

Greenway

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 11 No. 2

Fall 1989

Greenway Chairman Undergoes Roasting

Friday the 13th, was a very lucky night for the Platte River Greenway Foundation. On October 13th, the Greenway Foundation, along with the Foundation for Colorado State Parks sponsored a "Roast and Tribute of Joe Shoemaker", the Chairman of the two non-profit organizations. This fun-filled evening was held at the elegant Hyatt Regency D.T.C., and the turnout and results were both fantastic!

Over 400 supporters attended this once in a lifetime opportunity to see the former chairman of the Colorado Legislature's Joint Budget Committee undergo a thorough verbal jousting. A silent auction was also held prior to the main event.

The dais for the evening was a compilation of Joe's current and former political and civic based friends, all of whom offered a variety of well intentioned digs at the "roastee". Included in this unique group were:

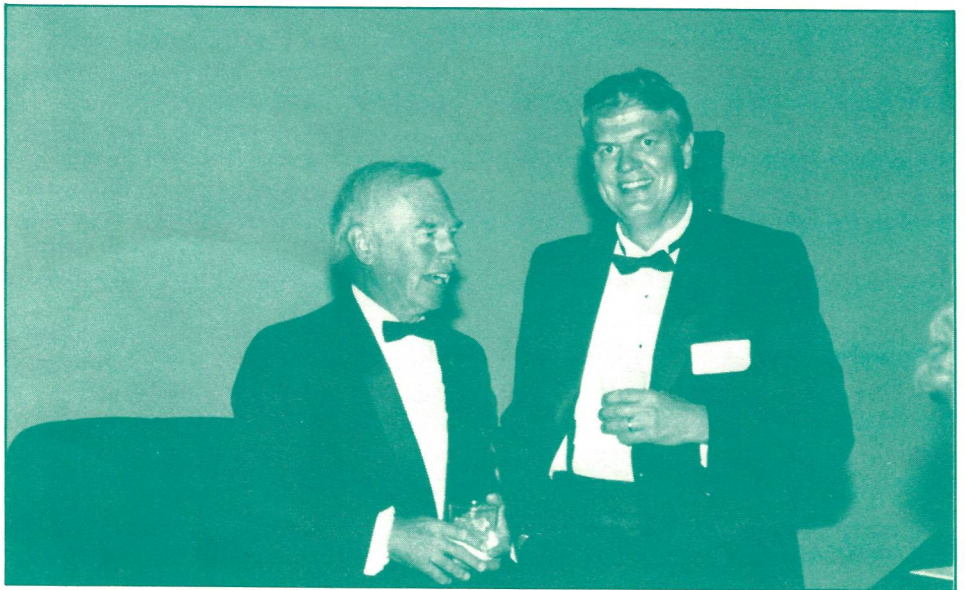
- Ralph Clark
- Bob Lee
- Frank Southworth
- Bob Wham
- John Nichols
- Don Friedman
- Bill McNichols
- Ted Bendelow
- Jim Aspinwall
- Jeff Shoemaker
- Rep. Hank Brown

Our superb M.C. for this evening of revelry was Mr. Starr Yelland.

As a result of the generosity of those in attendance, the members of the Dais, and a host of donations from those unable to attend, the Platte River Greenway Foundation and the Foundation for Colorado State Parks each received over \$11,000 to assist in their efforts to improve Colorado's environment.



Former Mayor Bill McNichols offers a few choice comments, much to the delight of the roastee Joe Shoemaker, wife Penny and Congressman Hank Brown.



Joe Shoemaker and Ron Holliday, Director of Colorado's Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation.

Our sincere thanks go out to all those who made this special event

possible. Our City and State will benefit from your generosity!

Cherry Creek South Greenway— The Trail for the '90's



Cherry Creek-South Greenway's hard surface trail: an unbeatable hike-bike amenity.

