

PLAYGROUNDS IN THE PARKS

New York the Foremost City in the World in the Matter of Encouraging the Use of the Public Parks for Outdoor Sports--The Results Called Good

The officials of the Department of Parks assert that no other city in the world does so much as New York to see that its public parks are enjoyed by its people, so much to make its breathing spots attractive and inviting. Especially noteworthy in this direction have been the efforts of the municipal government in recent years to foster in the parks outdoor sports and recreation of practically all kinds.

The old idea of a city park as simply an enclosed tree and shrubbery garden, with handsome lawns protected by plenty of "Keep off the Grass" signs, has given place to the new idea that a great and crowded city's parks should be the playgrounds of its children of all ages; that to be enjoyed by the people the parks should be used by the people. And the city is constantly at work preparing new playgrounds, improving those already in use, installing new equipment and providing additional facilities for sports and games.

The utilization of New York's parks for sports and games began about 1860, when schoolboys were first permitted to play baseball in Central Park. A baseball diamond was laid out in the southwestern corner of the park, and the rule was established that only boys under 16 should be permitted to play.

This rule still holds good in Central Park, but there are plenty of baseball diamonds in other parks where older players can be accommodated. To-day the old diamond is not used for baseball, but there are half a dozen new diamonds to the north of the old one on the green, and these are in use from morn till night every Wednesday and Saturday throughout the warm season.

About twenty years ago lawn tennis began to be played in Central Park, and since that time various other sports have been admitted and other parks have been made available for games, until to-day there is scarcely any outdoor sport indulged in by Americans that is not encouraged in the parks of New York city.

There are now 200 tennis courts in Central Park, and they are kept in constant use while the weather permits, more than 4,000 permits having been issued this year by the Park Board for tennis in Central Park. These permits are issued to all applying for them, no discrimination or favoritism being shown.

The old baseball diamond in Central Park is now used for croquet. This quiet game is also played in Mount Morris Park, and that it is still enjoyed by some New Yorkers is shown by the fact that there have been issued this year 500 croquet permits.

Crickets are played on Wednesdays and Saturdays on part of the meadow, Central Park, a score of teams holding permits for using the grounds. Nearly half of the players are dark skinned men, coming largely from the West Indies.

Lacrosse has been played from time to time on special permits, which are issued for that game whenever demanded, but public interest in it here does not seem to be large.

Occasionally permits are granted to practice archery in Central Park, though there is not much call for that either. In the autumn football is permitted to the schoolboys, and in winter the greatest sport enjoyed by the greatest numbers in

Central Park is skating, the lake and ponds being crowded whenever the ice is in good condition.

Good grounds for baseball are provided in St. Nicholas Park, and at Jasper Oval the grown up adherents of the national game have the same rights and privileges granted to the youngsters in Central Park.

In recent years the Park Board has been petitioned repeatedly to build a golf course in Central Park, but such petitions can never succeed because there is not room for golf links without spoiling a large part of the park for other purposes. The golf players must be content to go to the parks in the remote parts of the city.

Far more remarkable than this growth of popular interest in sports in the larger parks has been the development in the last four or five years of scientifically arranged and conducted playgrounds for the poor children of the tenement house neighborhoods in certain of the smaller parks of the city. Here the city fosters games and sports of various kinds by providing not only the grounds, with suitable fixtures and equipment, but also the individual implements necessary, such as balls of all kinds, bats, dumbbells, Indian clubs, and even tennis rackets; and furthermore it employs a corps of instructors to teach the children how to play the various games and how to get the most good out of their exercises.

There are eight of these specially equipped playgrounds now in operation in Manhattan borough, and three others in course of construction which will be opened to the children before the present summer is ended. That they are doing a splendid work in giving these poor children good physical constitutions and training, in reclaiming them from evil street influences, in breaking up the fighting gang idea and in starting them on the road to good American citizenship is asserted by those interested in the work.

The first playground of the sort was opened about ten years ago in William H. Seward Park, at Canal and Jefferson streets, by the Outdoor Recreation League. This soon demonstrated its usefulness and success, and led to the adoption of the idea by the city.

