PRELIMINARY REPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF

FALL CREEK GORGE AND CASCADILLA GLEN

AT ITHACA NEW YORK

Charles N. Lowrie Landscape Arch't.

1915


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Committee on Buildings & Grounds
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

Gentlemen:

I have the honor to submit the following report on the development of Cascadilla Glen and Fall Creek Gorge up to and including Beebe Lake and its immediate surroundings.

Since receiving your commission to undertake this work, I have given the subject careful personal study both on the ground by a detailed inspection of the entire length of the areas covered, and in the office with the assistance of such

topographic surveys as were available and also by personal interviews with those persons in Ithaca and elsewhere who have been most interested and have given thought to the problem.

This study has convinced me of the fact that an opportunity is here offered for the development of unique scenic attractions. Furthermore, this remarkable scenery is comparatively unknown today, due to the fact apparently that at the present time it is for the most part exceedingly inaccessible. It is true that the thousands who come and go to Ithaca from year to year get glimpses of these ravines from the various bridges crossing them, and from


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photographs which have been scattered widely throughout the world. But owing to the inadequate approaches this unsurpassed scenery which can be viewed to best advantage from the lower levels has only been a sealed book. The difficulty of traversing these lower levels on account of their steep and rugged slopes, has added to this condition except in a few limited and disconnected areas.

It has, therefore, been my first endeavor to make the lower levels as accessible as possible by means of approach paths at all important points. These paths serve as connections with a long system of marginal paths located on at least one side of the

ravines and for the most part on both; and as near as possible to the water. These longitudinal main paths, are so arranged that a complete circuit may be made of each ravine beginning at any point with comparatively little use of the same path both going and returning.

Another motive has been to locate the paths so that they shall lead the visitor to the most important and interesting points of view. As to what are the most important view points, a casual visitor would probably say the water falls. While this is true to a great extent, yet the many rapids and the great variety of water width from the broad

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expanse of Beebe Lake to the narrow gorge of Cascadilla Glen offer unusually fine water effects in great variety. Furthermore, the setting of these water effects as comprised by the sloping sides of the ravines has great variety and interest ranging as it does from the steep vertical formation to gentle wooded slopes. Again what may be called the texture due to different geological formations and to the many kinds of vegetation, furnishes an interest in some respects greater than the water itself.

Finally, the combination of water in this setting, forms great and noble scenery.

The following is a detailed description of the plans illustrating the means by which this scenery may be made accessible.

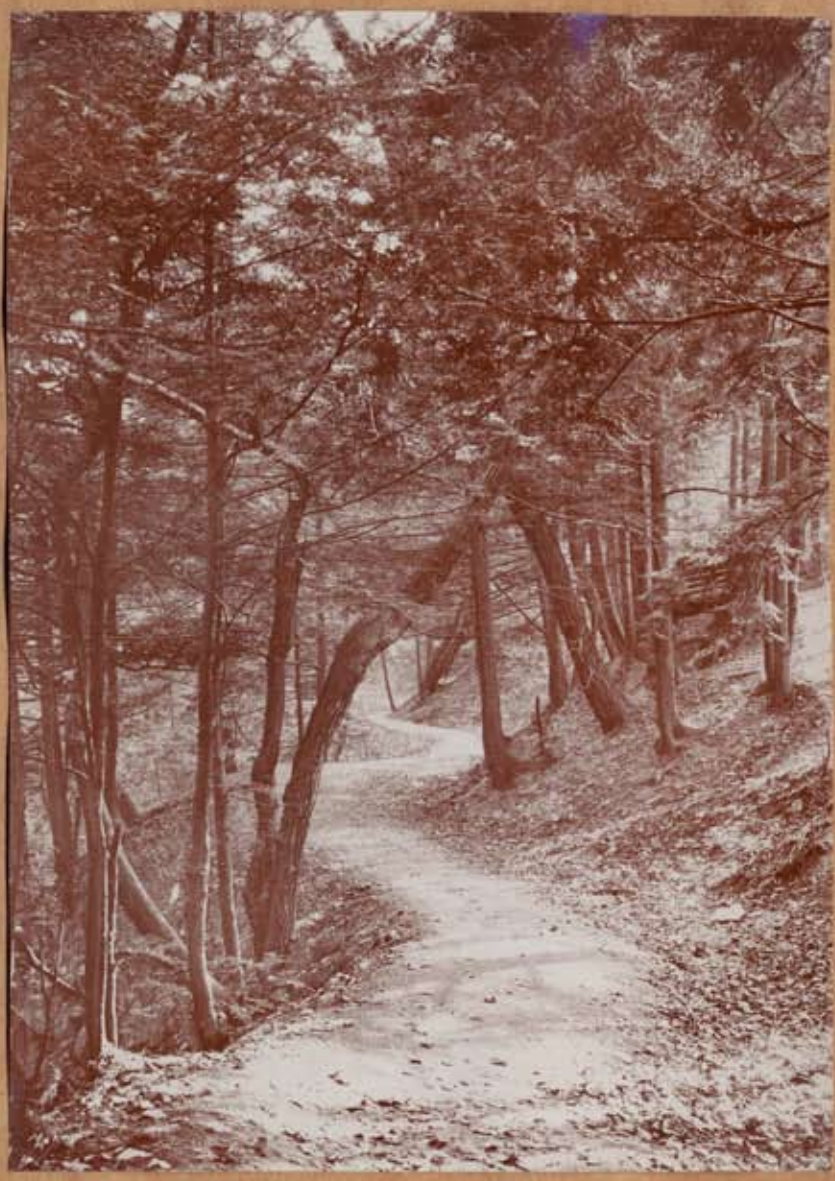
C A S C A D I L L A G L E N.

