

The Olmsted Archives

Frederick Law Olmsted
National Historic Site
Massachusetts

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Enduring Legacy

Olmsted Lithograph Collection, Job #1902 Jackson Park, Chicago Illinois, Revised General Plan, 1895.

The **Olmsted Archives** is one of the most widely researched museum collections in the National Park System, containing close to 1,000,000 original documents. Park and city planners from across the United States use these records each year to rehabilitate and rebuild many of the nation's most significant and beloved landscapes to the lasting benefit of millions of people. Historians, students, and preservation planners use the collection to document historic areas and to produce exhibits, films and scholarly publications.

The National Park Service is currently cataloging and conserving the collections which contain landscape photographs, initial surveys, field sketches, general plans, planting lists, presentation drawings, business records and scale models. Researchers have the opportunity to survey and study historic records related to parks, gardens, communities, estates, and campuses designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted firm, including:

- Acadia National Park, Maine
- Atlanta Parks, Georgia

- Baltimore Park System, Maryland
- Boston Park System, Massachusetts
- Buffalo Park System, New York
- Central Park, New York City
- Chicago Park System, Illinois
- Denver Park Commission, Colorado
- Louisville Park System, Kentucky
- Seattle Park System, Washington
- Stanford University, California
- US Capitol Grounds, Washington DC
- United States Military Academy, West Point, New York
- White House Grounds, Washington DC
- Yosemite National Park, California.

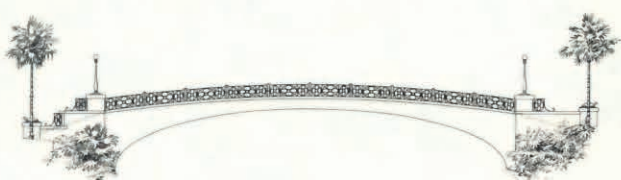
Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) is widely recognized as the founder of American landscape architecture and the nation's foremost park maker. At the height of his career, Olmsted established a full-scale professional office in Brookline, Massachusetts, which expanded and continued his landscape design ideals, philosophy, and influence over the course of a century. The Olmsted home and office ("Fairsted") were designated a National Historic Landmark in 1963 and became part of the National Park System in 1979.

The firm that Olmsted established in Brookline perpetuated his vision and played a role in the development of landscape architecture in the United States. The Olmsted firm served as a training ground for many landscape architects, and was active in the founding of the American Society of Landscape Architects and the establishment of the first formal training program in landscape architecture at Harvard University. The firm included the prominent landscape architects John Charles Olmsted (1852-1920), Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (1870-1957), Charles Eliot (1859-1897), Warren Manning (1860-1938), Henry Sargent Codman (1864-1893), Arthur Shurcliff (1870-1957), James Frederick Dawson (1874-1941), and Henry Vincent Hubbard (1875-1947). ■

Olmsted Photograph Album Collection, Job #907, Charlesbank, Boston, Massachusetts, n.d., (detail).



Olmsted Photograph Album Collection, Photo #918-61, Album #1, Franklin Park, Boston, Massachusetts, Photographer D.W. Butterfield taking view of Refectory Hill, Oct. 8, 1892, (detail).



Above: Olmsted Plans and Drawings Collection, Plan #2001-82, Audubon Park, New Orleans, Louisiana, Sketch for Foot-bridge over Formal Canal, 1901, (detail).

The **Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site**, a unit of the National Park Service, preserves the legacy and significant resources associated with America's premier landscape architectural firm and serves as a center for the study and preservation of landscapes. The Olmsted Archives provides researchers with historic documentation for Olmsted-designed landscapes. The Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation promotes the stewardship of significant landscapes through research, planning, and sustainable preservation maintenance. These programs, in conjunction with a public education strategy that extends beyond the boundaries of the park, enhance the appreciation and stewardship of America's most valued public spaces. ■