The first municipal playground was instituted in 1902; also in William H. Seward Park. This playground contains a double outdoor gymnasium for boys and a large playground for girls. There is also a pavilion with 150 free baths half of them for men and half for women. East River Park at the East River from Eighty-fourth to Eighty-ninth street, contains a small playground for girls and small children, provided with kindergarten and large swings or cups, as the children call them, and other devices appreciated by the smallest children. John Jay Park, at the East River and Seventy-sixth street, contains an outdoor gymnasium for the boys, two tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a basketball court, and a kindergarten equipment with sand houses and swings.

In Tompkins Square is, according to the director, the best park playground in the world. It is situated in the heart of the park, with the shade of the trees on the playground, and consists of an open air gymnasium and a separate playground for girls.

The gymnasium contains horizontal bars, two parallel bars, two horses (the German side horses), two bucks, inclined and horizontal ladders, flying and travelling rings, a running track, a jumping ground—in short, a complete athletic field, together with tennis and basketball courts.

A small park at Seventeenth street and the East River has been equipped with a kindergarten playground for small children.

Hamilton Fish Park at Houston and Willlet streets, has a double open air gymnasium with running track, athletic field, tennis courts, a playground for girls, sand houses, swings, shelter sheds, and, for kindergarten children, two indoor gymnasiums, one for boys and one for girls, which are used all through the winter.

At Corlears Hook Park there is a playground with an open air gymnasium, baseball field, tennis courts and basketball courts. And Hudson Park contains a small playground for the children of the lower West Side.

The new playgrounds now in course of construction are in Thomas Jefferson Park, between 111th and 114th streets, First Avenue and the Harlem River, where one of the largest outdoor gymnasiums in the world is building; De Witt Clinton Park, Fifty-second to Fifty-fourth street and the North River, where a fine outdoor gymnasium and complete athletic field will be ready for use by Sept. 1; and St. Gabriel's Park, between Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth streets, First and Second avenues, where a double gymnasium, athletic field and separate



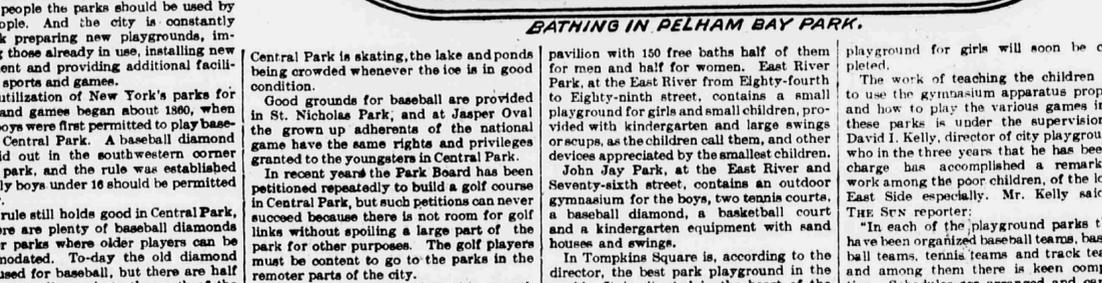
CENTRAL PARK TENNIS GROUNDS.



GIRLS HAND DRILL, WM. H. SEWARD PARK.



BATHING IN PELHAM BAY PARK.



DUMBBELL DRILL IN HAMILTON FISH PARK.

playground for girls will soon be completed.

The work of teaching the children how to use the gymnasium apparatus properly and how to play the various games in all these parks is under the supervision of David I. Kelly, director of city playgrounds, who in the three years that he has been in charge has accomplished a remarkable work among the poor children of the lower East Side especially. Mr. Kelly said to THE SUN reporter:

"In each of the playground parks there have been organized baseball teams, basketball teams, tennis teams and track teams, and among them there is keen competition. Schedules are arranged and carried out regularly.

"Competition games are held every Saturday and Wednesday afternoon throughout the summer, and the last Saturday of each month is given to athletics. The basketball play has been divided into three sections—seniors, juniors and middlets. These teams in one park challenge those of the other parks and the school and settlement house teams. Baseball, basketball and tennis are the most popular games among the boys of all the parks.

