

110 91

JACQUES GRÉBER

ARCHITECTE S.A.D.G. S.C. S.F.U.

Professeur à l'Institut d'Urbanisme de l'Université de Paris

10, RUE PERGOLÈSE (16^e)

TÉLÉPHONE : KLÉBER 98-45

Paris,

Septembre 1952

NATIONAL Archives
RG 34, vol. 272
File 190-G-1(1)

Mr. H.R. CRAM, Esq.,
Secretary,
Federal District Commission
291, Carling Avenue

OTTAWA, Ont.
Canada

JG/MCB

Dear Mr. Cram,

I beg to submit herewith to you, the report which you kindly requested regarding certain considerations related to Gatineau Park.

As I say in the first lines of the report, I very highly appreciate your kind request, but I think that I will just repeat in my considerations, all what has been already most pertinently discussed by the members of your Commission. ACGPRy. 1952.

I slightly changed the order of your questions as I thought that two of them could be in the same item.

The order in my answers is as follows :

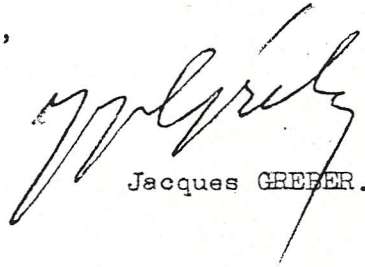
- a) Boundaries of the Park,
- b) Private ownership within the Park,
- c) General conception of development and various proposals,
(combining d and e of your questions)
- d) General design and architectural features,
- e) Service charges.

The plan is annexed to the report and illustrates most of its contents.

I thought that it might be desirable to facilitate the discussion about the possibilities of Gatineau Park to recall the various mentions made of the Park in the general report on the National Capital Plan. Those references are ~~are~~ added in an annex to the report.

With kind regards, I am,

Very sincerely yours,



Jacques GREER.

FEDERAL DISTRICT COMMISSION

OTTAWA

MEETING OF OCTOBER 20th 1952

REPORT ON GATINEAU PARK

Gentlemen,

Complying with the kind request of your Secretary ~~General~~, I gladly submit to you a few remarks in connection with the future development of the Park, but I really doubt that they will add much to the already most substantial report submitted to you in May 1952 by your Gatineau Park Advisory Committee.

Since my first work for the Federal Government was initiated in 1938, at the request of the Right Honourable William L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, I had many opportunities to discuss the wonderful possibilities of the Gatineau river and hills with your former President, the Honourable Frederic Bronson, Mr. R.P. Sparks, chairman of your Advisory Committee and Mr. Richards, Superintendent, as well as with your Secretary General, Mr. H.R. Cram and your superintendent and Director of Planning, Mr. Alan Hay, that is to say, that your Commission does not seem to need any advice, as this important problem is being handled by the most competent men.

I need not recall the constant and remarkable progress of the development of Gatineau Park since the start of its original nucleus, an achievement which has been unanimously admired and given as an example of Park planning and management.

... / ...

The potentiality of this magnificent Forest Reserve at the gate of the National Capital, needs no justification for a long range program of extensions and protection. Its natural structure, the infinite variety of its beauty and the attractive possibilities of such a Park, are far beyond the needs of an ordinary city park at the service of the population of neighbouring cities. It is really the essential feature of the whole plan of the National Capital of Canada.

Its development must be conceived for the manifold requirements of the regional population itself and also for the fast growing number of visitors and tourists coming to the Capital from all parts of Canada and of the entire world. Not speaking of esthetics at all, but from the only economic point of view, it represents an asset of unlimited value.

A - Limits of the Park :

The present limits of the Park are almost impossible to describe in their up to-date stage, as they constantly move outward with the wise policy of the F.D.C. to gradually acquire all lands of interest around the original nucleus.

In the last 5 years, the area owned by the F.D.C. has passed from 20,000 to 40,000 acres, and negotiations for new acquisitions continue at a regular pace.

The scope of the future extensions may be figured to a total of approximately 85,000 acres, according to the present program, but may easily reach the 100,000 figure.

The annexed plan N° 1 shows the present limits of the desirable extensions for present needs (colour).

