

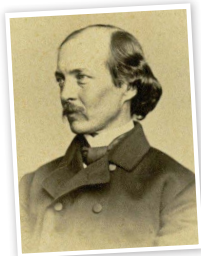
BUFFALO OLMSTED PARK SYSTEM

MAP & GUIDE



BUFFALO
OLMSTED PARKS
CONSERVANCY

Olmsted's Vision: *Landscape into Cityscape*



Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), revered as the father of landscape architecture in America, believed the purpose of urban parks was to “refresh and delight the eye and through the eye, the mind and spirit.” In 1858, he and his partner Calvert Vaux (1824-1895) had given form to this idea with their renowned design for Central Park in New York City. Ten years later in 1868,

Olmsted came from New York to Buffalo at the invitation of William Dorsheimer and others who were seeking to create a large public park in the thriving Queen City of the Lakes. After touring the city, Olmsted proposed that instead of investing in one large park like Central Park, Buffalo would be better served by three parks in different parts of town. Civic leaders endorsed Olmsted's novel concept. In 1870, after many years of design and planning, construction began according to plans that he and Vaux drew up. To supervise construction and planting, they recommended William McMillan (1831-1899) for the first parks superintendent. He held the post for 27 years.

The Park (present Delaware Park), The Front (present Front Park) and The Parade (present Martin Luther King Jr. Park) provided the people of Buffalo with a variety of leisure time experiences, including access to scenic views of Lake Erie. Moreover, Olmsted and Vaux carefully linked the new public spaces to one another, and to the radial city plan created in 1804 by Joseph Ellicott, by a new form of tree-lined residential boulevard they called a “parkway.” Buffalo became the first city in America to possess a coherent park and parkway system.

In later years, Olmsted's firm extended the park system into the southern part of the city. South Park and Cazenovia Park served the recreational needs of those who found it difficult to reach the three original parks. Riverside Park, the last of the Olmsted parks in Buffalo, focused on the city's other waterfront, the magnificent Niagara River. In addition, Olmsted augmented the park system with several small, neighborhood parks.

In 1876, Olmsted proclaimed Buffalo to be “the best planned city ... in the United States, if not the world.” Today, the city retains major elements of the extraordinary urban vision of this remarkable man. Olmsted and Vaux's Buffalo park and parkway system was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Western New Yorkers are proud and appreciative of this exceptional heritage.

Your Conservancy

The Buffalo Olmsted Park System was originally designed to enhance the quality of life in the City of Buffalo; economically, socially, mentally and physically. As the city grew and developed, some of the parkland was lost or significantly altered, changing the look of Buffalo, once known as the “City of Trees.”

Thankfully, a group of concerned citizens came together to do something about it. In 1978, the Buffalo Friends of Olmsted Parks was formed to help save the parks. Over the years, the group evolved into what is now known as the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy.

The Conservancy is an independent, membership-based, not-for-profit organization that strives to broaden awareness of, appreciation for and investment in the Buffalo Olmsted Park System in order to enhance, restore and maintain this historic cultural treasure for the benefit of current and future generations.

Since 2004, a powerful partnership between the city, the community and the Conservancy has emerged. The Conservancy is now responsible for the maintenance of the Buffalo Olmsted Park System. It has implemented a revolutionary urban parks management plan that brings accountability and community participation into its plan for success.

The Buffalo Olmsted Park Conservancy invites visitors to become partners in taking care of the parks. Participation opportunities include becoming a member, volunteering, adopting a tree or park bench, making a donation and much more. When you get involved, you help ensure that our parks and parkways remain beautiful places for leisure, recreation and the appreciation of nature, for today and forever.

PARK EVENTS

Visit our website bfloparks.org to find out what is happening in the parks.

KEEP IN MIND.

Please respect the Buffalo Olmsted Park System. Do not litter, pick flowers or disturb park animals or nests. Keep dogs leashed and clean up after your pets. Do not drive or park on the grass. Obey posted signs, flags and instructions from park personnel. Please help care for this scenic landmark.