"The boys have organized clubs of their own, and the pride they take in them is surprising. They buy their own uniforms, and they take good care of the park property, too, realizing that it is their property and that if it is stolen or damaged they are injured just that much.

"Each club or team has a separate hour for practice, and the boys themselves help to enforce the regulations. The junior clubs are made up of boys from 7 to 14 years old; the senior clubs of boys from 14 to 18 years.

"Basketball teams, of course, have to be arranged by weight. The middlets take in the youngsters averaging from 70 to 80 pounds; the juniors weigh 80 to 90 pounds; and the seniors 90 to 110 pounds. In the last year we have developed many good basketball players. The boys like it, and it is good exercise, keeping them in the open air and allowing small chance for cheating or crooked work in their play.

"Volley ball and gymnastic and athletic games are also enjoyed by our boys. Three deep: circle ball, catch ball, medicine ball, tag ball, bounce ball, mout ball, hustle ball, Indian club races, club hustles, marching evolutions, dumbbell drills, wand drills,

hand drills, Indian club drills and Indian club circle pull are some of these.

"A grand tournament is held about once in six months. On July 1 such a tournament was held for all the playground parks. The Commissioner awarded medals to the most skilful players in various games and contests, and the park winning the greatest number of points received a pennant. This is now held by Hamilton Fish Park.

"On special occasions, also, tournaments are held, such as the opening of a new park or playground. On Sept. 1 such a tournament will be held at the opening of De Witt Clinton Park.

"We try to devote as much time as possible to the general mass of the playground, and to develop teams and clubs. The enthusiasm among the boys for these teams has grown rapidly, and the park spirit now displayed is really remarkable.

"When the work was first started here the park would be fairly swamped by a horde of tough youngsters who had never had any freedom without lawlessness, and who did not know what to make of the thing. They wanted to tear everything to pieces. They couldn't keep their hands off. They had no regard for rules or regulations of any kind.

"Many of the old boys wanted to do nothing but fight. They had been brought up in the street, they had never had any other place to play. Their ideas of fun were derived from the dime novel and trash of that kind, and so they robbed the pushcart men and committed other petty depredations, but because they wanted to rob, primarily, not because that was their idea of sport.

"The men come together, a few walk down the street, and the boys who are to-day studying for the law, or medicine, or some other profession.

"And not only the boys, but the girls also are benefited by these playgrounds. The girls are taught kindergarten and social occupation work. There are sand houses and building blocks for the smaller children; dancing games and many others for the larger girls.

"The scups are immensely popular.

There are three sizes—large, intermediate and small, besides the baby swings. And the lives of many frail babies have been saved by these swings.

"In the hot hours of the day the social occupation work is given to the girls from 4 to 15 years old. Tether ball is a very popular game with the girls, who also play tennis and volley ball, and among the children the giant stride is very popular.

"For the girls in Hamilton Fish Park there is a library and quiet game room where they can spend an hour in the afternoon. Considerable work is done in summer in the outdoor gym and on the track, dumbbell exercises, and so on. In the winter they build toboggans, snow men, and have winter entertainments and parties, which are extremely popular.

"What all this means to the city is not appreciated by one man in a thousand. Some people who have merely heard that the city is spending a lot of money to provide sports for the children of the poorer quarters have said it was a waste of money, and the city might better spend it some other way.

"But they do not know what they are talking about. This work means not alone breaking up of the gang, which is in itself a highly desirable thing, but it means also the making of good citizens with an interest in the welfare of the city out of the most unpromising material, probably, in the city.

The parks of the Bronx, which average much larger than those of Manhattan, provide the extensive courses necessary for such games as golf and polo. And the Bronx parks are enjoyed by the people of all parts of the city. Commissioner Henry C. Schrader said to THE SUN reporter:

"The people generally, and even the city officials—those of the Manhattan Park Department included—do not realize to what an extent the parks of the Bronx are used for sports and recreation by the people of the other parts of the city. I really believe the Bronx parks are more used by people from Manhattan than by residents of the Bronx themselves, and people come from Brooklyn and Queens and Staten Island, too, to enjoy our Bronx parks.

