NATIONAL CONFERENCE GATHERS IN BOSTON-BROOKLINE-CAMBRIDGE

Frederick Law Olmsted, perhaps with his sons standing beside him, would have been more than a little proud, though undoubtedly somewhat taken back, to witness the arrival of almost 500 guests at Fairlaid in Brookline for the dedication of his former home and office as a National Historic Site and to hear the lavish words of praise heaped upon himself and his associates for their contributions to open space in America. Yet such is to be the scene on the closing day, April 26, of the National Association for Olmsted Parks second National Conference, being convened in Boston starting April 23 and ending Sunday with the official dedication of the Department of the Interior’s newest National Historic Site.

Volume I, Number 2, of the National Association’s Newsletter is devoted in large measure to the Conference, its program and to providing the conference with considerable background about the role of Olmsted and his associates in the Greater Boston Area, where he was active so long. The inside four pages include details of the program itself, wrapped around the official registration form, which should be used as soon as possible. A final program will be printed at the time of the conference, though this includes all the information available at press time.

A special supplement on Olmsted in Boston includes numerous interesting articles, some new by members of the Conference Steering Committee, some taken from older items which still seem fresh and provide unique insights into the work done by Olmsted and his firm. Included are summaries of the two Master Plans, recently commissioned for Franklin Park and the Back Bay Fens by the City of Boston. Each of these will be the subject of a special presentation during the conference.

The most important substantive day of the conference will be Saturday, April 25, when some thirteen workshops will deal with various aspects of the Olmsted legacy and particularly how community leaders, park administrators, planners and architects, writers and scholars can apply what has been learned from Olmsted to the present-day preservation and restoration of historic parks. Moderators and panelists are being drawn from a wide range of experienced practitioners, people across the country who have been working in their own communities and nationally to keep Olmsted’s ideas alive and increase public

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Overlooking historic Fanueil Hall, Alexander Alport, NAOP Executive Director, Cornelia Hanna McMurtie, New England Regional Co-Chair, Betsy Shure Gross, 1981 Conference Coordinator, and Eugenie Beal, Environmental Affairs Coordinator for the City of Boston, far right, meet with Boston’s Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, John Vitagliano, to settle final plans for the NAOP conference.
The Art of the Olmsted Landscape 
Exhibition to Open at Metropolitan Museum in September

The spirit of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux will return to Central Park when “The Art of the Olmsted Landscape,” an exhibition of the designers’ parks in New York City, premieres in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art on September 16, 1981.

The exhibition, sponsored by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission with the National Endowment for the Humanities, will examine Olmsted’s parks as man-made, fragile works of art. It is the culmination of a three-year project to research Olmsted’s work in New York City and to designate some of his creations as Scenic Landmarks.

“Many people perceive the preservation movement as focusing on built objects, and it does. What they don’t understand, and this exhibition will point out, is that our great historic landscapes are part of that ‘built’ environment,” said Gail Guillet, Director of the Olmsted Project.

Exhibition curator Bruce Kelly and Mrs. Guillet have attempted to identify the place of Olmsted parks in landscape history, to analyze the parks through their landscape elements, and to cite the designers’ contributions to America.

“Previous work has taught us about Olmsted himself, his philosophy, and his drawings. Our attempt is to explain the characteristics of his built parks. It is my hope that this work will be useful to the growing constituency of Americans concerned with restoring and preserving Olmsted’s giant contribution to our culture,” said Mr. Kelly.

A methodology for the restoration of historic parks, developed by Mr. Kelly, and the current condition of each of New York City’s Olmsted parks will be examined in the second half of the show. The Gallery Association of New York State will sponsor a two-year tour for the “The Art of the Olmsted Landscape.” SITES, the Smithsonian Institution’s traveling aegis, plans to circulate the exhibition nationwide.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a 110-page catalogue, “The Art of the Olmsted Landscape,” with an introduction by Bruce Kelly and 10 essays by Olmsted scholars and park advocates such as James Marston Fitch, Charles C. McLaughlin, Albert Fein, Ian Stewart, Elizabeth Barlow, Henry Hope Reed, Jean McElrigh, M.M. Graff, Dennis Stedman Francis, and Mel Kalfus. The catalogue will be illustrated with photographs and drawings, many of them 19th-century images from the exhibition.

A poster and brochure of the New York City Olmsted parks will also be published to complement the exhibition. In addition, a symposium on historic parks and an educational program will further enhance the exhibition’s impact.

—Mary Ellen W. Hern

The waterfall at the northern end of Central Park, perhaps at its loveliest, in Spring 1864.
One of the many ornate urns planned and planted for Central Park speak of a by-gone era of splendor and fanciful extravagance.

Bethesda Terrace in New York's Central Park as it appeared around 1885.
INSIDE FAIRSTED

The Olmsted Historic Site Council, composed of concerned Boston and Brookline residents, architectural historians, landscape architects and park activists, was formed a year ago to work with the National Park Service in preserving, reusing and maintaining the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline, Massachusetts. Its regular meetings deal with problems of acquiring and conserving the historic documents at Fairsted, letting people know of the existence of the site, evaluating various staff proposals which come before it and, for now, helping to prepare for its official dedication on the last day of the National Conference on April 26.

Archival Collection

The biggest news from Fairsted is that the remainder of the Olmsted archival collection has been acquired. In its closing session, the 96th Congress, at the initiative of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, added $415,000 to the Department of the Interior's budget specifically for the acquisition of the collection. Earlier in the year the National Park Service had purchased a portion of the collection with separate funds. The total collection is valued at $514,000. There are also many items from the Olmsted office which Artemas P. Richardson, former owner of the collection, plans to donate to the Park Service.

The materials which have been purchased include at least 115,000 plans dating from 1857 to 1980 as well as thousands of photographs, negatives, files and other records of the Olmsted firm. The office furniture, drafting equipment and other items not included in the purchase will be donated by Mr. Richardson.

Research Underway

Preservation historian Amy Millman has been researching the history and development of Olmsted's home and office in Brookline. Her final report, which will cover the entire spectrum of occupation from the initial 18th-century dwelling to the purchase by the National Park Service in 1980, will be a primary resource document to be used in future planning efforts.

The report will be divided into three major historical periods: F.L.O.'s occupation at Fairsted (while active and after retirement); the Olmsted Brothers (1903-1961); and Olmsted Associates (1961-1980). Although each period will have its own specific focus, there are some common elements that will be examined throughout the report. These include: structural changes that were made and how they related to projects going on at the time; changes in the firms' organization; relationship between Fairsted as office and Fairsted as home; innovation in techniques and equipment used; evolution of landscaping in relation to the firm's philosophical ideals; role of firm in landscape architecture.
Several landscape architecture students from the Harvard Graduate School of Design are also doing research on Fairstreet under the direction of Professor Albert Fein. This group is interested in the evolution of the landscape at Fairstreet and in the day-to-day life of the office. Joanne Emerson, a student in the Radcliffe Landscape Design Program, is also looking at the Fairstreet grounds. Her particular interest is in the area adjacent to the office known as "the hollow.

Physical work at Fairstreet is limited until more is known about the evolution of the buildings and grounds, but some work is being done on the windows to reduce heat loss and the first floor of the house is being painted for the April dedication.

Emergency work was begun in June to improve the storage conditions of all the collections in the Olmsted office and barn. The extensive collection of printed materials stored in the unheated barn was inventoried and cleaned under the direction of Liz Egbert, NPS Librarian. These materials were moved to the house and are now being packed into acid-free boxes for permanent protection. At the same time they are being arranged for ready access in anticipation of research needs.

