The Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site ("Fairstede") and NAOP have been awarded a grant of $35,500 to develop a comprehensive, on-line database of information on the vast collection of landscape design records produced by the Olmsted firm over a century of work. This grant, awarded by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT), will enable both NAOP and the Olmsted NHS to fulfill long-standing goals to make information concerning the Olmsted landscapes more accessible to the researcher. The database to be created by this grant will enable researchers to perform advance searches for information related to the Olmsted collections, thereby streamlining the overall research process. This NCPTT grant will fund the first phase of a 3 year project.

Interest in the study of these Olmsted landscapes has increased significantly, reflected in the number of research requests at repositories with Olmsted-related collections. Today, the Olmsted Archives at Fairstede is one of the most widely researched museum collections managed by the National Park Service. Each year, park and city planners, scholars, and community activists from across the United States use the plans, photographs and documentary records housed at Fairstede and other repositories to rehabilitate many of the nation's most significant and beloved landscapes.

Over the past decade, both the Olmsted Archives and the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress have made great advances in conserving and cataloguing documents in their collections. Creation of the Olmsted Research Guide On-Line makes this information widely available. The cooperative working relationship between the Olmsted NHS, a governmental entity, and NAOP, a private nonprofit organization, provides an excellent example of the interdisciplinary synergy which is a part of the mandate of the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training.

The principal investigator for the project is Supervisory Archivist Jill Trebbe of the Olmsted NHS. Dr. Charles E. Beveridge, series editor of the Olmsted papers Project at American University in Washington, D.C., and Arlyn Levee, Olmsted scholar and past cochair of NAOP, are NAOP's consultants for this project.

Note: The "Green Book" is still The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857-1950, published in 1987 by NAOP in conjunction with the editors of the Olmsted Papers project and the Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks. The "Green Book" is available from NAOP (please see Book List). This publication was based on records from the Olmsted firm before any of these documents had been archivally processed, enumerated or conserved by NPS. It was a valiant first effort. Clearly the NCPTT grant makes possible the beginning of a comprehensive, definitive resource that may eventually result in a "paper product" as well as the on-line database.
News from Around the Country

Maine

Acadia National Park

A gift of $5 million given this past summer to Acadia Trails Forever, a joint effort of the National Park Service and Friends of Acadia, by a couple who “love this place” and “hope for a permanently beautiful, resilient, and spectacular Acadia that is available for our grandchildren and the generations to follow” was added to $8 million in private funds and visitor fees for the restoration and care of trails. Acadia is the first national park in the country to have its trails maintained by a private endowment.

Massachusetts

Brookline - Fairlsted

Update - Belmont

Fairlsted; the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, and the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation were awarded the Frederick Law Olmsted award by Historic Massachusetts at its annual Preservation Awards Dinner in May in Boston.

McLean Hospital Open Space ‘Battle’. Late in July, voters in Belmont approved a referendum that would allow McLean Hospital to develop housing and a research and development complex while preserving 141 acres as open space and a town cemetery. The matter came to a referendum after this compromise proposal won approval from a special town meeting in May but opponents successfully gathered more than 500 signatures to place the proposal on a ballot. The vote on the referendum exceeded the two-thirds majority required and nearly 53% of Belmont’s registered voters turned out. Field Notes carried a special report on the McLean Hospital situation in the Fall 1997 issue (“The Saga on The Hill”) by, then-NAOP Co-Chair, Arleyn Levee.

New York

Brooklyn - Prospect Park

Buffalo

The first Emerald Award for best capital project in Brooklyn went the Prospect Park Ravine Restoration. Established this year to highlight what is best in the New York City Parks Department, the Emerald Awards were announced early this year by Parks Commissioner Henry Stern. Prospect Park also has a new web site: www.prospectpark.org.

