

IMPROVEMENT OF THE CITY OF DETROIT: REPORTS

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Improvement of the City of Detroit: Reports by Frederick Law Olmsted & Charles Mulford Robinson

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FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED & CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON

IMPROVEMENT OF THE CITY OF DETROIT: REPORTS

**Improvement of
the City of Detroit**

**Reports made by Professor
Frederick Law Olmsted, Junior,
and Mr. Charles Mulford Robinson
to the Detroit Board of Commerce**

**Detroit Board of Commerce
1905**

Introduction

Gentlemen: The Committee on Civic Improvement respectfully report as follows:

Before the Committee was organized, the Board of Commerce had secured a report on the improvement of the City of Detroit from Mr. Charles Mulford Robinson, who is well known in connection with the propaganda for civic improvement, and whose writings on that subject have wide circulation.

At the request of your Committee, the Directors invited Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., professor of Landscape Architecture at Harvard University, to spend a week in Detroit, and make a report on the various improvement topics under discussion. Professor Olmsted was one of the Washington Park Commission, and by President Roosevelt has been retained in an advisory capacity in connection with that work, besides having charge of the landscape features of the Capitol grounds and the National Zoological Park. His firm are also the consulting landscape architects of the Metropolitan Park System of Boston, of the Chicago outer park system, and of the most important park work in this country. The elder Olmsted made the original plans for Belle Isle Park, and many of his suggestions are still available among his papers. Subsequent to his visit to Detroit, Professor Olmsted was called upon to make a report on the improvement of the Huron River, with special reference to the cities of Ypsilanti and Ann

Arbor, and there is good reason to believe that all of his work in this portion of the country will produce tangible results.

Both Professor Olmsted's and Mr. Robinson's reports are submitted herewith, with the recommendation that they be printed for the use of the members of the Board of Commerce.

The Committee has held a number of meetings. From the beginning it took strong ground against the location of the new Belle Isle Casino on the site of the present structure. The Commissioner of Parks and Boulevards, who is a valuable member of the Committee, was heartily in accord with his fellow members, and he afforded the Committee every opportunity for a thorough study of the entire subject of the casino. The Secretary of the Park Commission, (Mr. Hurlbut,) also gave advice of great benefit. The Municipal Art Commission, rescinding their previous action, came to the support of the position of your Committee; and as a result there is now a unanimous choice of a site in substantial accord with the views expressed by Professor Olmsted in his report.

The Committee also has had a number of conferences with the architect selected to prepare plans for the casino, (Mr. Schilling,) and they have reached an agreement as to the character of the architecture, and the general objects to be sought in such a structure.

On the subject of the improvement of the River Front, the Committee have conferred with Mayor Codd, who has promised that the City Engineer shall make soundings and prepare estimates of cost in accordance with the simplest of the three designs submitted by Professor Olmsted. Until these plans and estimates are prepared, the Committee's work in this direction is at a standstill.

The Committee, at the request of the Michigan State Agricultural Society, took an interest in the plan of the grounds for the State Fair grounds, the location and character of the buildings, and the financial arrangements for the erection of the structures built this year. While the

