

WADDELL FOUNTAIN

CENTRAL PARK

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

April 1988

WADDELL FOUNTAIN CENTRAL PARK

But think na ye my heart was sair,
When I laid the mou' on his yellow hair;
O think na ye my heart was wae,
When I turned about, away to gae?

Nae living man I'll love again,
Since that my lovely knight was slain;
Wi' ae lock of his yellow hair
I'll chain my heart for evermair.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) from
The Border Widow's Lament

Remarkably, one of Scotland's best known romantic poets has close connections with the City of Winnipeg. It is upon Sir Walter Scott's magnificent one hundred and eighty foot monument that a local architect chose to base his design for a fountain in the heart of Winnipeg. Scott and the monument were well known to many citizens in the city and the romance and history of the fountain ultimately became city lore.

STYLE

Creation of useful landscapes within the town...is essentially a Victorian idea, due in the first place to the phenomenal growth of the "insensate industrial town" which created the basic need for such areas, and in the second place, perhaps, to the late Victorian zeal for reform.¹

The public park movement was originally a reaction to the excesses of the industrial town overcrowding, squalor and filth. As a Victorian Age creation, any park feature requiring architectural design also would fall into the Victorian category.

The Waddell Fountain is an example, albeit reduced, of High Victorian architecture. It is based on

¹ G.F. Chadwick, The Park and the Town. Public Landscape in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (London – 1966), p. 19.

one of the Commonwealth's most famous examples, the Scott Monument in Edinburgh, Scotland. The monument, built in 1844, was designed by George Meikle Kemp in the Gothic Revival style. It reflected the trend towards excessive ornamentation, due to the replacement of the cultivated amateur by the professional, studied architect.² This resulted in more technically sound support systems and, in turn, the ability to create more elaborate designs in the Victorian Era.

CONSTRUCTION

The Waddell Fountain was built in 1914 by day labour for \$9,722.19.³ It was designed by Winnipeg architect John Manuel and consisted of white stone on a granite base with a concrete basement to house the water pump. The William Penn Stone Company of Minneapolis did the work; all stone cutting and dressing were done in Winnipeg.⁴

DESIGN

The Waddell Fountain rises from a large, firm base and is excessively ornamented (by 1914 Winnipeg standards). Manuel added a dazzling array of ornamental features, not unlike the Scott Monument. Symmetrically designed, Manuel's creation sports four lions' heads that supply the water. From these heads, the water runs into a double tier of basins that overflow into the main basin at the base.⁵ The words 'Waddell' and 'Fountain' appear on two sides of the structure. Four nodding ogee arches are present (nodding because the arches lean forward and ogee because they contain both concave and convex curves). The main body is connected through a series of flying buttresses while the pinnacle is crocketed and surmounted by a star finial.

² R.F. Jordan, Victorian Architecture (London – 1966), pp. 136-37.

³ Winnipeg Tribune, June 26, 1971; and Winnipeg Free Press, September 17, 1960.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

INTERIOR

The only interior element of the structure is the pump that circulates the water in the system from early spring until freeze-up in the fall.

INTEGRITY

The fountain has stood in the same spot for over 70 years and is structurally sound. Unfortunately, the area around Central Park deteriorated, as did the park and its facilities. If vandalism can be called an alteration, then the `removal' of the top of the fountain is the structure's only change since construction.

STREETSCAPE

Surrounded by some contemporary structures such as the Warwick Apartments and Knox United Church, the Waddell Fountain is an integral part of the Central Park district of Winnipeg's downtown.

ARCHITECT

John Manuel was an architect in Winnipeg from approximately 1914 to 1927.⁶ Unfortunately, it appears he was not prominent and therefore information on him is sketchy. He was an active member of the Manitoba Association of Architects, serving on committees for several years.⁷ Shortly after World War I he rented office space on the second floor of the Nanton Block at Portage and Main. He remained there until his departure from the city in 1927.⁸ His other Winnipeg structures were the University of Manitoba Science Laboratory (1919-20) and a two storey extension

⁶ Henderson's Directory.

⁷ Thanks to the staff at the Manitoba Association of Architects for their assistance.

⁸ Henderson's Directory.

of the Science Building at the Fort Garry campus in 1923.⁹ This extension cost \$80,000 and should have made Manuel an important and successful architect. However, no subsequent information is available on his Winnipeg practice. By 1929 his mailing address had become Calgary and he lost touch with the Winnipeg architectural community.¹⁰ This is the first Manuel design to come before the Historical Buildings Committee; therefore the architect has no previous score.