The negative collection containing thousands of nitrate negatives was moved into two large refrigerators in an effort to slow their inevitable chemical deterioration. Temperature and humidity inside the refrigerators are carefully monitored. Prints and glass plates were separated out and are being cleaned, inventoried and transferred to special acid-free paper envelopes.

Emergency duplication of deteriorating nitrate and glass plate negatives is scheduled to begin in February. The negatives are now being inventoried and individually sleeved in envelopes to ready them for copying. To date, approximately 450 nitrate negatives have been found completely "melted," with no image remaining. Every effort is being made, with the limited funds available, to duplicate as many negatives as possible before more are lost.

Currently, access to the Olmsted plans is limited because they are stored in an unheated vault and many are too fragile to handle. A statement of policy on use of the archives is available from the site. For inquiries about specific projects, call Shary Berg or Mary Tynan at 617-566-1689.

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**Volume 2 of the Olmsted Papers Being Prepared for 1981 Publication**


The last chapter, "Freesoil Crusade," contains letters describing his efforts, in collaboration with the New England Emigrant Aid Company, to establish a series of free-labor settlements in West Texas that would halt the expansion of slavery in that region.

Also included are the American editor's introduction and supplement that Olmsted wrote for *The Englishman in Kansas, Or, Squatter Life and Border Warfare*, a description of the violence in "Bleeding Kansas" during 1856 by the English newspaper correspondent Thomas H. Gladstone.

Volume 2 of the Olmsted Papers will also contain the first detailed and accurate maps tracing Olmsted's southern journeys, and will include a set of annotated itineraries that will, for the first time, identify the people he met and the dates he visited the places he described. (Olmsted systematically disguised the identity of persons he visited during his two southern journeys in 1852-54, and often described events in a different order than they occurred as part of his effort to prevent identification of his hosts.) The maps and itineraries will serve as a guide to his three books of travel description as well as to Volume 2 itself.

Volume 3 of the Olmsted Papers, *Creating Central Park, 1857 to 1861*, is nearing completion and is scheduled for publication in the spring of 1982.

Charles Beveridge

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Understanding of what he stood for and what his work means to us today.

Among the workshops on Saturday morning will be one led by Dr. Charles E. Beveridge, Associate Editor of the Olmsted Papers, on "Understanding the Olmsted Landscape," helping one to look for the key elements in Olmsted's designs which made his spaces both interesting and unique. Another, led by Joan K. Bozer, will deal with "The Role of the Elected Official in Park Preservation," while a third, led by Alexander Allport, NAOP Executive Director, will survey the various forms of community organization which have evolved in different cities to cope with park preservation. William Alex, President of the Frederick Law Olmsted Association, will lead the fourth morning workshop on "Where the Olmsted Papers Are and How to Use Them." Each of these workshops is designed to provide a broad base of information for the more detailed sessions which follow in the afternoon.

The afternoon workshops will deal with: "Preserving the Olmsted Documents," which will focus on the broad issues of preserving architectural records as well as on the how-to of caring for fragile drawings, photographs, books and archival material. "Making Olmsted Newsworthy" will consider various publicity and information methods to focus attention on Olmsted and on park preservation projects, while "Management Models for Olmsted Parks" will consider the benefits and shortcomings of various forms of park organization which currently exist. "Funding for Park Preservation" will define the financial plight of Olmsted's parks, and explore where funding for rehabilitation and preservation programs, at the Federal, state and local level might come from, while "Preservation Resources of Olmsted Parks" will deal with the various legal action alternatives for protecting public parks which are available to municipalities and community groups. "Education and the Olmsted Legacy" will examine the role and responsibilities of landscape architects and others in the preservation and restoration of the Olmstedian design tradition, while "Crisis Management for Municipal Parks," led by Boston Parks Commissioner John Vitagliano, will come to grips with the kinds of large-scale financial problems such as New York has recently faced and Boston is now confronting with its proposition 2½.
Fairsed, in Brookline, as it appears today in winter garb

Olmsted's sleeping porch at Fairsed, added in 1887

Fairsed in 1895, depicting the house as it appeared at the time of Frederick Law Olmsted's retirement. Conference attendees will have an opportunity to inspect the house and attend its official dedication as a National Historic Site on April 26
OLMSTED IN BOSTON AND BROOKLINE

Restoration of Leverett Pond Involves Careful Study and Community Action

Three years ago, a group of Brookline neighbors concerned with the condition of their Olmsted park, under the leadership of Betsy Shure Gross, formed the High Street Hill Neighborhood Association Friends of Leverett Pond (FOLP). Leverett Pond is especially significant because it is located less than a mile from Frederick Law Olmsted's house and office, now a National Historic Site. Olmsted personally directed the design of this park, and its restoration today could serve as a community model for Olmsted park restoration throughout the nation. The original members of FOLP link their concern with their local park directly to all concerns for all Olmsted parks.

The efforts of FOLP have greatly increased public awareness of this Olmsted park. New benches, trash receptacles, plant inventories, park clean-ups, close cooperation with the Park Department, conservation and historical commissions, and greater police protection have all made a difference. The huge community support of a festival at Leverett Pond held last spring, and the restoration study made by the Radcliffe Landscape Design Program, which was greatly aided by Shary Berg and Mary Tynan of the Olmsted National Historic Site, convinced the Community Development Committee of the Brookline Council for Planning and Renewal, upon authorization of the Board of Selectmen, to award a $40,400 grant for fiscal year 1982 to FOLP.

The National Association for Olmsted Parks 1981 Conference has resulted in support of the preservation community, the landscape design community, and the city of Boston and town of Brookline. The conference will generate a new park constituency with a greater awareness of the problems our parks face. It will also reinforce the necessity of public and private sector cooperation in the capital improvement and maintenance of our parks. When citizen responsibility and constructive new management programs for our historic parks can be developed, our goal for the Pond will become a reality.

Leverett Pond is the largest pond in Brookline and is part of the Muddy River floodplain and of the Charles River watershed in a densely populated area called Brookline Village. The pond is an important wetland feature in Olmsted Park, a 36-acre section of the Boston Park System and the Muddy River Improvement Plan designed by Olmsted in 1880 and completed in 1895. The Norfolk and Suffolk County lines divide the pond, leaving one-third of the pond in Brookline. The pond is 1500 feet long, 500 feet wide, and has a half-mile-long shoreline. It comprises an area 12.8 acres. The major inlet to Leverett Pond originates from Jamaica Pond, a kettle pond fed by a natural spring. From Jamaica Pond the brook is culverted from Ward Pond to Willow Pond and emerges into Leverett Pond. The water flows into the Muddy River at the north end of the pond, into the Back Bay Fens and finally into the Charles River Basin. Leverett Pond is therefore an important link in the continuing function of the river-floodplain and wetland system in this area. Its uniqueness is that it was entirely artificially constructed out of a tidal estuary.

From an historical viewpoint the origins of Leverett Pond and its place in Brookline's history parallel the history of Brookline's growth and development. A study of the pond area shows that, up until twenty years ago, this southeastern corner of Brookline had not changed radically in the nature of the neighborhood and the environment over the last 350 years, despite the obvious increase in population and houses. Descriptions from the 17th and 18th centuries of the Muddy River where Leverett Pond is now located would be applicable in 1870, and, partially, in 1981. The site of Leverett Pond was a central thoroughfare in the 17th century just as it is today. How and why Olmsted came to design this park paints a picture of this remarkable man's life, and, in turn, of 19th-century America.