"We are glad to have them come; there is plenty of room up here for all, plenty of fresh air and plenty of facilities for good exercise. I don't know of any place in the world where there is a finer set of public parks than we have right here in the Bronx.

"On the one side we have the waterfront park, with the finest views across the Sound, with unsurpassed bathing and boating facilities—Pelham Bay Park; and on the other side we have the hills of Van Cortlandt Park. You can take your choice, the hills or the shore, and be sure of beautiful scenery, beautiful gardens, health giving air, and plenty of accommodations and conveniences for sports and pastimes, whichever you choose."

Macomb's Dam Park has been fitted out with a big outdoor gymnasium and quarter mile running track, which is just about finished. It also has a baseball diamond and ten tennis courts, and a number of boat

clubs make the park their headquarters. St. James Park contains tennis courts; Crotona Park has two baseball diamonds and twenty tennis courts, five of which are enclosed for tournament use exclusively; Claremont Park contains two baseball fields and a number of tennis courts, and tennis is played also in St. Mary's Park. All of these grounds are in constant use throughout the summer though the tennis courts are not so crowded as those of Central Park.

Boating on Bronx River is about the only sport permitted in Bronx Park, which is mainly given over to the Botanical Garden and the Zoological Park, and these exhibits provide a certain kind of recreation for thousands of persons who never dream of going to the parks for any more vigorous exercise than walking or driving, and to whom the various sports and games do not specially appeal.

But the most extensive facilities and equipments for sports and games are to be found in the two largest parks, largest not only of The Bronx, but of the whole city, Pelham Bay Park and Van Cortlandt Park.

The largest of all the parks, Pelham Bay contains two golf courses, ten baseball fields, scores of tennis courts, a fine athletic field, an open air gymnasium, a quarter mile running track, four bowling alleys, targets for archery practice, boat houses for boating on the bay, several yacht clubs built by various yacht clubs with the permission of the Park Department, 300 free bath houses, which are nowhere near enough to supply the demand on Saturdays and Sundays, and besides all these the Commissioner grants permits for tenting or camping out on the shores of the bay.

This summer there are about 200 of these tents put up and occupied by individuals or families from all parts of Greater New York, who are spending their summer in this pleasant way, with all the fun and frolic of camp life within the city limits and within easy call of business if business should demand attention. There are a great many children in these camping parties. They of course enjoy it greatly, and it is giving them health and strength.

Van Cortlandt Park contains nine holes on the "regular" for beginners, and the other a regulation eighteen hole links, which is kept in excellent condition and is a fairly sporty course. It is probably the finest public golf course in the country.

The polo field is another attraction at Van Cortlandt, and is used constantly throughout the season by various clubs of the upper part of the city and the adjoining suburbs. There are also in Van Cortlandt four baseball fields, many tennis courts, croquet grounds, a parade ground, which is used by various military and uniformed bodies for their drills and evolutions, and good facilities for boating on the park lake. This is crowded on Saturdays and Sundays. In the winter time skating is the great sport at Van Cortlandt, and the ice of the lake is enjoyed by thousands.

Brooklyn and Queens boroughs also make ample provision for popular sports and games in their parks. In Prospect Park are permitted basketball, archery, cricket, polo, tennis, boating and skating.

The parade ground adjoining Prospect Park, which is used by various uniformed organizations, provides also thirty-one baseball diamonds, which are always thronged.

The tennis courts number several hundred, and this year the Commissioner has issued some 6,000 permits for tennis.

Forest Park has a very good golf links of eighteen holes, and there is a flourishing golf club made up of the players who use this links. This park also contains several baseball fields and tennis courts.

Canarsie Beach Park is now being put into good shape with a running track and athletic field, and a new outdoor gymnasium is being built on the site of the old Park under the Brooklyn approach to the Williamsburg Bridge. There are also public playgrounds in Williamsburg, familiarly known as Macomb's Dam Park at New Lots, in the East New York district.

Richmond Borough has not yet come to be so thickly populated as to need the same park facilities as the other parts of the city, and so far the parks here have yet been made for sports and games in its parks. It has only three small ones, none of which would be adequate for very extensive games or exercises.

