NAOP Louisville Workshop A Great Success

By Don Harris, NAOP Co-Chair

The National Association for Olmsted Parks' workshop and fall meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, Saturday and Sunday October 11 and 12 was, in the words of those filling out evaluation forms, "excellent, fantastic, diverse and interesting." What more could one ask for?

"The Revival of the Olmsted Parks and Parkways of Louisville" was the theme, and participants from around the country enjoyed beautiful fall weather, stimulating presentations, and informative discussions. In addition, there were wonderful tours of Louisville's parks, playgrounds, and residential subdivisions designed by the Olmsted firm. Unexpected treats were the elegant cocktail party for the NAOP Trustees held by a generous member of the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy atop one of the city's prominent downtown buildings and a gourmet box lunch served in Willow Park on table.

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FLONHS “Fairisted” Receives Gift of Land

Congress has passed legislation allowing the National Park Service to accept a gift of 5.35 acres of land adjoining the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site “Fairisted” in Brookline, Massachusetts. The Brookline Land Trust donated the land, part of the Isabella Stewart Gardner estate, which had been given to the Trust by Mrs. Gardner's descendants. Congress must approve any gifts of land given to the National Park Service.

John Maounis, acting Superintendent of FLONHS, had announced the offered gift at the NAOP Board of Trustees meeting in March 1998 in Boston, noting then that they were still awaiting Congressional approval.

In updating the NAOP Board at its Louisville meeting of the legislation’s current status, he noted that the bill had finally passed the Senate and was awaiting House approval, which occurred on the afternoon after his announcement.

As the press release from Senator Edward Kennedy's office on October 13 states, “The donated land will preserve the historic landscape as it was during Olmsted's residency and make it available for educational and interpretive purposes.” Senator Kennedy and Rep. Barney Frank led the effort toward passage of the bill.

It is worth noting what each Congressman said (in part) upon passage. Senator Kennedy: "Frederick Law Olmsted made an immense contribution to the beauty and quality of life in communities across America." Rep. Frank: "Residents of Brookline are justifiably proud that their town is the home of this important national and international resource."

FLONHS “Fairisted,” in the National Park Service's own words, (continued on page 2)
Louisville Conference
(continued from page 1)
clothed picnic tables decorated with baskets of fall flowers—true southern hospitality!

The opportunity to see firsthand the successes experienced by the partnership between the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy and the Louisville and Jefferso n County Parks Department (with the participation of the Louisville Friends of Olmsted Parks) in beginning the restoration of their great park system was enlightening. Louisville represents perhaps what is the greatest metamorphosis of a city's park system in the nearly 20 years of NAOP's existence. What was well intended historically and begun nearly 10 years ago is now clearly rooted in their implementation strategies, and the results were a joy to behold.

Participants, as always, needed to take back to their various cities throughout the country a critical evaluation, gained from the presentations and tours, of the conflicts and challenges of a particular city (in this case Louisville) and determine the applicability to their own city. And that, more than anything, will carry the mission of NAOP forward.

The success of this workshop and its accompanying tours would not have been possible without the energy, skill and dedication of the staffs and volunteers of the three Louisville groups involved: the Conservancy, the Parks Department and the Friends.

NAOP is most grateful to Susan Rademacher, Executive Director of the Conservancy, and Brigid Sullivan, Director of the Parks Department, for all their coordination. To hold conferences and workshops in cities across the country bringing participants from all over to explore the Olmsted landscapes and learn from the varying experiences NAOP requires the help of local groups with local knowledge to make it most successful. The Louisville team shone in all their efforts to make this a rewarding learning experience for all of us.

Board of Trustees Meeting
The NAOP Board of Trustees meeting, held in Louisville during the same weekend, was also a great success, with trustee representation one of the best in several years. Careful preparation at the committee level, an opportunity for review and assessment at the executive level, and time for consideration of recommendations and motions by all trustees made for an organized and effective meeting.

Looking ahead to the 20th anniversary of the National Association For Olmsted Parks, the trustees are beginning to work on significant activities in conjunction with the American Society of Landscape Architects Centennial Conference, in Boston September 12-14 1999, as well as a national conference in Rochester, New York, September 30 – October 3 1999.

At the Board of Trustees meeting Phyllis Knowles, long-time administrator of NAOP, announced her resignation effective in November. Phyllis has ably managed many, many aspects of NAOP from membership to finance, and from issuing the newsletter to being "communication central" for a broad national constituency. Phyllis, in short, watched over and watched out for us and this was NO small task given volunteer co-chairs and trustees.

Phyllis was a careful steward of our resources and kept an impeccable set of files and financial records, and in general kept us on the "straight and narrow."

Phyllis, needless to say, will be missed, and all the trustees—and, I trust, the membership as well—wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

With Phyllis's departure, there will be some changes made to the NAOP office structure. During the transition, phone calls and mail will be answered as usual but the e-mail address will not be operative. We will strive to continue to service your requests and uphold Phyllis's enviable standards of promptness but we ask your forbearance during the transition.

Fairisted Receives Land Gift
(continued from page 1)
"preserves the legacy and significant resources associated with America's premier landscape architectural firm and serves as a center for the study and preservation of landscapes." Mr. Maounis brought with him to Louisville FLONHS's newest brochure, "The Olmsted Archives," about the almost one million original documents housed at "Fairisted" for the use of researchers. The Olmsted Archives is open Monday through Friday by appointment. You may send e-mail at Olmsted_Archives@nps.gov.

