Conference Examines “Balancing Nature & Culture”

As the April 20–21 NAOP Conference, “Balancing Nature & Culture in Historic Landscapes: A Celebration of Biltmore’s Centennial” in Asheville, NC, a wide range of ideas was presented. The complete text of proceedings will be published in 1996. A sampling follows from the Field Notes editor:

Ethan Carr, Landscape Historian, National Park Service-Park Historic Architecture Division: Creating a park involves changing a place to a picture; changing land to a landscape. To preserve landscapes we must change them. The national parks are complex artifacts of landscape architecture. We can’t think of them as either strictly cultural or strictly natural.

Robert Z. Meinhick, FASLA, Dean, Department of Architecture and Allied Arts, University of Oregon, Eugene OR: The United States has a tradition of landscape violence, leading to an adversarial relationship between those who would first consider nature and those who would first consider culture. We have created rigid pigeonholes: natural, historic, recreational. But Yosemite, for example, no longer fits any of these; it no longer even fits the image conveyed by the slides for sale in the gift shops. We need to learn the grammar of landscape as we learn another language and consider the complex constructions of overlapping layers. In ecology, an ecotone is a transition zone between two different environments. Its borders are unclear. Perhaps we should have a semantic ecotone for discussing cultural landscapes.

Michael Everett, Professor, Road and Land Institute, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence RI: We need to be aware of the incrementalness of history, of history as a continuum in which things, especially landscapes, evolve. In planning and design it is important to make sure that everyone means the same things by the terms they use and to overcome the cracks between professions caused by the budding of the fields as separate disciplines: architecture, landscape architecture, preservation.

Robert E. Cook, Director, Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain MA: Is landscape preservation an oxymoron? Ecological restoration is a highly refined type of gardening. We need to consider the flux of nature rather than the balance of nature. In the restoration of paintings, which has been considered for centuries, there are three different and accepted methods of restoring the varnish, each of which emphasizes a different aspect of the painting’s character.

John Dixon Hunt, Chairman, Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania PA: Landscape architecture involves inventing or creating a nature viable for that time and place. The changes that come with age are part of the artifact; the intentions of the creator are unknowable; any treatment is an interpretation.

Rolf Sauer, ASLA, Landscape Architect, Principal and Master Plan Project Director, Andropogon Associates, Ltd., Philadelphia PA: The master plan for renewing Louisville, KY’s, Olmsted parks and boulevards is a combination of historic preservation and ecological restoration. Much of conventional maintenance degrades cultural and natural resources. About 70% of park labor is devoted to turf management; 30% to litter. Mown grass is almost like green asphalt in its effect on drainage.

READING

Browse the extensive list of Olmsted and landscape-related books and articles. See inside.
CONFERENCES

June 15-16; September 14-15
Washington, DC

June 29; August 25; October 27

Conducted by Thomas E. King. Both conferences at the National Building Museum, 401 F Street NW, Washington DC.

Contact: National Preservation Institute, PO Box 1702, Alexandria VA 22313, 202 393-0038.

October 5-7
Old Salem, Winston-Salem NC
“The Influence of Women on the Southern Landscape.”

The tenth conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes. Contact: Old Salem, 919 721-7300.

REQUEST FOR HISTORIC FILMS

The National Park Service, the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the Garden Conservancy are creating a video, “America’s Landscape Legacy” to be narrated by the Honorary Chair of the Garden Conservancy, Angela Lansbury. For the video, the group needs film footage of landscapes nationwide. The film may be in any format, including videotape, but must have been taken before 1960. The sites selected will then be photographed by the project to show the landscape dynamic. The project will include a variety of landscape types, including parks, gardens, cemeteries, and farms. Film used will be returned and the location credited. Deadline: June 30, 1995.

Contact: Charles Birnbaum, Preservation Assistance Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington DC 20013-7127, 202 343-9597.

NAOP Encourages Use of Sample Form Letters

NAOP has developed form letters to deal with issues that arise repeatedly around the country. The last issue of Field Notes contained one that addresses funding issues. This one addresses proposals to build or widen roads in parks. NAOP invites readers of Field Notes to use and adapt this form letter for local issues.

