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In 1859, Elizabeth Stevens MacGregor's father moved his family to Texas where he was under contract to build the rolling stock for the first railroad to enter the city of Houston. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he was commandeered by the Confederacy to provide the lumber for their building operations. After the war, Otis Stevens continued in the lumber business and built a home for his growing family at the corner of Rusk and Crawford Streets. In 1869 he bought the block of ground which is today known as “Root Square,” and set his house in the center of it. Elizabeth received her early education as “Miss Brown's Private School for Young Ladies,” but with the opening of the first High School in Houston, her civic minded mother transferred her there. Later when Mr. Peabody, the philanthropist, offered the first scholarships to the newly established Teachers' College, at Huntsville, Elizabeth entered the competitive examinations, and later graduated from that institution. During the next two years she taught in the schools of Kildonan and the Public School system of Houston. She was a member of the first literary society organized in Houston, “The Ladies' Reading Club,” and was also a choir singer, and a member of the early “Women's Choral Club.” Throughout her life, she has continued to foster the cause of art and education, as well as social welfare activities. It has been a life long conviction that every citizen should make his definite contribution to the general welfare of the social group of which he is a part, and became one of the first members of the Board of Managers of the Young Women's Christian Association. For twenty years she gave active service to the YWCA, as Committee Chairman and as President of the Board. During the $800,000 Building Campaign for the Young Women’s Christian Association in 1920, acting as President, she helped to lead the project through to success, and during that leadership, the Activities Building at the corner of Austin and Rusk was completed and the Residence for Girls approved.

For eight years following the death of Henry MacGregor, she acted as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the estate and observed regular office hours in his stead. She carried out the provisions of his liberal will, spending two years in Derry, New Hampshire, his birth-place, supervising the buying and enlargement of a large estate and the building of a Library on that ground. As a tribute to his wife, Henry MacGregor directed that a small park be given on Almeda to replace “Peggy’s Point” and a fountain erected, and also deeded to the city of Houston, with an endowment for upkeep, Shoestring Park, along both banks of Bray's Bayou, and MacGregor Park, both gifts totaling approximately 215 acres, for permanent park purposes for the people of his adopted city. In MacGregor Park the city at once erected a large Shelter House, tennis courts and other recreational facilities and today two winding roadways, bearing the MacGregor name.

Henry Frederick MacGregor, was born on April 25, 1855, at Londonderry, New Hampshire, was educated at Pinkerton Academy in Derry, New Hampshire. He graduated from Bryant and Stratton Commercial College, Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1871. At 18, he booked passage on a steamer to Galveston, and, arriving with no money, took a job checking cotton on the barges operating on Buffalo Bayou. MacGregor was married on December 10, 1885, to Elizabeth Stevens of Houston; they had no children.

After MacGregor married he became active in the social and civic life of the city. His portfolio of real estate holdings grew rapidly, many of them located near existing or contemplated streetcar lines. He was secretary of the Galveston Railroad Company from 1879 to 1883; he was vice president and general manager of the Houston Railroad System from 1883 to 1903; after 1903 he was involved with real estate and other investments as well as the State Land-Oil Company, the Houston Post (with Governor William P. Hobby), the Bay and Bayou Company, the South Texas Commercial National Bank, the Houston Printing Company, and the Glen Park Company.

MacGregor withdrew from active participation in street railway matters in 1904 in order to devote his full time to real estate development and other interests. He was active in the lobbying effort to deepen the Ship Channel, and he became an important figure in the Texas Republican Party. Later, he was chairman of the board that planned construction of the original Hermann Hospital.

But his most visible legacy to Houston lies in the residential neighborhoods he created, primarily on the South End between McGowan Street and Hermann Park. Unlike many other suburban developers of his day, MacGregor provided for wide streets that continued the established city grid. He helped make possible Almeda Boulevard and Riverside Terrace, which for a time was one of Houston’s finest residential sections. When he died in 1923, his will provided for the establishment of MacGregor Park and North and South MacGregor Way, creating the first parkway system in the city along the banks of Bray’s Bayou.
Project Goals

- Rehabilitate time worn space
- Revitalize water feature and supplement with additional water elements
- Provide visual landmark that acknowledges gateway status of location
- Emphasize history of area and namesake
- Create spaces for variety of users
- Develop sensory stimulating spaces to be used at all times of day and year
- Encourage neighborhood residents to interact within space
- Enhance visual appeal of space
- Establish park as learning laboratory for use of native plants in dense urban setting
- Organize park spaces that are buffered from street noises and traffic
- Make spaces that are perceived as, and in actuality are, safe
- Contribute design that is effective in reducing pollutants through lower maintenance regimes and contributes to absorption of local emissions
- Originate management practices that result in lower long term operating costs