As one of its first items of business, the NAOP voted to make the Superintendent of FLONHS an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees. NAOP is working with FLONHS to create an expanded version of the Master List of Olmsted Firm Projects 1857-1950 to become available in print and on the Web.

Our aim is to update this document with additional information and thus enhance its value as a research finding aid. The website will present five fields of data relating to each listed project: 1) the name of the project or client; 2) location by community; 3) location by state; 4) job number; and 5) type of design (according to fourteen design categories).

Co-Chair Arley L. Levec has been spearheading this cooperation for NAOP. Watch for further information on the Master List. Watch also for a new Field Notes feature in the works: a column featuring news from "Fairisted."
NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Special Update from Montreal
After The Storm... Mount Royal Park
by Daniel Charter, Landscape Architect–Park, Gardens & Green Spaces Service, City of Montreal

Ten years ago, a torrential rainstorm occurred in Montreal that devastated parts of Mount Royal Park. It became essential to begin a large restoration plan of the park and its surroundings. Since then, the City has invested over $10 million U.S. dollars towards attaining the goals set forth by this plan. Today, a new drainage system covers over a third of the park. Water is channelled naturally to gullies and intermittent streams instead of causing erosion. Almost three quarters of the four-mile scenic roadway has been restored. Not only is this road the spinal cord of the park it is also the only major construction planned by Olmsted that was realised. More than seven miles of secondary pathways have also been consolidated and the views offered from these ways have been subtly enhanced. More than eleven thousand trees and two hundred thousand shrubs have been planted—all in respect and enhancement of the “charm of natural scenery” in the spirit of Olmsted. Mount Royal is one of the safest urban Olmstediants parks where, annually, close to three million people enjoy leisurely walks in a large wooded area.

Then a natural disaster struck again! In January 1998, almost three inches of water froze on trees and electrical lines in the Montreal region. Millions of trees were severely damaged. Mount Royal Park was hit hard with 80% of the 107,000 trees affected.

Hundreds of citizens participated in two “Spring Cleaning Bees,” and workers have contributed over 75,000 hours to make the mountain more safe and enjoyable. As fall approaches, the work on open or parkland areas is almost complete. In wooded areas, with over 98,000 trees, only the removal of fallen branches has been done. The careful pruning of broken trees will be ongoing this fall and next year. The planting and restoration of damaged zones will occur mainly in 1999. It will take a lot of time, love and care.

A public fund raising campaign by Les Amis de la Montagne (Friends of the Mountain) is ongoing to ensure the work is done in the best way. In October, the group will open an information booth in an old stone farmhouse to welcome park visitors. Exhibits, a documentation centre and animation activities will also be held in this building. Call Les Amis at (514) 989-8240 for information or to offer financial assistance. To communicate with the city of Montreal, go to www.ville.montreal.qc.ca.

EAST
Charles Beveridge, editor of the Olmsted Papers, was one of the guest lecturers in a lecture series offered this fall by the All Hallows Guild. Beveridge spoke about the “Olmsted Design Tradition.”

A booklet which reprints a speech given by Susan Klaus on FLO Jr.’s landscape services to the Cathedral is now available through the All Hallows Guild. For a copy, contact: Dede Petri at (202) 298-8109.

Maryland, Baltimore.
This fall featured a “Trio of Walks” in the suburban residential neighborhoods designed by the Olmsted Brothers, including the pastoral landscapes and slopes of Roland Park, the mansions and gardens of Guilford, and the middle-class development at Original Northwood. People participating in the walks were given a complimentary membership in Friends of Maryland’s Olmsted Parks

MEETINGS
& COURSES

The Arnold Arboretum
Jamaica Plain, MA
In cooperation with the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation of the National Park Service, the Arnold Arboretum now offers a Letter of Participation in Historic Landscape Preservation. Students must take five courses, such as Introduction to Historic Landscape Preservation, Maintaining a Historic Landscape, Developing a Preservation Maintenance Plan, and Historic Landscape Case Study, which will be offered over the course of two years. In addition, one elective course, such as Botanical and Horticultural Research, Library Resources, must be taken. Contact for more information: The Arnold Arboretum, (617) 524-1718.

1998-99 Seminars in Historic Preservation & Cultural Resource Management:
National Preservation Institute
A sample of courses offered in 1999:
• Planning, Design, and Implementation for Historic Landscapes (AIA/CES)—May 10 & 11, Washington D.C.
• Section 106: An Introduction—January 11-13, Dallas/Ft. Worth TX; April 12-14, Honolulu HI; April 28-30, San Francisco CA
• Section 106: An Advanced Seminar—February 8-10, 1999, Atlanta GA; May 3-5, San Francisco CA
• Heritage Development: Conservation, Community, and Economic Development Partnerships—May 7, Alexandria VA
Contact: Jere Gibber, National Preservation Institute, (703) 765-8100 or info@npi.org or www.npi.org

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS
The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training has issued its 1999 Call for Proposals for Preservation Technology and Training Grants. Grants are available in eight categories: Information Management; Training and Education; Applied/ Fundamental Research; Environmental Effects of Outdoor Pel-
Of special note:

☐ Frederick Law Olmsted, Designing the American Landscape—A new, elegant version of the Beveridge/Rechercheau book is now available in paperback. Published by Universe, a division of Rizzoli, it is now available in your local book stores for $25. In the near future, members of NAOP will be able to purchase the book at a discounted rate through the Association.


NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

and Landscapes.

Massachusetts.
Three Olmsted sites—Pinebank Restoration at Jamaica Pond; Restoration of Allerton Overlook in Olmsted Park, Brookline; and Restoration of the Olmsted Rockery at Easton—were among recipients of the first Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Awards in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program (HLPG) is a state-funded competitive grant program established by the Department of Environmental Management in 1997. A total of $523,700 was awarded to sites in eighteen cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts, Boston. Arnold Arboretum.
This year, improvements to Peters Hill were undertaken to enhance the pastoral character consistent with both the Olmsted/Sargent plan for the core area of the Arboretum and with Beatrix Farrand’s unrealized 1949 plan for the hill. The final effect is a passive public open space in the Olmstedian tradition of “scenery in the natural style” and an “enlarged sense of freedom.” A combination of native and imported species were chosen for their adaptation to the rigorous site conditions, including wind, cold, and drought.

Malden, Massachusetts. Ferryway Green. SPECIAL UPDATE
On June 15, a Middlesex Superior Court judge denied a request for an injunction filed by the Friends of Ferryway Green that would have stopped the construction of an elementary school on Ferryway Green playground. The 5-acre park, designed by FLO, is one of the country’s oldest playgrounds. Some Malden residents who protested the playground’s destruction were arrested for standing in the way of bulldozers. The judge determined that the park was not listed on either the state or national registries of historic places. Mayor Richard Howard claims that Olmsted’s plan was never implemented because it was shelved after a long delay in the playground’s construction. He further stated that several federal and state agencies, from historic to architectural, had approved the plans for the school building.

Massachusetts, New Bedford. Buttonwood Park.
This 97-acre Olmsted Park designed in 1895 is the city’s oldest, largest and most visited park. The Friends of Buttonwood Park, along with city officials, have successfully scaled back an expansion project to the Zoo within the park, making the zoo compatible with the park’s historic nature. Friends of Buttonwood Park said that the compromise would not have been possible without Historic Massachusetts and the Most Endangered listing.

Massachusetts, North Easton.
On Saturday, September 26, 120 historians, preservationists, landscape architects and interested local citizens gathered for the Second North Easton Colloquium, “Celebrating Olmsted Landscapes: Past, Present and Future.” Sponsor of the event was the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, one of a series of public and private buildings and landscapes designed by Henry Hobson Richardson and Frederick Law Olmsted for the Ames family of the Ames Shovel Company.

For information on the papers presented or on a “mini-colloquium” being contemplated on landscape preservation in the spring, contact Frederick L. Ames, 79 Western Ave., Essex, MA 01929, (978) 768-7981, e-mail semaderf@ici.net.

Massachusetts, North Easton.
North Easton is facing a threatened expansion of a library set on landscapes designed by F.L.O. The expansion, fueled by a Massachusetts Board of Libraries Commission grant of $1.9 million, would include doubling the existing structure of the Ames Free Library in the center of the H.H. Richardson Historic Landmark District. The library’s board has thus far refused to meet with the Massachusetts Historical Commission to review plans, as required by state law when accepting state monies. A group of concerned citizens has filed a lawsuit with the Massachusetts Superior Court in Bristol to stop construction. For more information, call (978) 768-3222 or call Frederick L. Ames, 79 Western Ave., Essex, MA 01929, (978) 768-7981, e-mail semaderf@ici.net.

New Jersey, Newark. Riverbank Park.
A follow-up to our report in the last issue of Field Notes:
Members of Save the Park at Riverbank (SPARK) put up such resistance to plans for building a minor-league baseball stadium on this land that the developers finally gave up. The park represents more than half of the available park space in the surrounding Ironbound neighborhood.

At a July 8 meeting, the Essex County Board of Freeholders unanimously approved a bond sale of $4,500,000 for the cleanup and restoration of Riverbank Park. The bonds, which will be sold through the Essex County Improvement Authority, will cover most of the community plan to restore and improve Riverbank Park. Work was to begin in late summer on trees, while a fence was to be put up in the fall so that major work could then begin. The target date for reopening the 10.7-acre park is spring of 1999.

New York, Brooklyn. Prospect Park.
Prospect Park’s Ravine is now three years and $4.5 million into its restoration project. The FLO/Calvert Vaux-designed landscape is now ready to be viewed on a limited basis, although it is still closed to the public. The restoration has thus far included the planting of 7,000 shrubs, 12,000 trees, and 161,000 smaller plants. Steps, waterfalls, and streams have been reconstructed from historical photographs and essays by FLO and Vaux, since the park’s original plans were destroyed in the 1930’s. On twice-weekend tours for the general public, people are now able to see much of the verdant greenery and waterfalls originally envisioned by the designers.

WEB SITES

For those of you who have trouble with the NAOPI Web address, http://flaz.uoregon.edu/”naopi,” it is now registered with several search engines—Altavista, Yahoo, and Lycos.

THANK YOU

NAOPI is grateful to all its contributors. The following have renewed their memberships for NAOPI’s fiscal year 1998-1999 at or above the Donor Level from April 16 through September 9, 1998:

SUSTAINER
Janet Olmsted Cross, New York NY
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Karin Murr Link, Seattle WA
Caroline K. Loughlin, St. Louis MO
Susan West Montgomery, Washington DC

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NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

In other news, the Prospect Park Alliance sponsored a computerized tree survey allowing the group to track the life of each of the more than 10,000 non-woodland trees in the park.

