



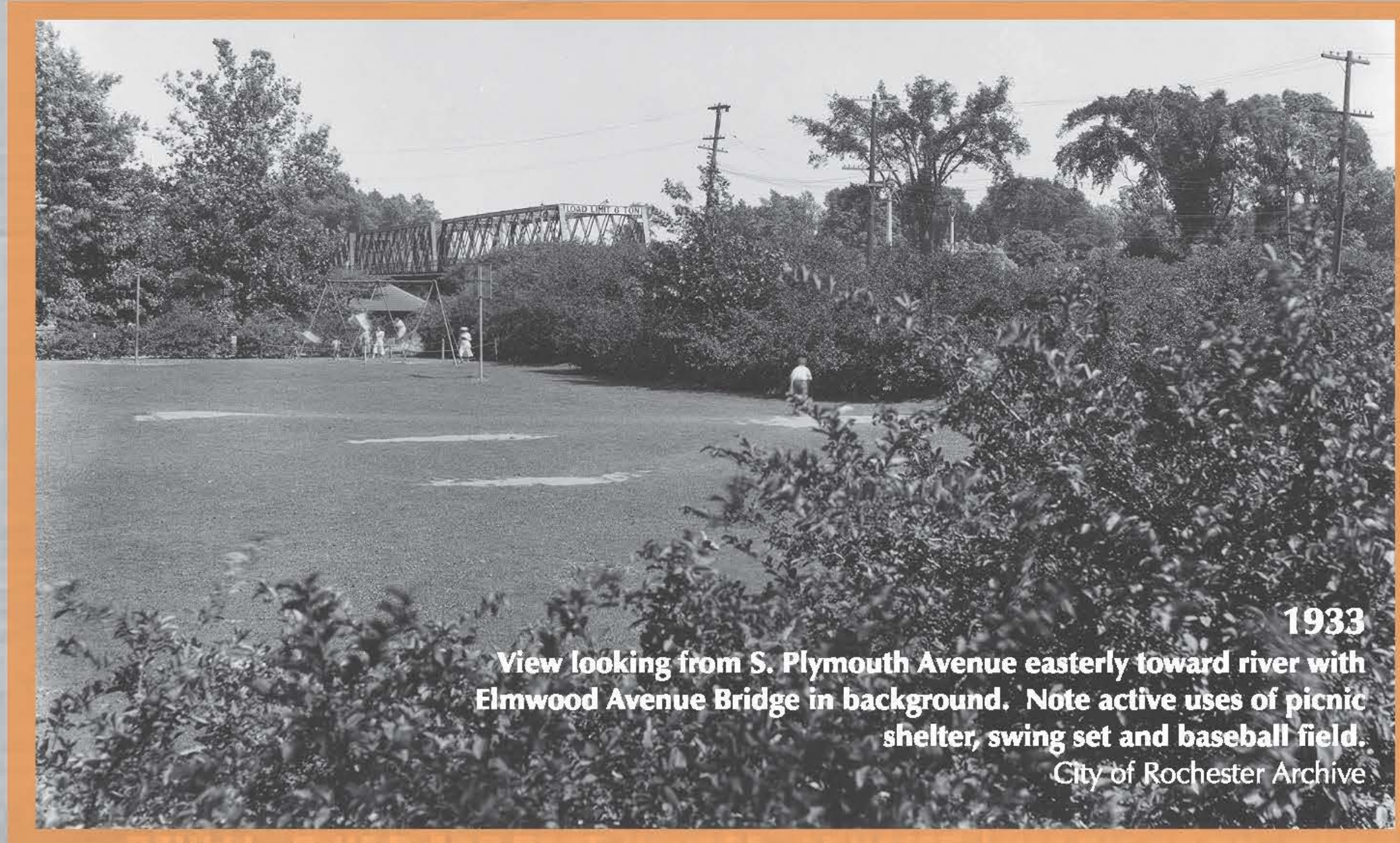
A Focal Point for Active Recreation

Active recreation finds its place in a pastoral landscape



1908

View of "canoe clubs" extending northward along the west bank of the Genesee River. The left-most building sat adjacent to the Elmwood Avenue Bridge.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C., Detroit Publishing Company Collection



1933

View looking from S. Plymouth Avenue easterly toward river with Elmwood Avenue Bridge in background. Note active uses of picnic shelter, swing set and baseball field.
City of Rochester Archive

In designing the Rochester park system, Frederick Law Olmsted's primary goal was to protect the Genesee River as a scenic asset. His 1890 General Plan of Genesee Valley Park recommended a "Pastoral" landscape of gently rolling and undulating terrain, a mix of pastures and groves, and a curving circulation system to offer shifting and changing views. Olmsted believed the pastoral landscape would soothe the nerves and allow the visitor to relax and unwind from the stresses of city life.

In Olmsted's design active uses, such as sports, were separated from passive uses, such as carriage riding, strolling, and picnicking, and were placed at the margins of his parks. At Genesee Valley Park, active uses were to be placed the west side of the park, north of the Elmwood Avenue bridge; he designated this as the site for boat houses and ball fields, keeping the area south of Elmwood Avenue open in character so as to protect the "Pastoral" landscape.