NAOP Boston Celebration in Pictures and Words

From the opening gala at the Massachusetts State House overlooking Boston Common to the celebration at Fairstoned (complete with anniversary cake), NAOP's 20th Anniversary Celebration May 17-20 engaged heart and mind, body and soul. Excerpts of former Trustee Betsy Shure Gross's remarks at Fairstoned serve as an emblem of the weekend. Betsy Shure Gross is currently special assistant to the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for Massachusetts, Bob Durand. She and the "Boston Task Force" that included former Trustee Arleigh Levens and our Treasurer Caroline Louglin deserve jewels for putting on such a fine celebration. To be exact, NAOP was celebrating its 20th Anniversary from its first conference ever, which was in Boston; NAOP was founded by resolution at a meeting in 1980 of 65 parks advocates in Buffalo, New York.

In 1973, when many of us were just beginning to work on the restoration of our open spaces, I read the preface to Laura Wood Roper's biography of Frederick Law Olmsted in which she said, "America's great pioneer landscape architect, Olmsted during his own long day was recognized as a prophet by a few and held in simple gratitude by multitudes. At his death, he was praised from one end of the nation to the other. Within a quarter of a century he was half-forgotten; his name became a feature of footnotes, and his great landscape works were let lapse toward ruin or, worse, cobbled and botched."

Think of those words - "cobbled and botched." They convey what we who established the National Association for Olmsted Parks, advocated for the acquisition of Fairstoned by the Department of the Interior, and struggled to educate and influence the municipal owners and stewards of landscapes designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, his sons and successor firms across the nation have faced for over a quarter of a century.

It was a rough beginning. We've come a very long way in a fairly short time. And we are determined never to have another author use those words about our nation's most significant designed landscapes again... For each scholar, researcher, community advocate and landscape restoration activist who comes here to seek inspiration, information and guidance, untold numbers of park users nationwide benefit...

Fairstoned is the soul of the landscape preservation movement. Access here, research here, heightens success everywhere. We are learning, we are seeing that, at long last, for the mistakes, abominations and intrusions of the "botched and cobbled" era there can be, through research, scholarship and careful planning, abundant recompense...

As partners with our political leaders, we can insure that continuing scholarship and research result in landscape rehabilitation and restoration in cities and

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Mount Royal Park celebrates 125th!

Mount Royal Park celebrated its 125th Anniversary on May 24, taking the media spotlight in Montreal. The Canadian Broadcasting System broadcast its 6 p.m. news from the summit overlook that evening and discussed history and issues concerning the park and its surroundings. Montreal’s two main newspapers gave “The Mountain” (as Olmsted suggested calling it) extensive coverage. La Presse has been running a series of articles by a well-known retired journalist (check out www.cyberpresse.ca/mont-royal) and The Gazette has written about The Mountain in the context of Olmsted’s parks as well as an account of NAOP’s celebration in Boston! On June 16, a festive parade and picnic commemorated The Mountain’s dedication as a park with participants in period dress. Mount Royal lies within three different municipalities. Currently, there is a movement to merge all the municipalities to form a larger Montreal - one island, one city. NAOP Trustee Daniel Chartier calls The Mountain a perfect example of how everyone can work together for the benefit of the new city. ASLA will be holding its first meeting outside the United States in Montreal September 20-24 with a charrette focused on the Beaver Lake section of the park.

The updated Emerald Necklace Master Plan was unveiled on April 3 to a large group of park advocates, city and state officials and members of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. Originally prepared in 1989 through the Massachusetts Olmsted Historic Landscape Preservation Grant program, the first statewide program in the country to restore the Olmsted legacy, the Master Plan serves as the blueprint for the current $393 million effort to control flooding, improve water quality and restore the historic landscape of the Emerald Necklace. Landscape architect (and former NAOP Trustee) Marion Pressley led the walk along the Muddy River during the Boston celebration. Fairstead, as Betsy Shure Gross pointed out at the celebration of Fairstead’s 20 years as National Historic Site, is the source of the information that forms the basis of this project. A strong proponent from the beginning of the landscape preservation movement and Fairstead’s designation, Congressman Barney Frank spoke eloquently of the proper role of government in establishing a treasure like Fairstead as a public resource. And Fairstead looked treasured; current superintendent Myra Harrison and her capable staff see to that.

For a copy of the Emerald Necklace Park Master Plan, contact Patrice Kish, Director of the Office of Historic Resources for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management at 617-626-1378.

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is facilitating the updating of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park Master Plan. “The goal is to reflect community need and interest within this plan while restoring Olmsted’s vision for the park.” The reforestation initiative in this plan guided the Conservancy and the Buffalo Green Fund’s tree planting work in April. This year’s FLO Birthday Luncheon (2nd Annual) featured the Cornell University professor Nina Bassuk who developed the “bare root” planting method being used for tree planting in the parks.