Your consultant, after numerous visits and inspections throughout the Gatineau Hills, begs to suggest that the action of the F.D.C. should not be exercised only on areas comprised within artificial limits which may leave, outside of the protected area, parts of the natural scenery which would risk to be rapidly marred or even completely destroyed by speculation, uncontrolled development, undesirable subdivisions, especially as the result of the fast growing success of the Park.

... / ...

Those parts of the surrounding country physically belong to the whole setting, and in many points, the present limits are merely arbitrary, breaking in the middle of a valley or of a hill. The danger is that, when the park is adequately planned, equipped and organized as one of the best playgrounds of the Canadian Nation, those abutting properties may gain such a substantial increase of value that they become a field for real estate operations where no control could be exercised : it is likely that an invasion of summer cottages and week-end chalets, cabins, noisy refreshment or recreation shelters, conspicuous parking lots and publicity signs would transform a lovely and restful scenery into a hellish disorder. This is not an exaggerated prospect, as the case may already be observed, not only on certain parts of Meach Lake and Kingsmere regions. Such conditions appear most conspicuously near Lake George, in New York State, and could be given as a convincing illustration of that menace. It would be a great pity indeed that directly across ^{the} park limits, while the greatest care would be taken by the F.D.C. to protect the area within those limits, a frame of disgusting surroundings could be permitted.

We will consider hereafter whether it would be possible to exercise the appropriate control on the surroundings of the Park, not only by direct purchase which would apply to parts of the scenery lending themselves for park development and use, but also by maintaining present conditions on other lands, such as farms, pastures and woodlands, which might have a rural value and may stay outside of the Park.

The various desirable revisions of the park limits should be the following according to the plan (colour) :

a) In Hull, the space included between Aylmer Road and the 2 new drive-ways leading to Mountain Road, one on the north of Fairy creek and one at the south of it, in the continuation of Bousherville Boulevard. This space directly connects with the present proposed limits which include the triangle between those 2 drive-ways and Mountain Road, with Fairy Lake in the center of the triangle.

... / ...

The interest of this very slight addition needs no explanation, as it is obvious that it will have the great advantage of carrying the park directly to the heart of the urban area of the Capital.

b) In the north of Chelsea Road, between the village of Old Chelsea and Meach Lake, the present limit is too close to Meach Road and three slight revisions are proposed to take advantage of an existing woodland, to extend a little further north, the protection of the Park.

c) In the valley of Masham, west of Wakefield, at equal distance between Sainte Cecile and Wakefield, the limit crosses in the middle of a wooded land which contains a small lake, and which is very close to the northern end of Lake Philipp, it seems to be wise to protect this area.

d) In the region of Lac Lapêche, at the western end of the present Park limit, another part of Gatineau Hills should be included. Curley Lake is comprised within this area which has no farming value as extensively wooded and which is very close to the beaches and the future shore development of Lac Lapêche.

The various limit revisions above mentioned might be obtained either by purchase or by measures of control, for instance, by maintaining their present use, exclusive of commercial development and of subdivision, except through agreement by the F.D.C. Even within the proposed limits shown on the plan established by the F.D.C. from which I ^{prepared} ~~laid out~~ the development plan herewith submitted, it seems that it might not be necessary to acquire all the acreage comprised within those limits, but certain parts could be ~~just~~ ^{not} protected ~~too~~ ^{not}, with the agreement of their owners, to keep them in their present state.

This remark leads naturally to the following consideration which concerns private ownership within the Park.

B - Private ownership within the Park :

I have read with great interest the various opinions expressed by the members of the Advisory Committee, and my impression is that, in spite of an apparent difference between their views, they

... / ...

Prepared

have a perfectly common conception of the protection of the Park. They do not even differ so much in the ways and means to realize satisfactory measures of protection, but only about the opportune time of enforcing them.

It is true and most desirable that the enjoyment of a public park should not be hampered by private encroachments, and that the ultimate conditions of the ideal achievement of the park is the elimination of all private property within its limits, but such condition is undoubtedly more essential in a park of moderate size, where the great number of people who use it reaches a certain point of congestion. In a park of 80,000 to 100,000 acres, the conditions are rather different.

The size of the free space is sufficiently abundant to reconcile the maintainance of privately owned grounds, and the needs of free land for public enjoyment. We might mention an ^{PARK} example near Paris, "le Bois de Boulogne", where a certain number of private properties are still existing. It is also necessary to consider the existing particular conditions of every private property and to include in the gradual planning of improvement of those conditions, a certain element of opportunity as to the eventual elimination of objectionable constructions.