The [name of group] would like to express its concern about the proposal to build/widen a road in ___. Park. On behalf of [number] advocates in [region] of membership, we are writing to urge that [governing body] consider very carefully the wisdom of such an action. Of course, roads are important and every community wishes to build them as directly as possible and at the lowest possible cost. But it is important to remember that a park is not just an empty space. It is a place of recreation, of refuge from the stresses and strains of city life, a place for the people of the neighborhood to come together and see and enjoy each other in natural surroundings. A park, in fact, often defines a neighborhood, with larger parks serving larger neighborhoods, some stretching beyond city or county boundaries.

Because the park is a thing in itself, serving special purposes within an area, it can easily be destroyed by having an incompatible use in or even near it. Few people would put a school playground in a library reading room or a hospital on an airport runway. These are all important facilities to have in a region, but they must be carefully located so their uses do not conflict. Similarly, a road can destroy a park.

A road will cut a park into segments, each of which may be too small to serve the intended purpose of providing a respite from city living for people and a home for desirable wildlife. Even if the remaining habitat is large enough to support a wildlife population, animals may venture into the road, with unfortunate consequences for themselves and for unwary drivers.

The heat and pollution of vehicular traffic as well as snow-melting chemicals that may be used on the road can cause irreparable damage to the park’s vegetation. Park officials across the country have discovered that road construction can offer a foothold in the park for invasive exotic species of plants that can soon overwhelm the desirable native species. The kudzu vine, which flourishes in the southern United States, is only one of such invasive species. Other states battle honeysuckles, grape vines, and a variety of others.

Frederick Law Olmsted was the father of landscape architecture in the United States. His talent went far beyond that of social reformer; he was an artist with an extraordinary talent for creating scenic landscapes. Olmsted and his sons and the successors as the Olmsted firm created more than 3,000 landscapes in the United States and Canada. Another 2,000 projects were initiated but not realized.

As the heirs of the legacy of Olmsted and other landscape designers, and as the successors of those who had the foresight to set aside park lands, it is important for us all to work to preserve these essential and much-loved assets for our cities. The [group] is happy to discuss alternate solutions to [region]’s traffic problems.
NATIONWIDE

National SOS! (Save Our Sculpture) needs examples of maintenance policies, practices, and problems; damage to outdoor sculpture from in-line skate and skateboard enthusiasts; suggestions for antivandalism techniques; and copies of or bibliographic information about outdoor sculpture guidebooks. Contact: Jill Wiley 800 422-4612.

EAST

District of Columbia. President's Park.
The National Park Service is preparing a comprehensive design plan for the White House and President's Park. The proposed schedule: Fall 1995, distribution of the draft plan and environmental impact statement for public review; Spring 1996, completion of the final plan and environmental impact statement. Contact: National Park Service, Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House, 1100 Ohio Dr. SW, Washington DC 20242; 202 619-6344; fax 202 619-6353.

Public tours of the Bishop's Garden will be available each Wednesday morning at 10:30. The garden, which includes many small garden rooms, was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., from 1907-1927. The one-hour tours will be led by docents of the All Hallows Guild and leave from the Herb Cottage on the South Road. Tours will be available through July and in September. No reservations are necessary. Contact: 301 986-1290 or 202 244-0568.

Maine.
The Maine Olmsted Alliance for Parks & Landscapes is now ready to begin Phase III (Community Planning, Subdivisions, and Suburban Designs) of its comprehensive survey of designed landscapes in Maine. Phase I considered public parks, town commons, and monument grounds. Phase II considered residential design, including small urban and suburban sites, gentleman farms, seasonal estates, and year-round estates. Contact: Tatyania Seredin, President, Maine Olmsted Alliance, PO Box 6176, Falmouth ME 04105; 207 871-0003; or Elizabeth Igleheart, Architectural Historian, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, 55 Capitol St., Augusta ME 04333; 207 287-2132; or Theresa Mattor, Project Researcher, RR 1, Box 212-B1, Hollis Center ME 04042; 207 727-5059.

Maryland, Baltimore.
The Friends of Maryland's Olmsted Parks & Landscapes, Inc., recently examined the organization's goals. Conclusions: the organization should 1) develop additional and more appropriate materials illustrating the importance of Olmsted principles for presentation both to adults and school children; 2) identify and pursue visible and timely projects; and 3) participate in more community activities, including conducting tours and speaking to schools and organizations. A report of another planning session appears under Seattle, Washington. Contact: Friends of Maryland's Olmsted Parks & Landscapes, Inc., PO Box 16244, Baltimore MD 21210.