A 13-minute video about Frederick Law Olmsted’s original three parks in Buffalo has been made that tracks the beginning of the parks and comments on the effect of modern times on Olmsted’s original designs. The video is the result of collaboration by public and private interests including the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy. Possibilities for Front Park, on Lake Erie, are highlighted in the video. According to landscape designer and Conservancy volunteer Pamela Earl, whose interest was a driving force behind the video, “What eventually led us to make this video was the desire to help people to see Front park as Olmsted had intended. The bridge communities on both sides of the border need to understand the Olmsted legacy in Buffalo if they are to make an informed decision about the peace Bridge expansion, a multimillion dollar transportation project.”
News from Around the Country

Maryland
Baltimore - Sudbrook Park

Sudbrook Park, a residential community designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., in 1889, celebrated its 110th birthday with a celebration on October 24. Dedication of Sudbrook’s new and corrected historic marker was part of the celebration. A book written by NAOP Trustee Melanie Anson, a resident of Sudbrook Park since 1970, presents a comprehensive, well illustrated history of this planned suburban village.

Illinois
Riverside

A special second “date of issue” ceremony for the Frederick Law Olmsted stamp was held in Riverside on September 25. A resident of Riverside had tried for years to get the Postal Service to issue an Olmsted stamp!

Missouri
St. Louis

NAOP Trustee John Karel, director of Tower Grove Park, was given a fine accolade on the editorial page of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch this past summer for his orchestration of the park’s restoration over the past decade, a restoration that is two-thirds complete. Opened in 1868, gift of a St. Louis merchant, the 287-acre Tower Grove Park enjoys National Historic Landmark designation.

Washington
Seattle

Historic Lincoln Park (currently known as Bobby Morris Playfield) on Capitol Hill was designated an historic Seattle Landmark in November 1998. It joined Hiawatha Playfield as the only other Olmsted Brothers-designed park to be so designated by the Seattle Landmarks Board. Lincoln Park includes the Lincoln Reservoir and Bobby Morris Playfield. Because the reservoir must be covered along with all of Seattle’s open reservoirs, the park will gain four usable acres. A Master Plan has been prepared that takes into account both the historic legacy and contemporary needs. The Master Plan was approved by the Parks Board earlier this fall. Funding remains an ongoing effort.

The Olmsted Interpretive Exhibit at the Volunteer Park Water Tower continues: open daily from 10 am till dusk.

THE Stamp

A United States first-class postage stamp honoring Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., Landscape Architect, has been issued. The unveiling of this stamp occurred at the Centennial Conference of the American Society of Landscape Architects in Boston on September 13 (please see your NAOP postcard included in this issue!) William Downes, Boston District Manager for the U.S. Postal Service, noted at the unveiling ceremony: “Olmsted’s contributions to the development of this country were not merely significant, but masterful. We will continue to be rewarded by his accomplishments.” And, did you know that the stamp includes a collage of photographs by Paul Rocheleau for the book Frederick Law Olmsted Designing the American Landscape authored by Charles Beveridge, Editor of The Olmsted Papers?
Buoyed by the recognition the Olmsted legacy received at the recently concluded celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the American Society of Landscape Architects in Boston, as well as the unveiling of a commemorative Olmsted postage stamp, a broad array of our national constituency engaged in a productive and informative long weekend in Rochester.

Among the highlights of the weekend was a photographic exhibition entitled Rochester's Olmstedian Public Pleasure Grounds - curated by Deirdre Cunningham. Deirdre is Landscape Curator for the George Eastman House (the conference host), an NAOP Trustee and was conference cochair with Trustee Bill Clendaniel, Director of the Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, MA. Both of them deserve a major thank you!

In addition, touring Rochester's and Monroe County’s Olmsted Parks (Seneca, Genesee Valley, and Highland Park), and seeing them from the various perspectives of historians, landscape architects, preservationists and park managers provided a variety of useful insights. Allan Cassidy, Director of Monroe County Parks, and Jim Farr, Manager of Rochester Bureau of Parks, and members of their staff as well as citizen park advocates enriched our time on the ground and must be mentioned.

