

ANNUAL REPORT 1995

PROVIDENCE PARKS DEPT.



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submitted by

*Nancy L. Derrig
Superintendent of Parks*



Department of Public Parks

"Building Pride In Providence"

January 31, 1996

Honorable City Council Members
City of Providence
Providence City Hall
Providence, RI 02903

Dear City Council Members:

In response to the request of the City Council, the Providence Parks Department is proud to submit this Annual Report for the year 1995. Throughout the year, the Parks Department has continued to assist the City Council in their efforts to deliver high-quality services to our citizens in both Roger Williams Park and in all our neighborhood parks.

Our Grounds crews, despite severe budget restraints, and rising graffiti and citywide vandalism, has done a fine job in maintaining our ballfields and playgrounds. As their section of the report demonstrates, they have also made significant improvements at many neighborhood parks, including Danforth Park, Davis Park and J.T. Owens. The Department has also designed and built Mt. Pleasant Memorial Park.

The magnificent urban showpiece, Waterplace Park, has been transferred to the Parks Department and we will be attracting people from around the State and tourists to enjoy the Park through all the seasons with concerts and festivals to add vitality to our City. Starting on a limited basis last summer, the Department managed an ambitious program and will expand the programs this year.

Other public events include numerous concerts, festivals, charity walks and runs and special events throughout the City. Public sculpture was highlighted once again with the nationally acclaimed Convergence Festival at Roger Williams Park. In addition, we have assisted almost every City public event to one degree or another, including Extreme Games, Christmas Tree Lighting, Easter Egg Hunts, Medieval Fair, Literacy Day in the Park, Head Start Festival, RI Churches Crusade Festival, Mini Grand Prix in Kennedy Plaza and dozens of other public events.

Honorable City Council Members

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In the face of our budget restrictions, we have attempted to both initiate plans and cooperate with various groups to assist in the development and adoption of various sites throughout the City in an effort to reduce city costs. One example is the Greenhouse which had early retirements slash the Greenhouse staff, including both the Division Director and Assistant Director. In addition, personnel cuts necessitated closing the North Burial Ground Greenhouses. However, through an innovative adoption by the Groden School, we have been able to continue the operation of the Greenhouse to the benefit of both the Parks Department and the community. By transferring another Department staff member, we have been able to maintain our effort while cutting costs and personnel.

We have also continued our Senior Citizen summer program, utilizing seniors to maintain neighborhood parks during the busy seasons. This is one of the most cost effective programs the City has established and has resulted in cleaner and safer neighborhood parks when we most need them.

Our Museum of Natural History has seen dramatic growth with the re-opening of the renovated Cormack Planetarium as well as "*All Things Connected*", an exhibit of the Museum's priceless Native American materials with its accompanying beautiful catalogue, the Museum's first ever. This year, the Museum dramatically increased its education outreach to school children and teachers, resulting in very successful children's programming and a completely booked school tour program.

The Roger Williams Park Zoo has seen attendance and reputation grow dramatically, both locally and nationally. We have opened new exhibits and renovated existing ones. Four new exhibits in 1995 were added: "*Madagascar*" - *Island Lost In Time*, *Tropical America -- RI's Rainforest*, *Australia - Where the Jungle Meets the Outback*, and *African Kopje - Smaller Wonders of the Plains*.

Our award-winning Education Department is seeing more and more youngsters in the innovative and highly successful ZooPower program which employs at-risk youngsters, teaches them about the environment and has them mentor younger children in neighborhood centers. The Education Department will have a new center this spring, funded by private contributions. This new facility will allow us to meet the demand for high quality environmental education for both students and teachers.

Honorable City Council Members

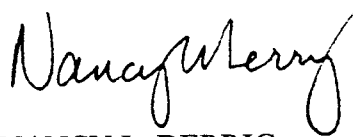
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As always, the Department extends to City Council members and their families an invitation to tour our facilities so you can see first-hand our operation and improvements.

Please do not hesitate to call on me if I can be of help to you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nancy L. Derrig".