To learn how you can support the Buffalo Olmsted Park System, call **(716) 838-1249**, email us at info@bfloparks.org or write to:

**The Buffalo
Olmsted Parks
Conservancy**
The Parkside Lodge
84 Parkside Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14214



The Olmsted Park and Parkway System

The Buffalo Olmsted Park System is comprised of six parks, seven circles, eight parkways and several smaller spaces. Use this map to gain a better understanding of the overall design of the nation's first urban park system.

The map indicates the original footprint of the parks as well as the current area of the parks. It also illustrates how the new parkways, and several existing city streets that were upgraded to the status of parkways, connect the individual parks. Where parkways meet or join major city streets, Olmsted and Vaux introduced spacious circles. Like the parkways, the circles afforded gracious settings for homes. They were also places for sculpture, fountains, or monuments. By following these routes, either walking, biking or driving, visitors can experience much of the green ribbon of parkland and parkways that Buffalonians have enjoyed for many decades.

Buffalo Park System Map Key

● CIRCLES

- Soldiers Place
- Gates
- Colonial
- Ferry
- Symphony
- McClellan
- McKinley
- Agassiz (altered)
- The Bank (lost)

■ PARKWAYS

- Lincoln
- Bidwell
- Chapin
- Richmond Avenue
- Porter Avenue
- Red Jacket
- McKinley
- Humboldt
- Fillmore Avenue (added by park commissioners to parkway system in 1874)

▲ OTHER OLMSTED-DESIGNED SPACES

- Grounds of the NY Asylum for the Insane (now Richardson Olmsted Complex)
- Prospect Park (now Columbus and Perla Parks)
- Masten Place (lost; site of City Honors High School)
- Days Park
- Johnson Park
- The Terrace (lost)
- Bennett Place (lost; now part of JFK Park)
- Heacock Place
- Parkside Neighborhood

To Niagara Falls
15 miles



- 1 Riverside Park
- 2 Delaware Park
- 3 Martin Luther King, Jr. Park
- 4 Front Park
- 5 Cazenovia Park
- 6 South Park

Delaware Park



Designed: 1868-1870 by Olmsted & Vaux

Location: Bordered by Delaware, Elmwood & Parkside Avenues, Amherst Street, Nottingham Terrace, Rte. 198 & Rumsey Road.

Delaware Park, at 350 acres, was the largest of the three original parks and was the type of landscape that Olmsted and Vaux called a country park. The park was a setting for passive recreation in surroundings that evoked an ideal rural world. A rolling meadow dotted with trees and surrounded by woods formed the eastern portion. "There is no more beautiful picture than that of a beautiful meadow, over which level-armed sheltering trees cast broad shadows," thought Olmsted. Visitors would find refreshment in simply contemplating its broad expanse of greenspace, strolling its rolling surface, or spreading a blanket on the ground to enjoy a picnic. Walking paths, a carriage drive, and bridle paths offered other possibilities to commune with nature. West of Delaware Avenue, Olmsted and Vaux created a picturesque lake for boating in summer and skating in winter by damming Scajaquada Creek that flowed through the site.

Olmsted predicted that Delaware Park was destined to take a "distinguished position among the parks of the world."

Although today's park still offers much in the way of original features, many others have yet to be restored. These include Spire Head House (an exotic gazebo designed by Vaux), a quarry garden, bridle paths, and pedestrian pathways.



