



## NAOP Responds to Plans for Olmsted's Capitol Grounds

by Esley Hamilton

The grounds of the U. S. Capitol, one of Frederick Law Olmsted's most celebrated landscape designs, will be substantially impacted by plans to build a \$265 million underground visitor center on the east side of the building. The current design is the fourth in a series going back to 1988, and the NAOP has reviewed them all. Most recently, NAOP co-chairs and four other representatives of our association met on July 25, 2001 with the Architect of the Capitol and his designers. While fully recognizing the need for a new facility, the NAOP team concluded that the present plan will destroy significant components of the Olmsted design. We have recommended several modifications and alternatives to the plan, and now we need to persuade the people making the decisions to adopt them.

The office of Architect of the Capitol goes back to 1793 and has been held by such major figures in American architecture as Benjamin Latrobe and Charles Bulfinch. The position became more controversial after World War II as styles changed, the preservation movement grew, and competition for space on Capitol Hill became more intense. Although appointed by the President, the Architect of the Capitol is responsible only to Congress and is exempt from review by the Fine Arts Commission, the National Park Service, or any other federal or local agency. Alan M. Hantman, FAIA, was appointed in 1997 as the 10<sup>th</sup> Architect of the Capitol; he is the first to be selected from a list of three candidates recommended by a congressional commission.

### The Capitol Visitor Center

The Capitol Visitor Center differs from other projects on Capitol Hill in that its cost above \$100 million was to come from private money, to be raised by a non-profit organization called the Fund for the Capitol Visitor Center. To assist with this effort, the U. S. Mint issued three commemorative coins: a five-dollar gold piece (selling for \$35), a silver dollar (\$10) and a half dollar (\$3). With help from the Pew Charitable Trust, about \$30 million has been raised to date. The recent tragic events of September 11 prompted Congress to allocate the remaining funds from Federal sources.

At our meeting, Mr. Hantman explained the need for the center. As the "People's House," the Capitol needs to be welcoming, but now visitors must wait in long lines outside the building for security screening, and once they are inside, facilities are inadequate. Anticipating as many as 18,000 visitors per day (nearly 3 million per year), the Capitol Visitor Center needs to accommodate about 5,000 people at any one time. The design by RTKL, the Baltimore-based architectural firm, has 588,000 square feet on three levels, including a large auditorium, transportation loading facilities and some space for congressional use.

The "footprint" or excavation for the "CVC," as the "AOC" calls it, will be 196,000 square feet, and Sasaki Associates landscape architects of Boston have been hired to design this surface area. Concerns about the effect of the project on Olmsted's historic landscape led to the additions of landscape historians and Olmsted scholars Dr. Charles Beveridge and Arleyn Levee to the design team. Both are former NAOP board members, and Dr. Beveridge is editor of the *Olmsted Papers*. They are currently preparing their research findings for presentation to the Architect of the Capitol. One concern reached the public in April when both the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* ran articles about the need to transplant or remove a number of memorial trees ("Capitol Trees Taking Their Leaves").

At a glance, the new site plan seems not too different from Olmsted's plan of 1874, except that skylights and courts now mark the east plaza, where inauguration ceremonies used to be held. *continued on next page*

### NAOP Mission

*To preserve the  
Olmsted legacy  
of landscape  
design for future  
generations.*

## NAOP Responds to Plans for Olmsted's Capitol Grounds

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two large oval lawns, which frame the central alley with its vista to the dome along East Capitol Street, seem to be intact. Looking at the new concept in three dimensions, however, our team found more troubling differences. NAOP's co-chairs sent a seven-page letter to Mr. Hantman on September 17 detailing our concerns for the preservation of Olmsted's achievement. Issues addressed included:

### Ramps

The two ramps entering from East Capitol Street cut eighteen feet into the ground requiring two stone retaining walls (most likely, further accentuated with a 42 inch-high railing to prevent visitors on the upper level from falling into the new entrance area eighteen feet below). They will compromise the axial approach from East Capitol Street and the nearly flat horizontal surfaces of the East Front. The scale and location of the two entrance ramps into the Visitor Center dramatically alter the historic landscape in fundamental ways, by altering its topographic structure and its spatial organization, especially the East Capitol Street axis and its flanking, staggered allees.