In all the city parks where sports are encouraged baseball and tennis are the most popular games. Tennis has been gaining ground in popularity in the last few years, and to-day the people who go to the parks to play that fine game far outnumber those who therein practise any other sport.

PRIZEFIGHTS ALWAYS A FEATURE OF LIFE ON BOARD UNCLE SAM'S WARSHIPS

"That set scrap between Johnson, the black from the Olympia, and Cohen, the Yankee bluejacket, that wound up in the death of Cohen, will probably grab the regularly arranged prizefights on board United States warships for a while at any rate," said a chief petty officer in the navy. "The hands will therefore be missing a lot of sport."

"The set battles, in which the men fight for a purse made up by the ships' officers, as in the case of the Johnson-Cohen fight, haven't been so frequent in the navy of late years as they used to be, but there's been more class in the arranged fights during the last ten years or so than there was when the mix-ups were more common. During the last decade I've seen some fights between big fellows on men-o'-war that wouldn't have looked bad to \$5 a head sports around a roiling ashore.

"In the old days the frequently arranged fights were between plugs with no boxing skill, but just swinging bluffers, as often as not, and the mix-ups would occasionally develop into rough and tumble affairs between the principals, with their partisans taking walls at each other on the sides. There's been a good deal of pains taken in the man-o'-war fights of recent years to have the men in first-rate trim when they got together, and to have them as evenly matched as possible. That's why I can't quite understand the fight between the man from the Olympia and the man from the Yankee that cashed in the Yankee man."

"I've seen a good many of these regularly arranged fights on board ship since I first began to sleep in a canvas bag a matter

of twenty years or so ago, and I never saw one of them reach any greater point of what's called brutality than the average prizefight ashore. The dead bad fights aboard men-o'-war are the imprudent, bare knuckle affairs, generally pulled off below in the bunkers, between men who have got it in for each other.

"The Pacific and China stations have always been the prizefighting stations for men-o'-war-men. On the Pacific station, particularly, there's a lot of main deck boxing between the men for'ard, and all hands become interested in the walloping act. Good men are developed in the progress of the bouts, and when the ships get to cruising together the crack men of each ship are put up against each other, nearly always by arrangement and subscription of the officers.

"Moreover, a lot of professional fighters, good second rate men as often as not, are shipped out at the Mare Island Yard, San Francisco's leading fight town in the country now, and San Francisco scrappers who are not quite good enough to get the money in the fighting game out there ship for a cruise or so in the navy when they find themselves up against it ashore.

"That's the way it was with Sharkey. He was a clumsy fellow, with nothing but strength and the ability to stand any amount of grueling, before he found himself on the friz in San Francisco, and shipped in the navy up at the Mare Island yard. He had a chance to develop himself in the navy, so that when he quit the service he wasn't a bad sort of a man, although none of us in the navy ever counted him

anywhere near first class. "The ringer was a gigantic Portuguese-Kanaka, half and half of each of those bloods, and the champion slugger of the Hawaiian Islands. This giant was rigged up in a bluejacket uniform, and it was given out that he was the star fighter of another American man-o'-war then in Honolulu harbor.

"The fight took place on board the Philadelphia. It lasted only two minutes of the first round, and then Sharkey landed on the Hawaiian giant's jaw, and the ringer went down like a typhoon uprooted date palm and never came to until he was sneaked ashore in the steam cutter.

"That was the last of Sharkey's fights in the navy. They didn't try after that to get him licked. His time was up soon after, and he quickly took rank as one of the good heavyweights of the country. It was the incessant practice that Sharkey got in the navy with men pretty nigh his equal in strength, and plenty of them his superiors in boxing, that sent him along so fast when he shed his bluejacket uniform. He says so himself, and he ought to know."

"The bare knuckle scraps on board ship between men who are sore on each other are just as common nowadays as they ever were, and there's no way of stopping them. There's a regulation against this sort of fighting, of course, but it's the dearest of all naval regulations.