Maryland, Baltimore. Gwynns Falls Trail.
The Trust for Public Land has opened an office in Baltimore and hired Terri Charles as project coordinator for the Gwynns Falls Trail, a 14-mile stream valley park. Contact: Trust for Public Land, The Mill Centre, 3000 Chestnut Ave., Suite #205, Baltimore MD, 410 243-3698; fax 410 243-4723.

The Garden Conservancy has received grants for its work on the John Hay Estate: $2,500 from the Charles Sumner Bird Foundation of Boston MA; $4,500 from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation of New York NY; and $3,400 from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. An article about this site appeared in the March/April issue of Historic Preservation. Contact: The Garden Conservancy, Box 219, Cold Spring NY 19516; 914 265-2029.
New Jersey, Ho-ho-kus. Hermitage.
The Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation identified plants shown in old photographs of this site. The Garden Conservancy had requested the identifications to assist in the preparation of planting plans for the grounds.

New Jersey, Madison. Florham.
The Friends of Florham have formed to help Fairleigh Dickinson University with work on its Florham-Madison Campus. The campus “is on the Twombly estate, Florham, and is one of very few private estates where Frederick Law Olmsted and the architectural firm, McKim, Mead and White collaborated.” The group is “now applying for historical registry status” as well as “restoring the formal gardens behind the Mansion and other gardens on the campus with private funding.” One of the members “carried out extensive background research at both the Olmsted archives in Brookline as well as the New-York Historical Society.” Contact: Emma Joy Dana, President, Friends of Florham, The Library, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Florham-Madison Campus, Madison NJ 07940.

The Disney Company has announced plans for a “family Woodstock” in Central Park, for the screening of the new movie “Pocahontas” on four giant screens.

Work on the Prospect Park forest was featured in a front-page article in the New York Times on April 9, 1995. The forest plan will include a decrease in the number of exotic plants in the forest. “Let the ecosystem that evolved here work again,” said Edward Tittel, Director of Landscape Management for Prospect Park. Part of a $1.3 million matching grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Foundation will be used to educate park users about staying on the paths to minimize soil compaction and erosion. The Prospect Park Alliance will spend $15 million over 25 years. The city will spend an estimated $28 million on bridges, drainage, and other infrastructure. Contact: Prospect Park Alliance, 95 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn NY 11215; 718 965-8951.

The All Wars Memorial to Colored Soldiers and Sailors was recently conserved as part of the Save Our Sculpture project.

NAOP member James Olmsted sent along an opinion piece by Dr. Gerald M. Reisinger, Executive Director of the Wyoming Valley Friends of Olmsted Parks in The Times-Leader of Wilkes-Barre urging work in Kirby Park. Dr. Reisinger notes that the city has turned its back on the Susquehanna River and neglected a park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. The design incorporated flood-way engineering and includes an overflow channel to reduce pressure on the South Wilkes-Barre curve of the river. The piece reports that the mayors of Kingston and Wilkes-Barre and Congressman Paul Kanjorski strongly advise cleaning up the park land as a sound investment in the future. An editorial on the facing page urged support of the proposal. Contact: Dr. Gerald Reisinger, 6 Gershom Place, Kingston PA 18704. 717 283-5194.
and health resort. He was back on July 3, 1895, this time to call on Frederick Law Olmsted first and then on John Charles. It was decided that plans for the village would be drawn up for $300 with no site visit to be made by the firm. The firm recommended the services of its associate, Warren H. Manning, to take active charge of landscape work on the village. So began the long association of Pinchurst, NC, and Warren H. Manning, that lasted for decades. It "provided a healthful, convenient and attractive town in which home-like accommodations and varied means of recreation could be secured at moderate cost." The historic integrity of Pinchurst remains strong. Some streets have been modified in the last one hundred years, but the majority of the Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot plan remains intact. The years of planning by Warren H. Manning have created a luxuriant landscape into which buildings appear to be tucked. Contact: Kristine Januzik, Archivist, Tufts Archives, Pinchurst NC; 910 295-3642; fax 910 295-9053.