from

L I N N S T R E E T T O U P P E R D A M.

The westerly entrances are on East Mill Street at the South and North sides of the Linn Street Bridge. The north entrance must pass the church and follow the stream 20 or 30 feet away approaching close to the stream as one ascends toward the first falls.

If possible at least one house at Mill and Linn Streets should be



removed in order to make an appropriate approach to the gorge by means of a bridge to meet the path at the north side. This added area, would serve as a suitable entrance from which may be obtained a view of the first falls. Some screen planting at this entrance would be necessary.

The path continues on the north side on a level about 15' or 20 feet above the water and reaches the top of the falls without the use of steps. Two hundred feet of railing is necessary here, also a retaining wall for a distance of about 50 feet.

From the path as one nears the first falls the second falls appear. These have more levels and shorter

falls. The path continues along the water level to a point above the second falls immediately under the DeWitt Place Bridge, where it is neceesary to go up approximately 30 feet to a level where there is an old wooden pipe line, which should be removed. We continue at this level to a concrete dam. Views up and down the gorge from this point are especially fine; the sheer cliffs below the second falls are impressive in their great height, though they do not compare with what we may see further up stream.

At this dam, which is 40 feet high, may be had views up under the Stewart Avenue Bridge to rapids and


FALL AND ENTRANCE BRIDGE
TO CAMPUS
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

falls above. A flight of steps here may well lead to Cascadilla Place. From an overlook point at the dam the path continues up stream on the north side to a point immediately under the Stewart Avenue Bridge. It would be necessary here to construct a way with retaining wall as the water line is from cliff to cliff; a railing would also be necessary. In passing, I should not forget that the removal of the shack, "Brownie's Dog", is most desirable.

Immediately under the Stewart Avenue Bridge, we cross to the south side of the stream by means of stepping stones to a small island and thence to the south shore, and ascend a distance

of about 18 feet to the top of the falls. We continue ten feet above stream level up south side to where the path from Stewart Avenue joins, thence about water level to bottom of the falls at the end of West Avenue; thence up steps about 10' to a level above the falls, where the path may become wider (8').

Above the cliff to the south side the ugly wall of a rooming house strikes the eye. It might be covered with vines - it certainly should be blotted out of the landscape. The Phi Delta Theta house is not unattractive at the north, atop the cliff. Then the path may ramp up part way, but

steps must be used for at least 30 feet of the distance. At the top, the cliff must be cut away to permit the path to pass around the falls. A railing is necessary for a distance of about 150'. The path then continues along the bank, which must be cut to accommodate it to a point below the big falls, where it is only possible to ascend by means of a long flight of steps, a distance of about 40 feet. At a point 75 feet west of the bridge a path might well ramp up to meet the path past the Cascadilla dormitory building. This seemed to me the only possible outlet for a path to the west side of the bridge.