Construction of the highly anticipated Cherry Creek South Greenway Trail has been in full gear over much of the summer and fall. The trail system consists of an 8 foot wide concrete hike-bike trail and a 10 foot wide equestrian path. Once completed, the 23 mile Greenway will connect two popular State Parks; Cherry Creek State Recreational Area and Castlewood Canyon State Park. The Platte River Greenway will be connected to the new trails via an existing trail along Cherry Creek located below the Cherry Creek Dam.

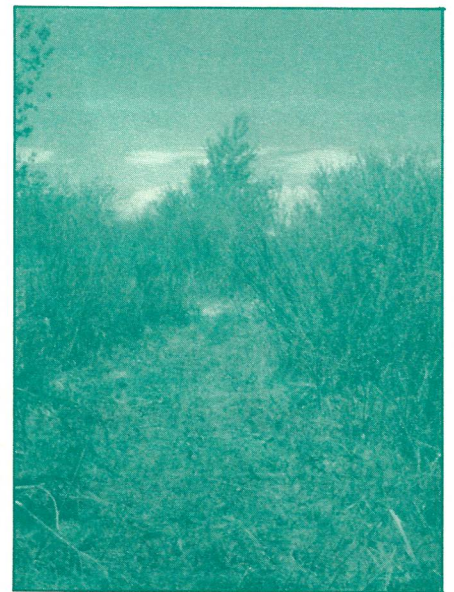
The newly constructed trails meander through breathtaking cottonwood groves that are teeming with wildlife. When combined with the local rural atmosphere, this new amenity promises to be one of the most popular recreational experiences available.

Fundraising and construction of the Cherry Creek South Greenway is being coordinated by the South Platte River Greenway Foundation. To date, funding for the project consists of both private

and public sector support, including the Town of Parker, Parker Water and Sanitation District, Colorado Division of Outdoor Parks and Recreation, Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, Gates Foundation, Boettcher Foundation, and Stroh Ranch Development.

This year, an ambitious fundraising campaign was also launched by the citizens of Parker to raise an additional \$30,000. The effort has been received well, with nearly \$10,000 of cash contributions and thousands more in volunteer time already in place.

The Town of Parker has identified the Cherry Creek South Greenway as the Town's number one park and recreation priority. Ann Waterman, Mayor of Parker, recently stated: "The Town of Parker and the surrounding area are in need of additional recreation amenities. The Cherry Creek South Greenway will provide an excellent opportunity for hiking, biking and equestrian activities in a beautiful and safe setting. The Town of Parker is grateful to everyone who has helped

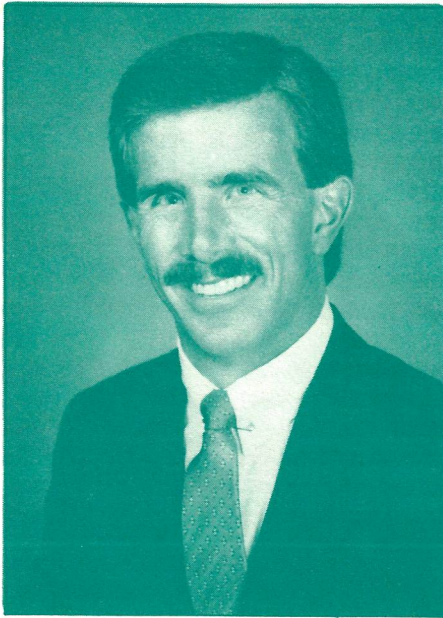


The equestrian trail helps make the Cherry Creek-South Greenway truly unique.

our dream come true."

For further information regarding this new and exciting project, contact the Greenway Foundation offices.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Jeff Shoemaker

1 989 has been an exciting and fun filled year for your Platte River Greenway Foundation!