Brookline, formerly called Muddy River, belonged to Boston before its incorporation in 1705 but was separated geographically by the Charles River. An historical account of 1633 tells of Boston inhabitants "taking on farmhouses in a place called Muddy River two miles from town, where there is good ground, large timber and a store of marshland and meadow." The marshland was well-suited for winter pasturage and within
reach of the tides, and the rich upland meadow provided for grazing and cultivation. Grants of land by the colonial governor were made to induce settlement. A 1635 “Map of the Hamlet of Muddy River” shows Leverett Grant from whence the pond presumably got its name. In 1639, 500 acres were laid out at Muddy River for common ground, and a year later the boundary between Muddy River and Cambridge was fixed. Thirty-two freeholders presented a petition in 1705 to the legislature for a separation from Boston, which was granted, and the name Brookline was adopted.

The town had a picturesque setting and “contained some of the finest country seats and best-managed lands which adorn the environs of Boston.” The topography is typical of the irregular glacial New England landscape. The site of Leverett Pond is a moraine. The topography is hilly and undulating, and the conical knolls can be seen in the eastern and northern areas of the park. The land-forms directly abutting the pond were artificially contoured. As part of the Muddy River Improvement Plan, the swamp soil excavated from the river was used in building up the riverbanks and the slopes of the park.

One sees the mastery of Olmsted in converting this flat and bare area into a natural-looking sylvan and pastoral setting which related to its surroundings and looked as if it had always been there. Variety of scenery, contrasts of form and arrangement of space — large tracts of woodland and field interchanging with special treatment of small areas — formed the basis of Olmsted’s designs in his parks. Rather than impose a design on a site, Olmsted drew the potential out of the site by first determining the character of the place. Consider what Olmsted achieved in his design for Boston! From Boston Harbor to Franklin Park one travels from a seashore community along a stream, through meadows and woods. In the Fens and along the Riverway the surfaces were completely altered to resemble a typical New England landscape; in the Fens the salt-water creek was bordered by meadows and low, wooded gravelly ridges. Above the marsh, the trees, the shrub layer and low, flowering native plants of the saltmarsh were planted. Along the Riverway where the tides ended and the fresh water began, plants of the New England woods and riverside were laid out.

How was Olmsted Park Created?

In 1869 Boston citizens petitioned for land to be developed for public park space. Six years later these efforts met with success with the creation of a Park Commission Board and the appointment of Olmsted as Chief Landscape Architect. Olmsted combined his administrative talents, scientific and technical knowledge with his painterly genius and used the unique topography to its best advantage, altering the land wherever it needed to be altered. He faced an enormous challenge simply in organizing all the people, park boards and town officials to make the system work.

Olmsted not only had the task of developing a green belt of five miles of open space but also of sanitizing the whole river system. The river had become a polluted, sluggish creek, in short, sewage. In Brookline the problem was particularly acute. The age of technology, which was causing vast changes across all of America, was as keenly felt in Brookline. The building of new industries, the railroads, new roads, and the growth of the population all caused open green spaces to disappear at frightening speed. The building of the railroads greatly affected the topography of the Muddy River area. The Brookline branch of the Boston and Albany Railroad, built along the western bank of the river, transformed the scenic marshland and woodland beauty into suburban backyards of shabby houses.

In order to create the park system, landowners along the Muddy River were bought out, with the exception of the threedecker houses and shops across from what was to become Leverett Pond. The town line between Brookline and Boston was changed resulting in the deeding of a portion of land to Brookline. The Brookline Land Company sold land for Leverett Pond to the town and coordinated their development plans with Olmsted’s park design. The double roadway along the Brookline side of Leverett Pond, Riverdale Parkway and Pond Avenue, was designed for pleasure traffic and access to the residences on the drumlin above the pond. In a report to the Boston Park Department in 1886, Olmsted noted the function of a parkway as “having the character of a street of extraordinary width, strong with verdant features and other objects of interest but not interfering with the primary business of the city.” His concept of “separate parks widely dispersed through the metropolitan area linked together by a system of connecting parkways” was a major contribution to American parks and city planning.

“Topographical Plan No. 133,” February 8, 1893, shows exactly which plants were planned for the area. Olmsted and his stepson and nephew, John Charles Olmsted, together with Charles Sprague Sargent, director of the Arnold Arboretum and Brookline Park Commissioner, chose the plants for the Brookline side. Olmsted and Boston Park Commission Chief Gardener, Fischer, planted the Boston side. Olmsted scholar Cynthia Zatizevsky, writes of the conflict between the Olmsted and Sargent over the planting. From the “Planting Plan No. 1,” April 9, 1892, Sargent deleted more than 30 out of 150 plants, his main objection being that Olmsted had included plants of foreign origin. Both Olmsteds had always been committed to using native material wherever possible but objected to Sargent’s rigidity in insisting on the exclusive use of native
plants. Magnolia acuminata, Rosa multiflora, Populus nigra, Calycanthus floridus, Kerria japonica, Ligustrum obtusifolium, Lonicera morrowii were some of the plants Sargent objected to and were later reinstated by the Olmsteds. Several issues of the gardening magazine, Garden and Forest, in 1898, deal with this controversy in articles by Mrs. Van Rensselaer, Sargent and the Olmsteds. Other plants of doubtful hardiness such as Liquidambar styraciflua were deleted; yet Platanus orientalis remained on the list. Further investigation might turn up interesting reasons for other deletions. Sargent was against the use of any showy flowering shrubs or birches or the use of turf. He lost the battle on the latter two to the Olmsteds as the islands and shorelines were liberally planted with Betula nigra and B. lent. John Olmsted felt the park was big enough for lawns. Sargent was a great enthusiast of hawthorns, and the planting plan for Leverett Pond included several Crataegus biltmoreana. Sargent planted a miniature collection of over 40 species of hawthorns north of Willow Pond Road in 1905, all of which are gone today.

A planting of the shrub layer shows those of the forest and wetland community along the footpath and on the banks of the pond. These include Cornus alternifolia, Symphoricarpos albus, Xanthorrhiza simplicissima (both good for erosion control), Rhus aromatica, Kerria japonica, Spirea tomentosa, Cornus racemosa, Lonicera japonica, and five species of Rosa. The trees of these communities included Pieta trifoliata, Quercus palustris, Q. rubra, Q. alba, Q. coccinea, Acer rubrum, A. saccharum, A. saccharinum, Fagus grandiflora, Fraxinus americana, and the species of Betula mentioned above. Ulmus americana was planted all along the pathway.

On the islands were many of the forest and wetland communities mentioned above as well as Sambucus canadensis, Rhamnus cathartica (now taking over the shoreline where it was not originally planted), Viburnum lentago, Rubus odoratus, three varieties of Salix, Ligustrum vulgare, and Berberis sp. The groundcover Comptonia peregrina was planted in great numbers, none of which has survived. In contrast to today's planting standards the quantities were large.

The total cost of the Brookline side of the entire park, from St. Mary's Street to Jamaica Pond, including maintenance until 1905 (the park was essentially finished by 1899), was less than $500,000.