It is possible to pass under the College Avenue Bridge at the south side and continue up at stream level under the railroad.bridge. At a point 350 feet north of railroad a foot bridge might cross the stream. at about 20 feet above water level. The lower path could readily rise to meet the bridge level. It would be undesirable to continue the lower path beyond the bridge, because the gorge becomes narrow and would hardly accommodate a path. The bridge would be a connection to the upper Campus buildings and would give a better crossing place for the students who now insist upon using the trolley bridge. At the north side of the

bridge paths up stream, and path direct to East Avenue would be desirable. Already there is a path up the north side of the stream at about 30 feet above the water level. the path continues west on the stream to meet the north end of the College Avenue Bridge.

The "Goldwin Smith Walk" will suffice admirably on the south side from the bridge location east to the second dam and west of the Women's Athletic Field. Across a bridge at this point the path joins the one west along the north side of the stream, which has a branch to East Avenue and continues west to Central Avenue back of the Kappa Alpha Lodge and the gymnasium. Existing roads through

the woods at various points on the north side in this region might best be eliminated.

At the east end of the "Goldwin Smith Walk", a short flight of steps would take one to the level of the stream and the dam. The path at south of Women's Athletic Field could well follow the little stream up to the bridge below the last falls. Near the end of the walk for a distance of 50' or 75 feet, a cut would be necessary and at the bridge steps and ramps may well lead in a southerly direction to the street above. The hemlocks along this walk opposite the Women's Field are exceptionally fine.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The path to the north of the Women's Athletic Field must be reached by crossing the bridge below the dam to the north side of the stream, turning east to the field to a path level 20' or 25 feet above the field.

The path may follow at the same level around to the east side of the field to a large white pine tree. At this point, steps may be built to reach the level of the stream again. The old creek bed is dry here and the path may be built upon it to continue east to the last falls.

A view of these falls is obtained at points on the paths near the bridge and from the bridge. A large amount of evergreen planting seems necessary on what was once an island near the

bridge and from the bridge. A large amount of evergreen planting seems necessary on what was once an island near the falls, and evergreen planting could also be done along the north path bordering on the Women's Athletic Field.

A concrete building at base of the falls should either be removed or made more interesting architecturally.

F A L L C R E E K G O R G E.

The westerly entrance to Fall Creek Gorge could be at Lake Street, immediately adjoining an old house, which it would be desirable to have removed. From the Lake Street Bridge, automobiles may gain a view up the gorge to the largest falls, known as the Ithaca Falls, 156 feet in height.


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THE TUNNEL
ITHACA GORGE.

The path leads in an easterly direction along the north bank, rising gradually to a point near the dam above these falls. From points along this path the most comprehensive view of the Falls is obtained.