**CENTRAL**

Missouri, St. Louis. Tower Grove Park.

Forest ReLeaf has designated Tower Grove Park as a Discovery Park and plans to plant up to 3,000 trees in the park to create "a living educational forest," in the words of Mary Sherry, director of Forest ReLeaf of Greater St. Louis. The creator and donor of the park, Henry Shaw, planted more than 200 species of trees and shrubs in the mid-1800s, so it could be an educational resource as well as a beautiful retreat from the city. Funding for other projects in the park will come from a share of a recently-approved half-cent sales tax for capital repairs in the City of St. Louis. A maze and observatory that were in Tower Grove Park from the 1860s until about 1912 will not be rebuilt in the park. However, the design of the historic structure will be reproduced in the Missouri Botanical Garden, adjacent to the park, as an observatory for the 8-year-old hedge maze at the Garden. The maze closely resembles the larger maze previously in the park. Contact: John Karel, Tower Grove Park, 4255 Arsenal St., St. Louis MO 63116; 314 771-2679; fax 314 771-6686.

Ohio, Hamilton. Greenwood Cemetery.

This 26-acre cemetery, which dates to 1848, has recently been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

**WEST**

California, Mouth Shasta.

Federal and state historic officials agree that 19,040 acres of Mount Shasta are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Such a listing would affect plans by the U.S. Forest Service to build a ski lift on Mount Shasta. The listing is based on the view of Native Americans that the area is sacred and historically important. Some opponents of the determination are pushing for the listing of a much larger area, which includes privately-owned land.

Washington, Seattle.

The State of Washington Big Tree Program identifies the largest specimens of each species of tree in the state. The new edition includes at least 25 Olmsted-designated trees, including a Coast Redwood (Sequoia sempervirens) in Interlaken Park, several trees in Volunteer Park, eight trees along Lake Washington Boulevard, and three in Mr. Baker Park. The Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks are considering several projects, including: 1) Drafting design guidelines for people working in Olmsted parks, including landscape architect, parks staffs and volunteers; 2) a poster exhibit with a concise overview of the Seattle heritage of Olmsted parks and boulevards and its current relevance to neighborhood planning and decision-making; 3) active outreach through the University or media, perhaps a Park of the month newspaper column. Contact: Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks, 2 Nickerson St., #105, Seattle WA 98109. President Jay Rood; 206 784-2535.


A master plan for the Arboretum is expected soon. Contact Jay Rood; 206 784-2535.
MILESTONES

The City of Seattle and the Seattle Design Commission honored the Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks for its part in the Streets That Work program. The award recognizes the organization’s stewardship of Seattle’s Olmsted boulevards. The design Commission noted that “Seattle has one of the largest and best preserved Olmsted boulevard systems in the United States.”

Frederick Law Olmsted
Biltmore Estate Landscape Architect
1852 – 1903

As work progressed on Biltmore Estate, his last and largest private project, Frederick Law Olmsted observed, “It is a great work of peace we are engaged in and one of the best days we shall all be proud of our parts in.” It was Olmsted who suggested the country’s first scientifically managed forest be established at Biltmore Estate. He is remembered with gratitude for his vision, his creative genius, and his reverence for the land.

Dedicated April 21, 1995
Commemorating Biltmore Estate’s Centennial And the Annual Meeting of the National Association for Olmsted Parks

INTERNET RESOURCES

The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training of the National Park Service is developing an Internet gopher. It will provide centralized access to other Internet resources, including SouthEastern Archaeological Gopher, ICOMOS Gopher, and National Archives gopher, the National Archaeological Data Base, the National Register of Historic Places, libraries, archives, and museums. Information posted will include announcements of cultural resource positions, grants, and conferences as well as information about the Center’s grants and research and training programs and current and back issues of National Park Service preservation publications. Contact: Mary Carroll, NCPTT, NSU Box 5682, Natchitoches LA 71497, 318 357-6464; fax 318 357-6421.

Information on the National Museum of American Art’s Inventory of American Sculpture is now available via NMAA’s new gopher server and ftp site on the Internet. To reach it, telnet to RYDER-NMAA (160.111.4.70). Some information also available on America Online.

Work continues on the NAOP World Wide Web site. A new address has been assigned (http://www.ultraplex.net/olmsted) and the site should be open by July 1.

