Union Park

Park and Recreation Board...Did You Know?

March 25, 2014
History

• Established in 1894 as one of Des Moines’ first parks
• A.W. Guthrie sold 20 acres at Thompson Place for $700 per acre
• Miss Thompson sold 7 acres for $650 per acre
• Known by river travelers as Thompson’s Bend
Union Park

- Original amenities included an aviary, pavilion, stone fountain and greenhouse
- Pictured below are Citizen Conservation Corps workers building the Works Progress Administration shelter by the wading pool, which was replaced by the splash pad in 2005.
Union Park

The original 27-acre-purchase has grown to encompass 51 acres with amenities including:

- Grills and picnic tables
- Restrooms
- Two enclosed shelters
- Open shelter
- Playground
- Historic Rocket Slide
- Basketball court
- Tennis court
- Heritage Carousel
- Formal garden
- Sledding
- Cross country skiing
- Wading pool attendance – 15,418
Union Park Entrance

• Postcard of the original park entrance and the restored entrance completed in 2012
• Restoration would not have been possible without the help of the Union Park Neighborhood Association and the Friends of Des Moines Parks and Recreation
Union Park Heritage Carousel

- Non-profit Des Moines Heritage Carousel Foundation initiated by J.C. “Buz” Brenton
- He proposed the venue and spearheaded fundraising efforts to purchase the carousel, installed in 1998
- City Council approved the original operating agreement between the City and the Carousel Foundation in January 2000
- Children ride for 50 cents
- About 45,000 rides provided during a typical season
Union Park

- Rocket Slide was installed at the height of the space age in the early 1970s and refurbished in 2011
- Ruth Perry was the founder of the Union Park Garden Club
Questions