NANCY L. DERRIG
Superintendent of Parks

MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

- ***"ALL THINGS CONNECTED:*
NATIVE AMERICAN COLLECTIONS EXHIBITION AND CATALOGUE**

The Museum's vast collection of Native American material culture had not been seen in over two decades and some of the objects included had never before been exhibited to the public. The catalogue, with its 38 full-color images, is the first in the Museum's 99 year history. The catalogue has been well received and has already been entered in several design competitions for judging in 1996.

The exhibition links the Native American cultural material to other areas of our collection as well. Plant, animal, archaeological, and geological specimens interpret the intimate relationships held by Native Americans with the natural world. Dependence on nature for food, clothing and shelter, as well as for Native folklore and mythic images is the basis for educational programs for children.

Visitors are invited to read text that places objects in a cultural context, but they are allowed the opportunity to confront stereotypes, compare perspectives and draw their own cultural conclusions. Our presentation of *All Things Connected: Native American Creations* has placed us on the cutting edge of emerging trends in Museum exhibition design and interpretation.

The catalogue and exhibition have added another layer of perception to the public's appreciation of Native American culture and heritage and constitute a step forward in the understanding of the peoples of America.

- **RE-OPENING OF CORMACK PLANETARIUM**

After a 22-month renovation, the Museum of Natural History's Cormack Planetarium re-opened to the public in November, 1995. The upgraded Planetarium, with its enhanced projection, special effects and audio capabilities will allow us to present programs that will offer glimpses of our galaxy the likes of which could not have been imagined when it first opened in 1953.

The power of dreams and imagination are what first inspired man to look to the heavens and to ultimately venture into space. Dreams, dedication and the generosity of many organizations enabled us to complete the much needed renovation of Cormack Planetarium. As we present new worlds and wonders to generation of star gazers, both young and old, we hope to encourage them to dream and inspire them to imagine.

The cooperation and support of the City of Providence was essential to the success of this important project. We are proud to present the newly renovated state-of-the-art facility to children and their families, the education community and star gazers throughout Rhode Island and southeastern New England.

- **EXPANSION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING**

We have re-focused our educational programming and have shifted to a hands-on, discovery-based menu of workshops that utilize the full range of the Museum's collections. These integrated programs enhance the students' and families' appreciation of our natural world and its diverse cultures while promoting inquiry and experimentation in the classroom and at home. After-school and summer courses for children have proven very successful as have weekend family programs that encourage parents and children to explore the wonders of science together, both at the Museum and at home.

We have also expanded the scope of our professional development workshops and the response from the education community has been overwhelming. Sessions dealing with accessing the Internet and utilizing the Planetarium have recently been offered, in addition to our regular workshops designed to help teachers link museum resources to classroom curricula. Also, graduate courses for in-service educators were offered through the University of Rhode Island. The classes were held at the Museum and were taught by members of the Museum staff.

Exciting collaborations with WSBE Channel 36 and Cox Communications will provide us with the latest in telecommunications technology. These advances will allow us to continue to expand the range of programs for both the public and school groups now and into the next century.

GREENHOUSE DIVISION

In the beginning of 1995 the Greenhouse Division consisted of six operating greenhouses. By mid-year, and as a direct result of the retirements, the North Burial Ground Greenhouse was no longer staffed. The North Burial Ground Greenhouse is currently utilized by the Groden School with whom the Parks Department has had a ten year, highly successful partnership.

The Greenhouse Division was also responsible for the maintenance and planting of the following public gardens:

Rose Garden
Hartman Garden
Japanese Garden

Boathouse, Casino, Betsy Williams Cottage and Museum grounds, City Hall, Downtown Providence flower beds and parks.

The Greenhouse Division was responsible for providing plant rental service to the Casino in 1995.

- **Personnel**

The Greenhouse staff presently consists of 11 full-time employees; one Greenhouse supervisor, 8 landscape gardeners and 2 laborers. During 1995, 6 employees retired and one resigned. This resulted in two supervisory vacancies, 1 landscape gardener special vacancy and 3 landscape gardener vacancies. In order for the Greenhouses to function adequately, my recommendation is that these vacancies be filled with landscape gardeners.

- **Greenhouse Conditions**

Four of the 5 Greenhouses have inadequate heating systems resulting in severe plant damage and lost plant material. My recommendation is to have Providence Gas evaluate the heating system and suggest ways to upgrade the system.

