

REPORT TO
REGIONAL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
ON FIELD TRIP
TO
DENVER MOUNTAIN PARKS - DENVER, COLORADO
by
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December 5 - 10, 1939

[Handwritten on cover at bottom:

Mr. Stromberg:--
I found this among some
old files - you may want.
Edith]

General

As per regional office assignment, visited the Denver Mountain Park system December 5th to 10th to confer with the inspector, National Park Service and city park personnel relative to regional office review of the Denver Mountain Park system master plan and the long range work progress submitted with the 18th period camp applications.

Concurrent with the objective of this trip, planning consultation requests on the part of city park officials were acknowledged and are covered further in detail within this report.

Master Plan and Work Program Reviews

Arriving the morning of December 5th, accompanied CCC superintendent Teyssier and Assistant Landscape Architect Keeling through the Denver Mountain Parks located within the inner loop - making a general planning reconnaissance check on comments contained within the regional office master plan review. With these same gentlemen time was spent going over the master plans being prepared for Kathryn Kraig, Cub Creek, O'Fallon, and Pence Parks.

With Inspector Priester returning the morning of December 6th, the master plan review memorandum was checked and considerable time was spent combing the review for questionable planning interpretations and/or alterations necessary before the final draft of the review memorandum is prepared.

Following the master plan check, Acting Regional Director Curtis' memorandum pertaining to the 15th period camp applications and long range work program comments were studied and discussed from the standpoint of correlated future developments on the basis of the master plan.

On December 7th, accompanied the inspector and Superintendent Teyssier on a morning drive over the outer circle to Echo Lake - going out on U. S. Highway #40 and returning on Route #74 - primarily to study the relationship of these outer metropolitan park areas to the circulatory route.

As evidenced in the general development plan, there are no Denver Mountain Park areas on the route to Echo Lake. However, this drive becomes one of the scenic interests because of the two national forests, Arapaho and Pike - through which it proceeds, assuring protective preserve zones for naturalistic appreciation.

Very few facilities for human use were in evidence along the route through these national forests.

Echo lake, an excellent natural lake, is located high in the mountains and proved to be a worthwhile objective for passive recreational enjoyment. Evidences of use throughout the picnicking areas

would indicate that they were far inadequate to meet the present demands. Most of them were badly fallowed and should be given a rest immediately for a year or more so that the natural cover can reestablish itself.

As indicated on the general development plan, improvements contemplated at the lodge involving the development of the cabin group should be further considered from the standpoint of federal participation in light of the concession benefiting the city at \$1.00 per year for lease. Such an arrangement would, unless under strict leasing control, appear to present problems in adequate maintenance and operation.

Returning from Echo Lake on Highway #74 over Squaw Pass, we observed that road alignments as now indicated on the general development plan have been changed so that a new road now under construction by WPA passes through Forsberg Park and Bergen Park Wilderness Area #2. This realignment now allows the relationship of a pleasure highway to metropolitan park areas having scenic qualities.

It is recommended that the general development plan be corrected to show this new road alignment - recent and contemplated acquisitions that will tend to connect the Mt. Judge Wilderness Area and Bergen Park Wilderness Areas #1 and #2.

The Mt. Judge and Hicks Wilderness Areas appear to have no convenient means for vehicular access conducive to public use. However, there were evidences of old logging trails leading to these two isolated tracts.

Information discloses that the city's only desire in acquiring these isolated and outlying tracts is for a watershed protection purpose.

Other business relating to detailed planning phases concerning conferences with the city officials provided time for Superintendent Teyssier, Assistant Landscape Architect Keeping, and Landscape Foreman Earl Mann to peruse master plan review memoranda and long range work program documents. So, on December 8, a conference was held in the inspector's office at which time all opinions were correlated and a decision reached as to the final contents thought advisable for inclusion in the final master plan review memorandum. This conference disclosed that many of the planning questions raised in the review had answers, but were merely overlooked in planning presentation. Of primary importance was the disclosure that two service areas exist for maintaining and operating these Denver Mountain Parks and the method for presenting this material in the next annual submission was discussed.

It was agreed and concurred in by Mr. Cranmer verbally that the three connecting park areas in the inner circle - namely, Corwina, O'Fallon, and Pence - should be combined on one sheet and studied as one recreational area under a single name that will be decided at the park authority's convenience.

Assistant Landscape Architect Keeling, upon his return from annual leave, will begin the preparation of the revised plans for the annual submission.

This manner of approach for the master plan analysis and correlation of all planning thoughts proved worthwhile - achieving a common ground for all concerned with the exception of the city park officials who unfortunately have shown but little interest in the preparation of master plans for the development of their extensive metropolitan park system. The writer is of the opinion that effort should be expended to expose our planning contributions to these park officials so that the present tendencies toward spasmodic alterations can be tempered toward predetermined decisions.

Alterations will be made in the master plans and work program to conform with the majority of planning comments as raised in the two planning memorandums.

A revised long range work program will be prepared for resubmittal that will consider, not only the developmental jobs, but a priority rating from the standpoint of construction within the five-year period.

Planning Consultation Requests

On December 8th, accompanying Inspector Priester, met Mayor Stapleton, Park Authority Cramner, Denver Mountain Park Superintendent Vail, and a Mr. Stahl who was representing a landholder by the name of Kirchof. We drove to Mt. Falcon sector, located on the north side of Turkey Creek canyon in the Indian Hills district. The city officials wanted us to look at the Kirchof land and adjudge the advisability of the city accepting a land donation from Mr. Kirchof for public park purposes.

