

Palestine, "the Land of the Book" Truly Named

REV. F. C. STIFLER FINDS HOLY CITY SMALL PLACE

Fifty-six Thousand People Live in Old Jerusalem—Visit Gives Colorful Impression

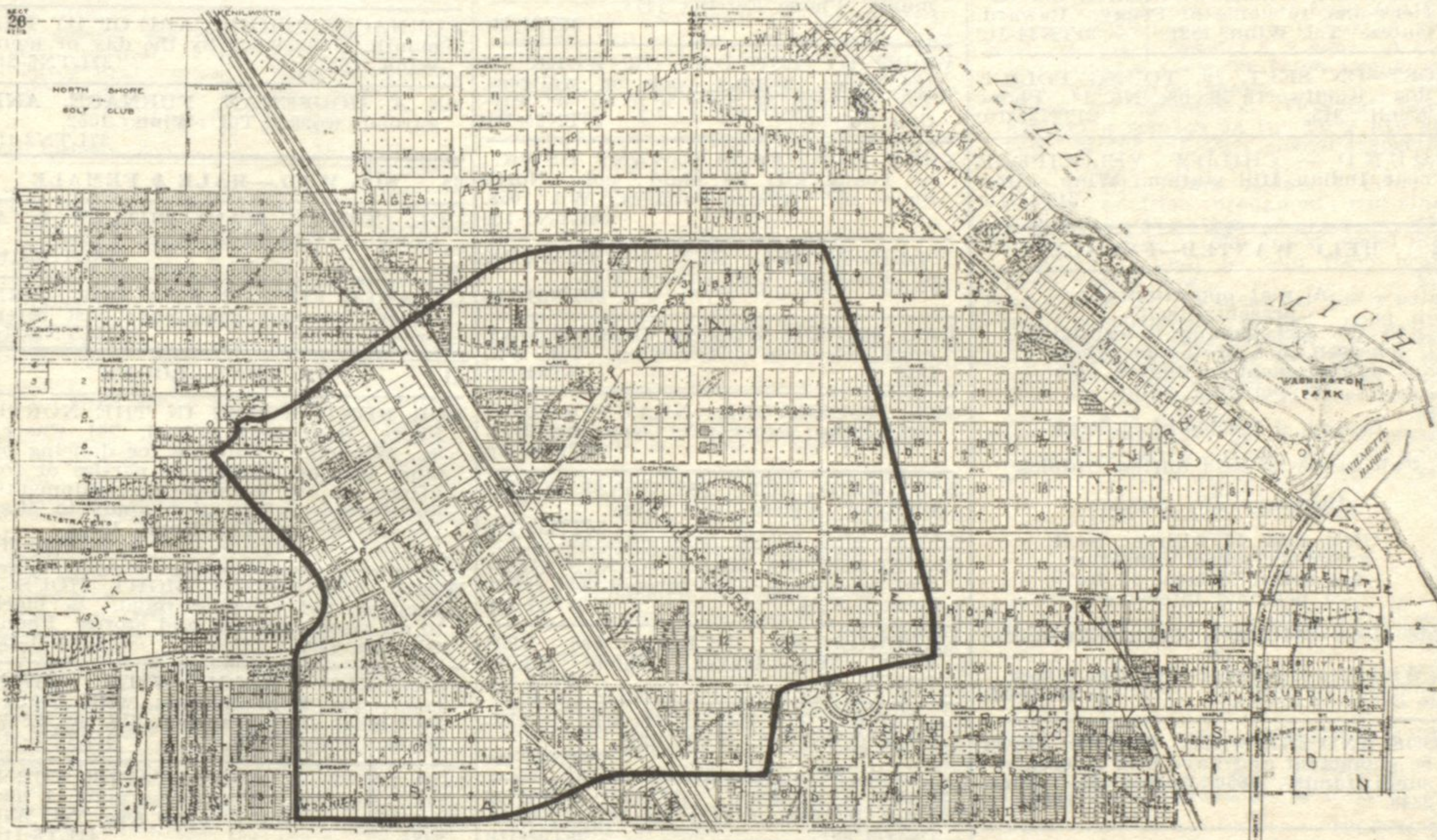
This is the fifth article of a series describing the wonders of the Holy Land. The writer, the Rev. Francis Carr Stifler, pastor of Wilmette Baptist church, tells the story of "the land of the book" in intensely interesting style.