NAOP has recommended relocating the entrances away from the East Capitol Street axis to allow access to the security screening area from the sides of the site; preserve and restore the central area. Visitors who approach from East Capitol Street would thus be afforded the historic vista and security and reception goals could still be met with access from the sides.

NAOP has also recommended reducing the overall size of the floor area within the project, including removal of all below-grade construction under the alley and ovals, so that these areas could be preserved and/or restored.

### Oval Lawns

Tree replanting will occur in these areas (that will "restore" historic views and vista). Current proposals show three areas of air intake in flat rectangular protuberances. These "elliptical plots" described by Olmsted as "unbroken," should be free of any architectural expressions. The gently rolling topography of the 'ovals' will make the concealment of vaults difficult and the introduction of screen plantings may or may not be appropriate.

Other recommendations include the relocation of proposed new utilities out of the ovals in order to minimize the impact of utility vaults on the rolling lawns.

### Paving

The new design proposes to replicate historic paving materials and patterns in a location where they were not used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Olmsted. This design approach does not allow visitors to discern

between authentic historic fabric and new design elements. This approach contradicts the Secretary's Standards for Historic Preservation and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes, and NAOP has recommended a reconsideration of the paving design based on a clarification of whether the intent is to preserve historic fabric, restore historic elements, or rehabilitate areas within a new design idiom.

### Treatment Plan

When undertaking project work in a nationally significant historic designed landscape, it is typical to prepare a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) and a Treatment Plan prior to undertaking design. As no CLR has been completed, it is premature for the design consultants to be making design development decisions. The project architects and landscape architects have not articulated a clear position about how they are differentiating their new design forms and spaces from the historic fabric. We would call this a "treatment philosophy" – and because there is no Treatment Plan, it is difficult to discern what is being preserved, restored or rehabilitated. A CLR and Treatment Plan would be in accordance with the Secretary's Standards for Historic Preservation and The Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. The National Park Service, The National Trust for Historic Preservation and other agencies advocate for the use of these guidelines at historic sites. Surely, the Capitol Grounds is an important enough landscape to merit the use of this approach as well. As a follow-up to the work presently underway by the AOC's consulting historians, NAOP believes a CLR should be prepared for the entire grounds of the Capitol so that future management of the site can effectively preserve the historic design. In the meantime, we eagerly await the project historians' recommendations regarding treatment of the areas affected by this project.

*continued on page 3*



Olmsted's "General Plan for the Improvement of the U. S. Capitol Grounds." The West Front with the terrace and steps is to the bottom, and the East Front, with its plaza, is to the top.

## NAOP Responds to Plans for Olmsted's Capitol Grounds

*continued from page 2*

Given the degree of its impact on the appearance, structure, and character of this important Olmsted, Sr. designed landscape, the NAOP cannot support the Capitol Visitor Center project at this time. We have encouraged the Architect of the Capitol and his design team to complete the historic landscape research component and allow these findings to fully inform the design. Based on the collegial tone of our July 25 meeting, we are optimistic that the concerns we have outlined above will be responded to in the design team's evolving refinement of the design.

NAOP will continue to try to work with the Architect of the Capitol so that our concerns are addressed as the design moves forward.

## New Trustees Profiles

These five NAOP Trustees were elected at the annual meeting in May in Boston.

**Meg Cheever**  
Pittsburgh, PA

Meg Cheever is founding president of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. This young (4 years old) organization was designed as the non-profit partner to the City of Pittsburgh in the effort to protect, preserve, restore and improve the four largest parks in the City and to increase public involvement in the parks. A native of Boston, Meg Cheever grew up on The Arborway, part of the Emerald Necklace.