Walking through the park in different seasons today is a pleasure despite the 20th-century problems which plague it. In summer the deciduous trees provide cooling shade, in the fall, the aesthetic enjoyment of the brilliant foliage, and in winter, a buffer against the wind, and warm sunlight filtering through the bare branches. The trees and shrubs help reduce air and noise pollution. The shoreline is ringed with a variety of wildflowers, grasses and sedges which provide bloom from spring to fall. There is a rich, diversified eco-system in the park, ideal for a natural laboratory of great educational value. The pond shoreline, the streambank, the woodland and the open field are full of a variety of plant material, which, in turn, provide habitats for landbirds and waterfowl. A unique feature of the pond is that it does not freeze over in one corner and provides a winter home for many species from all over the metropolitan area. Muskrats, turtles, frogs, carp and catfish also find a home there.

Unfortunately, the park has suffered since it was completed. Change may be inevitable, but efforts must be made to stem the tide of destruction. The majority of the trees and shrubs planted by Olmsted on the Brookline side are gone, most prominently the elms. A few majestic maples, beeches and oaks survive. Offspring of some shrubs and trees mentioned earlier remain. The oak forest on the Boston side contains much of the original planting. Invasive plants such as Celastrus scandens, Rubus sp., Polygonum sp. and Rhamnus have taken over, preventing fruiting, and choking out other plants. A detailed study of the past and present planting should be made to decide what should be pruned, removed, replanted or redesigned. The problem of maintenance is a 20th-century dilemma. The question of proper management and funding did not plague the 19th-century park. Some system of maintenance must be devised in an age when town budgets have been severely cut. The maintenance standards of the 19th century, or even of the mid-20th when the park grounds were cultivated yearly, cannot possibly be matched today.

The pond is polluted and needs to be dredged again. Since the pond is at the foot of a drunlin, the run-off from the streets is significant. Leaking oil tanks from buildings several miles away seeped into the town drainage system three times in the last five years, causing major pollution. The pond banks are eroded, and the turf is torn up by parked cars. An intrinsic part of Olmsted's design was to divert attention away from the park's boundaries. Today's traffic on the parkway has the opposite effect. The beauty and function of the park is seriously harmed by this problem. The salt from the roads has damaged the plants, especially the maples. The footbridge is badly in need of repair. The missing island should be recreated. The rolling meadow behind the pond is now a debris- and glass-strewn baseball field with glaring lights for night games. An ugly quonset hut in the middle of the woods houses an MDC skating rink and has caused drainage problems in the kettle hole below it. The present restoration study is considering all these problems.

The validity of Olmsted Park in the 19th century was obvious both in terms of physical and social needs. The same is true of the park in the 20th century. Olmsted's provision of green space for the public good and his sanitary improvement of the river is as necessary and crucial as it was 100 years ago. The parkgoers are there at Leverett Pond in greater numbers than was evident a few years ago. Crime has been reduced since the increase in police protection. The Sunday strollers, the joggers, the bike-riders, the sunbathers, the undemanding young fishermen, even a karate class, are there enjoying the park.

The purpose of this study has been to gather information about the park, past and present, and to judge its validity today. The next step is to develop a restoration plan which retains the character of the park as Olmsted envisioned it and yet best answers 20th-century needs. Active recreation areas or embellishments should not be added. It is important to preserve the park as part of the total system, restoring the linear park plan of Olmsted and thereby implementing the 20th-century Charles-to-Charles Corridor Plan.

Olmsted's environmental concerns are mandatory ones today. We should continue to "act with nature." The mood of the times favors nature in an urban setting.

by Cornelia Hanna McMurtrie

Credit is due to many in researching this study. I am especially indebted to the Editors of The Olmsted Papers, and to Betsy Shure Gross, Eleanor M. McPeck, and Cynthia R. Zaitzevsky.
Gardening in Brookline, a 1903 Perspective, Provides Interesting
Look at the World That Was

The following material is excerpted from an essay entitled
Landscape Gardening in Brookline, written by Hazel G. Col-
lins, a Brookline resident, in 1903. The essay was awarded the
J. Murray Kay Prize, an award given annually to a junior in the
Brookline High School for a paper of local or national interest.
It is printed here by permission of the Brookline Public Library,
to which Miss Collins gave the manuscript in 1934.

There has been a very great development in the growth and
appreciation of landscape-gardening in America during the
past fifty years, in which Brookline has held a place of no mean
distinction. Long before this great awakening, she had held
considerable distinction from the horticulturists' point of view.
It is surprising to know how many residents there were here in
the first half of the last century who devoted their leisure time
to the raising of fine fruits and flowers. It is still more surprising
to find how many varieties of fruits were first introduced into
America or first grown to perfection by these enthusiasts.
When Downing wrote the first American book on landscape-
gardening . . . he found three estates in Brookline worth de-
scribing, and furthermore said of that part of the town near
Cottage, Warren and Heath Streets:

"The whole of this neighborhood of Brookline is a kind of
landscape garden, and there is nothing in America, of the sort,
so inexpressibly charming as the lanes which lead from one
cottage or villa to another. No animals are allowed to run at
large, and the open gates, with tempting vistas and glimpses
under the pendent boughs give it quite an Arcadian air of rural
freedom and enjoyment. These lanes are clothed with a profu-
sion of trees and wild shrubbery, often almost to the carriage
tracks, and curve and wind about, in a manner quite bewild-
ering to the stranger who attempts to thread them alone: and
there are more hints here for the lover of the picturesque in
lanes, than we ever saw assembled together in so small a com-
pass."

Today Brookline possesses one of the finest estates in Amer-
ica, one of the "great American examples of 'natural' land-
scape-gardening" as it has been called and also one of the
finest Italian gardens. Her schoolhouse grounds can rank as
high as any in America, while as part owner of the Muddy
River Parkway, one of the famous parkways of the country,
she certainly has some claim to distinction. Her greatest dis-
tinction of all, however, is the fact that Frederick Law Olmsted,
'the most remarkable artist yet born in America,' made his
home here."

The two White estates on Boylston Street opposite the old
Brookline Reservoir, are interesting, not only in being the first
places laid out by Mr. Olmsted after his coming to Brookline,
but also in themselves.

The estate of Mr. Andrew White lies entirely on a steeply
sloping hillside on which were already growing many fine elm
trees. The two problems were, then, to terrace the grounds so
as to provide a site for the house and pleasure grounds and to
preserve the elms and have them related to the general design.
The house is placed well up the slope, commanding a good
view across the reservoir. An interesting feature is the large ter-
race on this side of the house. A high retaining wall carries to
the level of the first floor. It is only partially flagged over, and is
shaded by two large elms growing in the turfed spaces. The
driveway from Boylston Street curves easily up the slope be-
tween elm trees to the rear of the house . . . . The terraced walks
just in back of the house are treated in formal style with rows of
clipped shrubs. The greenhouses, which are, perhaps, the best
known part of the place to Brookline people, are placed above
the terraces to the left of the house. A steep hillside is always
hard to treat, even apart from its conspicuousness. This estate,
it seems to us, is a successful example. Its keynote . . . is its
dignity and simplicity, its serenity and shady repose.

Next to this lies the estate of Mrs. Abby White. Here shrub-
bery plays a more important part in the general scheme. The
site is just uneven enough to be interesting, and is bounded on
three sides by public streets. The lawn shaded by a few fine
trees lies in front, separated from the house, which is on slight-
ly higher ground, by a low retaining wall of loose field stone
reaching clear across the grounds in three curves. This wall is
masked by vines, and a tangled mass of shrubbery above it
gives an air of seclusion to the immediate house grounds. In
the curve farthest from Sumner Road lies a little flower garden,
intersected by paths, while along the opposite curve extends a
foot-path leading out to Sumner Road through a turnstile.
Vines and shrubbery are planted along the street walls, giving
the whole place a pleasant air of privacy to what would have
otherwise been a very open conspicuous site.