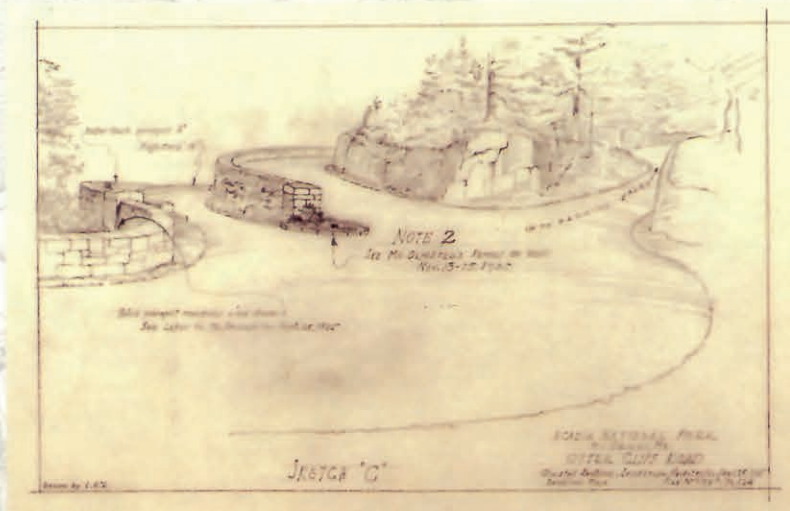
The Collections

Landscape Design Records

(1859-1979) help to illustrate the design process for over 5,000 projects undertaken by the firm. The design records contain:

- plans and drawings
- planting lists
- correspondence
- photographs
- lithographs
- published reports.

Plans may include initial surveys and topographic maps, field sketches and notes, as well as several versions of preliminary plans, general plans, planting plans and presentation drawings. These records also illustrate the Olmsted firm's involvement in horticultural science and the development of the park movement, including the establishment of the National Park Service.



Olmsted Plans and Drawings Collection, Plan #9138A-124-sh2, Acadia National Park, Mount Desert Island, Maine, *Sketch C, Otter Cliff Road, Sept. 25, 1935.*

Right: Olmsted Photograph Album Collection, Album #2, Photo #918-101, Franklin Park, Boston, Massachusetts, *Footbridge over Scarboro Pond looking South, June 22, 1894.*



Left: Olmsted Photograph Album Collection, Photo #930-49, The Riverway, Boston, Massachusetts, *The two islands below St. Mary's Street, 1907.*



Right: Olmsted Plans and Drawings Collection, Plan #2001-143, Audubon Park, New Orleans, Louisiana, *Revised Plan for Lake, 1915.*



Reference Collections

(1839-1974) collected by the Olmsted firm exhibit a wide range of design examples and available landscape products and services. The reference materials contain:

- photographs of international landscapes
- advertisements
- atlases
- nursery catalogs
- reports
- articles
- newspaper clippings
- periodicals
- books.

Administrative Records

(1880-1980) provide additional context for the landscape design process. The collection includes:

- ledger and accounting books
- billing records
- office memoranda
- advertising and promotional literature
- personnel files.

As a whole, these records document the firm's employment patterns and operational methods. Records in this collection also detail the purchase of specific materials used for landscape design projects.

Personal Papers

(1847-1980) include Olmsted family photographs, financial records, professional and personal association records, and selected papers of Olmsted firm principals, including Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (1870-1957), James Frederick Dawson (1874-1941), and Henry Vincent Hubbard (1875-1947).

Frederick Law Olmsted
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT.

Research Appointments

The Olmsted Archives is open to the public Monday through Friday by appointment. Reference assistance, finding-aids, and reprographic services are available. Contact the Olmsted Archives reference staff to determine which landscape design or other records relate to your research. Some records have yet to be processed and may require inventory and conservation treatment before they are available for research.

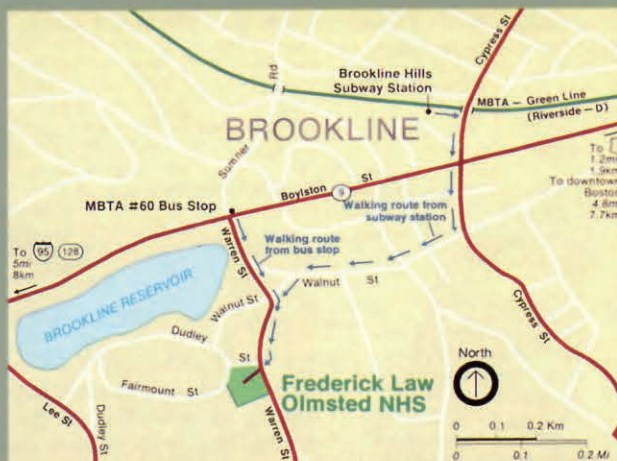
Upon request, the reference archivists will mail selected finding aids and guides to the collection. The collections are searchable through finding aids, databases, and indices, such as:

- geographic index
- client index
- subject index
- automated databases
- *The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857-1950* (National Association for Olmsted Parks, 1987).

For appointments, assistance and information, contact the Olmsted Archives reference staff at:

**Olmsted Archives
Frederick Law Olmsted
National Historic Site**

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Accessibility: Wheelchair accessible parking is available. Please contact the reference staff regarding accommodations for research visits.