



Friends of Fairsted

NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2012

Friends of Fairsted Announce First Beveridge Fellowship

The Friends received twelve outstanding applications for the Charles E. Beveridge Research Fellowship in its inaugural year. The applications came from across the country – from both academics and individual practitioners representing many disciplines. Research topics ran the gamut in scale and complexity, some with direct application to the preservation of Olmsted firm-designed landscapes or academic publications, others that were simply topics of interest to the researcher. The proposals included research questions focused on single features, individual historic properties, groups of resources in a particular geographic area or those with a common historic context, the Olmsted firm’s design strategies and trends over time, art of Olmsted design in photography, an education program in sustainability, and labor history. The Fellowship Committee and Dr. Beveridge evaluated the proposals and consulted with the Archives staff regarding the suitability of the materials at Fairsted to inform the research questions.

In 2012, the Fellowship will be awarded to historic preservationist Barton Ross to conduct research focused on the Olmsted legacy in Montclair, NJ. Ross, who is both a practicing architect and graduate student at Columbia University, will use this work to enhance the

knowledge, understanding and appreciation of a broad range of important landscape resources designed by the Olmsted firm in Montclair. Ross’s application “The Olmsted Firm and the Natural Improvements of Montclair –100 Years Later” was both thoughtful and clear, and demonstrated ways the fellowship could enhance the short-term and long-term stewardship of the Olmsted legacy in Montclair with a demonstrable outcome.

This new initiative honors distinguished Olmsted scholar Charles E. Beveridge and is intended to foster research using the archives at Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. Thanks to the generous contributions of many individuals, funds are in place to continue the fellowship for the next few years. In Fall 2012, Friends of Fairsted will issue the Call for Applications for the 2013 fellowship award.



Historical view of the “outlook towards New York”, 1914. Olmsted Job #2122: Eagle Rock Reservation, Montclair, NJ, courtesy NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Friends of Fairsted Lectures Explore Olmsted Firm’s Legacy of Urban and Suburban Design

Friends of Fairsted presented two inspiring lectures this year around the theme “Designing Communities: The Olmsted Legacy in Shaping the American Landscape.” Both lectures were filled to capacity and beyond and were enthusiastically received.

In November 2011, landscape historian Arleyn A. Levee looked at “The Enduring Design Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. in the Nation’s Capital.” In reviewing five decades of work by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., working with his colleagues on the U.S. Commission

of Fine Arts and other civic commissions, Ms. Levee showed how Olmsted and the Commission guided a vision to restore Pierre L’Enfant’s original ideal for America’s capital city to be an iconic representation of a powerful nation as well as a functional livable city. This lecture will be published in a forthcoming 2012 volume, entitled *A Centennial History of the U. S. Commission of Fine Arts*.

In March 2012, Ethan Carr, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University

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Friends of Fairsted

Advancing the mission of Frederick Law Olmsted
National Historic Site

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This newsletter was prepared by the Friends
of Fairsted Communications Committee.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

From the inauguration of the Charles E. Beveridge Research Fellowship to the success of 2011/2012 lecture series, it has been an exciting year for the Friends of Fairsted. I am honored to be its new president and look forward to continuing the leadership and work of past president Lauren Meier and the rest of the Board. Looking forward, the Friends will continue our efforts to support Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site by

offering programs and activities to promote and celebrate the legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted firm. On behalf of the Board, I thank you for the generous contributions that have allowed us to further the mission of the Friends. We have achieved a great deal and look forward to your continuing support. Please keep checking our website for updates on our activities, and I hope to see you at upcoming programs.

Henry Lukas

Park Update

Myra Harrison, Superintendent

Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site is delighted to report that all major construction activities will be completed by mid-June! The installation of the geothermal system, the repairs to twenty-nine different roofs made of six different roofing materials, the re-pointing of many chimneys, and the installation of a new compressor in the historic vault have been the major remaining elements of the extensive repairs and upgrades needed at the site. These have gradually wound their way to completion, and, for the first time in many years, by summer the site will be free of the omni-presence of contractors of one sort or another.

Most significantly, the Site now emerges from these many successive projects having achieved numerous improvements. Highlights include substantially improved environments for the collections, fire suppression extended throughout the complex, upgraded security and fire detection systems, and a rehabilitated barn for educational programming.

However, the installation of new exhibits in the first floor of the historic house will bring some contractors back to the site in November–December. We expect the exhibits to open in the winter of 2013, and to rededicate the Site in the Spring of 2013.

Since June of 2011, visitors have been welcomed back to the site Mon-Wed-Fri & Sun. The site staff are offering a full program of Spring walks and talks, most in the Emerald Necklace, and we will be offering expanded summer hours (watch the website).