Of small grounds, which are after all the most interesting to
the ordinary householder, Brookline has several fine ex-
amples.

The grounds of Mr. J.J. Storrow on High Street are interest-
ing in showing what can be accomplished on a difficult site.
The owner was wise in consulting Mr. Olmsted before he built
his house, otherwise a problem, already sufficiently difficult
owing to the cramped, tilted piece of land, might have become
impossible to solve satisfactorily, even by that master of his art,
it the house had been poorly placed. The fact that the land-
scape-gardener, and not the architect, is the one to consult first
is too often disregarded by prospective home makers . . . there
is a continuous descent [on the site] of eighteen feet. The
house is so placed as to command the view to the southeast
. . . A retaining wall of rough boulders holds the street on the
south and is covered with vines and banked at the corners with
low shrubbery, ferns and wild flowers. A little ravine for surface
drainage follows the dotted line on plan. Where it descends
under the footpath a little arch of stone carries out the idea of
the wall. The little lawn at the rear is pleasantly framed by
shrubbery screening the stable.

The tangled masses of bushes, the rough stone work, the
ferns and flowers, all give these grounds a decided pictur-
esque look entirely in keeping with their uneven hilly situa-
tion.
The Olmsted house on the corner of Warren and Dudley Streets is always admired by passersby and possesses for us a double interest being the home of Frederick Law Olmsted. It is a veritable little bower of a place. The square, old house is almost entirely hidden from the street; yet far from discouraging intimacy, a sight of the place makes one long to explore its hidden beauties. The uneven pole fence is neither stiff nor painfully "rustic," and the bushes and vines hang over it as if longing to escape into the street. The beautiful archway, over the carriage entrance, covered with trailing euonymus is a picture in itself and frames another picture — the driveway and a corner of the house scarcely visible for the mass of shrubbery in the circle in the center of the carriage turn.

Once inside the fence a perfect maze of wild beauty, from which there seems no escape, greets the eye. Following the little pathway, overhung by a huge lilac bush, from the driveway around the corner of the house, we suddenly come upon an unexpected breadth of view. A little lawn stretches before us. But even here the wild growth of bushes seems to grudge the house this little bit of cultivation, and intrenches upon its smooth green in irregular outline. Coming back to the carriage circle we discover a little path leading, apparently, into the fence, but making a turn brings us upon the street. So skillfully planned and planted is its opening that many people have never noticed its presence.

A thing that impressed us particularly was the little dell. When the land was filled in to make the streets, most people would have filled in this little place on the corner, between the streets and the office buildings, bringing it up to the level of the rest of the site. But the genius of Mr. Olmsted saw its value, and made here a picturesque dell. A little flight of steps leads down into it to the tiny oval path. The plot in the center, as well as the banks, is planted with bushes, shrubs, wild flowers and ferns in picturesque confusion.

We are sure there is not another place in Brookline that contributes so much to the appearance of the street, gives so much of its beauty to the passerby and yet is such an entire surprise to one entering its precincts, both in its complete seclusion and the unexpected breadth.

In choosing the various estates to describe here, we have not tried to take up all the estates worth seeing in Brookline, but have tried to pick out a few that seemed to us to have some special interest, either historical or artistic, and to make a fairly representative choice of the various types to be found here.

*Edited, 1981, by Leslie Smith Larkin, President, Brookline Historical Society, and Consultant to the Brookline Historical Commission*

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**Fairsted, A Look Back at Its History**

The house Frederick Law Olmsted moved into in Brookline in 1883 was a square, clapboarded, hip-roofed Federal-style structure with four tall chimneys and a two-story ell at the back. He bought it from the Clark sisters, Sarah and Susannah, descendants of the original owner, Joshua Child Clark, who tore down an older house on the site and built this one in 1810, the year he married Rebecca Boylston. The land had been her family’s, her grandfather, Dudley Boylston, having bought a large farm from the Buckminster family in the early 1700’s. By 1850 most of the farm had been sold off, and the remaining two acres, with house and barn, were what Olmsted purchased.

FLO was living in Manhattan when he came to Boston at the invitation of the Park Commission to lay out a park in the Back Bay Fens. More and more work came his way in Boston, and in 1878 he was engaged in planning the Arnold Arboretum, later part of the Emerald Necklace, with Charles Sprague Sargent, and living for the summer in Cambridge. In 1880 the Town of Brookline named three Park Commissioners of its own, one of whom was Sargent, and Olmsted was able to begin work on his plan for the improvement of the Muddy River with both Boston and Brookline. That summer he rented a house in the town, and the next year he leased his New York house and moved to Brookline year-round, renting first Mrs. Perrin’s house on Walnut Street, and later the Taylor house (since demolished) on Dudley Street. Both were nearby the house he later bought at 99 Warren Street.

Brookline appealed to Olmsted for a number of reasons — it was close to the site of much of his current work, the area in which he rented was rural and picturesque as A.J. Downing had pointed out, and last, but certainly not least, two of his good friends, with whom he worked closely, lived nearby — Charles S. Sargent at Holm Lea, off Warren Street, and the architect Henry Hobson Richardson, who had moved to Brookline in 1874. FLO first consulted with Richardson, then a Staten Island neighbor, in 1868, and they began their long and fruitful collaboration in 1871, working on many projects in the Boston area and elsewhere. The story goes that Olmsted, staying with Richardson one winter while on business in Boston, looked out the morning after a snowstorm to see a horse and plow clearing Cottage Street and said, “This is a civilized community. I’m going to live here.”

In looking for a house to buy, Olmsted was attracted by the old Clark house, despite Richardson’s overly generous offer of a lot on part of the land he occupied on Cottage Street. (Richardson appeared to forget that he was renting the property.) The Clark house then consisted of a center hall, two front parlors, a dining room and kitchen on the first floor, and four bedrooms on the second floor, with an ell containing the laundry room, woodshed and servants’ or children’s rooms. The site was unusual, being bounded on three sides by Warren, Dudley and Fairmount Streets, and sloping upward to Green Hill, or Fairmount, to the west behind the house. Even before Olmsted’s landscaping of the site, the place was undoubtedly picturesque and appealing. The Clark sisters were reluctant to sell but FLO and his step-son and nephew, John C. Olmsted, won them over with a plan to build them a house on a corner of the property which was to be theirs rent-free for life. In addition, Olmsted agreed to take the house and land subject to a mortgage so that the sisters might have a regular income. John Olmsted designed the shingle-style house, the present 12 Fairmount Street, making changes to suit the Clarks, and the arrangement was apparently satisfactory for all concerned. For many years the new house was called the Clark cottage to differentiate it from the Clark house.

As soon as the family took possession of the house in the spring of 1883, John was placed in charge of rehabilitating and remodeling it. FLO immediately took over the north parlor as
his office. An open space between this room and the old kitchen was walled in by 1884, and the original stairway in the front hall was replaced by a much larger one, all of mahogany, with heavy turned newel posts and balusters, a large floor-to-ceiling post, and a long curved rail leading to the second floor. Also, a conservatory was extended out from the old dining room. In 1887 the architect Charles H. Walker, a neighbor, was engaged to enlarge the office by adding an extension to the north, as well as a large bay window. The beamed ceiling was probably added at this time. Over the bay window a sleeping porch which opened off Olmsted’s bedroom was built. The windows of the porch are framed in fanciful Moorish-type arches and lattice work, contrasting with the simple style of the rest of the house.