Most of the above considerations have already been expressed in the memoranda submitted by Messrs. R. P. Spark, J. J. Connolly, Herbert Marshall and G. Burns. A question of the importance of clearing from every private owned land an area of the size of Gatineau Park cannot be solved by a drastic and immediate regulation, but only through a careful survey of the various cases, and appropriate measures.

We shall examine every typical case:

I° The principle should be established that all lands presently acquired by the F.D.C. in Gatineau Park, should be ultimately prohibited to private ownership, but this applies to the future, and for the present, exceptions to this rule should be carefully studied.

The Park is becoming day after day more visited, more organized, and gradually loses its original appearance of a wild land where every kind of human activity was tolerated with no noticeable

... / ...

harm to public enjoyment. This is the same story in every country, in newly developped lands. Sonner or later, conditions changes. The number of users increases and private rights become objectionable to common interest. ~~The~~ Measures of protection and adequate regulations become imperative ^{but} ~~but~~ it does not seem to me that it is absolutely necessary to purchase all those lands to apply the desirable remedy. As it is proposed in some memoranda of the Sub-Committee, a certain number of such properties might be acquired by mutual agreement if and when they are put on the market for sale, and if the Commission thinks that they are worth bying.

2.) Other properties are in such locations and in such good conditions that they may not be an eyesore or an obstacle to public enjoyment. Therefore, they might be maintained at least temporarily, and if possible, with an agreement, that they remain in the present condition. This applies particularly to lots of a rather large size and houses which do not look like shacks.

3.) Speaking now of really objectionable structures, either due to their location or by their shabby appearance, there is no other solution except elimination, and what has been sucessfully obtained around Philipp Lake, seems to be possible on the western side of Meach Lake. It is obvious that such elimination cannot be obtained at once, as a certain number of those objectionable buildings will necessitate long and desirable negotiation.

The fact that their establishment was tolerated and that families of residents of Ottawa are enjoying there, summer cottages and boat houses, must be handled with a certain diplomacy. Otherwise, the D.D.C. might be criticized for maintaining country houses of wealthy people and expropriating summer cottages of people of low income, in spite of being fully justified for so doing for the sake of esthetics.

At any rate, Meach Lake, as very well stated by Mr. Sparks, is the largest and the nearest lake to the Capital and must be gradually freed of all obstacles to a fully organized public enjoyment.

... / ...

It is true that the Road on the west shore is narrow and uneasy, but it was never intended for speed and heavy traffic. Beside, this is one of the vital arguments in view of the preservation of the particular beauty of Gatineau Park; most of the charm of the Park is intimacy, variety, quietness and moderate proportions. The development of Gatineau Park, if it would involve the construction of wide parkways, large parking spaces, stately hotels and vast places of recreation for big crowds, would mean exactly the destruction of its scenery. It is on the contrary, by the maintenance of small roads, the creation of well screened and small parking spaces, by a great number of places for picnic, camping, outdoor games, well adapted to the most picturesque topography, that its beauty and usefulness will be properly enhanced.

However, the size of the Park permits to develop a central artery, already planned by the F.D.C. which will be the parkway, operation No 1 of the improvements proposed in the Sub Committee report. Such artery will be the feeder of most of the strategic points of the whole park, reasonably connected with it by service roads of moderate size and also by a great number of pedestrian paths and bridle paths. This consideration which does not exactly concern the present question about private ownership, is nevertheless one of the reasons for the gradual elimination of the majority of private properties within the Park. It will not be long before the increase of means of public transportations will be necessary, following the example given by Kingsmere and Wakefield busses; moreover the use of the railway for reaching the park will also be developed when ~~the~~ limits of the Park are extended nearer to the Maniwaki Road, and the growing success of popular enjoyment of the park, will justify, and in a certain way, help the gradual elimination of private property.

How long will it take ? It cannot be decided by a fixed policy but rather more by the natural evolution of the character of the Park.

C. General conception of development :

The present development of the Park is relatively limited, owing to the lack of easy approach to many points of interest, owing to

... / ... ^{the}

quite insufficient equipment for places reserved to picnickers, campers and hikers. An excellent start shows the possibilities in the region of Philipp Lake in spite of the distance from the Capital by the way of Chelsea Road through Wakefield and Sainte Cecile de Masham. Meach Lake would offer greater possibilities when its western shore will be freed of private occupation and when the road on the eastern shore will be developed. At both ends of the lake, ideal places can be found for tea-houses enjoying a magnificent view.

