



*The International Goodwill Garden and the English Garden in bloom, c. 1955. WPRD.*

Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Prior to being moved to Assiniboine Park, it had stood in front of the old City Hall. After its placement at the entrance to the English Garden, the fountain statue became an integral part of the park, but also an irresistible temptation to pranksters. At least once a year since then the bronze boot has been stolen, leaving the

boy to stare soulfully at his empty hand. The boot almost always turns up again and is easily remounted, but if a new one has to be cast, it now costs almost \$2,000.<sup>12</sup>

As for the English Garden itself, George Champion had originally designed and supervised the planting in 1927 and 1928 and probably had a plan on paper for it. However, successive gardeners had changed it to suit their own tastes. When Assiniboine Park Superintendent Hector Macdonald gave an interview to the *Winnipeg Tribune* in 1959, he was quite adamant that there was no plan for the garden and he reported great difficulty in convincing visiting landscape architects that this was the case. "The idea is contrast, that's all," he said. "...bright, light colors in the distance, darker colors for the rear views. The size of the place, three acres, with the wonderful tree background, softens the whole mass into a pleasing blend. That's all we do."<sup>13</sup> Though the Edinburgh-trained Macdonald was making a difficult task sound easy, his attitude does suggest that the approach of the board's gardening staff to this garden was based more on horticultural craft and experience than on adherence to a previous design.

European and British trained gardeners had been the mainstay of the board's staff since the beginning and the board relied on their expertise. By the 1950s, it was getting

more difficult to replace retiring gardeners like E. F. Ball, who had, themselves, been able to train the more junior gardeners and labourers. Frank Ball had been with the board since 1920 and retired in 1954. It was he who personally laid out the formal flower beds at City Hall and other civic properties, often incorporating special celebratory elements. In 1953 he had worked out a crown and the initials "ER" in flowers at City Hall to honour Queen Elizabeth's coronation. No Canadian university or training school at that time had programs that produced similarly qualified gardeners. The board had to resort to stopgap measures in order to train staff. One of these was to offer two and-a-half day horticulture workshops for park keepers at the University of Manitoba. One feature of the horticultural life of Winnipeg that happily seemed to resist change, however, was the annual fall chrysanthemum show at the Assiniboine Park conservatory. It was still well attended and was one of those events by which Winnipeggers marked the change of seasons.

Neighbourhood parks languished during the 1950s. Many of their buildings dated back to the turn of the century and were badly in need of replacement. King Edward Park was extended and refurbished. St. Vital Park was used, throughout the decade, as a day camping park but it still had no sewer or water service. Day camping was a valuable service but