NAOP RECEIVES 2008 ASLA MEDAL OF EXCELLENCE

The prestigious ASLA Medal of Excellence, one of the highest honors the American Society of Landscape Architects presents each year, was awarded to the National Association for Olmsted Parks. The medal honors notable and sustained contributions to the management and conservation of natural and public landscapes. It recognizes NAOP’s significant contributions to landscape architecture policy, research, education, project planning and design throughout the United States.

“For the better part of three decades, the National Association for Olmsted Parks has advanced the legacy of landscape architecture’s founding father through education, advocacy, public planning and research,” said Nancy Somerville, Executive Vice President and CEO of ASLA. “There is not a more deserving organization for the Medal of Excellence.”

The award will be presented during the ASLA annual meeting in Philadelphia on October 6. It is particularly relevant this year as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Greensward Plan, the Olmsted and Vaux design for Central Park—one of America’s most important works of civic art and our country’s first major urban public park.

WORK TO PRESERVE U.S. CAPITOL GROUNDS CONTINUES

As the new U.S. Capitol Visitor Center nears completion for the December 2 opening, NAOP’s Olmsted Capitol City Committee continues its efforts to increase public recognition and stewardship of the Olmsted-designed landscape surrounding the Capitol.

Members of the Committee met with Stephen Ayers, acting Architect of the Capitol, and other AOC staff to learn about the AOC’s vision for the Capitol Grounds and explore potential collaboration between NAOP and the AOC office, including:

• Public outreach about Olmsted’s design and the site’s history and significance through cooperative efforts on a Capitol Grounds website, brochures, tours and similar materials;
• Review by NAOP of the U.S. Capitol Complex Master Plan to ensure public participation in the process;
• Research assistance with the development of a Cultural Landscape Report for the Grounds; and
• Exploration of private funding opportunities to support restoration of the Grounds.

NAOP will continue meeting with AOC staff in its effort to build support for the rehabilitation and long-term preservation of this nationally significant site. In addition, NAOP has developed a communications package about the Capitol Grounds to share the story of the Olmsted design with the millions of visitors and public servants who visit and work there. The package, titled “A Design for Democracy”, includes the logo above and a brochure featuring an overview and history of Olmsted’s visionary plan.
Executive Director’s Report

You will notice that Field Notes has been shortened. We are revising our communications tools, with an upgraded website (www.olmsted.org) that will incorporate information previously included in the newsletter to provide more timely updates about NAOP programs and member news. Reprints will continue to highlight reports by members of the Olmsted firm on important public design commissions. This issue focuses on Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.’s 1911 city plan for Pittsburgh, site of this month’s international urban parks conference.

NAOP strives to increase public understanding and awareness of the Olmsted legacy and its relevance to cities and communities today by making information available and as accessible as possible. The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm 1858–1979 tells the story of the breadth of the Olmsted heritage through essays, data, plans and photographs. Working with the Architect of the Capitol, NAOP is now developing a communications package about the U.S. Capitol Grounds (see p. 1).

Our members are also effective at conveying landscape history to local stewards. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Historic Landscape Preservation Initiative publishes the Terra Firma technical bulletin series, which provides information about preservation, maintenance and management of historic landscapes (www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/publications.htm). Fairsted has included music and art programs in its educational outreach. And Friends of Maryland’s Olmsted Parks & Landscapes recently issued a bulletin summarizing the 1904 Olmsted vision for the city linking parks, churchyards, public squares, playgrounds, school campuses and schoolyards, connected by parkways, boulevards and stream valleys, and its relevance to the city’s current planning efforts. Please keep us posted on your organization’s outreach efforts.

We are honored to have received the 2008 ASLA Medal of Excellence. This award reflects the tireless efforts of our dedicated board and members who have worked for more than a quarter century to advocate for the preservation of our designed landscapes and keep alive the record and built work of the Olmsted firm. Congratulations to all!
—Catherine Nagel

News From Fairsted

Some years ago, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and the Chief Historian of the National Park Service entered into a cooperative agreement, including an objective to “promote the exchange of scholarly ideas within the National Park Service (NPS) and between the NPS and the historical profession.” Pursuant to this agreement, we will host scholars at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site on September 5–7, 2008, concluding with a forum and community discussion on September 7.