Harrington Lake, almost completely deprived of approaches for public enjoyment, will offer the same possibilities as Meach Lake and Philipp Lake. In the direct vicinity of the 3 lakes, elevated points will easily offer interesting panoramas, through the elimination of a few trees. The same remark can be made about the possibility of developing outlooks on the ridge of the hills, facing the valley of the Ottawa River. The first one will be the Memorial Terrace at the extreme south of the Hill, between Mountain and Mine roads. Others might be established near ~~Pink Lake~~, Kingmere Lake, above Heyworth, Luskville, etc.

A system of several well selected outlooks, in a scenery of the character of Gatineau Park, is undoubtedly the first element of enjoyment to offer to the public, as it has not only the advantage of making them discover the magnitude of the region and its various aspects, but it is particularly beneficial, physically and morally, to urban populations, to "breathe" and admire vast horizons, in an impressive contrast with the discouraging and narrow vision of the city street.

The next element is picnic. The meal in the open air, so different from the quick lunch taken in a basement. Camping follows with all its joys. Similar to camping, is, especially in spring and autumn, the use of comfortable lodges or log-cabins, including, in a few exceptional cases, small hotels equipped with a complete comfort.

The number of sports or games possible in Gatineau Park offers many opportunities : boating, swimming, fishing, ~~water-skiing~~, ~~skiing~~, riding and perhaps, the best of all ~~footing~~ ^{Hiking}, while skiing is already

Hiking

... / ...

successfully developed in certain points in the region of Kings' Mountain and Camp Fortune. But such a variety in the unlimited possibilities offered by Gatineau Park, must not lead to an excessive and disorderly planning. The distribution of the different places of enjoyment must be carefully and methodically designed. The great size of the Park permits to scatter and isolate the various activities in order to completely avoid the appearance of congestion and noise, in spite of ample accommodations for large crowds.

Another defect to avoid is monotony by adapting the scope, design and treatment of each place to its natural setting. It will not only add to the attraction of the various places, but also facilitate the necessary and natural classification of different users, differences of age as well as of social conditions.

You may see by this very short description what an interesting task has your Sub Committee^{3/4} to fulfil.

Along a distance of approximately 32 miles from Aylmer road to the extreme northerly end of the Park, beyond Wolf Lake, the character of the Park gradually changes in scale, wilderness and consequently in opportunity of use. The relative distance from the City, the time of reach, will also add to the difference of treatment and of use. For instance, Fairy Lake Park, at the extreme southerly end, may be reached by walk, while Wolf Lake needs one hour ride by car. Therefore, the treatment of Fairy Lake Park will be more that of a city park with a few drives and pedestrian paths, and favourable places for lawns, games, wading pools, playgrounds and sand boxes for children.

Further up, around the elevation 570, the Memorial Terrace will call for a monumental but very sober design, in keeping with the scope of the Memorial.

Pinks Lake offers opportunities for picnic places and also, due to the easy reach from the city, natural conditions for the creation of a wide amphitheatre, directly connected to Mine Road, forming an open air auditorium with a capacity of easily 30.000 . This location would have the advantage of being very close to the

Memorial Terrace,

... / ...

and consequently, to lend itself to national or international functions. Further north, the group already developed of Old Chelsea and Kingmere, is one of the most interesting problem, as those 2 points have a cultural bearing on the life of the Park.

Old Chelsea has kept the charm of an original settlement and may be developed at very small cost as an example of the Canada pioneer life. Very little has to be done to enhance the old village, with its small cemetery, and to add a few typical buildings, either moved and rebuilt or carefully reproduced in view of carrying out the proposal submitted in the Sub Committee report.