PERSON

Waddell Fountain was named after Emily Margaret Waddell, a resident of the city who died after a serious operation in Rochester, Minnesota, January 23rd 1909. Emily and her husband Thomas lived at 457 Sargent Avenue and were childless. They had been in the city 25 years prior to her death. Mr. Waddell was a local temperance leader. In 1911, three years after his wife's death, Mr. Waddell and the City of Winnipeg were informed of Mrs. Waddell's 1904 will. It stated that in the event Mr. Waddell remarried, he would donate \$10,000 to the City for the creation of a fountain in Central Park.

Thomas was planning to remarry but did not have the funds available to complete his part of the legal agreement.¹¹ The City, for its part, was put in a difficult position. It could not force a citizen into poverty to build a fountain, yet there was a legal document to be considered. To make matters worse, Waddell was in the midst of a land venture that was jeopardized by the will and was tying up his meagre funds. Ultimately he was able to give the City the \$10,000 and, after studying designs from Canada, the U.S. and Great Britain, decided on local architect John Manuel's fountain.

⁹ "Emergency Building Extension, University Campus, Winnipeg" in Contract Record and Engineering Review, Vol. 37 (March 28, 1923), pp. 294-95.

¹⁰ Architect's Files, Manitoba Association of Architects.

¹¹ Winnipeg Free Press, September 17, 1960.

EVENT

There is no known event connected with this structure.

CONTEXT

With the promotion of Winnipeg as a commercial centre came a need for residential development and associated services and amenities. Many new citizens were arriving only to find early residential planning terribly inadequate. This was mainly because of the large personal and corporate holdings that had effectively controlled private ownership in the vicinity of Fort Garry. It was not until the 1880s that ownership became more dispersed as individuals purchased subdivided properties and developed single and multiple-family residential units.

As original housing in the City Hall district was displaced by development of warehouses and large commercial buildings, other areas of the city took on a residential role. Central Park, an irregularly shaped parcel of land north of Qu'Appelle Avenue between Edmonton and Carlton streets, was acquired by the City in 1893. A fashionable residential district with beautiful houses, cottages and apartment buildings quickly developed around the park.

The City had established a Public Parks Board in early 1893 to oversee the creation of parks and greenspaces in and around Winnipeg. By the end of its first year, the Board had acquired four small parks: Fort Rouge, 4.85 acres; St. John's, 10.5 acres; Victoria, 1.66 acres; and Central, 3.5 acres.¹² The Board originally called these parks, and four additional ones created in 1894, "ornamented squares or breathing spaces."¹³ Also under the Board's control were the planning and creation of wide landscaped boulevards that became one of Winnipeg's most beautiful features. Central Park, in the most urban location of the original eight "breathing spaces", became one of the most popular spots for those trying to escape from the intense (and probably stressful) city life.

¹² M.E. Cavett, et al, "Social Philosophy and the Early Development of Winnipeg's Parks," in Urban History Review, Vol. XI, No. 1 (June 1982), p. 32.

¹³ Winnipeg Free Press, September 17, 1960.

The park site was obtained by the City from the Hudson's Bay Company for \$10,000 cash and \$10,000 in debentures. The property was swampy in the summer with a large amount of 'gumbo' (sticky, useless ground).¹⁴ For a city in search of land for greenspace, this was perfect. As author W. Van Nus observed, "Perhaps the ultimate in creating beauty on the cheap was the idea of developing parks on economically useless land; i.e., land which could not be serviced for building development at reasonable cost."¹⁵

While the land was cheap, solving the drainage problem was difficult although ultimately worth while. Thousands of loads of manure and soil were brought in and, while settling subsequently occurred, this new base created extremely lush lawns and gardens. As the Winnipeg Free Press noted:

For many years Central Park was so popular a recreation area that the wear and tear of constant use made upkeep a problem for the city. Citizens flocked there for bank concerts, community singing, tennis or just a stroll around viewing the greenery and flowers.¹⁶

It is interesting to see how the park changed as the public's perceptions of its role changed. The original "ornamental square" soon acquired extensive walkways and gardens. It was an area for Winnipeg's prominent citizens to ride bicycles or take a leisurely stroll. In 1905 a bandstand and two tennis courts were added. An indication of the site's popularity was the outrage expressed in 1909 when the City suggested the site be used for a new art gallery and museum. An iron fence and drinking fountain were added shortly thereafter. The Waddell Fountain became part of the park in 1914 and, during the 1930s, the area became a popular spot for community singsongs, breaking the monotony of the Depression years.