ENJOY OUR
SELF-GUIDED
MOBILE
AUDIO TOURS

> Delaware Park (North & South)
> Japanese Garden in Delaware Park
tourwand.com/Olmsted

FEATURES

- **Parkside Lodge, 84 Parkside Avenue** (1) Built in 1914, the Arts & Craft style building designed by James Walker provides rest facilities for park users and houses offices of the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy.
- **Marcy Casino, 199 Lincoln Parkway** (2) Built in 1901 to designs of Green & Wicks, it replaced an earlier wooden boathouse designed by Vaux. Today, Marcy Casino offers a year-round restaurant, The Terrace, and banquet facilities.
- **Hoyt Lake (originally "Gala Water")** (3) A 23-acre lake with seasonal recreational opportunities.
- **Rose Garden** (4) A formal garden, created in 1912, which lies adjacent to the Marcy Casino. Nearby is the performance area for Shakespeare in Delaware Park.
- **Rumsey Woods** (5) A woodland area added to the park in the mid-1880s and popular with picnickers and walkers.
- **Japanese Garden** (6) Located below the Buffalo History Museum, the garden was designed in 1970 and implemented in partnership with Buffalo's sister city, Kanazawa, Japan.
- **The Ivy Bridge or Dell Span** (7) Designed in 1887, this hidden gem is the oldest architectural structure in the park.
- **Recreational amenities** for active sports added in the 20th century include an 18-hole golf course (8), tennis courts (9), baseball diamonds (10), a bike/foot path (11), basketball courts (12), playgrounds (13), rugby, and soccer fields (14).
- **Attractions in and around Delaware Park** include Albright-Knox Art Gallery (15), the Burchfield-Penney Art Center (21), Buffalo History Museum (16), Buffalo Zoo (17), Forest Lawn Cemetery (18), Darwin Martin House Parkside Neighborhood (19), and the Buffalo Architecture Center at the Richardson Olmsted Complex. The Jesse Kregal Pathway is a 1.8-mile recreational trail along the Scajaquada Creek that connects Delaware Park to the Niagara River Greenway Trail (20).

Front Park



Designed: 1868–1870 by Olmsted & Vaux

Location: Porter & Busti Avenues

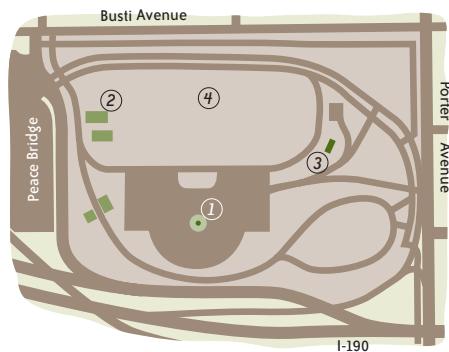
The chief feature of The Front was the semi-circular terrace designed to command a panoramic view of Lake Erie and the opening of the Niagara River. Here, Olmsted remarked, one could observe “a river effect such as can be seen, I believe, nowhere else – a certain quivering of the surface and a rare tone of color, the result of the crowding upward of the lake waters as they enter the deep portal of the Niagara.” With this prospect of water and infinity as background, the terrace, Olmsted thought, would also be an impressive setting for public ceremonies.

“The root of all my work,” he said, “has been an early respect for and enjoyment of scenery.”

Olmsted and Vaux’s plan also incorporated a large field for baseball and other sports. The park once included the adjacent grounds of Fort Porter, now the site of the Peace Bridge plaza.

FEATURES

- **Terrace with the Oliver Hazard Perry Monument** (1) by sculptor Charles Niehaus. In 1916, the State of New York erected the Perry monument to commemorate the centennial of his Great Lakes victory over the British navy during the War of 1812.
- **Recreational amenities** include tennis courts (2), a picnic shelter and playground (3), and a soccer field (4).
- **Nearby is Prospect Park**, a large residential square dating from 1836. One of the city’s oldest green spaces, it was incorporated by Olmsted and Vaux into the park system in 1870.
- **Attractions near Front Park** include Kleinhans Music Hall, Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, First Presbyterian Church, LaSalle Park, Shoreline Trail, and the Connecticut Street Armory.