New York, Buffalo.
The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy (BOPC) continues their efforts to influence the expansion of the Peace Bridge and toll plaza bringing motorists from Canada into Buffalo. The plans have, through the years, included converting some or all of Front Park into toll plazas and roads. BOPC will fight to convince the Peace Bridge Authority and City of Buffalo that the park is not only a historic site, but also a resource that will provide added value to the proposed project. Discussions are now centering on connecting bridge plaza to parkland, of better tying the existing parkland together and using landscape and neighborhood fabric as project enhancements. Formal hearings required for this project will put these new ideas into the public arena. The Conservancy will present its concerns there, and the Peace Bridge Authority will then be required to respond.

The Central Park Conservancy has received two private gifts this year, totaling $10,500,000, that will help to repair and maintain the running track and landscaping at the reservoir as well as to provide funding for outreach programs at the Central Park Visitors Center. The $10 million gift is from a foundation set up by two brothers in 1957; their daughters presented the gift as part of the closing out of the foundation. The $500,000 gift is from a charitable trust.

In another part of the park, a 14-foot high fountain was turned on again after being dry for 16 years. Cherry Hill Fountain, created in the late 1800’s as a watering place for horses, is located on Cherry Hill. The restoration of the Victorian-style fountain cost $20,000, just a fraction of the $170 million the Conservancy has spent on restorations since 1980.

A new project has been created since the $18 million restoration of the Great Lawn in Central Park: “Keeper of the Great Lawn.” Maria Hernandez, the “Keeper,” must help the Central Park Conservancy protect their multimillion dollar investment by educating people on how to behave on the lawn. That includes rules about no dogs, no bikes or rollerblades, and no impromptu ball or frisbee games. Hernandez rides around the lawn in a golf cart, while 49 gardeners care for 49 separate areas of the park. The gardeners are each assigned to a specific area so that they become familiar faces to people in those areas of the park.

In September, the new Kiel Arboretum was dedicated in Morningside Park. The late Tom Kiel was a graduate of Columbia University and a founding member of the Friends of Morningside Park. Columbia President George Rupp and Barnard President Judith Shapiro helped in the dedication ceremonies at the base of the newly renovated 116th Street steps.
"The True Purpose of a Large Public Park"
by John C. Olmsted

A paper read by John C. Olmsted before the meeting of the American Park and Outdoor Art Association in Louisville, KY in 1897. From American Park and Outdoor Art Association Proceedings Complete 1897-1904, First Report, pp 11-17. This paper was reprinted in a shortened version in Garden and Forest, vol. X, 1897, pp. 212-213.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: The movement for a large public park in one of our great cities does not usually originate with what is commonly called the people, but with a set of public spirited, broadminded citizens, who have traveled and read and otherwise have been enabled to form a pretty good general idea of what a large public park should be.

If this same set of people continued ever after in control of parks it would be better both for the parks and for the people, but, unfortunately, it sometimes happens that the parks pass into the control of men who, however honest and well intentioned they may be, have not grasped the fundamental reason for the existence of large parks. Therefore the following attempt at definition and explanation may be beneficial.

The true purpose of a large public park is to provide for the dwellers in cities convenient opportunity to enjoy beautiful natural scenery and to obtain occasional relief from the nervous strain due to the excessive artificiality of city life.

By large public park is not meant one covering more than a certain number of acres, but one large enough to contain a complete natural landscape, where the boundaries will not be obtrusive; where city conditions will not be unduly apparent; where one may stroll over hill and dale, across meadows and through woods, always amid natural surroundings, for hours without once following the same routes; where one may come again and again without becoming familiar with all its interesting localities and natural features; where many thousands of visitors may be enjoying the scenery at the same time without crowding each other; where those who especially seek seclusion may find parts so remote from the boundaries that even if city houses are not completely hidden they become reduced in the distant perspective to inconspicuous proportions as compared with the foliage of trees and other natural objects in the foreground; so remote that the roar of street traffic is less noticeable than the rustle of foliage stirred by the breeze or than the songs of birds or sounds of insects.

That the scenery of a park should be beautiful no one will deny, but that it should be natural needs explanation. There can hardly be such a thing as absolutely natural scenery in a public park near a large city. Fires, pasturing, cultivation, woodchopping, the destruction or driving away of the wild animals, wild birds and insects, and the introduction of others, have long since ended purely natural conditions about every large city, leaving at best only a general resemblance to natural scenery. Even if a tract of land is still to be found in a comparatively natural condition while in private ownership, it would not remain entirely in that condition after being properly fitted for and used as a public park.

With these limitations in mind, what is meant by the natural scenery of a large public park may be described as ordinarily either open meadow, open grassy hillsides or rolling ground, open groves of trees with good turf, dense woods, borders of shrubbery, or low woody or herbaceous undergrowth, water in river, brook, pond or pool, and, more rarely, cliffs or ledges of
His partner, Charles Eliot, expanded these sentiments by noting his support for "...a general association, to be made up of all who desire the advancement of landscape art... amateurs, landed proprietors, writers, park superintendents, engineers, foresters, gardeners and anybody interested might become members."