During this time Olmsted was also attending to the grounds. A lawn on the south side of the house extends to plantings of bushes and clumps of birches near Warren Street, and tall deciduous and evergreen trees toward the back of the property, behind all of which a low stone wall marks the boundary. In front of the house a circular driveway, from the center of which rises a tall spruce surrounded by bushes, is bordered to one side by a little dell planted with rhododendrons and other evergreens, and walked by a vine-covered outcropping of pudding-stone and the driveway’s retaining wall of natural boulders. A spruce pole or “grapestake” fence and planting along the street screen the house and office buildings, even though one drafting room and the vault are built close to the lot line.

In 1903 the present kitchen (since remodeled) was added, and the old kitchen was very probably made into a dining room at that time. At any rate, most of the large old-fashioned fireplace was filled in, and a small cast iron grate installed. The offices, drafting rooms and vault, all built on the north side of the house, were added at various times between 1889 and 1925. The front of the house, however, remains much as it must have looked when Olmsted first saw it in the 1880’s. After his death on August 28, 1903, it was at Fairstede, the home he had bought twenty years earlier, that a memorial service was held for him.

Leslie Smith Larkin
Consultant, Brookline Historical Commission

Much of the information for this article is drawn from Laura Wood Roper’s FLO, a Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted and Elizabeth Stephenson’s Park Maker, a Life of Frederick Law Olmsted.

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**Master Plan for the Back Bay Fens To Be Presented at NAOP Conference**

In 1976, the City of Boston commissioned Carol R. Johnson & Associates, Inc. to prepare a preservation Master Plan Report for the Back Bay Fens. The purpose of the report was to set guidelines for park preservation and improvement. In this way, over time, incremental projects could be coordinated to maintain a continuity of construction materials and design theme.

The Preservation Master Plan was prepared with the assistance of both the City of Boston and the Massachusetts Metropolitan District Commission. The plan recognizes work prepared during recent years by groups operating in the Fens area and uses survey and analysis information developed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council in 1973.

Involvement with community groups during the design process was important. The Boston Redevelopment Authority and the City of Boston Public Facilities staff had been coordinating with FenPAC (a community group) on the needs of the area for some time. We met with numerous community groups concerned with the Fens as well as FenPAC, which is the largest of the concerned citizen groups.

The Master Plan was prepared in a format directed at certain funding agencies and carefully identified specific problem areas so information was available for restudy of priorities depending on current need and available funds. We did not restudy water quality which had already been done for the city, but only studied the remaining aspects of park quality for which there was no previous data. In this manner, data was provided so funds can be appropriated for bridges, paths and plantings to stem the tides of deterioration even though the massive funds required for the correcting of the water quality are not yet available.

Back Bay Fens has indeed suffered from neglect and deterioration which was much more a matter of Boston’s general economic distress than lack of concern for the park. There were and still are many competing demands for the city’s tax dollars. Park rehabilitation does not always rank high unless citizens make their support for it known in an effective way. FenPAC has done this. The fact that it was worthwhile to undertake the Master Plan reflects an increased ability to invest in the park because of a stronger local economy and tax base and increased Federal and state dollars, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, to support such investment.

Since the completion of the Preservation Master Plan, this office has continued to coordinate with FenPAC in the detailed design and construction of the new footbridges and in the restoration of the Westland Avenue Gates where, through the good offices of FenPAC, one of the missing sculptural lion’s heads was located. I think it is important to point out what projects have been fulfilled based on the Master Plan — tree rehabilitation 1978, two new bridges and water’s edge rehabilitation under construction. This work is just the beginning of what needs to be done on the Fenway, but something is being done. High quality materials and design are being used to minimize maintenance and promote long life as well as to relate to the historic structures in the area.

Given new opportunities for park rehabilitation, the purpose of the Master Plan, as we saw it, was to describe existing conditions (including the competing demands for active recreation not accommodated by Olmsted) and to set forth general criteria for park improvements. What projects would be most important to arrest further deterioration? Which improvements would be most consistent with Olmsted’s concepts or, if inconsistent, still worthwhile? To what design and material standards should the city adhere to from an historic preservation standpoint? How much should these improvements cost? These are some of the philosophical and design issues that the Master Plan had to address.
A good Master Plan establishes criteria and guidelines but its development priorities must be under constant review so that they both meet current problems and provide a link with the past and future.

Both this Master Plan, and the one prepared by V. Michael Weimayr for Franklin Park, will be presented in detail at the forthcoming NAOP conference.

Carol Johnson
Carol R. Johnson & Associates
Landscape Architects

Franklin Park Master Plan
Commissioned by
Boston Department of Parks and Recreation

In 1978, the Boston Parks and Recreation Department asked us to prepare a Revised General Plan of Franklin Park. In 1886, Frederick Law Olmsted prepared the original plan of the Park. It seemed timely that a new plan be prepared for the goals and objectives of the park.

As co-author of the book Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., Founder of Landscape Architecture in America, and a devoted Olmsted fan, I was quite familiar with the principles which guided Olmsted's park design. From this point of view, the first question was: How strongly do we adhere to the historic context, and how do we respond to the twentieth-century needs? Secondly, we asked: To what degree do we address immediate problems, and to what extent should the plan be inspirational?

Our early approach was to assemble all available information pertaining to Franklin Park and to seek out the very best similar general plan for another major park which we hoped would serve as a guide so that we might start with a sound approach.

There had been considerable interest in Franklin Park over the past several years which generated reports by the Harvard School of Design students, a study by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, an environmental impact report for the new Franklin Park Zoo, and lists of needs and interests by the Franklin Park Coalition.

As Consultants to the Boston Parks and Recreation Department our firm was specifically requested to limit our early contact with the community until we had drafted our initial report. For whatever purpose this request was made, we recognize now that it did cause some resentment, particularly from the Franklin Park Coalition, the community-based group most closely involved with the fortunes of Franklin Park. This "uninformed" early approach, however, did allow us a totally fresh overview of the park and its historical context.

The outline of our plan was quite straightforward. We sought to find what made the original Olmsted Plan great, we evaluated the causes of the park's decline, we presented proposals which we feel will restore the park to its original greatness, and we offered suggestions to maintain its vitality.

Prof. Norman Newton, in his book Design of the Land, notes that Franklin Park is one of Olmsted's three finest parks. Although Franklin Park has many of the standard great park features such as the great meadow, the wilderness, the greeting, a circuit drive, a pond and a pedestrian underpass, we asked if these components were enough to make Franklin Park equal to Central and Prospect Parks (the other parks cited by Newton).

From the day Central and Prospect Parks were open, the parks were subject to endless well-meaning demands for special improvements, perhaps worthy in spirit but not supportive of the justifying purpose to provide a place for the enjoyment of rural scenery. We also know that children's play parks, zoos, exotic trees, statues, sports fields, promenades and other such park features are desired by many park users. But such active and formal activities are in direct conflict with the all-important pastoral landscape.

Olmsted's stroke of genius in conceiving Franklin Park was to design not one, but two totally different parks. The Front Park, open day and night, was to be the place for the crowd-gathering, noisy activities and obviously man-made objects. The Main Park, open during daylight hours, was to be accessible only by three large gates, and was to be of totally rural nature where roads and structures blend with the scenery, and buildings are apparent only to those who know their location.

With this understanding of the two-park plan, we were then able to proceed with our evaluation of the park. Tolerable and intolerable intrusions could be evaluated and the two-park concept could be re-activated to meet today's needs and demands.

