

V I N E Y E A R D

revealing the relationship between Americans and their land

AN OCCASIONAL RECORD OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

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A Celebratory Collaboration: Symposium Highlights River Road Country Estates of Louisville, KY

Shaun Duncan
Celebration Symposium Co-Chair,
Resident of Louisville, KY

The Country Estates of River Road, listed in the National Register in 1998, is a 350 acre contiguous area of designed landscapes that naturally fold into and utilize the dramatic topographical resources. Many of the estates overlook the Ohio River. Not until 1998, when historian Carolyn Brooks conducted extensive research on the area, was the treasure discovered—relatively undisturbed landscape legacies of Marian Coffin, Bryant Fleming, the Olmsted firm and Arthur Cowell. David Morgan, executive director of the Kentucky Heritage Council, had sensed the significance of the River Road estates and supported funding of the research project. He enlisted the support of River Fields, whose jurisdiction over 50 miles of the Ohio River corridor includes the subject area.

Then in January 2001, a unique partnership designed a symposium in Louisville, Kentucky. The National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative (HLI) joined with River Fields Inc. (River Fields), a local river conservation organization, to host “Celebration of the Country Estate: A Symposium on the Historic Estate Landscape and its Interpretation for Future Generations.” With resounding results, a celebration it was! This significant gathering unleashed awareness, generated ideas for future projects, uncovered previously unknown resource materials, and created and rekindled alliances.

As the organization advocating the stewardship of this river corridor, River Fields had been called upon repeatedly to react and respond to perceived environmental threats. Short on time, resources, and staff, River Fields was too busy “fighting fires” to publicize the rich cultural and historic landscapes at its

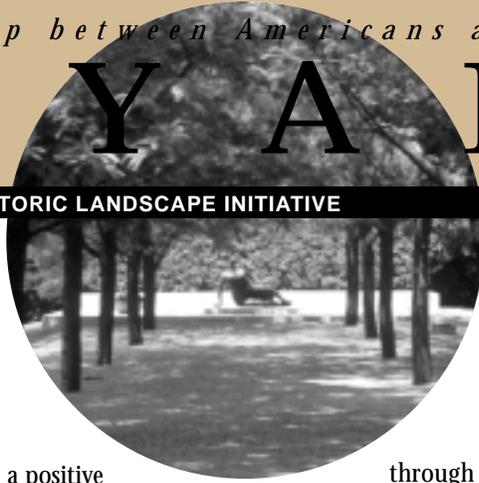
doorstep and create a positive network to help preserve them. The HLI, which had acknowledged Louisville’s preserved landscape legacy upon its first visit in the fall of 1998, conceived the joint Celebration as a way of cementing such broad alliances. As a result, River Fields took positive leaps in its public perception by educating the local, state and national community about its landscape heritage that parallels the cultural preeminence attributed to prized works of art.

Most important, the Celebration awakened the public to the national importance of this local resource and activated like-minded organizations and individuals to work together in such a quest. The symposium came about

through the joint effort of many partners—some active, some passive and some financial. All twenty organizations were united by the common thread of cultural landscape preservation, and of course, the Celebration!

Moreover, it is anticipated that the convergence of these organizations to produce such a novel event marks the beginning of important alliances. Participants included the Kentucky chapters of the AIA and the ASLA, the University of Kentucky College of Architecture and School of Landscape Architecture, local historical societies, a state-

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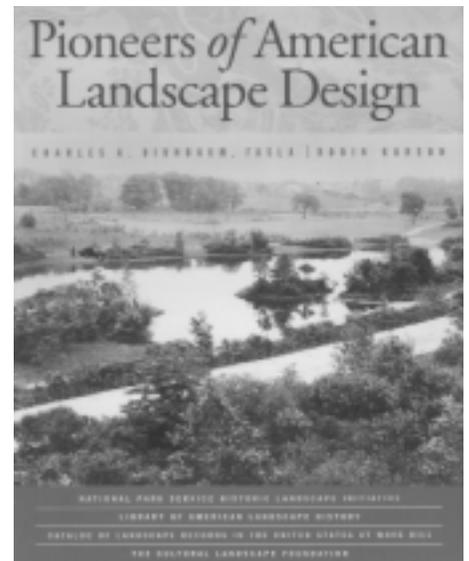
Miller Garden with Moore sculpture, designed by Dan Kiley, landscape architect, see related article, page 12.