The American Park and Outdoor Art Association (APOAA) was the outcome of this effort at organization. Its newly elected officers reflected the diversity of interests of the membership: as President, John B. Castileman, head of the Louisville park Board; as Vice President, L.E. Holden, park commissioner and president of the Cleveland Plain Dealer Publishing Co.; landscape architects Warren Manning as Secretary-Treasurer and John C. Olmsted as Chairman of the Constitution and By-Laws Committee. Over the next 7 years, the membership of the APOAA grew and diversified to include lawyers, teachers and significant businessmen such as Joel Hart of Atlanta and John H. Patterson from National Cash register in Dayton.

With their mission to educate, they held conferences yearly in cities from Minneapolis to Buffalo, publishing the proceedings and papers. By 1904, Charles Mulford Robinson, then Secretary, noted that they now included over 800 members and 50 organizations. "We are a recognized national authority, appeals for advice, assistance, literature, legislative influence, coming into the office in a steady growing stream from all parts of the country. There seems to be no limit save that imposed by lack of money to the good we might do."

Lack of money and the efficiency of numbers brought about a merger in 1904 between the APOAA and the Civic Improvement League to create the American Civic Association, whose purpose was "the cultivation of higher ideals of civic life and beauty in America, the promotion of city, town and neighborhood improvement, the preservation and development of landscape and the advancement of outdoor art." By that time, the urge to create an organization solely of landscape professionals had finally reached fruition. In 1899, the American Society of Landscape Architects was created with John C. Olmsted elected as its first president.

Arley A. Levee, currently the Co-Chair of the NAOP, is a landscape historian and designer from Belmont, MA.

rock. These principal features of the scenery again may be divided into their elements of earth or rock surface, water surface and foliage, either ground cover, shrubbery or trees.

The general earth or rock surface of a tract of land taken for a park, except where it has been broken by agriculture or for some other utilitarian purpose, and except where it is necessary to disturb it in connection with making more varied scenery or to fix it for the use of the public, seldom needs much grading. In some few cases, as at Back Bay Fens and Marine Park, Boston, every square yard of the original surface has to be altered in order to create a kind of scenery better adapted to public use and enjoyment that the original scenery. In other cases, as at Central Park, New York, and Jackson Park, Chicago, a large portion of the whole area has to be regraded for the same reason.

In most cases a good deal of grading needs to be done in places. The original natural surface is wholly or partially destroyed and a new surface is created artificially; but it should be so shaped and finished as to appear natural or at least as closely in harmony with natural surfaces as study and care can make it. Too often, however, through lack of appreciation of the true purpose of a large public park, the grading, which must be done, either ignorantly or carelessly, or owing to mistaken ideas as to economy, or owing to personal preference for artificiality, is made as regular and unnatural as possible, so that what might have been done in harmony with the natural scenery antagonizes it and greatly lessens its value for its true purpose.

Abundant instances of artificial-looking grading in the wrong place exist in many of our large public parks. The responsibility of park commissioners for this sort of interference with the true purpose of a large park is generally only in the indirect way of entrusting the work to men not properly trained in park making or by enforcing an unwise economy; for it must be acknowledged that to grade naturally and gracefully usually costs more than to grade formally and stiffly.

The water surfaces of a park need more study and care to make them appear natural in outline and as to their margins than do the ground surfaces of the park. Too often park waters are almost as stiff and formal in their outlines and in the shaping of their shores as are the curvilinear distributing reservoirs of waterworks. Here again the park commissioners are indirectly responsible for the bad results in consequence of working without the plans and directions of a trained artist or without a foreman trained in producing natural effects in park grading.

The verdure of a large public park is what the eye rests upon almost everywhere, and it therefore the most important of the natural elements of the scenery. The almost universal ground cover is grass, since no other plant is so well adapted to the purpose of hiding bare earth while enduring, with due care and under sufficient restrictions, the trampling of great numbers of people. But there are places where even grass will not thrive, or where a wilder or more varied effect is desirable. Such cases are very generally ignored in our large public parks, owing to a lack of knowledge or of artistic appreciation of the possibilities or requirements of particular cases.

If gardeners studied natural scenery more they would almost surely discover many opportunities in parks for the application of what they observed in the country. For instance, a dense natural wood which need not be or cannot be well thinned out sufficiently to permit a good turf to be grown, so that people may properly be allowed to ramble everywhere in it, may often be rendered far more natural and interesting by planting pretty wild flowers in its margins and suitable shrubby undergrowth in its interior than by attempting to grow grass on it. Again, steep, open banks, where it is difficult and expensive, and
often unnatural, to maintain turf, can be made far more interesting by planting by the use of low ground-covering plants or shrubbery.

It is usual in most public parks, even in the portions that are intended to most closely resemble natural scenery, to plant many trees and shrubs that are not only not indigenous to the locality or neighboring regions, but wholly foreign; and not only this, but purely horticultural varieties of trees and shrubs, often with most markedly unnatural forms, foliage or bloom, are used, not to aid in producing a beautiful piece of natural scenery, but solely because of their individual interest or eccentricities or for their strikingly artificial effect in masses.

The intention in using foreign trees and shrubs, when native sorts would actually be more appropriate and harmonious with the landscape, is generally to secure greater variety and therefore greater interest in detail. This is a worthy motive and may be indulged in if it does not result in sacrificing the true purpose of the park. But the use of foreign or horticultural varieties of trees and shrubs often results in artificIALIZING to a most deplorable extent what certainly ought to be a nearly natural landscape.