Concerts on the Green 1989 continued a tradition of offering some of the best free evenings of music in town. Thanks to the following sponsors, the Confluence Park Amphitheatre served as host to over 3,000 music lovers who enjoyed two of Denver's best jazz ensembles - **IMAGES** and **QUEEN CITY JAZZ BAND**:

- **FIRST COLORADO BANK AND TRUST**
- **MILE HIGH AND INTERSTATE KENNEL CLUBS**
- **KMGH CHANNEL 7**
- **PEPSI COLA BOTTLING CO. OF DENVER**

The Great Relay Race, Denver's longest continuous running event, returned for another successful year. Despite a very cold and rainy day, only one team decided to withdraw, and the event raised over \$4,000 to assist the Greenway Foundation's efforts.

The Greenway Experience continues to grow in popularity and parti-

cipation. Over 5,000 elementary students strolled the banks of the River, learning of its history as well as all the River offers to Denver's future. Carl Crookham, and his superb high school tour guides from the Metropolitan Youth Education Center, are insuring that today's youth will become the stewards of the Greenway in the future.

The Greenway Trail Ranger program focused on two areas in 1989:

- A major graffiti removal effort was undertaken along Denver's Cherry Creek Greenway trail which, thanks to a grant from the **GATES FOUNDATION**, a solid core of volunteers, and a lot of "elbow grease", removed thousands of square feet of graffiti from a 4 mile section of the historic walls of Cherry Creek.

- Jed Wagner, our Trail Ranger Supervisor and his two man crew also took on a contract with the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District to assist in their efforts along the South Platte River. Among the tasks accomplished by this hard working trio were:

- Planting and watering of several hundred trees and shrubs along the banks of the River.
- Monitoring and reporting the efforts of the District's debris removal crews.
- Inspecting the River and its banks on a daily basis.
- Taking inventory of every tributary, outfall, etc. that affect the flow of the River.

The major endeavor the Greenway Foundation in 1989 has been the implementation of a multi-year goal to ultimately connect Cherry Creek State Recreation Area and Castlewood Canyon State Park with a 23 mile dual surface trail along the banks of the Cherry Creek (see article on page 2.)

Both an equestrian and 8 foot wide concrete trail will be constructed, allowing a wide variety of trail enthusiasts to enjoy this innovative new amenity.

We are hoping to have 10% of our goal completed by the end of 1989, and are pursuing public and private grants to complete an additional five miles in 1990.

As always, any success we have is based on the donations of our supporters. The Platte River Greenway Foundation is a small foundation, but we are dedicated to furthering the construction, usage, and preservation of Greenways in the metropolitan area.

Thanks to you, we've made continued and significant strides towards that goal in 1989. If you have any questions concerning those efforts, (highlighted in this newsletter), please contact my office directly. I also encourage your phone call or letter telling us of your ideas and concerns relating to any efforts we'll undertake in the upcoming year.

On behalf of my Board of Directors and staff, best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season, and a successful 1990!



(Courtesy-Denver Post)

Rafting through the Confluence Park boathouse towards the Great Relay Race finish line.

OASIS ON THE HIGH PLAINS: How the South Platte “Greened” Denver

Diane Ipsen, M.L.A.