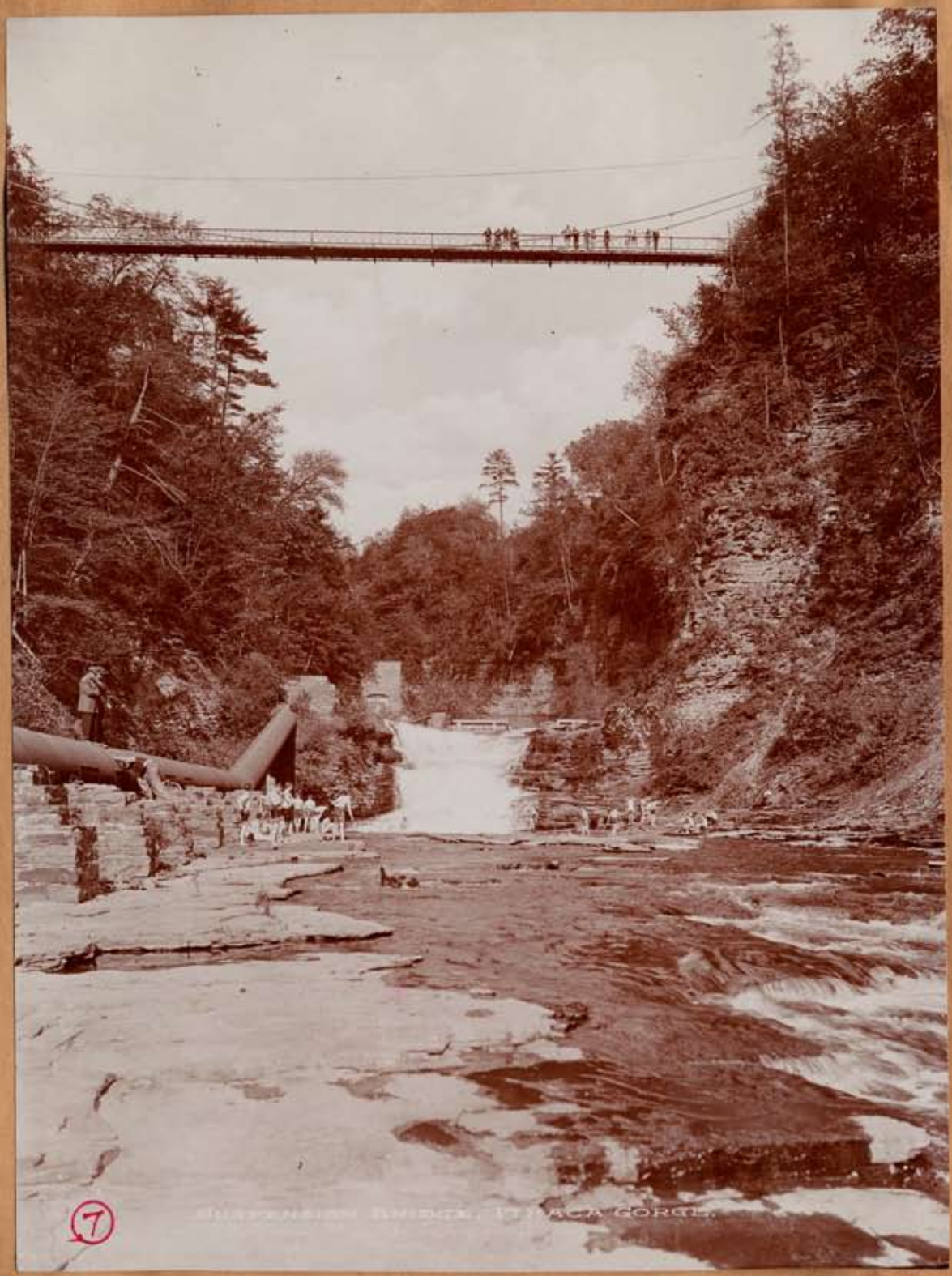
Upon reaching the dam one crosses upon stepping stones on the top of the dam to a point immediately at the east end of the old tunnel. A short retaining wall must be built from the tunnel opening immediately at the bottom of perpendicular cliffs.

Let us go back through the tunnel to a bridge over the sluice way. Turning north one may go out upon the top of the cliff to an overlook, where views are obtained up the gorge and

west to Cayuga Lake; this latter view is exceptional on a clear day. A small covered pavilion should be placed here to command these outlooks.

From the bridge over the sluice one may go south up a steep hillside to another entrance to the gorge on Willard Way.