Four of the five Greenhouses are in need of plumbing, electrical and general structural repairs.

In the past six months the staff has attempted to eliminate the overcrowding of plant material and reorganize the Greenhouses. The emphasis is on producing more quality material, increase the use of pesticides and present a more appealing product.

- **Equipment**

Vehicles are presently adequate. The anticipated fertilizer and watering systems are gradually being replaced with more modern systems as the budget allows.

- **Flower Shows**

In 1995 the Greenhouse presented the following shows:

RI Home Show

Easter/Spring Flower Show

Fall Chrysanthemum Show

Christmas Flower Show

(which included the 20 foot Talking Snowman and Santa Claus)

The Greenhouses were open to the public 365 days in 1995. There were approximately 258 scheduled tours.

ROGER WILLIAMS PARK ZOO

- **"HEDGEHOG" DAY**

Broke into national media with our spin on Groundhog Day. Zoo Director Tony Vecchio was interviewed and photographed by the Associated Press about how hedgehogs are better indicators of the weather than groundhogs. Ran in 78 papers nationwide and also appeared in British Columbia. All three TV stations picked up the story as well as national radio.

- **CELEBRATE RI**

Participated in the Governor's new inaugural bash at the Convention Center. Our booth had information on the Zoo and upcoming summer events as well as clowns making balloon animals. We had the longest line in the place.

- **NEW EXHIBITS**

Madagascar - Island Lost in Time -- Four species of critically endangered lemurs (for a total of over 15 animals) and a radiated tortoise exhibit opens.

Tropical America - RI's Rainforest -- New canopy sky-walk brings visitors to the tops of the trees to see exotic free-flying birds and unique monkeys. Reptiles and other animals are at either end of the building.

Australasia - Where the Jungle Meets the Outback - New clouded leopard exhibit is added to the former Nature Center and a huge outdoor aviary with Australian birds is open. Also, an underwater viewing exhibit of Asian small-clawed otters is open.

African Kopje - Smaller Wonders of the Plains -- African crested-porcupines and leopard tortoises start out in the new exhibit with dwarf antelopes (called dik-diks) and bat-eared foxes to be added this spring.

- **PASSPORT TO THE WILD**

A promotional campaign set up a trip to Costa Rica as a prize (provided by Collette Tours and American Airlines) for a contest that celebrated the opening of the four new exhibits.

- **SPRING FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW**

The Zoo brings "The Sentinel" to the flower show and collaborates with the Charles H. Smith Greenhouses staff in designing grand reproductions of past Park garden displays

including the floral clock and American flag. The exhibit is very popular, with adults and children stopping to take pictures of them with the "Hoppin Dog."

- **EDUCATION CENTER GROUND BREAKING**

Ground was officially broken on October 17 with a ceremony including the Mayor and Zoological Society Board of Directors, members as well as Park Commissioners. The building is scheduled to open in May, 1996.

- **RHODE ISLAND ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY FUNDRAISING EFFORTS PROVE SUCCESSFUL**

A \$450,000 grant from the Champlin Foundation for construction of the new Marco Polo exhibit highlighted a very successful fundraising year. The Education Center campaign has received grants of \$250,000 from the Kresge Foundation; \$50,000 grants from the RI Foundation, Providence Journal, and Fleet; a \$25,000 grant from the Prince Trust; \$15,000 grants from Amica and Citizens; and \$20,000 grants from Narragansett Electric and Textron. In addition, the RI Foundation awarded \$15,000 for construction of an off-exhibit breeding area.

- **FIRST TIME BIRTHS AT THE ZOO**

Spring was definitely a time for heralding some first time births at the Zoo. Babies were born to the Babirusa (a wild swine that only 8 other zoos have in their collection); sand hill crane; kowari (a hamster-sized carnivorous marsupial); rock hyrax (similar to a tail-less wood-chuck); and mongoose lemur (one of the most endangered of all lemurs, found only on the island of Madagascar).

- **THIRD ANNUAL REPTILE FAIR BRINGS BIG NUMBERS**

One of the biggest days of the year for the Zoo was during the 3rd annual Reptile Fair. Hundreds of different kinds of reptiles and amphibians are brought to the Zoo from private collections and displayed for the public. It's a real crowd-pleaser.