In retrospect the delivery of the Revised General Plan was no easy process. Endless hours were spent in discussions with the Franklin Park Coalition and the various involved public agencies. Plans and proposals were made and changed, pages of text were written and rewritten. Even the format of the plan, originally somewhat rigid and technical, was restructured to a more familiar style.

As the plan came off the presses it was severely criticized by the Coalition, particularly for its "lack of landscaping analysis" and its limited concern "with the actual condition of the parkland itself." As personally disappointing as this reaction was, it did emphasize the need to describe ever so clearly to the community the actual use and function of the General Plan. A general plan is only the framework within which specific site decisions can be made. The plan must be an inspiration and must set out clearly the justifying purpose of the park. It must state goals and objectives and it must lay out plans, programs, and a methodology for achieving them. It must be specific enough to be useful and general enough to withstand the pressures of change. And as here, in the case of Franklin Park, it must strive to maintain the Olmsted spirit which makes this park a park of national significance.

V. Michael Weimayr
V. Michael Weimayr Associates
Urban Landscape Architects

By permission of LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE magazine which contains a slightly revised version of this article in the January, 1981 issue.
North Easton's Rock Cairn Another Example of the Diversity of Olmsted's Work

Oliver Ames came to North Easton, south of Boston, in 1803 to buy the water rights along the Quisset River. Here he began his shovel-making business, which by the latter part of the 19th century had become the largest in the world. Both the terrain, some natural and some manmade, and the character of the Ames family were major factors in the development of North Easton; and after the 1870's, "governed Richardson's and Olmsted's transformation of a prosaic industrial town into one notable for its coherent plan and aesthetic merit."

The Ameses were never far from the growing town's activities and life. North Easton was physically, functionally and aesthetically a very cohesive place, with the shovel factories and transportation buildings at its core and the houses for workers and other townspeople nearby. Until the 1860's the family worked side by side with the employees. They built only practical things. They tried to provide everything necessary for the well-being of their workers. With the coming of the third generation, however, there was a decided shift in priorities. The Ameses had benefitted from the hard work of Oliver and his sons, Oakes and Oliver, and had accumulated wealth, education and a growing awareness of their role in constructing and maintaining the community. These conditions set the stage for both Henry H. Richardson and Frederick Law Olmsted. In 1879, having seen the Ames Free Library built, Oakes A. Ames commissioned Richardson and Olmsted to build Oakes Ames Memorial Hall and plan a Public Square which was to incorporate a Cairn.

Olmsted referred to the rectangular piece of land bordered on the west by the Hall and Library and on the south by the school as the Public Square, and it was here his idea for a memorial Cairn was to be realized. The land consisted of a fiat parcel which ended sharply in a high ridge on the southern side. The plans were submitted to Oakes Ames in late 1881, and on April 10, 1882, Olmsted wrote at length describing in detail the rockwork itself as well as the symbolism it evoked:

"In very old times it was customary to commemorate important events by a form of monument in the raising of which all the members of a community could have a direct part. This was done by their bringing together at a place agreed upon a great quantity of loose stones and laying them up in a conical pile known as a cairn. The outside stones of a cairn are usually so heavy that they could only have been lifted to their place by machinery or with great labor of many men, but the interior mass is more generally in part of smaller stones, some of which might have been brought by the hands of the youngest and feeblest of the community. The oldest and most enduring monuments in the world are of this kind and some of them, because of the beautiful plants that have become rooted in them and which spring out of their crevices or have grown over them from the soil at their base, are far more interesting and pleasant to see than the greater number of those since constructed of massive masonry and elaborately sculptured."

This area was becoming the real focus of the town, and certainly would benefit by visual and physical improvement all those who passed by. As part of the Public Square the Cairn was important symbolically as well as visually. As a memorial, the whole town would have an enduring part of it. The people would walk and rest upon the terrace, participate in all related ceremonies and even care for its flowers. Visually the Cairn was to be but one important feature of the Square. As in Central Park, Olmsted saw his work as "a single work of art, and as such subject to the primary law of every work of art, namely, that it shall be framed upon a single, noble motive, to which the design of all its parts... shall be confluent and helpful."

Although the architecture surrounding the Public Square was awesome, the actual planting and design were much in keeping with the natural elements already there.

The actual stonework of the Cairn was done by July of 1882. By 1886 there were many plants growing out of the crevices of the arch under the rockwork, and along its base. Already some of these plants appeared somewhat overgrown and overpowering. By 1887, however, Olmsted felt compelled to write Oakes Ames of his complete distress about the project. His vision and the reality that had been carried out were clearly not the same thing. It was, to him, a disaster and must have been an enormous disappointment considering the efforts he had put into this memorial plan. It failed, he felt, mainly due to improper planting, and he wrote, "It can never be a decent thing standing where it does until the jumbo wall is covered with the originally designed close-fitting dress of fine, delicate foliage. The foliage of the plants now growing upward from the outer base work is and always will be worthless until the proper body dress is to be seen through it, or, as more particularly in the case of the glossy evergreens, blending with it. The Virginia Creeper will not supply this body dress. The great coarse sedums planted last year will not. The palid euonymus planted last year... will not."

Olmsted obviously felt strongly about the project. He had designed a proper memorial in the most visible area in North Easton, and to have it be anything but what he had hoped simply wasn't right. The delicate and elusive effect of rockwork showing through the "sheets of foliage" escaped him. However, the failure is only in terms of practicality. An objective observer would probably conclude that visually this is a brilliantly conceived visual focus for North Easton despite the failure of the plantings, less than adequate maintenance and the encroachments of modern civilization.

Eleanor G. Ames

Ed. Note. This synopsis of Olmsted's involvement with the Ames family of North Easton, and especially the construction of the memorial Cairn there has been drawn from a comprehensive document for the Radcliffe Seminars Program by Eleanor Ames. It draws heavily on the writings of Laura Wood Roper, Albert Fein, Charles Beveridge, Elizabeth Barlow and others, as well as the writings of Olmsted himself, and we are indebted to their scholarship for the assistance it gave.
North Easton's park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, boasted a Memorial Rock Cairn, seen here as it looked in 1886.

Memorial Hall at North Easton was planned as the center of community life.
Sudbrook, Maryland, An Olmsted Community Under Attack

The Sudbrook Club of Pikesville, Maryland has been awarded a $1200 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, D.C. This grant, which will be matched by residents of the Sudbrook Club, was awarded to help defray the legal expenses which the Club expects to incur in its efforts to protect the Sudbrook Park National Historic District from the substantial adverse impact of the planned extension of the Baltimore-area rapid transit system to Owings Mills. Due to the imminent danger to the Sudbrook Park National Historic District posed by the current plans of the Mass Transit Administration, the National Trust for Historic Preservation judged Sudbrook Park to be one of the most worthy recipients of a grant in its Consultant Services category.

Sudbrook Park was entered on the National Register of historic places in June, 1973. It was designed in 1889 by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. Located inside the Beltway in the Pikesville area of Baltimore County, Sudbrook Park today is a residential community of turn-of-the-century and post-World War I and II homes set along gently curving streets amidst towering old oaks. These uniquely Olmstedian features — curvilinear streets, open greenswards, and profuse plantings — were determinative in Sudbrook Park's nomination to the National Register as a National Historic District. A large part of Olmsted's genius was his ability to create an "atmosphere of rural tranquility" close to, but undisturbed by, urban amenities. The artistry of Olmsted's design is evident when one enters Sudbrook Park, where tranquil, bucolic charm has prevailed for over ninety years.