This question has been thoroughly discussed by architects and historians, and I personally approve the idea, provided that the design of such pioneer village be modestly limited to the original settlements which belongs to the natural setting and climate of this part of Canada. (Ottawa Valley)

Otherwise, a sort of comprehensive exhibition of buildings and handicrafts of the whole of Canada would have an artificial appearance, in conflict with the environment. In brief, the best solution would be to complete, with no elaborate additions, the existing Old Chelsea. Next to this development, in a remarkably picturesque part of the woods, and dominating a charming water fall, there is the ideal place for the Headquarters of the Park Administration, an excellent suggestion of the Sub Committee report. Less than 2 miles away, in a westerly direction, is the village of Kingmere, with the Mackenzie King estate, now an historical shrine of Canada. I do not see why this part of the park could not be treated exceptionally as another cultural feature, by keeping some of the private buildings, and adding some new one, under the full control of the F.D.C., even a few shops, a chapel and a small assembly hall, a village school, the whole treated as an example of modern village architecture, thus offering an interesting comparison with the Old Chelsea group.

All this may be a longrange program, not essential for the present, but appropriate measures ought to be taken to save the necessary space for carrying out the idea in an opportune time.

Kings Mountain and Camp Fortune are worth developing,

... / ...

as they already show the possibilities for winter sports and skiing.

Some remark should be made for the 3 well known lakes, Meach, Harrington and Philipp, with the hope that, by proper surveys and explorations, their development should not be limited to the shores, but on the surrounding hills, as above suggested, in complete agreement with your Sub Committee. But, there are many other lakes, known by few : Taylor Lake, Wadsworth Lake, Twin Lakes, Clear Lake, Ramsay Lake at the south of the 3 large Lakes, and also Brown and Cameron Lakes at the North. These lakes constitute as many reserves as necessary, for accomodating growing needs. I even think that in the future, the Commission will authorize, near those restful and intimate lakes, as well as on well selected elevations in the woodlands, the construction of lodges with a few cabins, for the use of weekenders or vacationists. As a rule, cabins are most objectionable, because they are generally built on monotonous lines along the roads, and treated in the most tasteless manner, in spite of being overdone. But we know, on the shore of Saint Pierre de Wakefield Lake, or in the Montréal region, near Lac Mont Tremblant, excellent examples of what we have in mind.

I shall conclude by the region of Lac Lapêche. Now reachable by Wakefield and the Masham Valley, it seems that it could be ultimately linked with the development of Gatineau Park from Lac Philipp, through Taylor and Ramsay Lakes, and also through the provincial road No 8 from Eardley or Beechgrove, or from Quyon.

The potential advantages of Lac Lapêche are its size, the variety of its shore line and its bathing sand beaches. Fortunately, it is only partially developped, owing to the difficult access, and we think that its entire area should be protected, as it might, in the near future, become invaded by week-end shacks and lost for ever. This menace already exists on the southern shore of the Ottawa River, particularly near Britannia and Constance Bay, where the lack of appropriate control shows a mixture of fairly good summer cottages with

... / ...

undesirable shelters, where also the fire hazard has been overlooked.

The region of Lac Lapêche and of its smaller neighbour, Wolf Lake, seems to offer the natural extension and future overflow of Gatineau Park.

It is interesting to compare from the plan or from an aerial view, the growing scale of Gatineau Park, completely in accord with the relative distances of its main features from the Capital.

The various suggestions indicated by symbols on the plan herewith submitted, are only tentative, as well as the preliminary lay out of roads and bridle paths or trails. They are intended only for justifying the possibilities of the Park, but the final selection and situation and every item, must be the result of a careful inspection and detailed topographical surveys of each part of the Park.

List of the various proposals as indicated on the plan :

- outlooks	10
- picnic grounds	17
- camping "	14
- parking "	30
- boating	7
- fishing	13
- swimming	7
- restaurants, tea-houses, and small hotels	9
- lodges and cabin groups	5

The roads and walk system is comprised of existing, of improved roads and trails, and of new proposals. Their execution may be scheduled according to the various gradual developments in every particular part, no matter when they would be undertaken. The essential is to follow the master plan of the whole, and the programme of execution, carefully established in harmony with the respective character, use and capacity of the different creations.

Next chapter will treat of general principles to be observed in the design and the architectural treatment of the various features of the Park

... / ...

D.- General design and architectural features

The character of the Park, as already defined, calls for a treatment of extreme simplicity, not only in the general lay out, but also in every detail of the architectural features necessary to the operation of the Park.