The tract in question lies in the vicinity of two city holdings of 80 and 40 acres respectively. Mr. Cramner, negotiating the transfer, is interested in opinions as to what would constitute a desirable acquisition for recreational purposes - besides connecting with the 80 acre tract. In company with him, the writer climbed two mountains checking topographic cover and views - and found usable land character - excellent pine cover - exposed geological interests - and expansive panoramic views overlooking Denver and the plains to the east, better views in the opinion of the writer than are obtainable from Look-out Mountain. The writer expressed an opinion that a minimum acquisition desirable would constitute 200 acres. However, with Mr. Kirchof having title to 1000 acres, double the desired acreage would be most acceptable.

Public access appeared to be somewhat of a problem. However, Mr. Cramner mentioned the possibilities of building a road up the canyon located between Turkey Creek and Bear Creek canyons. This new area overlooks the Red Rocks Park and is not far from Little Park - and does have recreational possibilities for providing picnicking sites with outstanding views that prove such an attraction in the Denver Mountain Parks.

The writer feels that if a sizable acquisition were obtained, it would prove and influence toward changing the scope of the inner circle system of parks and pertinent land use problems thereon were discussed with Mr. Cramner.

With the inspector on December 7th, met Mr. Cramner, Mr. Jobs - the WPA construction superintendent at Red Rocks, and Mr. Vail at Red Rocks Park to study WPA participation in the development of this theatre project.

Modifications made in the development for the entourage of this theater, principally the parking area and approach roads now being constructed by WPA, were carefully checked and "personality-inspired" alterations to the previously accepted general development plan are now proving somewhat detrimental to the ultimate scheme as it effects the theatre. Items such as the grading of the lower parking area, cuts and fills for landscape effect, retention of existing roads as they relate to the parking areas, approach road and unloading court below stage, and obliteration of existing monumental stone decorations in the vicinity of Pueblo were discussed.

While the availability of labor and material appears to be an influencing factor in making certain modifications to the original plan, this conference disclosed that the WPA technical personnel have had little or no contact with the development and grading plans for this theatre entourage, and it was suggested to Mr. Cramner that this development plan be studied and revisions made in company with Mr. Jobs so that all construction efforts now being expended would have coordinated results.

Mr. Jobs's solution to straighten out the approach road to the tunnel which involves considerable retaining wall construction and fill was deemed a worthwhile improvement to be adopted. Also, the ideas for raising the existing water reservoir in the upper parking area to within a few feet of the present parking area was concurred in - as well as his intention for continuing the parking area fill on over to the Red Rocks escarpments.

These alterations to the upper parking area do not effect the original general conception for parking accommodations. WPA will buy materials and build the trail and steps from the upper parking area through a fault in Creation Rock to the theatre stage, providing an alternate route for pedestrian access to the theatre seats. However, relative to this particular job, Mr. Cramner agreed that WPA would not proceed within the confines of the theatre and that CCC would build the stone steps in the approach from the fault to the stage elevation.

The writer concurs in the opinion of the inspector that WPA participation be kept out of the confines of the theatre proper.

While in the theatre, Mr. Cramner requested my opinions regarding the development of the terraces and approach to the terraces in the upper end of the theatre. He has in mind the planning for a concession

and toilets to be located at a lower elevation than the upper terrace which would constitute two related terraces and such proposal will have merit if the landscape character is recognized to influence the design. By jumping from rock to rock with Mr. Cramner the advisability of connecting the concession with the toilets on this lower terrace was pointed out and Mr. Cramner stated that the architect now in their employ would start preparing sketch plans for the development of this upper terrace and would submit them to this Service for review and criticism.

Mr. Cramner's terrace proposals would fortunately, by location, take all noise related to such terrace use away from the theatre proper.

Mr. Cramner desires to have WPA do this work and the writer sees no particular objection if satisfactory plans and a collaborative supervisory control is exercised through this Service.

Mr. Cramner agreed to the suggestion that planting of junipers be done this winter in the planting boxes completed along seats adjacent to Creation Rock. Such planting was discussed with the inspector and Landscape Foreman Mann.

On December 8 with Inspector Priester, Park Authority Cramner, Superintendent Teyssier, and Landscape Foreman Mann, checked in the field at Evergreen Lake the controversial location for a proposed toboggan slide - the job at this writing being held in abeyance.

Mr. Cramner disclosed that technical comments written by this office objecting to the site and size of the toboggan, particularly the site, had influenced both he and Mayor Stapleton to withhold construction work on any toboggan slide until thorough consideration and investigation had been made to other tobogganing possibilities.

Field checking proved that the site as proposed and the construction necessary were not as objectionable from a visual standpoint as portrayed by the job plan - but that two other factors were worthy of more consideration before actual construction should be allowed. They are - (1) the popularity of this type of winter sport may prove the one slide inadequate to handle the demands so that the scaffolding now proposed to handle one chute may have to be strengthened so that ultimately two chutes can be offered - and (2) the park authority was under the impression that supervision would be unnecessary in the use of this type of winter sport - and it was pointed out to him that in other winter sport developmental areas in our region such activities required intensive supervision, especially where they were related to metropolitan usage - and that an attendant would be necessary from the standpoint of safety to regulate the use of this slide.

Mr. Cramner stated that for the time being he wishes no work to be done on this slide until he has had further conferences with the mayor relative to previous location questions and the operating problems that will ensue from such a development.

Mr. Cramner stated that he and the mayor had given considerable thought to previous planning proposals by this Service for the development of Lookout Mountain and that they were enthusiastic about improving the parking area, museum, and approach to the grave such as have been proposed. He discussed with the inspector and superintendent the possibilities of starting work at the earliest possible date. It was pointed out to him that work could be started in developing the new trail approach to the grave, the grave entourage, and the landing terraces at the parking area. Mr. Cramner also inferred that the city would be glad to participate in the construction of a new museum and they would consider engaging the services of a competent architect to design such a structure.

(signed) Kenneth F. Mitchell
Associate Landscape Architect.