

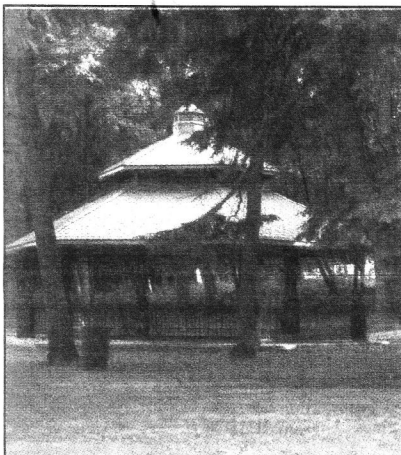
City's gem shines anew

STOCK



DAILY NEWS / ERICA HOBBS

New benches and the bridge that connects the park to the island in its pond are among the many changes Mrs. Stock's Park has undergone in recent years. The city of Hillsdale acquired the park in 2003 and plans to restore it to its original beauty from the 1800s.



DAILY NEWS / ERICA HOBBS

The Mary Anne MacRitchie Pavilion was built in Mrs. Stock's Park in the fall of 2007. MacRitchie was the first person to chair the Park Committee.



DAILY NEWS / ERICA HOBBS

Emilio Garza, Falisity Garza and Sheyanna Wood play by the water at Mrs. Stock's Park Monday evening. Since the city acquired the park in 2003 it has become a popular place for area residents to enjoy the outdoors.

Renovation work adds luster to landmark

By ERICA HOBBS
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Restoring Mrs. Stock's Park to its former glory has been a slow process, but a committee dedicated to the task is making progress.

The park used to be the jewel of the city, but then became tarnished, now some recent improvements have restored some of its past glory. New lighting, a bridge and planned landscaping are among the steps forward for the 8.5-acre park in downtown Hillsdale.

"It's really been just a wonderful thing for the community," committee chair Sheila Kovalchik said. "It's just a gem, that park has such a long history for the city."

The park originally belonged to the Stock Family in the late 1800s before turning into a company park in 1920. The once vibrant park fell into a state of inactivity and disrepair throughout the years and was finally donated to the city of Hillsdale in 2003 by General Mills. In 2005, the city formed the committee.

Now as the mill falls piecemeal to the wrecking ball, the park is seeing new life.

The committee has overseen significant changes to the park including building a bridge connecting the park to the island in the pond, erecting an iron gate at the park's entrance and establishing a free outdoor summer concert series.

A new pump house graces the grounds thanks to the efforts of a local teen who built it for his Eagle Scout project. Jay Bumpus Jr. worked with the committee to build the pump house. It serves as an enclosure for a 400-amp and 200-amp

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power source that provides electricity to the park.

Committee member Tom Walworth worked with Bumpus to construct the house and is currently installing recycled slate shingles from the Hillsdale Post Office on the roof, Public Services Director Keith Richard said.

One of the largest projects in the past year has been the addition of the Mary Anne MacRitchie Pavilion, a project that began last September and finished in April. MacRitchie had led the restoration of the park as the committee's first chairperson. After her recent death, the committee decided to name the pavilion in her honor with a dedication ceremony to take place later this year.

"We credit Mary Anne with being very influential," Kovalchik said.

Besides the new pavilion, Mrs. Stock's Park recently received new lighting. The Hillsdale Board of Public Utilities donated and installed 10 boulevard lights in May. Previously, the park had only a couple of light poles in the front of the park and none in the back.

"We felt that it was doing our part to help get the park up and operational and looking good," Director of

Mrs. Stock's Park

summer series

July 1: Bob Pogue - vocalist/guitarist - country, light rock, easy listening, variety

July 8: Town and Country Barbershop Chorus

July 15: Unforgettables - female vocal trio - a cappel-

la swing music

July 22: Hillsdale Wind Symphony

July 29: Chris McCourry and Friends - jazz music

August 5: Throne Together Ministries - gospel music

All concerts start at 7:30 p.m. in Mrs. Stock's Park

summer. The club plans to add more trees and flowers, including a large evergreen tree that can be decorated during the holiday season as a community Christmas tree.

Also in the works is a fundraiser to create an historic brick walkway that would go from the pavilion to the island bridge. The walkway would be made of old paving bricks taken from the reconstruction of the main roads in downtown Hillsdale in 2007. Residents are able to have a brick engraved in their name for \$100 as a way to commemorate a family name or event. The 8,000-brick walkway will feature the engraved bricks throughout.

"It'll be a nice upgrade," Richard said. "It preserves both the ambience and the historic nature of the park."

Long term, the committee hopes to expand the iron fence across the front of the park and create a South Street entrance.

For more information on the Mrs. Stock's Park Project or how to engrave a brick on the walkway contact the City of Hillsdale at (517) 437-6441.

On the Net
<http://www.ci.hillsdale.mi.us/stockspark.html>

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