- **ZOOPOWER AND OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMS**

This year, eleven teens and over 600 school-aged child care participants were active in the ZooPower program. As a counterpart to ZooPower, the summer Youth and the Environment program provided opportunities for 15 Providence teens to work on a variety of programs. The Explorer Program for teen-age volunteers continued to be filled to capacity. Two new programs included: the Science Honors program, aimed at gifted and talented students who would like to experience research at the Zoo; and CityLab, a satellite program of the Boston University School of Medicine, that was piloted at the Zoo last spring. This program provides middle and high school students with a four hour biotechnology lab at the Zoo.

- **ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (AGAIN)**

For the second consecutive year, the Zoo won several Brass Ring Awards from the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAA). The five awards won in 1995 included a "Best of Show" for a print ad which bet out other such attractions as Sea World, Florida; Disneyland, California and France; and Universal Studios, Hollywood.

- **ZOO GARDENERS BRINGS GREEN THUMB VOLUNTEERS TO THE ZOO**

The new "Zoo Gardeners" program brought twenty volunteers to the Zoo who take pride in helping to beautify the grounds of the Zoo by planting and tending various plants and gardens.

- **BEST OF RHODE ISLAND**

For the second consecutive year, Roger Williams Park Zoo was judged as the "Best Place to Take the Kids" by the editors of Rhode Island Monthly Magazine. The Zoo had a display at the Best of RI celebration at the Convention Center.

- **THE BIG "E"**

This year marked the first time that the Zoo participated in the Big "E" - Springfield's New England fair. The exhibit was included in the Rhode Island house and brought new of "New England's Great Zoo" to areas of Massachusetts and New England that previously had never heard of us. Coupons were distributed for tracking purposes and many were redeemed within a short time at the Admissions Gate.

- **ZOO HOSTS INTERNATIONAL COLLEAGUES**

Experts from all over the country came here to participate in these sessions:

COTTON-TOP TAMARIN MASTERPLANNING - Dr. Savage organized a Cotton-top Tamarin SSP Masterplan Session hosted by the Zoo. The session resulted in breeding recommendations for more than 200 animals housed in 50 zoos in the United States.

RODENT ADVISORY GROUP/NAKED-MOLE RAT Symposium and Masterplan Session -- the first ever symposium brought people from all over the world to discuss these naked, blind, and deaf rodents.

ROGER WILLIAMS PARK ZOO

- **UPDATE ON THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT**

Dr. Anne Savage, Research Director, was co-author of six scientific publications with topics ranging from reproductive functioning in captive primates to a study of gestational diabetes in white-faced saki monkeys. The national children's publication Weekly Reader featured Dr. Savage and her research with cotton-top tamarins as a cover story and teacher's lesson plan.

Also published both the masterplan recommendations and husbandry manual for the cotton-top tamarin. The Brown University Summer Studies Program continued last year with over 20 students nationwide participating in "Taking Away the Bars: Modern Animal Husbandry Techniques at the Roger Williams Park Zoo."

All of Dr. Savage's research programs are financed by outside sources.

- **MONKEYS IN THE TREES**

The release of cotton-top tamarins (critically endangered primates) into the trees of the Zoo proved to be a national news story and garnered us the attention of CNN on both national and international levels.

ROGER WILLIAMS PARK ZOO

- **VETERINARY DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS**

The veterinary department has excelled at participation in education and conservation projects in 1995. The department's medical expertise has the most impact on conservation through sharing information with colleagues, veterinary students, zoo interns, government agencies and the public. Through affiliations with local and interstate organizations, the department has enhanced the reputation of the Zoo as well as disseminated exotic animal medical information.

The department had over 15 veterinary interns from schools nationwide and also participated in hurricane disaster relief. Dr. Mark Lloyd is President of the Reptile and Amphibian Veterinary Medical Association and organized the annual conference for that association.

Some of the many organizations with which the veterinary department is affiliated include: RI Herpetological Association; RI Emergency Management Veterinary Task Force; Tufts Veterinary School courses; U.S. Veterinary Medical Assistant team (VMAT, see below); and the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians.