As the site approaches its 30th anniversary, and as it begins its new General Management Plan, the NPS encourages reflection on and discussion of the contemporary significance of Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. As part of this effort, four scholars will visit the site, providing perspective on which key themes and stories emerge as most important to convey to a modern public. They will assist the NPS in gaining fuller understanding of the site’s significance with respect to the late 19th/early 20th century historical context and movements relevant to the Olmsted story. The OAH visiting panel includes historian Charles Beveridge, Series Editor of the FLO Papers Project, landscape historian Ethan Carr of the University of Virginia, architect and planner Alexander Garvin, and urban historian and architect Dolores Hayden, both from Yale University.

As reported in Fall 2007, we received funding from the NPS to develop a new General Management Plan for Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. The first Plan was prepared in 1983, and most of its goals have been accomplished. As new issues have arisen, a thoughtful, forward-looking revision is needed. We are eager to connect with our partners and the public - including NAOP and its members - as we begin this inquiry and take a fresh look at the site.
—Lee Farrow Cook, Site Manager

SAVE THE DATE!
2009 MAINTAINING HISTORIC URBAN PARKS WORKSHOP,
AUGUST 17-19

The 2nd workshop in this ongoing series will be held August 17-19, 2009, at the Presidio in San Francisco, CA. For more information, visit www.olmsted.org/events or contact gestramiris@cpa-naop.org.
THE PAPERS OF FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED


The publication of Volume VII, Parks, Politics, and Patronage 1874-1882 in 2007 was greeted with a cordial critical reception, including a perceptive and thoughtful review by John Dixon Hunt in the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of Harvard Design Magazine. Series Editor Charles E. Beveridge continues work on Supplementary Series Volume 2, a pictorial book on Olmsted’s parks and park systems. Associate Editor Ethan Carr continues editing of Volume VIII, The Early Boston Years 1882-1890. The work is sustained by strong support from NAOP members, the National Trust for the Humanities, and George A. Ranney, Jr. and Victoria Post Ranney. Added funding made it possible to expand the editorial staff, including a full-time associate editor and part-time research associate, who will begin work in October.

Chronologically and thematically arranged, the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers contain the best and most representative documents, forming the intellectual capital for many NAOP advocacy efforts. Bringing Olmsted’s papers to the public allows for more informed restoration of this landscape legacy, expanding the understanding of America’s 19th century urban history.

Donations may be directed to NAOP, sponsor of the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers project.

PUBLICATIONS

April 28, 2008 was the 150th anniversary of the Greensward Plan for Central Park – a good time to remember some of the many books on the subject.


Miller’s photos of Central Park in every mood and season were taken over a period of twenty years and form an unparalleled tribute. Her text leads the reader through the design, realization, decline and revitalization of the park, explaining its natural features, buildings and works of art, fortified with period photos.


This book divides Central Park into four districts, describing the features of each, with detailed maps that even mark good camera angles. (See if you can do better than Sara Cedar Miller.) Historic photos supplement recent ones, and sidebars highlight key persons, geology, trees and birds.


With its pioneering system separating pedestrian, vehicular and horse traffic, Central Park probably has more bridges than any other park, and Calvert Vaux and Jacob Wrey Mould made them all different. Here each bridge is treated to two views or more, comparing their origins to current conditions.

And on Washington, D.C.:


Bednar traces the fate of the many circles and squares with which L’Enfant intended to punctuate the complex pattern of diagonal avenues in his 1791 plan. For each group of features, Bednar provides a history over the past two centuries, with maps, photos and a commentary on present conditions. FLO (omitted from the index) comes into the story through his 1874 design for the Capitol Grounds. While the book mentions the Olmsted’s only in passing, it adds significantly to our understanding of Washington’s parks and urban design.

—Esley Hamilton, NAOP Trustee
PAST EVENTS

NAOP Greensward Plan 150th Anniversary Dinner

NAOP celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the Greensward Plan with a festive dinner at The Century Association on April 28. Following a reception, guests were treated to a superb presentation by renowned Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer who shed new light on the relationship between Frederick Law Olmsted and Abraham Lincoln. Holding the event at the Century’s historic McKim & White Beaux Arts building was particularly meaningful as several generations of the Olmsted family, including Frederick Law Olmsted, were members of the association.