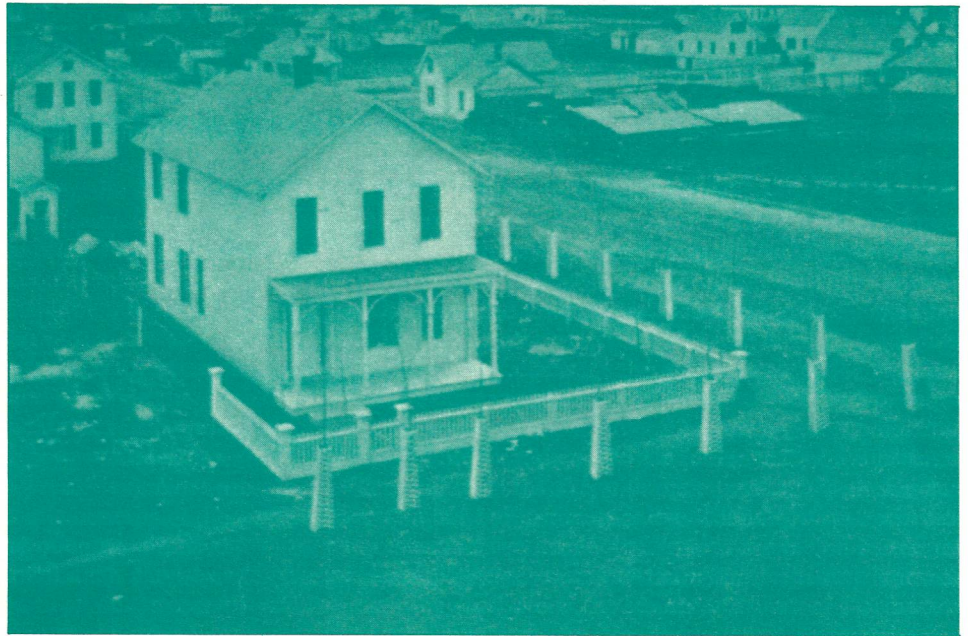
Diane Ipsen is a local Landscape Architect who specializes in studying and reporting on the history of Denver's landscaping efforts.

Reporting on Denver in 1888, the national magazine, Harpers, said: “The site originally was a barren waste, dry and hilly. Never was it green . . . and not a tree grew.”

In light of the current tree planting effort in Denver and renewed citizens' interest in preserving our urban tree cover, historic parks, and our heritage of lawns and gardens, we all should be aware of the origins of these landscape traditions—and the role our “Riviere La Platte” played over a century ago in changing the character of this settlement in the Great American Desert.

Within a year after the first rush of goldseekers arrived in this arid country in 1858, the construction of ditches and canals was underway to divert water from the few meager streams that etched the prairie. Ditches carried water for purposes other than irrigation. First, large amounts of water were required in placer mine operations to wash out the gold. Other ditches were dug to serve new industries; The Mill Ditch in West Denver, a hydraulic canal which took its water from the South Platte River, provided water power for an Excelsior Mill in Auraria. Even these industrial ditches would ultimately affect the changing landscape in Denver; for example, Overland Park and Lincoln Park, two of Denver's oldest, would be established along the Merchant's Mill Ditch east of the Platte, incorporating the by-then tree-lined ditch as a lovely landscape element while using its water for irrigation.

The earliest attempt to irrigate land in the Denver area occurred in 1859 when David Wall diverted water from Clear Creek to his vegetable gardens near Golden. Soon, other farmers diverted water from streams to their fields. Though they were modest efforts at best, a network of water channels began to trace the environs of the new towns of Auraria, Denver, and Highland.



Prior to the addition of irrigation ditches, Denver's topography was very dry and barren.

The earliest settlers dwelling on the banks of Cherry Creek and the South Platte hauled water to their cabins or dug shallow wells, but there was not water to spare for trees, lawns or flower gardens. Potential settlers were discouraged by Denver's barren landscape, which a journalist from the East likened to the Sahara. For Denver to become a more permanent settlement, larger irrigation systems were required.

One of the early water companies was the **Capitol Hydraulic Company**. After incorporating in 1860, the company secured water rights on the upper part of the South Platte River. Their first attempt to build an intake failed due to errors in the engineer's calculations. These ditches operated by gravity flow and the ditch was not surveyed with enough fall line to take water to Denver.

About this time, John W. Smith, one of Denver's important early entrepreneurs, agreed to build a new ditch for the Capitol Hydraulic Company. Smith surveyed the course of the 24-mile ditch so that it miraculously meandered from its headgate on the South Platte (six and one half miles above present-day Littleton) to Brown's Bluff, east of the little town of Denver—and all by gravity flow! It was an open, unlined ditch built with

human brawn; designed seven feet wide at the top with a descending grade of 5 feet to the mile.