¹⁴ "Public Parks Board" (Winnipeg – 1905) in City of Winnipeg Parks Branch File, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG 15/ B3.

¹⁵ W. Van Nus, "The Plan Makers and the City. Architects, Engineers, Surveyors and Urban Planning in Canada, 1890-1939," unpublished PhD. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1975, p. 171.

¹⁶ Winnipeg Free Press, September 17, 1960.

Playground equipment was installed in 1936, reflecting the changing population in the immediate area and the need for children's activity centres in the downtown. Restroom facilities were added in 1959.

In 1986, in response to the park's year-round use, the City extended the borders southward another 1.3 acres. Central Park became 4.8 acres in size and other additions are being planned to cope with its popularity.

Waddell Fountain can be placed in the context of the park as an ornamental rather than purely functional entity. Parks initially were created to provide beauty and a source of unorganized leisure activities — walking and biking, for example. It was not until much later that they became tools for promoting organized activities, with elements such as playgrounds and baseball diamonds.

LANDMARK

If revitalizing Winnipeg's downtown is indeed a goal, then areas such as Central Park will play an important role. The park is the only significant open greenspace for downtown residents north of Portage Avenue, and the Waddell forms an integral part of the area. The fountain is one of the city's last features that relate back to the original 'ornamental' role of parks in an urban setting. It is also unique within the city because of its size, design and the extent of ornamentation. It is one of Winnipeg's most classic fountains.

CENTRAL PARK – WADDELL FOUNTAIN

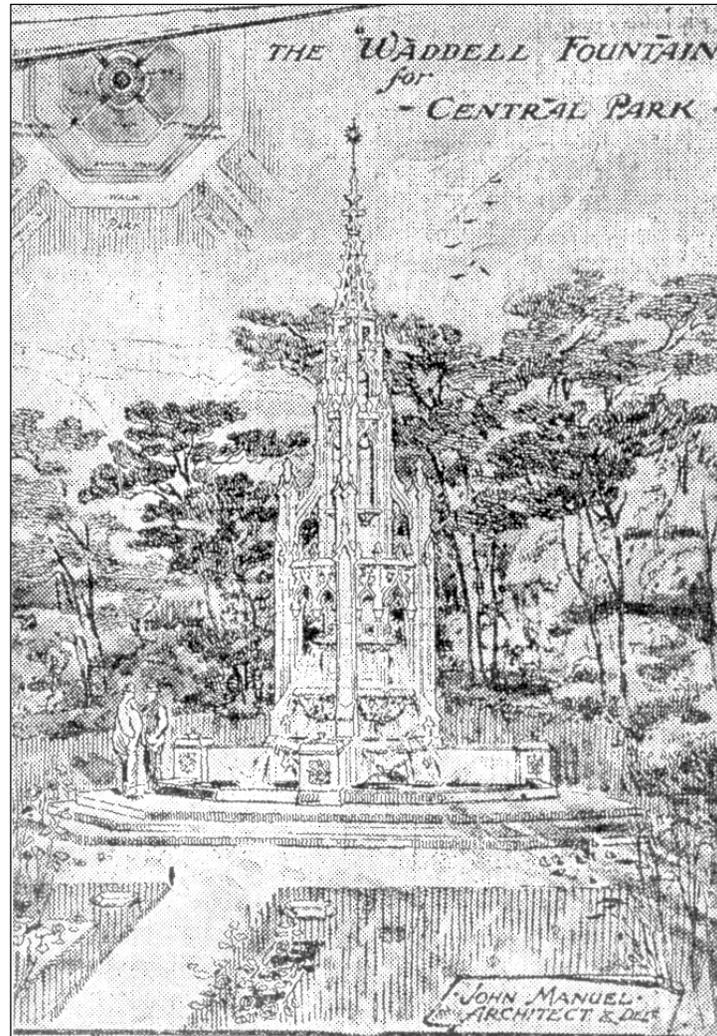


Plate 1 – Architect’s drawing of Waddell Fountain, 1914. (Reproduced from the Manitoba Free Press, 6 July 1914, p. 4, courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