**Patrice Kish**  
Boston, MA

Patrice Kish is director of the Office of Historic Resources in the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management. One of her many duties is serving as the Department's liaison to the historic preservation community. She serves on the Massachusetts Historical Commission and is on the faculty of UMass Community Preservation Institute.

**Tally Sweat**  
Atlanta, GA

Tally Sweat is president of the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance; a founding past president of Park Pride, a parks advocacy organization serving Atlanta City and one of its Metro counties; and a longtime member and officer of the Garden Club of Georgia as well as local garden clubs.

**Victor Walker**  
Boston, MA

Victor Walker is a landscape architect, principal in the Walker-Kluesing Design Group. Since receiving his Master's in Landscape Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1970, Victor Walker has had a long and awarded professional career as well as stints in academia and publications.

**Barbara Wilks**  
Brooklyn, NY

Barbara Wilks is an architect, and founding principal of Ten W Architects. She also has a Master's in Landscape Architecture. She has practiced in both the public and private sectors, taught in her fields including historic preservation, and participated in art exhibits.

# www.olmsted.org



**The NAOP Web site is up and running!**

This long-awaited Web site is immediate past Co-Chair Mary Fox's excellent gift to NAOP. Check it out today and let us know what you think.

## Publication Deadline for the Spring Issue is February 15, 2002.

**Field Notes** is a publication of The National Association for Olmsted Parks. **Letters Welcome!** Send to [naop@resource-network.com](mailto:naop@resource-network.com)

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# News from Around the Country

## Washington Seattle

Have you marked your 2003 calendar for April 30 - May 4? These are the dates for the NAOP annual Conference being hosted by the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks in partnership with the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation. 2003 is the centennial of the arrival of John Charles Olmsted in Seattle.

## Colorado Denver

"Denver Park and Parkway System: A Legacy of Design" took place August 24 - October 15. A major exhibit and series of events including lectures and bus tours, "A Legacy of Design" was presented by The Western History/Genealogy Department of the Denver Public Library, The Denver Public Library Friends Foundation and The Park People. Past Trustees of NAOP participated: Carolyn Etter chaired the Planning Committee; Kenneth Helphand and Don Etter gave lectures, "The Mystique of the American Park" and "Denver's Legacy of Parks and Parkways - 1868-2001" respectively.

The National Recreation and Parks Association convention was in Denver early in October with an introduction to the Denver Historic Park Documents Collection and this exhibit as part of the program.

## Louisiana New Orleans

According to local reports in *The Times-Picayune*, there is a good deal of activity on the parks front in New Orleans that will have a familiar ring for all parks advocates. A proposed improvement plan that is mainly a \$6 million reconstruction of the golf course in Audubon Park has drawn strong opposition that has mounted a web site ([www.saveaudubonpark.org](http://www.saveaudubonpark.org)). Officials of the non-profit organization that manages Audubon Park and Zoo believe the opposition is based on "misinformation, misunderstanding of their plans, and...emotion." The organization, Audubon Nature Institute, evolved from the Friends of the Zoo support group. A top official of ANI was named the first chief executive officer of City Park in July.

## Kentucky Louisville

"Olmsted Park Champions" - as in "Champion Your Park!" - is the volunteer component of the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy. Efforts include landscape management projects one Saturday morning a month in each of the 3 flagship parks - Cherokee, Shawnee and Iroquois.

The Conservancy participated in the alliance of organizations that cooperated to present a symposium earlier this year on the River Road country estates of Louisville - "Celebration of the Country Estate: A Symposium on the Historic Estate Landscape and its Interpretation for Future Generations." Speakers on the landscape architects involved were honored guests at appropriate homes.

## Georgia Atlanta

The Grant Park Conservancy draws heavily on volunteer hours as well as contributions. This combination worked to save more than 60 trees from a new airport runway site and 15 hardwoods along with native shrubs and ground cover from another large construction site and give them a home in Grant Park, which needs a large planting replication effort.