With Friends of Fairsted funding support, this spring the park produced a beautifully designed Teacher's Guide to serve as companion to the park's award-winning program for third graders, *Good Neighbors: Landscape Design & Community Building*. The guide includes teaching plans and support materials for all program components, including the newly inaugurated Historic Design Office experience and companion "Tools of the Trade" pre-visit activity. With the launch of these components and two new post-visit activities, *Good Neighbors* is fully up and running, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. As one young visitor confided at the close of her Fairsted visit, "This is my most favorite place in the whole wide world." This spring, twenty-nine classes will participate in *Good Neighbors*, translating into 580 opportunities for Boston and Brookline youth to consider the role thoughtfully-designed parks play in strengthening communities, and the role each of us plays in shaping and caring for these special places.

Liza Stearns Receives 2011 Freeman Tilden Award for Good Neighbors Program

“The interpreter who creates a whole, pares away all the obfuscating minor detail and drives straight toward the perfection of his story will find that his hearers are walking along with him - are companions on the march. At some certain point it becomes their story as much as his.”

Freeman Tilden

Accolades for Olmsted National Historic Site Education Specialist Liza Stearns’s innovative, curriculum-based education program continue, and in November 2011 she was presented with the prestigious Freeman Tilden Award for her leadership in creating and developing *Good Neighbors: Landscape Design & Community Building*. Our last newsletter reported that Good Neighbors received the Boston Society of Landscape Architects’ highest award for communications; the Freeman Tilden Award is awarded to one National Park Service employee annually to recognize outstanding contributions to educating the public. It is named for one of the forefathers of interpretation, Freeman Tilden, whose work on communicating the stories of our national treasures has influenced generations of park, environmental and museum interpreters and educators across the nation. Ms. Stearns’s program, which incorporates a multi-disciplinary approach to the story of Frederick Law Olmsted, an exploration of the Emerald Necklace and



Photo by Joel Veak. Courtesy of NPS, Olmsted NHS.

the value of park design, benefits third graders in Boston and Brookline in a way that uniquely combines local history with universal concepts. Friends of Fairsted continues to be proud to be among many supporters of this exceptional program.

Friends of Fairsted Lectures (continued)

of Massachusetts Amherst, turned his attention to the urban design work that Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. carried out in Boston and Brookline between 1882 and 1890. Carr’s discussion of the development of the section of the Boston Park System now called the Emerald Necklace demonstrated Olmsted’s genius for understanding the unique and characteristic features of a locale and then shaping his design around them to achieve both functional and aesthetic goals. His work in the Back Bay Fens

involved extensive engineering to achieve the desired sanitation improvements, while Franklin Park’s natural contours and rocky outcroppings were left relatively untouched in the making of Olmsted’s third and, perhaps, greatest public park. Mr. Carr’s lecture was based on his work as editor of Volume 8 of *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: The Early Boston Years, 1882-1890*, the forthcoming publication of which is supported by Friends of Fairsted.

Coming Soon

An exhibit in Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site’s historic barn during the month of September of art objects created from the wood of the Olmsted Elm tree by students in the Rhode Island School of Design’s “Witness Tree Project” course.



Caroline Loughlin Preservation Hero

The upcoming 2012 issue of *View*, published by the Library of American Landscape History (LALH) features founding Friends of Fairsted board member and former president, Caroline Loughlin, as a Preservation Hero. The article recognizes Loughlin’s extensive contributions to landscape preservation and the Olmsted legacy, including her work on the Olmsted Research Guide Online (ORGO), the *Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm*, the *Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, and the National Association for Olmsted Parks. This is well-deserved and timely recognition for one of the Friend’s most valued directors and a champion of the Olmsted legacy.



Friends of Fairsted
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Friends of Fairsted Welcome New Board Members

At their May Annual Meeting, the Friends of Fairsted welcomed Erica Max of Roslindale and Shaun Provencher of Jamaica Plain as new members of the Board of Directors.

Erica is the Landscape Supervisor and Educational Coordinator at the Wakefield Estate, a 23-acre historic property in Milton operated by the Mary M. B. Wakefield Charitable Trust. Before joining the MBWCT, Ms. Max worked for a year at the National Park Service Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. A graduate of the Radcliffe Seminars/Landscape Seminars, Ms. Max completed an Independent Project focused on the Roscoe Conkling Park, a park in the Utica Parkway System, designed under the direction of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. Her nomination form led to the Parkway System's addition to the National Register. Max is a graduate of Wellesley College.

Shaun Provencher has worked in historic and parklands preservation since 1994. Following a Masters Degree in Historic Preservation from the University of Pennsylvania in 1998, he worked for the National Park Service until 2005 on archaeological and cultural landscape preservation programs, and was the Pacific-West Regional Coordinator for the Cultural Landscape Inventory. In 2005 he returned to Boston where he managed the Historic Landscape Preservation Program for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Office of Cultural Resources until 2010. Shaun is currently a Land Protection Specialist for DCR. Shaun is also a custom metalsmith and Secretary for the Jamaica Plain Arts Council Board of Directors.

The Friends gratefully acknowledge the leadership and contributions of past president, Lauren Meier and bid farewell to Caroline Loughlin and Carol Winkler, whose terms ended at the end of April.