CENTRAL PARK – WADDELL FOUNTAIN

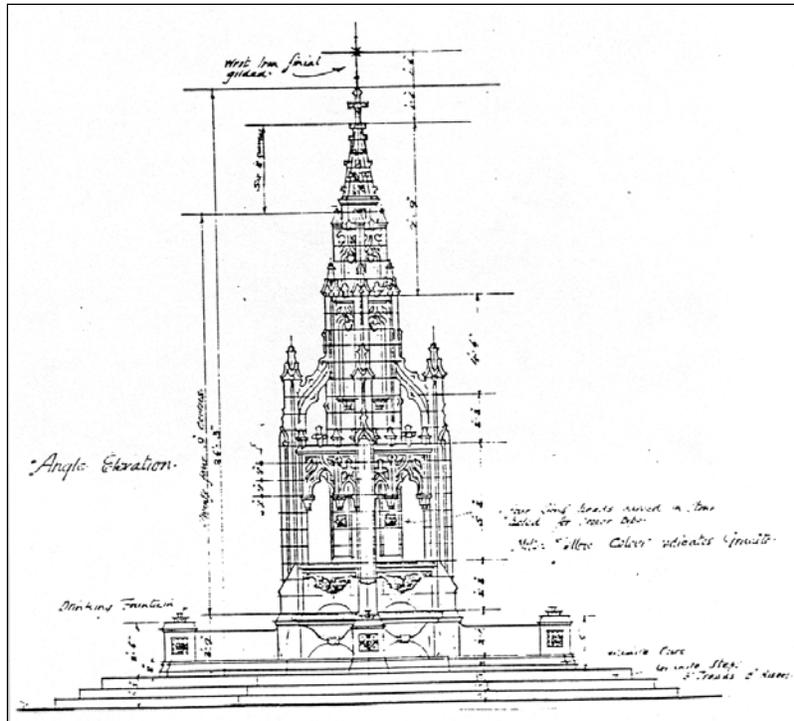


Plate 2 – Architect's plans of Waddell Fountain. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 3 – Central Park, 1897. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, T. Burns Collection #439.)

CENTRAL PARK – WADDELL FOUNTAIN



Plate 4 – Central Park, ca.1915. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

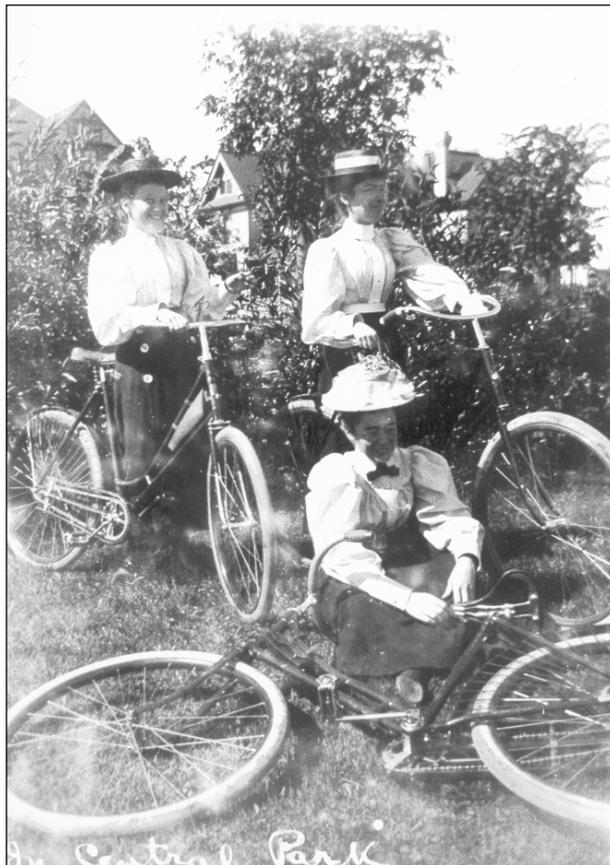


Plate 5 – Cyclists in Central Park, n.d. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N8311.)

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Plate 6 – Central Park, Waddell Fountain and Knox United Church, ca.1928. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N5169.)



Plate 7 – Waddell Fountain, 1956. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

CENTRAL PARK – WADDELL FOUNTAIN



Plate 8 – Waddell Fountain, 1988. (M. Peterson.)