We have already stated the reasons for avoiding any elaborate design. For the sake of keeping the natural beauty, the wild appearance of that part of the Laurentian Hills, the landscape designer and the architect should refrain of any attempt of artificial decoration. Every structure, whatever it be, bridge, fence, sign, tea-house, hotel, cabin, refreshment stand etc., should be harmonized to its natural environment by its simple lines, its blended colours, by the choice of its building materials, taken directly from the ground. Fortunately, Gatineau Park contains many quarries of excellent building stone and ample supply of timber. The association of those local materials is the guarantee of obtaining tasteful productions.

I would not suggest any artificial reproduction of old French barns or houses. Such reminiscences should be limited to the particular purpose of recalling pioneer life in a selected place like Old Chelsea. But all the other structures should be, above all, designed on functional lines, exactly corresponding to their use. If executed in simple local materials, they should automatically add to the attraction of the surrounding scenery, instead of making a blot which would depreciate the charm of the place. This is the main condition that ought to be imposed in the study of the architectural treatment of every element of the Park : no particular style, but a strict observation of the utilitarian programme, of the human scale and of the tactful execution, as close as possible to the natural lines and colours imposed by the environment.

Such condition ought to be agreeable to the builders in charge of those constructions, as their cost will be most economical, in comparison with elaborate and tasteless creations.

Examples could be taken from the treatment of the famous Blue Ridge Park in Virginia where all details have been carried out according to these principles. However, the imposing and wide scenery

... / ...

of the Blue Ridge Park could have permitted more monumental conceptions, but this would have been detrimental to the enjoyment of this wild country in its natural setting. And this is undoubtedly more true in Gatineau Park.

We have purposely omitted to speak of farms when we considered the possibility of keeping some private properties within the limits of the Park. This is precisely because the few farms which may exist within those limits are a part of the natural beauty and they add to the life and the resting attraction of this piece of nature kept untouched at the doorstep of the Capital City. They are apart of the existing architecture of the Park and should be preserved and properly kept up.

E.- Service Charges.

The question of eventual charges at the benefit of the F.D.C. in the operations of the various parts of the Park seems to be that such charges should be limited to a logical compensation, and provided that they be not intended to a commercial or speculative purpose.

For instance, the keeping of parking spaces in good condition, including the snow removal, is a pure service rendered to the public and it is natural that some kind of compensation be paid for it.

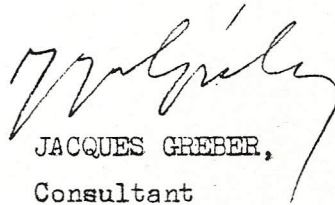
Other items such as tea-houses, lodges and cabins and even picnic grounds may be the object of a good up-keep, maintenance and operation. The public would appreciate such services; otherwise, if all facilities are entirely free of charges, they are a burden to the Commission, or they risk to rapidly deteriorate.

There are many examples of this kind of remuneration for various services in many public parks throughout the world. In Paris, the Bois de Boulogne and de Vincennes, near New York, the famous John's Beach Park, and in many other cities. The administration operates them either directly or through selected agents, and maintains a good public service, most beneficial to millions of people.

... / ...

I beg to state however, that this is just a personal opinion, as I do not feel fully qualified to discuss such matter, but my impression is that, as a tremendous amount of expenditure must be devoted to the structural construction and development of the Park, for which no return or compensation can be expected, at least, the operation and maintenance of the various amenities, added to the Park itself, fully justify a reasonable compensation intended to balance the actual cost of those valuable services.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Greber', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

JACQUES GREBER,

Consultant

September 25th, 1952

A N N E X

References to Gatineau Park in the General Report of the National Capital Plan (1950).

Part I - Chapter 11	:	page 104
" 14	:	" 130 - 132 - 136 - 141
" 15	:	" 151
Part II - " 3	:	" 173
" 7	:	" 234 - 236
" 8	:	" 244
" 9	:	" 248
" 10	:	" 261

Illustrations of the present conditions of the Park are given as follows :

Part I - Chapter 3	:	page 106,	illustration 79
" " "	:	" 109,	" 82 - 83
" 12	:	" 113,	" 88
" " "	:	" 114/115,	" 89, 90, 91, 92
" 13	:	" 120,	" 97
Part II - " 7	:	" 229,	" 185
" " "	:	" 234,	plate XXIX
" 8	:	" 236,	illustration 171
" " "	:	" 242,	plate XXX
" 9	:	" 249,	illustration 186
" 10	:	" 262,	" 198 - 199 - 200