Greensward Plan Celebration and NAOP Board Meeting
April 26-28, 2008, New York, NY

New York City celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Greensward Plan for Central Park the last weekend of April, culminating in a press conference and the renaming of the 72nd Street cross drive as Olmsted-Vaux Way on April 28, the very day in 1858 the Olmsted-Vaux plan was adopted. The Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrated the occasion with Creating Central Park, a conversation among scholars about Olmsted and Vaux and the distinct roles they played in realizing their vision for Central Park. Panelists included Morrison Heckscher, Chairman of the Met’s American Wing; Barry Lewis, architectural historian; Charles Beveridge, Series Editor of the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers project; and Francis Kowsky, author and professor emeritus of Art and Architecture at Buffalo State College.

What better time for the NAOP spring board meeting and the debut of The Master List! A copy of the book was presented by NAOP Chair David Bahlman to Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Deputy Mayor Patti Harris and Central Park Conservancy President Doug Blonsky during the press conference. The Conservancy made the Dana Center in Central Park available for the board meeting. Special recognition goes to trustee Sara Cedar Miller for handling the local meeting arrangements.

Despite pouring rain, trustees enjoyed an outstanding tour of nearby Morningside Park, led by Brad Taylor and David Rosenberger from the Friends of Morningside Park. Designed by Olmsted and Vaux, and opened in 1895, Morningside Park was recently named a scenic landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Visit www.olmsted.org/events for more photos.
Now Available—The National Association for Olmsted Parks is pleased to announce the re-publication of

The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm 1857-1979

Edited by Lucy Lawliss, Caroline Loughlin and Lauren Meier with essays by Julia S. Bachrach, Charles Beveridge, Ethan Carr, Lee Farrow Cook, Rolf Diamant, Nancy Pollock-Ellwand, Susan Klaus, Francis Kowsky, Arleyne Levee, Catherine Nagel, Anthony Reed and Jill Trebbe.

National Association for Olmsted Parks • National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site
Paper, 368 pp, $55, 2nd Edition

This richly illustrated color edition of the Master List includes new research conducted over the past 20 years. Searchable by project type and geographic location, it is an inspiring and invaluable tool for individuals and communities. Expanded to over 6,000 projects, the Master List is the only publication to categorize all of the Olmsted firm’s design projects so that the scale, type and geographic diversity of the work can be quickly and easily understood.

NAOP Members: $45 | Non-NAOP members: $55
$7.95 shipping & handling for the first book
For each additional, add $1.50

When the field of landscape preservation and our awareness of the Olmsted design legacy was in its promising infancy, The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm was the essential reference. Twenty years later, this new edition, brought to life with contemporary photography and evocative essays, is as much a cause of celebration as the hundreds of Olmsted designs that have been preserved and interpreted by communities all across America.

—Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR, Founder + President, The Cultural Landscape Foundation

Please send your order to: National Association for Olmsted Parks Book Orders, P.O. Box 104, Tranquility, NJ 07879; fax to 973.383.4877; or e-mail to cpa-naop@customfulfillment.com. For customer service, call 973.383.4488. Thank you for your order!

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NAOP is proud to present Body and Soul: Parks and the Health of Great Cities in partnership with City Parks Alliance and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. Join NAOP trustees and staff at our Exhibit Hall booth or during sessions offered by NAOP:

- **Maintaining Urban Historic Parks: Building Landscape Preservation Field Skills**, Sunday, Sept. 21, 2:00-5:00 pm: Presented by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation (NPS), this hands-on session focuses on field inspections as a critical aspect of a park maintenance program.
- **Identifying Preservation Training Needs for the Maintenance and Stewardship of Historic Urban Parks**, Monday, Sept. 22, 4:15-5:15 pm: Panelists and participants discuss knowledge and skills of maintenance staff caring for historic urban landscapes, helping NAOP identify training needs and develop a maintenance training program.
- **Uncovering History: Researching Your Local Landscape**, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 10-11:30 am: Using the Master List and other resources, the workshop explores the research process, tools and sources for researching historic landscapes.

NAOP trustees, leadership council reps and members will participate in sessions throughout the conference.