To continue along the south side of the gorge one passes under the Stewart Avenue Bridge and fifty feet further than the bridge are located steps, which take one to Stewart Avenue. These steps would be unnoticed and would therfore not be unsightly, being set back into one of the natural recesses in the Cliff.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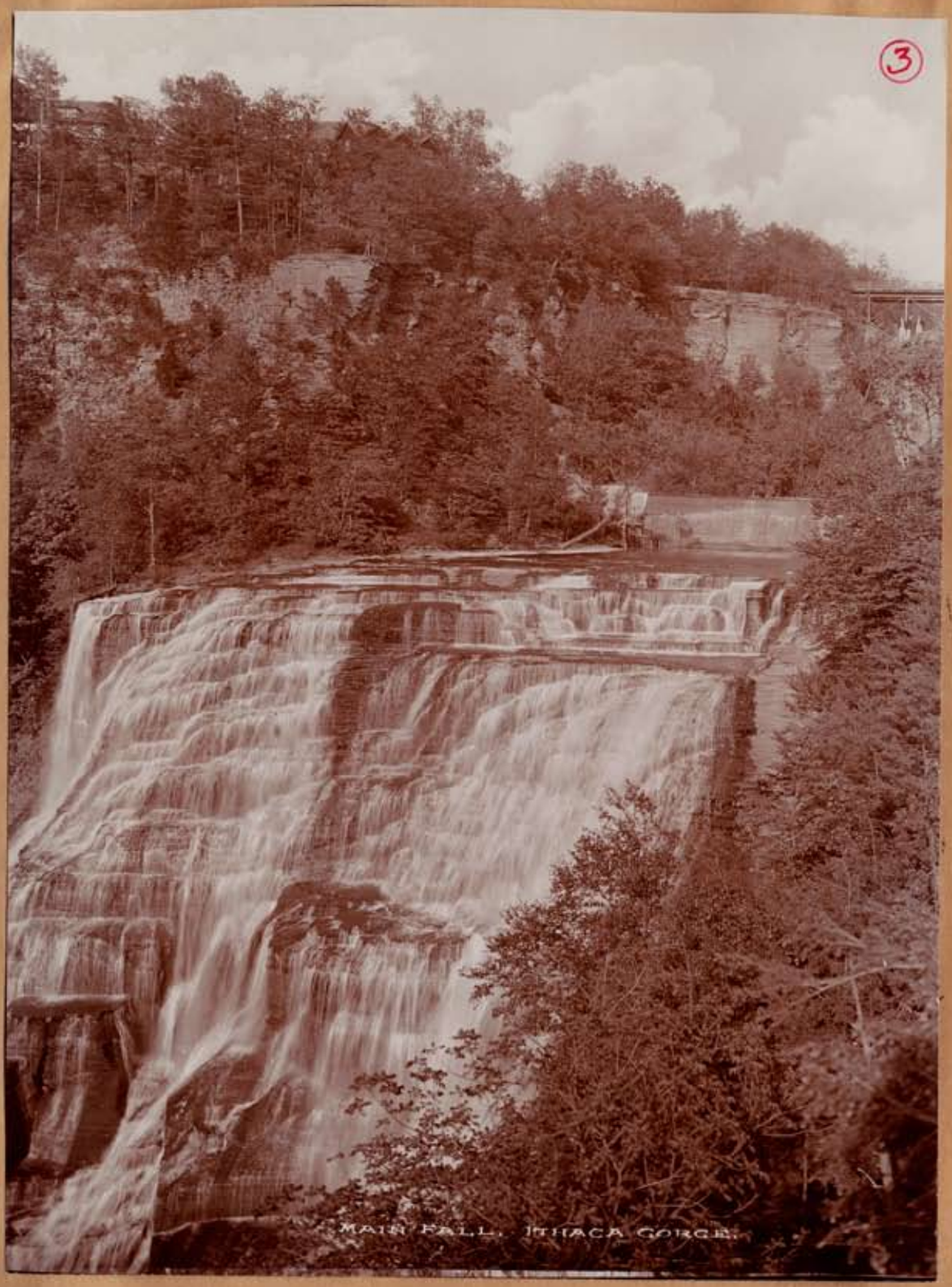
From the top of these steps a path takes one west to Stewart Avenue and east along the higher elevation to Central Avenue. Branches from this path lead to Horseshoe Falls and to the Cornell Heights Bridge.

At the north end of the Stewart Avenue Bridge a path goes east along the top of the cliff to a point above Forest Falls, then descending to a point immediately back of the old power house and crosses the sluice way to join the path from the south side of the gorge.

Continuing from Stewart Avenue Bridge the path in the gorge on the south side passes Forest Falls, thence to Horseshoe Falls and over the stream

on stepping stones to the new power house on the north side of the stream where it joins the north path. From here one goes up steps to the level of the Falls above the power house and along t the north bank where views are obtained up and down stream. Near the Falls above the new power house, paths lead out of the gorge up to Fall Creek Drive, one toward Prudence Risely Hall, another to the north end of the suspension.bridge.

The path in the gorge follows the line of an existing path up stream under the East Avenue Bridge to Triphammer Falls. Paths take one out of the gorge at a point immediately below Prudence Risely Hall to the Hall, and another to the north end of the East Avenue Bridge.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MAIN FALL, ITHACA GORGE.

