

A Dream Becomes Reality

CHARLES STEWART MOTT

The concept of the Genesee Recreation Area was presented to the Trustees of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation at a meeting of the board in 1964. Outlined were the opportunities that a large open space along the Flint River just north of the City of Flint would present to the people of this community. The presentation also pointed out that so large and bold a project would be expensive, and it would take many years to finish. But if it were to be at all, it would have to start right at the present. Discussion among those present naturally followed. Then suddenly Mr. C. S. Mott said: "Let's do it."

By "doing it" he meant to go in partnership with the people of the community, that if they would do their share, the Foundation would contribute substantial sums to purchase land so the dream could become a reality.

From the start it was envisioned that the Flint River would be improved to create a sizeable lake. This lake was to be the focal point of the project inasmuch as public access to any body of water in Genesee County was greatly limited. Mr. Mott realized that first things coming first, land had to be acquired and plans drawn up, and these took time. Yet he could not hide a feeling of impatience. "I want to see this area used by the people of our community while I am still alive," he said often.

To speed up the process of development he led the Trustees in 1969 to give a second grant of \$2,523,000, which, added to later grants of land and other cash gifts brought the Foundation's participation to \$6,186,500. Joined by State, Federal and local funds, these dollars soon began to bring about fulfillment of the vision.

Mr. Mott took great delight in giving the signal that started machinery in operation for construction of the dam. He followed the progress of development with interest. One day in the summer of 1972 while he was under constant medical care he asked his nurse and driver to take him to the Genesee Recreation Area. He wanted to see what had been done. They took him.

He visited Stepping Stone Falls, and then boarded the Park Commission's boat, the Yankee — named after the ship on which Mr. Mott served in the Spanish-American War — and cruised the lake that for some years he had hoped he would see. The newly opened Bluebell Beach was in heavy use that day. The sails of boats dotted the placid lake. Fishermen could be spotted along the banks of the coves. The sun shone brightly. He felt good.

That trip was one of the last outings Mr. Mott made before his final hospitalization.