Enjoy our Self-Guided Mobile Audio Tour of Olmsted’s west side, 8 mile bike ride.
tourwand.com/Olmsted

Martin Luther King Jr. Park



Designed: 1868–1870 by Olmsted and Vaux;

Redesigned: 1895 by Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot

Location: Bordered by Northampton, Best, N. Parade, E. Parade and W. Parade Streets; Fillmore Avenue runs through the park.

Originally called The Parade (and from 1896 to 1977 known as Humboldt Park), this 50-acre park was located near the center of the German population on the city’s East Side. It welcomed activities such as a field for military drills and sporting events and a large children’s playground. The Parade House, a magnificent restaurant, beer hall, and dance hall designed by Vaux, opened here in 1876 and immediately became a popular attraction for all of Buffalo’s diverse population. In an age when immigrants were arriving daily, such places, Olmsted thought, fostered the spirit of democracy. In 1895, the Olmsted firm redesigned the park, replacing the Parade grounds with a nearly five acre reflecting pool, a basin for water plants and large fountain. The revised park also became known for its floral displays.

FEATURES

- **Humboldt Basin (Splash Pad/Old-Fashioned Pond Skating)** (1) The 500-foot diameter basin is one of the largest wading pools in the country.
- **Walled Garden** (2) A peaceful, floral retreat added in the 1920s.
 - Greenhouses (4)
 - Sheltered Building
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Tribute Plaza** (3) (on the site of the Parade House). In 1983, Sculptor John Wilson created the bronze bust in the spirit of Dr. King.
- **Recreational amenities** include splash pads (5), pool (6), tennis courts (7), basketball courts (8), playgrounds (9), and picnic grounds (10).
- **Attractions in and around Martin Luther King Jr. Park** include the Buffalo Museum of Science (11) and the Hamlin Park Historic District.



Cazenovia Park



Designed: 1892-1894 by Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot

Location: Bordered by Cazenovia Street, Seneca Street, Potters & Abbott Road

The flat, 83-acre site of Cazenovia Park is traversed by a creek of the same name. The Olmsted firm (which included Olmsted's son, John C. Olmsted) proposed it be dammed to create a 20-acre recreational lake, and for many years, it was popular year-round with boaters and skaters. In addition, the designers included a bandstand and play fields and called for the planting of many trees to shade the empty landscape. Today, the lake is gone, but the trees have flourished and the playing fields and other facilities attract many to the park.

FEATURES

- **The Casino** (1) Completed in 1912 to designs by the Buffalo firm of Esenwein & Johnson, the building originally served as the lakeside boathouse.
- **Shelter House** (2) Built in 1902, it was the first amenity structure for Cazenovia Park. There were two gardens gracing the entrance, shelter and gardens were restored in 2016.
- **The Tosh Collins Community Center** (3)
- **Recreational amenities** include an ice rink (4), swimming pool (5), 9-hole golf course (added in 1925) (6), splash pad (7), playground (8), baseball diamonds (9), soccer fields (10), basketball (11) and tennis courts (12).
- **Cazenovia Resource Center** (13)



South Park



Designed: 1892-1894 by Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot

Location: South Park Avenue and McKinley Parkway

South Park, with its picturesque lake, tree-studded meadow, winding carriage drive, and pedestrian paths, was a smaller (156 acres) version of a “country park” like the earlier Delaware Park. In addition, South Park became the location of an arboretum displaying trees and shrubs that could grow in Western New York. To cultivate and exhibit plants that could survive only in warmer climates, including desert and tropical flora, a conservancy structure was aligned with the terminus of McKinley Parkway. Erected in 1898 by the well-known firm of Lord & Burnham, the three-domed conservatory is one of the largest structures of its type in the country.

FEATURES

- **Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens** (1)
- **Bog Garden** (2) Partially restored according to the Olmsted firm's original intent.
- **Arboretum** (3) Now largely lost, this was an early collection of trees and shrubs. Many of the original trees are marked to identify species. There is a feasibility study engaged through 2017 to assess the arboretum's return.
- **Recreational amenities** include a 9-hole golf course (4) added to the meadow in the 20th century.
- **Attractions in and around South Park** include Our Lady of Victory Basilica (5) and the City of Lackawanna Public Library (6).