Pioneers Sales Brisk

Cathy Markoff
Associate Marketing Manager
McGraw-Hill Professional Book Group

McGraw-Hill Professional is pleased to report on the progress of the Historic Landscape Initiative publication, *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*. Now, in its second printing and doing well on Amazon.com (#26 in Landscape Architecture), this is what some of the reviewers are saying:

The New York Times, November 2000
“It’s the first of its kind in America. We see it as a bible, the keystone for further research and revelation,” said Catha Grace Rambusch, director of the *CATALOG of Landscape Records in the United States*. Each succinct biography strives to capture the essence of its subject. The book is also a valuable tool for residents in towns and cities nationwide for understanding their own landscapes. *Pioneers* can also be used as a kind of travelogue, thanks to the



list at the back of the book, ‘Sites Accessible to the Public,’ complete with addresses and phone numbers.”

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Mission of the National Park Service

The National Park Service is dedicated to conserving unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Service is also responsible for managing a great variety of national and international programs designed to help extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.



HPS

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Welcome to **VINEYARD**

As with other editions, this issue of *Vineyard* celebrates and highlights recent partnership efforts of the Historic Landscape Initiative (HLI), while also showcasing current examples of exemplar preservation planning and treatment work for cultural landscapes nationwide.

The partnership efforts in this edition highlight a pioneering system of parks and boulevards in Fort Wayne, Indiana, designed by landscape architect George Kessler; Capitol Square in Richmond, Virginia, an iconic work of landscape design representing two centuries of change and continuity; and a continuation of the HLI's involvement with the Country Estate landscapes along Louisville's River Road.

Our survey feature in this issue includes a model partnership established to document and protect historic ranches of Routt County, Colorado, in addition to a new annual feature—an update of National Register listings for significant cultural landscapes. The treatment focus for this issue once again illustrates Maine's leadership role in landscape preservation with an outgrowth project of their state's survey of historic designed landscapes: "The Treatment and Management of the McLaughlin Garden in South Paris, Maine."

Finally, a note of celebration. The HLI was the recent recipient of two National ASLA awards: joint recognition for the President's Award of Excellence for *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture* (Spacemaker Press, primary recipient) and a Merit Award for our on-line technical series, *Cultural Landscape Currents*. This latter project could not have been realized without the contributions of Patricia M. O'Donnell, FASLA, Principal, LANDSCAPES, Charlotte, VT; Robert W. Hadlow, Ph.D., Historian, Oregon Department of Transportation; and Dale Jaeger, FASLA, The Jaeger Company, Gainesville, GA, who all served as guest authors. To learn more about *Currents*, visit our website at www2.cr.nps.gov/hli/currents.

Again, please note that all four editions of *Vineyard* are available on line at www2.cr.nps.gov/hli.

Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA
Coordinator, Historic Landscape Initiative

Mission of the Historic Landscape Initiative

The Historic Landscape Initiative develops preservation planning tools that respect and reveal the relationship between Americans and their land.

The Initiative provides essential guidance to accomplish sound preservation practice on a variety of landscapes, from parks and gardens to rural villages and agricultural landscapes.

The Historic Landscape Initiative is committed to ongoing preservation of cultural landscapes that can yield an improved quality of life for all, a sense of place, and identity for future generations.



Governor Paul E. Patton of Kentucky with HLI Coordinator, Charles A. Birnbaum at the Country Estates of River Road Celebration Symposium.

A Celebratory Collaboration continued from cover

wide preservation group, a local horticultural group, the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy, the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, a local arts association, and the Kentucky Heritage Council. LG&E Energy Corp., the local utility and power company underwrote some of the expenses, and the Glenview Garden Club (a member of the Garden Club of America) sponsored the keynote address.

National (HLI), state (Kentucky Heritage Council), and local (River Fields) government entities joined forces with hosting partner, the Speed Art Museum, to provide an ideal venue and draw a near capacity crowd for the symposium program. Nationally known experts presented the Louisville landscape legacy in its own context, as well as in that of the Country Place Era historical designation, and elaborated on the national scope of those designers who left their mark on the landscape of Louisville.

