



Out of Side, Out of Mind

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Before facilitating the creation of a world-renowned parks system, Edmonton had the unfortunate plan to place a dump in the heart of the North Saskatchewan River valley. In 1945, the city shuttled city garbage to a central location out of the view of most residents, but as William Kay remembers, just because you cannot see something does not mean you do not still know its there:

The Dump, as we knew it, located on the North bank of the North Saskatchewan River east of the Low-Level Bridge was one of the locations that our city felt was an appropriate location. It seemed that since it was on the riverbank well below the level of the rest of the city it was OK. As if it was a situation of “Out of Sight Out of Mind”. Unfortunately, its existence was not exactly out of mind as pungent odours wafted up to our level as burning and smouldering garbage let off its fumes when the wind blew from the South. Many times there was a smoky haze in the river valley when the wind died to a dead calm, which occurred often on hot summer days. Rather than burying it as is done today it was often set on fire to reduce its volume. Eventually a different solution was arrived at with the construction of the incinerator on the south side of the river where the Muttart Conservatory is located today. The burnt garbage residue of metal cans was landfilled next to it. Today these materials are the base of the Edmonton Ski Club Bunny Hill notably called Tin Can Alley.¹

Thankfully the city has changed its practice from storing garbage in the river valley, to embracing the wooded ravines as parkland. The River Valley would not be the runners' paradise it is today if the city was still practicing waste management in the valley.

¹ <http://www.epl.ca/edmonton-a-city-called-home/edmonton-a-city-called-home-story?id=1387>