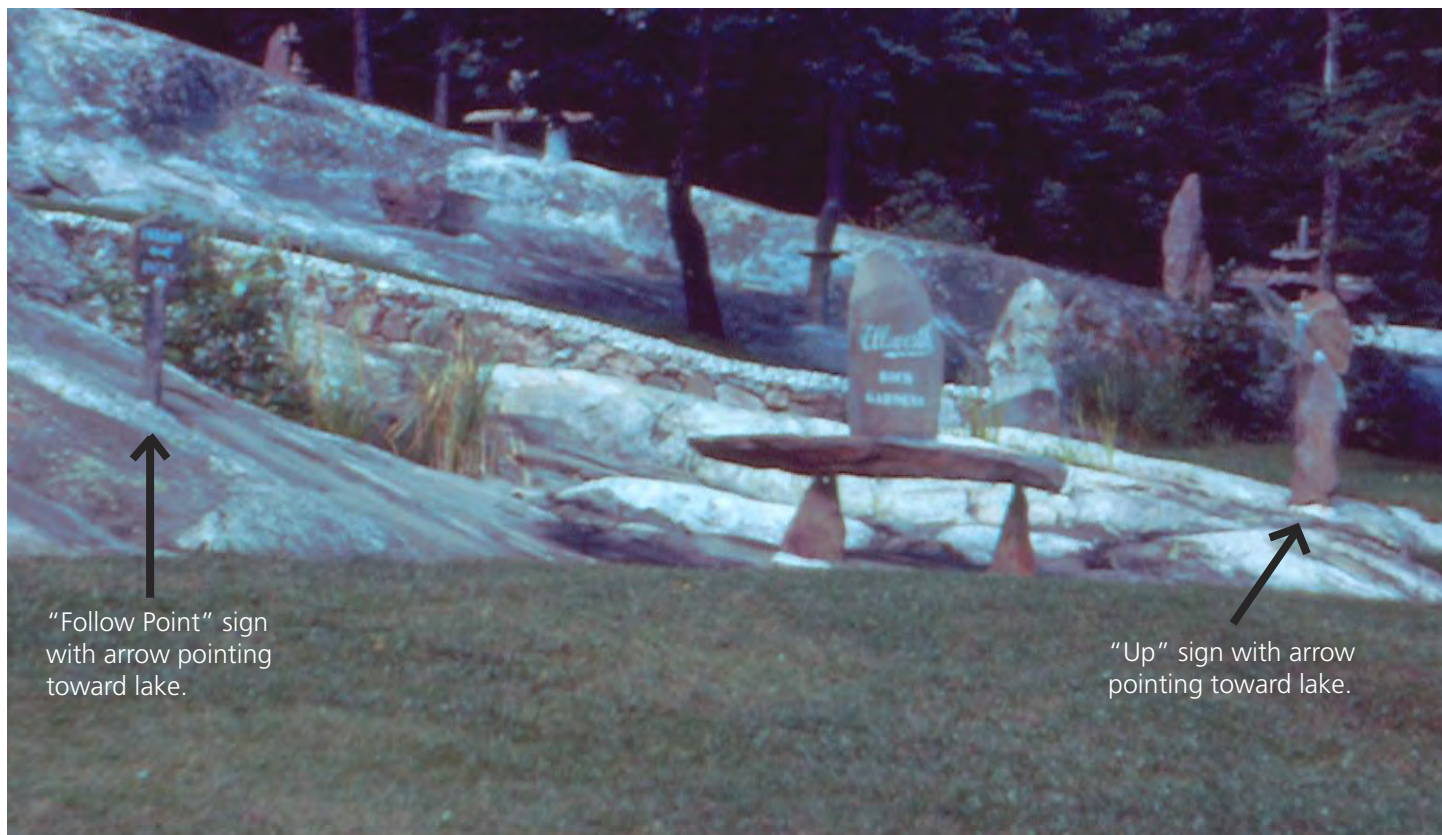




## Ellsworth Rock Gardens

2005 Newsletter



“Follow Point” sign  
with arrow pointing  
toward lake.

“Up” sign with arrow  
pointing toward lake.

Missing directional features at the base of the garden.

Kamnetz collection, 1963

## Where Does the Trail Start?

One of the most frequently asked questions at the gardens is, “Where does the trail start?” Visitors are first drawn to the Ellsworth signature stone at the base of the garden. Seeing the painted “Up” sign nearby, visitors assume the trail heads up the granite slope at this point. However, this may not have been Mr. Ellsworth’s intent.

Ellsworth used painted arrows, stone sculptures shaped like arrows and painted signs to help visitors find their way through the gardens. Some of these key directional cues have been missing for many years. Loss of these features has confused Ellsworth’s original design and created more

recent memories of the intended path through the gardens. Based on historic photographs and existing landscape features, the NPS theorizes that Ellsworth used the “Up” and “Follow Point” signs and an arrow-shaped stone sculpture at the base of the garden to direct visitors to a stone gateway located along the path to the guest cabin. All three of these features are now missing but once pointed toward the lake.