As lagniappe to a very special weekend, residents of the Country Estates opened their homes to host dinners in honor of the Celebration speakers and guests. The Governor of Kentucky added his tributes at one dinner. The symposium speakers on Marion Coffin, Bryant Fleming and the Olmsted firm were each honored guests at a home whose landscape was planned by the subject designer of their expertise.

Pioneers Sales Brisk continued from cover

Landscape Architecture, September 2000
"...an incalculable contribution to America's heritage, landscape architectural history, and the depth and diversity of the roots from which landscape architects draw their identity and pride... expands the definition of garden...beyond the growing sense of pride I have for my profession as I read about each designer's development, are the visual benchmarks...[they] also alert me to the great loss of those landscapes no longer found outside the faded images. A natural reference for landscape history classes and designers who recognize the value of knowing the roots of their vocation or avocation. Birnbaum and Karson clearly recognize that the building of history is an ongoing endeavor of many people's efforts."

Dirt: A Garden Journal from the Connecticut River Valley, December 2000
"...will serve as a consciousness-raiser for what I hope will be thousands upon thousands of American garden lovers, garden and park preserves, American history lovers—anyone who loves the land of this country and the efforts that have been made to create and preserve beautiful outdoor spaces. Even the garden-and-landscape-savvy may well learn something on almost every page. It is a chronicle of a collective American creative spirit as it relates to the landscape. Also a chronicle of individual artists who struggled to live, and to make a living, expressing their artistic visions. I was moved by the sheer will

"The response to the Celebration designed by the Historic Landscape Initiative and orchestrated by River Fields at the Speed Museum has been overwhelmingly positive. Everyone who has commented have said the weekend sparked a renewed energy, reawakened even the 'locals' to the national importance of the River Road Estates and provided many with a new sense of purpose and determination to continue in their conservation efforts."

David Morgan, Executive Director,
Kentucky Heritage Council



Charles F. Gillette (1886-1969) is not only one of the 160 Pioneers, but one of the designers in a continuum of landscape architecture at the Virginia State Capitol Grounds. See related article on page 6.
Courtesy NPS Pioneers files.

and genius of many of these pioneers. Many died young. Some though, were given their due share of life to make their multi-layered and complex cultural contributions to the designed American landscape."

The Wall Street Journal, December 2000
"Over the past 10 years, the preservation movement that is slowly documenting and preserving American designed landscapes has matured. One of the results is Pioneers of American Landscape Design...a handsome encyclopedia offering 160 short biographies of American landscape movers and shakers. The book stretches the conventional idea of 'landscape' past the residential garden to include designs for urban centers, freeways, cemeteries, suburban developments and wilderness preserves."

McGraw-Hill Professional congratulates all of the project sponsors and contributors on this fine tribute to the American fathers and mothers of landscape design. We look forward to continued success with this title.

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A Renaissance for Fort Wayne's System of Parks and Boulevards

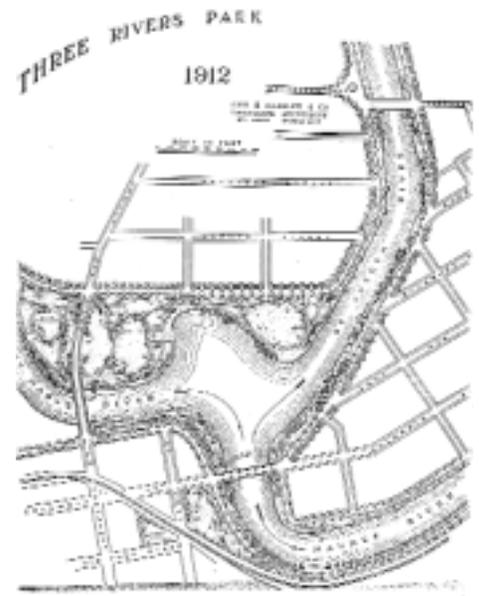
Julie Donnell
President and Founder
Friends of the Park, Allen County, IN

Even though George Kessler worked for the Riverfront Commission in Fort Wayne, Indiana, for only a year in 1912, he left behind a remarkable imprint on the land, a significant portion of which remains today. Unlike his designs for parks and boulevards in such cities as Kansas City, Denver, Dallas, and Cincinnati, his work in Indiana—in both Indianapolis and Ft. Wayne—has been largely invisible.

