Advocacy, Research and Website Projects now on the Drawing Board

Advocacy
NAOP will embark this fall on a partnership project to identify Olmsted-designed parks that are in need of help in challenging urban settings. Charles Beveridge has developed for NAOP a list of such parks in about 17 states. The first step will be to identify a public or private person who can provide information on the state of the park, the existence of a community group to protect and rebuild it, and public sector support for its rescue. NAOP will then survey all such identified park groups to determine their interest in participating in a pilot project. From the responses, five will be invited to provide further information from which one will be selected for the pilot. Concurrently, NAOP will have an extensive database for future efforts.

NAOP will offer in this pilot support from NAOP, access to its network of technical support, pro bono and paid, and will consider a modest grant to be matched on some basis.

Research
NAOP undertook last year to initiate a determination for public parks of what plans of the Olmsted firm’s ninety years were implemented. Our first efforts are underway in Illinois and Indiana under the guidance of board member Carla Corbin and will pick up momentum this fall. This is a prototype project to establish the questions to be asked and the information to be collected that gives some sense of partial or complete implementation of Olmsted plans, degree of variation from plan, if any, additional work done and by whom, present condition, and the existence of a funds organization. This prototype will guide future research into Olmsted work in other states.

NAOP will launch two additional projects this fall: identifying unpublished work on the Olmsteds and their landscape and planting plans, many done as part of Landscape Architectural degree programs; and developing a comparable bibliography of master plans created for Olmsted parks, a work in progress being undertaken by Co-chair Lucy Lawless and Treasurer Caroline Loughlin.

NAOP Website
Please check www.olmsted.org this fall to catch NAOP’s redesigned website. It will shine with photographs, be more informative, easier to navigate, and maintained to insure that all information is timely.

2005 Conference on Partnerships in Parks

Plans are underway for the next NAOP biennial conference, to be presented in cooperation with City Parks Alliance and the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy in Buffalo, New York, from May 19 – 22, 2005.

It Takes a Partnership...Urban Parks in the New Century will explore the benefits and challenges of public/private partnerships in urban historic and non-historic parks. The City of Buffalo will provide a setting rich with examples of historic landscape preservation and the role of partnerships that will be explored through tours and panel sessions. Historians will discuss the place of the Buffalo park and parkway system in Frederick Law Olmsted’s and Calvins Vaux’s careers and the American park movement. New approaches and agreements for managing these park systems between the government sector and non-profit organizations, with case studies from the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy and Chicago’s Millennium Park, will also be highlighted. Other programs of particular interest to NAOP members include a workshop on National Register and National Historic Landmark Status for Olmsted Parks, Development and Marketing Strategies, and Outreach and Education to Community Groups. Charles McLaughlin will deliver the opening night keynote address, marking the 25th anniversary of the first organizational meeting of NAOP.

NAOP Presents Workshop at National Conference
NAOP, in cooperation with the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy, will present a workshop on Historic Urban Parks and Partnerships on Sunday, October 3 as part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. The workshop has been developed to provide an overview of how communities can become engaged in restoration of historic urban parks and will feature roundtable discussions on organizational development, networking and advocacy, engaging the public, working with consultants, and federal partnerships. Current and past NAOP Board members, including Charles Binions, Lucy Lawless, Caroline Loughlin, Susan West Montgomery, Kevin Moore, Susan Rademacher, and Debbie Trinkle will be featured as panelists and facilitators. In addition to the topics covered, the program is intended to introduce NAOP to people in the historic preservation community and to serve as a forum for ideas that can be incorporated into the 2005 Buffalo conference.
Reception Planned During Christo’s Central Park Installation

The National Association for Olmsted Parks is planning an exciting, fund-raising event in February. Fifty people will be invited to have a guided tour of the Christo draping of Central Park followed by a reception. Christo will install 7500 gates, 16 feet high, six feet wide and 18 feet apart along 23 miles of Central Park footpaths. Gate frames are covered with saffron colored fabric from the gate top to within seven feet of the ground. This installation will be executed with due attention to the park environment and Olmsted design. All poles will be inserted in 600 pound bases sitting on the paths. Christo covers all costs of the installation.

A New Study on the Olmsteds in Missouri

Now that the cataloguing of the Olmsted records is almost complete and available at our fingertips through ORGO, the NAOP would like to know more precisely how many of these projects were executed, and what their condition is today. A recently completed look at Olmsted work in Missouri suggests that this can be a gratifying process.

ORGO identifies 17 Olmsted job numbers in Missouri, and only eight of these resulted in executed designs even in part. They include significant, even seminal work, not so much in fine details as in bold concepts, which once they were proposed seemed inevitable.

John Charles Olmsted made two recommendations that have shaped design of St. Louis. In 1895, he looked at the new site proposed for Washington University (Job No. 1729) and immediately determined that the school’s most important building should be on axis with Lindell Boulevard. The competition-winning design by Cope & Stewardson in 1899 followed that decision, and Brookings Hall served as headquarters for the 1904 World’s Fair. In his 1896 master plan for the Missouri Botanical Garden (Job No. 81), John Charles turned the whole axis of the garden 90 degrees to face Florissant, a new residential parkway. In 1960, the greenhouse on that axis was replaced by the famous Geodesic dome Climatron.

