

**Beautiful Park Open to Public:
Francis William [Bird] Park a Veritable Paradise
(From the Walpole Times, July 24, 1926)**

The morning mail brought me, among other things, three post-cards from friends who are away on vacations. The first card shows a view of the Grand Canyon, barren, stark, but very beautiful; the second is a picture of a shady corner in Central Park, quiet, inviting, and rose-covered; and the third is a water scene, calm, cool and romantic, showing the great St. Lawrence from the Canadian side.

In the afternoon I strolled around Walpole and in my strolling encountered something which caused me to wonder why the people of this beautiful town go elsewhere to search for beauty spots.

I found a park, a large, wonderful, beautiful park with winding streams, long lagoons, shady corners, high pines, open fields, hardy shrubs, a sandy beach, a bleak, barren water front, grassy knolls, sheltered hollows, sloping hillsides, graveled walks, woodland paths, flagged roadways, romantic bridges - a veritable beauty spot, grander, more inspiring, more refreshing and more soothing than many of the vacation resorts which attract the people of Walpole away from home.

This wonderful park lays between Washington and Pleasant Streets, East Walpole, and has an area of seventy acres. On the south side of the main entrance is a bronze tablet which reads:

**Francis William Park
Created and Endowed by
Charles Sumner Bird Anna Child Bird
for the People of Walpole
A.D. 1925**

On the north side of the entrance is a second bronze tablet which reads:

**Francis William Park
Dedicated to the Memory of
Francis William Bird
1881-1918**

The main entrance on Washington Street cannot fail to attract the attention of passersby. It is built with seam faced granite, is wide, beautifully curved, has an inviting and restful appearance, and seems to betoken the calm, quiet beauty that lays beyond.

From the main entrance, winding its way across the park to Pleasant Street is a granolithic

flagged walk eight feet wide and sixteen hundred feet long. This walk leads directly to the swimming pool which may be termed the central and principal feature of the layout.

An attractive concrete dam and spillway have been built across a small brook which flows through the grounds, resulting in a pool, of irregular outline, 200 feet long and 108 feet wide, concrete lined throughout and floored with a layer of sea sand. Large rocks and boulders with open beachways between are so arranged as to give the place a cool, seaside appearance. The water of the brook has been examined and approved by the State Board of Health, so the many bathers who use the pool may do so with a feeling of security and protection. In the centre, a spray of town water is sent up from the fountain base, supplementing the waters of the brook and adding a charm to the scene.

A bath house nearby furnishes accommodations for 240 bathers. The construction and arrangement of this building are attractive and unique. The exterior walls are of seam-faced granite with hammered Simbroco granite trimmings. The design is pleasing and the entrance inviting. The interior is laid out in three sections, the centre being a lobby and check room, and the wings, dressing rooms. Each dressing room is provided with showers, toilets, and 34 stalls, separated by slate partitions. Each bather is given a clothes basket in the check room, retires to one of the dressing stalls, disrobes, using the basket for a wardrobe, is given a brass check by the attendant for the basket and the clothing is laid carefully away in an individual compartment until called for.

Above and below the bath house, two seam-faced granite bridges cross the stream and, directly in front of the doorway, a causeway leads across the shallow water at the head of the pool. In the park, crossing the brook at various points, are ten bridges, seven types of architecture and construction being used, namely: seam faced granite, rustic stone, modern wood, brick, iron, concrete and Japanese wood.

Three tennis courts have been constructed and seven additional courts will be put in later.

There are eight entrances to this wonderful park and also four service gates. From each entrance a granolithic tile walk winds its way over mound and meadow, crossing the walks and graveled pathways which also wind their way in beautiful curves into the distance.

A six-inch water main has been laid through the heart of the park from Washington Street to Pleasant Street, and eight thousand feet of piping are used for the distribution of water.

At the present time, eight workmen are employed grading, planting, seeding down, and otherwise converting a pasture of swamp and hillside and rocks and brambles into a veritable paradise.

Work was started on the project July 1st a year ago and the accomplishments of the past year are almost unbelievable. In the section near where the Japanese bridge now stands a ton and a half of dynamite was used blasting out stumps to make a clearway for laying out a Japanese garden. Fifty-two large electric lamps controlled by an underground wiring system light up the pathways and pool at night.

A large ornamental fountain will be erected on the base in the centre of the swimming pool. The fountain design will be a pond lily supporting three frogs from whose mouths will issue a fine spray. A centre pipe will shoot a stream of water straight into the air, making a very beautiful effect.

Thirty large trees have been moved into the park and hundreds of young trees and shrubs have been planted. Others are to be set out as the work of grading progresses.

Adjoining the park is a pine grove of fifty acres which will be trimmed up and added when the work now going on will have been completed.

Francis William Park, even in its unfinished state, is undoubtedly as fine and as beautiful a piece of landscape architecture, as quiet and cool a resting place, and as attractive a playground as can be found anywhere between the borders of Mexico and Canada.

Another year may be required to finish the work of grading, seeding, planting, and otherwise beautifying the grounds, but enough is now ready for inspection, to please alike, the eye of the artist, the demands of the critic, and the emotions of the sight-seer.

Here, the tired may rest at the close of day, away from the busy hum of industry, among rolling fields and shady woodlands; and here the children may play among the green things of nature or splash in the cool, clear waters of the swimming pool.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sumner Bird have dedicated Francis William Park to the memory of their son. It is more than a memorial; it is a monument to the generosity of the donors.

Every resident of Walpole should visit this wonderful playground. It is now open to the public. The description of it which I have attempted to give is as weak and poor and inadequate as would be a child's attempt to paint the splendor of an autumn sunset. Like the sunset, this beautiful garden must be seen to be appreciated.

I stood beneath some trees and watched the shadows falling over hill and dale. I had lingered long among these new enchantments. The low sun added a quaint picturesqueness to the scene. The little brook flowed peacefully on. The surrounding landscape lay pictured in the clear, cool waters of the pool. Quietness reigned.

And then I returned home to look once more at the cards my friends had sent me. As I looked, I wondered and I am still wondering if these friends are aware of the beauties that may be found within walking distance of their own dooryards.

H.T.