"If they'd try to enforce it to the letter of the regulation, a lot of the best sailor men on board a man-o'-war would be in the ship's brig from one end of the year to the other. Fighting between men who've got a grudge against each other is what you'd call a necessary evil in the navy, and that's

the way the officers really regard the matter, in spite of the regulation. "The experienced officers blink at it. They know the bad results of a bitterness that's allowed to go on between a pair of bluejackets under the to'gallant fo'c'sle. The oldtime officers have found out that it's better that the thing should be fought out and done with than that a lot of other fists should be drawn into a quarrel that festers and grows unless the head of it is broken by a decisive battle between the pair of men who've been snarling at each other.

"Hardly a week passes that there is not at least one scrap of this sort on board most men-o'-war, with the promise of a heavier battle to follow.

"A bluejacket, for instance, seats himself on another's ditty box. When the owner of the ditty box orders the squatter to get off it the squatter hands him a bunch of talk. The men come together, a few wal-lows are exchanged, and then the men draw apart, both being wise to it that the Jimmy Legs is liable to be hovering around somewhere, and neither of 'em caring for a trick in the brig.

"A little thing like that will start a grudge between a couple of men grown peevish and snappy after long cruising, and after they've growled and glared at each other for a certain length of time, they're looked to by all hands for'ard to bring the thing to a finish and then dry up. The man of the two who's got what he thinks is the bigger grievance is carefully watched by the men for'ard to see if he makes any preliminary moves toward arranging a fight with the other fellow. He almost always does."

"The fights thus fixed up, however, are

not the regular navy prizefights like the Johnson-Cohen affair. They're just bile evaporating battles between fellows who, for the time, hate each other.

"Nearly all of these grouch fights are pulled off down below in one of the fire rooms or in an empty bunker, for the officers are not supposed to know anything about them. The empty bunker is preferred on account of its isolation.

"When one of these scraps is to come off between two bluejackets below all hands for'ard know all about it in advance, but very few of the men, unless they're intimates of the fellows scheduled to scrap, expect invitations to the mix-up. There isn't room in a bunker for more than two or three friends of each man.

"With one second each, and a referee agreed upon, the enemies, naked to the waist, go at it. The men are not allowed to fight rough-and-tumble. They've got to observe the rules of the game, and their shipmates are present to see that they do obey the rules.

"I saw one of these fights between enemies in which the two went forty-eight rounds, and they were a bunged-up looking pair of sailormen when they both consented to quit and patch up their quarrel. As a general thing, though, one of the men in these bunker fights is licked before the tenth round.

"If the men are unequally matched, and one of them is getting sorely the worst of it in the early stages, all hands in the bunker take a hand in pulling the two as to ability, and they're allowed to go on until one of them is well thrashed. At the wind-up of one of

these bunker battles all hands quietly quit the bunker and climb to the deck by different engine room or fire room ladders, so's not to attract the attention of the officer of the deck.

"As they're bare knuckle affairs, both men generally get pretty thoroughly maulled and bruised up in these bunker scraps, and when the fight's over they hop into their uniforms and skidoo to the sick bay to get themselves patched up with arnica! counterplaster, and so on. A man who's been maulled in a bunker fight knows at one peek what ails him, all right, but just for the sake of form he asks them what's the matter with their mugs. They've been fallen down an engine room or a fire room ladder—that's the usual answer. Both fell down the ladder at the same time. 'No, sir, they fell down different ladders.' "The ship's surgeon has a tin of liniment hanging around with a twinkle in his eyes, and then he scribbles an account of their injuries in his sick bay log, and orders the sick bay hands to dress up the walloping wouler scraps.

"And that's the end of the bunker fight. Fifteen minutes after the men leave the sick bay with bandages around their heads and a strong scent of liniment hanging about their heads they're liable to be seen with their banged-up heads together over a ditty box, comparing souvenir junk that they've picked up in their cruisions.

A Ceagur's High Leap From the Junction City Times. Frank Parker came in law week from his ranch in the Coast Range, some thirty or forty miles west of here. He informed us considerable nights before he left that he had been doing a racket about the place and next morning found their house cut dead and also two goats. The animal leaped an eight rail fence with a goat without disturbing a hair of its head, and the animal, which proved to be a collie, was tired and killed.