The Grant Park Conservancy, the Piedmont Park Conservancy, the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance, and the Olmsted Parks Society of Atlanta participated in developing the nine goals agenda of PARC 9-1-1 as Atlanta heads into its City elections in November. Parks Atlanta Rescue Coalition is proposing "9" goals for parks/greenpace/recreation/trees and water protection that "1" visionary mayor can pursue in the development of "1" great city. A forum for mayoral candidates was held in early October with guest keynote speaker and co-moderator Charles Jordan, parks commissioner in Portland, Oregon. (Commissioner Jordan got a standing ovation...)

## Pennsylvania Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh's Regional Parks Master Plan was released in April in Riverview Park by Mayor Tom Murphy with members of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and many parks' task forces in attendance. Said the Mayor: "I see an opportunity for us over the next number of years to connect these four great parks through a series of trails and bikeways to create a green necklace around Pittsburgh."

## New York Dewittville

*Frederick Law Olmsted's Point Chautauqua, The Story of an Historic Lakeside Community* (Canisius College Press, July 2001, Buffalo, NY) tells the story of this community founded as a Bible camp in 1875 through its resort years to its present status as a residential community. The author is a founding member of the Point Chautauqua Historical Preservation Society, which sponsored the publication. (\$15.00 plus tax from the publisher (716)888-3254; [www.canisius.edu/historyproject](http://www.canisius.edu/historyproject); 2001 Main Street; Buffalo, NY 14208. 136 pages, 48 illustrations, 20 historic photos, contemporary photos, prints, and maps).

## Connecticut Hartford

The second annual Olmsted Project lecture/luncheon was held on October 19 following a Tree Walk in Elizabeth Park guided by Ed Richardson, an expert on Connecticut trees. Sponsored by the City of Hartford Parks Advisory Commission, the event contributes to a trust established to provide an annual scholarship for a Hartford student majoring in landscape architecture and to a fund for a fitting memorial to native son Frederick Law Olmsted.

# NAOP's Strategic Plan

by Jerry Baum

The National Association for Olmsted Parks celebrated its twentieth anniversary at a May conference in Boston. This occasion stimulated NAOP to look forward and define the action it should take to strengthen its advocacy role and increase its capacity to execute its mission of preserving the Olmsted legacy for future generations.

The result was the decision for NAOP, building on the work and planning of prior boards and co-chairs, to initiate the development of a Strategic Plan that addresses two of its recurring problems, "too little money and too little staff." To resolve these two immediate problems, the Board will review and reshape the organization's vision for the next twenty years and develop a specific and focused plan of action for the next three to five years.

This will be done at NAOP's November Board meeting. One day will be devoted to developing a strategic plan that will have specific goals and a built-in monitoring process. It will need the active and full support of all NAOP members for it to be accomplished successfully. To assist NAOP in achieving the best results, it has retained an outstanding consulting firm, Wolf, Keens & Co., to prepare the board for this strategic planning effort and to lead it.

You should have already experienced one aspect of this process. In August, we mailed to each of our members a survey designed to encourage your input into this plan. We have been delighted with the enthusiastic response and the large number of surveys returned. These results, together with conversations Board members are holding with possible partners, and selected interviews by Wolf, Keens with people important in historic landscape work and in NAOP's history will all be incorporated in a discussion document prepared by Wolf, Keens & Co. for the board. This strategic plan will be shared with you as soon as it is completed.

Strategic planning does not come cheaply. NAOP has added \$65,000 to this year's budget to pay consulting and other costs associated with the plan's development and have some funds for implementation. NAOP seeks to raise a significant part of this total goal, \$40,000, from current and former board. To date, we are 95 percent of the way toward our goal. Individual gifts are ranging from \$50 to \$5,000. The remaining \$25,000 we hope to raise from our general members and some interested foundations. You will be hearing more about this shortly.

This is an exciting time for NAOP. With your help, we can become an even stronger and more effective advocate for the Olmsted legacy and the preservation, restoration and maintenance of historic landscapes.

## Save the Dates!

Visit  
[www.olmsted.org](http://www.olmsted.org)  
for up-to-date  
information on  
these  
conferences.