The context for the conference was set by Robert Durand - Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs, who clearly “walks the talk” in Massachusetts, recognizing the value of protecting historic resources as a key strategy in not only community preservation but in “community building” as well. Charles Beveridge, editor of the Olmsted Papers Project, spoke on the “Role of Water in F.L. Olmsted Park Designs”, exploring the wide-ranging use of water as a design element in these historic parks.

U.S. Representative Louise Slaughter and NAOP Trustee Susan West Montgomery, President of Preservation Action, in Washington, DC, both issued a call to action and highlighted the importance of paying attention to this legislative political agenda. These talks resulted in a resolution by those in attendance to support a national call for reauthorization and adequate appropriation of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, so critical to continued preservation of our public parks and cultural resources throughout the country.

NAOP is proud to offer for sale reproductions of historic Olmsted park postcards. We have included a postcard in your newsletter to show you the quality of the reproductions. Prospect Park in Brooklyn, the Capitol Grounds in DC, and Belle Isle in Detroit are among the Olmsted-designed landscapes included in the packet. Charles Beveridge has provided a write-up (on the back of the card) specific to each landscape pictured. Order several packets on the enclosed publication order form. The pack of twelve cards is $10, six cards for $5. Quantity discounts are available.
Introduction

Olmsted published the letter presented here in The Century Magazine of October 1886. At that time he was turning his attention more frequently to the preservation of natural scenery. By 1886 the campaign to create a state reservation at Niagara Falls, in which he played a major role, had succeeded and he and Calvert Vaux were about to prepare a plan for walks, drives, overlooks, and structures needed for the reservation. His special emphasis at this time, as demonstrated by his letter to the Century, was the preservation of scenery in cities. Some concerns that he expresses in this letter were of long standing, such as the protection of the valley of Rock Creek in Washington, D.C. A more recent concern was the reforestation of the islands of Boston harbor. In December of the following year he submitted a formal proposal to the Boston park commission for such a program. Olmsted also refers in this letter to his park-planning for lake fronts and harbors in Buffalo, Chicago, Detroit, and Bridgeport, Connecticut. Within two years he would return to Buffalo to plan a large park—never constructed—on the shore of Lake Erie. At the same time he began to design a park system for Rochester, whose key feature was preservation of the scenery along the banks of the Genesee River above and below the city through creation of Genesee Valley Park and Seneca Park.

The author who used the phrase "a healthy change in the tone of the human heart" to describe the developments in landscape taste that Olmsted describes here was the British art critic, historian, and social commentator John Ruskin (1819-1900). Ruskin greatly influenced Olmsted's ideas on aesthetics and landscape art, particularly through his multi-volume study Modern Painters, which Olmsted read with his friends in New Haven and Hartford in the mid-1840s.

This letter, with full annotation, will be published in Volume 8 of the Olmsted Papers series.

Charles E. Beveridge
Series Editor
The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted
Department of History
American University, Washington, DC

A Healthy Change in the Tone of the Human Heart

(Suggestions to Cities)

This is the term used by a great writer to describe what indolent people would be apt to call a difference of taste, the difference between the "taste" that led to the building of the Parthenon and that evinced in the building of cathedrals, and, again, between the public taste of the period of cathedral-building and the time of the building of—what shall be said?—Our soldiers monuments? Our patent iron bridges?

