

CPRS District II
Recreation, Park and Leisure

2008 Hall of Honor

Legacy Category

George Sim

1879 – 1947

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION



- Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation, 1918–1931.
- First full-time Superintendent of Playgrounds and father of modern recreation programming for the City of Sacramento.
- Legacy consists of 200-plus parks, 16 community center, and a wide range of programs that uplift the community.
- Outstanding innovation in creating broad based, joint-use agreements with the City Superintendent of Schools to open the school grounds after school and on weekends for supervised play.
- Oversaw the gifting of William Curtis Park to the City as a park and playground, 1919 and the bequest of 236 acres by William Land for William Land Park.
- Oversaw the development of Camp Sacramento that officially opened July 21, 1921.
- George Sim Park and George Sim Community Center named in his honor.



January 11, 2008

Kelly Gonzalez
Cosumnes CSD
8820 Elk Grove Blvd., Suite 3
Elk Grove, CA 95624

Dear Ms. Gonzalez:

The City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation is honored to submit the name of George Sim for the Hall of Honor Award – Legacy Category.

If you have any questions about the enclosed application, please feel free to contact me at (916) 808-5972.

Sincerely,

Hindolo Brima
Media and Communications Specialist
Department of Parks and Recreation



Optimize the Experience of Living!

The City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation respectfully submits the name of George Sim for the Hall of Honor Award – Legacy Category. Mr. Sim is considered the father of modern recreation programming in the City of Sacramento. George Sim was recruited in 1918, from Los Angeles, where he had been serving as Assistant Superintendent of Recreation since 1912. The first full-time Superintendent of Playgrounds for the City of Sacramento, Mr. Sim's legacy is the Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation, which now consists of 200-plus parks, 16 community centers, and a wide range of programs that uplift the community.

During his tenure as Superintendent from 1918 until 1931, he encouraged and fought for civic recreational improvement. His far sighted recommendations still have relevance and significant merit. In an article he wrote for The American City magazine in 1921, he stated, "The Playground Department is young but being established upon a firm foundation ... it has taken its place as an institution alongside the Public Library and the Public School."

Mr. Sim took his job to heart; he stressed the play needs of children and immediately began negotiations with the City Superintendent of Schools to open up the school grounds after school and on weekends for supervised play. His innovation and ability to create broad based, joint-use agreements has been a model for parks and recreation professionals for more than 75 years.

Mr. Sim was not a man to waste either time or opportunity. Under his direction, the McKinley and Southside Park clubhouses, baseball diamonds, playgrounds and tennis courts were overhauled. He ordered the old floating swimming crate removed from Southside Lake and the area converted into a boat landing. To compensate for the loss, Sim persuaded the directors of the Riverside Baths to allow children to use their facilities. Mr. Sim also arranged for some two hundred children to receive free tennis lessons to develop their interest in the sport.

During his administration, land for Camp Sacramento, the municipal summer camp in El Dorado County, was leased and the camp officially opened on July 21, 1921. That year, over twelve hundred "city-dwellers" enjoyed their vacation in the mountains. Only Los Angeles, of all the cities in California, had a similar installation at the time. Sims had worked with the Chamber of Commerce and local corporations to raise funds to construct the camp. Local plumbers, truckers, carpenters and contractors all offered free time and service. The development of Camp Sacramento was a rather remarkable instance of civic cooperation. The camp remains a popular recreation site for Sacramentans today.

In 1919 Mr. Sim oversaw the gifting of William Curtis Park to the City as a park and playground. In 1921, a new City charter was adopted and Sim continued in his position with the new title of Superintendent of Recreation. By 1922, his plan to administer all recreation activities through a central office and corps of playground supervisors was in place. His Department's jurisdiction included four

playgrounds, four clubhouses, seven playfields, the Del Paso Park golf links, and Camp Sacramento.

Early in the 1920s, Sim urged the immediate need to purchase land to accommodate the expanded recreation needs of a city in its period of maximum growth. In 1922, 236 acres of land was acquired through the generous bequest of William Land. In 1923, a bond issue was approved for the Memorial Auditorium for future operation by the City under Sim's department. 1924 marked one of Sacramento's largest expansions of recreational facilities and services. Additional facilities such as clubhouses, children's playgrounds, tennis courts and sports fields were added to McKinley Park and Southside Park, while a golf course was added to William Land Park.

Superintendent Sim believed that a recreation program must offer not only well-organized sports, but the opportunity for enjoyment of good music. Under his direction, new services were undertaken, including the formation of a symphony orchestra, the formation of a junior symphony, the organization of a community mass-chorus, and the recruitment of a "Music Week" committee. Each of these ventures proved to be a tremendous success in the community.

Mr. Sim continued to serve the City when the former "Joyland Park" in Oak Park was donated as a public park in honor of James McClatchy. Mr. Sim undertook the renovation of the park, remodeling of the swimming pool, and replacement of the playground.

By 1927, the Department had seven divisions: Playgrounds and Community Centers, Music, Community Dramatics, Camp Sacramento, Maintenance and Repairs and Administration, and Organization.

In 1927, under Mr. Sim's direction, the Recreation Department converted an old Fire House at 2nd Street into a social center for the use of itinerant and unemployed workman who congregated in the City's West End. By 1929, the facility was averaging 3500 visits per month in the one-room building. The City Council appropriated funds that year to purchase a new center. Since it gave shelter and a small degree of comfort, and thereby reduced the incidence of petty crime, the new center offered a service that was both humanitarian and practical. In another humanitarian act, Sim had lights installed on Crocker Park playground to give neighborhood boys a place for night meetings and the opportunity for "wholesome entertainment."

During 1928, many so-called "minor sports" were given the encouragement and support of the Recreation Department. These included the installation of facilities such as fly-casting platforms, bridle paths, horse-shoe pits, archery ranges, tennis courts and even the sponsorship of the Sacramento Pigeon Club.

Again in 1929, Sim was instrumental in working with the Superintendent of Schools to receive free use of school gymnasiums for evening basketball games, indoor baseball leagues, and gymnasium and dancing classes for employed young women.

That same year, the entire responsibility for the operation of Hughes Stadium on the grounds of Sacramento Junior College was assigned to the Recreation Department.

Another local recreation site which he became responsible for in the summer of 1929 was the H Street Bathing Beach outside City limits, along the American River. The river and beaches were used by thousands of people and presented constant drowning dangers. The Department stepped in and immediately hired life guards to patrol the river from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. during the summer months and there were no drowning reports in 1929.

Between 1930 and 1932, a new community center was added in Oak Park, a life size checker board was installed at Southside Park, land was purchased for East Portal Park, and construction of a municipally-owned, eighteen-hole golf course at Del Paso Park was initiated.

In 1931, George left City employment and went on to become a successful Sacramento insurance man until his passing in 1947. During his thirteen years as Superintendent, Sim's Recreation Department had made tremendous advances. It had become possibly the most vital part of City of Sacramento government, and certainly commanded one of the largest budget appropriations. Sim's single-minded devotion to the cause of Sacramento's recreation needs, particularly those of its children, enabled him to secure the cooperation of successive City Councils, to a degree impossible in other communities.

The City of Sacramento acknowledged Mr. Sim's service and dedication to the City by naming both George Sim Park and George Sim Community Center in his honor.

It is with much honor and pride that the City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation submits the name of George Sim for the Hall of Honor Award – Legacy Category.



42: - SOUTHSIDE PARK AND LAKE,
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA



