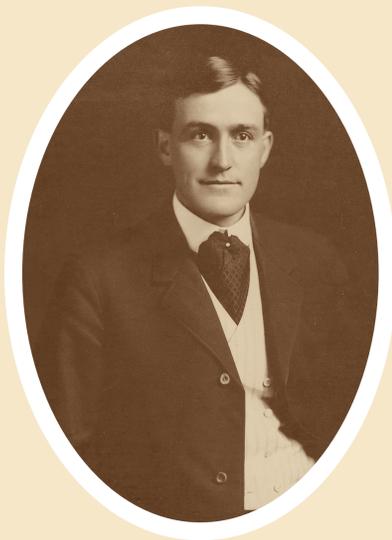


THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THE PARKS

In the early years of the town, woods and fields were so close, townspeople were not concerned about public open space. They had the courthouse square in the center of town and of course the university campus. By 1866 the town cemetery had been moved from Huron and Fletcher (now Felch Park) to Observatory and named Forest Hill. Its picturesque design of curving drives, hills, and woods echoed Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery, New York City's Central Park, and other great urban public spaces being built at the time.

As the city expanded, early twentieth-century civic leaders lobbied for city-owned parkland. In 1905 the newly established Parks Commission approved the purchase of Cedar Bend Park along the river, including what is now Island Park. **GEORGE PLUMER BURNS**, a young botany instructor at the university, was the commission's most dynamic member. He engineered the creation of the Arboretum by convincing UM alumni **WALTER AND ESTHER NICHOLS** to donate their farm on Geddes Road to the university for a botanical garden and arboretum. The deal included an even larger adjacent parcel Burns had convinced the city to purchase nearer the river. Burns and his wife donated another substantial piece of land for the project.



George Plumer Burns

In 1915 the city purchased the old Fairgrounds on Wells Street and promptly named it for Burns.



O. C. Simonds

He established the first professional program in landscape design at UM, the second of its kind in the nation.

OSSIAN COLE SIMONDS, a UM graduate and Chicago landscape designer who had been hired to design Cedar Bend Park, returned to prepare a plan for the Nichols Arboretum. After Burns left for the University of Vermont in 1910, the botanical garden was moved to a flatter location more suited for research, but the arboretum continued. Still jointly owned by the city and the university, it remains one of Ann Arbor's best-loved parks.



Eli Gallup

Hired as parks superintendent in 1919, he devoted the next 38 years to expanding and improving the city's park system.



♣ *It took Eli Gallup eight years to acquire from sixteen different owners the eight acres that would become Riverside Park. He developed the park for very little money, using WPA workers to clear away rubbish and old shacks.*



The city bought Barton, Argo, Dixboro, and Superior dams, along with their ponds and adjacent river banks—more than 945 acres—from Detroit Edison. Much of the Huron River corridor has since been developed into parkland, including the large park named for Eli Gallup.

Photo of Eli Gallup and Riverside Park courtesy of Albert Gallup.

Photo of George Plumer Burns courtesy of Judy Hesse Liberty. Photo of O. C. Simonds courtesy of Roberta Simonds.