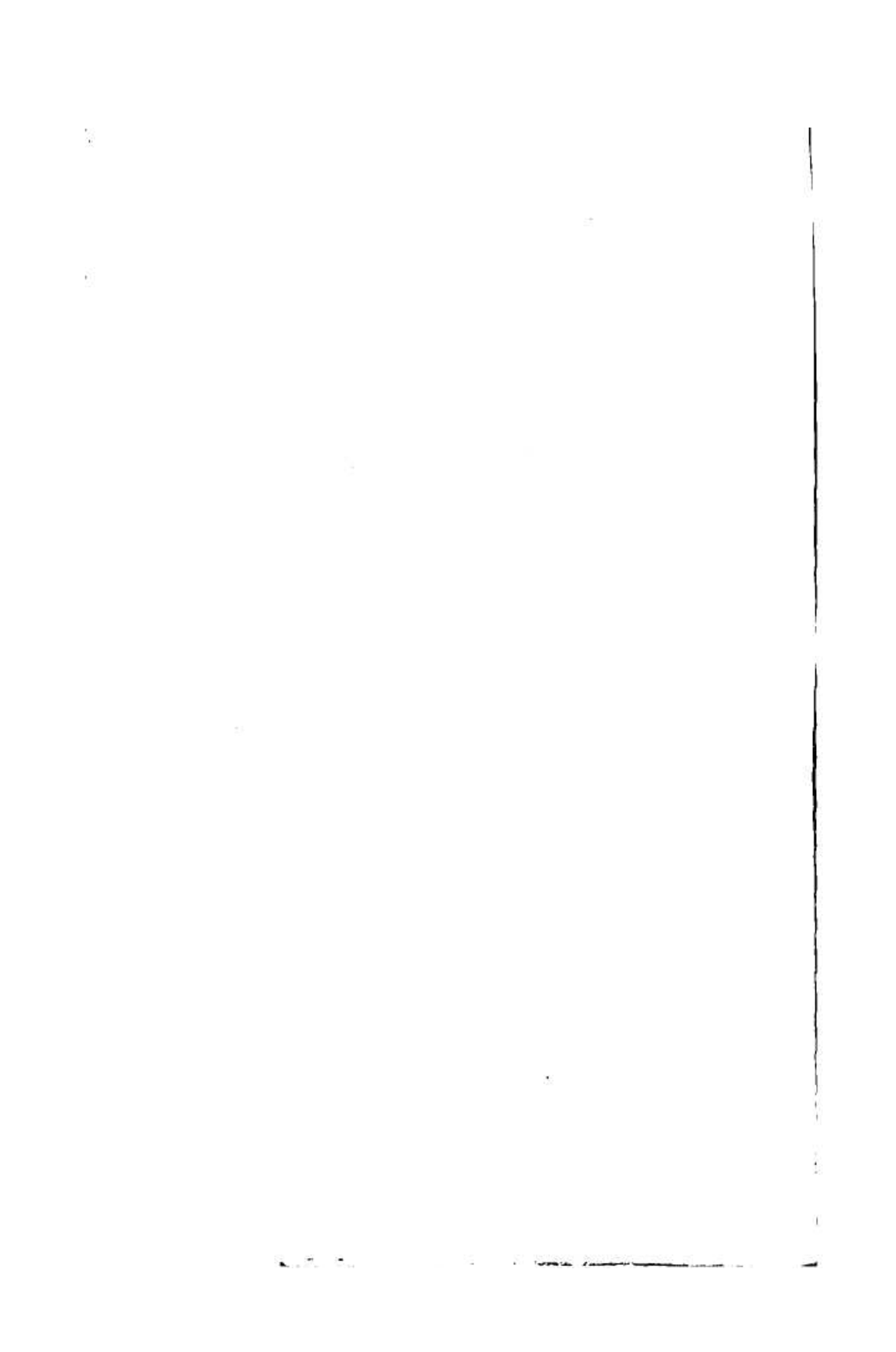
time within which the work must be completed was short, the general scheme of the grounds as planned was adhered to; and the improvements to be made during the coming year should show results by the time for the next fair. The buildings constructed are simple in design and permanent in character; and each is located in accordance with the general plan.

In submitting this report of progress, your Committee desires to express the hope that the suggestions presented by Professor Olmsted and Mr. Robinson will be read and carefully considered by the members of the Board of Commerce, so that each member may be acquainted both with the nature of the problems with which the Committee is called upon to deal, and also with the solutions that have been proposed.

Very respectfully,

Charles Moore,
Chairman.

To the Board of Directors of
the Detroit Board of Commerce



Improvement of the City of Detroit

Report of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

GENTLEMEN:—Having spent a week in Detroit at the request of the Detroit Board of Commerce Committee on the Improvement of the City of Detroit, examining certain municipal problems to which the Committee directed my attention, I beg to submit the following report:

I understand that an opinion is desired from me as to what action may best be urged upon the City by the Board of Commerce in respect to the following matters:

1. The Improvement of the River Margin.
2. The further Improvement of Belle Isle, with particular regard to the need for a new and better Casino Building.
3. The Completion and Improvement of the Boulevard.
4. The Improvement of the heart of the City—Cadillac Square and its vicinity.