Along its course it flowed in and out of a natural depression south of town, creating a lake from an old buffalo wallow which became known as Smith's Lake. (Yes, now incorporated in Washington Park!) Construction on “Smith's Ditch” (also called Capitol Ditch or Platte Ditch) began in 1865 and was completed as far as 12th and Washington by May 1867, terminating in a small lake. By this time, the company had changed its name to **The Platte Water Company**. Although the water was not designated for household and personal use, it was the first attempt to bring large quantities of water to Denver, and it was the first artificial waterway outside of mining operations built in Colorado.

The *Rocky Mountain News* displayed a keen interest in the progress of Smith's Ditch, for a Herculean undertaking it was! Even before construction, the *News* was featuring stories on the “Rotary Canal Builder”; a machine drawn by teams of oxen which could do the work of 100 men per day.

The paper hyped the Ditch and the citizenry responded enthusiastically, for the potential uses of it were perceived to be many, although it was exclusively

intended for irrigation. On May 2, 1866, the *News* reported on the progress of "The Great Enterprise", declaring: "The large area of land that will be made productive, the **prospective shade trees, shrubbery**, etc. together with health, comfort and cleanliness it shall give our city . . . combine to make this one of the most important enterprises of Colorado, and one in which all are interested."

By October, 1866, the *News* announced that the Capitol Hydraulic Company had finished excavation of the Ditch. "As soon as the flume across Cherry Creek is completed, water can be run to any part of the city. Let the owners of property make preparation for beautifying and adorning the same with shrubbery and trees next spring".

The following April, under the headline "Plant Trees", the *News* promoted the economic benefits of the Ditch. "With the opening spring, the water of the Capitol ditch will be available for irrigation in all our streets, so that the well-being of any trees newly-set is perfectly secured . . ." The paper pointed out that the cost of making these property improvements would be a trifle when compared to the "great additional beauty and pleasantness it will add to our city." The article concluded: "Plant trees then, all of you

who have lots in the city. They will beautify your homes and if you should ever desire to sell, put money in your pockets."

Plant trees the citizens did! The city contracted with the Platte Water Company for \$7000 a year to irrigate the shade trees on its streets. This was accomplished by a system of small lateral ditches which, from Smith's Ditch situated on the western edge of Brown's Bluff (Capitol Hill), would easily convey water downhill throughout what is now downtown Denver. There were 1000 miles of these charming street laterals in the town! Every street and cross-street had water on both sides and delighted citizens were allowed to divert some onto their lots. They brought cottonwoods from the creek bottoms and transplanted wild rose and native currant from the Platte to their yards.

Thus began the tradition of East Denver foliage. Under the lateral system lawns and trees began to flourish. Cottonwoods lined the streets and civic tradition was started. Smith's Ditch became popularly known as the "Big Ditch" to differentiate it from the smaller streams—and the South Platte supplied them all.