The residents of this historic community, documented as quieter than average by the Baltimore Mass Transit Administration's noise consultants, are extremely upset by the current plans to run more than 300 transit trains a day through the National Historic District and to tear down its bordering woods in order to build thirteen acres of concrete parking and transit station facilities. Such devastating and permanent alterations to the landscape, along with the introduction of the incessant noise of the trains, would work irreparable harm on the calm ambience that has characterized Sudbrook Park since its creation. Sudbrook Park is one of only three suburban villages designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. in the United States, and its residents are convinced that the current plans of the Mass Transit Administration would have a substantial adverse impact on the integrity of the Sudbrook Park National Historic District.

Although residents have tried to work informally with the Mass Transit Administration for a complete tunneling of the tracks and elimination of the Milford Mill Station, positive results have not been forthcoming. Recently, the Sudbrook Club retained Geoffrey S. Mitchell and Christopher R. West of the Baltimore City law firm of Semmes, Bowen & Semmes, in an effort to preserve the National Historic District and to secure for it the protections accorded under Federal law. This firm, which has also announced its intention to match the grant awarded by the National Trust, recently was instrumental in protecting the Federal Hill and Fells Point Historic Districts from the devastating effects of proposed interstate highways.

Chartered by Congress in 1949, the National Trust for Historic Preservation encourages participation by Americans in the preservation of this country's buildings, sites, objects, districts, and structures. This is done, in part, through grants and loans to member nonprofit organizations and public agencies.

In commenting on the recent grant, Larry Stahl, President of the Sudbrook Club, said, "If a rare and original painting were about to be slashed with a knife, art lovers all over would be concerned. Frederick Law Olmsted's community and park designs are every bit as much a work of art — each with a special character and historic value. Sudbrook Park can and must be preserved; we will do whatever is necessary to attain that goal."

Melanie Anson

The town of Sudbrook, Maryland, another Olmsted-designed community, also boasts the classic curvilinear roads for which the designer was famous. Now the community is threatened by a rapid transit line.
Mystery Plan Revealed

The identification of the "Mystery Plan" in the last newsletter was an easy matter for me. As past-President of the Frederick Law Olmsted Society of Riverside, Illinois, the plan and the memory of that lovely village are indelibly impressed on my mind. The curvilinear, tree-lined streets which encircle large, open green spaces of Riverside's 1500 acres (700 are public park land) follow the meandering path of the Des Plaines River, which forms the western boundary of the village. In 1868 this picturesque setting was chosen by the Riverside Land Improvement Co. as the location for the development of the "first planned suburban community." For the undertaking the company wanted to employ the very best and naturally looked to the famed designers of Central Park, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, as their inspiration in the creation of a "Village in a Park," a village which would combine the amenities of city life with the rural appeal of the countryside. Olmsted visited the location for the first time in 1868 and in a letter written to his wife described the scene: "a river (Aux Plaines) two hundred feet wide flowing slowly on limestone bottom, banks generally sandy and somewhat elevated above the prime level bearing tolerable trees, many elms... a village in a park." The firm of Olmsted, Vaux and Co. then took up the challenge and began to create an environment for the citizens of Riverside which would enable them to live in harmony with nature as part of everyday urban living. In recognition of its unique character the village was designated as one of the nation's Historic Landmarks in 1970.

We have been asked to take an in-depth look at Riverside, "The Ideal Community," the concept, the realization and the heritage today: what it's like to maintain a landmark community politically, economically and physically, and what it's like to live, as Daniel Burnham noted, in a landscape painted with nature. This narrative, with pictures, will be a part of the next issue of the newsletter. Sandra L. Higgins

NATIONAL NEWS OF OLMSTED PARKS

Editor's Note: In each issue of the National Association's Newsletter we will share interesting items of local concern which may also have importance elsewhere. Because of its brevity, each mention will obscure a considerable amount of additional information which can generally be secured from the local news sources, or through the National Association. We also would welcome your contributions to this Newsletter feature, and hope to find space to print them. Every reasonable effort has been made to check the complete accuracy of the information we have received. However, the possibility of error does exist, and different interpretations of the same facts are always possible. We assume full responsibility for such errors should they arise, and will try in subsequent issues to make them right whenever we can.

Newark, NJ
Branch Brook Park has been officially accepted on the National Register for Historic Places. The effort, led by the Cherry Blossom Festival, will give added protection to the park, the beauties of which were enjoyed by members of the NAOP Steering Committee during their meeting there in October.

Riverside, IL
Word comes from Dorothy Unger that the Citizen Stamp Advisory Committee to the United States Postal Service is again considering issuance of a Frederick Law Olmsted Memorial Stamp, an idea originated in Riverside in 1975. What could be more fitting than to have it appear in the year Fai-sted, his home and office is being dedicated as a National Historic Site? If you support this proposal, write both the Citizen Stamp Advisory Committee and the Director of Stamps, United States Postal Service, Washington, D.C. 20260.

Hartford, CT
Though not designed by Olmsted, Bushnell Park is in the city of Olmsted's birth, and its designer, Jacob Weidenmann, did eventually become an Olmsted partner. Largely through the efforts of the Hartford Downtown Council, a Friends of Bushnell Park Improvement Association is being formed, and its existence will certainly focus on the needs of other Hartford parks, such as Keney Park designed for Olmsted and Olmsted by Charles Eliot.

Chicago, IL
By a unanimous vote of the Trustees of the Friends of the Parks, the National Association's 1982 Conference will be hosted by them in June of that year, and the town of Riverside will cooperate fully in providing all delegates with an interesting and informative series of tours and meetings.

New York, NY
Word is being awaited, momentarily, on Commissioner Gordon Davis's decision with regard to Christo, the artist's plan to install some 11,000 "gates" along the pathways of Central Park and to drape them with saffron cloth to provide a series, or some twenty miles of billowing archways for visitors to Central Park. Though only to remain up for two weeks, the project has generated heated controversy in art and park-preservation circles in New York, and become the center of many dinner-table conversations. Community Board 5, one of the strongest citizen groups concerned with the park recently voted 21-24 against allowing the proposed work of art to be exhibited on top of the existing one, Central Park.

The Answer Was No!

Boston, MA
The Franklin Park Coalition has secured funding to reprint its excellent brochure. Copies can be secured from the Coalition at 319 Forest Hills Street, Jamaica Plain, Mass. 02130. Efforts are being made to reprint Cynthia Zaitzevsky's excellent report on Frederick Law Olmsted in Brookline, a Preliminary Study of His Public Works, which originally appeared in the Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1975-1978.

New York, NY
William S. Beinecke, the former Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Sperry and Hutchinson Company, has accepted as Chairman of the Central Park Conservancy, a new organization of private citizens and public officials whose purpose is to assist in the restoration of Central Park and to help fund specific programs of maintenance, horticulture, security and visitor services which are not now provided by the city.

Niagara Frontier
National Co-chair Joan Bozé announced that the Buffalo Friends of the Olmsted Parks, initiators of the First National Conference on Olmsted Parks in Buffalo last year, are planning an "Olmsted on the Niagara Frontier Day" in March. Olmsted's involvement with the Niagara Falls Reservation and five major Buffalo parks (Dela ware Park, Frontier Park, South Park, Cazenovia Park and the former Humboldt Park) which have been nominated for the National Register, will be featured, along with original maps and drawings.
In the life of any new organization, the first people to join, and by joining signify their financial and moral support, constitute a unique family, one we would expect to have a lasting and important relationship to the organization. We are pleased, therefore, to list our Charter Members, together with the early financial contributors who have made the start of this organization possible.

**Individual Members**

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