At a point where wooden steps were once located near Triphammer Falls to take one to the top of the cliff, a stairway is proposed, set back in a recess of the cliff out of view. This seems necessary in order to make the gorge walk continuous.

Let us return for a while to the north end of Central Avenue, At that point an outlook should be located where one may obtain views into the gorge and also toward Cayuga Lake. I have already mentioned about the path which leads along the upper level from Stewart Avenue. Another path descends into the gorge on the east and when about half way down divides, one going west to an outlook above the falls near the power house, another east to the

to the stream level and continuing up stream to a point under the Stewart Avenue Bridge, where stepping stones connect with the path on the north side of the stream. A few feet further east than the stepping stones on the south side, the path terminates at an outlook, where the view is toward Trip-hammer Falls.

From the top of the stairway up the cliff near the falls, the path skirts the north shore of Beebe Lake, occasionally touching the shore line in order that one may obtain views up and down the lake. In passing, mention should be made of the path connecting this lake border path with Thurston Ave.

About halfway up the lake on the no north side, a new location for the Women's


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TRIP HAMMER FALL AND
HYDRAULIC EXPERIMENT STATION.

Boat House, is shown on the plan. This new location is decidedly better than the old one it being nearer the Prudence Risely Hall, and in a location less public than where The building now stands. The better surroundings would be valuable, inasmuch as the boat house could be used as a gathering place for lunch parties and other g gatherings of the women students.

At the extreme end of the lake the path rises to an elevation of about 30' above the lake and turns north to a bridge over the wonderful small gorge near Forest Home. From the middle of the bridge views may be had south toward the lake and north to the Falls. This bridge, detailed on the plan, is

necessary, inasmuch as it will complete a circuit of Beebe Lake, and the Fall Creek system. From the bridge one may follow the old Forest Home Walk to the East Avenue Bridge, or take the new path along the shore as far as the toboggan slide where it joins the Forest Home Walk at a point opposite Triphammer Falls.

I have rapidly traveresd the paths relating to the development of the gorge totaling a distance of more than five miles. A large amount of detail has been omitted based upon additional engineering data that is now incomplete. However, the plan is most feasible and w will make available one of the scenic wonders of the New York State.


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An approximate rough estimate follows taking into consideration the construction of substantial well graded macadam paths, four foot-bridges, several stepping-stones stream crossings, retaining embankments, guard railing where necessary, and some quite extensive forestry plantation to protect steep slopes from erosion and to add landscape interest and variety along path margins.

An approximate estimate for the development of

C A S C A D I L L A C R E E K

Paths, 10,000 lin.ft. - 5' wide 5,555 sq. yd. @ .70	$3888.
Resurfacing Goldwin Smith Walk, 1280 lin.ft. - 600 sq.yd. @ .50..	300.
3 Bridges	5920.
Stone Steps, approx. 500, @$10.yd. .	5000.
Drainage, 1000 lin.ft. 8" pipe @ .50 lin. ft.	500.
Inlets, 100 @ $5.00 each	500.
Retaining Wall, 225 cu.yd. @$10. yd..	2250.
Stepping Stones	500.
Planting	1500.
Iron Railing, 1200 lin. ft. @ .50 lin. ft.	600.
Grading, 600 cu.yd. part loose rock, @ .80 per yd.	480.
	$21438.

An approximate estimate for the development of

FALL CREEK GORGE.

Paths, 19000 lin.ft.5' wide, 10,556 sq.yd. @ .70	$7390.
Resurfacing Forest Home Walk, 2960 lin.ft. 1644 sq.yd. @.50 ..	822.
1 Bridge, 320 cu.yd. masonry, @ $12.00 per yd.	3640.
Stone Steps	6200.
Drainage. 2000 lin.ft. 8" pipe @ .50 per ft.	1000.
300, 8" Inlets Catch Basins @$5.00 .	1000.
Retaining wall, 1080 lin.ft. 480 cu.yd. @ $10.	4800.
Stepping Stones, 320 lin.ft. . . .	2000.
Planting	3500.
Iron Railing, 2800 lin.ft. @ .50 .	1400.
Overlook at Ithaca Falls	1000.
" " Power House	500.
Grading, 1250 cu.yd. part loose rock @ .80 per yd.	1000.
	$33252.

Respectfully submitted

Charles N. Lowrie