Relief from the nervous strain of an artificial city life is afforded in no way so agreeably and conveniently as by a ramble amid the natural scenery of a large park and by the leisurely contemplation of the landscape. There are many workers in the city who suffer more or less from nervous strain, though often they are not fully aware of it. Where a large public park with ample provisions of natural scenery has been created, it has never failed to be much frequented for this purpose and to afford untold benefit to those who use it. Not only are the quiet and seclusion obtainable in the middle of a large park necessary in affording opportunities for occasional relief from the nervous strain of our artificial city life, but they are necessary to the enjoyment of the landscape of the park. Therefore, not only should conspicuous artificial objects unnecessary for the convenient use of the park be excluded from its natural parts, but noisy and dangerous occupations and amusements should also be kept out of, at least, the middle portions of a large park.

When one is seated under a tree, quietly contemplating a beautiful landscape, one should not be in danger of being hit by a baseball or golf ball, or be subjected to the annoyance of boys engaged in some game, yelling close at hand. In order to have the essential quality of seclusion, a large public park should not be attempted on both sides of a railroad or important city street if it is possible to avoid it, for even if the landscape could be made to seem continuous across the gap the noise would almost destroy the desired seclusion of a considerable part of the park.

An extent of natural scenery sufficient to afford the sense of quiet and seclusion so beneficial to the city worker can only be secured where the grounds are ample, and therefore this should be the essential characteristic of a large park. It is the one vital reason for the existence of such a park. No number of small parks can possibly answer the same purpose, however useful and even necessary they may be for other reasons.

We are, unfortunately, too much inclined to spend a holiday in seeking some more or less exciting pleasure. A quiet drive or stroll in a large park, or in the country, with perhaps a family picnic under the trees, would be far more restful and therefore more rational than to rush off by train to some Coney Island pleasure resort, with its various artificial attractions.

Even if the true purpose of a large park has been kept in view during the process of selecting the land, determining upon its landscape features and designing its necessary construction and plantations, it is too often lost sight of subsequently, and there is a marked tendency to artificialize the landscapes of our large public parks.

It is no doubt true that the majority of the visitors to a large public park on a holiday seek some positive amusement and prefer artificial attractions, and that they tend rather to avoid than to seek the secluded natural parts of the park. This can not be justly used as an argument in favor of artificializing the natural scenery of a large public park. This scenery has been preserved or created for an entirely different purpose, and one with which artificial means of amusement are utterly at variance. It cannot be rightly urged that it is unfair to the majority to use public funds for the benefit of a minority. That argument would apply to every square and almost everything the city possesses equally well. It is not an unreasonably small minority who use and appreciate and especially who benefit by, even if they do not fully appreciate, the more secluded and natural parts of a large public park. Besides, a great many others do not know what is good for them when they go to a park to look for more exciting pleasures. They should be gradually and unconsciously educated to better uses of large public parks and not have their crude demands alone catered to.

Park commissioners should not only understand the true purpose of a large public park, but they should have the courage of their convictions. They should know when to say "No," in answer to demands for introducing artificial objects and amusements into the natural scenery of the large public parks. This is where park commissioners are sometimes not true to their trust. Instead of preserving a large park in its simple, natural beauty, as a priceless heritage for future generations, they yield little by little to the temporarily urgent demands of those who raise a clamor for a site for something which, however desirable in itself, is as much out of place in the natural scenery of a large public park as a manual training school would be amid the books of a public library or a baseball cage would be in an art gallery.
If it is thought wise for a municipality to provide such artificial attractions, these should be limited in kind and number and be carefully devised. It would not be wise or economical for a city to destroy or injure broad and beautiful park scenery by introducing artificial attractions into it when these could perfectly well be provided in the smaller squares or in special amusement grounds, which could usually be nearer the centre of population than a large park, and therefore could be used by more people more frequently and more cheaply.

It is customary for cities to provide for certain kinds of amusements which are healthful and innocent, and for certain objects that are instructive and entertaining and for some that are artistic and inspiring, and which cannot be or are not usually supplied solely by private effort. Such, for instance, are formal gardens, statuary, conservatories, botanical and zoological gardens, concert groves, electric and other fountains, fireworks and the like; also popular athletic grounds, parade grounds, ball grounds for boys, and facilities for boating and bathing.

From motives of expediency it is sometimes necessary to include arrangements for some of these purposes in large public parks, but they should be placed in their borders, and in such a way that they will do the least possible injury to the more secluded parts of the scenery. Great discrimination is necessary in selecting among these objects those which will least interfere with the primary purpose of a large public park. Those forms of amusement or instructive entertainment requiring large buildings or implying much noise, or which draw large and careless crowds that would be liable to injure the grass and shrubbery and trees of the park, should be excluded. It is good policy to secure suitable lands adjoining a large park which can be held in reserve as sites for public museums, grounds for parades, fireworks, public speaking, baseball and (by flooding in winter) for skating grounds, for zoological collections, for a public conservatory, and so on. The park in Brooklyn is exceedingly fortunate in having two very commodious public grounds adjoining it. It is greatly to be desired that other cities should do likewise.