One of the gateway stones has a barely-visible painted arrow pointing up the hill. Facing the gateway stones, the Ellsworth “story stone” is visible on your left. This stone, which carries the

Ellsworth "Story Stone" is located here.



Stone gateway on lakeside.

Mathiason 2002

Painted arrow on this sculpture points up the stone path.

message, "These Gardens Designed and Constructed by Ellsworth," seems a logical place to start a walk through the gardens. Near the top of the stone path, another painted arrow is found on a stone spire just before reaching the apex of the garden.

At the top of the hill, visitors could explore the area that featured the "arrowhead" sculpture and the two tepees. Two sculptures indicated the path down the granite slope toward the Ellsworth's house—one with a painted arrow and the other an arrow-shaped stone. Both of these directional cues are now missing.

The paradox to this scenario is the 1944 signature stone located in the same area. It is placed to be read while walking up the granite slope (or perhaps from a side path) and not down. And the story stone gateway is one of three paths to the top of the gardens from the lakeside, suggesting there was more than one way to tour the gardens or a more complicated system of paths. Ellsworth's intentions may never be fully understood but he clearly had a vision for guiding visitors through the gardens.



1944 Ellsworth signature stone

Painted arrow (now missing) on this sculpture pointed down the granite slope.

## What is Happening at Ellsworth in 2005?

### Planting

Mr. Ellsworth supposedly planted 4 types of lilies and 28 other flower varieties throughout the garden, including both annuals and perennials. Some remnant plants can still be found at the gardens, such as daylily, phlox and bee balm. Other flowers have been identified by studying historic photographs.

The park has developed a planting plan for 9 beds based on historic photos. Six of these beds have been prepared for planting by removing trees, grubbing stumps, turning the soil, and covering the beds with plastic to keep the weeds down until flowers can be planted.



Park staff and volunteers will plant flowers this spring in the large bed at the base of the gardens. Over 600 orange tiger lily bulbs—historically the most prominent flower in the garden—were planted in this bed in 2003. They have not done well as they are a favorite food for the resident deer herd. This year the park will experiment with a variety of deer deterrents.

## Way finding

This spring the park will erect a temporary bulletin board at the dock entrance where orientation and interpretive information will be posted. In addition, a few directional cues will be placed to help visitors find their way through the gardens without walking through flower beds or over stone walls. Voyageurs is seeking funding for permanent exhibits, trail markers and other interpretive media to help visitors understand the history and significance of the garden and how to help preserve this intriguing place by staying on paths, respecting the sculptures, and watching children and pets.

## Sculpture Repair

Stone mason Billy Hendrick from the NPS' Williamsport Preservation Center in Frederick, Maryland returns this year to repair sculptures. When he is not at Ellsworth, Billy works on projects at the White House. He will be assisted by Historical Architect Al O'Bright from Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site.

Of the 200+ sculptures in the gardens, over 80 are now in complete condition. A number of stones that are obviously parts of sculptures have been placed in storage. Without additional historic photographs, it may be difficult to establish where these pieces belong. Although sculpture pieces are still occasionally found buried under layers of organic material, some sculpture pieces may never be found.



Billy Hendrick, stone mason

## Restoration of Missing Features

This year, the park will restore the missing windows, shutters and door of the Ellsworth workshop as well as the missing door on the Ellsworth privy. The park will also prepare specifications for reconstruction of the fence that once crossed the meadow, the tepees, and the bench/clothesline near the privy and explore alternatives for reconstructing some of the key missing sculpture elements.

## Stone Wall Condition Assessment

Landscape Architect Jane Wooley and Master Drystone Craftsman Neil Rippingale from the Dry Stone Conservancy of Kentucky will visit the gardens this summer to assess the condition



Collapsing stone wall.

of stone walls and make recommendations for repairing some of the walls that are in poor condition.

## Routine Maintenance

The park will continue routine mowing, trimming, and grounds maintenance. Beau Readman has primary responsibility for routine maintenance and carpentry tasks at the gardens.

## Schedule

Planting is scheduled for June 3, weather permitting. We hope to have the temporary bulletin board and way finding aids up by mid to late June. Sculpture repair and the majority of other work are scheduled for July 25-29.

## How Can I Help?

Historic documentation and preservation decisions are dependent on historic photographs and information from people who knew Mr. and Mrs. Ellsworth. For all donations of historic photographs, the park will provide a set of prints to the donor.

A donation account has been established for Ellsworth Rock Gardens. The Otter Creek Garden Club of Eau Claire, Wisconsin recently donated \$100.00.

Voyageurs is looking for a volunteer with their own boat transportation to weed, water and deadhead flowers this summer. Please contact the park's volunteer coordinator, Teri Tucker at 218-283-9107 (ext. 6163) if you are interested.

Please encourage guests and visitors to not feed the deer, select routes that do not cross stone walls or go through flower beds and to respect Mr. Ellsworth's creation by not moving any rocks.