In the fifteenth century, Mr. Ruskin tells us, the most cultivated of men found delight in scenes of which the chief characteristics were trimness, orderliness, framedness, surface fineness,—sources of gratification that could be so only through a conspicuous manifestation of human painstaking. The water in which they took pleasure was water flowing in a channel paved at the bottom, walled at the sides, rimmed at the surface,
and bordered by parallel floral fringes, specimen trees, or hedges. The rocks they enjoyed were any but crannied, craggy, mossy, and weather-stained rocks. They liked best to look on forest trees when they had been trimmed, shorn, and disposed in rows by the side of a road. They disliked all that we mean by depth, intricacy, mystery, in scenery. They liked clear outlines, fences, walls, defining circumstances, scenes fretted with bits of bright color, turf patched with flower-beds, nature dressed on the principles of our drawing-room and garden decorative art. They fairly hated the sight of the disorderly, unconfineable sea, with its fluctuating lights and shadows and fugitive hues. The civilization of our times, Mr. Ruskin thinks, finds a greater pleasure in rivers than in canals; it enjoys the sea, it enjoys the distinctive qualities of mountains, crags, rocks; it is pleasantly affected by all that in natural scenery which is indefinite, blending, evasive. It is less agreeably moved by trees when standing out with marked singularity of form or color than when the distinctive qualities of one are partly merged with those of others, in groups and masses, as in natural wood sides. It takes pleasure in breadth, sedateness, serenity of landscape. If modern art has any advantage over that of the middle ages, it is through its awakening to the value of these aspects of nature and its less respect for the more material wealth of man's manifest creation.

This doctrine is not Mr. Ruskin's alone. Scholars in general have substantially taken the same view from the time of Addison and Horace Walpole down. Mr. Ruskin has but presented it more fully and accurately than others. But if we accept it, what are we to think of the neglect that is apparent at many of our centers of civilization to preserve, develop, and make richly available their chief local resources of this form of wealth? Let me refer to a few examples.

At our national capital, while we are every year adding to its outfit new decorations in marble and bronze, formal plantations, specimen trees, and floral and bushy millinery, we leave the charmingly wooded glen of Rock Creek in private hands, subject any day to be laid waste. Once gone, the wealth of the nation could not buy for Washington half the value of landscape beauty that would thus have been lost.

Again, one of our Northern cities has always had lying at its feet a passage of scenery in which, with some protection and aid to nature, and a little provision of convenience, there might be more of grandeur, picturesque ness, and poetic charm than it is possible that this city shall ever otherwise be able to possess, though it should increase a hundredfold in population and wealth, and command the talents of greater artists than any now living. No effort is made to hold the opportunity. No thought is given to it. The real estate in which it lies, as yet mainly if not wholly unproductive, is from year to year bought and sold as private property with regard alone to its possible future value for some industrial purpose to which thousands of acres nearby can easily be as well adapted. There is a river running through it, but its chief interest to "the human heart" does not lie in the water. The water is of no small value, yet it might be wholly drawn off to turn wheels and all that I have said remain true.

We have another fine city, a city of some repute for its poets, its architecture, sculpture, music, gardening, its galleries and its schools of art. Liberal, provident, thrifty, clean, it sits at the head of a harbor giving directly on the sea. The harbor has made the city. Various islands and headlands make the harbor. The islands and headlands are thus the life of the city. Following Mr. Ruskin, one would suppose that whatever of beauty lies in them would long since have engaged all the art-sense of its people. But, in fact, hitherto, a
A Healthy Change in the Tone of the Human Heart

stranger wishing to look down the harbor toward the sea could not find a foot of ground along the shore prepared for the purpose. Once the islands were bodies of foliage. Seen one against another and grouping with woody headlands, they formed scenery of grace and amenity, cheerful, genial, hospitable. But long ago they were despoiled for petty private gains, and the harbor made artificially bald, raw, bleak, prosaic, inhospitable. Each island now stands by itself, as sharply defined in all its outlines as the most mediaeval mind could desire. Several of them are the property of the city and are in use for excellent purposes. It would not lessen but enhance their value for these purposes to dress them again with the graces of naturally disposed foliage; and under a well-prepared system, patiently followed, it would cost little more every year to do this than is spent for an hour's exhibition of fireworks. The harbor is often more crowded than any other on the coast with pleasure-seeking yachts and yachtslets; all that has been stated is perfectly plain; but the opportunity remains not only unused, but, so far as publicly appears, unconsidered,—a matter of no account.