- **ZOO VET HELPS OUT WITH HURRICANE DISASTER RELIEF**

The New England VMAT team was the only group organized enough to facilitate with disaster relief in hurricane-ravaged St. Thomas. Dr. Janet Martin, of the Zoo's veterinary team, flew to the area with the rest of the New England team to assist with animal difficulties due to the storm. Her efforts were chronicled in the PROVIDENCE JOURNAL as well as all three TV stations and the Associated Press.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

- **Roger Williams Park Vehicle Maintenance Garage (New Building):**

- 6 non-heated vehicle bays
- 2 heated vehicle bays
- 2 storage rooms
- New outdoor parking area
- New garbage disposal ramp
- New fencing/gates
- Seeding

- **Roger Williams Park Casino Entrance Gates (New Gates):**

- Wrought Iron Gates at Casino entrance road
- Brick Pillars

- **Davis Park Parking Improvements:**

- 2 new parking areas (adding 30 parking spaces)
- New asphalt walkway
- New curbing
- Seeding

- **Danforth Park Renovations:**

- New walking track
- New playground equipment
- New volleyball court
- Renovated basketball court
- New fencing
- New entrance area

- **Mount Pleasant Memorial Park (New Passive Park, Academy Avenue):**

- Large center planter
- Granite benches/granite (memorial) markers
- Stone dust and brick walkways
- Lighting
- Landscaping/irrigation
- Wrought Iron fencing
- New concrete sidewalk

- **Water Service at India Point Park:**

New 2" water service

- **J.T. Owens Renovations (Parks Department and State of RI DEM):**

Turf improvements

New tennis courts

Third field added

Parking improvements

New fencing

- **Ardoene Park Baseball Field (Parks Department and WHJY):**

New infield

- **Blackstone Boulevard Jogging Trail (Drainage Improvements):**

300' of jogging path rebuilt

Drainage improvements

Seeding

- **Various Planting Projects:**

Moshassuck Riverbank

India Point Park

Prospect Terrace

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Most of the improvements undertaken by this Department are done in the maintenance division. The bulk of the work is routine and, unfortunately, goes unnoticed at time. On the other hand, it would be highly noticeable if these duties were not performed.

- **Roger Williams Park Casino**

- Complete restoration of Bandstand
 - Complete exterior painting of building
 - Painted interior of building

- **Corliss Park**

- Installed 2 new basketball set ups, including pipe frames and backboards and rims
 - Removed 2 old wooden play sets and build new playground on a more suitable site within the Park
 - This work was requested by the Concerned Citizens of the North End through the Mayor's Office.

- **Gano Street Park**

- Installed 8 new basketball backboards, rims and nets
 - Requested by Midnight Basketball League through the Mayor's Office

- **Ardoene**

- Installed 2 new basketball frames, backboards, rims and nets
 - Installed new 6' ballfield fencing

- **Ridge Street**

- Reconstructed Basketball Court by expanding the court size and moving set ups

- **Fagnoli Park**

- Installed adjustable basketball set up

- In addition to the above, the Maintenance Division has repaired the fountains at Cathedral Square and DePasquale Plaza. The Maintenance Division has also removed

play structures which have been vandalized beyond repair from Ascham, Valley, Camden and Sackett Street Parks.

- The ballfield division also reconstructed the following fields:

Neutaconakut (2)

Valley Street

Davis (2)

Mt. Pleasant (3)

Fargnoli

Prete/Metcalf (2)

Sessions

Richardson

Ardoene

Hopkins (converted from softball to soccer)

- The Grounds crew also reconstructed a section of Blackstone Boulevard damaged by recurring wash-outs and repaired major damage to Davis Park caused by wash outs from heavy rains.

TREE FARM

Several highlights of the Tree Farm Report dated 1990 - 1995 are presented below:

- A total of 2,875 tree liners have been purchased for the Tree Farm since 1990.
- A total of 1,383 saplings have been harvested over the past three years.
- Species diversity is and has been a major strength of the tree farming community with 37 sapling types under cultivation over this time frame.
- Current stocking rate (53%) is well below total carrying capacity of 2,100 as annual harvests have outpaced renewal plantings.
- Tree Farm Harvests have contributed significantly to lowering costs and to increasing size of Neighborhood Planting Program.