



Frederick Gage Todd

(1876 - 1948)

Edmonton's River Valley, the largest urban park in Canada, is an asset that may never have existed without the efforts of Frederick G. Todd. As was common in most Canadian settlements, Edmonton's river valley was used for industry and manufacturing leading up to the flood in 1915. Todd saw its potential as a recreation space, and developed a plan for the area focusing on preserving and enhancing the natural state. His plan was used as the guiding framework for the river valley after the waters receded.

Born March 11, 1876 in Concord, New Hampshire in the United States, Todd completed his schooling in Massachusetts. He graduated from Massachusetts State College in 1895 and then apprenticed with the firm of Olmstead, Olmstead, and Eliot. This firm was the preeminent landscape firm of its era drawing on the knowledge of its namesake Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of the New York Central park and widely regarded as the father of landscape architecture. In 1900, Todd moved to Montreal, settling down and marrying Beatrice Evelyn Pinkerton in 1901, and raising two children.

In the winter of 1906 through 1907, the City of Edmonton asked Todd to generate a report on how to provide park space to meet the future needs of citizens. In that report, Todd found Edmonton to have the potential to grow into a bustling metropolis owing to its situation in the centre of a developing province, attractiveness for business and residential development, and its picturesque setting. With the potential for swift growth, Todd noted that park space becomes the limiting factor, and that financial prudence demands purchasing park land before people move in since land costs rise over time. In addition to recommending playgrounds, boulevards along streets, and large parks, Todd emphasized that ravines and hillsides are easily turned into natural areas for the public good as their incline makes other uses more difficult.

Frederick Gage Todd's report was adopted "in principle" by the Government of Alberta following the floods in 1915 and that same year Edmonton spoke of the river valley park system in its municipal development plan. It began the preservation of the river valley that has grown





Naming Committee

Honouring People and Places in Our City

6th Floor Edmonton Tower
10111 104 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5J 0P4
Phone: 780-496-6226

Edmonton

stronger over time though zoning bylaws, land use plans, community activists, and government investment.

As Canada's first resident landscape architect, Todd's influence can be found in many cities across Canada. Over his career, Todd became a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects and the Town Planning Institute of Canada. While his influence is felt most in Montreal, where he raised his family and where he served on council, his admiration of natural spaces as a resource for urban centres supported the growth of prominent public spaces, neighbourhoods, and cities throughout our country.

Edmonton's protection of the river valley was well underway by the time Frederick G. Todd passed away in Montreal on Feb 15, 1948. His influence on the way Edmonton developed cannot be understated. His report envisioned Edmonton as the city it has become in many ways – with its heart in the 'ribbon of green' running through our city and balancing natural beauty with urban progress.

Written and Edited by: Leah Anderson
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CITATIONS

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