One of the most impressive (and by its impressiveness the most recreative, and by its recreativeness most valuable) city grounds that I have known, I strayed into by accident, never having heard of it before. This was thirty years ago, and I have not heard of it since; but the impression it made was so strong that being asked for a note on this topic, it is instantly and vividly recalled. The entire value of this city property lay in its situation. Otherwise it was barbarous—barbarous in its squirming gravel-walks, its dilapidated essays of puerile decoration, its shabby gentility; its hogs and its hoodlums. But far below flowed a great river, and one looked beyond the river downward upon the unbroken surface of an unlimited forest; looked upon it as one looks from a height upon the sea.

No matter what is beyond, an expanse of water, as you say, can never fail to have a refreshing counter interest to the inner parts of a city; it supplies a tonic change at times even from the finest churches, libraries, picture galleries, conservatories, gardens, soldiers' monuments, parks, and landward outskirts. What is easier than to provide a grateful convenience for such refreshment? Yet if one wants it at Troy, Albany, Newburgh, Springfield, Hartford, Middletown, New London, Trenton, Norfolk, Louisville, St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg, what is offered? What was lost for Brooklyn when the brow of its heights was wholly given up to paved streets and private occupation! What resources is Burlington wasting! The wayfarer in Lynchburg may come to know by a chance glimpse at a street-corner that that city holds one of the greatest treasures of scenery at its command; but if he would see more of it, he must ask leave to climb a church-steeple, or, what is better, plod off by a dusty road to a point beyond the city's squalid outskirts, where the James river will give him undisturbed space for western contemplation. Many such illustrations of the general fact might be given.

Each island now stands by itself, as sharply defined in all its outlines as the most mediaeval mind could desire...it would not lessen but enhance their value...to dress them again with the graces of naturally disposed foliage.

But one who believes that Ruskin is describing tendencies of civilized movement rather than stages attained, as he looks over our land, is not left cheerless. Years ago a traveler arriving in Buffalo asked in vain where he could go to look out on the lake. "The lake?" he would be answered in the spirit of the middle ages; "nobody here wants to look at the lake; we hate the continued
A small space, it should not be forgotten, may serve to present a choice refreshment to a city, provided the circumstances are favorable for an extended outlook upon natural elements of scenery. Yet another may be come upon at Providence, a public balcony, not more than a hundred feet square, thrown out from a hillside street. A trifling affair, but a trifle that expresses much of public civilization.

Fredrick Law Olmsted.
New Publications

Clearing In The Distance
Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century
By Witold Rybczynski. Illustrated. 480 pp. New York: Scribner. $28. President Clinton took this book on his summer vacation. The next issue of Field Notes will have a review by one of our Trustees as well as an article on the recent spate of books about FLO, Sr.

The Man Who Made Parks

New Web Site from the Arnold Arboretum – www.icles.harvard.edu
The Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies of the Arnold Arboretum Announces a new website that offers a unique perspective on landscape issues.

This new website synthesizes academic research and practitioner experience and is designed for professionals as well as involved citizens. Topics are treated critically, examining many sides of an issue. Case studies of New England sites offer insight into management decisions. Abundant sources for further information: books, journals, and other web sites are listed and evaluated by Institute staff. This new website is free.

Bold Vision: The Development of the Parks of Portland, Maine
Theo H.B.M. Holtwijk and Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Editors, (ISBN 0-939761-068) $50. A book signing was held in Portland, Maine in September to celebrate publication of this history that includes several color fold-out plans of the 1905 park system by the Olmsted Brothers. Past NAOP Co-chairs Eleanor Ames and Arleyn Levee and Trustee Dana Souza are contributors. Books may be purchased by calling Amy Chadbourne at Greater Portland Landmarks at 207-774-5561, ext. 41 for additional $7 for sales tax, postage, and handling.

Are You Still a Member?

Check the mailing label on the envelope this newsletter came in. If your label says “EXPIRED”, this is the last newsletter we will be able to send you – UNLESS you renew your membership now. Conveniently enclosed with this newsletter is our new membership brochure. Just fill out the bottom of the form or attach your mailing label. You can use the enclosed envelope to send in your membership information, along with your check or credit card data. Then we can continue to send you the newsletter, including the news from the regions, notices of upcoming conferences, information about new publications and more. We don’t want to lose you. Please renew your membership now.