There is no more important matter, after a large public park has been acquired and its natural scenery perfected, than that of protecting it from serious injury by the introduction of buildings and other artificial objects not needed for the convenient enjoyment of the landscape by the people.

If there were a well-established and clearly recognized custom controlling what artificial features might and what should not be introduced into large public parks, such customs would develop into rules of common law. Or if there had been carefully drawn and detailed statutes passed upon the subject, or if there had been a series of decisions of courts as to what buildings and other objects could legally be introduced into public parks, their true purpose would be more clearly understood. It is true, there has been for years a statute in New York State forbidding the erection of buildings above a certain size not strictly for park purposes in any public park, but the principle upon which this law is based is so little understood that a few generous individuals recently had no difficulty in getting a law passed which enables them, with the consent of the Park Commissioners, to introduce a great museum of history into one of the most beautiful landscapes of one of the most perfect large public parks in the world.

The usual arguments in support of this desecration have been urged, namely, that the building is for a worthy semi-public object; that the collection it is to contain will be interesting and instructive to the public, and that the building itself will be handsome, and consequently that it will be an ornament to the park.

If this argument is sound for one such building it is equally sound for others. In that case a large public park is little more than a tract of beautiful vacant building lots which the public is temporarily enjoying as a play-ground until it shall be gradually required for one public or semi-public building after another.

If there is no principle upon which the advocates of the first semi-public building can be refused a site, there is no logical reason for refusing sites to any subsequent projects of a like sort. The bars once let down, there will be a stampede to secure beautiful building sites free of cost for natural beauty, art, botanical and other museums; for armories, normal colleges, high, grammar and primary schools, and so on almost indefinitely.

Who will be so foolish as to try to raise money for a building site anywhere within a mile or two of a public park, when there is a free building site in a large park which the controlling commission is only too anxious to have ornamented with another handsome building? And if the park commission should hesitate, it is certainly less trouble to get a State law allowing them or requiring them to assign a site than to raise the money to buy a site.

There seems to be a constant, and most pernicious itching among the park commissioners themselves to do something tangible and conspicuous that will mark their administration of the parks, and most unfortunately they usually want to locate some building or monument on every commanding site in the poor, unoffending landscape.

As the Irishman in a scrimmage goes on the rule of “wherever you see a head hit it,” so there are some park commissioners, who, wherever they see an ice smooth piece of turf, feel that there is an aching void and they yearn for a statue or fountain or something striking to put in it, and if nothing expensive offers they are apt to fill the gap by ordering the gardener to stick in a spread eagle or some other loud cry in colored foliage plants.
NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Hunting Park, part of the Fairmount Park system, suffered another blow this spring when vandals destroyed its Olympic-sized swimming pool. The pool, which opened in 1996, was severely and methodically damaged with sledgehammers and graffiti; damage is estimated at $30,000. The police had already stepped up its presence in the park, which borders some of the poorest and most drug-infested parts of the city. The Friends of Hunting Park, though discouraged, vowed to reopen the pool. The park began as a racing track for early 19th-century horse fanciers and became part of the Fairmount Park system in 1872.

SOUTHEAST
North Carolina, Asheville
The North Carolina Arboretum, a 426-acre garden in the Pisgah National Forest, is now open to the public. The project is the result of FLO's original vision for the Biltmore Estate as well as more than ten years of planting by the University of North Carolina. The garden includes a Visitor Education Center and amphitheater. The North Carolina Arboretum is located at 100 Frederick Law Olmsted Way in Asheville.

MIDWEST
Kentucky, Louisville. Third Street Playground.
There is a substantial threat to the seven-acre Third Street Playground (now known as Stansbury Park) designed by Olmsted, Olmsted and Elliott in 1900. The playground’s neighbor, the University of Louisville, has targeted the playground as the site for a special new campus promised as part of an economic incentive package to persuade United Parcel Service to expand its national air hub in Louisville. The Friends of Olmsted Parks in Louisville discovered that application must be made to the National Parks Service (NPS) for the conversion, since the park was part of improvements made through the use of federal Land & Water Conservation Grants. The city’s first application was deemed incomplete by the NPS, and the city and University are planning to revise and resubmit the application despite, in the words of Friends’ Vice President Bud Hixon, “an increasing pile of evidence that many better alternative sites for the Metropolitan Scholars Campus exist and that the University is simply trying to complete its long planned land grab using the banners of “economic growth” and “jobs for students.”

NAOP Co-Chair Arleyn Levee sent a letter to John Shumaker, President of the University of Louisville, explaining the park’s historic and recreational legacy and urging him to “reconsider any decisions which will irrevocably destroy the public recreational purpose for which this park site was initially acquired and intended.” Mr. Shumaker sent a reply that the University is trying to develop feasible options and will do “everything possible to achieve a compatible solution.” Watch future Field Notes for updates on this situation.

Michigan, Detroit. Belle Isle.
The Friends of Belle Isle (FOB) continue their fight to keep commercialism from encroaching on the island. Each year the island is the site for a Grande Prix race and boat races. The FOB was successful in keeping gaming casinos off the island. In October the FOB celebrated its 25th anniversary of protecting Belle Isle.