Seneca Park remains under threat by a proposed zoo expansion that would take 35 acres of parkland. Both Monroe County and the Seneca Park Zoo Society endorse the plan tripling the size of zoo and constructing a 600 car parking lot. The proposed expansion disregards zoo and park master plans approved by the County in 1991 after a great deal of community input. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the expansion plan, that was prepared by the County and local zoo consultant Sear-Brown appears to have ignored a detailed analysis of the Draft FEIS submitted by a City task force. That analysis concluded, “The consideration and evaluation of alternatives to the proposed plan is inadequate and needs further investigation.” The FEIS states, “The preferred development plan is a change in type of green space, an expansion of a park activity that is entirely consistent with a proper park purpose.” Seneca Park is a scenic reservation along the Genesee River and part of the Olmsted park system that includes Genesee Valley and Highland Parks.

Check out the new Prospect Park and Brooklyn Botanic Garden Guidebook published in April by Barnes & Noble as part of their Guidebook series. (Yes, there is one for Central Park.)

Central Park has been the site of a search conducted by a Columbia University geophysicist and a team of anthropologists and archaeologists for Seneca Village, a small early 19th century community that thrived on what is now the west side of Central Park. No digging, though. They are using a geographic information system, an aerial photograph along with an 1856 map of the area, and electromagnetic induction surveys.
News from Around the Country

New Jersey
Newark
Riverbank Park re-opened in late June after a $4 million remediation/restoration process. SPARK (Save the park at Riverbank) has been the grass-roots organization for this almost 11-acre park.

Pennsylvania
Scranton
A "lost" landscape story with a happy ending was reported in the April issue of The Atlantic Monthly by Witold Rybczynski. The Scranton Public Library's original planting plan by the Olmsted firm, "discovered" in 1992 by a local heritage association during planning for the library's centenary, has been carried out again (with some modifications e.g. 6 fewer species of trees, shrubs, and perennials).

Michigan
Detroit
The Friends of Belle Isle have a book (125 pages, full color) called Island in the City: How Belle Isle Changed Detroit Forever produced as a companion to the exhibit at the Detroit Historical Museum in honor of Detroit's tri-centennial. Cost is $20 plus $4 shipping and $2 shipping per each additional copy ordered. Call the FOBI office at (313) 331-7760 or write FOBI, Stapleton Center, 9341 Agnes, Detroit, MI 48214.

Kentucky
Louisville
Restoration of Shawnee Park's Great Lawn should be nearing completion with re-grading and re-seeding done this Spring. Completion of the new sports complex and field allowed reclaiming the core of the historic park to the open expenses of the Olmsted design. Volunteers launched removal per the 1994 Master Plan of the deteriorated facilities that had cluttered the Great Lawn over the years.

Georgia
Atlanta
Piedmont Park Conservancy has announced a grand opening of the Oak Hill section of Piedmont Park for July 11. Mayor Bill Campbell, an ex-officio member of the Conservancy, will be present. Oak Hill has been undergoing a major rehabilitation with new walking paths, irrigation, new Bermuda sod, nearly 200 new trees, benches and light posts. Oak Hill was the midway for the 1895 Cotton States Exposition and then part of Atlanta's first municipal golf course. The Conservancy's 5th Landmark Luncheon in May celebrated Oak Hill's history and revitalization.

Oak Grove Park, the "demonstration project" of the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance's first phase implementing the master plan for the Druid Hills park, was dedicated on May 30. Attendees were invited to view Oak Grove through Olmsted's eyes and, suddenly, those Olmsted masks from Boston popped up everywhere.

Louisiana
New Orleans
The 1897 book of sketches for Audubon Park made by the Olmsted Brothers in the "RFP" process is part of the Historic New Orleans Collection exhibit "In Search of Yesterday's Gardens: Landscapes of 19th Century New Orleans" (through December 29, 533 Royal Street). Guest curator Lake Douglas found the book of sketches at the University of New Orleans.

Washington
Seattle
Plan ahead with the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks for the celebration of the 2003 Olmsted Centennial celebrating the arrival of John Charles Olmsted in Seattle on April 30, 1903. The NAOP Spring 2003 Conference begins April 30 with a train excursion to Portland, Oregon (JCO travelled that route after all) and goes till Sunday, May 4.

Calling All Grass-Roots Olmsted Groups (Once More)

Field Notes wants to locate every grass-roots Olmsted group across the country. We want all the news for our "News From Around the Country" feature. Please help! Use this form yourself or give it to someone who can. Thanks!

Name of Organization __________________________________________ Contact Person ___________________________
Address _______________________________________________________
Phone __________________ Fax __________________ e-mail ___________________

Do you have a newsletter you can/will send to NAOP? (Please put NAOP on your mailing list) □ Yes □ No

Comments? ______________________________________________________

Please send by mail to NAOP, 19 Harrison Street, Framingham, MA 01702-2313; by fax to 508-879-4888; or by email to naop@resource-network.com