Already renewed? Thank you. We would be grateful if you would pass the membership brochure along to a colleague or friend who might like to join. Or use the form yourself to give holiday gift memberships or to renew your membership early.

As a membership organization, we rely on membership dues to continue the important work of NAOP. Thank you to all our members for your sustaining support!
NAOP Creates Excitement at the ASLA Centennial

Faye Harwell

NAOP strongly established its presence at the Centennial Meeting of the American Society of Landscape Architect (ASLA), in Boston, on September 12–15. Several NAOP trustees, present and former, Arleyn Levee, Cynthia Zaitzevsky, Dr. Charles Beveridge, Patricia O’Donnell, Tupper Thomas, Betsy Shure Gross, Nicholas Quennell, and Faye Harwell lectured at ASLA education sessions on topics related to Olmsted Senior and the Olmsted firm’s philosophy, design approach and specific projects. Former NAOP Co-chair Marion Pressley coordinated this excellent centennial meeting for ASLA.

NAOP also prepared a booth at ASLA’s EXPO, showcasing Olmsted designs and Olmsted park restoration by landscape architects from all over the United States. NAOP Co-Chair Mary Fox and Membership Committee members Dana Souza and Faye Harwell were assisted by Tupper Thomas and Christian Zimmerman of the Prospect Park Alliance and Mark Mastalerz of Rhodeside & Harwell in setting up and staffing the booth during the two days of the EXPO.

The event included a raffle of the book Frederick Law Olmsted, Designing the American Landscape (Rizzoli, 1995), which author Dr. Charles Beveridge donated and autographed for the conference. ASLA President, Barry Starke, assisted by Executive Vice President, Peter Kirsch, drew the winning name.

New membership brochures, souvenir post card packs and book marks designed by Jerry Arbog and Anne Knight of Seattle, WA, and a “Go with the FLO” button, were among the items that attracted hundreds of landscape architects to the booth. During most of the EXPO, the crowd at the booth was three people deep!

Many thanks to our administrative office staff for their help. NAOP also gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the following in preparing the exhibition:

The Frederick Law Olmsted Papers

Landscapes
Louisville Olmsted
Parks Conservancy
Pressley Associates
The Prospect Park Alliance
Quennell-Rothschild
& Partners, LLP
Rhodeside & Harwell, Inc.
Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks
Seattle Department of Parks
& Recreation
Dana Souza, City of Portland, ME
Walker-Kluessing Design Group
The American Society of Landscape Architects, as part of their 100th anniversary celebration as a national association, asked participating state chapters to name Medallion Landscapes: outstanding works of landscape architecture that participants felt exemplified the analysis, planning, design, management and stewardship of our land and outdoor spaces. Forty-one states nominated landscapes, and of interest to NAOP members and all those working to preserve the Olmsted legacy, twenty-five states recognized more than forty landscapes (thirty-eight parks alone!) designed by the Olmsted firm and of these many were park and boulevard systems as a single nomination! With no solicitation on the part of the NAOP, Olmsted landscapes consistently rose to the top of landscape architects' lists of those places that are most precious to the American public.

A complete listing of the Medallion Landscapes is available at the ASLA website www.asla.org. Ceremonies are being planned to present a nine-inch bronze medallion to the appropriate individuals and groups who have been a part of preserving and protecting the recognized landscape.

**Thank You!**

Thank you to photographer Paul Rocheleau for allowing NAOP to use several of his photographs for *Frederick Law Olmsted Designing the American Landscape* (authored by Charles Beveridge) for the new NAOP membership brochure.

**Ethan Carr** is a historical landscape architect with the National Park Service Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program based in Denver, Colorado. His recent book *Wilderness by Design* received an ASLA honor award this year. He began his career in the New York City Parks Department and has worked in private as well as public landscape offices in New York and Boston. He has also taught the history of landscape architecture at Harvard and the University of Virginia.