Fort Wayne, with a population of over 200,000, is today considered an industrial city with achievements in telecommunications, financial services, and agricultural products; however, in the early part of the century Fort Wayne was known for its parks. The city was established in 1794 where the Maumee, St. Joseph, and St. Mary's rivers converge in northeastern Indiana. These rivers were valued not only for commerce, but also for recreation opportunities and scenic vistas. The city acquired its first park in 1866 and continued to set aside land for parks through the 19th century.

By the time George arrived on the scene, the city's fledgling park board (formed in 1905) was responsible for several major parks in different parts of the city. Kessler's plan celebrated the three rivers and linked the existing parks with them by way of an orthogonal boulevard system and a series of riverfront drives. The plan presented opportunities for the creation of new parks and the development of neighborhoods as the city matured. The major outline of Kessler's plan was built, and even in the late 1930s, the Board of Park Commissioners was adding parks to the city in places suggested by Kessler's plan.

Today, the Fort Wayne Board of Park Commissioners oversees 2,300 acres of land. The Board long ago relinquished responsibility for the boulevards to other city departments. At first glance, the Army Corps of Engineers appears to have hidden most of the three rivers and concealed some of the parks, behind dikes and rip rap. Traffic obscures the stately boulevards. If one looks a bit closer, however, the remnants of George Kessler's vision of a boulevard system connecting the parks and rivers begin to take shape and for some in Fort Wayne, the potential for recovering the ambition and grace of that vision



1912 plan for Three Rivers Park prepared by George E. Kessler, landscape architect. Courtesy NPS files.

has become an inducement to activism.

This renaissance and resurgence of interest in parks is the result of the recent creation and the success of Headwaters Park, located at the confluence of the three rivers in the center of the city. The contemporary park design affirms the validity of Kessler's vision, which called for a central park (Kessler called it "Three Rivers Park") in almost the very same place. Not only has the Headwaters Park Commission completed this park, but historic preservation professionals and planners made way for a new Courthouse Green to augment the recently rehabilitated and nationally significant historic Courthouse. This attention to new parks downtown has magnified the need to address the potential and needs of the older parks in the city, the ones that existed in Kessler's time and those later parks that his vision inspired.

The decline of the city's older parks, due to budget cuts over the years, coupled with a controversy over whether the central core of a historic neighborhood park should be given over for parking (at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo), has led to the formation of the Friends of the Parks of Fort Wayne and Allen County.



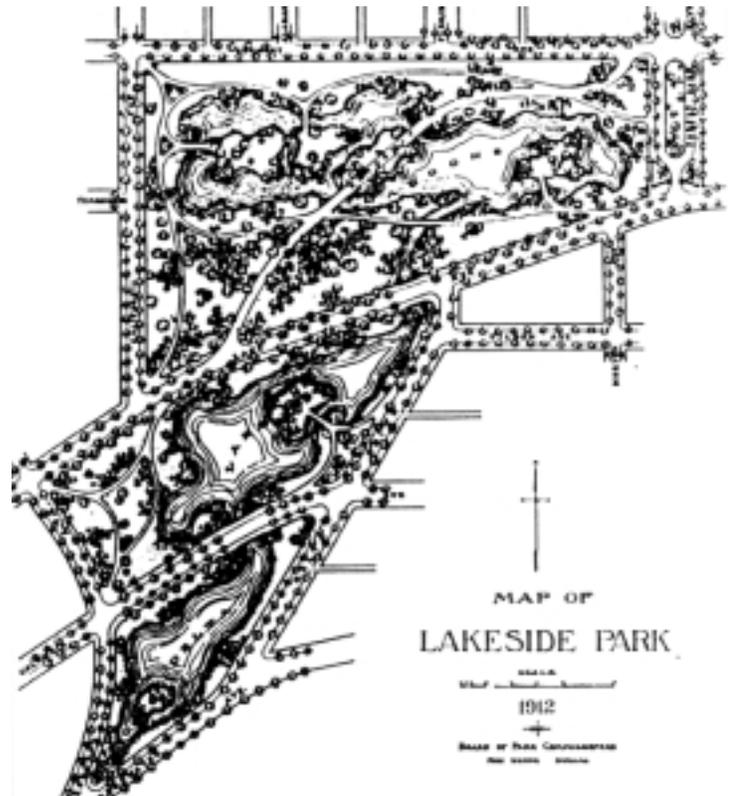
*Swinney Park, Fort Wayne, IN.
Jaenicke Garden, c. 1960s
Courtesy Julie Donnell.*