Riverside Park



Designed: 1898-1899 by Olmsted Brothers

Location: Between Niagara, Crowley, Vulcan and Tonawanda Streets

Overlooking the Niagara River, Riverside Park filled the missing piece in the park system by providing access to the river that, together with Lake Erie, is Buffalo's other outstanding natural feature. Designed by Olmsted's sons and successors after his retirement in 1895, it once had a landing on the river where boats from downtown would load and unload passengers. Inside the park, visitors might enjoy a variety of diversions, including listening to concerts, playing baseball or other sports, strolling along a meandering pool shaded by old forest trees, or simply watching the great river roll by.

FEATURES

- **Lighthouse** (1)
- **World War I memorial** (2)
- **Niagara River overlook** (3)
- **Senior citizens center** (4)
- **Recreational amenities** include a covered ice rink (5), playground (6), football field (7), baseball diamonds (8), tennis (9) and basketball courts (10), swimming pools (11) and picnic shelters (12).
- **RiverRock Gardens** (12) - reinterpretation of the original Minnow Pool. This rain garden restored the original planting plan to the north end of the park.



CANOPIES OF GREEN:

The Parkways and Avenues



The north side parkways were designed in 1868-1870 by Olmsted and Vaux; the south side Parkway was designed in 1890s by the Olmsted firm.

The parkways that linked the parks were residential streets that extended greenspace beyond the parks into the city. The major ones, the "Park Approaches," were 200 feet wide, shaded by multiple rows of trees—mostly American elms—and divided into separate lanes for carriages, equestrians and pedestrians. The longest was Humboldt Parkway, named for German geographer Alexander von Humboldt. It linked The Park to The Parade and earned an international reputation as one of the most beautiful streets in America. (In the 1950's and 1960's, the Kensington and Scajaquada Expressways decimated Humboldt Parkway and dissected Delaware Park.) In addition, several existing streets in Joseph Ellicott's 1804 plan for Buffalo augmented the parkway system. Delaware Avenue formed the principal route to The Park from the center of town, Niagara Square, some three miles distant. It soon became a nationally known address of fine residences, commonly called "Millionaires Row."

Spacious circles marked the parkway junctures. The grandest of these was Soldiers Place, the nexus of three major parkways, Bidwell, Chapin, and Lincoln. Other circles in North Buffalo that are still attractive residential addresses are Gates Circle, Symphony Circle, Colonial Circle, and Ferry Circle. Agassiz Circle has been greatly altered, and The Bank is largely destroyed.

The establishment of new parks in South Buffalo in the 1890s was accompanied by the creation of parkways to connect them to each other. The dream of linking these later parkways with the earlier system, however, resisted solution. Today, the attractive residential boulevards of McKinley and Red Jacket Parkways (which include McClellan and McKinley Circles and Heacock Place) remain isolated from their predecessors in North Buffalo.





Niagara Falls

During his association with Buffalo, Olmsted became passionately interested in creating a natural area around nearby Niagara Falls, where industry and commerce threatened to overrun the natural wonder. In 1869, Olmsted convened a meeting at the Falls with Buffalo park promoters to discuss his idea of having New York State purchase the shoreline, Goat Island and other smaller islands in the American Rapids for a public preserve. Thus began Olmsted's international "Campaign to Save Niagara." Finally, after much lobbying, Governor Grover Cleveland signed a bill in 1883 authorizing "the selection, location and appropriation of certain lands in the village of Niagara Falls for a State reservation and to preserve the scenery of Niagara Falls."