Newark, NJ Conference  
May 22-26, 2002

Trustee Wilbur McNeil and Kevin Moore of the Weequahic Park Association are planning a weekend as exciting as the Weequahic Park restoration effort!

Seattle, WA Conference  
April 30 - May 4, 2003

## Remember those POSTCARDS!

Great little gifts and stocking stuffers. Or for your own historic jottings. See **ORDER FORM** inserted in this mailing and send in your order today.

**"It comes down to the same point we make constantly: people deserve a first class park."**

*from the Weequahic Park Association newsletter*

# New Publications

## *American Picturesque*

By John Conron. 363 pp. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000. \$55.00. One often hears that Olmsted landscapes are picturesque, but exactly what does that mean? Conron's history of aesthetic theory puts landscape design on a par with literature, painting and architecture as he focuses on the high period 1835-1870 which saw the emergence of eclecticism. His chapter "Central Park as Picturesque Art" holds up Olmsted's work as a fusion of nature with art.

## *The Complete Illustrated Guidebook to Prospect Park and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden*

Text Neil de Mause, concept design philosophy and maps by Richard J. Berenson. Produced for Silver Lining Books, New York by Berenson Design & Books, Ltd., New York, 2001. \$14.95. In tall, narrow guidebook format, this book includes 190 and full-color photos, 20 pages of maps, and walking tours of the Park and the Botanic Garden. It was created in conjunction with the Prospect Park Conservancy and is available through the Barnes & Noble or Botanic Garden Web sites.

## *Island In The City: How Belle Isle Changed Detroit Forever.*

By Janet G. Anderson, Ph.D. 125 pp. Friends of Belle Isle (Whittier Towers, 415 Burns Drive, Suite 219, Detroit, MI 48214, or phone 313-331-7760), 2001. \$20.00. This companion book to an exhibit at the Detroit Historical Museum has full color photos, newspaper and city government accounts, and related statistics to tell the story of Detroit's most distinctive park, including its present opportunities and future challenges.

## *Eden by Design: The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan for the Los Angeles Region*

By Greg Hise and William Deverell. 314 pp. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. \$22.00. This is a new printing of a report submitted to the Citizens' Committee on Parks, Playgrounds, and Beaches in 1930 by Olmsted Brothers and Bartholomew and Associates, Consultants, entitled *Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region*. Hise and Deverell provide a 63-page introduction, explaining that the sweeping proposals of the plan had little impact at the time but its ideas influenced open-space planning for decades to come. As a postscript, the authors interview landscape architect Laurie Olin.

## *Park and Recreation Structures*

By Albert H. Good. 624 pp., Princeton Architectural Press, 1999, \$85.00. This volume reprints in one volume a three-volume survey first published in 1938 by the National Park Service. Over 500 illustrations document every kind of park building and structure from large inns down to picnic tables. Most of these are rustic structures of the type associated with the glory days of park construction.

## *Crystal Palaces: Garden Conservatories of the United States*

By Ann S. Cunningham; introduction by Paul Bennett. 176 pp. Princeton Architectural Press, 2000. \$45.00. Starting with the 1879 Conservatory in Golden Gate Park, this book details 25 photogenic conservatories (not to be confused with greenhouses) located around the country, comparing their architecture and management.

## Farewell to Mary Fox

By Faye Harwell  
and Jerry Baum,  
NAOP Co-chairs

In May of 2001, Mary Fox's term as Co-chair of NAOP came to a close. Mary did so much work during her term as Co-chair, that our whole organization has seen many accomplishments as a direct result of her effort. Mary played an enormous role in bringing to reality our huge celebration in Boston last May. Single-handedly, she managed to implement and direct the design of our new Web site [www.olmsted.org](http://www.olmsted.org) (which the rest of us had just been talking about for years!). She has always been prepared to help with 'whatever', give a smile or a friendly word, staff a table at a conference, gather new members, etc, etc, etc. This year, Mary assumes the role of chair of the Trustees Nominating Committee, always the responsibility of the immediate past Co-chair. We know she will do this job in her usual creative, gracious, and effective way. We are honored to continue to have her on our Board of Trustees. Mary, thank you so much for all your hard work and for being a mentor, a colleague, and a friend.