In the spring of 2000, the Friends learned of a survey of Indiana's historic landscapes by Malcolm Cairns, ASLA, who teaches in the landscape architecture program at Ball State University. The parks and boulevards designed and inspired by George Kessler in Fort Wayne figure prominently in the study. In an effort to learn more, the Friends invited the Coordinator of the National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative (HLI) to Fort Wayne to look over the system and respond to it. Over three very intensive days the HLI Coordinator visited the major parks in Fort Wayne, spoke at the annual meeting of the Fort Wayne Park Foundation, and gave two more public presentations in Fort Wayne. In all of these outreach endeavors the HLI Coordinator made it clear that Fort Wayne has a nationally significant system of historic parks and boulevards in need of preservation, rehabilitation and great public understanding. Great attention was paid to these events by community leaders and by the media. Both Fort Wayne newspapers covered the visit extensively. An editorial in the Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette* stated, "City officials, private parks supporters, parks patrons, and the community should regard the NPS message delivered in Fort Wayne earlier this week as both a pep talk and a warning."

As a result of the HLI Coordinator's visit, Graham Richard, Mayor of Fort Wayne, asked the Board of Park Commissioners to create a Cultural Landscape Committee to oversee the rehabilitation of two of the city's oldest and most historic parks—Swinney and Memorial.

Swinney Park was acquired by the city in 1874, but had served as a county fairground since the mid-19th century. In the mid-20th century, Swinney Park functioned as an amusement park, complete with dance hall and ferris wheel. Later in the century it was the site of Fort Wayne's first skateboard facility. Although Kessler did not leave a detailed design for this park, he did design the Thieme Drive entry to the park, which was constructed 1912-1914 and connected the park with Main Street and thus, to the entry to the city. In 1916, Arthur Shurcliff prepared a master plan for the park, which later was modified by Superintendent of Parks, Adolphe Jaenicke.

If George Kessler is responsible for the plan that related the parks to one another and to the rest of the city, it is Jaenicke, recognized as a plant growing specialist, who established a long tradition of elaborate garden amenities



Kessler's original plan for Lakeside Park, 1912, provided the inspiration for a waterside park over a half a century later. Courtesy Julie Donnell

in many of Fort Wayne's historic parks. Jaenicke, himself a landscape architect trained in Berlin, is responsible for one of the most dramatic features of Swinney Park. He converted a refuse ditch into a rock garden which was expanded in the 1930's by the CWA into a Japanese Garden complete with waterfall, pavilion, and teahouse—not to mention a small outbuilding, the sole function of which was to produce smoke to imitate the Japanese volcanoes.

By contrast, Memorial Park came into the system in 1918 and its design was solely the work of Jaenicke. It was developed as a memorial to lives lost in WWI. The plan, most of which remains intact, included carriage drives, a memorial grove, various other memorials and a recreation building which dates from about 1935. Here again, Jaenicke could not resist being dramatic—he created an imitation of the Blue Grotto of Capri in Memorial Park. Both parks are located at major entrance points to the city and in neighborhoods that would benefit greatly from their rehabilitation.

Fort Wayne's Cultural Landscape Committee is in the formative stages, but has already applied for funding from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to complete Cultural Landscape Reports for both of these

parks. While the mission of the committee is still taking shape, the intention is that the work will not stop there. The rehabilitation of these two parks should be the beginning of a movement to bring back the entire system.

In the year ahead the Friends organization looks forward to a continuing relationship with the HLI and hopes to secure the services of an appropriate consultant with experience in historic parks, community outreach and education.



*George E. Kessler
1862-1923.
Courtesy Missouri
Historical Society.*