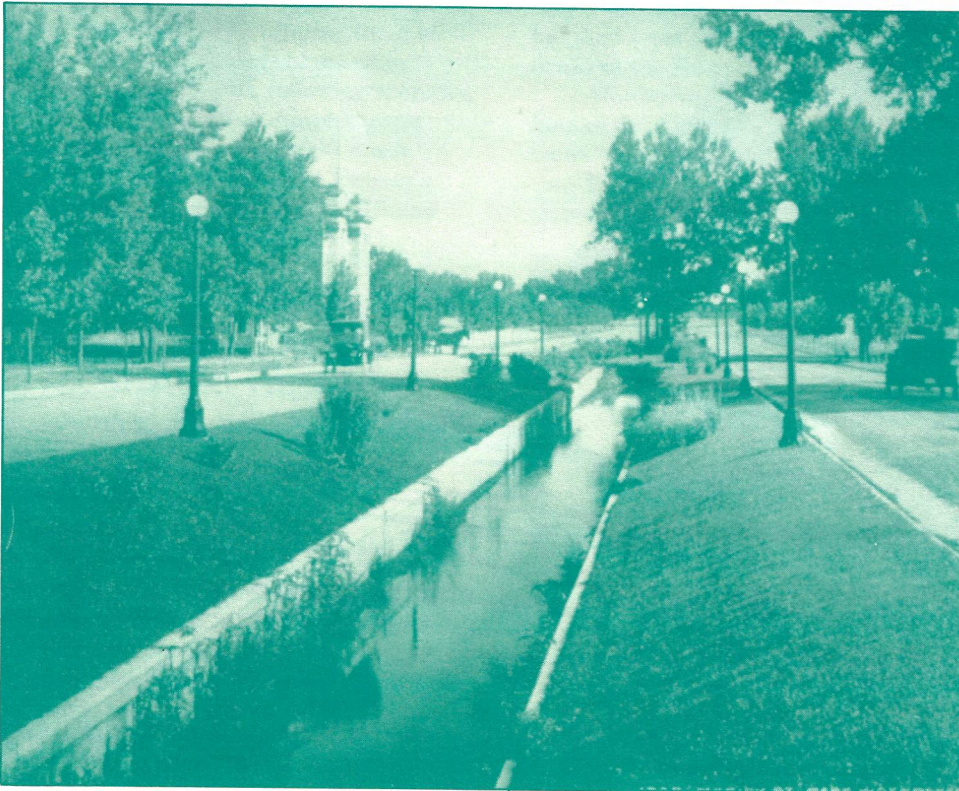
In 1901, historian Jerome C. Smiley wrote about the Big Ditch: "Its great service was . . . to the people of Denver

in enabling them to grow trees and have grass-plots to relieve, if not entirely banish, the verdureless dreariness of pre-existing conditions in the town; for, previous to its completion, and especially in "East Denver", there were few trees anywhere, and no lawns . . . By 1869 the general appearance of Denver had been materially improved in its landscape aspects. The winding ditch from far up the Platte that had for several years brought water to the Capitol Hill elevation, had been of invaluable service. Water flowed at the sides of the streets, giving life and vigor to many trees that had been planted, and enabling door-yards to be made green with turf and flowers."

By 1882, Denver acquired the Big Ditch from John Smith and the water channel was officially renamed the City Ditch. About this time, the ditch was extended to 17th and York (and later four miles beyond). Remarkably, it was the South Platte River that allowed for the greening of that barren rise on the prairie which was to become our City Park.

W.G.M. Stone, in his *Colorado Handbook*, wrote in 1892: "They laugh at our cottonwoods . . . They call our cottonwoods a cheap tree . . . but it has not been a cheap tree in Denver. Our people have paid large prices for cottonwoods, and larger sums for water to make them grow . . . till we have the shadiest streets and the greenest city of its age to be found on the globe. The cottonwood has been a luxury and a living joy — a luxury and joy no people can experience who live in a timbered country."

By 1892, the South Platte River had dramatically altered the landscape of the young city on its banks and determined an enduring "spirit of place" for Denver that is our heritage today. Unknown to many, the little City Ditch still flows in pipe beneath our streets, delivering a portion of the Platte River to parks and golf courses on its route and popping up open to the sky only on its journey through Washington Park. How fitting that the ditch has been designated a national historic landmark. It has carried life-giving water from the Platte into Denver for 122 years.



An example of one of the irrigation ditches allowing the greening of Denver to flourish.

The Greenway Wildlife Watch

Merle D. Grimes
Greenway Project Director

What is black, long-necked, has wings and looks like a funny, awkward duck? The answer is one of the South Platte River's most unique inhabitants, the Double-Crested Cormorant. While most species of Cormorants are considered ocean or coastal birds, only one, the Double Crested Cormorant, is commonly found in the interior United States, including Colorado.