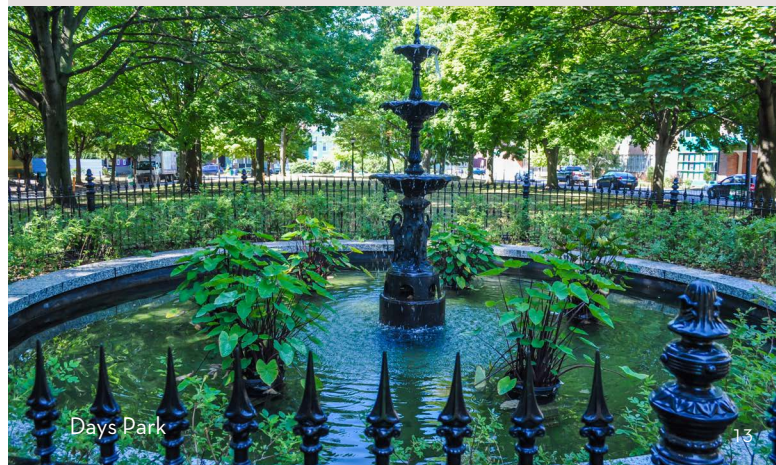
Four years later, Olmsted and Vaux teamed up to create a plan for the Niagara Reservation, now known as Niagara Falls State Park and managed by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. The two grand masters of their profession regarded their task as "the most difficult problem in landscape architecture to do justice to." In Olmsted and Vaux's view, a visit to Niagara Falls should be a leisurely and thoughtful journey to a place that possessed a wealth of natural beauty. The islands, rapids, dense woods, and varied flora offered many pleasing encounters with nature beyond the spectacle of the Falls. Olmsted and Vaux's plan sought both to restore parts of the shore that had become lost to manufacturing and to preserve the landscape that was still unchanged by man. They laid out pedestrian paths and carriage drives so visitors might enjoy all of the "distinctive charms of Niagara scenery." Their plan was never fully carried out; however, it established the conservationist philosophy of park management that distinguished the park on the American side of the Falls.

Other Olmsted Landscapes in Buffalo

- **Prospect Park.** Olmsted & Vaux incorporated this preexisting residential square into their park system. In 1876, Olmsted drew a new landscape plan for the square, now known as Columbus and Perla Parks.
- **Days Park** (1887; F. L. & J. C. Olmsted). Thomas Day donated the residential square known as Days Park to the city in 1859. Olmsted's plan included a play area for children.

SPACES MAINTAINED BY OTHERS

- **Grounds of New York State Asylum for the Insane** (now Buffalo Psychiatric Center, Richardson Olmsted Complex, and Buffalo State College). In 1871, Olmsted & Vaux made a plan for the grounds around the new hospital buildings that were designed by H. H. Richardson. Olmsted revised the plan in 1876.
- **Niagara Square** (1874; Olmsted)
- **Grounds of City and County Hall** (1875; Olmsted)
- **Parkside Neighborhood** (1875 and later; Olmsted). Parkside was one of the country's earliest planned residential subdivisions. In 1987, Parkside was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Lafayette Square** (1882; F. L. & J. C. Olmsted)
- **Bennett Place** (1887; F. L. & J. C. Olmsted; lost; site of JFK Park)
- **Masten Place** (1887; F. L. & J. C. Olmsted; lost; site of City Honors High School)
- **The Terrace** (1887; F. L. & J. C. Olmsted; lost)
- **Johnson Park** (1887; F. L. & J. C. Olmsted)



Days Park



Parkside Lodge | 84 Parkside Avenue | Buffalo, NY 14214
716-838-1249 | bfloparks.org



IN PROUD PARTNERSHIP WITH



County of Erie



Mayor Byron W. Brown



NIAGARA FALLS
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover Photos: Delaware Park, Paula Hinz; MLK Jr. Park, Zhi Ting Phua;
Japanese Garden in Delaware Park, Joe Cascio; Cazenovia Park, Joe Cascio

Inside Photos: Delaware Park, Michael Frank Jr.;
Colonial Circle, Joe Cascio; Days Park, Jeffrey Krajnik