By REV. FRANCIS CARR STIFLER

I was brought up on the map of Palestine. My father's work was to teach prospective preachers the New Testament. And I did not escape. When I became a theological student myself, I discovered that many years before my father had been trying out his lectures on his family. Family prayers after breakfast every morning was a regular seminar



The Damascus Gate, its towering walls presenting an imposing sight.



Here is a map of Wilmette (made before the annexation of the western territory) showing how small Jerusalem really is. Jerusalem (indicated within the heavy black line in the center of the map) is populated by 56,000 people, but would not begin to fill the territory of Wilmette, even before the additional land was annexed.



Inside the Damascus Gate in the city of Jerusalem.

of geography and history. Long before I heard anything about the map of the United States, I knew the main features of the map of Palestine.

Like all things that are far away and filled with wonder, Palestine always seemed to me like a very large place. When Jesus went with his folks from Nazareth to Jerusalem, I used to think of it about like a trip from Chicago to Memphis, when as a matter of fact, it was like a trip from Milwaukee to Wilmette. I used to pity poor Ruth for being so far from her native country, the land of Moab, but I find it was only as far as from Lake Michigan to the Fox River Valley—and being mountainous was always in sight and looked much nearer.

As a matter of fact, Palestine from Dan to Beersheab is not quite as long as the state of Vermont, indeed to

bring it a little nearer home, it is about as long as the distance from Waukegan to Kankakee, and the width in the north is about like the distance from Elgin to the Lake, and in the south as far as from Rockford to the Lake. And there are about as many people living in it as there are on what we call the North Side of Chicago.

Land Clothed in Sentiment

Distant hills always look green and desert countries miles away are sometimes clothed with a sentiment that makes them beautiful. The Bible writers loved Palestine. They and their fathers had fought to acquire it, and fought again and again to hold it. It was a far fairer land than the desert in which Moses and his hoards had wandered for a generation. So these writers wrote about Palestine's beauties. It is beautiful but to one who was

brought up in Pennsylvania and has lived half his life in the middle-western states with their black loam and frequent rains, Palestine does not look quite as beautiful as he had thought.

Of course, we saw Palestine in the summer. Have you ever seen California in the summer? My first trip to California was in July. People had told me how magnificently tropical were the great boulevards of Pasadena with their rows of palm trees. But when I saw those trees, they were gray with dust as was everything else. But it is hard to exaggerate in describing the beauties of California after the rains have started, and I dare say it is so of Palestine. As we saw it, there was little verdure and much dust. It was bare and brown and glaring with its limestone cliffs.

Topographically, Palestine, although

so diminutive, is a world in itself. It has a seacoast with at least one excellent harbor. It has mountains rising to a height of 7,000 feet and snow capped the year around. It has, cutting across its upper end, one of the richest valleys in the world, Esdraelon, and it has, more marvelous than any other feature, the most phenomenal river gorge on earth, the Jordan, running from its springs high up on Mt. Hermon, 1,700 feet above the sea level to the Dead Sea, 120 miles farther south and 1,300 feet below the sea level.

Half the length of the river is the part we have always thought of, the sixty miles between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. In this sixty miles the river falls 600 feet. And it is exceedingly tortuous. Its corkscrew windings increase the 60 miles to a distance of more than 200 miles. For the most part it is quite hidden under a dense growth of cane, willow and tamarisk. It is nowhere over 100 feet wide nor more than 12 feet deep.

In a later chapter, I shall tell you about our visit to the Jordan and the

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