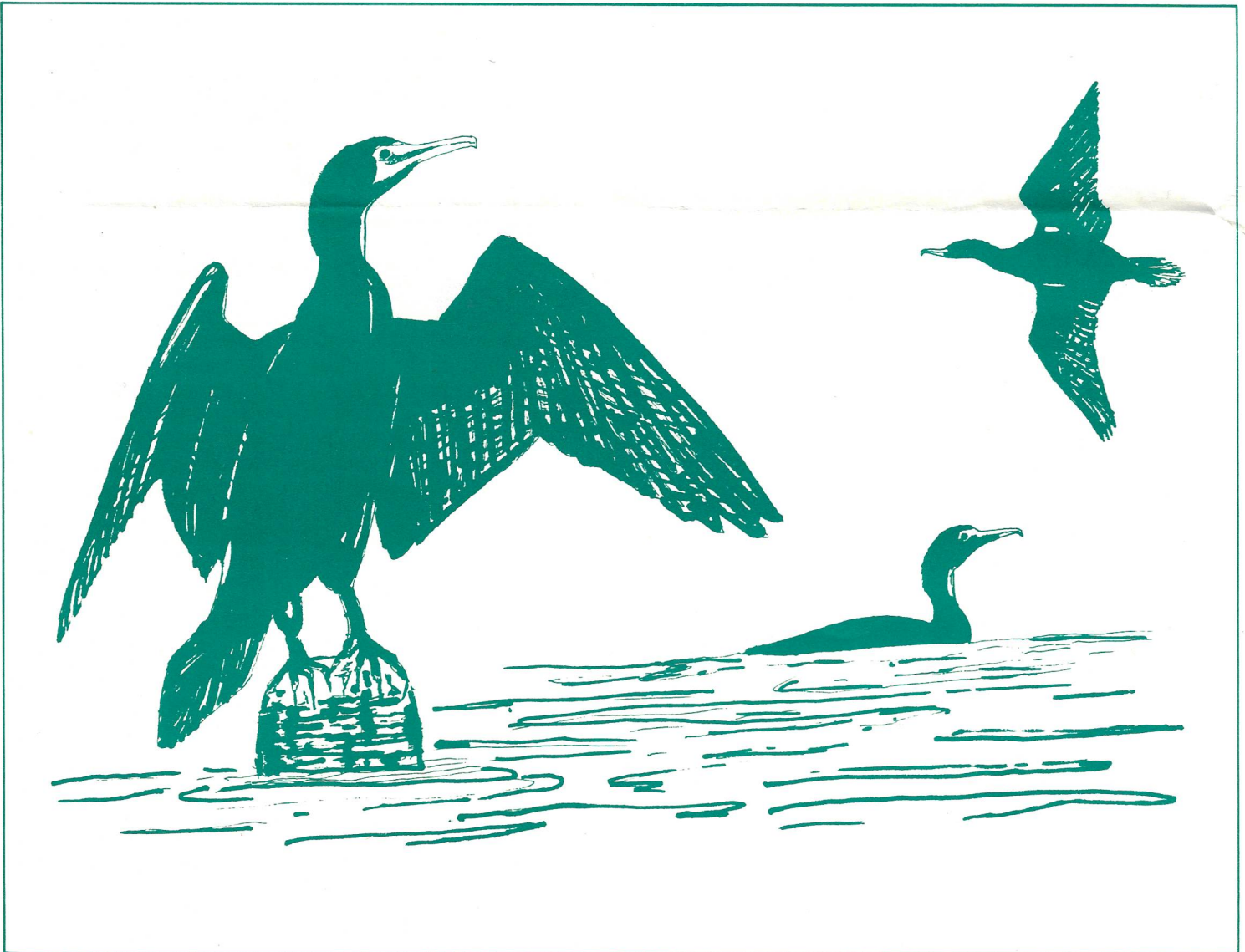
Cormorants are often confused with loons, due to their similar shape and low profile in the water while swimming. Cormorants however, are larger (about

the size of a goose) and swim and fly with their neck, head and bill tilted slightly upright. The crest of the Double Crested Cormorant is seldom observable. The species can best be identified by a small, yellow pouch underneath the bill, its large size, and dark black color.

