CIVIC ART IN PORTLAND, OREGON: BY FRANK IRA WHITE

As is the case with residents of most Western towns the people of Portland, Oregon, have perhaps been too absorbed in commercial callings and business exactions to give a great deal of thought or attention to civic improvement or to bring out the best in latent wealth in semi-natural art possibilities. Bountiful in bestowal of rich vegetation through favorable climatic conditions, nature has but fulfilled the strange prodigality with which the region has been endowed in the development of countless centuries, during which deep canyons and defiles were cut through basaltic eminences rising from the valley. These canyons have been made highways for macadam roads to rural districts, but in them is presented opportunity for an elaborate system of circling boulevards with chains of lakes such as no American city possesses.

Lakes greater in extent than those included in the park system of the Twin Cities in Minnesota could easily be created in some of these gulches through which small streams flow. Ultimately there will certainly be steps taken to avail the public of advantages thus easily and economically attainable, in the general scheme for beautifying the environment of the city. It is entirely feasible to connect the canyon highways skirting these lakes by circling boulevards crossing the high divide not far from the outskirts of the city. Lines of electric railway already surmount these eminences.

Architecture, by which a city is judged more generally than by any other single circumstance, is of a higher class in Portland than in many Western cities. City Hall is one of the most artistic municipal buildings of its kind in the country, and much taste is displayed in the Portland public library, built and maintained by the municipality; in the home of the Portland Art Association just completed; and in numerous churches, schools, hotels, blocks, and residences. Sentiment has been aroused along lines of municipal art by what has already been done. Additions will come to the sculptured groups and monuments placed about the city as a sequence of the Lewis and Clark Exposition, many of the designs now displayed on the grounds suggesting ideals that will be realized in more permanent form. There will remain as a heritage of the Exposition the Forestry
"COMING OF THE WHITE MAN." BRONZE GROUP IN CITY PARK, PORTLAND, OREGON

Photo by Kiser
“SACAJAWEA.” LEWIS AND CLARK EXPOSITION

Photo by Kiser
CIVIC ART IN PORTLAND

building, built entirely of huge logs cut in the Oregon forests, the largest building ever constructed of logs.

Nothing in the art exhibits of the Lewis and Clark Fair attracts more critical inspection and consideration than the bronze statue of Sacajawea, the birdwoman, that is to become one of the permanent treasures of the city. When Captains Lewis and Clark had made their long journey overland to the headwaters of the Missouri, thence through the Rocky mountains to that moment of their eventful journey when the success of their transcontinental trip seemed in doubt because of lack of a guide, to their aid came a young squaw, whose moccasined feet had trod the trails along the Columbia with her father and his tribesmen. Despite pleadings of others of the tribe into which she had been accepted through marriage, to dissuade her from her purpose to lead the pale-face band, she resolutely determined they were in need of assistance that she could and should render. Much of romance has been woven about the story of this princess of the progress of western Indian life, and her memory is revered and honored with that of the two brilliant young American officers who bore responsibility of the hazardous exploration journey. Miss Cooper, a Western girl whose skill in sculpture has been recognized, executed a conception of the dark-skinned heroine that has met with warm commendation. It was cast by the Henry Bonnard Bronze Company of New York especially for the Exposition, and will remain among the art possessions of the municipality. This statue, a life-size figure, represents a young Indian woman in tribal garb, bearing a pappoose on her back, facing toward the West with right hand pointing the way.

CITY PARK, with natural forest growth where gardeners have sought only to enhance the charm of nature, in fragrance and perfection of flowers, in shrubbery, and in the driveways over rugged hillsides, compares favorably with any municipal park in the country. Two large elliptical reservoirs, constituting a part of the water system of the municipality—owned and operated by the city government—are built in the hillside at one end of the area. Their peculiar outline, surrounded by masonry walls surmounted with iron railings, give the effect of great mirrors as seen from the surrounding heights. Created as a means of storing water to be conveyed by
pumping station to higher portions of the city, these reservoirs are not utilized for pleasure purposes, their only value to the general park plan being in artistic merit of their situation and design.

"Coming of the White Man," is a strong group done in bronze, aptly describing the mingled expectancy and trepidation with which the Red man viewed the intrusion of civilization a century ago, now being commemorated by a great exposition of American civilization of which the explorers were forerunners, and of that continental expansion of which they were early advocates.

This bronze group was presented to the city of Portland by the family of David P. Thompson. The figures are those of an Indian chief with shield swung over bare shoulders, and arms folded across his breast, gazing with grim visage toward the gorge where the Columbia sweeps through the Cascades, and where the snow-clad peaks of Mount Hood, St. Helens and Adams stand sentinel. Another Indian of giant stature stands erect, with left hand resting upon the chieftain's shield. The right hand is extended toward the approaching emissaries of enlightenment, and holds a branch broken from the forest evergreen as a token of friendship and confidence. The bronze figures rest upon a base of unhewn basalt, the formation with which the entire region is crusted. The site of the group is the highest at the eastern front of the park, which overlooks the city, the Willamette flowing from the south, the broad stretch of peninsula to the north, and the mighty Columbia from the east.

Here also, in another commanding position, is to be erected a monument to patriotism of native sons of the commonwealth who responded to the call of their country in 1898. Upon a granite pedestal already completed will be erected a shaft of enduring stone that will bear the names of those who fell before the fire of foreign foe.

Among the first gifts intended for the furtherance of civic art in Portland was the Skidmore drinking fountain. Erected in a locality which was at that time in the heart of the business district, it is now seen by comparatively few visitors to the city, and there have been suggestions for its removal from the spot near the docks, where heavy trucks rumble over cobbledstones, to a more favorable locality. "Stephen G. Skidmore, a citizen of Portland, who died January XVIII, A. D. MDCCCLXXXVIII, gave this fountain to beautify and bless his adopted home," is the inscription that tells posterity of
the affection of one born under other skies for his adopted city. Olin L. Warner executed the design, two bronze figures on either side of a granite shaft, supporting with their upheld hands a great basin over which pours sparkling waters. J. M. Wells was the architect and the fountain was erected under direction of the mayor and a committee of citizens during the same year in which its founder died.

In one of the smaller city parks, which are arranged after the Spanish idea in municipal playgrounds, and are known locally as the "plaza blocks," is set one of the most attractive drinking fountains of the municipality, characteristically Western in design. The site chosen is the center of a thoroughfare that divides the two blocks. The figure in bronze is that of a life size bull elk bearing seven-pronged antlers, standing upon a granite pedestal rising from the center of the octagonal basin. From carved lion-heads at either of the four sides of the oblong pedestal block gush streams of pure mountain water to quench thirst of man and beast.

Included in the park system is a line of blocks extending through almost the entire length of the business and residence section, in which nothing more elaborate has been done than to set them to shade trees of choicest varieties, sow to lawn grasses and subdivide by walks. In plans of the Park board these blocks are to be beautified by introduction of more extensive improvements, adding effects in flowers and foliage. Statuary, fountains, sculptured figures, and that which will add most to the aesthetic phase of municipal achievement, could wisely be included in future plans. With residences of the better class facing these blocks from either side, separated from the breathing squares by well kept streets, bordered by parked sidewalk areas, in a climate where roses blossom in the open air every month in the year, chances for greater elaboration are manifold and Park streets will probably become most popular thoroughfares in a great boulevard system linking city and country together.