**Deirdre Cunningham**, a landscape architect by training, has been landscape curator at the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY since 1991. She oversees the maintenance, ongoing restoration/rehabilitation, and interpretation of the 12.5 acre historic landscape collection. The original gardens and grounds were designed by Ahlgh DeForest who apprenticed with the Olmsted firm between 1897 and 1901. Deirdre coordinated NAOP’s 1999 national conference with Trustees Bill Clendaniel and Carolyn Etter. (Please see Rochester conference article.)

**Faye Harwell**, landscape architect and director and cofounder of Rhodeside & Harwell, in Alexandria, VA, has worked on a number of Olmsted parks in addition to many other landscape architectural projects. Among the Olmsted parks are Cadwalader Park in Trenton, NJ, the Niagara Reservation in New York State, and Patterson Park in Baltimore where her work earned a Merit Award from the ASLA Potomac Chapter. She has also lectured, taught, and written feature articles for a number of magazines including *Landscape Architecture*.

**Joe Hoerner** is Director of Property Management for the Chicago Park District. An architect, he is responsible for managing the contracted construction and maintenance of facilities and landscapes in over 500 urban parks district-wide with a yearly budget of over $60 million. Before joining the Park District, he practiced as a preservation architect with 3 firms in the Chicago area.

Welcome to our new Trustees!
George Batchelder: An Appreciation

George L. Batchelder III, the owner of the Olmsted-designed estate Moraine Farm in Beverly, MA, passed away on October 22, 1999. George was a striking example of the imagination and dedication that can come from attachment to a special place. He demonstrated how a landscape that is maintained in keeping with Olmsted’s original design concepts can generate appreciation both in its owner and its visitors. His painstaking preparation of guidelines to protect the key elements of the Olmsted landscape for future generations will hopefully serve as an influential example for owners of other Olmsted properties.

George’s parents bought Moraine Farm in 1928 from the family of J.C. Phillips for whom Frederick Law Olmsted designed the estate in the early 1880— in collaboration with the architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns. Olmsted sited the house overlooking Wenham Lake on a massive terrace that supported both the house and its adjoining private grounds and garden. It was one of his major attempts to create a naturalistic setting for a country house that would counteract the tendency toward decorative planting that was evident on many of the estates being created in the Boston area at that time. Under the stewardship of George and his wife, Mimi, Moraine Farm has remained the most Olmstedian in character of any estate still in use as a private residence.

George grew up at Moraine Farm and absorbed the landscape and its lessons. I used to assure him that he was a living example of the “unconscious influence” that Olmsted’s design principles exerted. Not only did he, and his parents before him, maintain the Olmstedian qualities of Moraine Farm, but when George and his family moved to California, he applied the same water-conserving design principles to the grounds of his house that Olmsted, unbeknownst to him, had adopted for northern California.

In 1982, George and Mimi returned to Moraine Farm, where for the past seventeen years they have worked tirelessly to recover and perpetuate the estate’s Olmsted legacy, both of landscape design and of agriculture and forestry. I had the privilege of watching the increase of their knowledge and pleasure in the estate during those years as they reviewed documents and photographs, conserved the Olmsted plans, re-enforced the historic quality of the landscape, and provided information for visiting groups. During this time they were generous supporters of the NAOP and the Olmsted Papers project. They were also generous in their hospitality, and I will always remember the first night I spent there, standing alone on the terrace in the evening with an amazed sense of the past presence of Olmsted at that very place.

Only a few months ago, George and Mimi completed preparations for the future with the sale of the house and landscaped grounds to Project Adventure, an environmentally-oriented organization that provides programs, similar to Outward Bound, to schools and corporations. At the same time, the Batchelders provided for oversight of the property by The Trustees of Reservations and the Essex County Greenbelt Association. Much of the landscape of Moraine Farm will remain accessible to the general public, including access to the house, terrace, and grounds by special arrangement. The legacy of Moraine Farm that George Batchelder has left us will be of enduring value—and he will be greatly missed.