The South Platte River provides an excellent feeding and resting area for the Cormorant. Often times, the bird is seen flying just above the River or swimming in calm, quiet pools of water. A favorite place for the Cormorant is in one of the many ponds that are adjacent to the River. Generally seen in flocks of up to thirty birds, the Cormorant enjoys standing upright with wings spread out, or swimming with just a small portion of the upper back, neck

and head above the water, almost as if they are about to sink. Cormorants feast on small fish and crustaceans. The abundance of these birds and others reflect that the food supply is healthy and continuing to get even better.

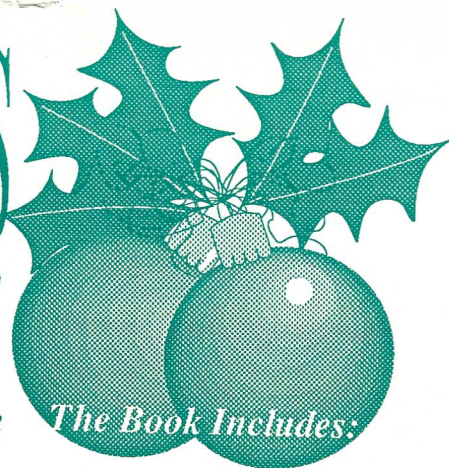
As a side note, some of our readers may have noticed some bright orange birds around Florida Avenue and the South Platte River. Believe it or not, approximately six parrots lived along the River for much of the summer. We do not know where they came from or where they are now. Those of us who enjoyed observing the parrots hope that they will make it to a warmer climate soon, as it is very unlikely that they can survive the Colorado winter.



Sketch of the Double-Crested Cormorant.

SEASONS GREETINGS

To Friends Of The Greenway



As the holiday season is now upon us, we would like to make available to our special members a rather unique gift giving idea.

Your tax deductible contribution of \$30 will make someone special (yourself included) a year-long member of the Greenway Foundation. Membership will include a copy of **Pedal Stops, A Guide To Denver Bike Paths.**

The book can also be purchased separately during this holiday offering for \$10 (also tax deductible).

The Book Includes:

- Detailed Maps Covering the Following Areas
 - Cherry Creek
 - Cherry Creek Reservoir
 - Highline Canal
 - Platte River
 - Bear Creek
- Restaurants Accessible From Paths
- Bike Shops Accessible From Paths
- Parks & Other Points of Interest Along Paths
- 5" x 5" Flip Page Format
 - For Easy Reference
 - Compact Size Makes Guide Easy to Carry
- Full Color
- High Quality, Durable Stock
- Large Fold Out Map of Entire Metro Bikeway System Included
- As Seen in Fine Metro Area Bookstores & Bikesshops

To ensure prompt delivery, please clip coupon and return by 12-15-89 to:

Greenway Foundation
1666 S. University Blvd.
Denver, Colorado 80210

☐ **Yes.** I would like to give a Greenway Foundation Membership to:

Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____

My \$30 per membership is enclosed. Please send my membership's copy of Pedal Stops to:

Name: _____
Address: _____

☐ **Yes.** I would like _____ copy(ies) of Pedal Stops sent to:

Name: _____
Address: _____

My \$10 per copy is enclosed.

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Your Support Makes the Difference!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

\$30.00 for you or a friend.

Included in the membership is a
Membership Card entitling you to:

- Notice of upcoming special events held along the Greenway during the year.
- All new members will receive a copy of our book "Returning the Platte to the People".
- A 20% discount on food and spirits for up to 4 persons at Zang's Brewing Co. (offer applies to any one evening anytime during that year).
- All copies of the newsletter printed in the year you are a member.

COMMEMORATING MEMBER

For \$100.00, have a contribution made towards the Greenway Tree Fund in the name of a friend or loved one. (Also includes all privileges of an Annual Member).

CORPORATE MEMBER

\$250.00 includes a limited edition print by well known artist William Condit entitled "Seasons Along the Platte." All prints are signed and numbered by the artist. (Also includes all privileges of an Annual Member).



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