MASTER LIST REVISIONS

NAOP is currently working with representatives of the Olmsted National Historic Site on a revision of The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857–1950. Anyone who has encountered problems in using the Green Book or who has corrections to offer should write NAOP giving the correct information. 7315 Wisconsin Avenue, Room 504 East, Bethesda MD 20814. 202 362-9511, fax 301 469-3841.
THANK YOU
The National Association for Olmsted Parks is grateful to all contributors. The following have renewed their memberships for NAOP's fiscal year 1995–96 at the Donor level or above since the last Field Notes:

CORPORATIONS
East Bay Regional Park District, Oakland CA

DONORS
Sarah Boasberg, Washington DC.
Mr. and Mrs. Thorp V.D. Goodfellow, Gladwyne PA
James Olmsted, McLean VA

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All Hallows Guild, Washington National Cathedral, DC
Central Park Conservancy, New York NY
Druid Hills Civic Conservancy, Atlanta GA
Monroe County Parks Department, NY
Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline MA

FROM THE EDITOR
Comments, news items, and letters to the editor are welcome. Please address them to:
NAOP Field Notes
7315 Wisconsin Avenue, Room 504 East, Bethesda MD 20814
202 362-9511.
FAX 301 469-3841.

Rediscovering Waterbury’s Fulton Park
by Mark Kane, former editor of Fine Gardening magazine

In 1921, the Olmsted Brothers firm designed an ambitious park for 70 acres of rocky land on the northern edge of Waterbury, Connecticut. In 1922, when it opened, Fulton Park was a gem. Meandering down a narrow valley, the park offered open rolling meadows, groves of trees, two lakes and a pond connected by a brook, an overlook, a stone and timber gazebo, a wading pool and fountain, a rock garden, and thousands of new shrubs and trees, many of them North American natives.

By 1989, when I moved to Waterbury, Fulton Park had grown a little seedy. Of the original lilac plantation, only four skeletal relics remained. Honeysuckle and immense forsythias had swallowed the wading pool and fountain. The granite boulders that lined the brook had toppled into the water. Graffiti covered the gazebo. The stone steps that led from one terrace of the park to another were almost closed by overgrown shrubs. Seedling trees had sprouted in the duff and leaf mold on the treads.

Now, in 1994, the park has come a long way back, largely because people in the neighborhood set out to make it safe and inviting. Parents formed a sports league, and their kids played soccer and baseball in the park. A walking group formed. Parents sponsored contests for children at the playground in the park. Skating parties were scheduled for the winter. The city opened the park's long disused skating house for holiday caroling. After a year of growing interest in the park, I visited the Olmsted archives in Brookline, Massachusetts, hoping to learn more about the park's design and early years. I came home with old photos of the park during construction and a complete planting plan. There were pictures of the rock garden in spring, with thousands of bulbs in bloom on a steep slope 300 feet long. On the planting plan, in tiny letters, I read: "3,000 daffodils in variety, 3,000 hyacinths in variety, 3,000 scillas."

More than anything else, the photos and the plan filled people with enthusiasm for the idea of renovating the park. We sponsored two clean-up days in the park, and, with the blessing of the supervisor, we cleared steps, pruned shrubs, and raked up debris. We raised money for a tree planting and had school children plant a 12 ft. magnolia as a gift to the park.

We discovered that the park had three endowments reserved for repairs. We offered to prepare a five-year plan for the park, and the park supervisor accepted the offer. The park board agreed to undertake some of the first projects, including repaving many of the walkways, pruning and clearing overgrown shrubs, and planting bulbs and perennials in visible locations. The crew that mowed and pruned in the park got more time for maintenance. They caught up with the pruning.

Going to park board meetings, reporting the rising interest in the park, researching the endowment, showing the planting plans to park board members— all these things persuaded the park board that more maintenance in the park would please the citizens who lived around it. The board was right. Fulton Park today is a tidier, more inviting place. It's not the original Fulton Park, but it's not likely to be restored to its original condition. The cost would be too high for the city to bear. But the park is still a gem, and it gives the city what Fulton and the Olmsted firm meant it to give: a green refuge for the heart and soul.

Contact: Mark Kane, 667 44th St., Des Moines IA 50312.