# New Publications

## *The Campus Guides*

Following its series of Garden Lover's Guides, Princeton Architectural Press has launched another series of guidebooks of special interest to Olmsted admirers. Each volume is well illustrated with archival and new photos, drawings, and specially drawn maps. Campuses where the work of FLO or his sons was especially important:

*The Campus Guide: Harvard University*, by Douglas Shand-Tucci. 224 pp., 2001. \$24.95

*The Campus Guide: Philips Academy*, by Roger G. Reed & Susan J. Montgomery. 168 pp., 2000. \$24.95.

*The Campus Guide: Stanford University*, by David Neumann & Paul V. Turner. 168 pp., 1999. \$21.95.

*The Campus Guide: University of Washington*, by Norman J. Johnston. 208 pp., 2001, \$24.95

*Other Campus Guides so far:*

*Cranbrook* by Kathryn Bishop Eckert, 208 pp., 2001. \$24.95

*Duke University* by John M. Bryan, 168 pp., 2000. \$24.95

*Princeton University* by Raymond Rhinehart, 188 pp., 2000. \$21.95

*Rice University* by Stephen Fox, 208 pp., 2001. \$24.95

*University of Cincinnati* by Paul Bennett, 224 pp., 2001. \$24.95

*University of Virginia* by Richard Guy Wilson & Sarah Butler, 168 pp., 1998. \$21.95

*Yale University* by Patrick Pinnell, 192 pp., 1999. \$21.95

Upcoming volumes in the series will include Illinois Institute of Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, the University of California-Berkeley, and the University of Pennsylvania..

*The Project for Public Spaces, Inc.*, located 153 Waverly Place, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, N.Y. 10014, has produced a variety of how-to books and videos that can be reviewed at their Web site, [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org). Two of special interest to park lovers:

### ***Public Parks, Private Partners: How Partnerships are Revitalizing Urban Parks.***

Foreword by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers. 135 pp. 2000. \$35.00. Described as a valuable tool for anyone involved in creating, preserving, or managing urban parks, this book shows how public and private sectors have joined together to develop new parks, more efficiently manage parks, and (this part is about us) restore historically significant existing parks.

### ***How To Turn A Place Around: A Handbook for Creating Successful Public Places.***

125 pp. 2000. \$30.00. Intended to distill twenty-five years of experience in understanding and improving public places, this handbook identifies the features that make some public places successful and others fail and sets out 11 principles for creating successful places. A workbook is included as an appendix.

### ***Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience.***

By Jerold S. Kayden, the New York City Department of City Planning, and the Municipal Art Society of New York. 360 pp. John Wiley & Sons, 2000. \$55.00. The thrust of this book contrasts with those above. New York's zoning rules have since 1961 encouraged the creation of spaces open to the public as part of private developments: But the more than 500 plazas, gardens, piers, and atriums that have resulted, Kayden finds, often are not as intended, for example, when metal spikes have been installed on public seating areas. This result has increased distrust of public-private cooperation.

### ***Icons of Garden Design***

Edited by Caroline Holmes. 176 pp. Prestel USA, 2001. \$29.95. Holmes selects 80 of the most famous and influential gardens ranging from medieval to modern, and gives them the luxury treatment, with over 300 color illustrations. Olmsted's Biltmore is in the company of Versailles, Stowe, and the Katsura Villa, as well as gardens from India, Russia and Brazil.

# Thank You

NAOP is grateful to all its contributors. The following have renewed memberships for fiscal year 2000-2001 at or above the Donor level.

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## Frederick Law Olmsted said

"What artist so noble...as he who, with far-reaching conception of beauty, in designing power, sketches the outlines, writes the colors, and directs the shadows of a picture so great that Nature shall be employed upon it for generations, before the work he arranged for her shall realize his intentions."

*Quoted in the Weequahic Park Association (Newark,NJ) newsletter.*