James F. Olmsted, McLean VA
Victoria Post Ramsey, Greyslake IL
E.N. Riesman, Westpount, Quebec, Canada
Ann Satterthwaite, Washington DC
David P. Schuyler, Lancaster PA
Sandra R. Sparks, Baltimore MD
Spencer Tunnell, II, Atlanta GA

NON-PROFIT CORPORATION
All Hallows Guild, Washington National Cathedral, Washington DC
Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, Jamaica Plain MA
Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, Buffalo NY
Bushnell Park Foundation, Inc., Hartford CT
Druid Hills Civic Association, Decatur GA
Francis Loeb Library, Harvard University, Cambridge MA
Frederick Law Olmsted Society, Riverside IL
Friends of Maryland’s Olmsted Parks & Landscapes, Baltimore MD
Friends of Planting Fields, Inc., Oyster Bay NY
Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks, Seattle WA
Historic Massachusetts, Inc., Boston MA
Library of American Landscape History, Inc., Amherst MA
Louisville Friends of Olmsted Parks, Louisville KY
Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge MA
Prospect Park Alliance, Brooklyn NY
Simmons College, Beatley Library, Boston MA
Village of Riverside, Riverside IL
The Trust for Public Land, San Francisco CA

GOVERNMENT CORPORATION
County of Union, New Jersey, Elizabeth NJ
Denver Mountain Parks, Morrison CO
Monroe County Department of Parks, Rochester NY
National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline MA
Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, Boston MA

FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION
Andropogon Associates, Ltd., Philadelphia PA
Charles R. Brown, Technology Park/Atlanta, Duluth GA
Douglas Reed Landscape Architecture, Inc., Cambridge MA
The Hambrook Company, Inc., Boston MA
Quennell Rothschild & Partners, LLP, New York NY

THE OLMS TED PAPERS
The Biltmore Estate, Asheville NC
In Appreciation of Phyllis Knowles

Phyllis—she can intimidate you with that arched brow and the upright posture which bespeak a strict upbringing and a stern sense of discipline. And if one doesn’t take the time to find the person behind the exterior one can remain intimidated. Fortunately many of us did take the time and discovered Phyllis the comic, Phyllis the friend and Phyllis the dedicated worker.

I expect to continue to enjoy the first two qualities as Phyllis moves on to other things but it is that last aspect which we will all miss so much at NAOP. Phyllis had no real reason to be as dedicated and passionate about NAOP as she was, but something—was it that strict upbringing?—led her to hold the organization together through thick and thin; through annual conferences; through countless board meetings, and the occasional retreat, and to put up with all of us who claimed the title of Chair but who, in reality, left most of the chairing to her.

So, thank you dear Phyllis. I, and many others, wish you well in your next venture.

Nicholas Quennell

Phyllis Knowles has provided NAOP with nine years of incredibly conscientious and intelligent work as its administrator. She has nurtured the organization and has been responsible for getting the office to be run in a business-like manner, which, as a former Chairman at a time of administrative disorder, I greatly appreciate.

As a result of Phyllis’s shrewd and frugal management and her attentive care to members—and to the institution itself, NAOP is not only alive today, but in remarkably better shape than it was nine years ago. Her tireless work and devotion to NAOP will be sorely missed.

Ann Satterthwaite

Illinois, Riverside.

A comprehensive evaluation of the active recreational areas of Riverside has been undertaken by the Riverside Playground and Recreational Department. A master plan has been developed for the restoration of these areas under a unified concept that would serve the village’s total Olmsted and Vaux’s original design and concepts for the community. Three of the six recreational sites had been completed as of September, with the remaining three scheduled for completion with the next three years.

Illinois, Riverside

The Village Board of Trustees have approved the construction of a new water tower to replace the existing one, which stands in an area originally designated as residential in Olmsted & Vaux’s Riverside plan. The following are quotes from two letters written about the controversy:

“Keeping the images of historic landscapes whole is both difficult and desirable. Difficult, because they are continuously lived in, and can’t be easily put aside for preservation in a museum gallery; and desirable, because although one might not think it at first, a great deal of progress actually depends on keeping the original image intact, in proportion and bright, and not allowing it to become overbuilt or clouded by extraneous elements like above-surface and more recent water towers.”—Walter Creese, past advisor to National Landmarks program when Riverside was reviewed for landmark status.

“The Northgate Tower was erected in an area planned in 1869 as a residential area—not a utility supply area. It seems to me and to many others that it is inappropriate to replace the Northgate Tower with another tower because of the honors placed on the village by state and federal government... Why not have underground water storage in Riverside?... An underground system is the way to go if it can meet the state’s requirement for additional water storage, a continuous supply of water for emergencies, comparable cost, and at the same time, preserve historic Riverside.”—Dorothy Unger, past chair of the Historical Commission.

NAOP NOTES

Congratulations to the following for awards they garnered during the 1998 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Landscape Architects in October:

- Former NAOP Trustee Marion Pressley, one of 28 landscape architects inducted as a Fellow. She was nominated by the Boston Chapter and is being recognized for her “works in Landscape Architecture.”

- Ethan Carr, who was presented with an Honor Award for his book Wilderness By Design.

- The National Park Service, which won a Merit Award for its book A Guide to Cultural Landscapes.

NAOP Survey Results: Over the summer many of you responded to our questionnaire on membership. Its purpose was to get to know you better and to give you the opportunity to inform us on how NAOP might become a more useful tool for our members in your efforts to support local parks, build bridges to other like-minded “Olmstediens,” and save endangered landscapes. In the next issue of Field Notes we will summarize the poll and tell you the results of the October Trustee meeting in Louisville where responses were formulated.