The firm created landscapes for three palatial private residences in St. Louis: for John T. Davis in 1893-94 (probably by Charles Eliot; Job No. 1384); for Henry Clay Pierce in 1895 (Job No. 1801), and for David R. Francis in 1895-96 (Warren Manning; Job No. 145). The grounds of the Davis and Francis houses survive, and the designs could be replanted.

The architect Henry Van Brunt invited the senior Olmsted to advise on a projected Kansas City system in 1892, while FLO was working on the Chicago World’s Fair. Colleague Henry Sargent Codman visited, and his seven-page preliminary report (Job No. 1250) sets out a philosophy of park purposes and locations that underpins the great achievement made by George Kessler and others in succeeding decades. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. got involved with landscaping for the Kansas City Liberty Memorial in 1927, after the 217-foot tower had already been erected to designs by H. Van Buren Maconagle. He worked with the local firm Hare & Hare for more than a decade on this, the biggest World War I memorial in the country.

The full six-page report was published in the newsletter of the St. Louis Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians and is available free from NAOP board member Esley Hamilton at ehamilton@stlouis.com or 314-615-0357.
NAOP Partner Establishes a Budding Program in Tree Care for Urban Youth

Working in collaboration with Boston Community Development Partnership, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center and Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation is establishing a career development program in tree care for inner-city youth. The program, designed as a community-based training opportunity, provides participants with hands-on experiences in local parks.

Using parks as classrooms, students learn valuable vocational skills while improving the condition of park resources. Working under the guidance of professional arborists who serve as instructors and mentors, urban youth are introduced to non-traditional career opportunities in tree care, park management, and cultural landscape preservation. Deviating with the fundamental principles of Outward Bound, to empower young people through hands-on experiences, the goal of the program is to inspire a strong interest in community and public service.

Several private and public organizations, including arboriculture corporations, state arborist associations, and national, city, and state park systems are interested in supporting the program. These organizations recognize the program’s potential to address a critical need for well-trained and highly motivated field staff. Working in collaboration with these organizations, the program will establish apprenticeship opportunities for graduating participants to gain additional field experience before advancing into career positions.

The program is designed to:

- Provide training opportunities in tree care, park management, and cultural landscape preservation for urban youth;
- Assist with improving the condition of park resources;
- Foster community interest and involvement in local park stewardship;
- Offer unique opportunities to develop successful public/private partnerships;
- Provide a trained, engaged, and motivated source of future park employees.

The Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation (OCLP) is a National Park Service center in the Northeast Region devoted to the planning, research, and stewardship of historic landscapes. The NAOP is partnering with the OCLP to produce technical briefs on historic landscape maintenance topics using the Olmsted archives for examples as well as to provide landscape maintenance training for stewards of historic urban parks.

For additional information please contact Charles Pepper, Acting Director, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation at 617-566-1689 ext. 260, email: charlie_pepper@nps.gov or Dan McCarthy, Certified Arborist, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation at 617-566-1689 ext. 262, email: dan_mccarthy@nps.gov

Mountain View Cemetery Gets a Partial Reprieve

Neighbors and preservationists have reached a settlement in their suit against Mountain View Cemetery and the City of Oakland (California) over an 18,000 square foot complex proposed in Frederick Law Olmsted’s 1885 cemetery landscape. However, concerns remain over additional demolition and construction work underway which was not addressed in the settlement.

The cemetery and approved city permits in 2003 to construct a mausoleum, columbarium and chapel on Olmsted’s double ring road of the central entry. In response, the Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League (PANIL), the local neighborhood group, and the California Preservation Foundation filed suit under the California Environmental Quality Act.

A settlement reached in July 2004 provides that Mountain View Cemetery withdraws its application for the disputed complex, that the City of Oakland withdraws all approvals and permits for the complex, and that PANIL and CPF withdraw their suit. This means that when the cemetery comes forward with another proposal for a mausoleum and columbarium structure, the earlier inadequate historical analysis can be recycled to justify the construction. CPF and PANIL hope that a new and more thorough analysis at that time can suggest ways to minimize impacts on the historic landscape as well as identify mitigations.

A number of urgent preservation concerns remain, as the cemetery is not protected by landmark designation. While the settlement is being finalized, the cemetery embarked on demolition and reconfiguration of Olmsted’s double ring road entry. Without landmark status, only routine permits for the accompanying plumbing and sewer work were required.

Additionally, many historic features such as roads, unusual stone-shaped cement gutters, and original retaining walls, as well as vandalized monuments, are in need of repair. The cemetery lacks a preservation and maintenance master plan which meets the National Park Service’s Historic Landscape Initiative guidelines.

PANIL and Olmsted Heritage Alliance (Oakland’s historic preservation association) are seeking non-adversarial conversations with the cemetery regarding short- and long-term plans. They also see landmark designation as crucial to guiding appropriate future preservation and development projects in the cemetery.

Further information, including site plans and photos, is available on the web at www.panil.org or PANIL, P.O. Box 20375, Oakland CA 94629. Or call Valerie Winemiller at 510-653-4652.